

## Pray Without Ceasing

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 16-18).*

Pray without ceasing seems like a pretty big request. How can we spend the greater part of our day constantly in prayer? We have a full plate of things to do and expectations to fulfill.

My short answer is that God is seeking a relationship with us. Prayer is our attempt to strengthen our relationship with God.

If you were in the presence of your best friend – a trusted person whom you respected – you would engage in frequent small talk with that friend. If you really trusted that friend you would tell him or her your feelings, your fears and your joys. Many of these you wouldn't discuss with others. They are reserved for that special friend, whom you know cares about you deeply and possesses the wisdom to guide you. God wants that kind of relationship with you. God wants to hear from you often – not just about the big things in your life. He wants to be in on the small talk and be part of your everyday life. You can trust God with the most intimate concerns.



Some people only pray to God when they want something. God doesn't want to have a “what have you done for me lately” relationship. He wants a close relationship based on a mutual love with the Father strengthened through communication.

The part of the verse that says to “give thanks in all circumstances” refers to us being grateful for what the Lord has done for us. It could be our health, our spouse, our family, our church, our vocation – all the things that are important to us. By doing so, we acknowledge God's blessings in our life. The blessings are given to us as opportunities to use them for God's purposes. It could be the opportunity to change lives when we go to work. It could be our opportunity to serve people in need. It could be an opportunity to be the spiritual leader in our family. Many people begin prayer by giving thanks for their many blessings, before presenting their requests to God. I recently read a comment by Rev. Tim Keller who asked the question, “Do we spend more time asking God for things than praising and thanking Him?”

Prayer is our primary way of communicating with God. Prayer doesn't have to happen only when we are on our knees, hands folded and in private. We can talk with God at any time, even in the midst of a crowd. A short prayer can just be a silent prayer in our mind. It doesn't have to be during an official prayer time, but spontaneous in our heart. Oswald Chambers said, “Prayer is the practice of drawing on the Grace of God.” He also said, “Pray now – draw on the Grace of God in your moment of need.”

Prayer is also two-way communication, with us listening for direction from God. His guidance may be signs He places in our path. These are opportunities to fulfill our Christian purpose and to help people in need. Our desire is for God to lead us on a godly path of serving Him by serving others. He may also place thoughts in our mind of what He wants us to do.

I saw a story with an interesting analogy. A young man fell in love with a young lady. He thought about her day and night and desired to spend the rest of his life with her. They talked often. She ended up moving away and they lost touch with each other. Time went by without a word spoken, a letter, text, email or phone call. The busyness of everyday life got in the way of their relationship. Their special friendship evaporated as they drifted apart. The same could happen with our relationship with God if we don't keep in constant communication with Him and we let the busyness of life get in the way.

Praying without ceasing refers to frequent communication with God, building a stronger relationship, and keeping Him at the center of every part of our life. In our faith walk the ultimate goal is to be “one with the father” (John 17:21).

**The Bible Says:** *That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me (John 17:21).*

**Question:** How frequently do you talk with God? Does your prayer include thanks or just requests?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father. I trust You with the most intimate details of my life. Be with me throughout each day and guide my thoughts and my actions, so that I can seek to accomplish Your will. Amen.