

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
Duties of Believers – Prayer

1

Introduction

If God's flock is to be healthy, above all else the relationship between the sheep and the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ the Son of God, must be right.

For that to happen, believers must be mindful of their responsibilities to worship and serve the Lord. Paul gives three exhortations to believers. Believers are to have constant joyfulness, constant prayerfulness, and to have constant thankfulness.

2

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for
you

3

Rejoice Always

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing

Last week we learned that we are to “rejoice always.” This joy is not based in circumstances but from our relationship with Jesus and the Father. They are in control and we are secure in their love. Joyful believers will also be prayerful believers. Those who live their Christian lives in joyful dependency on God will continually recognize their own insufficiency and therefore constantly be in an attitude of prayer.

4

Pray without Ceasing

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing

Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians to **pray without ceasing** is a divine command to all believers. The word "**Pray**" is the most common New Testament word for prayer. It encompasses all the aspects of prayer: submission, confession, petition, intercession, praise, and thanksgiving. **Without ceasing** means "constant" and defines prayer not as some perpetual activity of kneeling and interceding but as a way of life marked by a continual attitude of prayer.

5

Pray without Ceasing

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing

One cannot begin to understand Paul's command to continual prayerfulness without **considering how faithfully Jesus prayed** during His earthly ministry. Jesus was in constant communion with the Father, and the Gospels provide many examples of the Lord's consistent prayer life (Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 9:18, 28–29; cf. John 6:15; 17:1–26). Jesus undoubtedly prayed with a kind of intensity that we believers know little or nothing about. The classic example of such intensity is when Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion.

6

Pray without Ceasing

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing

The strong scriptural emphasis on prayer suggests a substantial list of motivations for Christians to **pray without ceasing**.

1. The believers **desire to glorify the Lord**. Jesus taught the disciples in His model prayer, “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven’ ” (Matt. 6:9–10).
2. The believers **desire for fellowship with God** motivates believers to pray: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.
² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?” (Ps. 42:1–2).

7

Pray without Ceasing

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing

3. Jesus said believers’ prayers would be answered in order that **“the Father may be glorified in the Son”** (John 14:13).
4. Believers should pray for God to **meet their needs**: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11; cf. Luke 11:9–13; 1 John 5:14–15).
5. Christians should pray persistently for **God’s wisdom as they live in the midst of a sinful world**: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

8

Pray without Ceasing

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing

6. The desire for **deliverance from trouble motivates prayer**. Jonah is a vivid example of such motivation: “Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish’s belly. ²And he said: I cried out to the Lord because of my affliction, and He answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, *and* You heard my voice.” (Jonah 2:1–2).

7. Believers should pray for **relief from fear and worry**. Paul encouraged the Philippians: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6–7).

9

Pray without Ceasing

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing

8. Believers should have the motive is **gratitude for past blessings** (Psalm 44:1-4).

9. Believers pray **to be freed from the guilt of sin**. David expressed this when he wrote, “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’; and You forgave the guilt of my sin” (Ps. 32:5; cf. Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9).

10. Believers should be praying **for salvation of the lost**.

10

Pray without Ceasing

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing

11. Believers should **intercede on behalf of others** and how they might be used in those situations (sick, poor, spiritually weak, hurting...).
12. The most important motivation for Christians to pray without ceasing, is their **desire for spiritual growth**. This should be for themselves and for fellow believers (Eph 4:14-21).

11

So What ...

George Mueller stands as an example of prayer. He founded an orphanage in England in the 1800's. He used it as a test of God's faithfulness and prayer. He never asked anyone for money, and God miraculously provided. Not a single meal was missed or bill unpaid. When it was done, he had 5 orphanages and ministered to over 10,000 children.

Mueller also had a list of 10 names found in his bible when he died. 9 of the names were crossed out with a date. When this was investigated, it appears that Mueller had a list of 10 people that he prayed for their salvation. As mentioned, 9 had gotten saved and the last came to know Christ at his funeral.

What are you praying for?

12