

Intro:

In chapter 2, Paul moves from charging Timothy to establish sound doctrine to instructions about gathered worship. In vv1-7, it seems he is particularly concerned about a form of elitism amongst some in the church who may have been teaching that salvation was limited to only a certain group of people (namely, the Jews). He combats that heresy by telling Timothy to pray for "all" types of people because it has always been God's plan to save all kinds of people.

Questions:

1. In vv1-2, Paul instructs Timothy to ensure prayers are offered for all people, including kings and all who are in high positions.

–What does Paul mean by "all people" here? In other words, is he referring to every single person on earth, or all types and kinds of people?

–Given that the kings and authorities Paul encouraged Timothy to pray for were most certainly not Christians, how should that form our attitude towards politicians in our culture?

–What does a "peaceful and quiet life" look like in our context? Is it incompatible with political activism or involvement in protesting social issues?

Leader tip: While this text calls Christians to a dignified, gospel-centered posture, most would agree that it does not mean Christians should withdraw from culture, society, or political engagement. Rather, it should be done in a way that is dignified and does not lead to putting our hope in presidents or politicians. Help your group see the balance and level-headed, God-centeredness that this text calls Christians toward as we live in a broken world.

2. In vv3-4, Paul says that God desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. This text brings up the critical issue of the plan and purposes of God in salvation and the effectiveness of Christ's work.

–What do you think Paul means here by "all people?" Is he talking about every person on earth, without exception? Or, is he talking about all people without distinction (meaning, all types of people whether Jew, Gentile, rich or poor, etc)?

–How should this text fuel and motivate evangelism and missions to different people groups and cultures outside of our own? (Read Revelation 7:9-12)

Leader tip: While this text is hotly debated amongst theologians, it seems most likely that Paul is saying that God desires all types of people to be saved. This fits with the context of vv1-2 where Paul calls for prayers for all types of people. The ESV Study Bible has a very helpful study note on this verse that you may want to reference.

3. In vv5-6, we read one of the sweetest and most gospel-rich sentences in the Bible. The Man Christ Jesus is the mediator between God and man and gave himself as a ransom for all. Again, the word “all” here in context seems to refer to all types of people. Otherwise, this verse is saying that all people go to heaven no matter what, which is clearly unbiblical.

–Discuss the idea of a mediator. How does Jesus act as our mediator before God? (Read Romans 3:21-26)

–Ransom is a powerful word. It denotes a payment that sets a captive free. To whom ultimately does Jesus pay the ransom to for us?

Leader tip: We are often tempted to think of the Devil as our ultimate problem and captor. And in some sense, that is true. But deeper than that, Jesus dies on the cross not just to free us from evil and Satan, but to satisfy the holy and righteous wrath of God that is against us in our sin. So, at the core of the work of Christ in paying our ransom, we see the Father's wrath "propitiated" or satisfied by the son's substitution. Help your group see that ultimately we are saved by God, from God, for God.