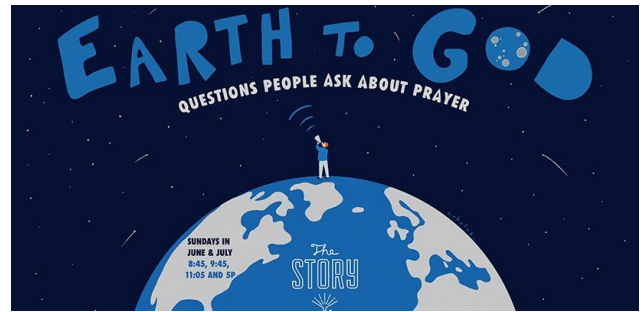


Sermon Study Guide - Part 8 The Story Houston - July 28, 2019

Eric Huffman - Lead Pastor
fb/ig: @pastorerichuffman tw: @erichestory
EarthtoGod@thestory.church



Earth to God: Questions People Ask about Prayer

This is the final week of our 8-week exploration of the questions people ask about prayer. We'll also gather this afternoon (4-7:30p) for our highly anticipated prayer class, "A PRAYING LIFE." Even if you've not yet registered, our staff has made it possible to accommodate walk-ins, so I still hope you can make it. So far in this series, we've learned about the following questions:

- What is prayer? (June 9, John Hopper, guest speaker)
- Is there any proof that prayer really works? (June 16)
- If God already knows the future, why pray? (June 23)
- Does God talk back when we pray? (June 30)
- Why does God make us wait? (July 7)
- Is there a blueprint for prayer? (July 14, Kale Kinchen)
- How should you pray when your life is a dumpster fire? (July 21)

You can hear/watch these sermons online at thestory.church/watch or by subscribing to *The Story Houston* podcast on Apple Podcasts or your favorite podcast app.

Today we'll explore this question:

What does it mean to 'pray without ceasing' (as found in 1 Thessalonians 5:17)?

What were your thoughts about these questions before hearing this message? On what authority, knowledge, or experience do you base your understanding?

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

What does the phrase "pray continually" (also translated "pray without ceasing") mean in the *context* of Paul's letter to the Christians in Thessalonica? Did Paul intend to suggest that Christians should pray every waking minute of every single day?

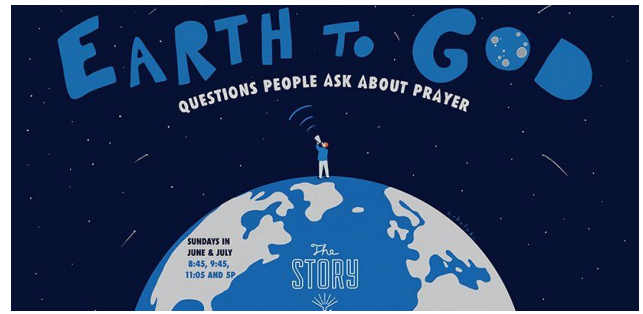
Note: to identify the context of any Bible passage, find out: who the author was writing to, what was going on when and where he was writing, where the passage in question appears in the book (beginning? middle? end?), what else is said immediately before and after, and why the author might have written the passage to that particular audience in that particular time and place, and how other parts of the Bible address the subject matter.

Instead of saying Christians should pray 24/7, it would appear that Paul is suggesting that believers who love God will pray *frequently* and *consistently* because we simply want more of God. How frequently and consistently do you pray?

A simple way to think about the value of praying continually is **to understand prayer as a discipline**, like exercise or studying. Just as frequent exercise empowers you, over time, to lift more weight or run greater distances, frequent prayer empowers you to *grow stronger* in your prayer life. Infrequent prayer, on the other hand, will often leave you feeling frustrated and guilt-ridden...kinda like infrequent exercise!

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As you pray more consistently, your capacity and competence in prayer *will evolve*. Fill in the blanks in this diagram to illustrate the evolution of prayer in a believer’s life:

STAGE OF PRAYER	SAMPLE PRAYER	CATALYST

When you grow from one stage to the next, what happens to the prior form of prayer? In other words, when a believer grows from saying only “petition” prayers to also “surrendering” their will to God’s will, will they continue to offer petition prayers in the same way as before?

What is intercessory prayer and where does that show up in the evolution of a believer’s prayer life?

Why is prayer “the portal to joy”? Read **Romans 8:28-30**

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. **29** For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. **30** And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Your Notes: