

# How to Pray #4

## Persist

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Nov. 26, 2023

Question: What do you want most desperately? You may only need a word or an initial to remember what you want most! What do you really, honestly want, maybe something only God can do for you?

One thing I learned growing up is this model of prayer: ACTS which stand for the different aspects of talking to God about things.

**A= Adoration** (Praise)

**C= Confession**

**T= Thanksgiving** (Praise)

**S= Supplication** (asking for things in a humble way; also means petitioning someone who has power to do something for you)

You can see all these aspects in the previous 3 sermons:

Eric talked about the Lord's Prayer a couple of weeks ago: you can pray this any time, to start or end prayer. Jesus told us this is how we should pray!

Praise: Mark Talked about shining a light on something worthy: Prayer does this for God

Confession: We are honest in prayer, particularly our sin.

Supplication for today:

Persist: Not giving up; keep on asking. From the Lord's prayer, ACTS is covered:

<b>9</b> “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,	Adoration
<b>10</b> your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.	Adoration, Supplication
<b>11</b> Give us today our daily bread.	Supplication, Thanksgiving
<b>12</b> And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.	Supplication, Confession
<b>13</b> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.	Supplication
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.	Adoration

The ACTS model is not comprehensive but it's a good place to start.

Here is a fictional tale with a message that Jesus told in Luke about a bad judge and a widow who has a difficult situation:

### **Luke 18:1-8**

**1** Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. **2** He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. **3** And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

**4** "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, **5** yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

Why does this judge, even though he is evil, give in? It's because of the woman's persistence; basically, he wants to get rid of her.

**6** And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. **7** And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? **8** I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

The moral of this story is what Jesus says at the beginning: We should always pray and not give up. You are the chosen ones and God is equating himself with this unrighteous judge.

Here is another parable (from me) called *The Grocery Store Parable*:

Remember when you went to the grocery store when you were young? Your parents went to the grocery store with a mission to get the items on their list. However, you had other plans. You see something you want, particularly at the check-out line. (People have jobs where they figure out what items to put in this location so you will buy them!) What do little kids want? They want whatever they want: it doesn't have to be affordable or good for them. They don't care if it's affordable or healthy, nor do they really understand these things. They want whatever they want intensely and honestly, as if their life depended on it. They will even say embarrassing things to get what they want: "I hate you!" "I'm not coming back home with you" They get what they want through repetition: they say what they want over and over until they get it.

(Here is a memory verse from Sue's sermon on **Scripture Memory** a month ago)

**Roman 12:12** Be Joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faith in prayer.

### **In Matt 7:7-8**

7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 "Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

In this parable, Jesus says that people don't give bad things to their children when they ask for them. Jesus is saying that God is not evil like you are and how much more so is he willing to give good things to his children. *This is encouragement for us to ASK.*

### **So why don't we persist in asking?**

1. **We lack belief that God is good.** This may come from our childhood and experiences.

#### **How to fix this:**

- a. Remember what God has already done
  - b. Practice Thanksgiving (in ACTS model). We need to state the things out loud that God has already done. This is a good daily practice!
2. **We want to avoid disappointment.** Disappointment is extremely painful: the older we get, the more disappointments we have. We would rather avoid pain and not ask rather than risk disappointment.

#### **How to fix this:**

- a. Let God make things happen (as opposed to you making things happen)
- b. Most of us are Stoics:

"Freedom Is not procured by a full enjoyment of what is desired, but by controlling the desire." -Epictetus .

Stoics don't change the world, they change their desires to fit the world and in this way, they avoid disappointment. I want people around me to behave perfectly:

- Christianity is not stoicism! We are to ask for what we desire, even if it seems impossible or irrational
- We leave the outcome to God, the creator and sustainer of all that exists! He decides what to do; we don't PUPPET God. I don't get to demand what I want and He is not obligated to do what I ask.
- Often, we engage in prayer to have God change our hearts, not give us what we think we want.

**3 We are not appropriately child-like.** In the Kingdom of God, we never fully lose our childlike aspects. But we pretend we are better than children because we think we are more mature.

**James 4:3** When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasure.

Is this saying that if I get my motives right first, then I can pray? No Jesus, invites the little children to him in Matthew. James 4:3 This is more of an explanation of why prayers aren't answered. A worse problem than having selfish prayers is NOT praying at all.

#### **Matt 18:2-3**

**2** He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. **3** And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

**James 4:2b** You do not have because you do not ask God.

If we wait to get our motivations "correct," we will never get started. We are all like the little child in the grocery store: we have to ask and not wait until we are perfect.

Applications:

1. Bring your heart to God earnestly: talk with Him about who you are and what you desire.
2. Remember what God has done.
3. Ask God for what you want persistently. Don't give up. He might not give you your request, but the parable tells us to persist. Maybe he will answer it in a way you didn't expect.

We have 20 prayers here at the Village: Start now; don't wait until the New Year. Ask God for the miraculous, that which only He can do!