

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, meet us today wherever we are and wherever we go; may we recognise Your voice, feel Your touch and be warmed in our hearts. May we therefore make a conscious effort to do what is right in Your eyes; not because You might condemn us for what goes wrong, but because You empower us to do Your will. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for Your real presence which makes this possible. AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Finance

*It is possible to use money for great good or great evil. Pray that the Lord will bring godly people into the financial professions so that the wisdom of Christ might guide us.*

### On-going prayers

- Give thanks for scientists who work to find medical cures
- Pray for those who risk their lives to help keep international peace
- Pray against corruption in high places, in politicians and leaders

## Meditation

Start believing in Christ your God;

Not because you must, but because you have been saved!

Start praying to Jesus Your Lord;

Not just when you need to, but when He prompts you!

Start listening to the voice of God;

Not because you ought to, but because He is speaking!

Start rejoicing in the Holy Spirit;

Not only in church on Sundays, but as Your spirit prompts you!

Start living the life of Christ;

Not for your own sake, but as a witness to the Kingdom of God!

Start expecting the Lord's return;

Not because the world is waiting, but because Christ is coming!

## Bible Study - 1 Timothy 5:17-22

<sup>17</sup> Let the elders who lead well be thought worthy of double pay, especially those who work hard in preaching and teaching; <sup>18</sup> for the scripture says, 'Do not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The worker deserves to be paid.' <sup>19</sup> Do not accept an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup> Openly rebuke those who continue to sin, so everyone else may stand in fear. <sup>21</sup> In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I charge you to keep these instructions without prejudice and without partiality. <sup>22</sup> Do not be hasty to lay your hands on anyone, and take no part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

## Review

Paul continues in this letter to speak clearly and directly, and also controversially! Leadership within the Body of Christ has always been a controversial matter, largely because of people's expectations and the very different characters of the people appointed to leadership roles. It is easy for human tensions to arise because of the passions raised within people about the nature of what they believe and how the Gospel is taught, and also issues of discipline which no one wants to acknowledge but still need to be dealt with. The picture in Paul's day looks very similar to that in our own time.

Who is a good leader who might be worthy of 'double pay?' Some argue that the Greek in verse 17 does not say 'wages'; however the word used does mean 'proper reward for work done'. Some people regard this as meaning 'honour' or 'respect', but this avoids the issue because the Greek does mean material reward. Therefore, when Paul adds in the next verse, 'the worker deserves to be paid' (5:18) it seems clear that he must be talking about pay. We would be unwise to try and build comprehensive principles of clergy pay from mere snippets of texts such as this (along with other scraps such as Paul's references to his own refusal to be paid for his efforts whilst on missionary work – e.g. 2 Thess 7,8,9 and Acts 18:3).

Nevertheless, this statement of Paul to Timothy indicates that the church must give appropriate pay to its appointed leaders or elders, where other passages indicate that missionaries and perhaps evangelists should receive a different kind of support. The reason for this is to enable such people to do their work without financial worry, and verse 18 suggests that they should be given according to their needs, as in the example of an ox treading grain (5:18). Difficulty occurs today when fixed pay scales for clergy do not enable individuals to minister without financial worry or when cultural secrecy and mistrust surround financial affairs and discussions, and little godly ground can be established for an open discussion about genuine need.

I have heard more than one senior church figure say that the most difficult of issues in the life of God's church is that of pay; and alongside this, discipline! This is the next item on the agenda of Paul's letter to Timothy (5:19). His straightforward advice is that multiple witnesses are required to provide grounds to investigate any accusation against a church leader. It would be very helpful if the whole church would accept this counsel, because a great deal of damage is done when one person makes allegations, which then become the subject of rumour or malcontent. What has happened to our churches if Satan can so easily disrupt the work of God? It is unfortunately true that in many places there are far too many scandals and live disciplinary issues; but in my opinion, the heart of these things lies not in the procedures followed but the faith of the parties involved. This is why Paul strongly advises that all matters of discipline and pay are dealt with openly and 'in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ and elect angels' (5:21), and without a hint of prejudice or partiality. Real problems can only be overcome when God's people trust each other in the love of Christ. Without this, bitterness and strife will prevail.

Perhaps Paul was conscious of some difficult situations which existed in the churches he had contact with when he said to Timothy; 'do not be hasty to lay hands on anyone'. He knew that mistakes could easily be made, and that caution was the best advice. In my own ministry, I have had the privilege of trying to give help and advice to ministers and clergy who have endured very difficult times; I have also been asked to give help and advice to churches which have trouble with their appointed leaders. The sadness and tragedy of some of the situations I have come across are almost beyond belief, but I have never found it helpful to try and tie down what should or should not be done to occasional passages of scripture such as this which give a patchwork of advice which may be hard to interpret into a particular situation. I have always found myself appealing to the fundamentals of Christian faith; confession, repentance, forgiveness and healing, for example; and the

abiding life and presence of the Spirit of God in the believer, which should apply to all parties involved.

Perhaps the best direct advice within this passage which we can take and apply to ourselves for whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, especially church difficulties about pay, employment and standards of ministry, is what Paul says right at the end of this text; 'keep yourself pure'.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. How should pay be determined for those who are appointed and anointed for Christian ministry and leadership?
2. How do most church disputes arise in your experience, and how may they be overcome?
3. Discuss in your group the possible meaning of verse 20, and whether there is a place for public rebuke in dealing with disciplinary issues in the church.

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*As indicated above, I have found myself in the situation of trying to help people who have been severely hurt by what has happened within the life of the church, and I am often bewildered and shocked by what appears to be quite ungodly behaviour by some. It certainly seems that where God is most powerfully at work, there is Satan, doing everything possible to make trouble for a church or its leaders. The only way I know which can help people address such issues is firstly to be aware of exactly this; to rebuke the enemy and to pray and seek the Lord's clearest guidance.*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *If you are aware of any issue of discipline or pay within your church or any you know, put aside time over a week to pray into this subject. Pray for the spiritual protection of those involved and for godly outcomes to disputes.*
- *If you are in spiritual dispute with things happening in your church or the people who run certain activities, seek to bring the difficulties out into the open in as god-like a manner as possible. In doing this, seek help and the prayerful support of others.*

## Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, You have called each of us to our home, our families, our places of work and our places of worship. May we honour You by respecting Your call, and all who share these blessings with us, and by fulfilling Your command to 'love one another'. Hear our prayer, Lord Jesus, and establish Your Kingdom in our midst. AMEN