



PRAYER

WITH NO
INTERMISSION

*40 Days
to Unceasing
Prayer*

**SMALL GROUP
LEADER GUIDE**

BLAKE HUDSPETH, BILL ELLIFF, AND MONTANA JONES

A WORD FROM BILL ELLIFF

FOR MANY YEARS a small verse intrigued and bothered me. “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) intrigued me because I knew that God couldn’t command us to do something that we couldn’t do by His grace. But it bothered me because it was not my experience. So, I began to pray about prayer! I began to consistently ask God to unlock this simple truth and help me experience prayer with no intermission.

God began to bring into my life people to whom this was a reality. They modeled unceasing prayer and made me know it was possible. God also began to help me move into deeper and deeper levels of prayer. The farther I went, the more I began to see that prayer is not a side-room, but the foundation for everything. How can we live successfully or build God’s kingdom rightly if we are not communing with Him about everything, all the time?

This small group study is intended to be used with the book, *Prayer with No Intermission: 40 Days to Unceasing Prayer*. Its goal is to help people, day by day, take bite-size steps in increasing prayer until we grow into a lifestyle of unceasing prayer.

As you study with your group, please remember that this study is not merely spiritually educational, but experiential! Your goal should be to help people see the value of unceasing prayer, but also to help them experience greater levels of communion with God than they have ever known, in both personal and group prayer.

We’re praying for you that you might join millions through the ages who’ve learned the priority and joy of unceasing prayer!

Praying,

Bill Elliff

© 2018 The Summit Church, All Rights Reserved.

Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible
(The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®),
copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry
of Good News Publishers.

Used by permission. All rights reserved.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Everyone in your small group or Sunday School class is at a different place in their spiritual journey. Spending six weeks learning how to grow in prayer will sound exciting for some whereas others might find it intimidating. Whatever the case, encourage everyone to take a next step towards becoming a more prayerful Christian. There will be something to learn for both mature and new believers alike.

Each week will have two opening discussion questions that will help break the ice and get your group ready for the video teaching. There is also a written introduction to set up the video so you can give clear instructions for what people are to do. These will help you orient the group on what to expect at each stage of the material.

The videos are 10-15 minutes long and focus on a specific aspect of prayer. Once the video is over, you will spend time applying the Scripture and the principles shared. In case there is a lull in conversation or members miss an important aspect of a verse, there are *Leader Notes included below most questions.

Because you will have a chance to put what you've learned into practice, the final minutes of your small group or Sunday School class are the most important. At the end of each week, there is a "Pray It In" exercise to help them engage in prayer in various ways. Leave at least 15 minutes for this section (even if you need to skip an application question because of time restraints). Here is a suggested schedule for a one-hour meeting:

10 minutes - Welcome and Opening Discussion

15 minutes - Video Teaching

20 minutes - Discussion Questions

15 minutes - Pray It In

The most important thing you can do for your group is pray for them and ask the Lord to use the next six weeks to ignite their heart. Spend time each day interceding for your group members by name.

Thanks for taking this courageous step in leading men and women in your church towards a life of unceasing prayer!

WEEK 1: WHY PRAY?

OPENING DISCUSSION

What do you like to do for exercise? Why do you exercise? (health, stress relief, fun, etc.)

How would you describe the health of your prayer life right now?

Today, we're going to learn why having a healthy prayer life is so important. Over the next six weeks, Bill Elliff will teach us various ways we can grow in this area. So, if you have a way to take notes (paper, pen, or phone), get them out now as we take next steps towards praying without ceasing.

PLAY WEEK 1 VIDEO

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What was one takeaway for you from Bill's message?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 together.

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
(ESV)

What are some things that stand out to you immediately in this passage? What does this tell us about the nature of God?

***LEADER NOTE:** Prayer comes out of a spirit of gratitude. God's will is clearly laid out in Scripture. Our circumstances do not determine whether or not we pray with thanksgiving. All of the statements in this passage are commands rather than suggestions.

Bill told a story about how the most powerful person is the person who prays. Who are people in your life that you see as examples of prayer warriors? What makes them stand out to you?

What step will you take this week to become a more prayer-filled Christian?

***LEADER NOTE:** A great first step would be to commit to read *Prayer Without Intermission* over the next 40 days. Remind them to read the book daily, one chapter a day and, most importantly, to do the “Pray It In” exercise at the end of each chapter. Remind them that this 40-day exercise will help them grow in prayer.

Break into groups of 3-4 and have everyone answer this question:

“What is hindering you personally from growing in prayer (i.e. intimidation, lack of faith, self-discipline, etc.)?” Have someone in the group pray for each person in light of what they shared.”

WEEK 2: ENTERING IN

OPENING DISCUSSION

Fears (or phobias) have different names. Arachnophobia is the fear of spiders. Aviophobia is the fear of flying in planes. Coulrophobia...the fear of clowns. What are some similar fears (or phobias) you have?

Sometimes, we can be afraid of certain aspects of prayer. For example, praying out loud in front of people or saying the wrong thing might keep us from a more fruitful and fulfilling prayer life. What are some fears you have about prayer?

Today, we will face our insecurities of prayer by learning how to enter into the presence of God the right way. Many times, when we feel like our prayers are bouncing off the ceiling or we aren't sure what to pray, it's simply because we haven't really entered in to God's presence. So, if you have a way to take notes (paper, pen, or phone), get them out now as we take next steps towards praying without ceasing.

PLAY WEEK 2 VIDEO

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What was one takeaway for you from Bill's message?

Read Matthew 6:5-13 together.

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (ESV)*

What are some things that stand out to you immediately in this passage? What does it tell us about the nature of God?

***LEADER NOTE:** If we pray like hypocrites, we shouldn't expect to receive a reward from God. There is no pressure to impress God with our prayers. Instead, Jesus invites us to speak in our normal manner but with our hearts humbled before God. Jesus gives a clear outline for a healthy prayer life so that we have no excuses.

Bill mentioned several words that shape the way we enter God's presence:

SINCERITY - What keeps us from approaching God in prayer sincerely?

SECLUSION - What are ways we can better focus our attention on God so that our prayers engage our heart with His heart?

***LEADER NOTE:** Some ideas for this could be praying through a Psalm, listening to worship music before (or even during) prayer times, or simply taking a moment to be still before the Lord.

SIMPLICITY - Name one way that you can simplify your prayer life this week.

***LEADER NOTE:** Some ideas for this could be praying on your drive to work without any distractions, choosing to write just three sentences of prayer so that your words remain few, or making the decision to pray for one thing during mealtimes (that doesn't involve the food).

Sons and Daughters - How does seeing ourselves as sons and daughters change the way we approach God in prayer?

PRAY IT IN

Break into groups of 3-4 and have everyone answer this question: "What is one word (Sincerity, Seclusion, etc.) that you want to see incorporated in your prayer life more this week?" Then someone in the group pray for that person, and so on throughout the group. When the group is finished, remind them to be respectful of other groups in the room who may still be praying for one another.

WEEK 3: WHAT TO PRAY

OPENING DISCUSSION

Have you ever met someone famous (a celebrity or politician or influential leader), and didn't know what to say? Who was it?

When you pray, do you sometimes feel like you don't know what to say to God?

***Leader Note:** This is more of a “raise your hand if you sometimes feel like you don't know what to pray” type of question. It's not meant to spur discussion as much as help people relate to one another's struggle in prayer.

Jesus anticipated this in Matthew 6 and taught us the sort of things we are to pray about as well as how to do it. Today, we're going to learn certain components of The Lord's Prayer that will help keep us from being tongue-tied when we go to God in prayer. So, if you have a way to take notes (paper, pen, or phone), get them out now as we take next steps towards praying without ceasing.

PLAY WEEK 3 VIDEO

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What was one takeaway for you from Bill's message?

Read Matthew 6:5-13 together.

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Cont. on the next page

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (ESV)*

We looked at 6 words that use the Lord’s Prayer to guide us through a more vibrant prayer life. Let’s take a look at each one in detail and apply it to our lives:

ADORATION - Do you typically begin your prayers with adoration or jump right into requests for things? Why do you think adoration is so important in prayer?

ALIGNMENT - What are ways that our will can be “out of alignment” with God’s will in such a way that it affects our prayer life?

***LEADER NOTE:** see James 4:2-3, 1 John 5:14, Colossians 1:9-10

ACCESS - “Give us this day our daily bread.” What would you say is your “daily bread?” Why are these things important to pray about?

ASSESSMENT - Do you stop and take inventory of your heart before you pray? How do you think sin affects our prayer life?

***LEADER NOTE:** see James 4:2-3, James 5:16-17

ARMOR - In the past, how has prayer enabled you to overcome temptation in your life?

ACKNOWLEDGMENT - Proverbs 3:5-6 commands us to trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding, but in all our ways to acknowledge God. What does it look like to acknowledge God in prayer? Why is that such an important component to effective, unceasing prayer?

PRAY IT IN

This week, you will use the Lord's prayer as a guide to lead your group through a time of prayer. You can say something along these lines:

***LEADER NOTE:** Be sure and move the prayer time along. It is better to stop them while they are praying on one section than to wait for long periods of awkward silence. But, it is also good to tell them not to be afraid of silence.

For the rest of our time together, we are going to pray in light of what we've just learned. I'm going to guide us through various parts of the Lord's prayer and invite everyone to pray in light of that specific verse. I'll continue to give us prompts every few minutes as we go along, and, remember, you aren't here to impress God or others with your language. Also, if there are a few moments of silence, don't worry, but listen to the Lord and see what He may be saying to you. Come in simplicity, sincerity and as sons and daughters. Let's pray.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

Let's spend the next few moments in adoration of who God is. What do you notice today about God that you would like to praise Him for?

"Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Let's ask God to let His Kingdom come in specific places in our life and community. Where is God wanting to bring His Kingdom today?

"Give us this day our daily bread."

Where do we need God's provision? What do you need to pray for someone else?

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Where do you need forgiveness and cleansing right now? Bring this before the Lord in silence.”

Who do you need to forgive right now? Take a moment to silently express this to the Lord.

***LEADER NOTE:** At the end of a moment or two of this silent prayer, lead a brief prayer thanking God for the fullness of His forgiveness and also for giving us the ability and humility to forgive others.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Let’s spend the next few moments asking the Lord to purify our hearts and the heart of our church, and to empower us to stand strong in the midst of temptation.

And, also to pray prayers of spiritual protection over areas of our lives, families, and church.

“For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

For the last few moments, what are some ways we need to acknowledge God in our lives or work or community?

After a few minutes, close out the prayer time and dismiss.

WEEK 4: PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER

OPENING DISCUSSION

How has your perspective on prayer changed as you have been reading “Prayer with No Intermission”?

What are some reasons that people give up on prayer?

Today, we’re going to learn how to persevere in prayer when we want to give up. So, if you have a way to take notes (paper, pen, or phone), get them out now as we take next steps towards praying without ceasing.

PLAY WEEK 4 VIDEO

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What was one takeaway for you from Bill’s message?

Read Ephesians 6:10-18 together.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints” (ESV)

What are some things that stand out to you immediately in this passage? What does it tell us about the Christian life?

***LEADER NOTE:** Though most of the armor of God is defensive, there are two offensive components: the word of God and prayer. Strength comes from God’s might. Notice the number of times Paul uses the words “whole” and “all.”

Verse 18 says, “Pray at all times in the Spirit, and with all prayer and supplication.” Many times, we tend to pray the same prayers the same way. So, what are various ways that you can pray unceasingly? (i.e. supplication, thanksgiving, intercession, praise, etc.)

Based on this passage of Scripture and what we’ve learned so far, what step will you take this week to become a more prayer-filled Christian?

***LEADER NOTE:** Spend time developing an aspect of prayer where you desire growth. For example, if you tend to pray for others a lot (intercession), focus this week on praise and thanksgiving.

PRAY IT IN

We’re going to take some time today to pray individually by writing out our prayers. This is a great way to not only focus our thoughts but capture them so we can see how God moves in our lives. We won’t share them with the group, but keep them when you leave today. After about 10-15 minutes, I’ll close us out in prayer. Feel free to move to a different room or even outside during this time.

***LEADER NOTE:** Hand out sheets of paper and pens (or they can write them on their phones), and dismiss them. It might be helpful to have worship music playing on a phone or through TV speakers. Give your group time to really engage in prayer individually, then encourage them again to keep their prayer notes. End by dismissing in prayer.

WEEK 5: THE WORD OF GOD AND PRAYER

OPENING DISCUSSION

What is the best trip you've ever taken? Have you ever gotten lost?

When it comes to prayer do you ever feel lost or aimless? What do you think leads to aimless prayers?

We all feel lost in our prayers sometimes, Today we will see how to fight lost and aimless prayers through God's instruction manual, His Word. So, if you have a way to take notes (paper, pen, or phone), get them out now as we take next steps towards praying without ceasing.

PLAY WEEK 5 VIDEO

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What was one takeaway for you from Bill's message?

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4 together.

"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire." (ESV)

What are some things that stand out to you immediately in this passage? What does it tell us about the Word of God?

***LEADER NOTE:** Everything we have has been given to us by God's power not our own. We have everything we need in God's Word and prayer to live a powerful Christian life. God has granted us promises we can claim today in His Word.

We will learn to pray better the more we are in god’s word. What are some ways that god’s word should inform or instruct our prayer life?

God’s Word has over 7000 promises. Have people volunteer to read a few of God’s Promises below. Ask the group how these promises could be applied to your life and prayers:

Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

Matthew 11:28-29

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Isaiah 41:10

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Philippians 4:19

“And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.”

LEADER NOTE: The goal is to help your group see God cares about what is going on in their life right now and has promises for them. They can begin using these promises to pray back to God and using God’s Word as a catalyst in their prayer life.

What are some practical steps you will take this week to incorporate God’s Word and prayer?

***LEADER NOTE:** You want your group to begin putting what they learned into action. Some may need to be more consistent in God's Word this week. Some may need to take one promise of God and pray it this week. Encourage your people to be incredibly practical.

PRAY IT IN

Break up into groups of 3-4. In these groups, have them pray for one another that their love for God's Word would grow this week. Ask them to pray some of the promises of God discussed over themselves, family, and church. When their group is finished praying, encourage them to be respectful of groups who may still be praying around them.

WEEK 6: THE REWARD OF PRAYER

OPENING DISCUSSION

Over the last six weeks, what has changed most about your prayer life? What are you doing differently?

What are some of your main motivations to pray? Why do you think that is?

Today, we're going to learn about the great works and rewards of prayer. So, if you have a way to take notes (paper, pen, or phone), get them out now as we take next steps towards praying without ceasing.

PLAY WEEK 6 VIDEO

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What was one takeaway for you from Bill's message?

Read John 15:1-5, 11 together.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing...These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." (ESV)

What are some things that stand out to you immediately in this passage? What do these verses tell us about the work of God in our lives?

***LEADER NOTE:** Bearing fruit requires us to abide in Christ at all times. As we learned in Bill’s message, prayer is one of the best ways to learn how to abide. You don’t bear some fruit, but much fruit and fruit that remains. Jesus said these things will bring us great, full joy.

Bill said, “The reason that there are many joyless Christians is because there are many prayerless Christians.” How do you think abiding in Christ through prayer produces joy in our lives?

Since God rewards prayer, how does that change the way you approach Him?

When you pray, how do you think God sees you?

***LEADER NOTE:** Encourage your group to be honest. Do they think God is mad at them? Do they feel awe? Or have they ever really thought about it before? How we perceive God’s view of us will determine how we approach Him in prayer.

Have different people in the room volunteer to read the following passages of Scripture. After each passage, ask your group how this shapes our view of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (ESV)

LEADER NOTE: God sees us as forgiven sons and daughters. We stand before Him in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

James 4:7-8

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” (ESV)

***LEADER NOTE:** Our sin can put up a barrier between us and God. Repentance in prayer purifies our hearts and cleanses our hands. It is a powerful weapon to resist the devil. We must not take our sin lightly.

Hebrews 4:15-16

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (ESV)

***LEADER NOTE:** Because of Jesus, we can approach God’s throne with confidence. There is grace and mercy waiting for us in our need if we simply go to Him in prayer.

PRAY IT IN

Break up into groups of 3-4 (men with men, women with women). As you do, ask, “In light of everything we’ve read and heard tonight, what area of need in your life (or someone else’s life) do you need grace and mercy? Share that with your group, then boldly approach the throne of God with confidence together.” When their group is finished praying, encourage them to be respectful of groups who may still be praying around them.

FINAL THOUGHTS TO SHARE WITH YOUR GROUP

Although this is the last week of our study, I want to encourage you to keep growing in prayer. The things we’ve learned in the last six weeks should become habitual to us.

We want our prayer times as a group to continue to be powerful as we experience God together. As you’re growing in prayer, let’s help each other grow by sharing what God is doing, what we’re learning in prayer, answers to prayer, etc.

And, if you feel you’re regressing in prayer, pick up Bill’s book and read some of the chapters again and let it be a continual help to you through the coming years.

If you learn to pray without ceasing, you will find the sweetest, most intimate communion that a human can experience. You will be surprised at its refreshment and joy. Amazed at its consistency. Stunned that it is so personal. Awed by how perfectly God knows exactly what you need to hear, every second of the day. Empowered by God's answers. And, you will wonder why you have waited so long to pray with no intermission.