

"Pray without Ceasing" **I Thess. 5:17** – Everyone knows this. And most of us have experienced its benefit.

But in an age and time of free enterprise, packed schedules, mentally challenging work, the pursuit of higher education, family, fun and DirectTV... prayer can sometimes be lacking in our lives.

It sounds silly doesn't it? That of all the people I talk to and interact with, the first person that I'd forget is GOD?! But it happened to God's people in the Old Testament, and if we aren't careful it can happen to us as well.

And so, to help with your prayer life, this morning, I want to share with you: The Plan. Not a plan, not just something that works for me, but The Perfect Plan for a Productive Prayer Life.

If you will follow this template, every day your relationship with God will grow stronger and more rewarding and you will face life's challenges with greater faith and peace than ever before!

This plan is perfect! And I assure you, my claim is based on CONFIDENCE, not ARROGANCE, as you will see before we are finished this morning. But first, let me show it to you!

(1-4 - Scheduling)

1. Start your day with a Prayer

- a. Make prayer a part of your morning ritual. Maybe even before your feet hit the floor. Perhaps while getting ready, or at the breakfast table, or in the car on the way to work.
- b. Start the day talking to God. He will be waiting.

2. Pray before your Meals

- a. This is a habit that seems to be fading away in our culture. Whether at the dinner table with family, at lunch in the cafeteria, or alone at Chick Fil a, give thanks before you eat.
- b. We've asked God to give us our daily bread, let's be sure and thank Him for answering.

3. Slip away Once per Day to Pray

- a. I like to think of it as "stealing a moment to give to God." Swiping it from the grips of a busy life and devoting some emotions and words to the Lord.
- b. Maybe during a break, or when the little ones are watching tv, or at a lunch break, or while driving. An unpredictable, but purposeful moment for God each and every day.

4. Pray at the End of a Long Day

- a. Is there any other kind? No one told me when I grew up that short and simple days would no longer exist! And of course, each day has its unique challenges.
- b. So, every evening on the car ride home, or with your family in the living room, or before you go to sleep: Fill God in. He knows your thoughts, but He wants to hear you express them.

(5-7 - Making it Personal)

5. Give Glory to your Father (Matthew 6:9 – "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name")

- a. Personal doesn't just mean it is about "me." Prayer is also personal to God. It is an offering, a fragrant aroma on the altar of incense to God. So, our words should reflect that.
- b. So, be creative, be descriptive. Throughout the day, address Him in unique glorifying ways:
 - i. "Dear heavenly Father," "Great Lord of All," "My Creator," "Sustainer of my life"

6. Plead for Him to Give you Wisdom (James 1:5-8)

- a. Sometimes we don't have the wisdom to do things without God. Okay, all the time we don't have wisdom to do things without God. SO, ask Him. Request wisdom, insight, and patience.
- b. "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let Him ask of God, who gives to all generously."
 - i. Personal troubles. Relationship woes. Life getting heavy. Ask for help. Before Decision!

7. Ask God to Heal you where it Hurts (Philippians 4:6-7 – "Be anxious for nothing...")

- a. Sometimes we need God's help. Okay, all the time, we need God's help. We need to make requests, plead for His aid. Ask, Seek, Knock in prayer daily.
- b. Mercy when we sin. Strength to fight harder. A good attitude during a tough day. Peace when we are hurting. We are a people built to be helped by God. Ask Him.

(8-10 - Showing Love for Others)

8. Pray for those you Love

- a. Do you want those close to you to Be Well, or Get Well, or Get Stronger, or Do Right? Talk to God about that. Most oft told lie among God's people: "I will pray for you." *Let's actually do it!*

- b. This takes discipline in prayer, but it is very good for you: take time and make it about the people around you. Not because their wellness is good for you, but because it is good for them.
9. **Pray with those you Love** (Luke 11:1, Acts 4:23-24)
- a. Even outside of worship there is something peace making and safe about praying with people who love the Lord. Holding hands at a devotional. Family gathered around the dinner table.
 - b. When we pray, we teach one another how to pray. (Luke 11 – “teach us how to pray”)
 - c. When we pray, we find a support and confidence that we may not have found alone. (Acts 4)
10. **Pray for those who don’t Love you** (Matthew 5:43-45)
- a. Unfortunately we can’t live our lives among only family, friends and brethren. The world is full of people who do not love God and therefore, don’t like you too much. They need God more than anyone. They need our prayers more than anyone. And, Jesus has commanded us to pray for them.
 - i. Pray they learn to do better. Pray they are humbled. Pray you will be a good example.

Well, there it is: The Perfect Plan for a Productive Prayer Life – Results Guaranteed.

It amounts to roughly 5 prayers per day, varying in length and content, but includes God, your neighbor and yourself. No one gets left out.

But let’s be clear. It is not the Perfect Plan because I put it together or because it has helped countless Christians. It is the Perfect because it has been shown to us, taught to us, and put on display by the One who is Perfect: Jesus.

Start your day with prayer – **Mark 1:35-38** (Prepared Him to do the Father’s work that day!)

Pray before your meals – **Mark 8:6** (Casual meal, Miraculous meal, Lord’s Supper ... no matter!)

Slip away to Pray in your Busy schedule – **Luke 5:15-16** (Though He was sought after and very busy!)

Pray in the evening after a long day – **Mark 6:35,46; Matt. 14:23** “evening” – (End of Long Day!)

Give Glory to God – **John 17:1-3, 11,25** – (He praised Him for who He is and what He has done!)

Pray for Wisdom – **Luke 6:11-16** – (A major crux of His ministry, he prayed before selecting, preaching)

Pray for Help – **Matt. 26:36-39**, – (Grieved and hurting. He turned to God! If He needed God, don’t we?)

Pray for the people you love – **John 17:9-11, 15-17** (The 12) ; **20-22** – (us as well!)

Pray with those you love – **Luke 9:28-32; 11:1** (Took His friends with Him; they learned from Him.)

Pray for those who don’t love you – **Luke 23:34** – (One of Jesus’ final prayers – concern for the lost!)

If it is good enough for Jesus, it is good enough for me.

And if Jesus needed it, I confess that I cannot live without it.

A living, daily, involved, life-giving, burden lifting, prayer life!

Let’s pray together: (Glory to God; Pray for Strength and Wisdom; Pray for church, family, neighbor)

Do you need us to pray *for* you? Do you need us to pray *with* you? Do you need to put on Christ so God will hear you? As He has been and as He will be until Christ’s return: The Father is Waiting.