

"Prayerless people cut themselves off from God's prevailing power, and the frequent result is the familiar feeling of being overwhelmed, overrun, beaten down, pushed around, defeated." Bill Hybels

Throughout scripture, the bible talks about God as being sovereign.

The word sovereign should bring to our minds one who is supreme in power or rank. They are self-governing, independent. What they will to be done is done. This is exactly who God is. He is sovereign over all. What He decides is what is. What He wills, goes.

Proverbs 16:9, "In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps." (NIV) "We plan the way we want to live, but only God makes us able to live it." (Message)

Psalms 115:2-3, "Why let the nations say, 'Where is their God?' For our God is in the heavens, and he does as he wishes." (NLT)

Jeremiah 10:23, "I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps."

Daniel 5:21, "He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes."

If God then is sovereign over all, if He does what He desires, if what He says to happen happens, why then do we even need to pray? If God does what He wishes, why pray? Is there a point to pray?

At the heart of prayer is a dynamic, interactive relationship involving God and human, not God and slave or God and robot.

God is shown throughout scripture as Sovereign, but at the same time within scripture, people pray and things change.

Read Exodus 32:9-14; Genesis 18:16-33; 2 Chronicles 7:14; James 5:13-16; Luke 11:9-10

Your prayers are an opportunity to change what could happen. God is sovereign but He's also merciful. He will hear your petition, your side of the story, and will make His sovereign decision. Some of the greatest moments in life are the miraculous moments when human impotence and divine omnipotence intersect.

But think about it, if you never choose to pray, you miss the opportunity to change what could happen. Miracles are the by-product of prayers that were prayed by you or for you. Certain expressions of God's power will only be exercised in response to prayer. We pray out of our ignorance and God answers out of His omniscience. We pray out of our impotence and God answers out of His omnipotence.

Esther is a story that beautifully portrays approaching a sovereign king. You can read about Esther in the book of Esther. :)

Esther always approached the king saying "if I have found favor with you, if it pleases you."

This is incredible imagery of approaching the sovereign king and believing that your petition can change what could happen.

Reasons why we should pray:

1. Simple act of humility – I cannot but You can
2. Gets us into fellowship with God
3. We involve ourselves in something bigger than us
4. Prayer changes things
5. It is a means to confession, a means to fighting sin
6. We're commanded to – maybe if we did what they did in the Bible, we might experience what they experienced in the Bible.

To understand prayer, we really just need to start by looking at what Christ himself taught us in regards to prayer. Not just through His words, but through His actions. After all, Christ is the example that we follow as Christians. Becoming like Christ is our ultimate goal, it's part of our purpose in life.

Romans 8:29 (message), "God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him."

So let's see what the word of God says in regard to Jesus and prayer:

Matthew 14:23 and Mark 6:46, right before Jesus went to walk on the water to His disciples it says, "After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone"

Luke 4:42, "At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place." and 5:16, "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

Luke 9:18, "Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"

Matthew 26:36; Mark 14:32; Luke 22:41 is when Jesus went into the garden of Gethsemane to pray before he was taken away to be crucified. He asked the disciples to pray while he went off to pray. The disciples though were a great example of us today. They fell asleep. But remember we're not following the example of the disciples we're following the example of Christ.

The disciples slept through prayer, Jesus slept through the storms!

John 17 is what many believe to be the prayer that Jesus prayed while He was in the Garden. In John 17 we see where Jesus prays over what was about to take place and that the Father would be glorified. He prayed for His disciples and then He prayed for us, those who would come to know Him.

We often use the excuse of being too busy, guess what, Jesus was an extremely busy individual but read Mark 1:32-39

What we gather from this is that Jesus prayed, even in the face of busyness, therefore so should we. Even knowing that, it doesn't make it simple does it?

Prayer still becomes hard.

It may be hard just because it's hard for us to talk to someone who isn't visibly there.

Maybe it's hard because of our association with God and with prayer.

If you have a negative connotation with the word Father, and you hear someone refer to God as our Father, you aren't going to approach Him with confidence. Or if you have an idea of a silent or uncaring God, it's not going to inspire much prayer.

Maybe you hear the word prayer and you think lifeless, legalistic ritual. Or you think of a time when someone says your prayer wasn't answered because of your lack of faith. Or you think of a time when you hear someone say, God spoke to me in my prayer time, and you think like God never speaks to me what am I a loser? Or maybe when you think prayer you think hyped up, emotional, super-spiritual drama.

Maybe prayer is hard because you just don't ever feel anything when you pray.

Praying to someone who isn't visibly there is hard, but that's where our faith comes in. Praying to a God we have a negative association with is hard, but that's when we need to search out the Bible to find out what His character is all about. Seeing prayer in a negative way is understandable but sometimes we have to experience things for ourselves. And when it comes to feelings, well,

feelings lie. Feelings aren't everything. Don't quickly conclude that because you don't feel anything, nothing is happening.

At the heart of prayer we need to be aware of God's end goal for our lives – that we are continually becoming mature learners of Christ.

Henri Nouwen once said that when prayer becomes a way of life for you, it does not mean that you think about God in contrast to thinking about other things, or that you spend time with God instead of spending time with other people. Rather, it means to think and live in the presence of God. As soon as we begin to divide our thoughts into thoughts about God and thoughts about people and events, we remove God from our daily life and put Him in a pious little niche where we can think pious thoughts and experience pious feelings.

True prayer is: A life where our relationship with God is a part of everything that we do.

We need to understand it's not the issue of God's presence, it's the issue of our awareness.

Psalm 139:7 "Is there anyplace I can go to avoid your Spirit? To be out of your sight (presence)? If I climb to the sky, you're there! If I go underground, you're there! If I flew on morning's wings to the far western horizon, You'd find me in a minute - you're already there waiting! Then I said to myself, "Oh, he even sees me in the dark! At night I'm immersed in the light!" (message)

God is a God who has infused His presence in the atmosphere surrounding us at all times. Maybe that comforts you, maybe that creeps you out. That depends on your perspective of God. When you live in prayer mode, you live in holy anticipation knowing that coincidences can be providences. Any moment can turn into a holy moment.

And that's pray - A life where our relationship with God is a part of everything that we do and a way of evoking change at the hand of a Sovereign God, change that begins with us.

When prayer becomes a part of our life then there is a transformative dimension in which God affects change in us and then a missional dimension in which God affects change through us.

Praying has never been the point of prayer. God has always been the point. If you seek answers you won't find them, but if you seek God, the answers will find you.

We've been raised to think that if we do this, then this happens and when none of this stuff happens we consider it broken or not right and we want it fixed. In a

lot of ways, we treat God the same. We feel as if God isn't answering prayers, something's broken. So what do we do with that?

John the Baptist experienced this. Jesus was performing miracles all over the place and John the Baptist, the one who prepared the way was in jail. Luke 7:20-23

We can't explain why God does what He does, how He does it. Moses asked God to identify Himself and He basically just answered, I Am. He can't be put in a box. Here's the thing though. We can be guaranteed that 100% of the prayers we don't pray will never get answered.

Here's what we have to question, Do we still trust God? Do we trust He has reasons beyond our reasons? Do we trust His plan is better than our plan? If we don't guard our heart, our unresolved anger toward God can undermine our faith.

See Jesus has made all the difference. When He said on the cross, "It is finished," it wasn't just the final payment on our sin debt; it was the down payment on all of His promises. Through what He did, it gave us the ability to approach the Sovereign King with boldness as the writer of Hebrews states.

Mark Batterson says in his book, *The Circle Maker*, "In the grand scheme of God's story, there is a footnote behind every headline. The footnote is prayer. And if you focus on the footnotes, God will write the headlines."

Your prayers can change the course of History! So pray! Circle everything you can in prayer.

1. Journal your prayers.
Write out questions, hurts, struggles. Write a letter to God. Write down the things God has done for you. When you go back and look at these you can see your growth, how God has answered, and when you're down you can look back at what God's done for you in the past.
2. Take prayer walks.
3. Pray over your calendar and schedule.
4. Pray scripture.
5. Pray about things you see in the news.
6. Pray over your relationships: family and friends
7. Pray for your church, school, job.
8. Pray for the needs of others.
9. As your relationship with God grows, you'll begin to become aware of things in culture, society and your peers that you need to be praying for.
10. Partner up.

As you do these things, you grow to do what 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, "pray continually". You will always have a prayer on your lips. As thoughts pass through your mind during the day, you can turn those thoughts into prayers. Your life becomes characterized by prayerfulness. You learn to turn your mind and attention to God.

Prayer will give you a life where our relationship with God is a part of everything that you do and a way of evoking change at the hand of a Sovereign God, change that begins with yourself.