

Bible Study for February 6th & February 8th

Why Use A.C.T.S.?

Prayer is obviously something that is very important to the Christian. We are commanded in Scripture to pray about everything (Phil. 4:6-7) and at all times (1 Thess. 5:17). Too often, however, our prayers are more like a grocery list or a Santa Wish List than the prayers of the Bible. This should not be. While we are invited, even commanded, to bring our burdens to the Lord in prayer (see Phil. 4:6-7 and 1 Pet. 5:7), the main emphases of both the examples of and exhortations to prayer in the Bible are often lacking in our prayers.

Biblical examples of and exhortations to prayer overwhelmingly emphasize the adoration of God, the confession of sin, and thanksgiving to God. To a lesser degree, intercession on behalf of others is also emphasized, but even then the emphasis is upon the spiritual needs of the one being prayed for rather than the physical needs. Most of our prayers focus on the physical, rather than spiritual needs, and virtually neglect adoration, confession, and thanksgiving altogether.

To correct this tendency, a pattern for prayer is necessary. Jesus' disciples knew the importance of knowing how to pray when they asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Jesus obviously knew the importance of this because He took His disciples question as an opportunity to provide a model prayer, the "Lord's Prayer" (Luke 11:2-4). This is not a prayer to be mindlessly repeated, but a pattern, a template of *how* we should pray.

Christians throughout the centuries have used the Lord's Prayer in exactly this way. The German Reformer Martin Luther responded to a question from his barber with a booklet on prayer which used the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostle's Creed as guides in prayer. The Puritan Matthew Henry wrote *A Method for Prayer* which provided a five-point guide for prayer which roughly followed the structure of the Lord's Prayer. The acronym A.C.T.S. is simply an easy to remember outline to think through while praying. This acrostic contains the major elements given by Christ in the model prayer (see Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4). It begins with Adoration which is worshiping God for His name and nature. Second, is Confession which admitting to and agreeing with God about our sins. Third, is Thanksgiving which is acknowledging God's gracious activity in our lives. The final word is Supplication which is spiritual and physical requests made for one's self and one another.

The purpose of our use of A.C.T.S. then is:

- To assist us in praying prayers which are more consistent with the prayers of the Bible.
- To provide a framework for our time together on Wednesday night's that will allow us to spend a significant amount of time in prayer together.
- To train ourselves to think of prayer as more than just a grocery list.
- To teach ourselves a pattern for prayer in our private devotional lives.

Legislators' Weekly Bible study meets each Tuesday (except following a Monday holiday) and Thursday in Capitol Annex Room 436 from 12:00-12:30 pm. It is the same study both days to allow flexibility for everyone's committee schedules.

A.C.T.S. Prayer Guide

Having a personal prayer plan can enhance your prayer experience. In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus teaches believers to pray in a certain way. A plan will provide direction and focus in your prayer life. Our desire should be to encounter the God who answers prayer. Believers should resist the temptation to allow this or any other plan to become a means to an end. Jesus warns against prayer being treated as simply a ritual or religious activity (see Matt. 6:7-8).

As you pray you can use the A.C.T.S. acrostic to guide your prayer time. These categories are broad enough to allow for adaptation to individual contexts. This acrostic contains the major elements given by Christ in the model prayer (see Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4).

Adoration - Spend time praising the Lord and adoring Him for who he is (Matt. 6:9). Use Scripture to praise Him (see Psalms 103, 145, 150; Rev. 4:8; 5:12-14). Love and cherish His presence and allow Him to work in and through your life (see Matt. 22:32-34). Be still before Him and enjoy His presence (see Psalm 46:10). Use this time to allow God to speak to you through His Word and Spirit (see Psalms 40:1-3; 90:12-17). Praise the Lord by praying scripture or hymns back to Him (see Psalm 84; Rev. 4:8; 5:9-10, 12-13 and "Great is Thy Faithfulness").

Confession - Confession should be a part of your continual walk with Christ (see Matt. 6:11). Spend time asking Christ to search your heart for areas that displease Him (see Ps. 139:23-24). Allow God to cleanse your heart of any unconfessed sin (see Psalm 51:10-13). Be sure to spend time confessing and repenting of (turning away from) specific sins (see 1 John 1:9). Accept His forgiveness and cleansing (see Jer. 31:34).

Thanksgiving - Giving thanks for all things should be a part of our everyday lives as God's people (see Phil. 4:6-7). This includes thanking God for specific things such as blessings, people, open doors, guidance, etc. Also give thanks for His salvation and the privilege to serve such a wonderful Savior. Thank Him for his goodness, loving-kindness, and faithfulness (see Psalm 100:4-6).

Supplication - We are called as believers to intercessory prayer (see Col. 4:2-4; 1 Tim. 2:1-4). Thus, we are to come before God on behalf of others. Spend time praying for specific people, events, states, countries, missionaries, etc. (see Acts 12:5; Rom. 10:1). In addition, spend time praying for personal needs (see Matt. 6:11-13). Make prayer lists for your time of supplication. Be sure to include a place for answers to be recorded. Recorded answers can become items for praise and thanksgiving.