

Just Breathe

#4 in Series – *Prayer: A Breath of Fresh Air*

1 Thess. 5:17 (NASB) “pray without ceasing”

Col. 4:2 (NASB) “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving”

Rom. 12:12 (NASB) “rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer”

Eph. 6:18 (ESV) “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”

Luke 18:1 (NASB) “Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart”

Praying is as natural to the Christian, as breathing is to the body... Breathing is something we do without even thinking about it, unless someone brings up the subject of breathing, and all of a sudden, you can't help but think about your next breath...

Or – when you get the “wind knocked out of you” – then you are not only “thinking” about it, but are desperately trying to “catch” the next breath...

“Just Breathe” is not only a title to a couple of different songs – both secular and Christian – but it is an excellent illustration for **1 Thess. 5:17, where the Holy Spirit, through Paul simply appeals to believes to –**

1 Thess. 5:17 (NASB) “pray without ceasing”

Prayer is essential for your spiritual health... Just as having a healthy intake of God's Word into your life, and healthy relationships with other members of the Family of God – prayer is absolutely critical for your spiritual wellbeing...

Warren Wiersbe – “‘Pray without ceasing’ does not mean we must always be mumbling prayers. The word means ‘constantly recurring,’ not continuously occurring. We are to ‘keep the receiver off the hook’ and be in touch with God so that our praying is part of a long conversation that is not broken.”

So, if prayer is an ongoing, uninterrupted conversation with God, what do we talk about with Him?... The short answer is – EVERYTHING.

The Scriptures give us clear instruction concerning the content of our praying... For a very practical approach, let's think about three general categories of prayer. This first category we will call –

1. Worship Praying

As the word *worship* clearly indicates – this type of praying is God-centered. This is purely vertical. It is focusing on God Himself...

Worship praying is focused on the –

- **Adoration of God**

This is worshipping God for Who He is... Well, just WHO is He?

Here is where an examination of the Names of God will increase our understanding of Who He is... A study of the Names and Attributes of God will immediately correct any of our misunderstandings of God...

Do you have a proper understanding of Who God is?... Is He the “Most High God” in your life? Is He the “All sufficient One”, “Master”, “Lord of Peace”, or “The Lord Who Will Provide”? Is He your “Father”?...

He is –

- EL SHADDAI – The LORD God Almighty
- EL ELYON – The Most High God
- ADONAI – Lord, Master
- YAHWEH – Lord / Jehovah
- JEHOVAH NISSI – The Lord my Banner (from whence comes our identity)
- JEHOVAH-RAAH – the Lord my Shepherd
- JEHOVAH RAPHA – The Lord Who Heals
- JEHOVAH SHAMMAH – The Lord is There
- JEHOVAH TSIDKENU (tsid-kay'-noo) – The Lord our Righteousness
- EL OLAM – The Everlasting God
- ELOHIM – God, Judge, Creator
- JEHOVAH JIREH – The Lord will provide
- JEHOVAH SHALOM – The Lord is peace
- JEHOVAH SABAOth – The Lord of hosts / power

These are but a few of the Names of God revealed to us in the OT... Listen, God knows us by our name, shouldn't we know Him by His?

Ps. 9:10 (NASB)

And those who know Your name will put their trust in You,
For You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.

Worship praying focuses on adoration of God – but worship praying is also focused on –

- **Appreciation to God**

This is worshipping God for what He does...

Again – the very Names of God will also give us insight to what God does...

Our worship of God will not only focus on the Person of God, but also the provision of God!... One of His Names is JEHOVAH JIREH – The Lord will provide... Would it not be appropriate to be specific in

our acknowledgment of His provision?

Instead of just saying “Thank you God for what you do” – would it not be better for us to be specific in our gratitude?...

For what specifically are you grateful for?... That question can be answered in any moment of your life!

Phil. 4:6 (NASB) “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

As we noted earlier in this series – gratitude is the default attitude of the Christian’s heart... Christians are given God’s grace which enables us to be able to be grateful in any and all circumstances...

Worship praying is the loftiest, and most needed in our lives!... Only when we truly encounter God in His worthiness, in His holiness, - will we be able to pray through the other types of prayer...

Let’s consider next what we will call –

2. Warfare Praying

Followers of Christ are in a spiritual battle! Why? Why would the world, the flesh and the devil come against those who belong to Christ?... It is because we seek to live for Christ – which makes us targets of enemy attacks. Satan will do all he can to leave us discouraged, doubting, and defeated...

Well, how do we contend with that?... In short – God’s Word gives us the answers:

2 Cor. 10:5 (NASB) “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”

When I was a young Christian, I was introduced to a ministry called Navigators. They still provide some very good discipleship materials. Their website is Navigators.org, and they have a very helpful section on how to pray during times of spiritual warfare. When we pray, our focus is on Jesus, which in turn strengthens our faith and enables our victory!... I wanted you to have their list of suggested ways to talk with the Lord with you are experiencing spiritual warfare:

- Thank You, Lord Jesus, for rescuing me from my sins and the devil’s stronghold by going to the cross for me. (Col. 2:13-15; 2 Cor. 2:14)
- Even though I know that the devil – like a roaring lion – wants to devour me, help me to steadfastly trust in You, win today’s spiritual battles, and bring glory and honor to Your name. (1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:12; Luke 10:18)
- Gracious Lord, forgive me for the ways I have given the enemy an opportunity. By Your name, help me to take back any lost territory he’s encroached upon. (Deut. 18:9-12; Ps. 139:23,24; 1 John 1:9)
- Sovereign God, keep me from the enemy: the evil one, the tempter, the accuser. Protect me from his fallen-angel followers – idols, demons, evil spirits. (Rev. 12:7-9; Matt. 6:13; 1 Thess. 3:5; Rev. 12:10, Lev. 17:7; Luke 8:30; Luke 7:21)
- Help me to submit anew today to Your authority, control, and will. Lead me to say “no” to the

devil and his temptations and “yes” to You and abundant life. By Your power help me resist him and see him run away. (John 10:10; Jam. 4:7)

- Lord Jesus, keep me in Your presence and away from evil. (John 17:15; Eph. 1:18-23; John 12:26)
- Mighty Lord, thank You for spiritual armor for the spiritual battle – the belt of truth; breastplate of righteousness; helmet of salvation; feet fitted with the readiness of the Gospel of peace; shield of faith; and the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. I need each piece. Help me remain strong in Your mighty power and stand against the enemy’s wicked schemes. (Eph. 6:10-18)
- Thank You for such spiritual weapons as faith, truth, and righteousness that demolish strongholds. Help me to keep my mind fixed on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. (2 Cor. 10:3-6; Phil. 4:8)
- Holy Spirit, I know my own actions can open the door to the enemy. Lead me to be humble, not prideful; forgiving, not holding grudges; content, not striving for what doesn’t satisfy. (2 Cor. 2:10,11; Gal. 5:22,23; Eph. 4:27)
- Satan attempts to incite me to sin or prompt me to do evil. I’m desperately dependent on You to thwart the enemy’s deceitful attacks. (1 Chr. 21:1; John 13:2; Acts 5:3)
- O Lord, thank You that absolutely nothing— not even the spiritual forces of evil – can separate me from Your love. (Rom. 8:38-39; Luke 4:1-13)
- When Satan goes after the core of who I am – telling me I’m a worthless sinner, a lost cause, an embarrassment to You – remind me of whose I am and who You say I am ... a saint, a new creation, Your beloved child. (Eph. 1:1, 2 Cor. 5:17; John 3:16)
- Father God, keep me alert to the evil one with spiritual eyes wide open as You use me to make a difference for eternity by helping other people come to know, grow in, and live for You. (1 Thess. 5:6; Pro. 4:23, 1 Cor. 10:12; Matt. 28:19-20)
- I pray as well for each member of my family and my pastor(s), church staff, and fellow believers. May they suit up in Your armor and experience victory by Your power. (Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:25; Heb. 13:18; 1 Pet. 5:8-10)
- Mighty God, use me as a soldier in the spiritual battle. You live inside me and are much greater than the enemy. Enable me to “fight the good fight” and advance Your Kingdom into the enemy’s occupied territory. (Col. 2:15; 1 John 4:4; 2 Tim. 4:6-8)

As you and I begin our day expressing worship to the Lord – we are better equipped then to “breathe” *warfare prayers* throughout the day!...

Ask God to equip you for the battle against your sin. Then get into the Bible and talk to the Lord about everything He says in His Word about doing such battle – and you will be victorious! Remember –

Rom. 8:37 (NASB) “ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.”

The third type of praying, we will call –

3. Work Praying

Work is what we do in order to meet needs... You need food and shelter, and God’s design for meeting those needs is work...

There is a basic element in prayer that is most often focused on the meeting of needs. It is called petition, or supplication...

Scripture gives us instruction to seek God for the meeting of our needs, and desires, for that matter. We petition God for our needs as well as for the needs of others.

First think with me about:

- **Petitioning for ourselves**

To make a petition of God, is simply to make a request... A supplication is synonymous, but carries the idea of seeking God’s grace or favor regarding a matter... This simply means we bring our needs to the Lord and trust Him with them...

Oh – we know how to express our need to Him in prayer. Experiencing needs that are challenging to us may be the most common motivation that leads us to pray at all... But if we pray as God instructs us to – we will not only “express” our burden – but we will “trust” it to the Lord!

Two of my favorite passages that call us to seek the Lord for our needs are:

Phil. 4:6 (NASB) “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

And –

1 Pet. 5:7 (NASB) “casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”

- **Interceding for others**

Remember – *Intercessory prayer is praying on behalf of others with the determination of seeing their needs met.*

That was our focus in last week’s message... And as we discussed last week – if you need Biblical guidance for how to pray for others – how about using Paul’s example in what he prayed for in behalf of the Colossians?

Col. 1:9-11 (ESV)

⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his

glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;

In conclusion:

A lot of you are familiar with the acronym called the A.C.T.S. of Prayer – which is a great reminder of the priority and focus in how we are to pray:

ACTS of Prayer (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication – for self and others)... If you forget today's outline – try to remember ACTS – and you will have it...

Questions to consider in Community Group:

- Have you ever had “the wind knocked out of you”? How about “spiritually” – when you just didn't want to pray anymore? If so, what convinced that perhaps “prayer wasn't worth the time”?
- What does it mean to “pray without ceasing”?
- **How difficult do you find it to “pray without ceasing”?**
- **What is “worship praying”? Do you find it difficult to “default” to that type of praying? If so, why?**
- **What do you think about “warfare praying”? How can we be guaranteed “victory” over the world, the devil, or our own flesh?**
- **Which example of warfare praying most resonated with you? What Scripture do you find yourself running to and praying through in times of spiritual battle?**
- **Why call petition, supplication or intercession “work praying”?**
- **The ACTS of Prayer was offered as a way of remembering the priority and categories of prayer. How helpful is that to you? What other things do you do that encourages your prayer-life?**
- **For what would you like for others to pray for you about this week?**