

Praying for Our Nation In this Election Cycle

Thesis: We want to fight the good fight and to fight the right fight in the right way (1 Timothy 6:3-21). We don't want to fight the wrong fight in the wrong way and with the wrong weapons. With God calling us and with God helping us, we fight the good fight of faith.

Text: 1 Timothy 6:12

I am so grateful for the Word of God. It is so practical and powerful. Throughout this letter to Timothy, God speaks through Paul to address the practical details of organizing the church into a healthy community.

That, it seems, is how God's grace is to work out in practice, the grace which Paul's closing greeting wishes upon Timothy and those with him. Grace doesn't ignore the concrete and specific problems and challenges. Like Jesus himself, it comes down to the practical level, gets its hands dirty, and gets on with the job (NT Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Pastoral Letters: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), p. 80).

In this contentious, angry, and volatile election cycle, may we show up as God wants us to show up.

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I want to share some practical wisdom from God's Word to help us be who God has called us to be in this hour. First, let's talk about ways to pray for our nation during this election cycle. Then, we will highlight some practical ways to participate in the elections.

Ways to pray for our nation and the elections at the local, state, and national levels:

1. **Pray for God's kingdom to come and for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven** (Matthew 6:10).
 - a. Wherever you go, be a gate of worship, welcome, and warfare (Matthew 6:9-13).
2. **Pray *for* our leaders** (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

- a. *I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— 2 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).*
 - b. We are not praying against our leaders. We pray for God to give our leaders wisdom, grace, and favor to lead. We pray for God to help our leaders lead in righteousness and justice.
 - c. It is ok to ask God to deliver us from corrupt or bad leaders. It is ok to ask God to change the hearts of leaders. It is ok to ask God to replace leaders through the democratic process.
 - d. However, we don't curse, condemn, or declare evil against leaders.
 - e. Rather, Jesus tells us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:43-44).
3. **Pray for a gift of the fear of the Lord to come upon our leaders** (Psalm 2:10-12).
- a. *Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son... (Psalm 2:10-12).*
 - b. *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).*
4. **Pray for God to raise up godly men and women in places of influence and council for leaders** (like Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah, etc.) (John 1:4-5,14; Matthew 5:13-16).
- a. *In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it (John 1:4-5).*
 - b. *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).*
 - c. May your light living in believers rise and shine in every area of their lives and in every place their feet step today (Jay Kelley).
5. **Pray for the peace (shalom) and prosperity of our city, state, and nation** (Jeremiah 29:7).
- a. *"Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city [and nation] to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jeremiah 29:7).*
 - b. We have a part and God has a part.
 - c. We actually have to work and pray for shalom-- wholeness, human flourishing, and well-being.
 - d. We also have to work actively for the prosperity of the city and nation, so that it prospers physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
6. **Fight the good fight of faith** (1 Timothy 6:12).
- a. The whole of the Christian life is a great contest requiring discipline and purpose.

- b. The present tense “fight” means that it is a continuous struggle.
7. **Fight with the weapons of the kingdom of God** (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).
 - a. *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).*
 - b. The passage in 1 Timothy 6:11 mentions 6 weapons: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance (patience), and gentleness. And, there are many other weapons of the kingdom of God mentioned throughout God’s Word.
 - c. Timothy was warned to flee the heresy (false teaching), divisiveness (grumbling and argumentative), and greed (materialism) that Paul had denounced in vv. 3–10. He was challenged to “pursue” (“constantly strive for,” Williams) six virtues mentioned in three pairs. Each trait represents a must to insure Timothy’s effectiveness in his ministry. The term “righteousness” refers primarily to upright conduct before human beings, and “godliness” describes an open and obedient relationship before God. The words “faith” and “love” reflect trust in God and benevolence and goodwill toward others (see 2 Thess. 1:3; Titus 2:2). Timothy would need “endurance” (hypomonē) in order to guarantee staying power for his difficult task. He needed “gentleness” in order to deal effectively with cantankerous heretics and wavering believers (Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin; *1, 2 Timothy, Titus, vol. 34, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), pps. 171–172).
8. **Remember our calling: we are called to partner with Jesus on his mission in the earth together.**
 - a. God has chosen to work through human institutions and human beings.
 - b. And, all human institutions, like political parties and branches of government, are flawed.
 - c. We are partnering with the Lord to restore individuals, systems, communities, and nations to God’s design.
 - d. Sometimes, we get confused and declare that one way is God’s way, like one party is Christian and the other isn’t, or one solution is Christian and another isn’t.
 - i. If you are a Christian, I guarantee you that there are positions, people, and platform statements by political parties that violate your beliefs and understanding of the kingdom of God.
 - e. When we do share our views, let’s speak our truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and share what we believe in gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15), rather than being argumentative, condemning, or dismissive.
 - f. Let’s work to stay connected and avoid distancing and cut off.

- g. And, let's look for men and women of shalom everywhere we go (Luke 10:6).
9. **Pray that we would show up differently in culture.**
- a. *Live such good lives among the [unbelievers] that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us (1 Peter 2:12).*
 - b. Matthew 5:43-45; 22:37-39; John 3:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; 1 John 4:7-21; Galatians 5:13-15.
10. **Pray that whatever happens we will conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippian 1:27-30; 4:4-7).**
- a. Steadfastness: stand firm; don't quit, don't give up.
 - b. Unity: contending as one for the faith of the gospel.
 - c. Courage: without being frightened in any way by those who oppose us.
 - d. Joy: Whatever we go through and whatever we experience, we are a people who choose to respond in joy, to express joy, and to live from the place of joy in Christ
11. **Pray for the revival of the church.**
- a. Isaiah 60:1-3; Ephesians 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:9-17.
 - b. Pray that followers of Jesus would pray and work for the wholeness and well-being of our nation (Jeremiah 29:7).
 - i. *"Make yourselves at home [in your nation] and work for the country's welfare. Pray for [the nation's] well-being. If things go well for [the nation], things will go well for you" (Jeremiah 29:7 MSG).*
 - c. Pray that believers would join Jesus on his mission in their spheres of influence throughout our country, including all the sectors of society (Matthew 5:13-16).
12. **Pray for spiritual awakening for our culture.**
- a. Isaiah 30:18-22; Isaiah 64:1-5; Psalm 33:10-12, 97:1-12.
 - b. Ask the Lord to bless America with spiritual awakening.
 - c. Ask God to bless America by raising up godly leaders at the local, state, and national levels.
 - d. Ask the Lord to bless America economically so that all people in our nation can have enough and so we can be a blessing to the entire world.
 - e. Pray for the plans, purposes, and prophetic words for our nation to come to fruition.
 - f. Ask the Lord to have mercy on our nation.

Here is what I am encouraging you to do in this election cycle:

- 1. To seek the Lord.

2. To pray.
3. To get informed about candidates and issues.
4. To vote your values based on the leading of the Lord.
5. To serve in the election process as you have grace and capacity.
6. To make godly declarations over our nation, leaders, and processes, rather than speaking judgment and curses.
7. To stand in the gap for the purposes of the Lord in our spheres of influence, welcoming the King of Glory and his purposes and saying “no” to the schemes and plans of the enemy.

Closing:

Thank the Lord for who he is and for what he is doing at the local, state, national, and international levels of our culture.

I want to leave you with this encouraging passage which Sharon Williams prayed recently:

Isaiah 30:18–22 (NIV84): Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! 19 O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. 20 Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. 21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.” 22 Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away....

Application:

Pray for our elections at the local, state, and national levels.

Ministry Time: