

LESSON 16 - PRAYING FOR INTIMACY **Are You Using Prayer To Get Closer With God?**

By Brian S. Holmes

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Prayer is communication with God. It's you talking with Him and Him talking with you. In this lesson we'll look at four different types of prayer, using the acrostic ACTS: (A) Adoration, (C) Confession, (T) Thanks, and (S) Supplication. But first answer these questions: Are you using prayer to get *closer* to God? Is building your relationship with God your *primary* goal? It should be!

All Prayer Should Develop Intimacy With God. Why? Because prayer that increases intimacy with God is *the* hallmark behavior of the Christian life. The reason is this: the Gospel is the foundation of our entire faith! Every behavior we do—including every prayer—should be like bricks that are laid on top of the foundation of the Gospel. Because of the Gospel we have a restored relationship with God, have been forgiven of all our sins, and have direct access to confidently and boldly approach God with our requests. Because of the Gospel God the Father adopted us in Christ and now He's forever our Heavenly Father. Because of the Gospel His Spirit now lives inside of us and should be directing our thoughts, desires, and requests. All your interaction with God should be in light of your trust in these Gospel truths. If you're talking to Him as though He's far away in Heaven, having to go through others as intermediaries, or asking Him to come "down" to you, it's as though you don't trust His Word and promises that He's *already living in you!* If you pray to God in such a way as though the Gospel wasn't true then your lack of faith will hinder your prayer, relationship, and intimacy with Him. Our conversations with God should reflect that we do trust in His Word and promises. Our prayers should be fueled by our knowledge and love of Him, our ongoing desire to please and glorify Him, and the goal of deepening and strengthening our relationship with Him. This will change why, and for what, and how, we talk to Him. There's a problem if you're praying in a way that makes you less close to God, less connected to His heart, less about His glory, less like Jesus, or less led by His Spirit. In regards to our desires, James 4:3 says, "*You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*" Our prayers must glorify God. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus said, "*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*" In Jeremiah 29:13 God says, "*You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.*" When it comes to getting our prayers answered, 1 John 3:21-22 says, "*We have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.*" Guided by right motivations let's now look at four types of prayer modeled by Jesus in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 and Luke 11.

Adoration. Adoration is telling God how much we adore Him. This type of prayer is about giving honor and glory to God for who He *is*. He alone is God, creator and sustainer of the universe. He alone is worthy of praise. He's the painter, and the rest of creation, including us, are His painting. Everything exists to bring Him glory. And everything that doesn't bring Him glory by its existence will inevitably bring Him glory by its destruction. The Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-10 begins saying, "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed [meaning honored, sanctified, holy] be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done.*" Some manuscripts and traditions include, "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory." In Luke 19:40 Jesus said if humans didn't rejoice and praise God and Jesus as King then the stones would cry out! The Holy Spirit is always speaking *to* us, glorifying the Father and Son as well. He opens and fills our hearts with admiration of God's wonder. Through worship we then give it back!

Confession. In John 16:8 Jesus said "*he [the Holy Spirit] will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*" He speaks to us by showing us our sinfulness. Not to tear us down, but to build us up. He leads us to repentance. He leads us continually to seek the Father and Jesus, to trust the Gospel, and to believe our sins are forgiven through Jesus's atonement. He leads us to pursue justice, righteousness, holiness, and godliness. Confession is our response, where we come into agreement with God, acknowledging our sins and failures before Him in humility. 1 John 1:8-9 says, "*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" Also confession and forgiveness go hand-in-hand. Jesus says in Matthew 6:12 to pray, "*forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,*" and Luke 11:4, "*forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.*"

Thanksgiving. This type of prayer is about thanking God for all that He has done and is doing. The Christian heart should be overflowing with gratitude. The amazing grace of God, the joy of having been forgiven of our sin, our adoption by God, our ongoing relationship with Him, the fruit of the Holy Spirit's presence, answering prayers, deliverance, healing, personal sanctification and transformation; spiritual, relational, and material blessings are all things to express gratitude for. The Holy Spirit speaks to us in this way as well. He's always reminding us of what God has already done, is currently doing, and has promised to do - flooding our hearts with appreciation, gratitude, and love to give back.

Supplication. This type of prayer is asking God for what we want, making our needs known to Him as a personal request. James 4:2 says, "*You do not have, because you do not ask.*" Philippians 4:6 says, "*in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*" Requests should be godly, according to His will, and bring Him glory to grant them. They shouldn't be greedy, selfish, or driven by sinful or worldly passions. They need to be asked humbly and earnestly. Jesus's example in Matthew 6:11 and 13 says, "*Give us this day our daily bread*" and, "*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil [or the evil one].*" Each one of the four ACTS types of prayers is communication with God and should be used to develop our intimacy with Him.

Let's pray. Father, speak always to me by Your Spirit in me. Help me to seek You first and get better at hearing You speak throughout the day. Help me develop an active prayer life. In Jesus' name. Amen.