

A Traveler's Guide to Prayer

✠ for everyone (vv.1-2)

✠ for pleasure (vv.3-6)

✠ for peace (vv.7-8)

In the Name of Jesus, the one Mediator between God and man, dearly redeemed believers:

A Traveler's Guide... sounds like mostly science fiction movies. But **A Traveler's Guide to Prayer** takes us beyond the cosmic realm of space travel into the spiritual realm where our souls will some day pass from this life into the next. It's a good reminder: We are just passing "through" – if you're troubled by politics this election year, or health concerns, or family fragmentation, or guilt crushing your soul. Paul said, "***We must go through many hardships (tribulations) to enter the kingdom of God.***" (Acts 14:22) You can put up with an awful lot if you know you're not meant to stay here. Passing "through" means you'll soon be free of heartache and misery. The dear Holy Spirit is bringing relief to our souls through Paul's first letter to young Pastor Timothy. **A Traveler's Guide to Prayer** is...

✠ for everyone (vv.1-2)

Another election, more prayer challenges. Travel broadens horizons, puts politics in perspective.

Until about sixty years ago "the Hindu monarchy killed, imprisoned or expelled anyone who brought the message of Jesus into the country. Nepal is "one of the darkest corners of the world," but our prayers are being heard **for everyone**. Today 36,000 Christian brothers and sisters meet in 40 churches where we could not even send a missionary. Read *Every Neighbor + Every Nation*, a special edition of *Forward in Christ*. Our synod's friendly counselor was walking past a house where screams of a young woman indicated demon possession. He knocked and offered, "I know who can help your daughter." Her oldest brother: "We will never bring our sister to you. You are lower than the lowest caste in Nepal – and you think you can help?" "Only Jesus can help her." "Never will we bring her to you. You are nothing."

As a high government official, surely the oldest brother could help his sister, right? A few weeks of trying drained him and his wife from the 24-hour screaming. Finally they gave up and took her home.

Later the family carried her on a cot. Her father took off his hat, knelt down on the ground and touched his hat to the Christian's feet, pleading, "Please help my daughter." "No theatrics. No drama. No high emotion." They took her into their home and prayed for her. After four weeks the demons left. Christ transformed her into a completely different person. She calls every year on her birthday to say thanks. "Jesus is the one who saved you," they remind her. All the family converted to Christ, except her oldest brother. Hindus and Buddhists tell people, "Only the Christian God has power over demons."

"I urge...that requests (begging), prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone." If they're good officials, they need God's strength. If they're evil, they need God's straightening.

Chaplain Phil Merten had inmates praying for his motorcycle trip home, Racine to Milwaukee. Pouring rain forced him into a gas station wondering what to do. Someone yelled, 'Hey, are you heading for Milwaukee?' Empty motorcycle trailer...right to his front door! "*Traveling mercies*" – God loves answering intercessions for others too.¹ If we can "***live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness,***" the Gospel can spread and grow. While we're "passing through," our God is busy....

¹ Chaplain Phil Merten. "The Prayers of God's People," *Compassion*, Fall 2006, p. 6. Subscribe a www.wlim.net.

✠ for pleasure (vv.3-6)

If people pray at all, it's usually for personal **pleasure**. That's what Jesus calls, "finding your life," while losing it. Like gorging on awesome crab apples and.... But if you pray **for God's pleasure**, He loves to comfort, guide and bless sinners and wayward travelers home to heaven. God "**wants all people to be saved and to come to a clear knowledge of the truth.**" Since Jesus is "**the way and the truth and the life**" (John 14:6), "**no one comes to the Father except through [him].**" He's the "**one Mediator between God and men...who gave himself as a ransom for all**" – even for those who hate Him.

Pastors from Asian countries still encounter personal risk and persecution, being removed from their villages or beaten. One graduate of our Pastoral Studies Institute² could safely stay in the U.S. and minister here. Instead, he and his wife spend their own money to travel back home, risking their lives to tell people about the one true God. On his first trip, he spoke about marriage. "The women were crying," he says. "I was teaching the husbands that God says to love their wives." They'd never heard that before and begged him to bring Bibles next time. Coming back through security all his luggage was searched, but the Bibles were in his backpack. He passed through safely and gave them all away.³

One man complained that after thirty years, he could not remember a single sermon. "Maybe a waste of time for me and the pastor," he wrote in the local paper. After many letters to the editor, one man finally wrote, "I've been married for 30 years. My wife has cooked some 32,000 meals, but I cannot recall the menu for a single meal. Yet I know they all nourished me and gave me the strength. Otherwise, I'd be physically dead. Likewise, I go to church for nourishment or I'd be spiritually dead today!"

✠ for peace (vv.7-8)

God appointed Paul a preacher of the "**the true faith to the Gentiles.**" Congregational challenges trouble, but "**I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or arguing.**" (TPA)

God rescued our congregation and the Wisconsin Synod from the crash of 2008. Deep debt, missionaries recalled, worker training schools hurting – God's people prayed for His **peace** to keep us working together for the Gospel. God went way beyond what we could ask or imagine to grant **peace**.

God-taught language skills from our schools blossomed. "THE CROWN JEWEL OF WORLD MISSIONS," Multi-Language Publications (MLP) has 700 publications in 47 different languages. More than 2.9 million items printed. With Internet and "smart phones" filling the world, national worship groups can train their own pastors to reach out in their culture with music, worship, and instruction.

One doctor who had to leave Pakistan with his wife because of death threats, recalls God's miracle with literature in his hospital. He had asked WELS for materials which his wife began translating into the local Urdu language. He had hospital staff proofread her work even though they were Muslim. One worker hid a copy of Bible teachings in the bathroom, but it was discovered by another woman. She read it and began sharing the Good News. Soon the whole hospital community was hearing about Jesus.

"You cannot preach the Word of God outside – people will kill you," he says. "But in the hospital, the Taliban likes this literature very much. Many Taliban are the real radical Muslims. Their life is changed when they come to the hospital and started reading the Word of God. Sometimes we have more than 800 literature books gone." More than 50,000 people have received this Christian literature. So the doctor would ask Muslims, "Why do you study this Word of God?" They'd answer, "We like it."

How long we're passing through this vale of tears, only God knows. But **A Traveler's Guide to Prayer**, blesses **everyone**, even officials. God's **pleasure** is being fulfilled since He wants everyone to be saved and come into the light of God's truth in Christ. For God's **peace**, pray, Christian, pray! Amen.

² Pastoral Studies Institute (PSI), Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary training pastors in their home cultural.

³ *Every Neighbor + Every Nation = WELS World Missions and You. Forward in Christ*, Vol. 103, No. 9A, Fall 2016, p. 8.

For the study behind this sermon or for copies email m.cordes@comast.net .

You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.wels.us/newlife .

New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church
180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126