

Rhetoricians, whether they be teachers, preachers, politicians, or pundits often utilize certain tools to help people remember their point. Some will use alliteration. Others will employ witty slogans or sayings. And still others will come up with acronyms. These tools are useful for both the speaker and the audience. Unfortunately, sometimes those rhetorical tools can be misunderstood and therefore misused.

A great example of this in the Christian life has happened in regards to teaching on prayer. Somewhere, some time ago, someone either in a book on the subject of prayer or in a lesson/sermon on prayer introduced the acronym A.C.T.S. This little acronym has been used to teach that prayer has different aspects and facets. The A reminds us that prayer should contain adoration for God. The C stands for confession' an important part of any prayer life. The T is all about thanksgiving. And the S stands for supplication, or making requests.

I believe this is a wonderful tool. As a matter of fact, the other day when I encouraged you to start a prayer journal in an effort to be more intentional in your prayers, I included each of these things. Adoration is praising God for who he is. Thanksgiving is praising God for what he has done. Confession is owning and repenting of your sin. And supplication is expressing your needs and/or desires.

So, I want to be clear. There is nothing unbiblical or wrong with the A.C.T.S. acronym or what it teaches. However, there can be something wrong with our application of it. If we view it as some secret formula or even as a necessity for effective prayer we have gone too far. As a matter of fact, at that point, we are flirting with the very thing that Jesus decries in Matthew 6:7, vain and repetitious prayer.

While the Bible has much to say about prayer and many books have been written by scholars on the subject, it is important to remember that the Bible does not offer some code or formula for prayer. Even in our passage today, we will see a warning against such an idea. The Model Prayer, or Lord's Prayer as it is errantly referred to, is meant to be a model, not a must. Just as when Jesus taught us to pray in his name he was not giving us some magical incantation to attach to the end of every prayer, so the Model Prayer is about principles of prayer not procedure for prayer.

So over the next two weeks, lets learn from the Master.

Scripture: Matthew 6:9-14

- I. Principle of Righteous Prayer part I (9-11)
  - A. **Representation not Replica**
    1. "Like this" not "this"

- a) While the Model Prayer is extensive in its scope it is not detailed nor is it personal
  - (1) No specific sins are named
  - (2) No specific temptations are mentioned
- 2. Jesus' own prayers differed from the Model Prayer in the fact that they were specific
  - a) He dealt with temptation that was directly related to him in the Garden of Gethsemane
  - b) Jesus had no need to seek forgiveness
- B. Righteous Principles**
  - 1. Relational
    - a) Our
      - (1) We are not alone
        - (a) The Spirit of God dwells within us
        - (b) The body of Christ (the church) offers support
    - b) Father
      - (1) Close, loving relationship
        - (a) Gal. 4:6
    - c) Our Father
      - (1) We share a Father with Jesus through Jesus
  - 2. Reverential
    - a) In heaven
      - (1) Remember that God is greater than us
        - (a) In abode - his realm is perfect
        - (b) In attributes - his righteousness is perfect
        - (c) In action - his response to our prayer will be perfect
    - b) Your name be honored as holy
      - (1) Certainly this applies to the use or abuse of God's name
        - (a) Profanity, exclamation, flippant and irreverent
      - (2) Also, and more importantly, pertains to God's person
        - (a) His character and authority
      - (3) Be honored, respected, and obeyed
        - (a) Even princes and princesses must honor, respect, and obey the king
        - (b) Jesus set the example in this (John 5:19; 12:49-50)
  - 3. Right priorities
    - a) Your kingdom come
      - (1) Kingdom in both senses of the word (Matt. 6:33)
        - (a) Rule of creation
        - (b) Reign in the hearts of man
    - b) Your will be done

- (1) God's will not our wants
  - (a) Recognize God's wisdom and plan
  - (b) Recalls Jesus' prayer in Matt. 26:39, 42
- c) On earth as it is in heaven
  - (1) There is no disobedience in heaven
  - (2) There is no hesitation in heaven
- 4. Reliance
  - a) Daily Needs
    - (1) By not praying for a week's or month's worth of bread, the disciple is encouraged to petition the Lord daily
    - (2) The request is not for opulent or extravagant but for obvious needs
      - (a) Prov. 30:8-9

As we study the subject of prayer and seek to apply biblical principles to our personal and congregational prayer lives, we must remember these principles. We must remember that at its heart, prayer is personal poignant communication between us and the God who loves us so much that he has opened the doors of communication through faith in Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And lest we become too casual in our relationship with the Lord of all creation and forget his majesty, we would do well to enter into that time of communication reverently and respectfully. As we enter the throne room and come before the King, we should seek his glory and honor, trusting that in doing so we will be heard and blessed. We can rely upon God to hear and meet our needs.

This morning, I invite you to use our time of invitation to inspect your prayer life. Does your prayer life include these biblical precepts? Again, remember, this is not a formula to be followed but principles to be personalized and practiced.