

# NEVER STOP PRAYING

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Discuss perseverance (sticking with something; not giving up).

- **What are some things you will do in your life that require perseverance?** (finishing school, memorizing Bible verses, making a team, finding and keeping a job, achieving a goal, staying married, etc.)

Today's Bible Point: NEVER STOP PRAYING

- Daniel 6 – Tell me what you know about the story of Daniel and the lions' den.
  - **Why was Daniel thrown into a den of lions?** (vs. 13: *it was punishment for the law he broke; his persistence, others' tattling*)
  - **Why was there a law about praying only to the king?** (vs. 3-9: *faithfulness, jealousy, treachery*)
  - **How many times a day did Daniel pray?** (vs. 10: *three*)
  - **What was the king's name?** (*Darius*)
  - **Daniel was a Jew who was living in Babylon, far from his home. Why was he there?** (vs. 13 [*& ch. 1*]: *he was a captive from Judah*)
  - **What was one of Daniel's special gifts?** (*see other chapters of Daniel: interpreting dreams, advising kings*)
  - **Was King Darius happy about having to throw Daniel into the lions' den?** (vs. 14: *no*)
  - **If King Darius did not want to throw Daniel in with the lions, why did he do it?** (vs. 15: *laws of the Medes and Persians couldn't be changed, even by the king*)
  - **King Darius believed that who would save Daniel?** (vs. 16: *the God Daniel served continually*)
  - **How long was Daniel in the lions' den?** (vs. 17-19: *overnight*)
  - **Why did the lions not hurt Daniel?** (vs. 22: *God sent an angel to shut their mouths*)
  - **Who let Daniel out of the lions' den?** (vs. 23: *King Darius*)

## I Thessalonians 5:17

- **What does ceasing mean?** (*stopping*)
- **How can we praying without ceasing?** Sometimes there is more than one way to look at a verse. For example, Psalm 63:1:

<sup>1</sup>O God, thou art my God; **early will I seek thee**: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

I always thought “early will I seek thee” referred to the Psalm writer’s desire to pray (seek God) early in the morning, early in the day, which it probably does. And I should do the same. But one time during my Bible reading and prayer time, God put another meaning on my heart: “early will I seek you” could be a reminder to pray (seek God) *early in situations*. In other words, I shouldn’t wait until I’ve tried everything to fix my own problem (like how I will ever remember everything I need to pass a test, or where I will get the money for \_\_\_\_\_), but I should take the problem to God EARLY, right away.

- **So here are a couple of ways to look at “praying without ceasing”:**

1. Have a prayerful attitude; be aware of God all day long.

One of most helpful pieces of advice I have ever received about prayer was when I was in high school completing a course on prayer (Christian school). The workbook mentioned “practicing God’s presence” and explained this as being aware of God at all times—like you are aware of the people around you. You can talk to Him anytime, whatever you’re doing.

**What are some things you every day or often?** (brush teeth, shower, eat, chores [make bed, clean room, take out the trash, do dishes], school work, Facebook, video games, etc.)

At some point in my life, I quit waiting for the perfect time and place to talk to God and just started talking to Him all day long. A running conversation. With starts and stops. And not always out loud.

Examples:

- Before I get out of bed in the morning, I thank Him for the day and ask Him to give me wisdom and help me do the right things with my time that day.
- While I brushing my teeth, I ask for help with a particularly hard thing I have to do that day.
- When I get on my computer and have a message from a friend who has a problem, I pray for wisdom before I start typing. As I'm typing, I ask God to bless my friend and help her in her situation.
- Later, as I'm making out my grocery list, I ask God to help me spend my money wisely and find some good deals at the store and also to help me shine as a light for Him wherever I go.
- As I step outside, I thank Him for the beautiful weather...or for the rain.

**Being AWARE of God and interacting with Him all day long has brought me closer to God than I ever imagined.**

Caution: We need both a good quantity and quality of prayer time.

My ongoing, everyday conversations with God don't replace special times set aside for the two of us to have uninterrupted conversations.

- Kind of like me with my husband: We have everyday communication (often interrupted by phone calls or work or kids), and then there's "date night," our time to focus on each other and have uninterrupted conversations. We need both. If I only talked to my husband during our dates, our relationship would suffer. And if I only talked to him in little snippets day-to-day with no special uninterrupted time, our relationship would suffer too.
- Each of needs a good quantity (amount) of prayer time and a good quality (uninterrupted, focused) of prayer time.

## 2. Pray with perseverance.

Amplified Bible: "Be unceasing in prayer [praying perseveringly]"

**What does "perseveringly" mean?** (*persistently, actively, intently; in other words, not giving up*)

Parable of the Persistent widow: Read Luke 18:1-8.

Verse 8 (Amplified Bible): "...when the Son of man comes, will He find [persistence in] faith on the earth?"

Example: Praying for years for **my mom to come back God**. I was told it couldn't ever happen because of some things she had done while she was away from God. I decided to ignore these comments and persevere in praying for her until she finally turned back to God! She became one of the strongest Christians I have ever known.

In thinking about this topic of perseverance, I was reminded of a story I once heard about Winston Churchill. In his later years, **Winston Churchill**, who had guided England through the dark days of World War II and was known for his inspirational speeches, was asked to give the graduation speech at Oxford University. He came to the podium, and after the applause died down, he stared out at the audience in complete silence for several seconds. Finally he spoke emphatically: "Never, never, never give up!" Then he sat down. Now, there's disagreement about how many "nevers" and whether he repeated the phrase once again or even if the speech happened, but the story has been repeated over the years as encouragement to others to *persevere*.

Whatever you have been praying for, don't stop! You never know when you are about to receive the answer! Persevere! Persist!

## OTHER THOUGHTS ON PRAYER:

**Do my prayers really make a difference?** Prayer doesn't always change the situation, but we are always changed as we pray. We become closer to God, see things more through His eyes. Sometimes we realize we've been praying for the wrong thing; for example, we were praying God would punish that person who hurt us, but we begin to realize that God loves that person and wants to save him/her. Sometimes we realize God is teaching us something as we wait for our prayers to be answered. Maybe we are learning patience or how to have more compassion and love.

**If prayer is talking with my Friend, why are there times when I just don't feel like praying?**

Sometimes we've sinned or made mistakes, and we feel like God doesn't really want to hear from us. Sometimes we feel like we've let Him down. Sometimes we're too busy with other things. Sometimes we wait too long, and it seems awkward. And don't underestimate the devil's interference; he would love to keep us from praying. My advice is: **Just do it.** Just talk to God. Repent if you need to. Apologize for not "calling." **Just start talking, and it will get easier and easier.**

**Prayer is a conversation,** which involves both speaking and listening. **Sometimes in our prayer times we have to be quiet and let God speak to us. How do we do this?** (reading God's Word; being still and giving Him time to speak to our hearts, give us an impression or feeling [burden]).

**There is power in praying in the Holy Ghost.** Jude 1:20-21. Speak in the language God gave you when He gave you the Holy Ghost. There are many times when I am praying for people, and I just don't know what to say. I don't know what their most important need is or how God wants to work in their life. I have learned to pray in the Holy Ghost. **God works in wonderful ways when we pray, speaking in tongues, letting the Holy Ghost work through us.**

**Praying for God's will is one of the hardest things to do.** Jesus Himself had to pray this prayer. Sometimes what we want (for example, healing) may not be thing God has in mind for His overall plan of good. It's hard to give up what we want and say, "You know what's best, God. Do what you want." I experienced this firsthand when praying for my mom to be healed. **In the end, what is the most important prayer to pray for any person? Salvation is more important than healing.** A person can enter heaven with an imperfect body and be instantly healed, but a person cannot enter heaven with sin in his/her life.

**Try keeping a prayer journal.** Write down praises (this is where you can keep your alphabetical listing of things God is), lists of people to pray for (i.e., family, friends, classmates, etc.); requests for others, requests for yourself, things that you are struggling with, etc. Don't forget to write down answered prayers. Date things so you can remember specifically when you asked and when God answered. **Remember, you don't have to pray with your eyes closed, so open your eyes, look at your lists, and speak the names, requests, and praises you have written down.**