

# Pray Without Ceasing

1 Thessalonians 5:17

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**FOCAL Read Together** 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray<sup>1</sup> without ceasing.

When the baby is born into this world the first thing it does is draw air into its lungs, and the second thing it does is to begin to communicate to those around it. The child cries and the child coos. We may not understand exactly what the child wants but its cries tells us that it needs something, and its coos tell us that its satisfied. The parents will start talking to the child from the very start. We will try to teach the child how to talk to us long before we try to teach it how to walk. Humans instinctively know that we must *connect to one another*. We must communicate, fellowship, and love. I cannot satisfy all the needs of my life. I was designed to live in community with others. This is why *peer pressure* has such a strong hold on people. We need others to survive.

Humans are created in the Image of God.

**Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over ...**

The Triune God - communicating from Father to Son to Holy Spirit - said **let US create man in OUR image, after OUR likeness**. We are made in the *image* of God. We are not God, but we were made in His image. We are not animals, for we are **to have dominion** over the animal kingdom. Man is above the animals, and below -

<sup>1</sup> προσεύχομαι, proseuchomai (pronounced *pros-yoo'-khom-ahee*), From G4314 and G2172; to pray to God, that is, *supplicate, worship*: - pray (X earnestly, for), make prayer. + ἀδιαλείπτως, adialeiptōs, (pronounced *ad-ee-al-ipe'-toce*) Adverb from G88; *uninterruptedly*, that is, *without omission* (on an appropriate occasion): - without ceasing.

but created like God by God.

**Genesis 1:27** So **God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.**

How are we like God? We were created to be part of a community. As the Godhead - Father, Son, and Spirit - is a community we are a community. The Scripture says **in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them.** We were created to communicate to one another and to God. As husband and wife speak to one another, as two best friends communicate their lives to one another, God wants us to communicate with Him. **Pastor Rick Warren** rightly said:

**"Human beings are not made for isolation. We were made for connection. Why? Because we were created in the image of God."**

God made us to connect - to communicate - to one another. But He also made us to connect and to communicate with Him. God spoke to Adam and Eve before they ever spoke to one another. God wants us to connect with Him first. We are in His image and after His likeness. God commands the Christian to **pray without ceasing**, to make Him the center of our lives.

**Proverbs 15:29** **The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.**

Just as the baby's parents teach their child how to communicate with them before the child ever takes his

first step, God expects His born again believers to learn how to communicate with Him.

The unbeliever sees prayer as no more than an emergency resource to turn to when all else fails. The believer, on the other hand, should understand that prayer is *communicating with the Lord Who loves you, Who made you, and Who has saved you.* God commands that our prayer to Him be **without ceasing.** This is the Biblical pattern for prayer, and is supported by many other texts. Our Lord Jesus said:

**Luke 21:36** **Watch ye therefore, and pray always<sup>2</sup> ...**

We are to **watch and pray ALWAYS, or literally "at all times"**. The early disciples - as Apostles - understood what Jesus meant for them to do. When there was a struggle in the early Church over the feeding of the widows the Apostles told the local Church to **find seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, and let them be in charge of the widow's tables.** The Apostles said:

**Acts 6:4** **But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.**

They were going to give themselves **continually to prayer.** Prayer is mentioned *first* for a reason. The God called minister, be they pastor, preacher, teacher, or evangelist *must* connect with God before they hope to present God's Word to the people. As **John Owen** said,

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<sup>2</sup> πας καιρός, pas kairos (pronounced) pas kahee-ros' = on all occasions, at all times

**"He that is more frequent in his pulpit to his people than he is in his {prayer} closet for his people, is but a sorry watchman."** Prayer gives us direction. This is why the Scripture repeatedly tells us to **"pray without ceasing"** in a variety of ways. In Romans we are told:

**Romans 12:12 ... be persistent in prayer**<sup>HCSB</sup>.

In Colossians we are commanded,

**Colossians 4:2 Continue in prayer..**

The Apostle tells the Church at Philippi:

**Philippians 4:6 ... in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.**

And as Paul closes his letter to the Church of Ephesus he says:

**Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...**

The command to **pray without ceasing** isn't given to the unbeliever. It is given to those who **are justified by faith in God through the shed Blood of Jesus Christ**. If you are **Children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26)** the Lord commands that you **pray without ceasing**. He is with you always. God wants more than a moment of your time each day. He wants you to **pray without ceasing**.

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HCSB Holman Christian Standard Version used here for clarity

Let's examine the command before us.

## **1. What Is Prayer?**

**FOCAL** 1 Thessalonians 5:17 **Pray without ceasing.**

When we take the command **"Pray without ceasing"** at face value we learn what God means prayer to be. Prayer is communication between the heart of God and the heart of the believer.

**PRAYER BOOKS** Some people use **prayer books** to pray, whereas others - like myself - often pray the Scriptures back to God. There is nothing wrong in this. The Bible forbids **vain repetitions (Matthew 6:7)**, saying the same thing over and over again, for **"this is what unbelievers do, thinking that the more they chatter the more God will hear them"**. Prayer is communication, and we are to speak with God as our Father and our Friend. **Abraham was called the Friend of God (James 2:23)** for he spoke to God and God spoke to him. We do not chatter.

There are times when I pray along with the Shepherd David:

**Psalms 6:6-9 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. {7} Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies. {8} Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD**

**hath heard the voice of my weeping. {9} The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.**

My heart aches at the state of the world, and as I pray I use that Grand Old Book to enrich my prayers. Praying the Scripture back to God makes for powerful prayer. Yet, dear friends, if I am to **pray without ceasing** there are times when I will not have a Bible with me, and yet I am still to pray. My heart - and the Word stored in it - will have to speak to the Lord.

Though we can use the Scriptures and - for some - the prayers of others to strengthen and enrich our prayers, **"pray without ceasing"** means that God wants to hear words written from the Book of your heart.

God wants you to commune with Him as one Friend to Another.

**LOUD OR SILENT?** When I pray, I often **pray out loud**. When I was young we went to a local Church where the pastor said, "Let us pray", then there was a reverent silence as people *thought* their prayers to God. If you **"pray without ceasing"** then there will be times when you will speak out loud to our Lord, and other times when you will make your mind your prayer closet. The Lord knows our thoughts, and hears our prayers whether we speak or think them. The Psalmist said:

**Psalms 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:**

God knows our thoughts. When the children of Israel rebelled against Moses and that old saint turned to God the Lord replied:

**Exodus 14:15 ... Wherefore criest thou unto Me? ...**

Though there is *absolutely no indication* that Moses ever spoke out loud to God. God heard Moses' thoughts, and answered as quickly as Moses prayed.

**KNEELING OR STANDING?** What is the *best way to pray*? Some people like to pray kneeling, others standing, or with arms outstretched.

If we **pray without ceasing** then *our posture in prayer* will naturally change as we go through our day.

If I **pray without ceasing** then I'll pray with my eyes wide open - and both hands on the steering wheel - while driving my car. When I'm alone with God in a prayer closet - be it the forest or in a carpeted room - my environment will dictate my position of prayer. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees who *made a show of their prayers*. He told them:

**Matthew 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.**

**PLACE OF PRAYER?** Does our Lord demand that all prayer **be in a closet**. Absolutely not! If that were true then I could not **pray without ceasing**. Though there are times we should go into solitude to seek God's face - there must also be times when we cannot be in our prayer closet or at the assembly of the local Church. If I am to **pray without ceasing** then I can pray in the mall or in the marketplace.

*My mind can become my prayer closet, and as I walk through the market place I can talk to the Lord*

**Galatians 2:20 ... Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.**

**WHEN DO I PRAY?** Pray without ceasing tells me *when to pray*. I listened to a preacher make an issue of praying in the morning, preaching from the text:

**Psalms 5:3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.**

Is it important to **pray in the morning**? Absolutely. Our Lord Jesus taught His disciples to prayer by saying:

**Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.**

It wouldn't make sense to pray for your **daily bread** at the end of the day. You pray for your sustenance *before you need it*. You pray, "Dear Lord, supply my needs as I go out into this day". We should pray in the morning.

But **pray without ceasing** tells us that we also need to pray at all times, *not just the morning*. The Psalmist said:

**Psalms 55:16-17 As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. {17} Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.**

**Evening, morning, and at noon.** Though we are to **pray without ceasing**, we are at least to pray thrice daily: in the beginning, the middle, and end of our day. The Prophet Daniel prayed three times daily in his prayer closet (**Daniel 6:10**). Jesus went to His mountain prayer closet, we see:

**Luke 6:12 And it came to pass in those days, that {Jesus} went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.**

The Apostle Paul commanded the widows to ...

**1 Timothy 5:5 .... continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.**

Prayer should be at all times, in all positions, in all places, in all ways, and in all circumstances. We are to pray without ceasing.

## **2. Pray Because God Alone Is Able**

We who believe are to pray without ceasing because

**there is but One God - and we are not Him!**

You entered the Christian way of life - not by your works, but through His work. Dear friends, if you are Christians then you became Christians **by praying to God.**

**Romans 10:9-13** That **if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. {10} For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. {11} For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. {12} For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. {13} For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**

We entered the Christian way of life by **calling upon the Name of the Lord. Whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21).** We were born again by believing that Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, and calling upon His Name we prayerfully believed His promise. We realized our sinful estate and, crying out to God "save me", He did!

Having entered the Christian way of life by prayer - being born again of the Spirit and indwelt by the Same - we *live* the Christian way of life by prayer. We are unable, but He is able. We are weak, but He is strong. We are prone to fail, but He is able to keep us

from falling.

The Apostle said:

**Philippians 4:13** **I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.**

Christ must strengthen me. God must empower my life. I must **pray without ceasing.** I must also **pray without ceasing** for God is always with me. We are told:

**Hebrews 13:5-6** **{God} hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. {6} So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.**

In this present world we who believe are surrounded by temptations that can draw us away from God. We are so frail, so subject to failure. We are rarely content with what we have. When I **pray without ceasing** I remember that God is always with me. He will **never leave me nor forsake me.** He is there to **be my Helper, my Comforter, my Guide.** When I am blinded by that which is around me He touches my eyes and lets me see. When in the dark the Lord Who said "**Let there be light, and there was light**" (**Genesis 1:3**) gives me light to chase away the darkness. When I see my many shortcomings He reminds me in prayer that "**He is able to keep me from falling, to present me faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy**" (**Jude 24**).

We often choose one of two different paths when we go through the trials of this life. We either *worry about* it and in desperation try and fix our own problems, or else we become overwhelmed with the trial and move into depression - or worse. Rather than worry the believer who has learned to **pray without ceasing** will do as the Scripture says,

**1 Peter 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.**

Let the Lord handle the problem, and the problem will be handled. If you are in Christ and are truly born again Jesus has told us ..

**Luke 18:1 ... that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;**

God hears our prayers. He has promised to hear our prayers, and promised to deliver us in times of trouble.

**Psalms 34:17-18 The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. {18} The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart...**

### **3. Prayer Changes Things**

**FOCAL** 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

A little girl came to her daddy and asked him for a nickel. Feeling generous he pulled out his wallet and offered her a five dollar bill. The child crossed her

**arms, stuck out her lower lip, and refused to take the bill. Her daddy said, "But honey, that's a five dollar bill". The little girl said, "I don't want that. I want a nickel!"**

Prayer changes how we look at things. It changes our hearts.

As we grow in the Lord and pray we come to the realization that God always wants to give us the very best. Like that little girl we may stomp our feet and demand a nickel when God wants to give us a five dollar bill. We'll never know the difference until the day we - as good children of God - are faithful to God in prayer. Prayer changes our hearts.

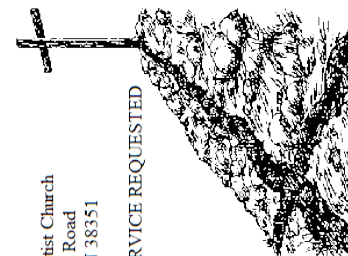
Three thousand years ago **King Solomon** finished building the Temple of God. Solomon prayed that God would make **both the House of God as well as the House of Israel prosperous**. The Lord appeared to Solomon, and told him:

**2 Chronicles 7:12-14 ... I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice. {13} If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; {14} If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.**

What did God tell Solomon? He said, "**Solomon, I've heard your prayer, and I will bless this Temple because of it. But I will not bless your land *until My people, who are called by My Name, humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways***". God will not heal the land until the people of God *act* like the people of God. What did Jesus say?

**Matthew 5:13-16** **Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. {14} Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. {15} Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. {16} Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.**

You belong to God, and God belongs to you. As He is Light, you are to be light. As He is Savor, you are to be savor. **Pray without ceasing.** Politics will not heal our land, but prayer will. Dear Church, just as Solomon's prayer - righteous though it was - could not heal the land by itself, neither can your pastor be the light of the Church. God's Church, His people, **must pray without ceasing.** Our lives must continually look upward to the Lord Who loves us and Who gave Himself for us. We must not despair, but pray. We must not faint, but pray. We must not join in with the world, but pray. May God touch your hearts with His Word!



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**FOCAL Read Together 1 Thessalonians 5:17**  
**Pray<sup>3</sup> without ceasing.**

Genesis 1:26; Genesis 1:27; **Proverbs 15:29**; Luke 21:36; Acts 6:4; **Romans 12:12**; Colossians 4:2; **Philippians 4:6**; Ephesians 6:18

**1. What Is Prayer?**

When we take the command "**Pray without ceasing**" at face value we learn what God means prayer to be. Prayer is communication between the heart of God and the heart of the believer.

**Matthew 6:7**; James 2:23; **Psalms 6:6-9**; **Psalms 139:23**; Exodus 14:15; **Matthew 6:6**; **Psalms 5:3**; **Matthew 6:11**; **Psalms 55:16-17**; **Daniel 6:10**; **Luke 6:12**; **1 Timothy 5:5** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**2. Pray Because God Alone Is Able**

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**We who believe are to pray without ceasing because there is but One God - and we are not Him!**

**Romans 10:9-13**; **Philippians 4:13**; **Hebrews 13:5-6**; **Genesis 1:3**; **Jude 24**; **1 Peter 5:7**; **Luke 18:1**; **Psalms 34:17-18** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**1 Thessalonians 5:17**; **2 Chronicles 7:12-14**; **Matthew 5:13-16** \_\_\_\_\_  
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