

Week 4: A Prayer Lifestyle

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The Big Idea

Key text: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 — "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

A prayer lifestyle is an abiding relationship with God that carries us through both the quiet moments and the busy ones. It grows from a heart that loves God, not from technique alone.

The big question: *How valuable are God's desires to you?*

1. Don't Forget: Abide

The world competes for our attention. The danger is not comfort or success itself but forgetting the Lord in the middle of it. The experience of a powerful Sunday worship service or a morning quiet time can be choked out as we "go on our way."

- **The warning:** 1 John 2:16-17 · Deuteronomy 8:11-14 · Luke 8:14
- **The "one thing" heart:** Psalm 27:4. David desired to dwell with God, gaze on His beauty, and inquire of Him.
- **The invitation:** John 15:9-11. "Abide in my love... that your joy may be full."
- **Example:** Brother Lawrence, a 17th-century monastery cook, did every small task "for the love of God" and kept his mind in God's presence all day (*The Practice of the Presence of God*).

2. Rejoice, Pray, Give Thanks

God's will for our prayer life is spelled out in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Rejoice always.

Returning to joy in who God is keeps our gaze fixed on Him instead of on our worries.

- Philippians 4:4-7
- Isaiah 26:3 - "perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you"

Pray without ceasing.

Rejoicing turns into an ongoing conversation with God about everything, small and large. Make prayer your first response, not your last.

- John 4:32-34 - "My food is to do the will of him who sent me"
- John 5:19 - the Son does only what He sees the Father doing. If Jesus only did what He saw His Father doing, then he was always watching His Father and abiding in Him.

Give thanks in all circumstances.

Gratitude blesses God's heart and retrains our minds away from fear and anxiety, even in trials and grief.

- Luke 17:12-19 - the one leper who returned to give thanks
- Matthew 6:33-34

3. The Practicals

Like a marriage (Ephesians 5:32), relationship with God starts with talking but grows into much more. There's room for other ways to spend time with God and build a relationship with Him!

Here are some ideas:

Talk to God (out loud, journaling)	Psalm 62:8
Sing to God	
Listen to God	James 1:19, Psalm 139:17-18
Sit in silence with Him	Psalm 131:1-2, Psalm 27:4
Pray the Lord's Prayer	Matthew 6:9-13
Read the Scriptures to hear God speak	Hebrews 4:12
Pray the Scriptures	Psalm 63, Ephesians 1:16-17
Meditate on Scripture	Psalm 1:2-3
Pray the Apostles' Creed	
Intercede for others	
Prayer Walk	Romans 1:19-20
Notice God in Creation	
Laugh and Cry with God	
Fast	Matt 6:16-18
Pray in tongues	I Cor 14:14
Listen to sermons	
Listen to worship music	
Set daily rhythms of prayer	Psalm 119:164
Pray in community	Colossians 3:16-17
Pray in the Spirit	Jude 20-21

Closing: It Starts With the Heart

None of these practices brings lasting change unless our hearts long for the Father's love. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Jesus warned of people who honor Him with their lips while their hearts are far from Him (Matthew 15:8). Begin with: *"God, my heart loves you, and I want to love you more."*

The big question:

How valuable are God's desires to you?