

Wednesday Devotional

July 22, 2026

The Power of Prevailing Prayer By: Rev. John MacArthur

There are three verses that are strung together in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5:16-18 that give us three basic commands: “rejoice always,” “pray without ceasing,” “in everything give thanks”—and then comes — “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” And that refers to all three commands. It is God’s will for you to rejoice always. It is God’s will for you in everything to give thanks. It is God’s will for you to pray without ceasing.

These things make up the constant flow of our Christian life. At all times, in all circumstances, we rejoice, we give thanks and we pray. Rejoicing and giving thanks because we know that God is working all things together for our good and His glory. And even though we know that, still we are to pray without ceasing. God, though sovereign and working His absolute inviolable unassailable will, chooses to operate that will in response to our prayers.

Praying without ceasing. What does that mean? *Adi-aleiptōs* is the Greek word. It simply means continually. It doesn’t mean nonstop. It means recurring. It is that which flows from a settled dependence. It’s just a constant kind of running, open conversation that never really has a period. It’s sort of like prayer is just your Christian life and community with God, with a series of commas and semicolons.

I don’t know how it is in your prayer life, but I think if you really walk with the Lord, prayer is a way of life; you’re always just a hair’s breadth away from a prayer. And I don’t necessarily mean words that are audible, but that there’s always this openness that thrusts everything in your life before the throne of God. You hear about a tragedy, someone you know, and immediately out of your heart rises to God a petition on behalf of the people who have been severely distressed by it. You hear about a disappointment, and immediately your heart goes out, “God, comfort those people.”

Prayer can rise out of our heart, sort of on spiritual instinct, because we know the only source of help is God. It becomes a way of life. We start our day with prayer. We pray through the day. We end the day falling asleep very often with petitions rising silently from our heart to the throne of God.

Unceasing prayer is an attitude in which I view the world and all that is going around in my life, all that occurs, and it all sort of translates into prayer. I see something good, and immediately a praise rises from my heart. I face something confusing, and immediately out of my soul comes this plea, *God, grant me wisdom.*

I face responsibility to teach the Word of God, and so often as I do, there is this unceasing cry out of my heart: *Give me wisdom, knowledge, clarity, power to convey the truth.* It isn’t that I walk around mumbling with my eyes closed like the bruised and bleeding Pharisees during Jesus’ times. That was their title. They were called the bruised and bleeding Pharisees because they thought it was a sin to look at a woman, so whenever one came along, they closed their eyes and they kept running into walls. We’re not talking about that.

Neither does praying without ceasing mean saying the same thing over to God again and again and again. Your heart can cry out to the Lord, and He understands your request. You don’t have to repeat it with some formula. There’s nothing to be gained by endlessly saying the same words, but obviously until the prayer is answered, there will arise from our heart persistent petition before the Lord.

Prayer should be, in many ways, the dominant feature of your life, much like breathing. You’re not always preaching. You’re not always witnessing. You’re not always rendering service. You’re not always using your spiritual gift. You can’t always be here and be there and be saying that and speaking to the right person about the right issue. You can’t always be addressing problems, confronting issues, because you’re not there. But you can always be praying—always.

While it is the highest energy of which the human heart is capable, it is also the most powerful instrument that we have. What a gift. Intensity is the essence of praying without ceasing. It is what it means to seek God with all your heart in all the issues of life, at all times (see Proverbs 3:5-6), with all prayer and supplication, not being anxious, but in everything by prayer, taking your requests to God (see Philippians 4:6). It’s that kind of prevailing prayer.

So, pray without ceasing. Simple, yet profound. Not vain repetition, and yet it’s a continual rising of the longings and desires of the heart into the presence of God. It’s so natural to the Christian to do it that it doesn’t need to be taught. And yet it’s so far beyond us that it has to be learned by being in the Spirit. This is a great thing, the greatest connection we have to all the divine resources. God will hear and answer as we obey His commandments and do His will. ■ ©2026 MACARTHUR FAMILY TRUST

Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version.

John MacArthur served as the pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, for more than 56 years until his death on July 14, 2025. This article is adapted with permission from a sermon he preached on Dec. 8, 2002, at Grace Community Church.