

The Books of 1 and 2 Timothy, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 3: Prayer, Roles, and Order in Worship

1 Timothy 2:1-15

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This chapter is doctrinally rich and, in places, doctrinally sensitive, so approach it with both confidence and care. Two great themes anchor the lesson. The first is the universal, genuine offer of the gospel: God “desires all people to be saved” (v. 4), and Christ “gave himself as a ransom for all” (v. 6). Here Scripture itself answers the idea that Christ died only for a chosen few or that God secretly desires the salvation of only some. The gospel call is real and universal, and people are genuinely able to respond. Let your class marvel that the heart of God reaches toward every person, and let that truth fuel both prayer and evangelism.

The second theme is God's ordered design for the assembly, including the distinct roles of men and women. Paul calls men to lead in public prayer with holy hands and peaceable hearts, and he teaches that women are not to teach or exercise authority over men in the assembly. Handle this with dignity and warmth, never harshness. Note carefully that Paul does not appeal to the customs of Ephesus but to creation itself: “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (v. 13). This is the apostolic pattern, rooted in God's design, not cultural prejudice, and it honors both men and women, each with a vital place in the body. Be ready to address modesty too, which Paul ties to a heart adorned with good works rather than outward display.

Aim the lesson at both conviction and the heart. Doctrinally, you want your class to leave grounded in the one God, the one Mediator, the ransom for all, and the ordered pattern of worship the apostles delivered. Pastorally, you want them moved to pray for everyone, to share the gospel with fresh urgency, and to gather for worship with reverence, peace, and modesty. This is a chance to show that God's order is not a cage but a gift, and that a church shaped by the truth is a church at peace.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul urges that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people” (vv. 1-2). Why does Paul place prayer “first of all,” and what does it reveal about the heart and mission of a healthy church that it prays even for kings and those in authority?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the force of Paul's opening words: “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people” (v. 1). The phrase “first of all” signals priority. Before Paul addresses anything else about the assembly, he addresses prayer. A

church that has its priorities right is a praying church, and a church that prays for all people has caught something of the heart of God.

Walk through the breadth Paul commands: “for kings and all who are in high positions” (v. 2). Remember the kings of Paul’s day. Nero, who would later have Christians burned, sat on the throne. Paul does not tell the church to curse such men but to pray for them, so that believers “may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” This is a radical, gracious posture, praying for the very authorities who might persecute you.

Draw out why prayer comes first. Prayer is the church confessing that the mission belongs to God, that we cannot save anyone by our cleverness or strategy, and that we depend on Him to work. A church that prays for all people is a church that believes God can reach all people. The praying knee and the saving God belong together.

Note also the goal Paul gives: a “peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (v. 2). The church prays for stable, ordered conditions, not so it can be comfortable, but so the gospel can spread unhindered and believers can live lives of quiet godliness that commend the faith to outsiders.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Prayer as the first priority of a healthy church (v. 1)
- Intercession for all people, including hostile authorities, as the heart of God (v. 2)
- Prayer as the church’s confession that the mission belongs to God
- The aim of a peaceful, godly, dignified life that commends the gospel (v. 2)
- The link between a praying church and a saving God

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul make prayer the very first priority for the gathered church?
- What does it say about a church when it prays even for hostile authorities?
- How would our congregation change if intercession for all people truly came first?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul wants the church to pray for all people, even for governing authorities who may be hostile to the faith (vv. 1-2). Who are the people, or kinds of people, you find it hardest to pray for, and what would it look like to begin lifting them up before God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This first self-examining question moves from the church’s call to pray for all to the individual’s prayer life. Paul’s command is sweeping: all people, including kings and rulers. Most of us pray

comfortably for those we love, but our prayers shrink when it comes to people who have hurt us, people we disagree with, or people who seem hopeless.

Help students name honestly the people they find hardest to pray for. It might be a political figure they despise, an estranged family member, a person who wronged them deeply, or a whole category of people they have written off. Naming the resistance is the first step toward overcoming it. Jesus Himself taught us to pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44), and Paul models it here.

Then point them to the transforming power of intercession. It is very hard to keep hating someone you are sincerely praying for. When we begin to lift a difficult person before God, asking for their salvation and good, God often softens our own hearts in the process. Encourage one concrete commitment: a name to begin praying for daily this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The call to pray even for enemies and those who have wronged us (Matthew 5:44)
- Intercession as a means God uses to soften our own hearts
- The breadth of Christian prayer extending beyond those we naturally love
- Sharing God's desire for the salvation of all in our prayers

Discussion Prompts

- Who do you find hardest to pray for, and why?
- How might sincerely praying for a difficult person change your own heart?
- Who is one specific person you will begin praying for this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul says it is "good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (vv. 3-4). What does this teach us about God's heart toward the lost, and why does Paul tie God's desire to save to the church's call to pray?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verses 3-4 give the theological ground beneath the command to pray for all: "This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Notice that Paul calls God "our Savior," and then describes His saving desire as reaching toward all people. The God we pray to is by nature a saving God.

Sit with the phrase "desires all people to be saved." This is the revealed heart of God. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11); He is patient, not willing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance (2 Peter 3:9). When we pray for the salvation of all

kinds of people, we are praying in perfect harmony with the will of God. Our prayers echo His own desire.

Note also the phrase “to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Salvation comes through truth, through the gospel heard, understood, and obeyed, not through vague sincerity or ignorance. God’s desire to save all is bound up with His desire that all come to know the truth. This is why the church must pray and also proclaim. The God who desires all to be saved has appointed the preaching of the truth as the means.

Draw the connection Paul intends. Because God desires all to be saved, the church prays for all. Our intercession is not a long shot against God’s reluctance; it flows with the current of His own loving will. This frees us to pray boldly and widely, confident that we are asking for what God Himself wants.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God revealed as Savior whose desire reaches toward all people (vv. 3-4)
- God’s genuine, revealed desire that all be saved (v. 4; 2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 33:11)
- Salvation coming through coming to the knowledge of the truth, not vague sincerity
- Prayer flowing with the current of God’s saving will, not against His reluctance
- The necessity of proclaiming the truth as God’s appointed means of saving

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that God “desires all people to be saved”?
- Why does Paul connect God’s desire to save with the church’s call to pray?
- How does it change our praying to know we are asking for what God Himself wants?

Question 4

Student Question:

Paul says God desires “all people” to be saved and to come to “the knowledge of the truth” (v. 4). How does knowing that God genuinely desires the salvation of everyone shape the way you see the people around you, and the urgency of sharing the gospel?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question presses verse 4 into the student’s view of people. If God genuinely desires all people to be saved, then there is no one we can rightly regard as beyond hope or beneath our concern. The cashier, the coworker, the relative who has wandered far, the person whose lifestyle troubles us, each is someone God desires to save.

Help students notice how easily we write people off. We make quiet judgments that certain people will never change, never believe, never come. But the God who saved Saul of Tarsus, and who desires all to be saved, does not share our pessimism. Seeing people through the lens of

God's saving desire changes how we treat them, how we speak to them, and whether we bother to share the gospel at all.

Then connect this to urgency. If God desires all to be saved, and salvation comes through knowing the truth, then the truth must be carried to people. Our convictions about evangelism are tested right here. Encourage students to identify one person they have stopped seeing through God's eyes, and to ask God for fresh love and a fresh opportunity to share Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's saving desire shaping how we view every person (v. 4)
- The danger of writing people off as beyond hope
- Evangelistic urgency flowing from God's desire to save all
- Seeing people through the lens of God's love rather than our pessimism

Discussion Prompts

- How does God's desire to save all change the way you see the people around you?
- Is there someone you have quietly decided is beyond reach? Why?
- What is one way you could share the gospel with fresh urgency this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul writes, "There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (vv. 5-6). What does this passage teach about how a person comes to God, and what does it mean that Christ gave Himself as a ransom "for all"?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is one of two doctrinal high points in the lesson, and it carries the great theme of the one Mediator and the ransom for all. Read verses 5-6 slowly: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time." Every phrase is loaded with gospel truth.

Start with "one God." There is not a god for the Jews and another for the Gentiles, not many paths up the same mountain. There is one God, and therefore one truth and one gospel for all peoples. Then comes the bridge: "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." A mediator stands between two estranged parties and brings them together. Sin had opened a chasm between holy God and sinful humanity, and there is exactly one bridge across it. Not Mary, not angels, not priests, not our own good works, but the man Christ Jesus, fully God and fully man, the only one able to lay His hand on both God and humanity at once.

Now dwell on "who gave himself as a ransom for all." A ransom is the price paid to set a captive free. Christ gave Himself, His own life, as the price to free us from sin and death. And He did it

“for all.” This little phrase is enormous. It stands directly against the idea that Christ died only for a select, secretly chosen few. The atonement is sufficient for and offered to all. God desires all to be saved (v. 4), and Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all (v. 6). The love of God and the death of Christ reach as wide as the human race.

Be clear about what this means and does not mean. That Christ is a ransom for all does not mean all are automatically saved, for the ransom must be received through faith and obedience. But it does mean the offer is genuine and universal, that no one is excluded by some hidden decree, and that anyone who comes to God through Christ will find the way open. Let your class rest here: the bridge has been built, the price has been paid, and the gate stands open to all who will come through the one Mediator.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- One God and one truth for all peoples (v. 5)
- Christ as the sole mediator between God and men, fully God and fully man (v. 5)
- The exclusion of all other mediators: not saints, angels, priests, or our own works
- Christ’s death as a ransom for all, against the idea of a limited atonement (v. 6)
- The genuine, universal offer of salvation, received through faith and obedience
- The unity of God’s desire to save all (v. 4) and Christ’s ransom for all (v. 6)

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that Christ is the one and only mediator between God and men?
- Why is it significant that Christ gave Himself as a ransom “for all”?
- How does this passage confront the idea that Christ died only for a chosen few?

Question 6

Student Question:

If there is only “one mediator” between God and men (v. 5), then we cannot come to the Father except through Jesus. Where are you tempted to approach God on some other basis, your own goodness, your religious effort, or a substitute mediator, and how does resting in Christ alone change that?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question presses the truth of the one Mediator into the student’s daily walk. If there is only one mediator, the man Christ Jesus, then every attempt to approach God on some other basis is misguided. Help students examine where they secretly try to come to God through something other than Christ.

Name the common substitutes. Some try to approach God through their own goodness, hoping their decent lives will earn a hearing. Some lean on religious performance, their attendance or

their giving, as though these were the basis of their standing. Some quietly look to a human figure, a beloved teacher or a departed loved one, as a kind of go-between. All of these, however sincere, bypass the one Mediator God has appointed.

Then offer the freedom of the gospel. We do not have to be good enough to approach God, because Christ is good enough, and He is our Mediator. We come to the Father through Him, on the basis of His ransom, not our resume. This is deeply freeing. Encourage students to identify where they are still trying to earn access to God, and to rest instead in Christ alone, the one bridge who is always open.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Access to God only through the one Mediator, Christ (v. 5)
- The error of approaching God through our own goodness or religious performance
- The rejection of substitute mediators, however sincere
- The freedom of resting in Christ's merit rather than our own

Discussion Prompts

- On what basis are you tempted to approach God instead of Christ alone?
- Why is it freeing that we come to God through Christ's worth, not our own?
- What would change if you truly rested in the one Mediator this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul gives instructions for the assembly: men are to lead in prayer "lifting holy hands, without anger or quarreling," and women are to adorn themselves "with modesty" and good works, and not "to teach or to exercise authority over a man" (vv. 8-12). What does this passage teach about God's design for order and roles when the church gathers?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here Paul turns to the conduct of the assembly, and we must teach it plainly and warmly. He addresses the men first: "I desire that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling" (v. 8). The men are to lead in public prayer, and the emphasis falls on the heart behind the hands. Hands lifted in prayer must be "holy," and the heart must be free of anger and quarreling. There is no point in leading worship while nursing a grudge.

Then Paul addresses the women: they are to "adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control," not chiefly with elaborate outward display, but "with what is proper for women who profess godliness, with good works" (vv. 9-10). The true adornment of a godly woman is her character and her good works, not extravagant show. This is a word about modesty and about where real beauty lies, and it applies, in principle, to all of us.

Now come to the words that our age finds difficult: “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet” (vv. 11-12). Teach this with dignity. Paul is speaking about the public assembly of the church and about the roles of teaching and exercising authority within it. In that setting, the leading of the assembly, including public teaching over men and the exercise of authority, is given to men. This is the consistent apostolic pattern (see also 1 Corinthians 14:33-35).

Be careful to present this rightly. This is not a statement that women are less valuable, less gifted, or less loved by God; Scripture everywhere honors the faith, service, and worth of women. Nor does it forbid women from learning, teaching children, teaching other women, or serving in countless vital ways. It is a matter of God-given order in the assembly, of roles, not of worth. A healthy congregation honors both the men who lead and the women who serve, each according to the pattern God has given, and it does so with warmth and mutual respect, not tension.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Men leading in public prayer with holy hands and peaceable hearts (v. 8)
- The heart behind worship: free of anger and quarreling (v. 8)
- Modesty and good works as the true adornment of godly women (vv. 9-10)
- Women not to teach or exercise authority over men in the assembly (vv. 11-12; 1 Corinthians 14:33-35)
- The distinction of roles as a matter of God-given order, not of worth
- The honored and vital place of both men and women in a healthy congregation

Discussion Prompts

- What does Paul emphasize about the heart of those who lead the church in prayer?
- How does Paul locate real beauty and adornment for a godly woman?
- How can we teach the roles God has given with both conviction and warmth, honoring all His people?

Question 8

Student Question:

Paul links worship with the heart: men praying without anger, women adorned with good works and modesty rather than outward show (vv. 8-10). What does your own outward presentation and inner attitude in worship reveal about your heart, and where might God be inviting you to grow?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes the worship instructions of verses 8-10 and turns them toward the heart. Paul ties outward conduct to inner reality: the man's lifted hands must be holy and his heart free of anger; the woman's adornment should flow from godliness and good works rather than mere outward display. Worship is never only about what is seen; it is about the heart behind it.

Help students examine their own approach to the assembly. Do we come to worship carrying anger and unresolved quarrels, going through the motions while our hearts are far from peace? Do we give more thought to how we appear than to the condition of our souls? Paul's words gently expose the gap that can open between outward religion and inward reality.

Then point toward growth. The aim is not to add new rules about clothing or posture, but to let worship spring from a heart at peace with God and others, a heart adorned with humility and good works. Encourage students to identify one area, an unresolved conflict, a preoccupation with appearance, a wandering heart, that God may be inviting them to bring into alignment with the worship He desires.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The unity of outward worship and inward heart condition (vv. 8-10)
- Reconciliation and peace as preparation for worship (v. 8; Matthew 5:23-24)
- True adornment as humility and good works rather than outward display (vv. 9-10)
- Worship that springs from the heart, not mere external form

Discussion Prompts

- Do you ever come to worship carrying anger or unresolved conflict? What might God want you to do?
- What does your attention to outward appearance versus inner character reveal about your heart?
- Where is God inviting you to let your worship flow from a heart at peace?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul grounds his teaching in creation: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve," and points to God's design from the beginning (vv. 13-14), even as he affirms that Christ is the one ransom for all (vv. 5-6). How do these verses hold together God's universal desire to save everyone and His ordered design for roles in the church, and how does this stand against the ideas that Christ died for only a chosen few or that the roles are merely cultural?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal climax of the lesson, where the chapter's two great themes meet, and it deserves your fullest care. Paul grounds his teaching about roles not in the customs of Ephesus but in creation itself: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (vv. 13-14). At the same time, this same chapter has declared that Christ "gave himself as a ransom for all" and that God "desires all people to be saved" (vv. 4, 6). Help your class see how these truths hold together, because together they answer two errors at once.

Take the first theme: God's universal desire to save. The chapter could not be clearer. God "desires all people to be saved" (v. 4); Christ is a "ransom for all" (v. 6). This stands firmly against the teaching that Christ died for only a secretly chosen few and that God desires the salvation of only some. The Scriptures do not present a God who hides His true intentions or who built the gospel for an elect minority while passing by the rest. The gospel call is real and universal, and people are genuinely able to respond. Anyone who comes to God through the one Mediator will be received. Let your class marvel at the wideness of God's mercy and reject any teaching that narrows it.

Now take the second theme: God's ordered design for the church. Notice carefully where Paul anchors the role of men and women. He does not say, "because the women of Ephesus are uneducated," or "because the culture expects it." He reaches all the way back to the garden: "Adam was formed first, then Eve" (v. 13). This is the decisive point. Paul grounds the pattern in the order of creation, in how God Himself made man and woman in the beginning. That means it is not a temporary cultural arrangement that expires when customs change. It is rooted in God's unchanging design. The apostolic pattern, that men lead the assembly in teaching and authority, rests on creation, not on prejudice.

Hold the two themes together, for this is the heart of the matter. The very same God who desires all people without exception to be saved is the God who has ordered His church with distinct roles for men and women. There is no contradiction. Equal worth before God and distinct roles in the assembly are not opposites; Scripture holds them together effortlessly. Men and women are equally loved, equally redeemed by the ransom paid for all, equally heirs of grace, and they are given different and complementary roles when the church gathers. To insist that equal worth must mean identical roles is to import a cultural assumption that the text itself does not make.

Finally, teach this with the dignity and warmth it deserves. There is nothing harsh or demeaning here. God's order is a gift, not a cage. A church that honors His design is a church at peace, where men step up to lead and serve with holy hands and humble hearts, and where women are honored for the faith, godliness, good works, and countless ministries that adorn the body of Christ. Marvel that our God is both wide in mercy and wise in order, and lead your class to receive His pattern with gladness rather than to sit in judgment over it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's genuine, universal desire to save all, against unconditional election (v. 4)
- Christ's ransom for all, against limited atonement (v. 6)
- The gospel call as real and universal, with people genuinely able to respond
- The role distinction grounded in creation order, not culture (vv. 13-14)
- The apostolic pattern as God's unchanging design, not a temporary custom
- Equal worth before God and distinct roles in the assembly held together without contradiction
- God's order received as a gift, with men and women each honored in the body of Christ

Discussion Prompts

- How does this chapter answer the idea that Christ died for only a chosen few?
- Why is it important that Paul grounds the roles in creation rather than in the culture of Ephesus?
- How can equal worth before God and distinct roles in the assembly be held together without contradiction?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across this whole chapter, from the call to pray for all people, to the one Mediator who ransomed all, to God's ordered design for worship. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this passage, and one concrete step you will take because of it.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the whole chapter. Paul has moved from the call to pray for all people (vv. 1-2), to God's desire that all be saved (vv. 3-4), to the one Mediator who ransomed all (vv. 5-7), to the ordered conduct of the assembly and its grounding in creation (vv. 8-15). The thread running through it all is a God who is wide in mercy and wise in order, and a church called to reflect both.

Invite students to look back and name what God has stirred. For some it will be a renewed commitment to pray for all people, including the difficult and the lost. For others it will be fresh wonder at the one Mediator and the ransom paid for all. For still others it will be a humbled, glad embrace of God's design for worship and roles, received as a gift rather than resisted. The goal is for each person to leave with something specific.

Then press for one concrete step. It might be a name to begin praying for, a person to share the gospel with, a conflict to resolve before the next assembly, or a settled resolve to honor God's pattern for worship with reverence and peace. Help your class turn the truth of this chapter into a single act of obedience this week, trusting that Christ Himself is forming them through His word.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The integration of God's wide mercy and His wise order across the chapter
- Prayer, evangelism, and ordered worship as fitting responses to the gospel
- Obedience to God's pattern as a glad gift, not a grudging burden
- Christ's ongoing work of forming the believer through His word

Discussion Prompts

- What is the single most important thing God has shown you in this chapter?
- What is one concrete step you will take this week because of it?
- How can this class help one another both pray for the lost and honor God's design for worship?