

## Journey into Servanthood

### Lesson 3... Putting Power into Your Prayers (1 Timothy 2:1-8)

**A** “journey into servanthood” requires powerful prayer. If we are to be servants, we can’t be like the old gentleman who would get up regularly at prayer meeting in his church and pray: “Use me, O Lord, use me – in some advisory capacity!” That kind of prayer has no power and will not result in a “journey into servanthood.”

In these verses we can discover how to put power into our prayers. Verse one begins: *I exhort therefore, that, first of all.* The phrase *first of all* indicates prayer is the most important part of a “journey into servanthood.” Let’s look at three requirements for putting power into our prayers.

#### **We must include the elements of prayer (2:1).**

Powerful prayers include four elements: *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks* (2:1b). Paul uses these four terms that are not really different types of prayer, but elements or the scope of our prayers. Let’s look at the four elements of powerful prayer.

**Element #1: Supplications.** This word means asking God for something for yourself. Although this is often the sum total of our prayers, it should be only a part. There is nothing wrong with asking God for particular needs. There are at least two *supplications* for personal needs in the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus said we should pray for *daily bread* and for deliverance from evil (Matt. 6:11 & 13). The Bible commands us to *be careful for nothing; but in everything of prayer and supplication with thanksgiving* what are we to do (Phil. 4:6)?

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Asking God to meet our needs is an important element of powerful prayer. However, we must be careful not to confuse needs with greeds, or the selfish with the spiritual. This is because of what prayer principle found in James 4:3?

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The Bible tells us *no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly* (Psalm 84:11c). If what we pray for is *good* for us emotionally, physically, and spiritually, God will give it to us. But if it is not *good* for us,

#### Notes

God will not grant our request. Therefore, when is the only time God will not grant our *supplications*? When they are not good for us!

**Element #2: Prayers.** This word stresses the sacredness of prayer because it simply means talking to God. It reminds us to whom we are talking and that prayer is a holy time for privilege and reverence.

**Element #3: Intercessions:** This means making a request or being an advocate for someone else. It involves sympathy, compassion, and involvement. When we pray for someone, we cannot be cold and detached. *Intercession* is the idea of praying for someone and really understanding his or her hurt and pain. The greatest prayer for intercession in the Bible is Jesus' prayer in John 17. Here we learn two vital ingredients for our prayers of intercession. First, we are to pray for their **protection** from the Evil One. What is the second ingredient Jesus teaches us by example in John 17:17?

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Thus, the two most important things we can pray for others is they be protected from Satan and they become sanctified, or made holy and ready for service, through the truth of God's word. This is the only *truth* concerning right or wrong and righteousness or evil.

**Element#4: Giving of thanks.** The word translated *giving of thanks* is the Greek word from which we get our English word "Eucharist." This term is often used for the Lord's Supper, reminding us when we partake of the Supper, the most important attitude is thanksgiving.

One reason we always want things we don't need is we are not thankful for what we already have. Happiness is not getting what you want; it is wanting what you have. Unthankfulness is a sin because it is disobeying what command found in Colossians 4:22?

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To put power into our prayers, **we must include the elements of prayer** and ...

### **We must be inclusive to our prayers (2:2-4).**

Our prayers are often confined to the personal needs of our family or circle of friends. We pray, "Lord bless me, my wife, my son Joe, and my daughter Sue – us four and no more." However, the scope of our prayers should include *all men*, which means everyone (2:1). Our prayers should be inclusive, not exclusive. This means our prayers should include even the most detestable people. For whom does Jesus tell us to pray in Luke 6:28?

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We are also to pray *for kings* (1 Tim. 2:2a). When we pray, we must not forget our God is much bigger than our local church or city. We should regularly pray for our president and national leaders. *All that are in authority* (2:2b) means leaders in various levels of government should have a regular place in our prayers. Paul writes we are to pray for these leaders so *we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty* (2:2). Decisions that affect our religious freedom and the morality of our nation are made daily in the chambers of government. Regular prayers for those *in authority* are a tremendous weapon against the influence of the Evil One. Not only are we to pray for those *in authority*, but what else are we to do, according to 1 Peter 2:17?

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To the original recipients of this letter this meant praying for the Roman emperor Nero, who had his own mother murdered and burned Christians at the stake and fed them to wild animals as a spectator sport. Therefore, regardless of the person in the office, we are to honor the position because God has established the institution of government to control lawlessness in a fallen, sinful world (Rom. 13:1-7). If government leaders are not believers, we are to pray for their salvation because God wants *all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim. 2:4).

To put power into our prayers, **we must include the elements of prayers, the inclusive in our prayers, and ...**

### **We must follow the principles of prayer (2:5-8).**

There are four basic principles that must be followed in any powerful prayer. These foundational truths go against the grain of not only Paul's polytheistic culture, but ours as well.

**Principle #1: There is one God** (1 Tim. 2:5a). Printed on our money in the United States is the statement "In God We Trust." But the real question today is "which God?" Is it the god of the Moslems, Hindus, or the New Age movement? In our culture we are pressured to agree all religions are equally valid and have different roads to heaven. To have a powerful prayer life, we must realize there is only one true God, and He is the One to whom we must pray. We must never forget what truth found in 1 Chronicles 17:20a?

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**Principle #2: There is one mediator between God and us** (1 Tim. 2:5b).

The word translated *mediator* means “one who stands between or one who intervenes.” This means there is only one way to pray to the *one God* and have our prayers answered – through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ bridges the chasm (or “grand canyon”) between a sinless God and sinners like us. That’s why Jesus makes what promised in John 15:16b?

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Jesus said, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6b). That is true not only of salvation, but of our prayers as well. That’s why we must always pray “in Jesus name.” We are to respect people of different beliefs and religions, but we must hold firmly to the basic truths of Scripture.

**Principle #3: Our sin debt has been paid.** Jesus gave *himself a ransom for all* (1 Tim. 2:6a). The word ransom refers to the price paid to free a slave. Jesus paid the price not only to free us from our sins, but also for our right to approach a holy God in prayer. This is the good news of the Gospel, and Paul tells us: *Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle* (2:7a). We have a holy obligation to pray for and try to reach everyone with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When we lose our desire to win nonbelievers, we also lose all power in prayer. Not praying for the lost and not trying to win them is to forget the Cross.

**Principle #4: Don’t get “hung up” on posture in prayer.** Paul concludes this passage on prayer by writing: *I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands ...* (2:8a). The common posture for Jews and early Christians was arms outstretched with palms upward. At the completion of the temple, Solomon stands in front of the whole assembly of Israel and says the prayer of dedication. What do we read about this posture in 1 Kings 8:22?

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There is a lot of disagreement about posture in prayer. One day three pastors – a Methodist, a Baptist, and an Assembly of God – were discussing this issue. The Methodist said, “I think the only correct posture is with hands folded beneath your chin.” The Baptist said, “I disagree. I think the best posture is on your knees.” The Assembly of God pastor said, “I think the best posture is with your hands outstretched toward heaven.” A telephone repairman who was working in the building overheard the debate and said, “The most effective posture for me is dangling upside down from the top of a telephone pole.” Paul assumes his readers will pray with uplifted hands

because that was typical in his day. However, his concern is not posture but the attitude of the heart, which means praying *without wrath and doubting* (1 Tim. 2:8b). The word *doubting* comes from a Greek word for “disputing.” Therefore, when we pray we need to remember what David tells Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28:9c about our hearts and minds. What is it?

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To put power into your prayers, you must include the elements of prayer, be inclusive in our prayers, and follow the principles of prayer. Which of these have been most neglected in your prayer life, and what will you do today to improve?

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