

PRAYER IS ADORATION

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We need to pray... more! And here are some reasons why: Prayer is

- Our song of love to God (praise should be told)
- Our path to forgiveness (knowing of Christ's sacrifice isn't enough)
- Our expression of gratitude (thanks is something you say, not just think)
- Our means of appropriating God's promises (faith must be activated)
- Our access to knowing God (Bible reading alone is insufficient)
- Our arena of spiritual conquest
- Our place of surrender to the Lord
- Our sanctuary of communion with the Savior
- Our "green pastures" of spiritual nourishment
- Our "still waters" of inner rest
- Our shade in the desert
- Our mountain top of personal transformation
- Our avenue of spiritual authority
- Our first act of love

The most amazing fact connected with the practice of prayer is this: God bends down to listen!

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

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

Psalm 135:15 *The idols of the nations are merely things of silver and gold, shaped by human hands.¹⁶ They have mouths but cannot speak, and eyes but cannot see.¹⁷ They have ears but cannot hear, and noses but cannot smell.¹⁸ And those who make idols are just like them, as are all who trust in them.*

In the religions of the world that do pray, the *act* or *ritual* of prayer is the effective power, but in Christianity, the God-who-answers-prayer is the effective power. It is not your prayer (alone), but His response that accomplishes the work. In His grace, He has chosen to partner with us in this way (prayer).

God does not always answer our prayers as we want or expect; He is not *our* servant, we are *His*. He always does what suits His own grand plan. Thus, Apostle John assured us:

1 John 5:14 AMP *And this is the confidence (the assurance, the privilege of boldness) which we have in Him: [we are sure] that if we ask anything (make any request) according to His will (in agreement with His own plan), He listens to and hears us.*

This is the most wonderful and also the weirdest thing about prayer. We speak with an unseen God who answers in unheard words. (I realize that some have claimed to see Him with their eyes and some have claimed to hear Him with their ears, but these are the exceptions, not the rule.) Generally, we, like Moses, are following an invisible Leader by faith (Hebrews 11:27).

Prayer is our lifeline to God, our primary means of communication with Him. Therefore, the more we pray, and the better we become at doing so, the more we will see of His good will in our lives.

Last week, I referred to the model prayer that Jesus taught us (the Lord's Prayer). While reciting the prayer from the heart is good, it often fails to engage the whole of our being. Yet, when the prayer is used as a guide, it walks us through six arenas of prayer that will fit the most important concerns we are to bear. They are these:

- **Praise (adoration)**
Our Heavenly Father, worthy of praise
Praise God for His divine character and His kindnesses toward people. Declare His greatness.
- **Purpose (surrender)**
Your Kingdom come (here)
Declare His authority over circumstances and nations. Invoke His presence, influence, life, and order.
- **Practice (obedience)**
Your will be done on earth
May people everywhere heed His word, acknowledge His wisdom, and do what He wants.
- **Provision (requests)**
Provide what we need each day
Give us what we need for body and soul, that we might have strength and grace to serve Him.
- **Purity (forgiveness)**
Forgive us, as we forgive others
Acknowledge the wrong things you have done and the right things you have failed to do and receive His merciful love; then, pass it on to others.
- **Protection (security)**
Protect us from evil
Help us discern right from wrong, show us how to escape temptation, and protect us from the schemes of the evil one.

If you follow this model, you may be sure that you have touched on the most important areas, whether you have prayed for five minutes or sixty.

At the same time, no model of prayer is magically effective. I have found, what millions of others have also found: the most effective prayers are the ones you *actually pray!* That is to say, prayer is only effective when you *do it*, not when you read about it or think about it.

One more word about the effect of your prayers: do not try to measure their effect as you would measure the effectiveness of a cake recipe — How does it look? How does it smell? How does it sound when I thump it? How does it taste? You cannot judge by your natural senses.

Prayer is not simply a matter of mixing the correct amounts of the correct ingredients in the correct manner (a pinch of Scripture and a cup of faith in a quiet place). Effective prayer is not so much an event, as it is a lifestyle. Therefore, you cannot properly judge the effectiveness of a single prayer. Rarely, has a single prayer been the catalyst of an act of God. He illustrates our collected prayers in the Bible as “bowls filled with incense.” How many ladlefuls does it take to fill a bowl? It may depend on the size of the ladle and the size of the bowl, but it surely is more than one.

And there are other models for prayer, too. And each may be helpful in particular ways. Perhaps most significantly, varying the model you use from time to time will help to prevent you from falling

into the rut of *mindless routine*. Nothing takes the wind out of prayer — and the whole of your spiritual life — like mindless routine. But to keep fresh — in motivation, perspective, and energy — you must designedly break those molds when they begin to become rusty. Try something new! Put your mind back into it.

The same principle applies to Bible reading. Change it up from time to time! If you read from Genesis to Revelation last time, next time alternate books from the Old Testament and the New Testament, or read them in chronological order, or read from a translation you have not read before. This stimulates your alertness and widens your perspective of God's truth.

Today, and for the next three Sundays, I want to speak about another prayer model. It's commonly referred to as the ACTS model. I don't know who first dreamed it up, but it breaks prayer down into four essential components, based on the acronym, ACTS.

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

You may find this acronym helpful to reframe your thinking as you pray and revitalize your prayer life. Now, if your times of prayer are vibrant and meaningful, do not change what you're doing. If it ain't broke, don't try to fix it.

But if your prayer time is dull, lifeless, or non-existent, please consider trying this prayer model. Just spend part of your time worshiping God, part of your time confessing your personal needs (especially for forgiveness), part of your time thanking God for what He has already done for you, and part of your time making requests for others and for yourself.

Our focus today is the first theme: Adoration. This is our look at God.

What Is Adoration?

The word comes from the Latin *adorare*, meaning *to pray to* or *to speak reverently to*.

To describe adoration, I will use another acronym: AWE. Adoration is an **A**ttentive **W**orship **E**xpression.

Attentive — mentally focused on God, His character, attributes, and works.

Worship — magnifying, exalting God above yourself and your circumstances.

Expression — using speech, verbal praise, with feeling.

Adoration is to appreciate God in your heart and mind and express it with your voice.

Do you believe that *He is* who He says He is? Then declare His wondrous character with conviction in your voice.

Has He revealed something to you *about Himself* through His names, titles, attributes, works or miracles? Tell Him how that makes you feel.

Express your *love* for God. Be fervent. Express your deepest feelings for Him.

Why Is God Adorable?

Based on the lyrics of a familiar chorus we sing, I will suggest two reasons:

He is *altogether lovely*.

Philippians 4:8 *And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*

He is *altogether worthy*.

1 Chronicles 16:25 *Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! He is to be feared above all gods. ²⁶ The gods of other nations are mere idols, but the Lord made the heavens!*

(Altogether wonderful to me has more to do with thanksgiving, which we will come to in a couple of weeks.)

How Shall I Adore Him?

First, do as King David did: “Remember the Lord.” Nothing will chase away the gloom or confusion and brighten your day like a good dose of reflection on the good works of God — in the Bible, for you and for others whom you know or have read about.

The practice of adoration can be described by yet another acronym: DESIRE.

Declare His worthiness — recount the many ways He has demonstrated His greatness in the Bible and in your life.

Express your love — use love language to address the Lord, and engage your feelings as you do so.

Sing of His majesty — use a familiar tune, or make up your own, with your own words of love and appreciation (it really doesn't matter if the words rhyme or not!).

Illustrate your reverence — lift your hands toward Heaven, take off your shoes, kneel down, bow down with your face to the ground as you worship.

Revel in His goodness — clap your hands for joy, dance, shout, skip, leap, spin around (all these are Biblical forms of worship).

Enjoy His awesomeness — simply “glow” in His presence, breathe it in, soak it up, bask in His love.

Worship and prayer are not distinct activities. The first element of meaningful prayer must be worship.

If we do not revere God, it makes no sense to pray to Him.

If we will not worship God, our heart is not yet in the right condition for prayer.

If we do not praise God simply for who He is, our faith is weak and our purpose is off track.

The beginning of prayer is still, and always will be, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done."

If you will you make a point of expressing worship to God whenever you pray, you'll find it sets the stage for trusting Him for great things.