



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, September 18-24 (C) – 1 Timothy 2:1-7

Focus: *For Everyone*

word of life

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone” 1 Timothy 2:1 (NRSV)

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-7

Our readings continue this week from the pastoral letter of 1st Timothy. The author of the letter is giving instructions to Timothy so that he might “... fight the good fight, having faith and a good conscience.” (1 Timothy 1:18b-19 NRSV) Timothy is encouraged to live a godly life in community with others.

1. *What does a godly life “look” like?*
2. *Is it possible to lead a godly life and not be in community with others?*

The first admonition mentioned is to pray. “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone” (1 Timothy 2:1 NRSV) Living faithfully in community begins with a life of prayer. Paul wrote similar instructions in Philippians 4:6: “... in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (NRSV) Note the addition of the word “intercessions” in 1st Timothy. The emphasis is clear – intercessory prayer for others is central to living in community. The faithful are called to pray for one another.

3. *Think of your congregation’s prayer life. When does the congregation pray for others?*

Timothy is then encouraged to pray specifically for those who govern – “for kings and all who are in high places.” (1 Timothy 2:2 NRSV) Echoes of the prophet Jeremiah come to mind urging the people in exile in Babylon to pray for the city in which they are exiled, “... for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” (Jeremiah 29:7 NRSV) The intent of prayers for those who govern is to foster a context where peace, dignity, and godliness can be known. We are to pray for leaders and those “in high places” for the sake of all in the community.

4. *Reflect on the prayers of the church offered in worship. Is there usually a petition for those in government? Should there be?*

Prayers for leaders are to be offered for the well-being of everyone. Note the inclusiveness which permeates the readings for this week from 1st Timothy 2. We are to pray “for everyone” (vs.1); God desires “everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (vs.4); Christ Jesus “gave himself a ransom for all.” (vs. 6) Clearly, living the faith daily involves living in a community where all are included and cared for.

5. *How does a believer have time to pray “for everyone”?*
6. *When is it difficult to include certain persons (or groups) in prayer?*

The reader of 1st Timothy is urged to be inclusive and to pray for everyone because of God’s desire for inclusion of everyone in Christ’s saving work. God “... desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4 NRSV) The instruction in 1st Timothy 2 becomes a creedal hymn which directs our prayers and which provides the basis of living in community – one God, one mediator in Christ, one ransom and sacrifice for all. (vss.5-6) That same God called the writer to be a herald of the faith to all. We are called to do the same!

7. *Why do you think God expects us to include everyone in our prayers?*

word *among us*

The campaigns for political office have been brutal these past few election cycles. Sides have been firmly drawn, and party affiliation seems to triumph over just policy for all. The recent presidential election has been polarizing, with the results lauded by some and lamented by others.

But shortly after the votes had been counted and the results confirmed, a pastor sent out an e-mail to members of the faith community. In the e-mail, the pastor acknowledged the divisive nature of the state and the vicious tone of the political discourse. But rather than taking sides, the pastor urged the reader to pray – to pray for those newly-elected, to pray for those who feel excluded, to pray for the community.

The pastor ended the note with these words from 1st Timothy—“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high places, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.” (1 Timothy 2:1-2 NRSV)

1. *What outcome might you expect as we pray for those who govern and run for political office?*
2. *How difficult is it to pray for those who govern—especially when you disagree with their policies and political party? Or do you pray for them even more? Explain your response.*

The author of 1st Timothy urges us to pray for everyone because God’s grace is for everyone. The godly life begins with prayer – not only our individual needs, thanksgivings, and concerns, but also the concerns and needs of the whole community. Our prayers should include those in civil authority as they govern, so that there might be peace in our hearts, in our homes, in our community, state, nation, and world.

3. *How might the life of the pray-er be transformed as he or she prays for everyone?*
4. *How has praying changed your life?*

faith practice *in daily life*

Strive for justice and peace throughout the world.

“No one left behind.” “No justice, no peace. Know justice, know peace.” “All are invited to the table of the Lord.” We hear these words of inclusion. We are called to work for justice and peace. We are called to recognize all as brothers and sisters in Christ. But where do we begin? How do we live a godly life? The words from 1st Timothy remind us: it all begins with God. God’s saving grace is for all. And we are called as people of God to be inclusive as God is inclusive.

It all begins with prayer. Intercessory prayer, by its very nature, includes others. We become aware of the needs of others as we pray. We identify and lift up those in positions of authority who have the opportunity to make a difference. We roll up our sleeves while we are on our knees. And we find in intercessory prayer our mission and calling.

5. *Share a situation when members of the church prayed for you or your loved ones?*
6. *What does it feel like to know people are praying for you (or your loved ones)?*
7. *How might your prayers for someone become a gift to that person?*

Prayer

Open our eyes, Lord, to see the needs of others. Open our hands, Lord, to welcome and include everyone. Open our hearts, Lord, to love as you have loved us; in Christ we pray. Amen

last word

Pray each day this week for our elected officials.

Daily Faith Practices

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