

“First of All, Pray”

1 Timothy 2:1-10

Dave Geldart

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1. Recap 1 Tim context – BRIEFLY!
  - a. Next week, back to ch 1 v 9-10 - Biblical Sexuality
    - i. Join us!
  - b. Timothy, don't be like these certain persons, wreaking havoc in the Ephesian church, some of whom have shipwrecked their own faith!
    - i. Oppose them! Set the church straight!
  - c. Instead hold fast to faith and good conscience in order to “wage the good warfare”
    - i. Talking about SPIRITUAL warfare (not arming himself with guns and knives)
  - d. By keeping Paul's charge to him:

**1 Timothy 2: <sup>1</sup>First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, <sup>2</sup>for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. <sup>7</sup>For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.**

**<sup>8</sup>I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; <sup>9</sup>likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, <sup>10</sup>but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.**

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2. PRAY

3. First of all – by leading the church to Pray.
  - a. Biblically, the church is to wage warfare against Satan and this world's fallen system of sinful living.
    - i. Church on OFFENSIVE, raiding Satan's kingdom, saving immortal humans
  - b. How are we to do this – FIRST AND FOREMOSTLY? - by praying.
  - c. Counterintuitive?
  - d. Anticlimactic?
  - e. Church answer?
4. Why would this feel anticlimactic?
  - a. Functional Naturalism
    - i. We live FUNCTIONALLY like there's no real supernatural that intersects our real lives
    - ii. We got this. Up to us
  - b. Functional Determinism
    - i. God exists, but nothing we do really matters

- ii. Everything set
  - iii. Why pray to a God who already knows everything?
    - 1. Am I going to inform him of something good he didn't think of?
      - a. Meaning he's not ultimately wise or all knowing
    - 2. Or am I going to convince him to do something good he WASN'T going to do?
      - a. Meaning he's not ultimately good
    - 3. So prayer makes no sense.
  - iv. Godric quote - "What's prayer? It's shooting shafts into the dark. What mark they strike, if any, who's to say? It's reaching for a hand you cannot touch. The silence is so fathomless that prayers like plummets vanish into the sea. You beg. You whimper. You load God down with empty praise. You tell him sins that he already knows full well. You seek to change his changeless will. ... And sometimes, by God's grace, a prayer is heard."
  - c. So We've grown cynical
  - d. And prayer SEEMS SILLY – Weak
    - i. So most of us DON'T DO IT
      - 1. Or when we do, it's anemic, confused, and dutiful
5. But if reality REALLY IS as God says – spiritual, warfare, etc, limited nature of humans
- a. Spiritual warfare
    - i. Satan and evil spiritual beings exist too!
    - ii. We are being actively opposed
    - iii. Ephesians 6:11-12 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
    - iv. 2 Cor 10:<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup>For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. <sup>5</sup>We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ
  - b. So we pray – A WEAPON ag spiritual enemy! To God, who can. "WE ARE WE WEAK BUT HE IS STRONG"
  - c. Then it makes all the sense in the world to PRAY
  - d. Because all the things we long for are utterly beyond our ability
    - i. *"Changing our world*
    - ii. *Our neighbor's mind*
    - iii. *Our coworker's HEART!*
      - 1. *I am starting to see there is a difference between "saying prayers" and honest praying. Both can sound the same on the outside, but the former is too often motivated by a sense of obligation and guilt; whereas the latter is motivated by a conviction that I am completely helpless to "do life" on my own. Or in the case of praying for others, that I am completely helpless to help others without the grace and power of God."*

– Paul E. Miller, *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World*

2. *Spiritual warfare not primarily waged with physical warfare, but spiritually – arguments and truth claims!*

- e. At the end of the day I can't do a THING to touch those things
- f. Effect of cynicism on prayer
  - i. "To be cynical is to be distant. While offering a false intimacy of being "in the know," cynicism actually destroys intimacy. It leads to a creeping bitterness that can deaden and even destroy the spirit...  
A praying life is just the opposite. It engages evil. It doesn't take no for an answer. The psalmist was in God's face, hoping, dreaming, asking. Prayer is feisty. Cynicism, on the other hand, merely critiques. It is passive, cocooning itself from the passions of the great cosmic battle we are engaged in. It is without hope."  
– Paul E. Miller, *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World*
- g. *Praying Life*
  - i. "A praying life isn't simply a morning prayer time; it is about ... realizing that we can't even walk through a mall of our neighborhood without the help of the Spirit of Jesus" (l. 969).
  - ii. "Prayer is bringing your helplessness to Jesus" (l. 786).
- h. Jesus, the God of the universe, creator and sustainer of all, who is completely able
  - i. Ephesians 3 <sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
  - i. *We need to do our FIRST work, and BEST work, in prayer! (Praying Life)*
  - j. Like a army Radio operator -- Call in an airstrike! (power not in him, but who he's calling)
- 6. So really, unless we chuck the whole Bible and Christian perspective, prayer makes ALL THE SENSE in the world
  - a. And this is true not only individually, but CORPORATELY!
  - b. Prayer isn't just for Christians, it's for the church
  - c. And that's what Paul is CHARGING Timothy to believe and lead out in!
- 7. **Corporate prayer must be the backbone of any healthy church.**
  - a. No church can hope to accomplish anything SUPERNATURAL unless they are praying for Supernatural help
  - b. Spurgeon – Secret to his success? – the Boiler Room prayer meetings
  - c. Spurgeon had a humble and biblical attitude about his ministry. He never took credit for the fruit. As a matter of fact, when people came to his church to learn the "secret" of his success, he took them to the basement where there were hundreds of people on their knees in fervent prayer. Yes. There was prayer before, and even during the service! Spurgeon called these prayer gatherings the church's "boiler room."  
In Spurgeon's day, steam was the main power source. Boiler rooms were powerhouses that drove everything from home heating systems to enormous machines in factories. While boiler rooms were never the most glamorous part of a building they were absolutely essential. **Spurgeon said, "If the engine room is out of action, then the whole mill will**

**grind to a halt. We cannot expect blessing if we do not ask.”**

The secret to a healthy church’s success – prayer

- d. We can largely measure the health of our church by our prayer meetings
- 8. So we’re supposed to pray – but FOR WHAT?
  - a. FOR ALL PEOPLE
    - i. All – over and over
  - b. That pretty well covers it!
  - c. ALL PEOPLE
    - i. For Christians
    - ii. And for the lost souls around us
  - d. Even for our rulers and leaders!
    - i. Even to give THANKS for them to God!
    - ii. No just the “good” ones – this would have included Roman Emperors – Nero – persecuting Christians, who would ultimately have Paul executed!
    - iii. So that we can lead peaceful, dignified lives...
      - 1. Not taking about individual Christians living unplugged reclusive lives, but rather political and social stability so His Peace can advance!
    - iv. Pray for leaders and peace and context for Gospel to move forward
    - v. Because God is using them to maintain some basic semblances of order civilly
    - vi. And he desires basic civil peace so the Gospel can spread!
    - vii. God does NOT require our leaders to be Christians – or even GOOD MEN – to use them for good.
  - e. Look at ALL the ALLs!
    - i. God desires ALL PEOPLE to be saved and come to know the Truth
      - 1. Including our leaders
      - 2. So we pray. BIG BIG prayers
  - f. Because there is only 1 God and 1 mediator for all people!
    - i. Because there is ONE God
      - 1. Contrast of ALLs with ONES
      - 2. In his day, in contrast to the MANY gods of Greco roman pantheon
      - 3. In our day, in contrast to the NO GOD of materialism/atheism
    - ii. And he has provided only ONE mediator between people and him
      - 1. Jesus
      - 2. Not MANY paths to God
      - 3. Only one
      - 4. Made possible because he gave himself up as a ransom for us all
        - a. THIS IS THE testimony given at the proper time
        - b. We want ALL people to hear this testimony
  - g. For this Gospel, this testimony, Paul was appointed a preacher and apostle to the Gentiles
    - i. Not lying!
    - ii. Must have been in dispute among Ephesians!
- 9. So we are to pray for ALL people, for peace and stability, for rulers, for all to come to a saving knowledge of the Gospel

10. But HOW then should we pray?

- a. *Do funny stuff – funny things people say when they pray*
  - i. *Father God, "FATHER", "REALLY", "O GOD", "LORD GOD"*
  - ii. *"Lord, we JUST pray that you would JUST like, JUST really JUST totally..."*
  - iii. *"We beseech Thee, in Thine tabernacles, O Lord. Ye forgiveth the bowels of iniquity as an ensample..."*
  - iv. *Partake, impart, bounty*
  - v. *Funny Phrases*
    1. *Traveling Mercies*
    2. *Covet Your Prayer*
    3. *Hedge of Protection*
  - vi. *UNSPOKENS*
  - vii. *Echoes!*
  - viii. *The Non prayer – lord you already know..... Just do whatever you want. What you're going to do anyways.*
- b. Paul addresses this as well in the next few verses!
- c. V 1-7 more general, global focus, on WHAT we should be praying for
- d. V 8-10 more local focus w/in church on HOW we should pray
- e. Read v 8-10
- f. Lots of background context here. Remember, Paul is writing to help Timothy deal with specific issues causing trouble in the Ephesian Church (and we're only hearing 1 side of it)
- g. But other overwhelming theme: Pray TOGETHER! Really Together
  - i. Men
    1. Must have been stereotypically quarrelsome w/ each other
  - ii. Women
    1. Must have been using church mtgs as their personal fashion show
    2. Selfish
    3. Wearing expensive, even inappropriate clothing
      - a. Ephesus known for being a very wealthy city
      - b. Causing problems – inconsiderate and divisive, self-focused
    4. Inappropriate – considered immodest, disrespectful
      - a. Likely flaunting their newfound freedom in Christ
      - b. Akin to women coming to this meeting in bikinis
        - i. Technically legal
        - ii. But extremely distracting
        - iii. Immodest
        - iv. Inappropriate
  - iii. Men,
    1. Don't be divided by anger or fighting (who's right, who's the strongest, who's the top)
    2. Prayer mtg is NOT a spiritual wrestling match for you to try to win
    3. Instead pray with HOLY hands together
      - a. A Jewish worship form
      - b. Focus is TOGETHER!
  - iv. Women,

1. Don't be divided either by trying to look the prettiest (who's the best, most worthy).
  2. Prayer mtg is NOT a fashion show for you to try to win
  3. Instead, beautify yourself with GOOD WORKS – including serving one another and by PRAYING
  - v. Prayer mtgs are not primarily for you, but for Others!
  - vi. It's not about the form of prayer, but rather the attitude – the goal
    1. Not about puffing up self, but rather serving others in unity
  - vii. This is when the GOOD STUFF starts happening
    1. THIS is when church stops being boring – and gets INTERESTING – EVEN QUITE FUN!
11. Our corporate prayer times should be mainly focused on others
- a. Not on my issues or problems
    - i. Not primarily for self, issues, health
  - b. There's a place for that! But primarily in other venues
    - i. OK to share, GET prayed for
  - c. Or at least to be shared with the group for OTHERS to pray for you!
  - d. Focused on All people having access to the Gospel!
12. Practical applications
13. Next steps personally
- a. Begin scheduling time of prayer
    - i. Start small!!!
    - ii. Write out prayers in journal
    - iii. Helps you slow down
    - iv. Helps you focus
    - v. Helps you remember that you're having a conversation with a real person (God)
    - vi. Begin to develop your prayer muscles in your personal prayer life.
  - b. Begin praying at home WITH YOUR SPOUSE, kids
    - i. If single, with friends and family
  - c. Choose to prioritize prayer meetings
    - i. Wed morning prayer
    - ii. LGs when they start in Sept.
      1. LIFE Groups
        - a. Prayer nights
        - b. Led/facilitated
    - iii. Other options???
    - iv. Take a step FORWARD in your corporate prayer engagement!
      1. If terrified to pray out loud, great place to start, but not ok place to stay
        - a. Start by coming to prayer mtg and LISTENING to what others pray
        - b. Pray something SIMPLE, short.
          - i. Thank God for the Gospel, for Jesus dying on the cross for you.
      2. Consider helping start/lead a prayer gathering
  - d. Pray boldly and bigly!

- i. FOR GOD’S WORK THROUGH TG!
- ii. For neighborhoods
- iii. NEIGHBORS
- iv. Big things
  - 1. BEWARE OF FALLING INTO the trap of FUNCTIONAL naturalism or determinism!
- v. What crazy things should we be asking God for?
  - 1. James 4:2b - You do not have, because you do not ask.
  - 2. John 14:13-14 - <sup>13</sup>Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask me<sup>[e]</sup> anything in my name, I will do it.

14. Further Study:

- a. Check out the Psalms – chock full of examples of prayers!
  - i. Feel free to use these or other passages as outlines for your prayers.
- b. Check out Paul’s recorded prayers in his letters in the NT: esp Ephesians
- c. Read A PRAYING LIFE
  - i. One of most influential books I’ve ever read
  - ii. Not guilt driven, but DESIRE DRIVEN!
  - iii. Has significantly transformed by prayer life
  - iv. **A few on resource table today for \$10**

15. End with Haystack Case

**The Gospel Coalition - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/4-lessons-the-haystack-prayer-meetings-teach-us/>**

## Haystack Prayer Meeting

In 1806, a Williams College student named Samuel Mills began to pray for the cause of foreign missions. Until then, the missionary organizations in the United States were solely dedicated to domestic missions, both in the Western frontier and among Native American tribes. But Mills prayed that the Lord would raise up men to take the gospel to other nations.

One August day, Mills assembled a small group of spiritually minded friends who prayed together outside of campus for foreign missions. Some accounts say there was a sudden thunderstorm as they were praying, which caused the five men to take refuge under a haystack.

Afterward, they continued to gather weekly for what became known as the Haystack Prayer Meeting. In answer to the prayers from among the haystacks, God established the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, the American Bible Society, and the United Foreign Missionary Society. Through those organizations, the Lord sent many laborers into his ripened field.

- a. 4 valuable lessons from the Haystack – proven thousands of times over through the ages – lessons that should be especially encouraging to us at Tallgrass in the middle of Kansas:
  - i. **1. God uses people in the middle of nowhere to plead for the souls of people who are everywhere.**

- ii. **2. God uses people who are young to stir up people of all ages.**
- iii. **3. God uses people who are few in number to gather a countless harvest.**
- iv. **4. God uses invisible and seemingly insignificant events to accomplish his great purposes.**

16. What might God do through us? Though our small, obscure little prayer meetings?

- a. There's absolutely NO REASON why generations after us might not encourage one another with the story of the **Prairie Prayers** – and the ripple effects of their prayer meetings that went not only across the world, but on into eternity itself.
- b. Don't laugh. Don't scoff. This is God's will for us. I know it. Our time is NOW!
- c. Let us pray!
- d. WHO KNOWS WHAT GOD MIGHT DO!?

**REFERENCE PRAYER MEETINGS DOC**

17. Now, with our remaining time, instead of Q&A, we're going to do something a little different

- a. Prayer Practice!
- b. We're going to briefly model how a small group prayer meeting could go
- c. Invite up anyone who has been connected so far with our Tallgrass Prayer mtgs
- d. These are not PROFESSIONAL expert prayers, just normal folks
- e. While they're coming up,
  - i. **Also refer you to the "Group Prayer Basics" sheet (pass around)**
  - ii. Encourage you to check this out, good resource
  - iii. One of the helpful tips (#13) is that those not praying aloud at the moment are still to be engaged.
  - iv. Rather than thinking about what they might pray next, instead discipline yourself to stay actively involved with what's being prayed
  - v. You can do this by verbally or nonverbally agreeing with others' prayers.
- f. Tonight we'll generally follow the prayer outline from our 1 Timothy Passage:
  - i. Praying for our leaders
  - ii. Praying for God's good work in increasingly wide circles
    - 1. Within our homes
    - 2. within our church family
    - 3. for our friends and neighbors
    - 4. for our city
    - 5. for our country
    - 6. for our world