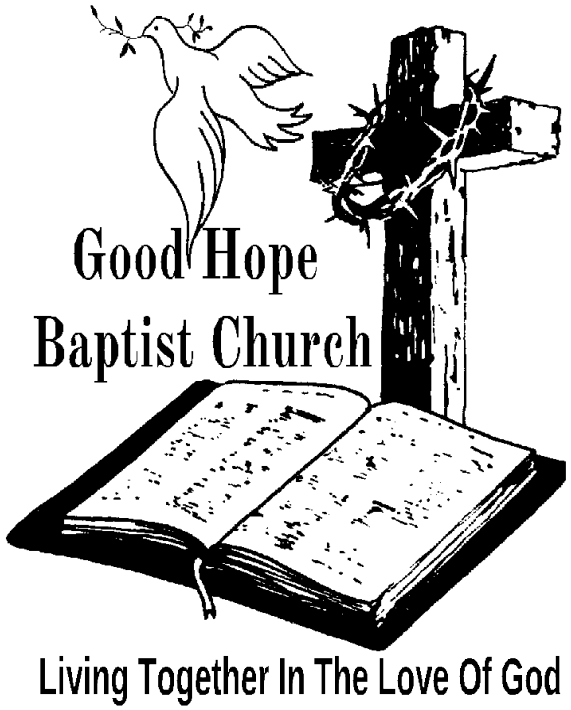
Your Father Wants To Talk To You

1 Thessalonians 5:17



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FOCAL Read Together **1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing.**

Illustrate A little boy was bored, and because he was bored he was causing a commotion at Church. His daddy warned him several times, but the child just wasn't listening. Finally the daddy stood up, picked up the child, and whispered, **"You and I are going to have a little talk, young man!"** As they headed toward the door the child cried out, **"Somebody, PLEASE pray for me!"**

Just like this little boy, too many people view prayer as an "emergency brake" - something you pull only when you've tried everything else. Others think that prayer is something done in Church, or when you go to bed at night:

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take!

In a *Newsweek* cover story ("Talking to God", January 6, 1992) it was noted that a **Gallup poll** found that **78% of Americans prayed once a week, and 57% prayed once a day.** The Newsweek article went on to say:

"Some of these prayers are born *in extremis*: there are few atheists in cancer wards or unemployment lines. But in allegedly rootless, materialistic, self centered America, there is also a hunger for a personal experience with God that prayer seeks to

satisfy."

Prayer is no mystery. It is not someone sitting in a "lotus position" like a Buddha or a Hindi growling syllables and tones to a mystical god.

Prayer is communication. It is talking to God as a Person. It is conversation with the Eternal and Almighty God.

When a child is born into this life, the first thing it does is begin to communicate. The child cries, it complains with unintelligible words. It makes statements that make no sense. Is it saying **"Daddy"**, or is that just **"da da da"**, a bunch of sounds. As parents we worked with our children, repeating words over and over again. We knew how to talk, but they didn't. So we kept on trying and repeating. When the child wanted something he'd point at it. We'd say, **"What do you want? Do you want *water*? Say it! Say *water*."** The needs of the child drove the child to speak. The child wanted to communicate, to talk to us, and we wanted to talk to our children.

Illustrate On **March 11, 2011** there was a terrible **9.0 magnitude earthquake in Japan, killing an estimated 12731 people** and injuring 14706 others. On Thursday, April 7 there was a 7.1 magnitude aftershock that killed even more. I have heard preachers speculating that **perhaps God is judging Japan for its previous rejection of Him**. I don't believe that. In Jesus' day the **Governor Pilate** heard that there were some Galilean Jews who were planning an uprising against Rome. When he heard they were in the Temple of God worshiping Pilate sent his soldiers to the Temple to kill those men on the very grounds. **Someone asked Jesus, "Were these Galileans such great sinners that God allowed Pilate to do this terrible thing, spilling their blood on the holy grounds of the Temple?** How did Jesus reply? He said:

Luke 13:2-5 (NIV) **"Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? 3 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. 4 Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them, do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."**

Our world is a sinful and a fallen world where bad things happen. God the Father is calling everyone to **repent** - turn away from this world - and to come to Him. **God is saying to those who do not Him as Father, "Believe that Jesus died for you, and rose again for you. Believe it - and show your belief by talking to Me. Call out to Me, and ask Me to be your Father. Turn from your way, and believe My Way, My Son Jesus Christ."**

Bad things happen in this life, and we do not understand the bad. But the greatest thing of all is not to live without the bad, but to fail to walk with the God Who is so good. Going back to my earlier illustration, when a baby is first born it comes from the warmth of the mother and into the misery of cold, covered with icky stuff. It cries, screaming in baby talk, "Why is this happening to me?".

It's stomach hurts, and it doesn't know it's hungry. It feels out of place. But as the child grows it learns that it's needs are met by running to the arms of Momma or Daddy. The parents feed the child, clothe it, discipline it, give it a place to stay. And though the child doesn't understand why its parents do what they do, it trusts their heart.

1. God the Father Loves You, And Wants To Build A Relationship With You

What does it take to build a relationship? Communication! Conversation! Your Father wants to talk to you. You enter the Christian way of life by prayer, and you grow to know your Heavenly Father through prayer.

Consider those three little words for a moment, **"Pray without ceasing"**. First of all, this is a COMMAND, and it is a command that anybody can follow but sadly few attempt.

Illustrate God didn't say **"Study your Bible without ceasing"**. It's good to study the Bible, and every Christian ought to be reading his or her Bible every single day. The Bible is God's Written Word to us, and we need to read it. But you can't study your Bible and eat. You can't study your Bible and work. You can't take a shower and study your Bible. You have to stop studying and reading your Bible when you're mowing your grass. When you're driving your car, you can't read your Bible. **But you CAN pray without ceasing**.

Illustrate God didn't say, **"Sit under preaching without ceasing"**. Some of you have sat under long and boring sermons - I hope this isn't one of them! I heard of a preacher once who used to time his sermons by popping a mint in his mouth. When the mint was gone, he would conclude his sermon. One Sunday he kept preaching until he looked out and saw his wife waving her watch. He concluded the sermon - about an hour and a half long - and realized **he had inadvertently put a shirt button in his mouth!** We can't listen to sermons without ceasing, but we can pray without ceasing.

When I pray without ceasing, I am reminded that my God is always there!

We do evil when we forget where God is. **Business Meetings in local Churches become as rowdy as saloons when the members forget that God is there**. God is there. Jesus Christ is with us. The Lord Jesus promised:

Matthew 28:20 (KJV) ... lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Our God is never far from us. We may think that, but it is not true. **Dr. James Dobson** said:

"I am still awestruck by the unbelievable dimensions of God's creation. How does one grasp the meaning of a visible universe that is at least 30 billion light years across and composed of perhaps 100 billion galaxies, each containing hundreds of billions of stars?"

That amazes me. But what amazes me even more is that this immense God, the Creator of all that we see, He is always with us. The Apostle Paul said:

Acts 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being;

God is everywhere - and He wants me to walk and talk with Him - not as an equal, but as a son.

A child depends on a parent, and a sheep depends on a Shepherd. Christ is always listening for our voices. Jesus said:

John 10:27-28 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: [28] And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish,...

Our Lord gives us eternal life. He walks with us, He talks with us. When we suffer, He wants us to share that suffering with Him. **King David** prayed, saying:

Psalms 6:6-8 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. {7} Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies. {8} Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity ...

Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever **watered your bed with tears, your eyes swelling up from the crying?** Have enemies - both physical and spiritual - tugged at your life? What shall we do? Shall we have a *panic attack*, falling apart through the trials that grip us? No, but **King David called out to God, saying:**

Psalm 6:9 ... for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. {9} The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.

He hears me, and receives my prayers.

If I am commanded to **"pray without ceasing"**, this answers the question **"Should I pray out loud or silently? Should my eyes be opened or closed?"** It doesn't matter - God hears my every prayer.

ILLUSTRATE I'm sure you've all gotten behind a **"texting driver"** before. Nothing irritates me more than sitting at a long stop light behind someone who is "texting". The light changes, and she keeps on typing instead of driving. If you're driving, you ought to drive! I saw a bumper sticker the other day that said, **"Hand up and drive".** If I can find it, I'm putting it on my car. Driving while texting is annoying to others - and extremely dangerous. **Texting while driving caused more than 16,000 road fatalities - most of them young people - between 2002 and 2007.** May I say that not *one* fatality has ever been attributed to **praying without ceasing** - but keep your eyes open if you're driving!

I can **kneel, stand, or walk** when I pray. I can **pray in the prayer closet, in a private place, or out in public.** If we teach our children the importance of prayer - communicating with God - then our children will bring

prayer back to our schools. If we obey the command **pray without ceasing** then we will begin to mold our world rather than being molded by it.
We are living in a blighted America today. Morality is gone. Iniquity abounds. God's Church seems to have fallen, and cannot get up. What is the solution to what is hurting America? The Lord said:

2 Chronicles 7:14 (KJV) If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

The solution to a fallen America is a praying people. We who are saved by faith in Christ are **called by His Name.** We are **CHRISTians**, children of Christ. We are to **humble ourselves, and pray.** We are called of God to **seek His FACE, not His HANDS**. Most of our prayers seek the hands of God. We go to God with a "Gimme List", despite being the most prosperous people on the face of the earth.

God says, **"seek MY FACE. Pray without ceasing. Come to know Me. Pray as you read My Word, and you will understand it. Pray as you go through the trials of life, and WE will overcome them".**

The Bible tells us that:

James 2:23 (KJV) .... Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Who was Abraham? He was an unknown man from a heathen and unbelieving land. His father Terah worshiped false gods. His people sacrificed their firstborn children unto false gods. **Who was Abraham? He was a friend of God!** Why was he a friend of God?

a **Abraham believed God**. When God told him something, Abraham had the faith that responded. He DID that which God asked. Whether it was to move, or to offer up Isaac, Abraham responded and did.

b **Abraham talked to God**. He often sat in the door of his tent just *watching and waiting* for God. He was receptive to the Lord. He *communicated* with God.

2. If I Pray Without Ceasing, Then I Am Reminded That It Is Not Me But God Who Is Able

Illustrate A little boy had been sent to his room for being bad. When his momma came in later to check on him, he told her **"Mommy, I've been praying"**. She asked him, **"What were you praying about, honey?"** He said, **"I was thinking about what I did, and that made me pray". "Good"**, she said. **"If you ask God to make you good, He'll help you."** The little boy said, **"No momma, I didn't ask God to make me good. I asked Him to help you put up with me".**

That child instinctively knew that he wasn't able to make himself good. Only God can make anyone good. Without God, we all quickly sink to the depths of evil.

Prayer changes *me.* God wants us to **pray without ceasing** because as we pray, we learn. **An arrogant man will never pray. A selfish man will only pray when it meets his needs.** But a man who **prays without ceasing** will have a heart tender to the Will of God and to others.

Pastor **E. Stanley Jones** said:

"Prayer is surrender - surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will. If I throw out a boat hook from the boat and catch hold of the shore and pull, *do I pull the shore to me, or do I pull myself to the shore?* Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God."

God is able to change me, to protect me, to walk with me, and to guide me. Not only that - He wants to do these things, but often I get in the way! As I pray I find my will molded to His will - and life is so much easier when I walk with God.

Illustrate As I pray my worries become God's concerns. **God is able!** A **missionary to Zaire** said:

"A mother at our mission station died after giving birth to a premature baby. We tried to improvise an incubator to keep the infant alive, but the only hot water bottle we had was beyond repair. So we asked the children to pray for the baby and for her sister. One of the girls responded. **'Dear God, please send a hot water bottle today. Tomorrow will be too late because by then the baby will be dead. And dear Lord, send a doll for the sister so she won't feel so lonely.'** That afternoon a large package arrived from England. The children watched eagerly as we opened it. ... under some clothing was a hot water bottle! Immediately the girl who had prayed so earnestly started to dig deeper, exclaiming, **'If God sent that, I'm sure He also sent a doll!'** And she was right! The heavenly Father knew in advance of that child's sincere requests, and **5 months earlier He had led a ladies' group to include both of those specific articles**."

Our God is able! Rather than worry about a need, the Lord tells us to be ...

1 Peter 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

The **Prophet Daniel** was given an ultimatum. He was either to **hide his faith, or feed the lions**. The Bible says

Daniel 6:10 (NIV) Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Illustrate Daniel In America today we as Christians are told, **"Sit down. Shut up. Hide your faith!"** Daniel said, **"I don't think I'm going to do that!"** Was he thrown in the lion's den? Absolutely! What happened then? The Bible says that the **King rushed to the lion's**

den the next day and cried out ...

Daniel 6:20-22 (NIV) ... "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" 21 Daniel answered, ... 22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."

The angel of God shut the mouths of the lions, but it was the prayer of Daniel that brought the angel!

Illustrate the Daniel's Friends Daniel's friends, **SHARACH, MESHACK, ABINDEGO,** were told to be tolerant and *bow down to the gods of the unbelievers*. **"Be tolerant, or be toast!"** How did they answer? They said:

Daniel 3:17-18 (NIV) If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Dear friends, the reason that America is *postChristian* and fallen is because we have backed away from our Lord. The Hebrew Children refused to worship or to pray to any God but the True God. They stood up for Jesus. Tossed in the flames of a furnace they did not perish, but the Scripture says:

Daniel 3:24-25 (KJV) Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said .... Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

Pray without ceasing! Your Heavenly Father may not deliver you *from* the trial, but if not He will deliver you *in* the trial or *after* the trial!

Don't talk about praying - pray! Don't study praying. Pray!

Illustrate Three preachers stood arguing about the best way to pray. One said, **"The only way to pray to the Almighty is down on your knees."** The second said, **"Oh no! The Jews prayed standing upright, with arms outstretched. That's the way to pray!"** The third man said, **"No, that's too arrogant. You need to pray prostrate, with your eyes closed. He is, after all, Almighty God!"** A utility repairman had been standing off to the side, and he spoke up. **"The best praying I've ever done was when I fell out of the bucket and found myself hanging upside down from a telephone line".**

Don't just let fear drive you to pray. God is waiting, and wants you to get to know Him. Pray without ceasing!

When someone does you wrong - pray!
When trials come don't wring your hands - pray!

When fear knocks at the door of your life - pray!
Are your finances low? pray!
When loneliness hollows out your soul - pray!
When it seems darkness is all about - pray!
When you don't know what to do - pray!
When you think you know what to do - pray!

Above all, pray that you will be assured of your salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Once you are assured of your salvation, pray that God will use you to lead others to Him. Pray that His Kingdom will grow - and that He will use you to grow it. The saved are left on this earth to lead others to meet Jesus, to bring others into the Great Family of God. **Pray without ceasing** that we as His Church will be able to do this.

May God touch your hearts with His Word!

Good Hope
Baptist Church

4038 Graham Sherron Road
Wake Forrest, NC 27587

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Living Together In The Love Of God

FOCAL Read Together **Pray without ceasing.**

Luke 13:2-5

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Matthew 28:20; Acts 17:28; John 10:27-28; Psalms 6:6-8; Psalm 6:9; 2 Chronicles 7:14; James 2:23

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1 Peter 5:7; Daniel 6:10; Daniel 6:20-22; Daniel 3:17-18; Daniel 3:24-25

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