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PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

In his letter to the Thessalonians Paul instructed them to "pray without ceasing" (ch. 5:17). Over the years we have heard that verse explained any number of times, and almost without exception, it is explained that the verse "does not mean exactly what it says." Well, it is obvious that the Lord does not intend for us to go around all day with our hands folded under our chin and our eyes cast heavenward; and he does not intend for us to go around all the time mumbling under our breath. There is really no benefit in long, repetitious prayers. Matt. 6:7, "But when ye pray, USE NOT VAIN REPETITIONS, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

But we are not so interested in what the verse does not teach as we are in learning what it does teach. The verse does mean what it says. Think about this. We are all a reactionary people. We go through every day reacting to situations. Suppose you are driving nails, and after awhile, the inevitable happens. You hit your thumb with the hammer. What do you do? Now you may come out with some expression that you ought not to even think, much less say out loud. I hope that is not your reaction; but it does happen. Or you may dance around, holding your thumb, saying, "Ooheee, ohaaa." Or you may jump around, making strange faces and goggle eyes. But one way or another, you are going to react. You cannot help but react.

Suppose you hear that somebody has said something really mean about you. How do you react? You may react by saying something just as mean about him. Or you may just groan down inside, or you may walk around steaming for awhile. Suppose you have just been very disappointed; a very special project of yours has fallen apart, and there is no way to put it back together. How are you going to react? Do you see? We go through every day reacting to situations.

Instead of coming out with some expression that you ought not to use, or saying something mean about your friend, or walking around, all cast down and disappointed---suppose that you pray. Suppose that in the privacy of your mind, you instinctively beg God to give you strength for the moment.

But you may think, "Harold Hunt, you do not know how my life has been going. With all the disappointment there is in my life, and as many times as I have been insulted and injured, if I pray every time I whack my thumb, or every time I stub my

toe, or every time I am disappointed, or I hear that somebody is trying to do me some harm, why I would not get anything done but pray."

NOW YOU ARE BEGINNING TO GET THE POINT. Prayer ought to be as natural as breathing to the child of God. Prayer ought to be our natural response to every situation. We do not need to go around mumbling under our breath every moment of the day; but every situation that calls for any decision, or requires any determination, or any strength of character ought to prompt to us to pray. We do not even have to think to breathe; it is so natural that we breathe without thinking. Prayer ought to be just that instinctive. Prayer ought to be such a part of our makeup that we are constantly ready to pray. We should be ready to pray every time a difficult task comes to our attention, or anything goes wrong, or every time a personal conflict presents itself.

We ought to begin our day with prayer, and close it with prayer. Most of us do not bound out of bed at the very moment the alarm goes off. Most of us lie there for a moment. Now you may lie there for two or three minutes, or you may lie there for a long time; but how you occupy that time will have a great effect on how you deal with the day. Suppose that during that time when you are not entirely awake, and you are not entirely asleep, you spend the time in prayer. You are facing a difficult day; whether you realize it or not, you need the Lord's assistance. If you do not realize how desperately you need the Lord's help to face the problems of that day, then that is the very thing you need to pray about. You need to pray that God would help you with your insensitivity to your own spiritual need. Suppose you spend that time, as you drift between sleep and waking up, talking to the Lord about the prospect of that day. Do you suppose that you might get along with folks on the job better if you spent that time asking the Lord for grace to do just that? Do you think that you might go through the day, ever more alert for the need and the opportunity to pray, if you spent those first few moments of the day in quiet prayer?

Do you ever have trouble sleeping? Suppose you closed every day with prayer. When you lay your head on the pillow, and pull the covers up to your chin, and expect to go to sleep in a few moments, suppose that you then spend the remainder of your day in prayer. You don't know how long it is going to be before you go to sleep. Perhaps you have been having trouble sleeping. Some nights you lie there until way in the night. Every once in a while, you toss and turn almost all night. It seems that you are always able to go to sleep just about time to get up; but it is too late then. Suppose that you make a practice of always spending that time in prayer. If you go to sleep right away, you will not have time to finish. If you do not go to sleep, you will have more time to talk with the Lord than you have had in a long time. And even if

you do not sleep, it will be time very well spent. You are not likely to become nearly so bothered about not sleeping, if you are enjoying that time of communion with the Lord.

But after a few nights of closing the day with prayer---talking to the Lord till you go to sleep, no matter how long that takes---you will probably find that you never do finish. You will probably find that you are going to sleep sooner, and sleeping better than you have in a long time. It is probably a good idea to begin by thanking the Lord for all the things he has already done for you. Most of us are so ungrateful; it behooves us to take some time to thank the Lord for what he has done. The first few nights, you may not find as many things to thank the Lord for as you will during the nights that follow. After you have thanked the Lord for the many things he has already done, it is a good idea to ask him for the things that you feel that you still need. But after a few nights, you will probably find that you never get that far; you fall asleep before you finish thanking him for the blessings you have already received.

If you have a job, or at least an income sufficient to supply your needs, you ought to thank the Lord for it. There are people who are not so well blessed. Do you love your country? Thank the Lord for it. Our nation is not able to take all the people who would like to live here; and it is heart-rending to see telecasts of some of those pitiful people who want so desperately to come here. Do you have a wife and children that love you? Thank the Lord for them. It is hard to be contrary with your wife at breakfast, if you went to sleep the night before thanking the Lord that he blessed you to find her. Do you have a home to live in? Thank the Lord for it. In this time of recession a lot of people are losing their jobs, and losing some very comfortable homes. Some of them are going from living very comfortably to wondering how they are going to survive. Do you have sufficient food, or the money to buy it? Thank the Lord. I always thank the Lord for my food. I don't always pray out loud; but I do take the time to thank the Lord. I have seen some times when my financial situation was very shaky, times when I really did not know how I was going to get by. I can tell you that beans and potatoes taste better, when I take a moment to consider what it would be like, if I did not have them, and did not have money to buy them. I do not know what your experience might be; but I can tell you that when I close my day with prayer, I almost never can stay awake long enough to finish thanking the Lord for what he has already done for me. I have to wait until the next morning to pick up where I left off. Sometimes I wake up in the night, and I finish then; but even then I usually go back to sleep before I can finish.

If you have the idea that prayer is a task to be performed, perhaps, once a day, and then for about three or four minutes---you have never realized how important prayer

really is. You need to start your day with prayer, and finish it with prayer---and to be constantly on the alert for the need, and the opportunity, to pray at every moment of the day. "Pray without ceasing."

Our attitude toward prayer, and our attitude toward Bible reading ought to be very much the same. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and IN HIS LAW DOTHE HE MEDITATE DAY AND NIGHT," Psalms 1:1,2. Now it is obvious that you cannot be consciously thinking about the scriptures all the time. There are times that you need to think about other things. If you are driving down the interstate, it is a good idea to have your mind on what you are doing. You can get yourself, and other people, in some mighty dangerous situations if you are thinking about everything but driving. If you are on the operating table in some hospital, you would like to think that the mind of the surgeon is on what he is doing.

But read the text again: "And in his law doth he meditate day and night." It does mean what it says. It is a dangerous practice to explain away the clear statement of any text of scripture.

We cannot spend every moment of the day reading our Bibles; but all of us have abundantly more time for the Bible than most of us have ever used---or even imagined that we have. Think about this for a moment. God so created the solar system that the earth rotates on its axis once in every twenty-four hours. That is to say that our days are twenty-four hours long, and we always find some way to occupy those twenty-four hours. We may use the time gainfully, or we may squander the time; but we spend the time in some manner. Most of us seem to think that we are just about the busiest person in town. We never seem to have time to do all we need to do. Somebody is forever telling me, "I just don't have time to read the Bible; I wish I did, but I don't." Imagine what might have happened if God had so ordered the natural creation that our days were only twenty-three and one half hours long. Do you imagine that the human race might have somehow survived; or do you believe that we would have all expired, because we just cannot get along on a twenty-three and a half hour day? I believe that, somehow, we would have found a way to get along, don't you?

Do you believe that you would be able to get through the day if you took the first thirty minutes of each day for your Bible, or do you believe that after a few days your world would just come to a screeching halt, because you just cannot get along on a twenty-three and a half hour day? Do you think that your day might even go much better, because you spent the first thirty minutes, quietly with the Lord. Do you think

you might get along better with the people on the job, because that first thirty minutes put you in a better frame of mind to face the day. Do you think that the job might go better, and you would not have to do some of your tasks over. A lot of time on the job is spent in redoing things that we should have done differently in the first place. If we did not have to do so many things over, we could save a lot of time. Do you not think that if you were able to face the day in a better frame of mind, that there might not be so many of those repeat jobs.

Not only would we all manage to survive if we spent that first thirty minutes with our Bibles, we all have little bits of time scattered through the day that we could spend with our Bibles---if we really wanted to. We very often make the comment, "If God cannot have first place in our lives, he will not settle for second place." That statement is true; but it is also true that in this matter of reading our Bible, God will accept and bless the time that we use, regardless if it is our leftover time. God will accept and bless your THROWAWAY time. Our lives are just filled with "throwaway time," time that we cannot profitably spend in any other way.

Did you ever have a doctor's appointment for 2:30, and the doctor did not see you until 4:00? Were you just a little annoyed that he made you wait? Did you think that if he was not going to see you until 4:00, it would probably have been a good idea to set the appointment for 4:00 to start with? Were you, perhaps, not in an especially good humor when you finally did see him? Suppose that as soon as you got to the doctor's office you got out the New Testament you carry in your pocket and began to read. You are going to read until you are called for. You might have more time to read your Bible that day than you have had in a long time. Do you have the idea that you might be in a better frame of mind to talk to him, when he finally does call for you? Nobody likes to be kept waiting; but the best way to minimize the stress is to occupy the time profitably; and there is no better way to do that than by reading your Bible.

But it is possible that you do not carry a pocket New Testament with you. There are a lot of people who don't. I cannot understand why they do not; but it is a fact. There are a lot of people, who, for some reason, do not carry a New Testament with them. If you don't, that is one habit you need to start. You would never think about going to town without your wallet. A pocket New Testament does not take up any more space than a wallet does, and there is no end to the benefit that it can be to you to always have a New Testament with you. You never know when you are going to come across some of this "throwaway time" we are talking about; but there is one thing you can be sure of: your life is just filled with it; and if you will just use that time to read your Bible, you will spend more time with the Bible than most people do.

Did any of you husbands ever have to stop at the grocery store for "just for a moment?" Your wife tells you she just needs to "pick up two or three things; it won't take but a minute;" but it has already been almost thirty minutes, and she is not back yet. When she finally does show up, she is pushing a grocery cart full of groceries. Is it, perhaps, a good idea for her to just get in the car and sit down---without bothering to make any explanation? Can she sense from your expression that you are not in a particularly good humor. Suppose that, when she first got out of the car, you got out your New Testament and started to read. You could even have a Bible in the dash of the car. Do you think that it might be safer for her to speak to you when she does get back, if you have spent that thirty minutes quietly with the Lord?

When you wives go to the hairdressers, how do you spend your time? Perhaps, you catch up on the neighborhood gossip; but you should have that finished by the time you get under the dryer. You cannot hear anything when the dryer is going. Do you, maybe, read some of the magazines they have laying around? If the content of those magazines is anything like the covers would suggest, you might read things in there that would embarrass you. Or, at least, it ought to. Again, do you not think that your time would be better spent, if you would read your Bible, while the dryer is going?

But perhaps, it would embarrass you to read your Bible in public. It should not; but it would embarrass some people. Do you remember that the Lord said that if you are ashamed of him before men, he will be ashamed of you before his Father. That is not talking about being ashamed of any of his children on that grand day when we all stand before him in judgment; but it is saying that if you are ashamed of him at 11:30 on Saturday morning, he will be ashamed of you at 10:30 on Sunday morning. Did you ever wonder why you do not enjoy the church service as much as you used to? That may be the reason.

Most of the people who become acquainted with the church do so because of the recommendation of a satisfied member. If somebody saw you reading your Bible in such a public place as the beauty shop, do you not think that it might pique their curiosity? Do you think that it might make them wonder what there is about your religion that makes you enjoy the Bible so much that you read it at every opportunity? Or do you think that if you are ashamed to be seen reading your Bible others might get the idea that your religion is not really important to you?

We are living in a very wicked age. In some ways, there has never been another age like it. Now I know that people in very nearly every age have believed that their age was the most wicked age that ever was. And if a person is even slightly acquainted with the facts of history, he must admit that there have been other ages in which

wickedness was more rampant than it is in this day. Baal worship was a very wicked kind of religion. Ritual murder (human sacrifice), and ritual fornication were the very heart of the worship of Baal. There was a time when National Israel was given over to that wicked religion. Isa. 57:5, "Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, SLAYING THE CHILDREN in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks." Ezek. 16:20,21, "Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of THY WHOREDOMS a small matter? That THOU HAST SLAIN MY CHILDREN, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?" That is not the situation in America today. Even that is going in secret among some of the Satanic cults; but it is not public practice. At some times in the history of ancient Israel and the nations around them, that was public practice.

When Christ was born, Herod heard that one had been born "the king of the Jews," and he ordered every baby under two years old to be killed. There are a lot of things wrong in our government today; but our government could not get away with anything like that, not even if it wanted to. Christians are not being rounded up and slaughtered by the hundreds the way they were during the days of persecution.

But while all that is true, there are some ways in which this age is different than any other. There has never been an age in the history of the world in which it was possible for the mind-manipulators to pipe immorality into our living rooms the way it is being done by television today. Our people are spending enormous amounts of time watching television, and the content of those programs is steadily becoming more immoral. Our minds are steadily becoming conditioned to accept immorality.

Several years ago I was selling life insurance on a "debit." An insurance debit is an arrangement where you make your rounds every so often picking up premiums. One day I had stopped to pick up the premium from an old couple, and the television was on. I don't remember what the program was, but the scene must have been somewhat less than edifying, and the old lady said, "Mr. Hunt, what do you think of television?" Well, I was not inclined to go into their homes volunteering my opinions. I was there to sell insurance, and I did not want to impose on them; but she asked. And since she asked, I told her. She said, "I agree with you; there are things on television that are not fit for children to watch." Well, that just hit me like a bucket of ice water. I said, "Tell me, if those programs are not fit for children to watch, are they really fit for you and me to watch?" She said, "Oh, Mr. Hunt, folks our age are not as impressionable as little children are." Well, she was about thirty years older than I was, but she was putting me in her age category.

I agreed that folks "our age" were not as impressionable as we once were, and we were not as likely to go out and imitate what we saw on television as young folks are; but I said, "I will tell you what I would like for you to do. Some time when one of those programs come on that are "not fit for children to watch, you go ahead and watch it all the way through, and when it is over I want you to get your Bible and read it for a little while. And next month, when I come by, I want you to tell me how you felt reading your Bible, after you had been watching that mess." She said, "I see what you mean."

The immoral segment of society has never in the history of the world had such ready access to our minds as they have had since the introduction of television. You can be sure that the most immoral people in our nation are using television for the very purpose of conditioning people to immorality. They are immoral, and they want others to be immoral.

The downward slide of television is no accident; it is part of a pattern. In 1932 Aldous Huxley wrote a book entitled BRAVE NEW WORLD. In that book he envisioned an age when the mind-manipulators would use immoral programming on television to condition people to immorality. In 1932 very few people had even heard of television, much less seen it; but Aldous Huxley knew exactly how it would be used.

It is worth noting that Aldous Huxley was the brother of Julian Huxley, the father of Neo-Darwinism, the most prominent form of the theory of evolution. He was also the grandson of Thomas Huxley. One hundred years ago Thomas Huxley was the bulldog for Charles Darwin, the founder of the modern theory of evolution. There is no other notion that has caused such havoc in America as the theory of evolution has. Our schools teach our children that God is not our creator---that we are simply the products of blind chance. It is no wonder that our younger generation has gotten the idea that if God is not their creator, they are not answerable to God, nor to anybody else for their conduct. Most of the problems in America would not have gotten so bad as they are is that unscientific, and unprovable notion was not being drilled into the minds of our younger generation.

But God will not allow the adversary to get an unbearable advantage over the people of God. I have no doubt that it was in the providence of God that, at the very time television began to gain such a hold on America, cassette tape recorders came on the scene. We are vexed with the wickedness of this age; and the mind-manipulators of this world are doing everything they can to use modern technology to help them in their assault on our minds and on the morals of our country. With radio, and

television, and recorded music, we are faced with a constant barrage of immoral sounds and ideas. But we can use the technology of this age to our advantage.

Sometimes I hear somebody say that he would like to have lived in some other age. I would not want to live in any age that did not have cassette tape recorders. Now you may not place as great a value on your tape recorder as I do on mine; but if I could not get a replacement, there is no price that I would take for my tape recorder. When a little boy begins to grow up he begins to set his goals. I was just like any other little boy. I could not wait to get old enough to get a job; I wanted to have an independent income. I needed that income so I could get my own car. But after those two things I wanted to find somebody who could figure out a way to hook up enough car batteries to run one of those old tape recorders. Now back in those days we did not have cassette recorders. We had those old 30 and 40 pound back breakers. I imagined it would take an entire trunk load of batteries to run the recorder. I never imagined that the time would come when we could carry a tape recorder in our pocket, and it would run for hours on two AA batteries. I just wanted some way to set one of those old reel to reel recorders in the passenger seat so it could read to me as I drove down the highway.

I bought one of the first battery powered tape recorders that was sold in Maryville. Royal Jewelers had an add in the Sunday paper, and I could not wait to get there on Monday morning. That was a long time before they invented the cassette. The first battery powered tape recorders were still reel to reel. Every time the tape ran out you had to stop the car and rethread the tape. I only had it a few weeks until somebody took it out of my car. But they did not steal the mike, and in those days you could not go to Radio Shack to buy a replacement mike. So the only thing he could do with the recorder was sit and listen to me read the Bible to him. I thought it served him right.

I have worn out a lot of tape recorders during these last thirty years. Sometimes I listen to sermons; more often I listen to the Bible on tape. I realize that much of the time I am not learning anything. Sometimes it runs, and I don't pay any attention. But whether I learn anything from the tape or not, it always accomplishes one thing. During the time I am listening to those tapes, I am not listening to the radio. Anything that will keep you from listening to some of the music that is being played now on the radio has to be an advantage. It has been over twenty years since I have listened to music on the radio. Recently I read about the music awards that had been given out the night before. I did not recognize the name of any song that won an award. I did not recognize the name of most of the entertainers, except that I had seen their names in the paper. I felt good about that.

I have very little first hand knowledge about what is being sung on the radio today; but if it is as bad as it was twenty years ago, when I quit listening, it is bad enough. From what I read in the newspapers, it has not gotten any better.

There was an old Scottish patriot, who is quoted as saying, "If you will let me write your music, I don't care who writes your laws, I will rule your country." That statement is more accurate than most people have ever realized. Those songs you go through the day humming to yourself have an impact on your life. If you go through the day humming Amazing Grace, and How Firm a Foundation, it will have an effect; and if you go through the day humming some song you heard over the local rock-and-roll station, it will also have an effect. The morals of our people, and especially the morals of our young people, are being shaped by the music they listen to.

Much of the time, when you listen, you do not think you are learning, but you really are, after all. Much of the time, when I listen to those New Testament tapes, there is more that is registering than I realize. When I was a little boy I used to hear a Pepsi commercial on the radio. It went, "Pepsi Cola hits the spot, twelve full ounces that's a lot, twice as much for a nickel too, Pepsi Cola's the drink for you." How long has it been since you could buy a Pepsi for a nickel? That is how long it has been since I heard that commercial. I did not make any effort to memorize that commercial. I had no need to memorize it; but I memorized it nonetheless, and I am sure that as long as I live and have my right mind, I will likely be able to quote it. Do you remember, "Super Suds, Super Suds, lots more suds from Super Suds?" It has probably been forty years since they ran that commercial, but some of you who are reading these lines can remember it. If you listen to the radio very much, at some time you have probably found yourself humming the tune to some commercial for a product that you would not have considered buying or using. You had no use for the product, but constantly hearing the commercial fixed the tune in your mind. We need to be careful what we listen to.

We are constantly bombarding our minds with something; it behooves us that we bombard it with better things. Most people keep the radio or the television going the majority of the time. If you get in the car, if the radio is not turned on, you probably turn it on. The music you listen to will have an effect on you. You will likely not go out and imitate the things you hear about in those songs; but it will diminish your interest in spiritual things, to say the least. You can buy the New Testament on cassette tapes for anywhere from twenty to fifty dollars, depending on where and when you buy it. Usually it will be narrated by an Englishman by the name of Alexander Scourby. He is very articulate; he can pronounce those proper names that most people have trouble with; and he is very easy to listen to. When you are riding to work every

morning, you would do much better to listen to him reading the Bible to you than you will listening to most of what is on the radio.

If it does not accomplish anything more than to keep you from hearing what is on the radio, that would be a benefit; but it will do much more. Moses said, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew," Deut. 32:2. The scriptures are like a gentle rain. They generally do their work slowly and gently, even when you are not aware.

Most people seem to keep the radio on "for the racket." At least, that is what they tell me. If you have to listen to something, you would do well to provide yourself with something better than the music on the radio.

Your mind is generally active. Some small part of the time you may not be thinking about anything; but that is not usually the case. The adversary has a more ready access to you through your thoughts than he does in any other way. If he can, he will induce you to think filthy, unclean thoughts. Every person has an old carnal nature, and if he can, the adversary will use that old carnal nature to stir up unclean thoughts, and unclean feelings in your mind. He has no more effective way to do that than to have you constantly listening to music written and performed by vile, perverted, sinful performers.

But not every person is as susceptible to unclean thoughts as others are. Every person has a carnal nature, just as surely as everybody else does; but that carnal nature does not work exactly the same in every person. Not every person is as plagued by unclean thoughts as the next person. There are those who have, for the most part, brought that problem under control; and others were never bothered with it in the first place, that is, not to the same degree. But if Satan cannot attack you in that way, he will attack you in some other way. If he cannot entice you to think unclean thoughts, he very well may be able to stir up mean, spiteful feelings in your mind. Perhaps he will direct your mind to some person who has not done you right. You have been mistreated, and you begin to ponder the thought. You begin to recall all the times that person has taken advantage of you, and you may consider how you ought to respond. That hurt, and perhaps, just a little malice, begins to prey on your mind. Sometimes, when you think on it, the offence begins to grow, and the more you think about it, the more offended you become. It does not do you any good to think about it; you just become more annoyed with the situation. You would do so much better to feed your mind with better things.

Perhaps the adversary fails on both those points. Not everybody is plagued with

unclean thoughts; and not everybody has a problem with malice. If he fails on both of those points, he may direct his attention to your greed. There is more greed in the world than most of us imagine. Much of what the world calls success is really greed. The bookstores are filled with books on how to be a "success." Most of those books are simply manuals on how to satisfy your greed, how to acquire and maintain more and more of material things, how to gain more attention, or more prestige, than your colleagues. Driving down the highway listening to the New Testament on tape might stir you up to realize that gaining a closer relationship with your maker is a more profitable goal than figuring out a way to gain that expensive toy you have had your eye on.

But if you do not have any great problem with lust, or malice, or greed, that does not mean the adversary is going to give up. He will very likely attack you through your pride. Satan will take the high road, if the low road is blocked. If he cannot get you to gratify the low and base instincts of the flesh, he will begin to tell you what a fine person you are. He will try to convince you that you have done such a good job in all those categories that you must stand head and shoulders above your friends. He will brag on you, and get you to brag on yourself, until you are convinced that you really are doing a very good job. You are a good citizen. You are a credit to your community. You are probably the most devoted member of your church. If everybody in the church was trying as hard as you are, the church would be in much better shape. You are really alarmed that you cannot get other people to come up to your standards. Pride may not have destroyed as many lives as lust, and malice, and greed; but it has done its share of damage; and as surely as you feed and cultivate your pride, you will cripple yourself in your service toward God.

Your mind is constantly active; if you are not thinking about one thing, you will be thinking about something else. And if the adversary cannot attack you one way, he will attack you another way. He will use your very thoughts as a weapon against you. If you are going to bombard your mind with some kind of sound most of the time, you need to find the very best sound. Find something that will stir up better thoughts.

Most of our people have cassette recorders, and a lot of them are using them to record their church services. Your day might go better if you spent some of the day listening to those tapes while you work. If you do not have the tapes you need, our people have several good tape services, which offer a wide variety of tapes by good able preachers. Our people are blessed with some very able preachers. I believe that this generation is blessed with some of the most able preachers our people have ever had, and their tapes are readily available. Acquiring those tapes will represent some of the smartest money you will ever spend. The ministry is a great benefit to the Lord's

people, and we would do well to spend more time in listening to what they have to say.

If you need to listen to music, there are any number of music cassettes available. That music will stir you up to better thoughts. Unless your work goes more smoothly than mine ever did, you need the Lord's constant assistance to guide you through the day. There are all sorts of problems, and sometimes, personal conflicts, that arise on the job. If you listen to good music, and spend some time in prayer, as you drive to work each morning, your day is very likely to go much better than it will if you bombard your mind with other things.

Most of us watch entirely too much television. We can make ever so many good resolutions, but most of us still watch television more than we need to. And it goes without saying that most television programming is not a benefit to our spiritual well being. The content of most programs becomes more immoral and more unacceptable every year. But I am convinced there can be an advantage, even to television. I don't believe that it is any accident that at the very time television is becoming such a detriment, camcorders have become so readily available. If we are going to watch television, and most of us will, we should, at least, provide ourselves with something better to watch than commercial programming. A VCR costs about as much as a cheap television; a video player is even cheaper; and a camcorder costs about as much as a console television. Most of our homes have a console television; so most of us could afford a camcorder, if we really want it.

If we are going to watch television anyway, we would do well to videotape some of our meetings, and when we need to lean back and relax, we could watch that. I have noticed that I sometimes enjoy the videotape every bit as much as I enjoyed the sermon at the meeting. Sometimes at our special meetings we are so tired before some of the last preachers are called on, that we cannot really enjoy what they have to say. But, later, when we are able to relax at home and watch the service, we are more rested, our mind is more alert, and we just may get more out of the sermon than we did before. I have watched some of those tapes over and over again, and I enjoy them every time.

Videotapes are very inexpensive; you can buy them for anywhere from three to five dollars each, and you can usually get two sermons on each tape. That is a mighty small price to pay for the benefit received. If individual families do not want to spend the money for a camcorder, it would not hurt for the church to make arrangements to make the videotapes available. It would certainly benefit the members---and the church.

I used to wonder how those preachers ever found time to read their Bible in the long ago, when they had to earn their livelihood working in the fields from before daylight until after dark. We have it mighty easy today compared to the way they had to live. It is much easier for most of us to earn a living than it was in ages past.

One day I was talking to an old brother who raised his family on a tiny farm, all the time that he was pastoring churches, and I asked him how he ever found time for his Bible. He said, "I just took my Bible to the field. I couldn't plow all day without taking a break every now and then, and I would have my Bible at the end of the row. While I rested, I would read my Bible, and then I would pray and think about what I had read until I took another break." That brother was spending more time studying his Bible than most preachers who have a comfortable study and all the time in the world for reading. It did not take a lot of concentration to follow a plow, and all the time he was plowing he was praying and thinking about what he had just read. It is no wonder that when he got to church he was anxious to tell what he had learned.

When Paul instructs us to "pray without ceasing," and when David says that the blessed person meditates in God's law "day and night," it is not nearly so unreasonable a thought as we might think. Our minds are engaged in some manner almost every waking hour. We are constantly thinking about something; and for the most part, especially in this electronic age, we are constantly bombarding our minds with all sorts of sounds, and all sorts of suggestions. We could make a practice of going to sleep every night praying, and praying during the night when we wake up and have difficulty going back to sleep, and during that waking up time every morning. We could spend the first thirty minutes every morning reading our Bible. We might have to get up thirty minutes earlier; but after awhile we would probably start going to bed a little earlier. We could use our waiting time for reading, and we could replace commercial radio and television with tapes of preaching, and Bible reading, and good, inspiring religious songs. It is possible for us to constantly feed our minds on better things, and indeed, meditate on his law "day and night." It is possible for us to pray whenever we are faced with the need for prayer; and if we are in the spiritual condition that we ought to be in, that will be most of the time that our minds are not necessarily occupied with other things.