

## Prayers

### Opening prayer

Dear Lord, forgive me when I have failed to live up to the standards to which I aspire, for I long to be Your servant and to do Your will. In the face of temptations, give me the courage to choose to do what is right and turn away from the tempter, and in the face of spiritual danger, give me the strength to stand firm in faith and the resolve to do what is good and right. Show me Your pathway and lead me within it I pray, and receive this my prayer, dear Lord; AMEN

### Prayer Suggestions

General theme of the week: PREJUDICE

**1. For yourself**

*Pray for strength to stand against the enemy when he tempts you into the pathways of prejudice, and pray for the courage to love all people equally*

**2. For your friends and family**

*Offer all your loved ones and friends to God without prejudice, and in prayer, seek God's will for them and for their daily work*

**3. For the church and its work**

*Pray that God's people will always stand against favouritism and prejudice, stand as a beacon of what is right within the darkness of our world*

**4. For your neighbourhood, your country and the world (News)**

*Pray for your own country, that it will always choose the path of godliness and give all people equally opportunities and equal value.*

### Meditation

Lord God, Almighty Father, Rock of ages,  
Inventor, Designer, Composer and Artist.

Flood my senses with the ecstasy of life,  
And overpower the fruitless pains of death.

Irradiate my soul with the brilliance of Your light,  
And absorb the darker evils of self.

Energise my enthusiastic soul with love,  
And purge the dismal paths of gloom.

Stretch my mind with the intricacies of truth,  
And burst all selfish myths of supremacy.

Lord God, Rock of Ages, Prince of Peace  
Principal, leader, colleague and aide.

Excite me by the possibilities of life,  
And paint me with colours of godliness

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## Bible Study

### Bible passage – 1 Timothy 4:11-16

<sup>11</sup> Instruct and teach these things. <sup>12</sup> Let no one treat your youth with contempt, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, faith and purity. <sup>13</sup> Give attention, until I

arrive, to the public reading of scripture, to preaching and to teaching. <sup>14</sup> Do not neglect the gift in you, which was given through prophecy and with the laying on of hands of the eldership. <sup>15</sup> Put these things into practice, be absorbed in them, so that all may see your progress. <sup>16</sup> Look after yourself and the teaching, and persevere in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

## Review

In this passage, Paul offers heartfelt advice and warm encouragement to Timothy. It is a wonderful mixture of sound advice and support, and it is a good example of how to encourage maturity in others. At the beginning, however, two interesting things come to light, which are essential to our understanding of the whole letter. Firstly, we discover that Timothy is a relatively young man and secondly, he was someone with a specific gift, but the letter does not mention what it is!

If we look at this passage, however, it is possible to work out quite reasonably what the gift is. Paul began his letter by mentioning 'teaching' and Timothy's solemn duty of passing on the truths of the Gospel (1 Tim 1:3) along with a clear instruction to him to teach and train the people of God properly. The previous reading also speaks about instruction, teaching and training (4:6-10). Back in our passage, teaching appears in verse 13, and then after the mention of a special gift in verse 14, Paul says '*Look after yourself and the teaching and persevere in them ...*' (4:16). The close relationship between Paul's concern for Timothy as a person and his teaching, along with all that has been said in the letter makes it possible, if not likely, that Timothy's gift was indeed, 'teaching and instruction'. The more we read of both Paul's letters to Timothy, the more we will find this constant emphasis on teaching, and it is unlikely that Timothy should have a special gift only for Paul to ignore it! In general, Paul was concerned to encourage Timothy in his use of the gifts he had been given.

We can see now why Paul told Timothy not to worry about his age. We do not know whether he was in his twenties, thirties or forties, he was still somewhat younger than Paul and younger than some of the people he was commissioned to lead and teach. In Paul's day, age was venerated, and a group of people tended to defer to the opinion of the oldest person present. Indeed, Paul may have been reaching an age where he would have enjoyed such veneration, but it is clear that Timothy was not. Because of this, Paul was profoundly forward thinking in his insistence that the spiritual gift of teaching and the anointing of a leader by the laying on of hands (4:14) was to be respected by all, irrespective of age. It would have damaged the church greatly if teachers were hampered in their work by people whose opinions were accepted merely because of their age! So when Paul said to Timothy 'let no one treat your youth with contempt ...' he was encouraging him to stand on the authority he had been given; not his own authority of course, but Christ's authority and the authority of the Word and the Spirit.

As we all know, we respect most those teachers and leaders who give an example of godliness through how they behave and go about their work; and this is the simple advice given by Paul to Timothy in verse 12. Advice to set an example of love, faith and purity, presents a challenge to anyone, but it is not an impossible goal. If someone reaches out towards higher goals, then people will appreciate the example given and offer due respect. The goals may not be reached, but leaders who have given up on aiming high not to be trusted or respected.

Within the passage as a whole, Paul gives Timothy wise advice about preaching and teaching, emphasising the public nature of the Gospel and the importance of declaring it openly (4:13). In fact, the Greek of this verse emphasises 'public reading'. Paul also urges Timothy to 'be absorbed' in his ministry, because this will demonstrate his serious intent for the Gospel (4:15); he does not tell Timothy to go and get a hobby or have a holiday to balance out his life, as we might suggest to people in order to advocate 'balance'! Finally, Paul expresses concern for Timothy; 'look after yourself... for in doing this you will save yourself ...' (4:16).

Paul recognises that one who is called to ministry will find that all life becomes intermingled with the call, and there is no separating of private life from work for the Lord. Many clergy today are trained to believe that they must maintain a sense of their own privacy and identity apart from their work for the church. This is difficult territory, but I do suggest this is dangerous and leads to much stress. It is a simplification of what the call to work for the Lord is about, and how it works within the human soul. It is far better to keep Paul's advice to Timothy, to stay close to the heart of God's call in every aspect of life, for in this, the leader becomes whole.

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## Discipleship

### Application

## Questions for groups

1. If you are a church leader, how do you respond to what is said here? Is it exciting or is it frightening?
2. If you are not a church leader, does this passage reflect what you expect of a leader? In what ways?
3. What place does special gifting have within ministry, and how much should be made of it?

## Discipleship challenges

- *Read through this passage and see what the Lord is saying to you personally through it. Sometimes the Lord will have a special word from scripture for us, which is something we need to hear at a particular time and place, always be ready to listen.*
- *Pray for your church leaders and make it your business, over a period of a week, to pray about what they do, their gifts, their reputation and preaching skills, and everything about them. Pray for understanding and with understanding.*

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## Final Prayer

Bless those we love this day, Lord Jesus. Keep them in Your care and protect them from all evil. If there are problems between us, may we be humble enough to let you heal us. When we are at peace together, may we give You the glory. You have given us each other. Praise be to You, Lord Jesus, AMEN

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