**Reflection 21-27 September – Get real!**

**Bible study on 1 Timothy 2:1-7**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

Heavenly Father, we come before you today
with gratitude for the gifts of community and fellowship.
As we gather in your name, we invite your Holy Spirit
to be among us, guiding our thoughts, words, and actions.
Open our ears to hear your voice,
**Amen.**

**Read the passage**

*Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.*

1 Timothy 2: 1-7

 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people- [2](https://www.christianity.com/bible/niv/1-timothy/2-2) for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. [3](https://www.christianity.com/bible/niv/1-timothy/2-3) This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, [4](https://www.christianity.com/bible/niv/1-timothy/2-4) who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. [5](https://www.christianity.com/bible/niv/1-timothy/2-5%22%20%5Co%20%221%20Timothy%202%3A5) For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, [6](https://www.christianity.com/bible/niv/1-timothy/2-6) who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. [7](https://www.christianity.com/bible/niv/1-timothy/2-7) And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle-I am telling the truth, I am not lying-and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

**Explore and respond to the text**

*Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.*

**Bible notes**

1 Timothy hints at turbulent times. The first chapter ends with a reference to an internal dispute leading to ‘shipwreck in the faith’ (1:19-20). This passage, beginning the second chapter, looks outward to the authorities of the wider world. The writer teaches that the church in Ephesus should seek good relationships with those who hold power. There is evidence that the wider Church faced persecution in many places – Roman policy disapproved of new religions, particularly when they claimed that anyone other than Caesar was lord. The Church has learnt, perhaps through painful experience, that if it is to flourish they need to be on good terms with authority, as far as possible. Therefore, the Ephesian Christians should pray for those in power as a demonstration of their good intentions in wider society. Perhaps this is a slightly different emphasis from Paul’s exhortation to pray for rulers because they were appointed by God (Romans 13:1).

The strong affirmation that praying for rulers is appropriate (v.3) may suggest that this approach is controversial. The writer justifies it by arguing that it is consistent with God’s will because it creates channels through which all people may be saved, ransomed by Christ (cf Matthew 20:28). The hymn-like affirmation of the one, unique God, mediated only through Jesus, highlights the absolute Christian rejection of the many faiths of the Roman Empire. This is more surprising than it might seem. In that context, it was common to worship in more than one faith community, almost as an insurance policy against choosing the wrong god. Christian claims to exclusivity came as a surprise to many Gentiles. The passage ends by reiterating Paul’s assertion that he is genuinely appointed as apostle to the Gentiles, which was sometimes controversial because of his history as a persecutor (2 Corinthians 12:11-12).

Praying for Gentile authorities, then, is justified for two reasons. From a pastoral perspective, it strengthens the possibility that fledgling, vulnerable Christian communities will be able to worship peaceably. From an evangelistic perspective, rulers are representatives of the wider Gentile community. Christians are called by God to share, with all, the good news that in Christ we can be set free.

See also:

**Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

‘You’re in my prayers’ – these words have become a cliché expressing vague benevolence towards someone in trouble. For many people, praying for those in authority implies a similarly general request to God to look after powerful people. It is a safe way for Christians to engage with secular leadership without risking the criticism, ‘Christians shouldn’t get involved in politics’. Does this do justice to the power of prayer? What does it mean today to pray that the Church may lead a ‘quiet and peaceable life’? Is it praying for a future where we no longer need to run food banks and provide warm spaces? In a multi-faith society, how do we pray for our leaders to ‘come to the knowledge of the truth’? The Church is called to ‘get real’ in its prayerful engagement with leaders of wider society.

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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| A hand holding a dice next to a game board  AI-generated content may be incorrect. |  |

**Questions**

* What ‘cards’ have you been dealt in your life?
* How could you help others with the skills God has given you?
* What real life needs/issues will you bring to God in prayer today?

**Prayer**

Lord, you search us and know us.
When we need to pray for people in power,
remind us to see them as people you love.
When we think about how to spend our money,
help us to see the impact of our decisions.
When you want us to pray for all people,
inspire us to see the needs beyond our own community.
**Amen.**