

A.C.T.S. - A Model for Prayer

Christ-followers often use a simple acrostic as a guide to prayer: A.C.T.S. Each of the letters in this acrostic stands for one of the key elements of prayer:

- (A) Adoration
- (C) Confession
- (T) Thanksgiving
- (S) Supplication

But not only does this acrostic remind us of the elements of prayer, it shows us the priority we ought to give to each.

The first element of prayer should be adoration, or praise. The Psalms, which are inspired samples of godly prayer, are heavily weighted on the side of adoration. I've noticed over many years that as we grow in the discipline and in the delight of prayer, it seems that we naturally spend more and more of our time on this first element.

Second, prayer should include confession of our sin; as we remember who we are when we come into God's presence, we see that we have come short of His holiness and have need of His forgiveness.

Third, when we pray, we should always give thanks, remembering the grace and mercy God has shown toward us.

Fourth, prayer rightly includes supplication or petition, bringing our requests for the needs of others and ourselves to God.

I think this is a helpful acrostic for remembering both the elements and the priorities of prayer.

Unfortunately, we often spell our prayer life something like S.C.A.T., because we start with supplication and spend very little time, if any, on adoration, confession, and thanksgiving.

The Lord's Prayer

In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus gives his followers an example of how to pray, known as The Lord's Prayer:

"Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. ¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us today the food we need, ¹² and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. ¹³ And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one." Matthew 6:9–13 NLT

When we look at the Lord's Prayer, we see adoration at least implied in the petition "Hallowed be Your name." Jesus acknowledged that God's name is holy. We certainly see confession in the petition "Forgive us our debts." And there are supplications. However, it seems that the T is conspicuously absent. Where in the Lord's Prayer do we find any overt expression of gratitude to God? It's not there. That's strange, for as the apostle Paul taught, thanksgiving should always be included in our prayers: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6, emphasis added).

Even though thanksgiving is not explicitly mentioned in the Lord's Prayer, I think it is implied in the petition: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). My reason for making this assertion is simple: we are to be alert not only to the need that we have daily for food, but to the reality of God's daily provision for our needs. That realization, of course, should induce us to an attitude of thanksgiving.