

PRAYER IS SUPPLICATION

By Rev. Will Nelken

Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, August 16, 2009

Have you been breathing this past week (exhaling prayers and petitions, inhaling thanksgiving and joy)? Isn't it a good exercise?

The God who made the universe is only a breath away! Because, when we pray, Almighty God bends down to listen to us.

Psalm 116:2 *Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!*

This sets our God apart from all false gods and idols: He is the One who hears and answers prayer.

Since prayer is so vital for our spiritual lives, I have been describing some prayer models to help you pray more often and more effectively. The Lord's Prayer is such a model. And there are others. This month we are looking at the ACTS model for prayer:

- **A**doration
- **C**onfession
- **T**hanksgiving
- **S**upplication

Prayer should begin with adoring worship — this sets the mood, establishes a right attitude, and reminds us that prayer is building our relationship with God, not shopping for His gifts.

And prayer involves confession, not only of wrongdoing but also of your faith, hope, and love. By your confessions you identify and connect yourself with Christ and with His people.

And prayer includes thanksgiving — reflecting on God's accomplishments in the past, acknowledging His gifts in the present, and anticipating His promises in the future.

Today, we'll consider the fourth facet of this prayer model: supplication.

What Is Supplication?

Supplication means **humbly pleading** for favor (help); not begging (in an effort to persuade an unwilling God), but earnestly asking and persistently asking in hope, until an answer is received.

Pleading may also convey a legal aspect of presenting one's case, based on facts and reason, and according to legal realities. Always remember, that the one who is pleading (you) is not the judge, and does not have the final say, but is **simply presenting** (however passionately) a single perspective. Therefore, the request is made humbly.

Supplication also **anticipates an answer**, a conclusion — whether it is justice or provision or assistance or direction.

The word occurs with greatest frequency in Solomon's petition to the Lord at the dedication of the Temple that he built in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 6) and in the psalms of his father, David. These were men acquainted with supplication, both by necessity and heredity.

Supplication is not a form, so much as an outlook, an expectation, perhaps best described by two words: humility and hope.

God's answer to Solomon's supplication was this:

2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people, who are called by my name, will **humble themselves** and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

The first key to God's favorable response was (and is) humility.

Humility

We are not God. The greatest among us is not comparable to God. That's why, when we try to describe Him, we use words like *magnificent, glorious, awesome, mighty, majestic, wonderful* and *sovereign*.

Our God is not small; He is huge, enormous, gigantic, immense. He breathes out stars and their planets and sets the bounds for the ocean depths (Psalm 33:6).

Our God is not weak; He is strong, mighty, all-powerful, all-sufficient. Not only can He control wind and waves (Mark 4:39), but He holds all creation together by the power of His command (Hebrews 1:3).

Our God is not unkind; He is gracious, generous, merciful, tender-hearted. He gives kind attention to the people He has made and keeps His promises (Psalm 145).

God holds the answers that we need for our lives.

James 1:5 If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.

Hope

Our requests of God may be stimulated by our need, but they should be **motivated by our faith** in Him and **rooted in His promises** to us.

Hebrews 11:6 It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

It would be an exercise in futility to pray, however long and hard for things that God has forbidden or denied us. He is not our puppet; we are His people.

And yet, as to many of the kind things God has promised us through our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, God has said, "Ask." Some of His promises are general, and come to everyone, whether they ask or not. But most of His promises are conditioned upon our asking, and sometimes our obedience. If we meet His conditions, we may ask expectantly.

And many times, the only condition required is that we belong to Jesus Christ by a persistent faith relationship!

The psalmist sings repeatedly:

Psalm 42:5 Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again — my Savior and my God!

Apostle John encouraged us to pray with hope:

¹ John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴ This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

And right after that he urged us to pray for others who have fallen into sin:

¹ John 5:16 If you see a Christian brother or sister sinning in a way that does not lead to death, you should pray, and God will give that person life.

Two Aims

Supplication has two aims: personal (for yourself) and intercessory (for others).

Pray God's promises for yourself. Not every promise in the Book applies to you, but the Holy Spirit will make clear those that do at the appropriate time, if you request His help.

Pray God's promises for others. Be generous with your prayers, like God is with His responses. Lift up those who are downcast, or who have fallen, or who are troubled.

There is nothing you cannot ask for, except that which God has forbidden. If you have a promise that applies to the situation, plead your case before our Compassionate Judge. If you're not sure if a promise applies, appeal to our Heavenly Father for wisdom and consideration.

If, on a daily basis, you will give five minutes for each phase of this model to think through and express your adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication, you will be well on your way to building a growing, exciting, and lasting relationship with our Creator and Redeemer.

Don't just talk! Allow time to think and discover. You're getting to know Almighty God.

¹ Corinthians 2:9 As it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"—¹⁰ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

Let the Holy Spirit be your guide as you pray. He will often give you just what you need to strengthen your faith and secure your hope in God.