

# Dual Citizenship

## Week 4 | 1 Timothy 2:1–7

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*To our rulers and governors on the earth...to them, Lord, give health, peace, concord, stability, that they may exercise the authority given to them without offense. For You, O heavenly Lord and King eternal, givest to the sons of men glory and honour and power over the things that are on the earth; do Thou, Lord, direct their counsel according to that which is good and well-pleasing in Your sight, that, devoutly in peace and meekness exercising the power given them by You, they may find You propitious. O Thou, who only has power to do these things and more abundant good with us, we praise You through the High Priest and Guardian of our souls Jesus Christ, through whom be glory and majesty to You both now and from generation to generation and for evermore. Amen.*

—Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians*

According to early church history, Clement was a leader in the Roman church in the late first century. Even though he likely knew many Christians who had been persecuted and even martyred at the hands of the empire, in a letter he wrote to the Corinthian church, he encouraged believers to pray for their governing authorities — for those leaders to experience good health, peace, harmony, stability, and for them to be guided by God.

Over the last several weeks, we've explored the idea of dual citizenship — that while we are citizens of earthly nations, our primary allegiance is to God and his kingdom. This allegiance shapes how we understand our role as citizens and relate to our governing authorities. Because their authority comes from God, we are to respect our leaders and submit to our government, unless it orders us to disobey God.

As people who have been redeemed, reborn, and renewed, we are also called to do good in our communities. As we wrap up this series, we're going to focus on prayer. How can we, as Clement modeled for us centuries ago, pray for those in authority? Each day this week, we'll take the opportunity to pray for our government leaders.

## Day 1

An unfortunate by-product of living in an advertising saturated age is that many of us have become highly skeptical of big claims. The stain remover that says it can get out any stain, can't. The miracle weight-loss pill, isn't. The "new and improved" isn't all that different.

When it comes to prayer, some of us have adopted the same cynical attitude and decided that the claims about prayer in the Bible are simply too good to be true. We may have falsely concluded that prayer is too mysterious to bother with, or we're not very good at it, or both. As a result, we're not praying as the Scripture commands.

Maybe our approach to prayer has been all wrong. God is not a genie to be commanded. Prayer is God's invitation to partner with him in what he's doing in the world. When we pray as explicitly directed in God's Word, we can be confident that God not only hears our prayers, but is ready and willing to act.

Our central passage this week comes from 1 Timothy. This is a letter Paul wrote to his co-worker and spiritual son, Timothy who was leading the church at Ephesus. Notice how Paul instructs the church at Ephesus to pray.

### 1 Timothy 2:1–7

*I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—<sup>2</sup>for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. <sup>7</sup>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.*

- What should the church in Ephesus be praying (verses 1–2)?
- Why should they be praying this (verses 3–4)?

## Reflect

As we've seen in our Dual Citizenship series, one of the practical implications of submitting to governing authorities is that it is the most likely avenue to living at peace with one's government. The apostles encourage compliance unless obeying the government meant disobeying God. This allowed Christians to live "peaceful and quiet lives."

Yet the apostles had a larger goal. Their primary allegiance was to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the "good news" that they were determined to spread was a royal proclamation that he had come. They wanted everyone to hear this proclamation. The true King was offering every person the opportunity to know him, be redeemed by him, and have a place in his eternal kingdom. "Peaceful and quiet lives" were not the end goal for Christ's followers, but a means to an end. What the apostles sought were the best conditions for expanding Christ's kingdom through inviting people to trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and follow in his ways.

As we consider this week how to pray for our government leaders, we should keep this end in mind. Our prayers for our leaders should reflect God's desire to save all people. What would it

mean for us to pray for our leaders, not only for our own sake, but for the sake of the gospel? For the sake of helping people find and follow Christ, and loving our neighbors as ourselves?

For the rest of the week we will consider what “petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving” we could be offering for our government authorities. We will focus on different leaders to pray for each day. Commit to spending time each day this week praying for our governing authorities.

## Respond

- Are you in a regular habit of praying for government leaders? Why or why not?
- If you regularly pray for them, what do you pray?
- Will you commit to praying for our government leaders every day this week? Who will you start with today?

## Day 2

Inevitably, we will encounter government leaders that we agree with and those we don't. It's easy to pray for the ones we like and support.

But what about those we have issues with? Maybe we dislike some decision they've made, or disagree with their stance on some issue. We might even be worried that they are incompetent or corrupt. Those are the ones we should pray for the most!

As Christians, we want our government leaders to be blessed by God, not just for their own sake, but for the people they lead. If we want to “live peaceful and quiet lives in all goodness and holiness,” and live in a land where we are free to worship God, proclaim the gospel, and do good for other people, we should do what Paul instructs and pray for our *all* our leaders.

## Read

### 1 Timothy 2:1–4

*I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—<sup>2</sup>for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all people.*

### Jeremiah 29:7

*<sup>7</sup>Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”*

- According to these passages, why should we pray for our government authorities?

## Reflect

As we've been reminded through this series, this world is our temporary home. Peter calls us "foreigners and exiles" (1 Peter 2:11). Hebrews says, "For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14). God has "delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son he loves" (Col. 1:13). According to Paul, "our citizenship is in heaven—and we also eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). So, we are not to be "conformed to this present world" (Romans 12:2). We are exiles and strangers here.

The people of Israel became literal exiles when their nation was conquered by Babylon. They became captives of the Babylonian empire and were forced to relocate there. They were swept up and deposited in a place where they did not belong. What were they to do? How were they to live? The prophet Jeremiah relates God's desire for them during their time of exile. This is guidance that we can use as we navigate our own exile here on earth as we "await the city that is to come."

God tells the people to "seek the peace and prosperity" of Babylon, for if it prospers, they will also prosper. Likewise, as modern Christians we are to seek the good of our cities, regions, and nation. One way the Lord specifically tells them to do this is to pray.

In 1 Timothy, Paul says to make "petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people — for kings and all those in authority." The first three words all have similar meanings, so we probably shouldn't try to draw sharp distinctions between them.<sup>1</sup> Paul seems to be emphasizing the importance of asking God to intervene in the lives of people. He is also encouraging them to be thankful.

You don't ask for help from someone you think can't or won't help, or who you don't trust. In going to God in prayer for all people, including those in authority, we are acknowledging our dependence on him and our faith in his goodness, mercy, and love. We can pray with thanksgiving knowing that our Father always hears and responds to our prayers in the best way possible.

So let's start today. Let's seek the good of our cities by lifting up those in leadership!

## Respond

As you seek the "peace and prosperity" of the city in which you live, take some time pray for its leaders.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 87.

A quick Google search can lead you to the names of elected officials and other leaders in your school district, city, and county. Take a few moments to find the names of local officials such as school board members, the city council, the mayor, police chief, county officials, and local judges.

Make a list of ten people in local government that you feel led to pray for by name. Thank God for their service and pray for them and their families. Pray that they come to a greater knowledge of God. Pray that they would seek the peace and prosperity of your area in God-honoring ways, and that God would respond by giving them wisdom, clarity, courage, resilience, a passion for justice, and a compassionate and humble heart.

## Day 3

This week we're focusing on a very practical thing we can do to bless our city, state, and nation. Pray for our leaders! Today and tomorrow, we're going to consider some verses from Scripture that can guide our prayers.

Since we aren't citizens of ancient Israel, we have to be careful not to apply every Old Testament passage about the nation of Israel directly to our own context. We can, however, allow the principles contained in those passages help us understand God's will for humanity, and by extension our leaders.

Proverbs offers us wisdom on how to live in ways that honor God and promote human flourishing. By praying for authorities according to God's wisdom as revealed in these Proverbs, we are asking God to shape our leaders so that they will govern wisely and justly.

Of course we share God's desire as expressed in 1 Timothy 2:3-4. He *wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth* that Jesus is the one mediator between God and humanity. So we should also pray that our leaders will come to know Jesus if they don't already, and follow him more closely if they do.

Below you'll find proverbs grouped by subject. Consider writing out a prayer for our government's leaders using these proverbs to inspire you. Today, we'll focus on our state's leaders. You will find a link below to find their names.

### Let's pray for our leaders to:

**Come to a saving knowledge of God**

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,  
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

*-Proverbs 9:10*

**Grow in wisdom and be guided by God**

*Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.*

*She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.*

*Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her; those who hold her fast will be blessed.*

*- Proverbs 3:13–18*

*Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you;  
love her, and she will watch over you.*

*The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom.  
Though it cost all you have, get understanding.*

*-Proverbs 4:6–7*

*How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver!*

*-Proverbs 16:16*

*The prudent see danger and take refuge,  
but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.*

*-Proverbs 27:12*

**Grow in righteousness, integrity, and a desire to lead justly.**

*When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice;  
when the wicked rule, the people groan.*

*-Proverbs 29:2*

*By justice a king gives a country stability,  
but those who are greedy for bribes tear it down.*

*-Proverbs 29:4*

*Better a little with righteousness  
than much gain with injustice.*

*-Proverbs 16:8*

*Whoever walks in integrity walks securely,  
but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.*

*-Proverbs 10:9*

*Whoever pursues righteousness and love  
finds life, prosperity and honor.*

*-Proverbs 21:21*

*When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices;  
when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.*

*-Proverbs 11:10*

## Respond

Yesterday we prayed for our local leaders, so today let's focus on our state leaders. The Texas Tribune has an easy to use website that can help you discover the names of state officials.  
<https://www.texastribune.org/directory/>

Select ten state officials and pray for them by name. If you wrote a prayer that was inspired by the proverbs above, use that one. You may want to pray it for yourself as well!

## Day 4

This week, we're focusing on praying for our governing authorities as Paul urges us to in 1 Timothy 2:1-6:

*I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—<sup>2</sup>for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup>For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all people.*

Yesterday we allowed several proverbs to shape our prayers for our leaders. We'll continue that approach from other Proverbs, and end the day by praying for national and international leaders.

Read the following verses from Proverbs, and if it's helpful, write out a prayer inspired by them for our governing authorities.

**Let's pray for our leaders to:**

## Turn to God in faith and seek his to guidance

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not rely on your own understanding.  
Acknowledge him in all your ways,  
and he will make your paths straight.*

*-Proverbs 3:5-6*

## Surround themselves with good and wise counsel

*Plans fail for lack of counsel,  
but with many advisers they succeed.*

*-Proverbs 15:22*

*If a ruler listens to lies,  
all his officials become wicked.*

*-Proverbs 29:12*

*<sup>13</sup>Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value the one who speaks what is right.*

*-Proverbs 16:13*

*For lack of guidance a nation falls,  
but victory is won through many advisers.*

*-Proverbs 11:14*

## Be willing to learn and correct course when necessary

*Listen to advice and accept discipline,  
and at the end you will be counted among the wise.*

*Proverbs 19:20*

*Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,  
but whoever hates correction is stupid.*

*-Proverbs 12:1*

*Whoever gives heed to instruction prospers, and blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord.*

*-Proverbs 16:20*

*Where there is strife, there is pride,  
but wisdom is found in those who take advice.*

*-Proverbs 13:10*

## **Grow in humility and compassion**

*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be lowly in spirit along with the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.*

*-Proverbs 16:18–19*

Of course there are other things we can pray for our leaders: that God will protect them from harm, give them strength and endurance for the difficult jobs they do, and that he would bless their families and give them peace. I'm sure you can think of more.

Let's not stop praying for our leaders after this series is done. Let's continue to lift them up in prayer as Paul urges us to.

## **Respond**

Today let's focus on our national leaders — members of Congress, the President and Vice President, along with the President's Cabinet, and members of the judiciary, including the Supreme Court. Pick a few officials that you'd like to pray for personally, by name.

This Wikipedia page has links to all office holders in the United States.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists\\_of\\_office-holders\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_office-holders_of_the_United_States)

You might also consider praying for the heads of state in another country.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/world-leaders-1/index.html>

# **Day 5**

It's Friday, the end of our week, but also the end of our Dual Citizenship series. Let's reflect on what the Lord has shown us and how the Spirit has shaped us through God's Word.

## **Reflect**

We covered four key passages in this series. Take a moment and read through them.

- [Matthew 22:15-22](#)
- [Romans 13:1-7](#)
- [Titus 3:1-11](#)
- [1 Timothy 2:1-7](#)

How have these passages shaped your view of government and your responsibilities as a citizen? As Christian citizens and citizens of our country, how can we be a blessing to the people of our nation?

## Connect

In the beginning, God designed our world to be a place where he would dwell with us. As our Creator and Lord, his love and rule would have provided everything we needed including peace, security, purpose, and a home where we belonged.

Humanity has been in exile since Adam and Eve rebelled against God and were forced from the Garden. And now, all these generations later, something in us still longs for what should have been. We know this is not the way it was supposed to be. We're living in a world marred by sin, and it's not the one for which we were made. It's full of uncertainty, fear, suspicion, injustice, and strife. This is not the way our Creator designed us to live.

I wonder if much of the political fervor that we see in our nation springs from this feeling of exile, and the longing for the home we've lost. Something is wrong, and we're desperate for someone to fix it. We turn to political leaders for peace, security and purpose. If we suspect we've found one who can provide them, we'll invest in them, trust in their solutions, and join them in demonizing the other side.

But it won't work. Our hearts long for heaven and the one who reigns over it. We'll never be able to create heaven on earth, no matter how brilliant or good our leaders are. We have to live in the reality of now — we can make our temporary home a better place, but sin will always be with us. It's a tyrant that has not yet been fully ejected. But one day it will.

Jesus is our ultimate and eternal King and it's in him we find our hope. We can and should work to make our world better, including using the rights and privileges we have as earthly citizens to love our neighbors as ourselves. But we must do so with humility. Because while we might see a vision of a better world, the path to it is not always clear. Our political systems can't withstand the weight of our faith or our hope. They will never be able to alleviate all our fears. But Jesus can. He loves us so!

The apostles saw the world as it is. They knew we needed systems of government and that by submitting to those governments, we might live peaceable lives where we would be allowed to tell people about Jesus and share his love. So let's fix our eyes on Jesus during this turbulent political season. And like Paul, let's pray fervently for all people to come to a saving knowledge of him and let's obey his command to be ready to whatever is good.

## Respond

How would you summarize your biggest takeaways from this series? How will you apply them? Use the following questions to help you think through what God is showing you:

- Take some time to pray about how you engage with earthly government. Over the last few weeks, has the Spirit convicted you through the Word? Encouraged you? Are there ways you speak, think, or act that need to change?
- As part of our vision, we want to engage people in meaningful conversations where people experience the love of Christ through us. How can you speak peace and hope to others during this season? How can you have conversations about politics that encourage greater faith in God?
- Let's ask ourselves, as citizens of heaven who are also citizens of countries here on earth, how can we do good things for the place we temporarily call home?