

NOTES

I. Engage Prayerfully

We start with by engaging prayerfully.

Look at Paul's urgent call in 1 Timothy 2:

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."

1 Timothy 2:1-2

a. Pray for leaders because their decisions affect everyone

We pray for our leaders because their decisions affect everyone. Notice 'all people,' then for kings and all those in authority. 'All people' definitely includes kings and all those in authority under its umbrella, but Paul is probably also recognizing the reality that praying for our leaders is ultimately praying for things that affect all people.

Every year, the federal government puts a budget together. Our most recent budget, which you can access on the internet is almost 500 pages (see Endnote 1). The Provincial government budget documents are also easy to access, and you quickly see how complex and important these budgets are (see Endnote 2).

Not all of us can jump in the thick of things and tinker with the budget; but all of us can pray for those in charge.

Pray, God, give our leaders in Ottawa, Victoria and City Hall wisdom. Help them to make good decisions that bring life to our communities, that benefit our neighbours, friends and families. Help them to pursue justice and to flee from pressures that would corrupt. Would your will be done in our seats of government, would your Kingdom, with its Shalom – the harmony you desire for creation – be established here on earth, as it is in Heaven.

b. Pray for Leaders Because They're People

We pray for our leaders' well-being because they're people – for their mental and emotional health, for clear minds. We pray not only because they lead us, but because God loves politicians.

Pray for them even when you disagree with them. When Paul writes 1 Timothy, Nero is the head of the government. The same Nero who eventually beheads Paul. Not exactly a politician you'd want kissing your babies.; but pray for them anyways.

c. Prayer for leaders because prayer does stuff

NOTES

God chooses to mysteriously interact with the world along with our prayers. As James says,

“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

James 5:16b

Prayer also changes us. I’ve found, time and time again, that praying for people affects my overall disposition toward them. Christ is formed when the Spirit of God works on us in our prayer time. We grow in our love for others, even our enemies.

II. Engage Carefully

It’s dangerous in there, so we need to engage carefully.

If you’ve got your bibles out, turn to Ephesians 6, and we’ll start reading at verse 10:

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Ephesians 6:10-12

Sometimes, ‘struggle’ is interpreted as some sort of hubristic offensive struggle, where we attack strongholds in the seats of power. Let’s continue to read:

“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”

Ephesians 6:13

Stand your ground...to stand. Not charge. To stand. Do you see how this is defensive language? If we read the following verses, we have these armor analogies that Paul gives us – belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith and helmet of salvation. Then, finally, the only thing in this list that has any offensive capability is the sword of the Spirit. Which should then be accompanied by fruit of the Spirit.

This passage is not marked by triumphalism. It’s a recognition of our deep vulnerability.

Peter writes:

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

1 Peter 5:8



Open Up

Who do you rub shoulders with most often?

What are the spaces (work, church, neighbourhood, school, online), where you tend to meet and interact with the most people?

Discuss:

1. **Read 1 Timothy 2:1-6.** What do you notice? What does it look like to pray for our leaders? What things prevent us from keeping our leaders in our prayers?
2. **Read Ephesians 6:10-20.** How do you think we 'put on' these different pieces of spiritual armor?
3. **Read Luke 10:29-37.** What stands out to you in this passage?
4. Where do you actually have the most power right now? How are you using that power to influence change?
5. Where might God be calling you to deeper engagement in your community?

Pray

Take some time to pray for our leaders. Pray that God would give them wisdom, and help them to lead justly and with integrity. Pray for each other, that God would transform us and make us salt and light in our world. Ask that God would make us into instruments of healing and life in the lives of our neighbours.