



WHEN: SCHEDULED PRAYER

*After bidding them farewell, He left for
the mountain to pray. (Mark 6:46)*



There are times in life when you will be *motivated* to pray. It may be because of a crisis, a hope, or a fear that feels all-consuming. But prayer should also be something that's part of your daily schedule. And not just before meals or when going to bed. We're talking about a time set aside solely to focus on the Lord and your relationship with Him. That's our target for this chapter: *scheduled prayer*.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, we are encouraged to "pray without ceasing." This means never being far from the attitude or action of talking and listening to God. Prayer should be a natural part of our thinking. Not just in our worship but in our work. Not just in our quiet moments but also in our chaos. We pray because He's there. We pray because He's God. We pray because He cares.

THE BATTLE PLAN FOR PRAYER

But this doesn't mean we're sinning if we're not praying every second of every day. That would be impossible. But if we were to say that kids *play constantly* or that teenagers *text their friends constantly*, we wouldn't mean they never do anything else except playing or texting nonstop. We'd just mean that throughout the day, kids are often trying to integrate play into what they're doing. Many teens communicate hourly with their friends through text messages. Likewise, God desires that prayer become an ongoing opportunity we take full advantage of—quietly praising, thanking, and leaning on Him at any moment and context in our minds and hearts.

Interestingly, the Bible connects prayer to the burning of incense before the Lord. Revelation 5:8 says the golden bowls of incense in heaven are “the prayers of the saints.” David also wrote, “May my prayer be counted as incense before You; the lifting up of my hands as the evening offering” (Ps. 141:2).

To see what this analogy really means, look back to God's original instructions about the altar of incense, which was located inside the tabernacle: “Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it; he shall burn it every morning when he trims the lamps. When Aaron trims the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense. There shall be perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations” (Exod. 30:7–8).

That's the manner in which we should look at prayer. It's a crucial part of the life of a believer. It's a priority and a passion.

But along with this “constant” attitude of prayer should be times when we commit to pray as part of our regular

THE BATTLE PLAN FOR PRAYER

schedule. These are times when we intentionally focus *ONLY* on prayer, not just as an added part of our other daily activities. It's when we say with our actions and priorities that God is above everything else in our lives. In fact . . . He *IS* life.

The lighting of incense was a part of the daily habit and schedule of the priests. Though it burned throughout the day, it was scheduled to begin at the start of their day and would later wrap up at night. We, too, must make prayer a scheduled part of our lives.

Even with his responsibilities as king, David said, "Evening and morning and at noon I will pray" (Ps. 55:17 NKJV). In like manner, Daniel went to his room, opened his window, and routinely prayed to God three times a day, even when praying at such an expected time could mean losing his life. His enemies knew when to be watching for him. And in Mark 1 and Luke 5, we find Jesus getting up early as part of His routine to spend time in prayer.

Whether you're the CEO of a business or between jobs, you should still prioritize prayer as a necessity in your schedule each day. Married couples should schedule a time to pray together. Families should make prayer a part of their normal routine. And churches need scheduled prayer times and prayer meetings within their own congregations, as well as in partnership with other churches in their city.

When we schedule something, we're less likely to forget it or treat it as something we'll "get around to later." After a while, it becomes a routine, then a sacred habit.

That's the goal when scheduling prayer.

THE BATTLE PLAN FOR PRAYER

Anything important enough to us will be something we make time for. Even when we're extremely busy. But remember, Jesus was busier than all of us, and He prioritized daily prayer.

What if the richest man in your city called you today and said he would give you ten thousand dollars in cash every morning if you showed up and rang his doorbell at 6:00 a.m. Would you be there? Absolutely. No question. Why? Because if we really want something bad enough and value it enough, we make it happen. We figure out a way to fit it into our schedules. At the same time, our Savior, Jesus Christ, is daily offering us eternal treasures from His Word and the opportunity to talk with His Father, the God of the Universe, to share our hearts and needs. And yet we still come up with excuses as to why we don't have time to make it work.

So determine today that prayer will be the priority God wants it to be in your life. Choose to start each day in prayer. To end each day with prayer. Even better, couple it with time in God's Word. Whether it's an hour or just fifteen minutes, schedule time to be with the Lord, and watch what He does with it in your life.

Lord, when I look at my average day, I see a lot of things that I never consider not doing or making time for. Each day. Every day. And yet prayer—why can I so easily decide not to block out a set time for something this essential? Help me not continue to make this mistake. Thank You for always being here, ready to communicate with me. I commit, Lord, to being there to communicate with You.