



Introducing Prayer

I call on you, O God, for you will answer me; give ear to me and hear my prayer. - Psalm 17:6

A.C.T.S. Prayer

Group Leaders: Review "Group Leader Resources" for this quarter. On p.2-3 you will find the A.C.T.S. model of prayer (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication). Start the first meeting of 2007 in prayer. Ask the group for prayer requests for A.C.T.S. and have different group members pray for each one. Confession may not be an easy one and may have to be in general for our sins. Supplication – make sure to include a prayer for our study of Prayer this Spring.

Adoration:

(example: We adore/appreciate how powerful you are.)

Confession Requests:

Thanksgivings:

Supplication Requests:

We want to begin this study “on the right foot.” There is no better place to start than with God. Prayer is God-centered. It is an act of faith that appeals to who He is and is thankful for what He has done. There are a few things that are critical to understand about God that will deepen our prayer lives.

Psalm 139:1-6

David talks about how well God knows him. He says that God has searched him. When God searches our lives he finds the good and the bad. He finds everything. God knows everything.

David says God’s knowledge is “too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.” (139:6). *Why is God the one to take our questions and concerns to?*

- He has the answers.
- He is wiser than we are

Isa 55:8-9

How does Isaiah say God’s thoughts are different from our thoughts?

- His thoughts are wiser than our thoughts.

How does God being all knowing affect His answers to our prayers?

- He knows just what we need.
- He answers our prayers perfectly.

Psalm 139:23-24

What two things does David say God knows about us in verse 23?

- Heart
- Thoughts.

That means he knows us completely.. He can read our mind. There is nothing we can hide from Him. *How does God’s wisdom encourage us to be honest with God in our prayer life?*

- We cannot hide anything from Him so we should be open and honest with Him about our lives and what we are dealing with.

If God knows everything, why do we need to pray to Him?

- Even though God already knows everything, he expects us to take initiative in approaching Him in humility.
- He desires a relationship with us and relationships require communication.
- Just because your husband/wife knows you very well and may even know what you are thinking at times doesn’t mean you stop talking with him/her.

How does God’s knowledge of our lives help empower our prayer life?

- We understand that he knows the right answer.
- God knows us well so he knows just what we need.

God Is Ever Present

Psalm 139:7-10

David reminds us that we cannot escape from God. He is “ever present.” That might seem a little intimidating, just as God knowing your heart seems intimidating. In reality, this is a comforting part of who God is. It is great to know that God is present. Often when things are hard, we need a shoulder to lean on and someone to be there for us. God is always there.

Where can you go to escape from God’s presence?

- Nowhere

What does David say God does when He is present with us (139:10)?

- Guides us
- Holds us fast
- His presence offers us protection.

How should the assurance of God’s presence effect our prayer life?

- God is personal and involved, not distant and unconcerned.
- We know He hears us.
- He is present to act on our behalf.

God Is All Powerful

What if God had all the knowledge in the world and was always present with you but wasn’t really able to do anything about your problems or help in times of need? Deism believes God created the world and set it in motion but He is no longer involved in the affairs of the world. They believe God is “hands off.” We know better than that. God is powerful and entirely involved in the affairs of the world.

Scripture is full of examples of God’s power. God has been acting on our behalf since the beginning of time to help build a relationship with us. *What are some examples of God’s using His power to help His people in the Bible?*

- Here are a few:
 - Creation
 - Exodus from Egypt
 - Promised Land

What are some examples of God’s acting on our behalf?

- Jesus’ life, crucifixion, and resurrection.
- Forming the church
- Being present and active in our lives today.
- The Holy Spirit acting as a comforter and counselor in our lives.
- Answering our prayers today

God didn’t just do all that thousands of years ago and stop. Prayer is powerful because the God who acted so powerfully on behalf of His people in the Bible is the same God today. We are His people. He continues to fight for us today.

That makes prayer a highly significant activity as it connects us with the God who knows us, is present with us, and who is able to help us.

Reflect on the following quote by Gordon MacDonald,

Until we believe that prayer is indeed a real and highly significant activity, that it does in fact reach beyond space and time to the God who is actually there, we will never acquire the habits of worship and intercession. In order to gain these habits we must make a conscious effort to overcome the part of us that thinks that praying is not a natural part of life.

What does MacDonald say is a challenge to one's prayer life?

- Doubt that our prayers are actually heard by God.
- Thinking prayer is not a natural part of life.

How does God's knowledge, promised presence, and power help us see prayer as real and significant?

- Our prayers really do reach God. They are really heard and acted upon.
- God is able to make the impossible possible.

Application

All of our views of God have been shaped by our own personal experiences and scripture. Viewing God as a present Father might be hard to accept by someone who never knew their father or their father was absent from their life. *Which of the three: all knowing, ever present, or all powerful is hardest for you to deal with?*

What barriers have you found hardest to overcome in keeping prayer a regular part of your life?

What could you do to encourage someone else to grow in their prayer life?

Put it Into Practice

This week, take some time out each day to pray to God. Try using the A.C.T.S. model of prayer by starting with Adoration and ending with your requests (supplication). There are printable cards on the website you or your group members can print to help them pray through A.C.T.S.