

*This midweek study will explore the biblical doctrine of prayer and providence. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching/discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.*

### Essential Doctrine: Prayer and Providence

If God is in control and already knows the future, why pray? The Bible teaches that, although God has a plan for this world that He promises to fulfill, prayer is often the means God uses to accomplish His divine purpose. Even though God may know the end result, the means that lead to that end result will be accomplished through prayer. In this sense, it is true that “prayer changes things,” and it is also true that God uses prayer to change our hearts so that our will comes into conformity with His.

### 1 God’s sovereignty compels us not to refrain from praying, but rather to pray all the more. (Acts 4:23-30)

Option: Ask students to discuss people or teams who have recently won a major competition. You may include things like The Voice, American Idol, the Super Bowl, the World Cup, or the NBA Finals. Many times a good team will be predicted to win again the next year, but past success doesn’t guarantee success in the future.

- ▶ *Imagine one of these winners decided to slack off after their success, saying, “We’re going to win anyway.” How would you motivate them to start giving their best?*
- ▶ *Consider that God is sovereign and in control of everything that will happen. Does this knowledge move you to pray more or less?*
- ▶ *How does being on God’s team parallel being on a championship athletic team? How should being on God’s team motivate us to pray like being on the championship team would motivate us to practice hard?*

#### Read Acts 4:23-30.

- ▶ *The religious elite recently arrested and threatened the disciples, then released them with a warning not to speak about Jesus anymore. How did they decide to address this threat?*
- ▶ *Look at verse 28. Does God’s providence discourage or catalyze their prayers?*
- ▶ *How should God’s sovereignty affect our prayers, if we model them after Acts 4?*

### 2 We don’t simply rely on the promises of God; we also pray them. (Dan. 9:2-3; Matt. 6:10)

#### Read Daniel 9:2-3.

- ▶ *What is surprising about Daniel’s actions? Why?*
- ▶ *If you were in Daniel’s place, how would you act as the close of the 70 years approached?*

- ▶ *Was Daniel’s praying for what God promised an act of doubt (as in he wasn’t sure that God would keep His promise), or an act of faith? Why?*
- ▶ *How did Daniel show us to “work” as God’s promises come to us?*

#### Read Matthew 6:10.

- ▶ *Is it certain that Jesus will return and God’s kingdom will come? If so, why do we pray for it?*

### 3 Prayer allows us to participate in God’s providential work. (2 Cor. 1:11; Col. 4:12; 2 Pet. 3:12)

#### Read 2 Peter 3:12.

- ▶ *If the day of the Lord’s return is set, why do you think Peter suggested we can “hasten” it?*
- ▶ *If prayer is a work we can do, just like Epahras and Daniel did, what is one way we might “hasten” the day of the Lord?*

#### Read 2 Corinthians 1:11.

- ▶ *How did Paul invite the Corinthians to work with him? What was the outcome of their work?*
- ▶ *How amazed would we be to get invited to take part of a magnificent team? How should we react to the invitation to participate in God’s sovereign work through prayer?*

### WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *How would you answer someone who says, “God’s just going to do whatever He wills anyway. Why should I even bother praying?”*