

Gathering Question: Where and when did you learn to pray? Does prayer come easily for you or is it difficult? If you had to characterize your prayers with one word what would that word be?

Learning to Pray

The disciples felt the need to ask and sometimes we feel the same. We don't know how to pray as we ought to. Our prayer life can become very imbalanced concentrating on our requests to God or our problems and struggles. To be sure there are times in our lives when we need to concentrate on a certain kind of prayer more than others but a really powerful prayer life is concerned with not only petition but also praise and adoration.

Years ago, a minister named Bill Hybels, started praying with some structure in his prayers. Every time he goes before the Father now, he tries to include at least four different parts to his prayers. The first letter of each part forms an acrostic that spells out ACTS. Hybels writes out most of his private prayers and each one contains these sections.

“A” stands for adoration. Hybels contends that every prayer should include a time for praise and adoration of God. In this part of the prayer you can recount how God has blessed your life at certain moments and in all kinds of situations. This is also a good moment to remember the wonderful attributes of our Father—his mercy, love, forgiveness, grace, etc.

“C” stands for confession. Prayer should include a time of coming clean with God. We should be willing to write out loud our sins and our shortcomings. And as we tell God what we have done we should ask for and accept his forgiveness.

“T” stands for thanksgiving. You might spend a long time on this part thanking God for his grace and forgiveness. You might want to remember all the blessings he has showered upon you—your family, friends, job, home, etc. Thanking God every day keeps a person from being covetous and writing down your blessings will remind you of all the things God has done for you.

“S” stand for supplication. This is finally the place you can lay out your requests to the Father. This is the time we humbly ask God for the things we need and for his intervention in those needs. It is important for us to leave those requests with God and let him handle them at this point. Then you can go about your life with real joy and peace.

Read: Luke 11:1-10.

Reflect:

1. What do you think of Hybel's approach to prayer? How would you change his approach for your own personal use?
2. As you read Jesus model prayer in Luke 11, what words in his prayer express adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication?
3. Why is persistence in prayer so necessary? Doesn't God hear the first time?