



# Prayerful Living

September 19, 2010

## Focus Scripture 1 Timothy 2:1-7

Additional Scriptures  
Jeremiah 8:18—9:1  
Psalm 79:1-9  
Luke 16:1-13

**Just and loving God, open our imaginations to catch your vision of all people living together in wholeness and harmony. Strengthen our leaders to work for justice and peace, so that all people may be brought to live in your reign of shalom. Amen.**

Check out Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage. Spirit Sighting are posted weekly prior to the date of use.

With the community addressed in 1 Timothy, we are reminded that God’s people pray in all circumstances. We are urged to pray for everyone, including political leaders, so that all people may live in God’s reign of peace and wholeness – *shalom*. God’s wise ways lead and encourage us as we seek to live prayerfully as members of the Body of Christ and also citizens of our own countries.

## Focus Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

When the early Christians realized that Jesus would not return soon, they worked to organize communities of Jesus’ followers for ongoing worship and service. Leaders like Paul wrote letters of teaching to these groups, offering their interpretation of the meaning of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection and the implications of Jesus’ teachings for the Body of Christ. The letters to Timothy most likely date from a later time than the life of Paul, but they reflect Paul’s teaching.

In the focus passage, the author teaches about prayerful living, urging the community to pray for everyone. The call to pray for all people reflects the author’s vision of God as Saviour of everyone.

These verses also address a thorny question facing those who lived in the Roman Empire. Should a Christian pray for an emperor who demanded to be honoured as a god, and before whose statue oaths were taken? The author tells the Christian community it is “right” and “acceptable” to pray for political leaders, so that they might live “a quiet and peaceable life” (v. 2). Some scholars suggest this urging did not mean yielding to Roman custom, but embodying a desire to see God’s peace (*shalom*) established for all people. Other scholars suggest that the author was using Paul’s “voice” to encourage the church to befriend the empire and its ways in order to move forward. Others suggest these words are to encourage church members to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16) in order to survive.

The author says God, “our Saviour,” desires for all to come to the saving knowledge of the truth of God’s saving ways. This message of inclusion is grounded in the belief that there is one God and one mediator between God and humankind, Jesus the

Christ. In verse 6, Jesus is described as “a ransom for all.” Though Christian theology has several ways of exploring what this means, a cornerstone of our faith is belief that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ declare God’s victory over evil and bring new life. The kernel of the author’s message is that God is a God of salvation, forgiving and restoring to wholeness all who call on God’s name.

Like the church in Timothy’s time, Jesus’ first hearers struggled to find a way to live in the world, and yet not of it. In **Luke 16:1-13**, Jesus tells a story of a shrewd manager. Accused of squandering his master’s money, the manager visits the debtors with a plan to repay the master and provide for his own future. Jesus commends this manager for finding a way to live in the current situation, yet also speaks to the responsibility to live faithfully into the *shalom* of God’s reign.

When the relationship with God seems broken, God’s people cry out in lament, a prayer for help in a time of grief. In **Jeremiah 8:18—9:1**, the prophet laments that the people have been unfaithful to God’s commands. Leaders have been carried off into exile. **Psalm 79:1-9** echoes Jeremiah’s lament, weeping over the destruction of the Temple and the death of the people at the hands of the Babylonians. This is an image of life in the absence of *shalom*.



Prayer is part of living faithfully as citizens of God’s realm. God’s people are called to pray for peace and justice for all people. What does it mean to pray in Jesus’ name for leaders? How might prayerful living strengthen us to work for justice, even as we pray for God’s *shalom*?

