

February 15/16, 2025

A Church That Prays, A God Who Saves

God's Design for the Church in 1 Timothy

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Pastor Ryan Harmon

There is no question that as believers, for us individually, for us as a gathered community as the church, that we are called to be people who stand up for the truth. Paul made that quite clear last week in the text that we read. He called Timothy to fight the good fight of faith. To stand up for what is true. No question about that. It's not up for debate as we read God's word that becomes quite clear. The question that comes from it is a little more fuzzy however. The question is, if we want to be a church that stands up for the truth, that fights for the truth, that upholds what is true, how should we go about it? What is the best strategy if we want to be a church that upholds what is true? That's what Paul is going to address today, and I think his answer might surprise you. If you have your Bibles, open with me to 1 Timothy, Chapter two, as we continue our study in God's Word together.

Just as a reminder, we began this study two weeks ago. This is a letter that Paul wrote to Timothy. Timothy was his young mentee—his protégé. And Paul dispatched Timothy to address some problems that were unfolding at a church that Paul established in Ephesus. Paul planted a church in Ephesus and he named elders. We read about that in Acts chapter 20. But over time, apparently some things were starting to go off track in Ephesus. They were beginning to compromise on the truth, beginning to listen to things that were merely speculation. And there was some heresy that was starting to seep its way into that church. And of course, that was very alarming to Paul. The leaders weren't doing their job of protecting the truth, and so Paul dispatched Timothy to go address the problems that were unfolding in Ephesus. Essentially sent Timothy in as a fixer, someone to go in and sort out the chaos that was unfolding in Ephesus. So now as we continue, we turn from an admonition in the first chapter—Paul was admonishing Timothy, “Stand up for the truth. Stand up for what is right.” And now as we turn to chapter 2, Paul focuses in on what the call of the church is. We know that the Ephesian church had gone off track but what does a church that is existing, that is operating according to God's design, what does that look like? That's where Paul begins. 1 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 1. So he says:

First of all, then,

First of all means this is the main priority before you think about anything else. Think about this. This is priority number one.

First of all, then I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men. (*NASB, 1 Timothy 2:1)

I think it's pretty clear that Paul begins where so often in the church we turn as a last resort. He begins with prayer. “As you seek to be a church that is according to God's design, as you step in,

Timothy, to this situation in Ephesus, the first thing I want you to focus on is ensure that they are a praying community.”

Paul uses four different words to describe prayer. He says **entreaties**, which is requests that we make to God. **Prayers** is just a general word for prayer. **Petitions** would be like an intercession; when we pray on behalf of someone else. Finally, **thanksgivings**. Ultimately, this is just a number of terms that are used in the New Testament to describe different forms of prayer that occur when the church is gathered together. And really, we do the same thing when we gather together. Already this morning, there have been different forms of prayer. Carey opened us with a prayer—kind of a prayer of commission, a prayer of gathering. Jordan prayed for a number of things, asked God for things, but also thanked God for things. And these are just different forms of prayer that occur when the church is gathered.

So first of all, the church is to be a praying community. What exactly are we as the church to pray for? Well, he says, pray **on behalf of all men**. **All men** could be translated *all people*. It’s inclusive of everyone. Pray for everyone. Now, when I look at my own prayer life, I will admit to you that is a challenge to me because just the way things go in human life, I think it is safe to say that so often our focus becomes pretty narrowly confined to what’s happening in our little world—what’s happening in my life, what’s happening in my house, what’s happening in my family. And of course, those are things that we need to be praying for, absolutely. But Paul here, in his command to pray for all people, on behalf of all people, is expanding the scope of prayer to be global in scope. Pray on behalf of all people. In other words, as Christians, as the church, we are to have ears and eyes that are attuned to the needs of the entire world. The mission of the church is global. There is a need that is expansive.

I’m thankful that Jordan brought our attention to what’s happening in South Asia. I’ve had the privilege of traveling to South Asia a number of times, especially in my previous role, when I was a global outreach pastor. And I’m reminded every time I meet those brothers and sisters in South Asia of the desperate need all around the world. These are places where so many people don’t even know the name of Jesus. They have not heard of Him. The need is great, and so Paul calls us to be a people, calls the church to be a people who are concerned, who pray on behalf of all people.

This idea is captured in our mission statement as a church. We say at Lincoln Berean that our mission is to glorify God by seeking to present every person complete in Christ. Not some people, not lots of people. Every person. That’s a mission that requires that all of us be engaged in it, the mission that calls all of us to participate in the work that God is doing. Our God has a global mission. The mission of this church is to seek to reach every person because the mission of the Church is to reach every person because that’s our God’s mission.

A question here at this point in the text, real early, is whether or not you know, do you know that you are called to be caught up in that very mission? In coming to Jesus Christ, you came to one who intends to reach every person with the good news of the gospel, and He’s called you as His disciple, as His follower, to participate in that mission. And the first way that you can participate is by going to Him in prayer on behalf of all people. We have a global mission.

One of the things that I have found over the years that I've been a pastor here at Lincoln Berean Church—18 years now—is sometimes I encounter people who are walking through their Christian faith and they are very bored; they're just not thrilled. They're not totally caught up in how exciting the mission of God is. And every time I encounter someone like that, that's bored in their faith, my first question is, "Do you know that you're called to a global mission of world revolution?" Jesus intends to change the world, and He's called us to participate with Him in that mission and prayer is not a small part of that task. Prayer is a central part of that task. Show me a bored Christian, and you'll find someone who does not know that they are caught up in a mission of world revolution. World revolution to turn more and more people to Jesus Christ.

We're called to be global. We're called to start with prayer as we engage in that mission. We're to pray for all people. We're praying for our neighbors, certainly the people in our lives. But Paul is going to continue and specify some of the people that we're called to pray for. He's going to include someone that could easily be described as Paul's enemy. Pray **on behalf of all men**. Verse 2:

For kings and all who are in authority, (Vs. 2a)

All means all. For kings, for all those in authority. When Paul refers to kings in this context he's most likely referring to the emperor of Rome himself, the one overseeing this massive empire that was a military behemoth, took the world over, conquered nation after nation. But certainly that call to prayer for kings is inclusive of everyone else in civic authority as well, and everyone else in authority just generally because he says, "Pray for all those **who are in authority**." Now I'm thankful that we live in a republic and that we have a democratic process in which we get to vote for the people that we prefer to be in authority over us. But that certainly is a new thing on the world stage. That's a very young reality when we look at world history. And of course, when we're talking about Paul and the people that he's writing to in 1 Timothy, we're talking about a reality where they had no opportunity to vote for anyone. They just had authorities that they didn't get to choose, and that makes it all the more convicting and astounding to me that Paul says, "Hey, pray for them. Pray for the king."

Specifically, this Roman emperor was one that was quite notorious. You've probably heard of him. His name is Nero. Nero was a horrible emperor. Nero was a pretty bad guy, and Paul says, "Now pray for him." Here's a little bit of Nero's rap sheet. Nero reigned over the Roman Empire for 14 years, from 54 AD to 68 AD. During that time, he unleashed the most strategic, comprehensive strategy to persecute Christians that occurred in the Roman Empire up to this point. There were persecutions that took place in corners of the world that were just situational, circumstantial, but Nero said, "We will persecute Christians." Nero, five years into his reign, killed his mother, the one that helped him take the throne. He killed both of his wives. After killing both of his wives, he then married a man whom he dressed as a woman for the wedding ceremony. He burned Rome to the ground. Probably was an accident, but after that accident he then blamed the Christians in order to heighten the persecution that would be directed towards Christians. To cap it all off—the cherry on top of Nero's reign—he is the one that was in charge when both Paul and Peter were martyred. That's Nero. And Paul says, "Pray for him. Pray for him."

As Christians, we know we're called to pray, but here Paul is issuing what I take to be an incredibly challenging enlargement, for lack of a better word, of the concept of prayer. Prayer is participating in the world scene. It's participating in what God is doing throughout the world. It's coming to the King of the universe, the one that oversees every king, the one that oversees history, and it's asking Him to intervene even in the lives of those in authority that we don't know and that could harm us. Paul's saying, "Don't think too little about prayer. Pray on behalf of all people. Pray for kings. Pray for all those in authority. Pray for governors, pray for mayors, pray for all people." Now, why do we pray for them? And what exactly should we pray for them? He's going to tell us at the end of verse 2:

[Pray] for kings and all who are in authority so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. (Vs. 2b)

Is that what you expected him to say? What is the reason for this prayer for all people and for kings and all those in authority? Well, essentially, it's a call to pray that they would govern in such a way that we as believers would be unhindered in our capacity and our freedom to pursue that which truly matters. That we'd be able to remain 100% focused on the mission, not dealing with all the chaos that happens when a culture devolves into chaos. Pray that they would govern wisely. Certainly pray for their salvation—that as well—but also pray that essentially, peace and tranquility win the day so that we can focus on that which matters.

He's going to continue to describe what matters, but he begins by talking about pursuing a life of **godliness and dignity**. In other words, growing up in our faith, pursuing Jesus, becoming more like Him. **Godliness** is a term that Paul uses many times in 1 Timothy, and it is essentially a description of the life that results when we surrender to God. It starts to take on the very qualities of God Himself, qualities that we could describe as the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace. These qualities begin to be embodied by us as we pursue the one that is the fullness of all those qualities. **Godliness, he says, and dignity. Dignity** could also be translated as *holiness*. Only God is holy, but He is making us into a holy people, a people set apart for Himself, increasing in our capacity to obey Him, to follow Him. Dignity could also carry the meaning of people who are aligned to do what is right, who act according to God's design. That's what it means to be a person of dignity.

If we go back to our mission statement, we capture this in this phrase *complete in Christ*. We get that from Colossians. We seek to present every person complete in Christ—that is to grow in godliness—to become a person of dignity, here, using the language in 1 Timothy. If we go to our vision statement, we describe it as becoming more like Him, becoming more like Jesus. Elsewhere, Paul says we are called to be conformed to the image of the Son. That is, we want to look more and more like Jesus, that our character would look more like Him, not because we're doing it through our own strength but because His Spirit is working in us and changing us from the inside out, such that what flows from us looks more and more like Him. Paul says to pray for the leaders, so you can focus on what truly matters. So you can seek to grow, seek to become more like Him, seek to live a life that embodies the gospel that will be on display for others. As they look at us, they will see different types of people, people of a different kind that look more and more like God and that ultimately direct their attention to God.

Before we move on, it's just important for us to note that this is a command. Paul says, he's urging, "Pray for all people, pray on behalf of all men, for kings, for those in authority." As Christians, this is something we're called to. I read one commentator who said, "This is surely the command of Paul, or the urging of Paul, that is least followed in the Church today." Pray for our leaders. Pray for the ones we like. Pray for the ones we don't like. Ultimately, pray that they will lead in such a way that we are allowed to pursue that which matters which is the mission of God, upholding the truth. So what is the truth? Well, Paul is going to get to that in just a second, but before he does, he makes a comment just about how good this is. Verse 3, he says:

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior...

In other words, it's good to pray for all people. It's good to pray for our leaders. It's acceptable. It's also good to be people who lead quiet and tranquil lives, as he described, who are pursuing lives of godliness and dignity. This is good, this is pleasing to God. He continues:

...God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (Vs. 3b)

We're called to pray for all people, have a global mission. And that makes perfect sense, because we have a God, we follow a God, we serve a God, we worship a God who is a God who saves. God our Savior who desires that all men be saved. Our prayers are aligned with the heart of God.

Now this raises a question, "Does this statement that God **desires all men to be saved**, does this mean that in the end, all people are saved?" The question that comes up in this text, and in fact some people use this very text to support that kind of idea, so it's important that we talk about it. The logic is this, "Because God gets what He wants, if He desires all people to be saved, then surely, in the end, all people will be saved." That's the logic. The question is, "Is it true?" It's quite a complex theological topic when we start talking about it and we're going to try to describe it quickly here, but we need to acknowledge that part of what we have to do in a case like this is hold the biblical truths in tension. Because the Bible claims two things that are hard for our minds to put together. Absolutely we affirm that God is in charge of all things. He's sovereign over everything. Everything is occurring according to His plan. He orchestrates world events. He raises up leaders. He brings down leaders. Ultimately, if we come to Him, it's because He has called us. We affirm all of that, and we also affirm that God has set up the world. He's revealed it in Scripture that He's set up the world in such a way that people are able to reject Him.

God desires that all be saved. But this is a desire that, in His own providence, by His own choice, He is allowing that that desire will not be met. All will not be saved. God oversees everything, and God desires that all be saved. But people are free to reject God, and in fact, as we just read the pages of Scripture, we see them reject Him all the time. Theologians have a fancy word that they use for this type of idea. It's called an *antinomy*. Antinomy, essentially means that there is this reality that there are truths that are difficult for us to work out and they exist in tension, in a seeming paradox. Jesus being fully God and fully man is paradoxical to us. It's hard to really come to terms with how that's true. Over times, different groups have gone too far one way or the other in their effort to make sense of this. And so they've said, "No, He's all God and He just appeared to be a man." Or, "He's all man, and He never claimed to be God." Those are wrong

statements. That's heresy. What's true is somehow he is fully God and fully man. When it comes to God's will, what's true is He oversees all things. He desires that all be saved and yet people will reject Him, and all will not be saved. But we can take clearly from this text, comfort from the fact that it is evidently clear that God is not trying to keep anyone out of relationship with Him. He desires that all people be saved. He goes on to describe what it means to be saved as coming to knowledge of the truth. Coming to knowledge of the truth.

Two weeks ago, when Bryan opened this series, he began with this statement. He said, "We live in a culture that's become pretty dismissive of the idea of truth." Later in that same message, he closed with this statement, "No community can flourish where truth isn't valued." We live in a culture that's become pretty dismissive of truth, and no community can flourish where truth isn't valued. If that is true, if he is right and I believe he is, that means we're living in the midst of a culture that is going to struggle to flourish more and more because it wants to set truth aside more and more. This idea of truth is all over the pages of 1 Timothy and so we need to talk about what it is every time it comes up, because it's a term that's becoming more and more vague in our world.

I like to describe truth as simply that which actually is. It's the way things actually are. Truth is kind of merciless in this sense, it's ruthless because truth does not change itself depending upon whether I like it or not. It doesn't change depending on whether I feel good about it, or it doesn't even change depending on whether I believe it. I can believe all sorts of things that are not true, and my believing them doesn't make them true. Truth is steady. It's assured. It's solid.

I used to drive a car that was this old, 1988 just kind of car that was falling apart. I'm trying to get it back up and running, but I'm not very good—if you can't fix it with a Leatherman—I'm not very good at fixing things. So this whole car was an adventure to drive because the gas gauge was broken. That makes every drive an adventure. Now, what made it more adventurous was the odometer was also broken, and so I couldn't set the odometer and say, "Okay, I have this many miles before I run out of gas." That meant that every drive was an adventure in faith. "How much gas do I have? I think I have about this much." So I was always trying to discern, "I believe I have this much gas," but we all know that what I believed about my gas—about the quantity of gas—mattered very little compared to how much gas I actually had. What was really true about my gas tank is what determined whether I'd be able to get where I was going. I could believe all sorts of things. That didn't matter. The amount of gas in my tank did not change depending on my belief. That's the way truth is. It doesn't adjust to us. We have to adjust to it. That's why truth is so important. It matters because you can count on it if you know the truth and you can align yourself with it, then you can live in reality with constantly running in to the fact that you're wrong about something. You're not running out of gas constantly. So what is truth? Well, Paul is going to give us a basic statement of fundamental truth. Verse 5:

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

That's the truth. That's true, that's something you can build a life upon. That's something you can count on. He starts by saying, **there is one God**. There aren't lots of gods. There is one God. Now by saying this, Paul is aligning himself with the great theological history of Israel when they

had a phrase that they called the Shema, it was this summarizing statement. It said, “The LORD, our God, the LORD is one.” God is the beginning. He is the foundation. There are many gods, there is one God. Everything starts with Him. Everything that is, is only because of Him. There is one God. Then he continues, **and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.** The one God brought everything into existence, created all that there is. But we know the story: His creation, humanity rebelled, and in rebelling against God and not believing God, not trusting God, sin entered the world and brought separation between God and people, between God and humans; and so God intervened. God did what only He could do. He sent His Son as a mediator. A mediator’s job is to step into the gap, step into the distance between two people and bring about reconciliation. God, the one God, sent His Son as a mediator to restore the relationship—the broken relationship—to abolish the distance between God and people. And Paul says He did that by giving Himself as a ransom, as an exchange for all. We sang about this earlier, that Jesus is a ransom. To say He is a ransom means that what we deserve, He got. He took our place. He died instead of us. He paid the debt that we could not pay. He took our place. He gave Himself as a ransom. This is a truth that we affirm, it’s a truth we uphold. There’s one God, one Mediator, Christ Jesus. He gave Himself as a ransom for all. That’s the truth you can build a life upon. That is the truth the church is called to uphold. That is what we are called to uphold together.

I think we can admit, though, in our culture, in the cultural moment we’re in, affirming those things will set us apart from the broader cultural narratives. It’ll go against the grain, and people will argue with us about these things. There’s one God. Well, what’s the broader narrative? The broader narrative is there are many gods, or that there are many religions, but they’re all referring to the same God. So instead of saying there is one God, maybe the culture at large might say they are the same God. Everyone’s just looking at this God differently. Well, to say there is one God is to say something very specific about Him. To say there is one God, and then to qualify that one God is the one who sent His Son as a mediator, is to qualify and to say something very specific about Him that sets Him apart from all other gods. Any religion that does not say that God sent His Son as a mediator is not talking about the same God. When we affirm there is one God, we are saying the One God is the God that sent His Son, different from all other gods. We’re not referring to the same God any longer. There’s one God, and He sent His Son. Jesus is the one mediator to say that, to affirm that. To say something very specific, very unique about Jesus specifically, it’s to say He’s the only one that is able to bring about reconciliation between God and people. No one else can do it. Jesus Himself said, “I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life. No one comes to the Father, but through Me.” That is a very exclusive claim, but it comes with an absolutely inclusive offer. You can only come through Jesus, but everyone can come. He gave Himself as ransom for everyone. God desires that all be saved, but to be saved exclusively occurs through Jesus. There is one mediator. Jesus says, “You can only come through Me, but I bid that all come.” Now that’s something quite specific about Jesus.

Now compare that to something I read recently on a church website. I was on a church website for some reason, and I happened to come across their statement of faith and they said they’re a Christian church, but then they defined what Christian meant. And they said, “Christian means we perceive in Jesus the divine qualities of love, peace, joy and justice. It does not mean we think Jesus is the only path to God.” It doesn’t mean that we think Jesus is the only path to God. That’s what Christian means to them. Now that is saying something quite different. We affirm there is one mediator, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all. And the way truth works is that

both of those statements cannot be true. Truth is merciless in this way. It doesn't conform to our statements of faith, our professions. So we affirm with Paul, "There's one God, there's one Mediator, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all." I'm sticking with Paul on this one.

Paul continues and concludes by saying **the testimony given at the proper time**. In other words, all of this occurred at just the right time. God was not late. He sent Jesus in at the proper time. He sent Jesus as a mediator at the appropriate time, just when everything was falling apart. At just the right time, just when God knew this is when the mission will expand, it will explode, it will take off like wildfire around the entire world, God sent His Son. He knew what He was doing. He sent Him to proclaim the truth, the truth that has changed the world. It's a truth that still changes lives, and that's why it's so critical that we as a church uphold what is true. It's why Paul was so concerned when the Ephesian believers, the Ephesian leaders, weren't upholding the truth, and he sent Timothy to go in and bring them back in alignment with the truth.

To live according to the truth is to live according to the way God designed the world, it's to live in a way that actually allows you to flourish. So it's a truth worth giving your life for. That's precisely what Paul did, and this is how he closes this section. He says:

For this reason, I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I'm not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. (Vs. 7)

In other words, why would Paul surrender his life? Why would he abandon the great ascendant path he was on in Judaism? Why would he suffer and be slandered? Why would he traverse land and sea? Why would he do all those things for a lie? He did it because these things were true. Paul wasn't running around making loads of money. Often he paid his own way. He wasn't some religious charlatan that was just saying that which was so appealing to the ears of those he communicated to. Paul gave up everything because he discerned in this truth there is a world-changing message. And so he decided it was worth giving up everything in order to proclaim this truth. If it is true there is only one God and there is only one Mediator, then the world needs to know. And so Paul set his life on a mission to proclaim, knowing this would change the world. Jesus was launching a world revolution. So the greater question is, "What does God desire for His church?" Well, what He desires for His church is to be caught up in this mission, to stand firm in the truth, to uphold the truth, and to do that through a number of things that He named.

These would be marching orders for us today. If we talk about application of this message, we can start in no better place than what Paul himself said. How do we do this as a church? Well, Paul began by saying, "We can pray. We can pray." I had a professor that asked me once, "Ryan, if God answered all your prayers this week, would anyone new come into the kingdom?" That's convicting. We can pray, pray on behalf of all people. Maybe this week there's someone that God will put on your heart, and you can just begin to pray that God would woo them, God would bring them to Himself, that they might be saved, that they might step in to knowledge of the truth. We can pray. Prayer is participation in the work that God is doing. We can pray for our leaders. Pray that they govern with wisdom so that we can be about that which truly matters. Not be distracted by all the nonsense, just be focused in on proclaiming what is true and standing for what is true. We can pray for leaders around the world. I know that our brothers and sisters in South Asia would say, "Please, pray! We're facing more and more persecution. Pray that there'd be peace, pray that

there'd be tranquility, so that this message can go forth without us facing the threat of jail time, and pray for our leaders.” Participate in the mission in that way.

Paul says we can grow—we can pursue lives of godliness and dignity. We can grow, become more like Jesus. We can do that in our communities. Do that together, not in this individual pursuit, but when we gather in Life groups we can encourage one another to continue to grow in godliness. We can have a vision for one another that we would look at one another and say, “I so long to see God grow in you, to see your heart be more and more surrendered. I long for that, not in the judgmental way, but in a longing way. I long for you to step more into the fullness that is available for you.”

We can grow and we can multiply. Those are two words we've been using this year, especially as a staff. Multiplication, believing that God desires that all would be saved. So we proclaim with words, we proclaim with the way that we live our lives, living lives that are transformed, that communicates something different to the world. And we pray, pray for those who are not saved that they might come into saving knowledge of the truth. God is launching, He has launched, and He is continuing a world-changing revolution. Focus on Jesus Christ, that all people might come to know Him and experience the fullness that is available only through Him, can only enter through Him, but He bids that all come and we're called as a church, what we're supposed to be doing here, is participating in that very mission. And so today, as we gather, and every week as we gather, we do that by praying together. We do that by proclaiming what is true. We do that by surrendering our lives that we might be transformed by the truth, knowing that God will take all of this and He will bring it together to change the world, to bring more and more to saving knowledge of His Son, Jesus Christ. Let's pray together.

Our Father, we do confess to You that our minds can sometimes become so focused on our little world. So we pray that You would help us to be people to take up the call to pray on behalf of all people, that our hearts would be stirred like Your heart for the lost all around the world. That we participate in Your mission through prayer, first, certainly through proclamation, through sharing with our neighbors, through all of these things, but that we would, we would never think too little of coming to You in prayer, the God of the universe that oversees all things. So give us a large vision of that. We pray that as a community, that Lincoln Berean church, Lord, that we would be a people that stand for the truth, that stand for what is true and what is good and what we know will lead to flourishing. And that we would do that out of love for those that do not know—in our world, in our community, in our state, in our country, and in the entire world. So we thank You that You have called us to participate in the work You're doing. Thank You that You allow us to do it through Your Son. Amen.

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WINTER 2025 // WEEK 6

Life Group Questions

1 Timothy – What Are We Doing Here? // February 15/16, 2025

A Church That Prays, A God Who Saves // 1 Timothy 2:1-7

Introduction

This week Pastor Ryan took us into chapter 2 of Paul's first letter to Timothy where he addresses how and why we should pray and conduct ourselves particularly with regards to those in authority over us, those who do not follow Jesus and our mission as worshippers of the God desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

We invite you to look over all the questions on the following pages and write your thoughts down before you meet with your group. Some people even use these questions to take notes during the sermon. The questions are meant to stir your thinking and prompt open discussion, and we do not expect you to cover every question each week.

Warm Up *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

- 1) When you were a kid, what kind of life did you hope/dream of having when you grew up?

- 2) If you could live your life all over again, would you? Explain your answer.

Getting Started

Transition into group discussion.

- 1) Open group discussion with prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
 - a. For the Spirit of God to lead you in truth
 - b. For the fruit of the Spirit to be cultivated in your lives
 - c. For grace to hear and apply what the Spirit says to you
- 2) Choose someone to read the passage aloud for the group.

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

- 1) **How is what we are experiencing at the weekend worship services affecting your everyday life? Can you see yourself becoming more like Jesus to some degree because of your participation in worship, the teaching of the scriptures and community? If so, how? If not, why not?**

- 2) A key word to notice in our passage is the word “all”. It is used 5 times in these 7 verses! **What do you think Paul is trying to emphasize by using “all” that many times?**

What do we learn about God from 1 Timothy 2:3-6?

If we truly believe that God desires all people to be saved, how would that affect how we treat everyone in every circumstance?

- 3) Pastor Ryan mentioned that when Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, it is likely that Nero, a bloodthirsty ruler who slaughtered Christians for sport, was in power in Rome. **How does that affect the power of Paul’s words?**

At one point in Israel’s history the nation was in exile in Babylon. The people were longing for Babylon to be overthrown so they could go home again. During this waiting period, the prophet Jeremiah tells them they should settle down, live a normal life and *pray to God on behalf of Babylon* (Jeremiah 29:4-7). **How does this affect the way you hear Paul’s words?**

What can we learn from Christians around the world who live under oppressive regimes?

- 4) Thinking through the context of our passage, **why are we commanded to pray for kings and those in authority over us?** Compare our passage with Paul's words in Romans 13:1-7 and Peter's words in 1 Peter 2:13-17.

How would you characterize your own activity (or lack thereof) in prayer for all people and for those in authority?

- 5) Paul states his reason for this command as, "that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity". **Have you considered qualities like tranquility (peacefulness), quietness and dignity to be key values to a God-honoring lifestyle? Why or why not?**

What does a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and holiness look like?

Reflect for a moment on the last comment you made or discussion you had (in person or online) about those in authority in your context. **How would you describe your response? If tranquil and quiet aren't apt descriptions, what might be a reason for that?**

Are people drawn to following Jesus by a tranquil and quiet life? Explain your thoughts.

Personal Spiritual Exercises

Just like physical exercises help strengthen and stretch our bodies for healthy living, these spiritual exercises are meant to move us spiritually in ways that may be new so we might experience inner growth. Since God longs for us to experience Him with our whole selves—mind, body, spirit—we invite you along each week to strengthen your souls with suggestions and prompts.

Scripture Focus: Take time to slowly read 1 Peter 2:11-17 several times this week. Listen for what the Holy Spirit may be wanting to emphasize to you. Consider reading the passage aloud as sometimes we hear scripture differently when it is read aloud. Respond to the Holy Spirit by writing at least 2 sentences in your journal.

Prayer Focus: Follow Paul’s command from our passage this week. Pray by name for those around you who don’t know Jesus. Pray for those in authority (the leaders of our church, our mayor, our governor, our congressional representatives, our president). Pray to God on behalf of our nation.

Prayer *(Suggested time: 20 min)*

A significant part of “coming together” is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. If you would rather not pray aloud when it is your turn, feel free to pray silently and then say “Amen” aloud signaling the next person in the group to pray. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the message, working through the above questions or the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus? Would you be willing to share your prayer request with the group?