

requests of God, it is part of the design of prayer. And, God wants us to cast our cares upon Him (1 Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6-7).

Example in the Psalms. Read Psalm 141 and learn how the psalmist expressed his supplication to God in a variety of ways. Notice his petition for God to hear his voice and hurry to help. Notice his petition for God to help him pursue personal holiness and to stay away from evil. Notice his petition as working against the evil acts of the wicked. Notice his prayer for personal deliverance from the wicked.

How to pray this kind of prayer. Consider the following suggestions. First, cast your own anxieties and cares upon God in recognition that He cares for you and is the one who can do something about them (Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7). Second, petition God on behalf of others concerning the same things you would think to petition Him about for yourself (Ephesians 6:18-20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2). Third, petition God concerning physical concerns you and others have, including the world leaders to make right decisions (1 Timothy 2:1-2), daily needs (Matthew 6:11), sickness (James 5:14-15), challenges of the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7-8), etc. Fourth, petition God concerning spiritual concerns you and others have, including avoiding temptation (Luke 22:46), spiritual growth (Philippians 1:9-11), effectiveness in God's service (Philemon 1:6), wisdom (James 1:5), open doors for sharing the gospel (Colossians 4:2-4), boldness in speaking God's word (Acts 4:29), the salvation of others (Romans 10:1), the forgiveness of sins (James 5:15-16), etc. Fifth, make all your requests focused on the will of God being accomplished above your own (Matthew 6:10).

Conclusion

As you consider the privilege to address God in prayer, there is certainly an endless amount that we can pray about. You can use the ACTS of prayer to help guide you through prayer and to grow in your prayers. Challenge yourself to pray each kind of prayer daily. And, even challenge yourself to devote an entire prayer to each of the ACTS of prayer (i.e. an entire prayer just to express adoration toward God).



Although most Christians understand there is a need and responsibility to pray, there is sometimes a struggle concerning the contents of the prayers. Unless one is very mindful of the content of his/her prayers, they can easily become mundane, insincere, and repetitive (in an empty kind of way). Yet, the Bible teaches people what they can and should pray about. One easy way to remember what can and should be included in our prayers is summarized by the acronym ACTS (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication). Then, while we can learn much throughout the Scriptures, the book of Psalms can serve as a major help in this area.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn the ACTS of prayer so as to consider how to engage in more meaningful prayer.

Adoration

What it is. This element of prayer expresses praise, reverence, and devotion to God. When Jesus taught how to pray in Matthew 6, He prayed that God's name would be honored as holy (v. 9). This expresses the desire that others would come to recognize who God is and recognize that His name is above all others. However, in this, is also a personal recognition of the holiness of God's name. Therefore, it is appropriate to spend time in prayer praising God for all that He is and all He has done!

Example in the Psalms. Read Psalm 145 and learn from how the psalmist expressed such adoration. Notice his exaltation of the name of the Lord (Jehovah, Yahweh). Notice his recognition of the exalted role of his God and King. Notice his awe of God and God's acts. Notice his celebration of God's goodness, majesty, righteousness, and works. Notice

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his expression of dependence on all that God does. Notice his identification of God's character.

How to pray this kind of prayer. Consider the following suggestions. First, learn to stand in awe of who God is and all that He has done so that expressing your adoration of God is not a forced or uncommon expression (Romans 11:33-36). Second, develop the desire to glorify the name of God so that doing so is not just something you feel like you must do to go to Heaven, but something that you long to do and that you will continue to do when you get to Heaven (Revelation 4:8-11; 5:11-14). Third, take time to identify what makes God holy and awe-inspiring so that it is easy for you to list them as expressions of praise toward Him (Psalm 111:9). Fourth, meditate regularly on all the characteristics and acts of God so that you develop a growing and deep sense of awe concerning them and can express them with an increasing sense of reverence (Psalm 143:5).

Confession

What it is. This element of prayer expresses your own faults and shortcomings to God, in a desire that He will extend mercy toward you. When Jesus taught how to pray in Matthew 6, He taught we should petition God for forgiveness (v. 12). Then, 1 John 1:9 directly teaches the concept of confession of sin toward God. Although God certainly knows our faults and shortcomings, He still desires us to admit them to Him (both generally and specifically).

Example in the Psalms. Read Psalm 51 and learn how the psalmist confessed his sin (concerning the incident between David and Bathsheba, 2 Samuel 11-12). Notice his acknowledgement of wrongdoing. Notice his need for God's grace, mercy, and compassion and his expression of such to God. Notice his request for God to cleanse him from his sin completely. Notice his expressions of guilt for the sin that had been committed. Notice his contrite desire to be restored to a right relationship with God. Notice his expression of commitment to live and work for God if He would restore him.

How to pray this kind of prayer. Consider the following suggestions. First, engage in sincere reflection and honest self-evaluation so that you can honestly see all the areas of wrongdoing in your life rather than allowing pride to cloud the way you perceive yourself (Luke 18:9-14). Second, have a broken and contrite spirit that does not view the fault, shortcoming, or wrongdoing as being a small and insignificant thing to God and your relationship with Him (Psalm 51:17; James 4:8-10). Third, ask God

for mercy/forgiveness in recognition that there is nothing you can do to earn this forgiveness for yourself (Acts 8:22; Luke 18:13). Fourth, experience godly sorrow/grief concerning what the sin has done to your relationship with God and sincerely repent of the sin before you ask God for mercy (2 Corinthians 7:10; Acts 8:22).

Thanksgiving

What it is. This element of prayer expresses your gratitude for who God is and what He has done. Although Jesus does not include thanksgiving when He teaches how to pray in Matthew 6, He demonstrated the importance of it in His own life (Matthew 15:36) and in other Scripture. Christians are directly told to give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Certainly, failing to give thanks demonstrates an arrogant and ungrateful attitude for all that God has done and continues to do.

Example in the Psalms. Read Psalm 136 and learn how the psalmist expressed his thanksgiving to God in a wide variety of ways. Notice his gratitude for who the Lord is. Notice his gratitude expressed for all the various elements of God's creation. Notice his gratitude for God's past actions for His people. Notice his gratitude for the way God had presently blessed His people. Notice his gratitude for God's daily provisions and care.

How to pray this kind of prayer. Consider the following suggestions. First, be mindful of as many ways as you can concerning how God has given blessings in your life and in the lives of others (Psalm 143:5; James 1:17). Second, consider it essential for you to express thanksgiving to God for anything and everything He does (Luke 17:11-19; Ephesians 5:20). Third, thank God for the physical blessings He has given you (Acts 27:35). Fourth, thank God for His past answers to your prayers (Psalm 118:21; 2 Corinthians 1:11). Fifth, thank God for the spiritual blessings He has provided through Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:57). Sixth, thank God for things that others do (1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2:13; 1 Timothy 2:1). Seventh, be overflowing with gratitude toward God (Colossians 2:6-7).

Supplication

What it is. This element of prayer makes a humble petition/request to God. When Jesus taught how to pray in Matthew 6, He includes the petitions that God's name would be honored as holy, for God's kingdom to come, for God's will to be done, for daily provisions of food, for forgiveness, and for deliverance from temptation (vv. 9-13). Although prayer is not just to be viewed as an opportunity to petition and make