

## PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

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### Pray without ceasing

Pray without ceasing, of course, does not require us to spend every hour on our knees. (**I Thessalonians 5:16-18**). Here Paul writes always, without ceasing, and in all circumstances to cast a net over everything we do. Along with joy and gratitude, prayer must pervade every part of life, waking and sleeping, eating and working, serving and resting. We may not pray at every moment, but we do, over time, bring prayer into all moments of our existence. We may not walk with our heads always bowed, but we do always walk in a posture of dependence, ever ready to pour out our hearts to God. Those who pray without ceasing find themselves, like Paul, breaking into prayer spontaneously. Prayer invades the hours after morning devotions as we turn every burden into “**Help me,**” every pleasure into “**Thank you,**” every temptation into “**deliver me,**” and every opportunity for obedience into “**strengthen me.**” Prayer is more than a slot in our schedule; it is the reflex of our hearts, the aroma of our waking hours. The command of prayer is not a guilt trip or a summons to drudgery. It is rather, a call to become who we were made to be. It is a command to live up to our privileges in Jesus Christ. It is an invitation to enjoy our God, not just once in the morning, but all day long. And for those who are in Christ, their the stage of life doesn't matter.

To be sure, no one can manufacture this spirit of dependence through a series of steps; no one can help oneself into unceasing prayer. At the same time, however, no one drifts into such prayer without effort. To grow in praying without ceasing, then, we can begin by rethinking about some of our spiritual practices and expectations, and asking God to train us by his grace. Unceasing prayer depends upon scheduled times, vigilantly guarded, where we cease from everything but prayer. If we want to carry on a lively communion with God, we need to follow the pattern of psalmists, apostles, and our Lord himself, who diligently devoted portions of their day to be alone with God [Psalm 119:62; Daniel 6:10; Acts 3:1; Luke 5:16).

In Scripture, prayer is our response to God's revelation, the human answer to divine speech. We can address God only because God has first addressed us – in creation, certainly, but specially in his word. We will grow to pray without ceasing, only when we carry God's word with us. Just as children learn to speak by hearing their parents' voices, so we learn to pray by listening to our Father. The more his words rest in our hearts, the more readily we will speak them back to him.

We might find ourselves praying more often, and with more relish. If prayer is merely an activity to do, then “pray without ceasing” will sound oppressive. But if prayer is communion with God, Son and Spirit – then we will hear the command differently: “Enjoy God without ceasing. Depend on God without ceasing. Gain strength from God without ceasing. And find that he is ever near, always faithful.” One day soon, we will not struggle to

pray. Prayer will feel us natural as breathing, as pleasurable as tasting fruit from the trees of the New Jerusalem. Until then, persevere to become the person God is remaking us to be.