

Teach Us to Pray

Glenwood Community Church
Adult Equipping Center – Class 4, May 14th

Purpose: To help any disciple have a meaningful and consistent prayer life by (1) learning from Scripture, (2) hearing from seasoned disciples, and (3) *addressing common obstacles to prayer*.

Overview: Obstacle #1 - Why Pray? God is sovereign.

1. Scripture demonstrates and teaches that prayer is effective.

- a. Demonstrations of God answering prayer (Ex. 2:23-25, 2 Kgs. 19, 2 Chron. 6)
- b. Teaching on the effectiveness of prayer (Mt. 7:7-11, Mk. 9:28-29, James 1:5, 5:16)

2. Theological Tension: God's Sovereignty

Two Scriptural Truths¹:

1. "God is absolutely sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions in Scripture to reduce human responsibility."
 - a. Scripture – General (Prov. 16:33, Ps. 115:3); Natural World (Ps. 135:5-7, Mt. 6:26, 30, Job 38-41); People (Prov. 16:4, 9; 21:1, Eph. 1:11, Acts 4:23-30); Evil (Job, Lam. 3:37-39)
2. "Human beings are responsible creatures – that is, they choose, they believe, they disobey, they respond, and there is moral significance in their choices; but human responsibility never functions in Scripture to diminish God's sovereignty or to make God absolutely contingent."
 - a. Scripture - Is. 65:1-2; Lam. 3:31-36; Ezek. 18:30-32, 33:11; Josh 24:14-15, Rom. 10:9, 11

¹ D.A Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*. Baker Academic. 1992. P. 148

Scripture Where Two Truths are in Close Proximity:

- Gen. 50:19-20
- 2 Samuel 24:1, 10
- Is. 10:5-19
- John 6:37-40
- Phil. 2:12-13
- Acts 4:27-28

3. What does all of this mean for prayer?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Does knowing God's stated will hinder human agency or encourage it? (Ex. 32; Dan. 9; Acts 18:9-11; Jn. 17:1)

"God expects to be pleaded with; he expects godly believers to intercede with him. Their intercession is his own appointed means for bringing about his relenting...in God's mercy Moses proved to be God's own appointed means, through intercessory prayer, for bringing about the relenting that was nothing other than a gracious confirmation of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The really wonderful truth is that human beings like Moses and you and me can participate in bringing about God's purposes through God's own appointed means. In that limited sense, prayer certainly changes things..."²

² Carson, *ibid*, p. 164

“CH Spurgeon was once asked if he could reconcile these two truths to each other. “I wouldn’t try,” he replied; “I never reconcile friends.” Friends? - yes, friends. This is the point that we have to grasp. In the Bible, divine sovereignty and human responsibility are not enemies. They are not uneasy neighbors; they are not in an endless state of cold war with each other. They are friends, and they work together.”³

“The inability to see the connection between cause and effect is intrinsic to the nature to the nature of prayer because it is the direct activity of God. Trying to dissect how prayer works is like using a magnifying glass to try to figure out why a woman is beautiful. If you turn God into an object, he has a way of disappearing...Often answers to prayer start prior to the actual prayer. The only way to know how prayer works is to have complete knowledge and control of the past, present, and future. In other words, you can figure out how prayer works if you are God.”⁴

God is sovereign **and** personal.

- The generous Father
- The incarnated Son, Jesus Christ, our Advocate, Intercessor, Mediator
- The present and indwelling Holy Spirit

Sharing: Ron Horch

Implication Questions (Life work):

1. *How has God used others to accomplish His sovereign will in your life? Think of specific examples.*
2. *How are you uniquely positioned now to be a means of His love and salvation to others? Think of the relationships you have, the gifts He’s given you, the circumstances that you’re in, etc.*
3. *Which do you need to dwell on more right now: God’s sovereignty or human responsibility? Why?*
4. *Think of ways that dwelling on God’s sovereignty or human responsibility might help or hinder your prayer life.*

Next Few Classes:

- *Prayer Panel – May 21st*
- *Why pray? It doesn’t work! – May 28th*

³ J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. IVP, 2008. p. 43, quoting Charles Spurgeon.

⁴ Paul Miller, *A Praying Life*. NavPress, 2017. p. 112.