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## Start with Prayer



**QUESTION 1:**

*Who do you know that's really dedicated to something?*

## THE POINT

God calls us to pray for others' salvation.



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

My prayer life has ebbed and flowed since becoming a believer. When I first received Christ, I had plenty of time to pray. Then life got busier with all the responsibilities that come with marriage, children, work, and ministry. Though I still prayed daily, it required focused effort. I remember feeling as though I had to fight through multiple distractions to spend time with God. My struggle was not due to a lack of desire, but a full schedule made me realize I needed to be more intentional in my prayer time.

I'm not alone. Many people struggle with prayer. In addition to the challenge of finding time for focused prayer, many struggle with what to pray. Praying for our own personal needs may be easy, but what do we pray beyond that? We can certainly pray for others, and when we see obvious, physical needs, we know what to pray. But we should pray for others in another way that's not as obvious as physical needs.

We should pray for the spiritual needs of others, and we can begin by praying for their salvation.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-2

**<sup>1</sup> First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.**

In these verses, Paul talks about the importance of prayer. Paul began with “first of all,” underscoring for Timothy that the first order of business in the church is to pray. Prayer should not be treated as just something we use to kick off our Bible study group or “filler” between songs during the worship service. As Paul told the Colossians: “Devote yourselves to prayer” (Col. 4:2). “Devote” is a strong word, calling us to be continually diligent in prayer. Paul underscored this diligence when he told Timothy to lead the church to make prayer the first priority.

Prayer is how we communicate with God, but we often treat it like a monologue, focusing on our own needs and concerns. The ultimate goal of prayer, however, is to connect with God, to seek Him and His wisdom. When we do that, He is glorified as our prayers align with His will.

Paul identified several types of prayers. “Petitions” are requests for needs. In general, our “prayers” are requests or thoughts expressed to God. “Intercessions” are prayers we present to God on behalf of others. It is our privilege to intercede for and pray on behalf of others. And “thanksgivings” remind us to be grateful for who God is and what He has done and can do. Paul was not giving us an exhaustive list of ways to pray, but his list emphasizes the comprehensive nature of our prayers. The call to pray is a serious one that incorporates all aspects of prayer.

It’s not beneficial for our prayer life to focus on one type of prayer. Effective prayers include petitions, intercessions, and thanksgivings—all forms of prayer.

### QUESTION 2:

***How would you describe the different types of prayer included in these verses?***

Jesus came to earth because God loved the world, and believers are expected to carry on His ministry to the world. One way we do that is through our prayers. Whether we agree with who they are or what they stand for, we're admonished to humble ourselves and intercede with the Father on their behalf. As we focus our prayers on the urgent spiritual need for others to draw near to God, we become filled with Christ's compassion for them.

We are to pray compassionate prayers for all—and that includes our leaders. As we pray for them, we should remember God has appointed them to the positions they

hold. God is in control and has a plan for our leaders (Rom. 13:1-2). Paul's heart was in evangelism, sharing the message of Christ everywhere. Paul was writing during the reign of Nero, a harsh ruler who persecuted Christians when it suited him. Paul's reminder to pray for leaders would certainly include praying for their salvation, but those prayers could include praying for their leadership and policies. What leaders do can greatly benefit the spread of the gospel. We should pray for leaders because what they do can help us "lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (v. 2).

## 1 TIMOTHY 2:3-6

**<sup>3</sup> This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup> For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time.**

I've had a few injuries that required care from a chiropractor or physical therapist. The goal of their therapy was to provide relief from pain and restore alignment. Those injuries often caused chronic discomfort until damaged parts of my body were brought back to healthy alignment.

We often need spiritual alignment as well. It's good to check ourselves to ensure that what we seek from God is in line with what He desires. Paul was clear on one thing God

desires: He "wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Therefore, we should align our prayers with His desire and pray earnestly for the salvation of others.

### QUESTION 3:

***How does prayer align our desires with the desires of God?***



Have you ever considered the impact you have on others as a believer? When we trust the hand of God to work through our prayers, we will pray with a sense of urgency. We have the privilege of praying for those whom God has placed within our sphere of influence, and such prayers are pleasing to God.

We can know that God's desire is for all to be saved because "there is one God" (v. 5). Since there is only one God, He has a singular purpose and desire. His desire does not just apply to the Jews but to all people He created in His image. God also made that salvation available through "one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus." Our culture says there are many ways to God, but God provided only one way to a relationship with Him. Salvation is through Christ and Christ alone, who "gave himself as a ransom for all" (v. 6). Christ's work of salvation is available to all.

We can be an agent of life transformation as we align ourselves with God's desire by committing to pray for others to know and accept Jesus Christ. We should be diligent and take full advantage of the partnership we've been given. Through our prayers, we partner with God in advancing His kingdom.



## 1 TIMOTHY 2:7-8

**<sup>7</sup> For this I was appointed a herald, an apostle (I am telling the truth; I am not lying), and a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. <sup>8</sup> Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument.**

Paul acknowledged that he was divinely appointed to preach the truths he mentioned in verses 5-6: the good news of the gospel. His mandate was to spread the message to the Gentiles of God's love and redemption for all. Paul didn't go exclusively to the Jews; rather, the Holy Spirit led him to step into the culture of the Gentiles to share the same truth about Jesus that he shared with the Jews.

Verse 8 starts a new thought from Paul, but what follows was based on what he had written in the first seven verses. He began with "Therefore," meaning "based on what I've just written, this is what you should do." His instructions in verses 8-15 are for both men and women, but he began with the men.

### QUESTION 4:

***Why is prayer an important step in sharing the gospel?***

Paul had stressed the focus on our prayers, and now he told the men how they were to pray: "lifting up holy hands without anger or argument" (v. 8). This is not an emphasis on the posture of prayer, but on our character. To have holy hands is to be morally pure. Paul had already told us to "lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (v. 2),

so to do so in moral purity without dissension among ourselves would certainly aid the reception of the gospel by others.

Because we will face all kinds of challenges, we need to be "prayed up." We cannot live, engage, or witness to the world in our own abilities. At the heart of prayer is a dependence on the Holy Spirit who empowers us to witness. Four truths arise out of this passage—four ways we can pray:

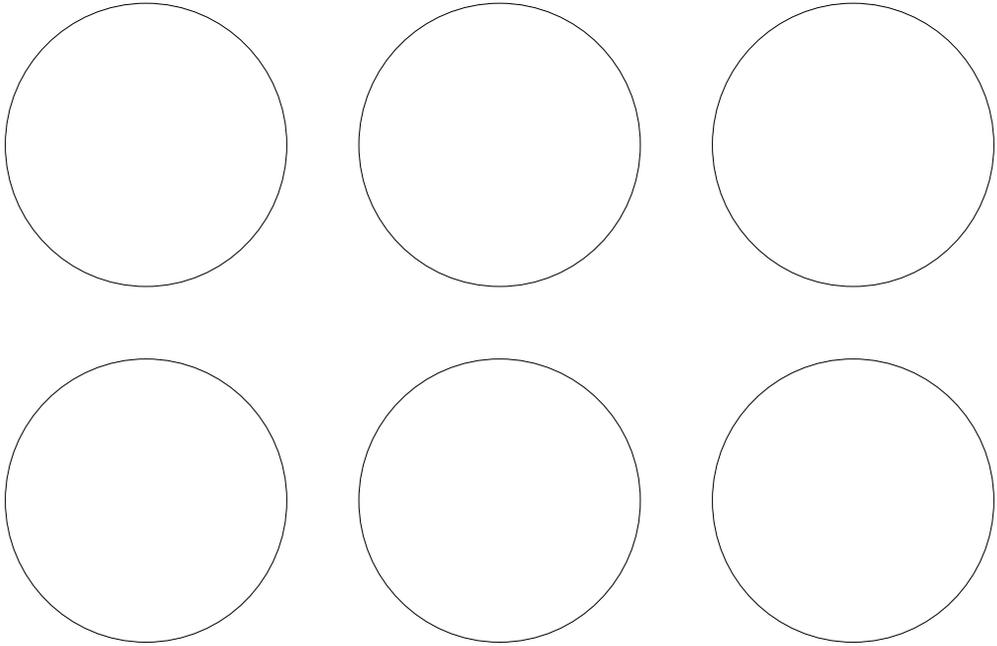
1. We are to pray for all people: family, friends, enemies, and those who rule.
2. We are to pray for people to come to faith in Christ. Even as we pray for them in other ways, our ultimate aim is to align with God's desire that they experience His salvation.
3. We are to pray with confidence for their salvation because Christ paid the ransom for them through His death.
4. We are to pray for ourselves and others who share the gospel—all who are called to be "heralds" of the truth of Christ.

### QUESTION 5:

***What are some ways our group can be more evangelistic in our prayers?***

## PRAYER MATTERS

*In each circle, write the name of someone who needs your prayers, especially for salvation. As you place a finger over each circle, think about that person and pray, asking God to work in that person's life for salvation, to meet needs, or other matters God brings to your heart.*



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*“Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference.”*

MAX LUCADO

