

# Prayer

“Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16 CSB).

Prayer is not just a spiritual discipline, but a royal invitation into the throne-room of God. You may be at your coffee table, driving in your vehicle, or waiting in line at the grocery store, but when you decide to pray you enter into the royal presence of God Almighty.

Let that sink in for a moment.

The King of the universe who is also our heavenly father invites us to pray in order to give us the blessing of His “grace to help us in time of need.” What an *awesome* privilege. Through Jesus Christ, we have become guests of honor in the throne room of God.

## Getting Practical

Over the years, many believers have adopted an approach to prayer that guides us through approaching God through a memorable acronym. While no method is inspired by God, we like this method because it begins with a posture of worship. This is more important than we often realize, because we typically only come to God when we feel like we need something.

This approach is called the A.C.T.I.V.E. method. You’ll notice that the words used are a bit “old school” and not what you would likely consider to be common, everyday language. That’s ok! If you’re not comfortable with these words specifically, we’ve included a simple word that summarizes each of these. Moreover, these simple words are great to use as the outline you teach your kids when you teach them to pray.<sup>1</sup>

### **A—Adoration**

Adoration cultivates a heart of *worship*.

Simple Word: Wow

If “Adoration” feels a little too technical to you, then just begin your prayer by saying something like, “Wow God. You are awesome and here’s why...”

### **C—Confession**

Confession cultivates a heart of *humility*, acknowledging that we have fallen short of God’s perfect standards. Because Jesus has already paid for our sins, we don’t confess our sins to be made right with God or to receive forgiveness. Instead, we confess our sins so that we can walk more closely with God with a heart of humility.

Simple Word: Sorry

If “Confession” doesn’t ring a bell for you, then simply transition from your moment of “wow” with God into a time where you acknowledge your sin before your loving Father. You may say something like, “Father, I’m sorry for not trusting you with...”

### **T—Thanksgiving.**

Thanksgiving cultivates a heart of *gratitude*.

Simple Word: Thanks

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<sup>1</sup> These words come from Ruth Schwenk, “Wow, Sorry, Thanks, Please: Four Simple Words to Lear Your Child in Prayer,” *The Better Mom Blog*, May 19, 2019 <https://www.thebettermom.com/blog/2015/5/4/four-simple-words-to-lead-your-child-in-prayer>

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Being grateful changes us. Changes our perspective. It gets us from focusing on what we don't have to all we have been given.

## **I—Intercession**

Intercession simply cultivates a heart of surrender and intervenes on behalf of another. To pray and focus on the needs and distress of others

Simple Word: Please

After working through these words, this is a great time to “present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6–7). Whatever is on your heart, finish your time of prayer by saying something like, “Father, please...”

## **V—Vanquishing Satan**

The term, vanquishing satan, may sound odd. For us, it simply means to practice regular spiritual warfare by resisting Satan in prayer.

Simple Word: Resist

1 Peter 5 reminds us to “Resist him (our enemy), firm in the faith.” People are not our enemy. We have said it like this at Stonegate, the enemy is the enemy. The evil spiritual forces at work around us hate God and those who follow him. Say something like “We can come in Jesus name and ask God to destroy the work of the enemy (this way)...”

## **E—Extreme Prayer**

This manner of praying is admitting our weakness and need for Jesus to move mountains, to do the impossible, to move His kingdom forward in power.

It is intentionally praying the kinds of prayers that tap into all of Jesus' promises for maximum kingdom impact. Extreme prayer is not about getting God to give us our wishes. This is not about a new trinket or more ease.

Extreme prayer is praying “in Jesus' name” - meaning literally praying about seeing Jesus bring his salvation to each person and to the ends of the earth.

Simple Word: Extreme

John 14:13-14 says “Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” Who is far from Jesus? What is broken around us? Say something like, “We ask God that you would save (name of someone you know who is far from Jesus)...”

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## Some Final Tips

With this method in mind, please know there are many other ways to pray. This is just one we've outlined for you. However, in general, there are some other tips we'd encourage you to try in your pursuit of prayer:

**Helpful Tip #1: Pray the Bible.** Many believers find it helpful to turn the words of Scripture into their own personal prayers.

To give an example, let's say you are reading Romans 12 in your Bible reading for the day and you really want to focus on praying verse 9 which reads: "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good." You might pray for these realities to become true in your life by saying the following:

*Father, teach me to be a person of **genuine love**. I know this is how Jesus loved me, so please teach me to love in the same way. Teach me also to **hate what is evil**—teach me to **hate sin** and **love what is good**. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.*

**Helpful Tip #2: Journaling.** Another tool believers have found helpful through the years is journaling. Journaling is a great way to express our hearts to God, reflect on His promises, and write down our prayers in a way meaningful to you.

**Helpful Tip #3: Fasting.** Jesus expected His followers to combine prayer with fasting. That's right—*fasting*. Jesus didn't say "If you fast...", but rather "When you fast..." (Matthew 6:16–17). There are number of ways people define fasting, but in general "Fasting is a believer's voluntary abstinence from food *for a spiritual purpose*."<sup>2</sup> In other words, fasting is not meant to be a form of torment, but rather a method for *intensified and focused prayer*.

Practically, this means comes down to making three choices:

1. Identify a specific issue you would like to devote some specific prayer to (i.e. pride, anger, lust, marriage problems, difficulty at work, etc.)
2. Select a day (24 hour fast) or a time period (i.e. 8–5; temporary fast) to pray about this issue. Every time you feel the sensation of hunger, that's your alarm bell to pray and seek the Lord.
3. Commit to this time of prayer and fasting.

You may be surprised that what seems a bit crazy to our world of self-indulgence is actually a great tool for spiritual relief and growth. The best way to find out is to give this a try for yourself.

## Extra Resources

### Some Things to Read

- "How to Pray" available on our Resources page
- *Praying the Bible* by Donald Whitney
- *Prayer* by Timothy Keller

### Online Resources

- "Wow, Sorry, Thanks, Please: 4 Simple Words to Lead your Child to Pray" by Jeannie Cunnion (Article)
- "How to Pray for Unbelievers" by Tim Challies (Article)
- "How Can I Improve my Prayer life" by Donald Whitney (YouTube Video)

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<sup>2</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 192 emphasis added.