

**“First of All, Then...”:**

*Praying for our Nation in the Midst of our Mission*

*Notes*

“First of all, then, I urge that *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings* be made for **all people...**” (v.1)

Family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, classmates, local churches, members of our community, people with politics and world views that differ from ours.

“...for **kings and all who are in high positions...**” (v.2a)

President Biden, former President Trump, members of our federal, state, and local government, media, cultural influencers, and others.

“...that *we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.* This is good, and it is *pleasing in the sight of God our Savior...*” (vv.2b-3)

It pleases God that we aim to live lives of peace.

“...[God our Savior]...who *desires* **all people** *to be saved* and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For *there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,* who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.” (vv.4-6)

The exaltation of Christ, the triumph of his gospel, and the salvation of all people is God’s desire as well as ours.

“*For this I was appointed* a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.” (v.7)

Each of us (as did Paul) has a vocation, a calling on our lives. Let us pray that we would

## **MEFC Community Group Study Guide**

For the week of July 14th-20th

### **Getting Started**

1. When you hear the words “spiritual gifts” what comes to mind? Wayne Grudem (refreshingly) defines a spiritual gift as: “...any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church.” That’s helpful, isn’t it? It has a way of taking a bit of the mystery out of this discussion. Based on this definition, do you have a sense of how God has gifted you to serve within the church? Explain.

### **Digging Deeper**

2. In Article 6 of our Evangelical Free Church Statement of Faith we confess that: “We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.” Notice how the biblical teaching concerning spiritual gifts is set within the larger framework of the scriptural witness concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Why is this important? What do we lose when we allow our discussion about the gifts of the spirit to be cut loose from the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)?

## Open Your Bible to 1 Corinthians 12...

3. The explicit biblical teaching concerning spiritual gifts is found in 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40; Ephesians 4:7-16; Romans 12:3-8; and 1 Peter 4:10-11. Read briefly through these portions of Scripture together. What do you notice? What encourages you? Surprises you? Confuses you? Take some time to discuss these things together as a group.

4. Last fall, we took some time as a church to walk through a careful discussion of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (see this link [https://www.moundfree.org/\\_files/ugd/537883\\_bd99a6c36e994ca49450f4d4a8963ac9.pdf](https://www.moundfree.org/_files/ugd/537883_bd99a6c36e994ca49450f4d4a8963ac9.pdf)). Why is it important that this continue to remain an issue which we will discuss, even debate, but over which we will never divide? If you recall that public conversation back in September <https://www.youtube.com/live/-NbU3m00KOY> what further reflections do you have (if any) since that time on these matters? Has your personal understanding or application of the biblical texts on this issue changed or stayed the same?

*This final portion of our study brings us back to that last question under the “Getting Started” section (Do you have a sense of how God has gifted you to serve within the church?) In the language of our church membership covenant, we are here considering how we might best come to “discover and deploy our spiritual gifts in loving service” within our congregation.*

5. What are you good at? Don’t simply think in terms “churchy” activities with your answer here (remember Wayne Grudem’s definition of spiritual gifts in the first question of our study). It may be a mental aptitude you have, a physical ability, or some other gifting. Remember, we can (and should) have this discussion without becoming prideful. Paul calls us to think soberly and humbly about our gifting (Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 4:7). So, by God’s grace, what are you good at? Please share with the group.

6. What do you love to do? What is it that when you're doing it, you're left thinking (*this brings me such joy, it is a pleasure to do this*)

7. What have other people told you that you're good at? Obviously, these last three questions may have answers that don't exactly coalesce. For example, you might be good at something that doesn't tend to bring you that much pleasure when you do it. Or, you might enjoy doing something that you're not actually all that good at. Or, you might think you're good at something but no one's ever seen you do it, or they've seen you do it and wouldn't say that you're all that good at it. The real question here is: what, when you do it, tends to bring blessing into the lives of other people (and they've told you as much)?

8. What would you like to learn to do or try doing if someone would only give you the opportunity to explore it? Remember: the pathway of discipleship involves four steps: 1. I do, you watch, we talk. 2. I do, you help, we talk. 3. You do, I help, we talk. 4. You do, I watch, we talk. So...what would you be curious to explore doing?

9. What obvious needs do you see when you look around our church right now? What holes do you see, weaknesses do you observe, opportunities do we have, etc? Are you gifted (based on questions 5-8) to step in and help?

10. We desire to be a church that paints with the colors that God gives us. If you belong to Jesus, then you are a color on our palette. The question is: is your color on our canvas? Close your time together as a group by praying for helping one another to discover and deploy your spiritual gifts in loving service.