

FAITHFUL INSTRUCTIONS: PRAY CONTINUALLY

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Icebreaker:

Ask each person in the group to share 1 good thing and 1 challenging thing that has happened to them in the last week.

Scripture Passage:

*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Be joyful always; **pray continually**; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

Notes:

- These verses contain God's commands for all Christians "... for this is God's will for you."
- Notice that there are no exceptions for persons, circumstances or events.
- The guidelines are prefaced with:
 - "Always" (definition: at all times; on all occasions)
 - "Continually" (definition: repeated frequently in the same way; regularly)
 - "all Circumstances" (good, bad, unexceptional, mundane, routine)

Definitions:

1. Q1. How does Matthew 6:5-8 describe how we should and should not approach prayer?

Matthew 6:5-8 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

2. Praying Continually:

- The word “continually” does not refer to uninterrupted prayer, but constantly recurring prayer.
- Note: If we are honest, many of us find prayer challenging. It can often be difficult to maintain a regularity of prayer amidst the various pressures of life.

Q2. If regular prayer is a part of God’s will, then why do we treat it as a non-essential part of our daily activities? Did your prayer activities this past week reflect a “constantly recurring” event? What keeps us from praying with more consistency and regularity?

Q3. Describe some things we could change in our daily routine to make daily prayer a more regular occurrence.

3. Components of Prayer:

Pray is more than making requests. There is no one way to approach prayer, it can be having a relationship and conversation with God. Some share their personal soul struggles, while others have a desire for personal intimacy with God, while still others are wanting to pursue a deeper knowledge of God.

Q4. How could we improve the components of your prayer life? What could we add to improve our relationship to God?

4. Answers to Prayer Can Be Found:

a. Through His Word (Bible)

- *II Timothy 3:16-17 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Q5. Do you believe that God can provide answers to your prayer request(s) by providing words, passages, and thoughts from the Bible? If yes, describe an instance in which you prayed and believed that God provided an answer from the Bible.

b. Through His Son, Jesus Christ

- *Hebrews 1:1-3 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being,*
- *John 10:27 "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."*

Q6. The more we know about Jesus, his pleasures, pains, and struggles we will become "like" Him and hear Him speaking to our hearts. From your understanding of Jesus, what seemed to cause Him the most pain? Do those things cause you pain? If yes, describe some actions you can take to address the pain or relief of the pain.

Q7. During your prayer times, do some of your requests mirror the heart of Jesus? How have you received some answers to your prayers as a result of knowing Jesus deeper? If so, maybe you would like to share an example. What are some things

you could do to get better acquainted with Jesus?

c. Through His Spirit

- We are made in the image of God, and when we confess Jesus and follow Him as our Lord and Savior, His Spirit comes to live in us.
- *John 14:16-18 “16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*
- *1 Corinthians 3:16 “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?”*

Q8. God’s Spirit speaks to us through our conscience, helping to make the right decision. When we’re tempted, that same Spirit warns and nudges us to do the right thing. Describe an incident in your life where you knew the Holy Spirit was providing you with a clear decision. Did you listen to the Holy Spirit’s direction? If yes, how did you react to the result? If no, and you ignored or rejected the Holy Spirit’s direction, describe how you felt afterwards?

Q9. What steps or activities could you take in the following weeks to help you become more sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s presence and guidance?

d. Through Meditation and Thought

- *Psalms 19:14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.*
- *Isaiah 26.3 You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*
- *Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.*

- *Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Q10. What are some ways we can keep our minds and thoughts more like God's?

e. Through the Words, Counsel, and Actions of Other Believers

Q11. How do you go about seeking out advice, words of wisdom, etc. from other believers?

Reminder: Regardless of the way or method God chooses to reveal Himself or “speak” to us today, remember one truth. He will never contradict His Word, and the message He gives will always bring glory to God.

Summary Thoughts:

- Prayer works, if it didn't, we wouldn't do it. God hears and He will answer. Sometimes with yes, or no or not yet. But He will definitely hear and answer, and He will use it to change you to be more like Him.
- Here's why you need this sermon: You might agree that prayer is powerful, but you need to change your approach to praying continually.