

STUDY 3

FIRST OF ALL, PRAY

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To be more effective in praying evangelistic prayers.
- ❖ To explain how a quiet and godly life contributes to the church's witness.
- ❖ To be able to defend the uniqueness of Jesus to those of other religions.
- ❖ To discover how to identify what God has called *you* to do and why.



BACKGROUND

Some scholars believe that many Christians had become somewhat disheartened that the return of Christ had not yet happened. These scholars suggest that Paul was anticipating that, as a result of this disappointment, Christians needed to prepare to live in a hostile world where they would have to endure persecution. But there are other scholars who have a different perspective. They too acknowledge that Paul was preparing believers for what was about to happen (persecution and martyrdom), but rather than Paul guiding them into retreat, he was exhorting them to continue to reach out. And this was to begin with how he wanted them to pray.

INSTRUCTION

Objective 1. To more effectively pray evangelistic prayers.

Prayer seems to confuse many believers. After all, if God is the One who opens the eyes of the spiritually blind (note Acts 26:18) and also predestines people to be saved (refer to Eph. 1:5) then what difference does *praying* make? Perhaps a way to understand why we should pray is to consider that while God ordains the outcome of an event that He wills, He also ordains the *means* by which it is to be fulfilled.

1. Consider the promise to Abraham and Sarah that God ordained to fulfil recorded in Genesis 17:19, and note its ordained fulfilment recorded in Genesis 21:1-2. Without going into any detail, what *means* might God have ordained for this promise to be fulfilled for Abraham and Sarah to have their *own* son? Could this promise to Abraham and Sarah that they would have their *own* son have been fulfilled if they had done nothing in response to God's promise?
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The New Testament seems to make it clear that God has ordained the *means* by which people will be saved. This includes p _ _ _ _ _ g (Eph. 3:8-9; 1Thess. 2:16) and p _ _ _ _ _ g .

2. Of all the issues that needed addressing in the Ephesian Church, what is it that Paul tells Timothy must be his *first* priority? (1Tim. 2:1-2)
 - (a) To commence teaching a course on advanced theology.
 - (b) To change the colour of the carpet in the church to make it easier for the cleaners to shampoo.
 - (c) To call for, and to lead, the church to begin praying for their political leaders, all in authority, and for all people.
 - (d) To set up teams of street witnesses who can confront people with the Gospel and present them with an evangelistic tract.

Timothy was instructed to lead prayerful *pleas* (“supplications”, “entreaties”) to God on behalf of those who did not know Christ. This conveys the sense of p _ _ _ _ _ g to God to have have mercy on the unsaved and to bring them to salvation. To *intercede* is to ‘stand in the gap for someone’. Therefore to intercede for a person in prayer means that a believer prays earnestly on behalf of another person. When F.W. Boreham lived near Dunedin in New Zealand he would often visit the criminal court to observe how a lawyer pleaded to a judge and jury for the life and acquittal of someone charged with murder. He noted how passionately, persistently, and prepared, these lawyers were as they interceded on behalf of their clients. He reasoned that since these lawyers would go to such great lengths to save someone from jail or the gallows, how much more should he be passionate, persistent, and prepared to intercede in his *preaching* and *prayers* for those in peril of eternal judgment?

3. Write the name of someone for whom you could intercede for their salvation this week-

Note how First Timothy 2:3-4 informs how we can pray for the lost.

Objective 2. To explain how a quiet and godly life contributes to the church’s witness.

4. Note who Paul instructs that prayers and thanksgivings be made for in First Timothy 2:2. How does verse 4 reveal the kind of prayers that Paul meant?

In praying and thanking God for these governing leaders to come to the knowledge of the Saviour, Paul saw that the end result would allow believers to live in a certain way.

5. Note what Paul considered to be the result of such prayers being answered (1Tim. 2:2b), and consider why the New Testament didn't simply instruct for believers to pray for this result instead of praying for the salvation of civic officials.

6. In seeking to be a witness for Christ even in a hostile world, what did the Holy Spirit have the Apostle Peter write in First Peter 2:12 and 3:16? What is the relationship of this exhortation to Paul's exhortation to pray for the lost? (Note also Matthew 5:16; Titus 2:8)

Objective 3. To be able to defend the uniqueness of Jesus to those of other religions.

7. Consider First Timothy 2:5. In what way does this verse present Jesus Christ as unique?

No other religion claims that their founder was the m _____ r between God and man. Jesus Christ was uniquely qualified to be so because He was God i _____ e which means He was both fully _ o _ and fully _ a _ (Phil. 2:6-8).

8. Based on First Timothy 2:6, who can now be saved and how might this statement by Paul have challenged those Jews who felt that salvation was only for those who were (or had become) Jews?

Objective 4. To discover how to identify what God has called *you* to do and why.

In the opening chapter of First Timothy Paul had referred to “certain persons” (1Tim 1:6) who it seemed had been accusing Paul of ignorance and not really understanding the truth about God or salvation. In defending his understanding and ministry, Paul invoked the Jewish practice of *speaking under oath* (something that Caiaphas did in the trial of the otherwise *silent* Jesus who was then compelled to speak because the High Priest had put Him under a sacred oath to tell the truth - note Matt. 26:63). In First Timothy 2:7 Paul essentially puts himself under a sacred oath to assert both the truthfulness of his message and his ministry.

9. What was Paul’s ministry, and how was he so sure about it? (1Tim. 2:7)

You may never have had a ‘Damascus Road’ experience like the Apostle Paul where Jesus appeared to him and announced his call to be a *herald* and an a _____ e . But if you have been walking in heartfelt obedience to Christ for some time, you probably have a sense of *who* God has called you to be, and a growing sense of what He has called you to do.

10. How might your involvement in your local church community be a help to you to identify or confirm your ministry and/or spiritual gift/s?

APPLICATIONS

Discuss and share-

11. List three prayer strategies that you could implement over the next four weeks to more effectively praying evangelistic prayers -

12. If the leadership of your church authorised you to organise a group of volunteers from your church to do an outreach “act of service” for your local community, what would you organise, and how would you maximise its impact?

13. If you befriended a Muslim and he or she claimed that the Qur’an endorsed that the New Testament was indeed the “Word of Allah” and that it also described Jesus as merely *a great prophet*, how would you make your case to your Muslim friend from the New Testament that Jesus was more than just a great prophet?

14. There are several indicators that help us to realise who God has called us to be and what God has gifted us to do. Considering three of those indicators, (i) what do you most often find yourself doing in serving God, (ii) what are you often most critical about, and, (iii) what is it that most of those who know you encourage you about? Based on these three considerations, what do you feel God has gifted and called you to do? As others share their answers, about their callings, evaluate whether you agree with their assessment and then be open to feedback from others when you share what you believe to be what God has called *you* to do.
