

I. Introduction.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV) | ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

II. Pray continually: historical meaning and contemporary definition.

A. First things first: It's important to understand that Paul's letter to the Thessalonian Christians was written to the entire citywide church (as were all of his letters except for the pastoral epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon) throughout Thessalonica. They were not written to individual believers or even to just a single local church expression as we understand it today. Paul was writing to everyone and so his instructions must be understood to be interpreted regionally. Notice how the letter is addressed:

- "Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians (*plural*) in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you. ² We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. ³ We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God..." (1 Thessalonians 1:1-4, NIV)

B. Think of the larger community: We must interpret Paul's charge to "pray continually" in a more community-oriented sense instead of merely an individualistic sense (although a regular private prayer time is essential). I believe God's heart in expressing these words through the apostle was to bring the larger body of Christians together for regular united prayer so that they would remain strong and weather the challenges they would encounter. We get a bit more of an idea why when we understand the context of how the church in Thessalonica was born:

Acts 17:1-9 (NIV) | When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ² As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah," he said. ⁴ Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks (*Gentiles, or non-Jews*) and quite a few prominent women. ⁵ But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶ But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." ⁸ When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. ⁹ Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

C. We stay together when we pray together. Paul knew that if the Thessalonians remained vigilant enough to pray much together, they could overcome a hostile Roman and religious culture. There were many obstacles that could trip them up, but contending in prayer together was a mighty weapon strong enough to cut down all the traps laid by the enemy. The same is true for us today!

- **GPHOP:** As an aside, my hope for the GPHOP is to be a gathering place for the church throughout central Illinois to pray together and walk out the spirit of this verse. I believe that when we can actually do this if we do it together, which in turn causes us to walk in God's will and higher purposes in the whole tri-county region—not just in our individual lives and congregations.

D. So what does "pray continually" mean to us in the here and now? Well, here's just a few thoughts: It means that we pray continually together with all the saints in our area. It means we join together regularly for prayer with believers from many different churches. It means we intercede day and night, night and day. It means that we don't neglect private prayer or stop trying to cultivate an attitude of prayer throughout the day, but that we don't stop there—we go further: it means we try to get the whole citywide church praying together (one gathering at a time). It means a whole bunch of churches and leaders and families understand its importance. It means 24/7 prayer in a spirit of unity for the glory of Jesus. It means wherever you go you get people praying together. Let's keep being faithful to this end. Amen!

E. Concluding thought: Those that band together to embrace the charge to pray continually will see God answer continually. Praying without ceasing has never been about us staying busy with religious activity, but seeing God break powerfully into our reality on a regular basis.

III. Space for taking notes:

Help me improve my notes! The first person to point out a legitimate mistake/typo on this document (during service) gets \$1.

Greater Peoria House of Prayer Announcements for September 6, 2019.

- 1. Welcome** to the Greater Peoria House of Prayer... we're glad you're here and blessed to be worshipping God with you! Be sure to pick up the **free** materials at the back table in the prayer room or the desk near the front of the downstairs fellowship area, which includes teaching notes, stickers, pens, prayer cards and more. **Daily schedule:** We have morning prayer right here in this room seven days a week from 7-8 a.m. Monday - Friday and 8-9 a.m. Saturday and Sunday. We have afternoon prayer four days a week: Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 11:30 a.m. - noon. We have evening prayer with live worship from 6-8 p.m. Monday - Saturday. On Friday's, we have an extra prayer gathering from 10-11:30 a.m. Our **Friday Encounter Night** is from 6-9 p.m. and is our main corporate gathering each Friday evening featuring live worship and a teaching to inspire love for Jesus and prayer.
- 2. UPCOMING EVENTS:** Young men's discipleship tomorrow night (Saturday, September 7) from 6-8 p.m.!
- 3. Prayer room ministry opportunities:** If you are interested in leading or ministering during a live worship set by singing, playing an instrument, prayer leading or behind the sound board, please contact us at info@gphop.org. We'd love to have you serve on one of our teams! **Team ministry opportunities:** If you feel the Lord has gifted you in the prophetic (or would like to grow in this gifting) and would consider helping on a prophetic team, send an email to info@gphop.org. Contact Mandy Kistner at mandy@gphop.org if you would like to schedule a future healing ministry appointment or help out on the healing team.
- 4. Missions:** Please keep the following missionaries we support in prayer as well as be sensitive to their financial needs: **Ashley Bucknam** and **Alicia Wright** (ACTS School; Colorado Springs, CO); **Tim and Blair Fraim** (Florianopolis House of Prayer; Florianopolis, Brazil); **Eric and Erin Simmons** (Minnesota House of Prayer Network; Twin Cities, MN); **Austin and Amy Zhu** and **Phil Kellenberger** (International House of Prayer; Kansas City, MO); **Babett Mueller** (111 Global; Kansas City, MO). Also keep friends **Tyler and Sarah Cook** and family in prayer who lead a HOP in Ottawa, IL.
- 5. Military:** Please keep the following members of our military in prayer as they valiantly serve the United States of America: **Jake Gerst**, currently stationed in Fort Benning (Georgia).
- 6. Social media:** Follow us on Facebook (Greater Peoria House of Prayer - GPHOP), Twitter (@GPHOPrayer), Instagram (@GPHOPrayer), Vimeo and YouTube for regular updates and inspiration. Use these social media sites to get the word out, share pictures, quotes you heard, etc. Contact Derek at derek@gphop.org if you're interested in helping with GPHOP's social media.
- 7. Refuge ministry:** There are several groups who use our facility for their ministry purposes. Please keep the following in prayer: Christian Business Men's Connection Bible studies (Thursday mornings), Kinisi 424 senior worship leader meetings (monthly/as needed), kingdom business prayer groups (as needed), prophetic dance classes (as needed) and Sunday church gatherings (as needed).
- 8.** We provide **free wifi** to everyone here! The password for the **GPHOP** router is on the chalkboard in the downstairs fellowship area. You can also connect to either the CableWiFi or xfinitywifi routers if you have a personal Comcast account.
- 9. Prayer requests:** If you would like our community to pray for something specific, please submit it to info@gphop.org.
- 10. Giving:** If you have been blessed by the GPHOP and would like sow financially into the ministry, we would be more than blessed. You can give in cash, but if you would like to give to GPHOP with a check, please make it out to "Greater Peoria House of Prayer" or "GPHOP"—your gift is tax deductible. Thank you for your generosity! It's helping make day and night prayer with worship possible in central Illinois. You can place your gift in the Saturday night offering during the 7 p.m. teaching or drop it in either of the two black donation boxes. Donations can also be mailed to our physical address at 117 East Washington Street, East Peoria, IL 61611. Donors can also use PayPal or our website (gphop.org/donate) to give electronically.

*Thank you for helping to **keep this prayer room sacred** by ensuring conversations with others are brief and kindly reminding others to do the same. Use the large Gathering Grounds fellowship area downstairs if you would like to chat at length.*