

PRAYER

Lesson 3: A Well-Rounded Prayer Life (The ACTS Model)

1. *Adoration*
2. *Confession*
3. *Thanksgiving*
4. *Supplication*

Prayer: Heavenly Father, send us your Holy Spirit. Enrich the content of our hearts, so that you are pleased when we open them to you in prayer. In the name of Jesus and for his sake we ask it. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

A story is told about a country boy who, at age fourteen, fell completely silent. For seven years he didn't say a word to anyone. At first, his family and friends were astonished, but finally they came to accept Junior's silence as a fact of life.

Then, one day, Ma burned the biscuits. She was scolding herself softly as she carried them to the table. Ma, you burned the biscuits," Junior said. Ma dropped the plate on the floor. The family looked at Junior in shock. "Son," Dad said, "you haven't opened your mouth in seven years! Why not?" "Because," Junior said, "up 'til now, everything's been okay."

Is our prayer life a little like that? Do we feel no need to pray as long as everything's "okay"? If so, let's remember: in our prayers, we can talk about much more than our own lives and what's wrong with them. Today we will look at one way of keeping our prayers well-rounded, filled with a variety of things God wants us to pray for. Remember the word ACTS. It can be a helpful way to organize your prayers.

I. Adoration

Psalm 146:1-2 Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. ² I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

1. What does it mean to praise someone?
2. Explain: we praise the LORD for who he is and what he does.
3. Refute this statement: When we praise God we are basically buttering him up so that he'll give us what we want.

ADORATION = prayers in which we praise God for who he is and what he has done

II. Confession

Luke 18:9-14 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ ¹⁴ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

- 1.) Both the Pharisee and tax collector went to the temple to pray. What was wrong with the Pharisee’s prayer?

- 2.) What made the tax collector’s prayer God-pleasing?

- 3.) Martin Luther once said, “The Law is for the morning; the Gospel is for the evening.” What do you think he meant by that?

CONFESSIO = prayers in which we acknowledge our sinfulness and ask God for forgiveness

III. Thanksgiving

Philippians 1:3-6 I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

1. What does Paul thank God for?

2. How is thanksgiving similar and different from praise?

3. After a prayer of confession, what is the first thing we should thank God for?

THANKSGIVING = prayers in which we acknowledge God’s many kindnesses and express our gratitude for them.

IV. Supplication

Philippians 1:9-11 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

1. Paul continues his prayer by making a request for the Philippians. What does he ask God to do for them?
2. We may not always know what others need. How can the petitions of the Lord's Prayer serve as a good list of things to pray for on behalf of others?
3. Respond: It is in our supplications that our selfish sinful nature most often rears its head.

SUPPLICATION = prayers in which we make requests to God on behalf of ourselves and others.

SUMMARY

We have a special occasion today: Confirmation Day. Reflecting on our own confirmations, using the ACTS model, what might we include in our prayer?

A –

C –

T –

S –

Life with God

- Day 1: In your prayers today, focus on adoration. Make a list of attributes of God, and praise him for being who he is.
- Day 2: In your catechism, read the Apostle's Creed with Luther's explanation. Pray a prayer of adoration that praises God for what he has done.
- Day 3: Read the Ten Commandments with Luther's explanations. Offer an appropriate confession of your sins.
- Day 4: Now find the Table of Duties in your catechism. Find where it mentions the duties of your station in life, and confess to God the ways in which you have neglected them.
- Day 5: List the evidences of God's goodness that you can see from where you are right now. Thank God for them.
- Day 6: Make a mental list of people who have been significant in your spiritual life. Thank God for each of them.
- Day 7: To think about: What is the most pressing need I feel right now? What is my most important need? Are they the same? If not, how are they related? After thinking for a few minutes about these needs, take them to God in prayer.