

Without Ceasing | 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To learn the importance of prayer and praying for each other.

Icebreaker: How did you learn to pray? Who first taught you?

Discussion

Read:

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing (ESV)

1. What can't Paul mean when he says to "pray without ceasing"?

Let's re-examine Jesus' prayer life.

Luke 5:16

¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.

2. What do we learn about prayer by the fact that Jesus often withdrew to pray?
3. What might be some wilderness places (when you are alone and have less distractions) where you could prioritize space for prayer?

Read:

But, Jesus didn't just pray in those undistracted, private settings. Keith listed out a handful of examples of when Jesus prayed.

- At his baptism
- Before choosing his disciples
- Before breaking the bread when he fed 5,000 people
- At the transfiguration
- Before healing people
- Before raising Lazarus from the dead
- When calming a storm as the disciples thought they were going to drown

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- Before responding to the traps set by religious leaders
- When he sent 70 followers out to represent him to the world
- Before he was betrayed
- When he stood on trial from false charges
- Before he was crucified
- While he was on the cross and the moment of his death

4. What did “pray without ceasing” look like in Jesus’ life?

Read:

One reason we don’t pray without ceasing is because we think we’re too busy. Keith mentioned this story from Tim Keller in his book “Prayer.” In a particularly challenging season of life Tim’s wife, Kathy, asked Tim to begin praying with her every night and used this illustration:

“Imagine you were diagnosed with such a lethal condition that the doctor told you that you would die within hours unless you took a particular medicine—a pill every night before going to sleep. Imagine that you were told that you could never miss it or you would die. Would you forget? Would you not get around to it some nights? No—it would be so crucial that you wouldn’t forget, you would never miss. Well, if we don’t pray together to God, we’re not going to make it because of all we are facing. I’m certainly not. We have to pray, we can’t let it just slip our minds.

5. What’s wrong with thinking we’re too busy to pray?

Read:

[Luke 11:1](#)

Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

6. What’s comforting about the disciples asking Jesus to teach them to pray? How might we need to ask that question?

Read:

[Romans 15:30](#)

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.

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7. If Paul urged others to pray for him in his struggles, what will it take for us to pray for each other?

Sharing and Prayer:

Bring note cards, sticky pads, or another means of people recording prayer requests. Have everyone write a personal, meaningful prayer request for the next two weeks that he or she gives to the person on their right. Allow some time to have that person pray for that prayer request then encourage everyone to pray for that prayer request throughout the next two weeks.