

Bible Studies for Life: May 2

Start with Prayer • 1 Timothy 2:1-8

By Don Schuman



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Last week's lesson began a new unit about sharing our faith in Christ with others. First, we must recognize our responsibility to share Christ. Having understood that duty, our first course of action is prayer for everyone. An attitude and commitment to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15) begins with prayer.

The Apostle Paul and Silas prayed by the riverside. Lydia heard the Gospel and was saved. Later, Paul and Silas were praying in prison when God flung open both the doors of the jail and door of the Gospel to the jailer. Effective witnessing follows effectual prayer.

Pray for Everyone (2:1-2). The exhortation to pray did not apply to Timothy only, or pastors only, but extends to all believers. All believers should pray for all people.

Because petitions (supplications), prayers, and intercessions are similar, one might interpret this exhortation to mean "pray, pray, and pray some more!" However, intercession is prayer as an advocate.

Moses interceded on behalf of the sinful Hebrews in the wilderness (Exodus 32:9-14). Abraham interceded on behalf of Sodom (Genesis 18:22-33). Stephen interceded on behalf of the

mob that stoned him to death (Acts 7:54-60). Likewise, we are to intercede on behalf of lost souls under the wrath of God.

Petitions are requests according to the will of God. Evangelist D. L. Moody's heart for the lost is revealed in his petition prayer, "Lord, save the elect – and then elect some more!" If God is not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9), so should our hearts petition that everyone be saved.

Proper petitions in soul-winning are requests that God fill us with wisdom and faith to persuade and that the Holy Spirit would freely convince lost souls of their need for Christ. Prayer in this context involves a desire for God's will to be done and for His grace to be upon everyone.

Jesus taught us to pray for our enemies as well as our brothers. We should pray for those in authority (whether or not we agree with their policies) to give ourselves peace, godliness, and honesty, which is good in God's sight (2 Timothy 2:2-3).

Thanksgiving is acknowledgement of God's goodness and blessings in all things, including the opportunities to share our faith. Gladly we give thanks to God for opportunities to share the saving Gospel of Christ and to see those souls believe and be saved!

Praying for Everyone Pleases God (2:3-6). Praying for everyone by petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving is good and acceptable in God's sight. In addition to pleasing God, such prayer develops our attitude toward others to see them saved, just as God is willing that all should repent and come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (v. 4).

Jesus commanded His disciples to pray for their persecutors, so that His followers might be "the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:44-45). Such attitude and action show a spiritual maturity like God the Father (see Matt.

5:48).

Why is it so important to begin sharing our faith with prayer? Jesus said in John 6:44 (AV), "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

Prayer tunes our hearts to the Father's will and brings our desires according to His will to His heart. To see the lost soul saved, we should start with prayer that the Father will draw that soul to Christ.

Isn't it like our gracious God to exhort His people to pray for others who may pray to impersonal and powerless false gods – or the god they make of themselves! False gods cannot answer the prayers of their followers, but the true God desires to save them.

Pray for Everyone in Unity (2:7-8). Followers of Christ should pray together in the common cause of winning souls. Lifting up holy hands points to our need for spiritual purity in our lives, including the removal of wrath from our hearts. Some people are hard to witness to. Some respond with blasphemy and other means to stir wrath within us. Our spiritual response is more prayer.

Neither should we doubt that God can save anyone. Some souls are far, far away from God, but His hand is not too short to reach them. Let us pray in all situations for all souls.

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