**Discipleship Explored, Prayer**

**Message Outline**

1 Thessalonians 5 New International Version (NIV)

**12**Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you.**13**Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. **14**And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. **15**Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

**16**Rejoice always, **17**pray continually, **18**give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

**19**Do not quench the Spirit. **20**Do not treat prophecies with contempt**21**but test them all; hold on to what is good, **22**reject every kind of evil.

**23**May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24**The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

**25**Brothers and sisters, pray for us.

Prayer is both a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for our faith

Pray without \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ like God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ without \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Pray without \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The word Prayer here is made up of two words: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *and* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Prós* means a shift in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and a sense of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Application: Pray with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Pray without \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Euxomai* means to make a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ backed by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ worship

Application: Pray with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

“Come \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with God, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ your life in exchange for His. Maintain an attitude of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as an ongoing part of your life, and be sure to give Him \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in advance for moving on your behalf.…”

Pray without ceasing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God loves without failing

It is an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Pray without ceasing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that is who you are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Soul Food Day 1**

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**Meaning of Pray without Ceasing**

“Praying without ceasing” means at least three things.

First, it means that t**here is a spirit of dependence that should permeate all we do**. This is the very spirit and essence of prayer. So, even when we are not speaking consciously to God, there is a deep, abiding dependence on him that is woven into the heart of faith. In that sense, we “pray” or have the spirit of prayer continuously.

Second – and I think this is what Paul has in mind most immediately – praying without ceasing means **praying repeatedly and often.** I base this on the use of the word “without ceasing” in Romans 1:9, where Paul says, “For God is my witness, who I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that *without ceasing*I mention you.” Now we can be sure that Paul did not mention the Romans every minute of his waking life, or even every minute of his prayers. He prayed about many other things. But he mentioned them over and over, and often. So “without ceasing” doesn’t mean that, verbally or mentally, we have to be speaking prayers every minute of the day in the fight for joy. It means we should pray over and over, and often. Our default mental state should be: “O God, help…”

Third, praying without ceasing means **not giving up on prayer.** Don’t ever come to a point in your life where you cease to pray at all. Don’t abandon the God of hope and say, “There’s no use praying.” Jesus is very jealous for us to learn this lesson. One of his parables is introduced by the words, “And he told them a parable to the effect tha tthey ought always to pray *and not lose heart.*He knew our experience in prayer would tempt us to quit altogether. So he, along with the apostle Paul, says, Never lose heart. Go on praying. Don’t cease.

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Adapted from: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/what-does-it-mean-to-pray-without-ceasing/>

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**Soul Food Day 2**

1 Thessalonians 5 New International Version (NIV)

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**The Most Common Word for Prayer**

The most common Greek word translated “prayer” in the New Testament is the word *proseuche*. This particular word and its various forms is used approximately 127 times in the New Testament. It is the word that Paul uses in Ephesians 6:18, when he says, “Praying always with all prayer.…” The word “prayer” in this verse is a translation of the word *proseuche*. Today I would like to tell you about this word and what it means for you and me.

The word *proseuche* is a compound of the words *pros* and *euche*. The word *pros* is a preposition that means *toward*, and it can denote *a sense of closeness*. For example, one scholar says the word *pros*is used to portray the intimate relationship that exists between the members of the Godhead. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with*God.…” The word “with” is taken from the word *pros*. By using this word to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is telling us that theirs is an intimate relationship. One expositor has translated the verse, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *face to face* with God.…”

The word *pros* is used in Ephesians 6:12 to picture our *close contact* with unseen, demonic spirits that have been marshaled against us. Nearly everywhere it is used in the New Testament, the word *pros*carries the meaning of *close, up-front, intimate contact with someone else*.

The second part of the word *proseuche* is taken from the word *euche*. The word *euche* is an old Greek word that describes *a wish, desire, prayer*, or *vow*. It was originally used to depict a person who made some kind of vow to God because of some need or desire in his or her life. This individual would vow to give something of great value to God in exchange for a favorable answer to prayer.

In Greek culture, before prayer was verbalized and offered to a “god,” a commemorative altar was set up and thanksgiving was offered on that altar. Such offerings of praise and thanksgiving were called *votive offerings* (from the word “vow”). These votive offerings were similar to a pledge. The person would promise that once his prayer had been answered, he would be back to give additional thanksgiving to God. These votive offerings of praise and worship were elaborate and well-planned. Giving thanks to a deity was a significant event, so it was done in a serious and grandiose manner to outwardly demonstrate a thankful heart.

All of this is included in the background of the word *proseuche*, the word used more than any other for “prayer” in the New Testament. Keep in mind, the majority of Paul’s readers were Greek in origin and knew the cultural background of this word; hence, they understood its full ramifications. *What a picture of prayer this is!*

This tells us several important things about prayer. First, the word *proseuche* tells us that prayer should bring us face to face and into close contact with God. Prayer is more than a mechanical act or a formula to follow; it is a vehicle to bring us to a place whereby we may enjoy *a close, intimate relationship with God*.

The idea of *sacrifice* is also associated with this word for “prayer.” It portrayed an individual who desired to see his prayer answered so desperately that he was willing to surrender everything he owned in exchange for answered prayer. Clearly, this describes an altar of sacrifice and consecration in prayer whereby a believer’s life is yielded entirely to God.

Although the Holy Spirit may convict our hearts of areas that need to be surrendered to His sanctifying power, He will never forcibly take anything from us. Thus, this particular word for prayer tells of a place of decision, a place of consecration, an altar where we freely vow to give our lives to God in exchange for His life. Because the word *proseuche* carries this meaning of surrender and sacrifice, we can know that God obviously desires to do more than merely bless us — He wants to change us! He wants us to come to a place of consecration where we meet with Him face to face and surrender every area of our lives to Him, and in exchange, we are touched and changed by His power and Presence.

I think you can see that the word for “prayer” used most often in the New Testament is more than simply a prayer request. This word demands *surrender*, *consecration*, and *thanksgiving*from us. The idea of the word *proseuche*is this: *“Come face to face with God, and surrender your life in exchange for His. Maintain an attitude of consecration as an ongoing part of your life, and be sure to give Him thanks in advance for moving on your behalf.…”*

The possible references for the word *proseuche* are far too many to list right now, but I suggest that you study for yourself many of the 127 places where it is used in the New Testament. However, be sure you don’t just study this subject of prayer — *you also need to do it*!

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Adapted from: <https://renner.org/the-most-common-word-for-prayer-in-the-new-testament/>

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**Soul Food Day 3**

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**12**Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you.**13**Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. **14**And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. **15**Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

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**The Living Word**

The Bible is a book of knowledge but it is also a living word. This means that the Bible not only enriches our minds, but it also penetrates our hearts (see Hebrews 4:12). Sometimes when we focus so much on what the Bible says we sometimes miss what God is trying to say to us right now. That is why sometimes we just need to carve our space, often in silence, to mediate on scripture. That is what we will do today: mediate and rest in scripture. We will be there to guide you. Read the scripture slowly and then sit in still silence for one-minute resting in God. We will give you questions you can ask to God, however, allow the Holy Spirit to work on your heart what he wants in this time. Let’s pray, *Father God guide as we find you in your word.*

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-25

*Was there a word or phrase that stood out?*

Sit and listen in silence for 1 minute

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-25

*Is there anyone in your life who exemplifies all these qualities listed?*

Sit and listen in silence for 1 minute

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-25

*What does it look like in your own life to pray without ceasing or to pray continually?*

Sit and listen in silence for 1 minute

*Pray to God*

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
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**Soul Food Day 4**

Acts 2:42-47

**42**They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. **43**Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. **44**All the believers were together and had everything in common. **45**They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. **46**Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47**praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

**Prayer of the Church**

Prayer occupies a significant place in the Book of Acts. Almost all of its twenty-eight chapters mention the Church praying. In chapter one, the church waited for the Holy Spirit’s coming by praying. In chapter two, after the Church was born, the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, breaking of bread and to prayer.

In chapter three, they healed a man who was crippled from birth through prayer.
In chapter 4, when the Church was persecuted by the Sanhedrin, they prayed and asked the Lord to give them boldness to continue witnessing for Christ.
In chapter 6, the apostles said: `We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.’
In chapter 7, before Stephen was martyred, he knelt down, prayed aloud and then fell asleep.
In chapter 8, Peter and John prayed for the believers in Samaria, and they received the Holy Spirit.
In chapter 9, after turning to the Lord, Saul prayed.
In chapter 10, the angel of the Lord appeared to Cornelius as he prayed.
In chapter 12, the Church prayed for Peter earnestly when he was imprisoned.
In chapter 13, while the leaders of the Antioch church were fasting and praying, the Lord commissioned Paul and Barnabas to do mission work.
In chapter 14, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for the churches with prayer and fasting.
In chapter 16, Paul led Lydia to the Lord in a place of prayer and through prayer, the prison doors were opened.
In chapters 17, 18, 19, Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus were covered in prayer- when we study Paul’s epistles, we realize that he always prayed.
In chapter 20, Paul’s prayer brought Eutychus back from the dead.
In chapter 21, when Paul and his co-workers were about to part ways, they knelt down on the beach to pray.
In chapters 22- 26, of course Paul had prayed as he testified of Jesus before the Jews, the Sanhedrin, Felix, & King Agrippa.
In chapter 27, in the face of a storm, Paul prayed.
In chapter 28, after the storm, Paul prayed for a sick man, and the man received healing from the Lord.

Prayer, prayer, prayer! Prayer was a mark of the Early Church. In Acts, we see that when God’s people pray, circumstances changed. May the Lord have mercy on us for we do not pray as much as we should. We must pray more.

Every small group must pray when they meet together. All small group leaders, you must set aside time for prayer among your members. Prayer is a ministry. One day, my wife and I visited an 80-year old sister. This sister lamented that she is not as physically strong as she was in her younger days and added that the only thing she could do now was to pray. She said: `Pastor, I often pray for you.’ Immediately I expressed my deep appreciation for her prayers!

In 1988, when I was about to come to the Philippines, my mother wasn’t keen on the idea due to the uncertain situation in this country. Later on my mother said, “If the Lord is truly calling you to the Philippines, I cannot oppose. I can only pray for you every day.” Now that my mother is gone, I believe there are many people who continue to pray for me. This aged sister is one of them. The Early Church was a church that prayed. How about our church, how is its prayer life? Have you prayed for the church?

Thankfully because of Jesus and his prayer life, we can pray more! We can have communion with the living God because of Jesus. Through Jesus, we can find joy in prayer and the church can grow in prayer as we trust in him. Amen!

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Adapted from: <https://cbcp.org/blog/2011/05/22/acts-2-three-things/>

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**Soul Food Day 5**

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**25**Brothers and sisters, pray for us.

**Prayer as Informal Devotion**

Some translations say to “Pray without ceasing.”

When I was younger and heard this verse, my first impulse was to think of Julius Caesar or Caesar Salads. I was all like, “Who are these people who are praying with salads?” It was a confusing time for me.

But once I studied this verse...I saw something else. And it scared me.

To me, prayer was this all-encompassing act of service and devotion. It required me being appropriately dressed, in a holy place of some kind and at a minimum, it was to go on for at least 45 minutes. Maybe even an hour because that seemed like a good round number. And I couldn’t even consider opening my eyes throughout the whole thing.

You can understand why the act of praying was such an intimidating thing to me. The talking to God part wasn’t so scary but it was more feeling like if I didn’t do it in just the right way, He wouldn’t listen and He might even get mad at me.

In my mind God would say:

“Look at him. He’s down there praying to Me and he’s already opened his eyes twice. Not to mention him zoning out and thinking about stuffed crust pizza for 45 seconds. I’m so mad right now”

But when I was a little older, I had a breakthrough. My youth pastor talked about how prayer with God wasn’t supposed to be this big ordeal, it didn’t need to be a ritual. And it wasn’t something we HAD to do. It was something we GOT to do. He compared it to talking with a friend, only that “friend” was also the Master and Creator of the universe, nbd\*.

That idea changed everything for me.

Should prayer with God be given its proper respect? Absolutely! After all, you are talking to God. But don’t let the layers of what you think you’re supposed to do get in the way of what God wants most with us: relationship.

And don’t think of “praying without ceasing” as a task or a chore. Think of it as something we get to do. With or without Caesar Salads!

**Ask:**What are some ways you get hung up on prayer? What keeps you from praying? Seek out someone whose prayer life you admire and ask them what they do. Try out some of those ideas and figure out how you pray best.

**Pray:**God, thank you so much for being willing to listen to me. You want to have a relationship with me. You want to talk with me. You even desire me to pray about my thoughts, worries and fears. Help me to listen as much as I talk. And help me to pray without ceasing.

*\*nbd - means no big deal. It took me years to figure out that it wasn’t no birthday. Believe me, when I realized that it re-wrote years of my life.*

Application

1. What did you hear? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

Adapted from: <https://skitguys.com/blog/how-to-pray-without-ceasing?gclid=CjwKCAjwnrjrBRAMEiwAXsCc47OLdy_G5DNPogG5cSGOPVXbLVK0wUWKGuTGZgeYmKYx-jsKO3Pz7xoCjSsQAvD_BwE>

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**houseChurch Material**

**Have different readers share the verse from 2 or more translations**

**﻿Reflect between each reading**

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**Application**

1. What did you hear during the reading? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?
2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said? How do you feel comforted, convicted and challenged from the reading?
3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?
4. Share any of the above discoveries with your houseChurch. Ask each other, “What is your nugget?”

**Discussion Questions**

1. Count how many times ‘always’ or ‘all’ appears in this passage and then compare the use of ‘always’ (or ‘constantly’ in some translations) in Romans 1:9. What do you think Paul means by using these words?
2. How is your prayer life? What makes it hard for you to pray continually?
3. The context of this chapter is the day of the Lord. Jesus is coming back like a thief in the night, therefore we must be ready. How does this fact affect your actions and your prayer life? See especially verse 23-24.

Now talk to Jesus