

The ACTS of Prayer

Written by Ben Cordes

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Prayer is one of the greatest gifts we have received in the new birth. To be able to communicate freely with God is an amazing thing. When we think about the price that was paid (Jesus' life) so that we may go "boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16), then perhaps we will use the gift of prayer more often.

Prayer is something we all need to improve upon in our walk with God. The disciples, desiring to pray effectively, asked the Lord to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1). Where better to learn what is needful in prayer than to seek the wisdom of the one who has purchased our passage to the throne of grace? There is a format that seems to be present in the prayer Christ gave to His disciples. Let us examine the prayer more closely so that we may understand how we ought to pray.

Luke 11:2-4

"And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

Give us day by day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."

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There are five elements we should remember in our prayers and four of those elements are given in the easy-to-remember acronym, ACTS. The items listed are not meant to be dogma for the only way to pray, but as a simple reminder of what is good to include in our conversations with God.

Adoration

Confession

Thanksgiving

Supplication

Adoration is viewed in the address unto the Father. He is given the title of the Heavenly Father, as Jesus acknowledged that His Father is in heaven. Adoration means to praise and worship and thus we see that Jesus declares that the Heavenly Father's name is hallowed (i.e. regarded as sacred and holy). Beginning prayer with adoration unto God ought to bring us to a mind of reverence and seriousness concerning just who it is we are speaking to, but we should also be reminded of the sweet comfort found in praying to *our* Father.

Confession of sins is a practice we are taught to perform. When we sin we miss the mark which Jesus Christ has set. When we have done wrong it is best for us to admit what we have done to the person we have wronged and ask for their forgiveness. Every sin is a transgression against God's holy law. Thankfully, God knows we are sinners and is forgiving. We read in 1st John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." There is no human being without sin, and thank the Lord there is no sin too disastrous for Him to forgive. We ought to include confession of our sins in prayer to God because He is faithful and just to forgive them for us.

Thanksgiving is the act of showing forth the gratitude for someone or something. The prayer

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Christ gave to His disciples does not include a formal line of thanksgiving. However, Christ openly gave thanks to the Father on several occasions (Matt. 11:25, Luke 10:21, John 11:41). The Apostle Paul also instructed to include thanksgiving in prayer (Phi. 4:6, Col. 4:2, 1 Tim. 4:4). When we remember to give thanks in our prayers to God, we are challenged to take inventory of whom and what we are thankful for. This practice should supply health to our spiritual lives.

Supplication means to give an earnest request. Just as thanksgiving calls our minds to whom and what we are thankful for, supplication brings our minds to whom and what we need. We often get wrapped-up in our wants and feel as if they become needs, but what the example prayer given by Jesus shows us is that our needs should be understood by us, rather than our wants. What is needful for life? The Lord said "give us day by day our daily bread". The Apostle Paul said "having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:8). The prayer of supplication should also remind us that the very essentials are supplied by our loving Father and that if it were not for the supply He gives, wants would not be a concern for the lack of fulfilled needs. Supplication suggests that we know we have needs and we know where our needs can be filled. If we acknowledge that God can supply our needs, we also must acknowledge that He knows what is best for us, thus we should always include "Thy will be done" in our prayers. There is no better way to verbally submit to the Lord than by admitting that we believe His way is better and to request that His will be done in the matters of this world and our lives.

As mentioned above, there are five things we need to remember in prayer. The last thing mentioned here needs to be the first thing remembered before we go to the Lord in prayer. Lastly, we need to be sincere; sincere of heart, mind and intention, coming earnestly to the Almighty supplier of life in faith believing He is able and willing to help. Prayers filled with adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication mean nothing and are simply words if they are not offered with a sincere heart toward God.

Before we bend our knees in prayer, let us remember to pray sincerely and intentionally, not with "vain repetitions, as the heathen do" (Mat. 6:7), but from a heart of gratitude for the blessings we have received and in hope that our Heavenly Father will continue to provide for us.

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16b