

Prayer is as essential to knowing God and growing spiritually as breathing is to living and staying healthy. Just as you need to communicate effectively to be a good employee or spouse, our walk with God is only as strong as the communication between you and Him.

You might ask, "If God already knows what we need before we ask, why even bother praying?" Scripture makes a very strong case for prayer in the life of the believer.

- Jesus told us to pray. Luke 18:1 says, "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart." We should pray simply because Jesus told us to and emphasized it in His life and teaching. There really is no better reason to pray than this.
- Prayer is God's appointed way of obtaining things. James 4:2 says, "You do not have because you do not ask." Do you ever wonder why you never seem to know the will of God for your life, why you never have any opportunities to lead others to the Lord, or why you always seem to be scraping by? Maybe you haven't seen answers because you haven't asked God. He wants us to experience the blessings of seeing our prayers answered, such as the salvation of a loved one, a divine healing, or a wonderful provision. But we first have to ask.
- Prayer is the way by which God helps us to overcome our anxiety and worry. Philippians 4:6 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

When you come to God and present your fears and anxieties to Him, He will give you His peace and comfort. That doesn't necessarily mean He will take away whatever it is that is causing your worry. But you can know that He is with you, helping you persevere.

- Prayer is one of the ways we make ourselves ready for the return of Jesus Christ. Luke 21:34–36 says, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will be as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." As believers living in the last days, our lives should be characterized by watchfulness and prayer (see also Mark 13:32-33).

Whatever concerns you may have at this moment, it is always time to pray! Remember, Scripture tells you to "[cast] all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

The Bible identifies several different types of prayers we can pray. One model for how we should pray is captured in the acrostic A.C.T.S. Each letter stands for a specific aspect of prayer, arranged in a very natural order.

**A: Adoration** (Worship)

**C: Confession** (Of Specific Sins)

**T: Thanksgiving** (Gratitude)

**S: Supplication** (Specific Requests)

- **Adoration:** Jesus essentially taught us the same thing in the Lord's Prayer, which begins, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name" (Matthew 6:9). This puts things in perspective for us. A good example of this type of adoration is found in Psalm 95:1-7. When we take time to praise and worship God in our prayers, we are placing God where He rightfully belongs. As a result, our problems and needs come into their proper perspective.
- **Confession:** The closer we draw to God, the more we sense our own sinfulness. When Isaiah came into God's presence, he said, "Woe is me, for I am undone!" (Isaiah 6:5). The confession of our sin removes any barriers and clears the air of anything that would cause God not to hear our prayers. As 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us . . ." This is, once again, modeled in the Lord's Prayer. After "Our Father who art in heaven," we find, "Forgive us our sins" (Matthew 6:12).
- **Thanksgiving:** Our immediate response after confession is thanksgiving. We should be thankful that God would indeed cleanse and forgive us. Should we give thanks because everything is going perfectly in our lives or because we are in a good mood? No, we should give thanks because God deserves our praise. Psalm 118:1 says, "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For his mercy endures forever." As another translation puts it, "His love endures forever." By giving thanks, or simply expressing gratitude for what we have, we prevent our focus from shifting to what we do not have.
- **Supplication:** If we are faithful in the first three steps, the last step will not degenerate into some spiritual shopping list. Too often in prayer, we cut to the chase instead of spending time in adoration, confession, and thanksgiving first. Yet, God does want to hear our needs and requests. Scripture tells us, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6-7). We are also promised, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Do not neglect this vital part of your Christian walk. As someone has said, "Prayer is the breath of the newborn soul, and there can be no Christian life without it."