

Prayers of the Saints: Praying Without Ceasing – Individually

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SCRIPTURE

Ex 30:7-8: And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it [*the altar of incense*]. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations.

Mal 1:11: For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.

Rev 5:8: And when He [*the Lamb*] had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, reach holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.



PRAYING WITHOUT CEASING – INDIVIDUALLY

I. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

- A. What does it mean to “pray without ceasing”?

- B. What does prayer have to do with *rejoicing always* and *giving thanks in all circumstances*?

- C. How can we pray when we don't feel like praying?

II. Methods of Praying

- A. **Prayer list** (or journal)

- B. **Days of the week for various topics**
 1. Monday: family
 2. Tuesday: church family
 3. Wednesday: struggling believers & non-believers
 4. Thursday: Missions
 5. Friday: Local, state, and national government
 6. Saturday: _____
 7. Sunday: _____

- C. **Note cards** (with topics, scripture verses, etc.)

Richard Trist, an Australian pastor, described his first encounter with John Stott, one of the world's leading theologians and pastors. Trist had just flown in from Australia to be the preaching pastor under Stott at All Souls Church, in London. As he and his family were unpacking, the phone rang: “It's John Stott here. I just wanted to welcome you to London and let you know I have been praying for you. How are you and Glenda, and the children Luke, Sophie, Lily and Grace?” Trist was struck not only by an invitation to tea but also by the fact that Stott had *already* been praying for him and his family by name. Trist soon discovered Stott's personal habits of prayer. As soon as John got up in the morning, he sat on the edge of his bed and prayed:

Good morning heavenly Father, good morning Lord Jesus, good morning Holy Spirit. Heavenly Father, I pray that I may live this day in your presence and please you more and more. Lord Jesus, I pray that this day I may take up my cross and follow you. Holy Spirit, I pray that this day you will fill me with yourself and cause your fruit to ripen in my life: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control. Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons in one God, have mercy to me.

Stott's “prayer system” consisted of an old leather-bound book stuffed with papers containing hundreds of names of people he had met in his travels. After reading the Bible, he opened his prayer book and went to work.

—Paul Miller, *A Praying Church*

- D. **Prayer by association** — especially while driving
1. See a Carolina Tree Care truck? Pray for Gordon Spaugh
 2. See a school? Pray for our teachers: Alison Gurley, Elizabeth Evans, Katy Klutz, Sheryl Troutman, Nita Whitaker...
 3. Pass a church? Pray for your pastors
 4. See the FOX Sports logo on TV? Pray for Jesse Larson
 5. Pass a hospital? Pray for our doctors: Hans Mah, Terri Smith, David Beard, Wes Hudson
 6. Pass a Firehouse? Pray for Mike Wilson
 7. Other ideas? (driving over RR tracks, seeing a squirrel, glimpsing a red cardinal, seeing a port-a-potty, etc.)
- E. **Insomnia prayers:** “Okay, Lord, I can’t sleep! Who would you have me pray for?”
- F. **On-the-spot prayers:** when someone asks if you can pray for them, don’t just promise you will. Seize the moment and ask, “Can I pray with you now?”
- G. **Other methods?**

III. Corporate Prayer: Prayer for the Colossians

The below prayer is based on Colossians 1:9-14

LEADER: *Dear Father, we ask that you would continually fill us with the knowledge of Your will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives...*

Let us ask the Lord to fill us with knowing His will (for us, for our families, for the church, etc.).

Let us ask for the Holy Spirit to give us understanding in knowing the Father’s will for us.

LEADER: *We pray that we would live a life worthy of You, O God, and to please You in every way...*

Let us confess where we haven’t been living in a way that’s been pleasing to God. And let us ask for the power to live a life worthy of our calling.

Of course, in seasons of distress and grief he alone is able to find relief and even be joyful (in view of Rom. 8:28, 35-39) who at the Father’s throne makes all his wants and wishes known. Hence, the directive “Always be joyful” is immediately followed by “Ceaselessly pray.” The most comprehensive word for *prayer* [in Greek] is used here. For synonyms see the striking passage Phil. 4:6. What Paul means is: there must be no decline in the regularity of the habit of “taking hold on God” in the midst of all circumstances of life. Cf. Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2. The apostle could afford to say this, for he himself gave the example (3:10; II Thess. 1:11; Eph. 1:16; 3:14).

—Simon Kistemaker, *NT Commentary*

Pray without ceasing, or else your flower will fade and your spiritual fruit will never ripen. Continue in prayer until the last moment of your life...

As we breathe without ceasing, so must we pray without ceasing. As there is no attainment in life, of health, or of strength, or of muscular vigour which can place a man beyond the necessity of breathing, so no condition of spiritual growth or advance in grace will allow a man to dispense with prayer.

—Charles Spurgeon

Paul said we should “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17), meaning that we should, if possible, do everything all day with conscious reference to God (1 Cor 10:31). There should be background music of thankfulness and joy behind every incident in our day, audible only to us (Col 3:16-17). This kind of spontaneous and constant prayer during the day should be a habit of the heart. We will never develop it, however, unless we take up the discipline of regular, daily prayer.

—Timothy Keller, *Prayer*

LEADER: *Enable us to bear fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of You...*

Let us ask the Lord to enable us to bear the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Let us ask the Lord that we might grow in the knowledge of Him — not just knowing about Him, but truly knowing Him.

LEADER: *We pray that we would be strengthened with all power according to Your glorious might so that we may have great endurance and patience...*

Let us ask the Lord to strengthen us with His power for whatever He calls us to.

Let us ask for great endurance and patience in our lives, families, and church.

LEADER: *We give joyful thanks to the You, Father, who have qualified us to share in the inheritance of Your holy people in the kingdom of light...*

Let us give thanks to the Lord who has qualified us to share in Christ's inheritance. Let us thank Him who has made us holy by the blood of Christ.

Let us ask that the light of Christ would shine through us.

LEADER: *For You have rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son You love, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Let us thank the Lord who has rescued us from darkness and has brought us into His Kingdom. Let us thank the Lord for His redeeming of us and for His forgiveness of us.