

Praying without Ceasing

**What did the Apostle Paul really mean, and can it be done?
Here is one practical suggestion for obeying the command.**

The apostle Paul admonishes us to "pray without ceasing" [1 Thes. 5:16]. But how do we do that?

Some people have found "breath prayers" helpful. These are typically short prayers of a few syllables which can be said in one breath. They are repeated constantly throughout the day, any time our hands are occupied but our mind is free to think. They are one way to learn to have the mind of Christ, rather than allowing our minds to drift in neutral when we are not concentrating on a specific thought or task at hand.

The most famous breath prayer is known as the "Jesus Prayer," based on Luke 18:13: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." To develop your own personal breath prayers, think of something to help you grow in your personal relationship with the Lord. Ask the Lord to guide you; He usually has a better idea of what we need than we do.

Put your request into a simple phrase, and address it to God by one of your favorite names for Him. Begin to pray it, and ask the Lord to change it any way He desires until it feels as natural as breathing. Continue praying it until it becomes something you do unconsciously, until you feel it is part of you and you can see ways in which the Lord is answering. He will lead you to know when to change your breath prayer; try not to rush it. Here are some examples:

"Abba, Father, let me experience Your love."

"Precious Vine, help me abide in You."

"Spirit of Wisdom, grant me discernment."

For more information on breath prayers, see Richard Foster's book, *Prayer, Finding the Heart's True Home*, Harper Collins, 1992.