“Everyone learns from models, and Bill Hybels not only shows how he prays but also helps us understand prayer...in Too Busy Not to Pray, you’ll not only be inspired but you’ll have a guidebook for prayer for the rest of your life.” Rick Warren, author of the Purpose Driven Life.

About: Too Busy Not to Pray

Prayer. Often, this is a word that rolls off the tongue without a second thought. I’m sure just like me, you have found yourself saying the comforting words to a friend in need, “I’ll keep you in my prayers,” or “I’ll make it a matter of prayer.” In reality, how many of us find that we pay lip service to such a task, when, as Christians, this becomes (and should be both in theory and practice) our natural response? The Bible tells us in James 5:16, that, as God’s children, we should “Confess [our] sins to each other and pray for each other so that [we] may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.” (NLT) This verse has challenged me to make time for prayer, rather than view it as an ‘optional add-on.’ For this reason I decided to read, “Too Busy Not To Pray”, which highlights the effectiveness and blessings in praying when we set specific time aside with God.

Most of us find it difficult to find the time to pray. Life often gets “in the way.” Just when you sit down to take some time out of your hectic work schedule, you realize you were meant to go to that practice at church, the car has broken down, or school has phoned to say your child is sick and needs to be collected. Of course, all of these things have their own importance, but they provide a practical example to show how often it can seem impossible to find uninterrupted time for prayer.

After meeting and relating to like-minded people in his role as pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, Bill Hybels realized that after many years of a similar pattern of “prayer on the run,” he concluded that he was too busy NOT to pray. Do we think of prayer as far removed, an essential tool in the days of the Early Church without much relevance for today? Hybels explains it perfectly when he says, “We serve a God who has spoken in history, who will indeed speak tomorrow and who wants to speak to us right now, right where we are.” (Chapter 13) God is the same yesterday, today and forever! Of course he still wants to hear from us, his children whom he loves!

Having looked at our struggles with regards to praying, HOW can this book help you?

Firstly, Hybels writes this book in a conversational style of writing, making it easily accessible to a wide audience of readers. Most of the content is drawn upon his own life experiences and reflections, which the reader will be able to relate to. Hybels does not list a series of “jargon” words to make us feel bad about the state of our prayer lives, but through this book he gives an honest, realistic approach on how to deepen our time spent in relationship with God. At the end of each chapter you will find a section that provides questions for reflection and
discussion. This leads away from an, “ok here’s where you are going wrong, now go and fix it” approach, rather, Hybels is saying, “I’ve been there, here’s what helped me. Try it and see.”

The first half of the book analyses where we have gone wrong in our prayer lives and why this is. "If your life is rushing in many directions at once, you are incapable of the kind of deep, unhurried prayer that is vital to the Christian walk.” Hybels notes that too many Christians know about God but rarely experience his presence in their lives. Someone once gave me an excellent analogy for this in relation to our attitude to prayer: In studying for a history exam, you spend lots of time reading up about an inspirational historical figure. You may pass the exam because you have researched and know everything about that person and their life but unless you actually meet them, talk to them and spend time with them you will never know them. The same is true of our creator. By setting aside real, meaningful time with God, we will be able to glimpse more of who he is and our lives will begin to be shaped by the revealing of his desires for our lives.

The second half of the book begins to address those issues Hybels has made us aware of, and looks to provide some answers as to how we can change our prayer lives, and ultimately the positive effect this will have on our relationship with God and those around us. In Chapter 7 Hybels talks about how effective prayers can move mountains, he states “faith comes by looking at God, not the mountain.” The passage from Luke 7, which tells us about having faith the size of a mustard seed, reminds us of the power our prayers can have. It is not the size of the mustard seed (our faith) that evokes change but rather the awesomeness of the God we have behind us!

So what now?
At the end of your reading, why don’t you challenge yourself to turn the theoretical into the practical? As Hybels so wonderfully puts it, “When I reached the end of all that diligent study, I did something radical: I prayed.” Praying. This is a verb, a doing or action word. If, like me, you have been reading Christian books, and going to prayer meetings, and finding out all about prayer, the question is: when are we going to actually sit down and pray? A perhaps uncomfortable thought as it requires us to take action!

As you are probably aware, I could very easily spend another few pages explaining just what I have taken away from this book but why do that, when you can read it for yourself? I would really recommend this book to anyone who wants to not only improve their prayer lives but who has the desire to deepen their relationship with God. This book has revealed that prayer does have power, but it is our decision whether or not we make the most of it.