

Prayer

Bless us, Lord Jesus, as we make plans for the future. Keep close to us as we make decisions about our work, our homes, our finances and our relationships; in this way, we pray that our actions will be a true reflection of what You would do through us, and all You have created us to be. May we enjoy Your presence and Your guidance, and be excited by the possibilities of life you put before us. AMEN

Prayer Suggestions

Prayer ideas

Make a list of the things that are on your mind, and pray for them systematically, through the day

On-going prayers

- **Pray for those who preach.** *Pray for those who will preach tomorrow; that their word will be heard and they will be blessed as they preach*
- *Pray for those affected by abuse scandals in the Catholic church in Ireland*
- *Thank God for the work of God's people amongst the poor*

Meditation

Find beauty in companionship,
For Jesus is our friend and respects our love:

Find beauty in simply duties,
For Christ empowers us all to do good:

Find beauty in helping the poor
For the Son of God brought hope to the world:

Find beauty in doing what is right,
For the Spirit creates the fruit of the Spirit within:

Find beauty in working with others
For the Father loves the unity of His people:

Find beauty in overcoming problems
For the Lord our God is victorious over all evil:

Find beauty is resting from all you do
For God Himself rested, and loves the Sabbath.

Bible passage – 1 Timothy 2:1-7

¹ I therefore urge you, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ² for kings and all who hold high office, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³ This is good and pleasing to God our Saviour, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is also one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself to bring about freedom for all. This is the testimony given at the proper time ⁷ for which I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Bible Study

Review

The second chapter of Paul's first letter to Timothy begins with some famous advice about the prayer, beginning; *'I therefore urge you, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who hold high office ...'* (2:1). He adds to this a short summary of the Gospel he preaches, as if to justify its authenticity: *'This is the testimony given at the proper time, for which I was appointed a herald and an apostle ...'* (2:6,7).

Those of you who read these studies will know that it is part of the author's vision to advocate prayer and the study of God's Word as essential to Christian discipleship. One of the books of the Bible that led me to this conclusion was 1 Timothy, because here, while describing the duties of Christian living to Timothy, Paul places prayer alongside knowledge of the authentic Gospel. Paul could not, of course appeal to the New Testament and call this knowledge 'Bible study' as we might do today, because the Bible did not exist then. However, he did speak about the importance of understanding the authentic Gospel of Christ, something that is now preserved in the Bible. In the early days of the church, congregations sprung up with a variety of beliefs based on the Gospel they had heard, and it soon became necessary to try and the truth about the life and death of Jesus Christ. In those days, the standard measure was the testimony of the twelve apostles, to which Paul also included himself, by reason of the special revelation he received (see Gal. 1,2, Eph. 3 etc.).

This may well explain why we often find passages of this nature in Paul's letters. In verse four, Paul says, *'God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth'* (2:4), with an added explanation of Christ's work as Mediator between God and humanity (2:5). Then, Paul refers to the importance of knowing this Gospel truth, saying that it was a testimony given at the 'proper time' (2:6), and that he had sought to remain faithful to it throughout his ministry (2:7). Paul knew the true Gospel testimony would only be maintained if two things happened; firstly it was written down, and secondly if faithful leaders followed this heritage of apostolic teaching. The equivalent today is for us to say that the true teaching of the church is based upon our heritage of our knowledge about Jesus, as found in the Bible as a whole. Certainly, this is a strong argument for keeping faithful to the Gospel of Christ, and it supports one half of the argument for the importance of 'prayer and Bible study'.

The first part of the passage is well known advice about prayer, but it does not say that the first subject for prayer is 'those in authority'. I have often been asked to tell people where they can find 'the passage that says our first duty in prayer is for leaders ...' and they are indeed looking for 1 Timothy 2:1,2, ignorant of the fact that what it says is a little different to what they think! The passage is in fact a general description of prayer, and *'kings and all who hold high office'* is the second item on the list. Paul begins by saying that prayer is vitally important, and he lists a variety of forms of prayer, beginning with *'requests'* (meaning personal requests), and going on to *'prayers'* (meaning prayers in general), *'intercessions'* (prayers for others), and *'thanksgivings'* (prayers addressed to God)' (2:1). He then goes on to say that such prayers should be said *'for all people'*.

Yes, our first priority is to talk to the Lord, using all appropriate forms of prayer. In saying this, Paul reflects his own practice, as recorded in his own letters (see, for example, Rom 1:9, 2 Cor 1:11, Eph 1:6 etc.). It is only after this that Paul goes on to mention the duty of prayer for those in positions of earthly and spiritual leadership (2:2). This is clearly important, but it is quite wrong to suggest that Scripture tells us to pray for *'kings and all who hold high office'* first. Paul mentions this and gives it prominence here because of the need for a peaceful setting for the proclamation of the Gospel (2:2,3), so his priority is the Gospel rather than the kings themselves, and how they are and what they do. It is of course right to pray about such people, but wrong to misinterpret Scripture.

The main emphasis in this part of the passage is on the need for prayer as a discipline of discipleship, and it clearly goes together with maintaining a good and accurate knowledge of the Gospel. Prayer and Bible study are essential to discipleship.

Discipleship

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Discuss in your group what this passage says about prayer and the duty of each disciple to pray.
2. Discuss in your group what this passage says about knowing the apostolic Gospel and how we can get to know it better.
3. What do you gain personally from this passage of Scripture?

Topics covered by this text

- *The importance of prayer*
- *The importance of knowing the Gospel accurately*

Personal comments by author

I feel slightly guilty in making a connection between the themes of this passage and the aims of this website, but I can hardly avoid this. I believe that it is essential to develop both prayer and Bible study amongst Christians today if the work of the Church is to grow, and one of the main reasons for my conviction is the strong connections between these two that can be found in a variety of places within Scripture. Indeed, it would be inappropriate of me to write and promote this website unless I based my convictions on Scripture, and this is why I share this today.

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *To what extent do you exercise 'requests, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving' in your prayers? Is there any one of these that you find difficulty in using regularly? Work at any of these that are not part of your prayer life.*
- *In what ways do you feel that you come across the apostolic faith today? In the Bible? In church? In Bible study? Where would you expect to find apostolic teaching?*

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus; draw me to Your perfect love, and as I seek to be like You, keep me mindful of my humanity; of where I have come from, as well as where I am going. May I learn from Your powerful and compassionate love how I can remain true to my calling throughout my life. Through Jesus Christ I pray; AMEN
