

Week 3 ~ ACTS

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.”

(Ephesians 6:18, NIV)

There are as many different ways to pray as there are to comb your hair. In fact, according to this verse, we are encouraged to be creative in the ways we should pray. Our ability to pray in a variety of ways is limited only by our lack of ingenuity.

To be sure there are areas in my life where creativity shines through – which proves God is a miracle-working God – but this creativity is usually a result of an idea I came across in a magazine, originated from a conversation I had with a friend, or saw displayed in someone else’s life. And picking up from where those sources left off, I tweaked them, added to them, or further developed them to make what was not originally my idea into something that is singularly “me”. I am not required to be the originator, but in order to live a life of diversity, ingenuity, and creativity, I do have to start somewhere, take the baton, and press forward.

When it comes to prayer, praying with others can be extremely beneficial in developing a more robust prayer life. By praying with others you can experience how they pray and adopt some of their practices that would otherwise be lost to you. It’s not so much “copying” what someone else does as it is “acquiring” a new prayer skill.

How often do you pray with others that you might learn from them new ways to pray?

Is there someone who could benefit from you and how you pray so that they, too, might follow the instructions of Ephesians 6:18?

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ACTS is a simple acronym that stands for: **A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, **S**upplication.

Kind of like Week 1 where we prayed the Lord’s Prayer phrase by phrase, these 4 words are an order by which we will structure our prayer time. It starts by putting God first through Adoration, addresses sin and failure with Confession, lifts the spirit and soul by expressing Thanksgiving, and acknowledges our needs in the utterance of Supplication.

In praying the ACTS way, I have personally found it helpful to set aside a specific amount of time that can be broken down equally in four parts – say, 20 minutes; devoting 5 minutes to each phase of the ACTS practice of prayer. However, this is only a suggestion I've found helpful and in no way a rule or standard by which you feel you should follow unless it is of benefit to you as well.

ADORATION

Adoration is an act of honor and worship given out of profound love and devoted esteem.

This first phase is specifically for the purpose of recognizing and acknowledging God. While your esteem and honor of God may flow out of a heart of gratitude and thanksgiving, try not to utter your thankfulness at this initial stage. Remember, that's what the "T" stands for and you will have time for that. This is a time to address who the Lord IS – Creator, Savior, King, awesome, wonderful, fearsome, etc. Adoration, in essence, is giving to God the highest compliments you can possibly give him.

CONFESSION

Confession is the admission of guilt for sins committed or insincere motivations. It aims to bring the confessor into proper alignment with God in his/her heart.

Having put God first through adoration, we are now in a good position to see our wrong in light of his supreme right-ness, admitting our errors and offenses. While confessing our sins is about accepting God's grace and mercy, it's also about developing a greater awareness of our sinfulness and our temptations to act apart from God's holy will. A more "detailed" approach is beneficial. For example, you could say, "Lord, forgive me for my impatience." Or you could go deeper by addressing your impatience, "Lord, it was wrong of me to lash out at my family today in frustration and my need for control. And out of impatience I harbored ill-will against the cashier in line at post office today. Lord, forgive me and help me." Do you see the difference?

Confession also allows us to move forward, refreshed and renewed, through the next two phases with a deeper awareness of God's goodness and open hearts to recognize true needs as opposed to our often selfish wants.

THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is the expression of thankfulness and gratitude for blessings and favors and goodness God has bestowed on you and your life.

This is the phase to focus on the good. It is the time to pour out and express your gratitude to God. No blessing is too small; no act of his love too insignificant. Take the time to appreciate God through what he's given you and what he's done for you. And, think of all the terrible things that could've happened but that he's protected you from – thank him for that too.

SUPPLICATION

Supplication is humbly and sincerely making requests to God for yourself and on behalf of others. This is also commonly referred to as petition or intercession.

So often we come to God with our requests and requests alone. We don't know how to pray without asking for Him to give us something or do something for us. Having Supplication at the end of this prayer practice is beneficial in that it puts our relationship with God first and still allows for us to ask God to provide for us in his favor. And yet, for those who are hesitant to ask God for things – healing, provision, strength, guidance, wisdom, relationships – it gives as much importance to seeking God's hand as it does his face. It just is in its proper place – face, first; hand, last.

Ask, and ask boldly, remembering that God is sovereign. It doesn't hurt to ask, the worst is that he could say, "No," but the blessing is that he could answer, "Yes."

"You do not have, because you do not ask God." (James 4:2)



Reflection Questions

1. What did you most enjoy about prayer this week?
2. What was most challenging?
3. How did your prayers change throughout the week as you became familiar with the ACTS practice of prayer?
4. What revelations, if any, did you receive in prayer this week? Were any directly related to praying in this way?
5. What are you most likely to take away from this prayer exercise?