

ACTS in Prayer

by Jay Hancock

How often do people in America pray?

According to *Life Magazine* Gallup Poll Survey (March 1994) here are the answers:

How often do you pray? Less than once a day (25%), Once, twice a day (51%), Three or more times a day (24%).

Have you ever prayed for: Family (98%), Forgiveness (92%), Victory in a sports event (23%), Harm to befall someone (5%)

How Long do you usually pray? One minute (8%), Five minutes or less (47%), One hour or more (28%)

Have your prayers ever been answered? Yes (95%)

Which of these statistics surprise you? Are there any you don't believe are true?

Our goal this morning is to encourage you to examine your prayer life and to give you a model for prayer that you can commit to use in a daily prayer time. (Teaching Aim)

While most people agree that praying is important, most people also agree they do not pray enough. E.M. Bounds, a popular author on prayer wrote the following (*The Best of E.M. Bounds On Prayer*, Baker Book House, 1981, pp. 96-97):

The men who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for Him, have been men who spent so much time with God as to make it a notable feature of their lives. Charles Simeon devoted the hours from four till eight in the morning to God. Mr. Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. Of him, one who knew him well wrote: "He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining." ... Luther said: "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer." He had a motto: "He that has prayed well has studied well."

ADORATION of God

Matthew 6:9, 13b

Psalms 113:1-4

- Adoration involves focusing on who God is and what He means in your life. It is the contemplation of the glorious nature of God, and the outpouring of praise to the Heavenly Father for who He is in Himself.
- Focusing on God helps us have the right perspective on God as we begin our time of prayer.
- It raises our prayer life above ourselves and causes us to look toward God.
- Adoration is distinct from thanksgiving in that adoration is giving God the glory for who He is, and thanksgiving is thanking God for what He has done for us.
- As Price states, "In thanks my thoughts center on myself. In adoration my soul is concerned about the majesty and glory of God" (*ACTS in Prayer*, pg. 10).

PSALM 113

The LORD Exalts the Humble.

PRAISE the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD.

Praise the name of the LORD.

2 Blessed be the name of the LORD

From this time forth and forever.

3 From the rising of the sun to its setting

The name of the LORD is to be praised.

4 The LORD is high above all nations;

His glory is above the heavens.

CONFESSION to God

Matthew 6:12-13

Psalms 51:1-4

- Practically speaking, it is good for us to deal with our sin before we move on in prayer.
- As believers we must realize that we are already forgiven on our sin. God did that when we received Jesus as our Savior. Yet, confession of sin (constant agreement with God about our sin) is encouraged in the Model Prayer and in other places in scripture in order that our fellowship with God would not be hindered.
- When we are not willing to confess our known sin, it places a barrier between God and us. (Ps. 66:18)

PSALM 51

1 BE gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness;

According to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,

And cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me.

4 Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned,

And done what is evil in Thy sight, So that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak,

And blameless when Thou dost judge.

THANKSGIVING for what God has done

I Thess. 5:8

Psalm 9:1-2; 57:9-11; 107:1-3

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

16 Rejoice always;
17 pray without ceasing;
18 in everything give thanks; for this is
God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

- In thanksgiving you express gratitude toward God, generally in response to His concrete acts. It is rejoicing in what God declared to be good and is important because it establishes our relationship to the Source. (James 1:17...every perfect gift comes from God...)
- E.M. Bounds says, "Love is the child of gratitude." How is that true?
- Also note that I Thessalonians 5:8 says, "In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." In tough times, giving thanks is not always easy. But we are commanded to give thanks *in* all things, not *for* all things. We can do this if we know that in our time of trouble "God works all things together for good..." (Rom. 8:28)
- One pastor asked a lady how she was doing and she replied, "I have a terrible headache, but praise the Lord, I have a head to ache!" Is it difficult for you to offer thanks, or do you have this lady's attitude?
- Another writer once thought, "What if tomorrow I only had the things for which I thanked God today?" Thankfully God doesn't work that way!

Psalm 9:1-2; 57:9-11;

1 I WILL give thanks to the LORD with all my heart;

I will tell of all Thy wonders.

2 I will be glad and exult in Thee;

I will sing praise to Thy name, O Most High.

Psalm 57:9-11

9 I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, among the peoples;

I will sing praises to Thee among the nations.

10 For Thy lovingkindness is great to the heavens,

And Thy truth to the clouds.

11 Be exalted above the heavens, O God; *Let Thy glory be* above all the earth.

Psalm 107:1-3

1 OH give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;

For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary,

3 And gathered from the lands,

From the east and from the west,

From the north and from the south.

SEEKING for self and others

Matt. 6:10, 11, 13 and Psalm 5:1-3

Matthew 6:10,11,13

10 'Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
11 'Give us this day our daily bread.
13a 'And do not lead us into temptation, but
deliver us from evil.

PSALM 5

1 GIVE ear to my words, O LORD,
Consider my groaning.
2 Heed the sound of my cry for help,
my King and my God,
For to Thee do I pray.
3 In the morning, O LORD, Thou wilt
hear my voice;
In the morning I will order *my*
prayer to Thee and *eagerly* watch.

- The “S” in ACTS can stand for seeking or supplication. Regardless of the word you use to remember this element of prayer. It means bringing your needs (petition) and the needs of others (intercession) before God.
- Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us to approach the throne of God with boldness or confidence. God wants to hear about our needs, and He wants to answer our requests.
- In scripture we are clearly told to ask (Matt. 7:7) and we are told that we sometimes do not have God’s help because we don’t ask.
- This aspect of prayer is designed to help bring our lives in harmony with God’s will. We don’t just ask for whatever we want (The Daddy Principle). We seek to put our life in line with God’s will while at the same time bringing to Him our most personal feelings and needs. Jesus brings out both of these aspects in the Model Prayer as He says, “thy will be done” as well as “give us...our daily bread.” In these two phrases, He deals with our personal need as well as God’s overall will.

Answers to Prayer:

- _____ (Mark 11:23-24; Matthew 21:22; John 15:7, 16)
- _____ (2 Corinthians 12:7; Matthew 26:39)
- _____ (1 Samuel 1:10, 20)

Public Prayer:

- First, pray for the need _____
- When the Lord gives you a burden to pray, keep that burden. Don’t assume it is for _____.
- With public requests, always ask, “What is the _____ need?”

The theme of scripture is. “Answers will come!”

When we pray for ourselves and others, we need to be specific. Then we need to watch for God’s response. In *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby makes this very good point:

Our problem is that we pray and then never relate anything that happens to our praying. After you pray, the greatest single thing you need to do is to turn on your spiritual concentration. When you pray in a direction, immediately anticipate the activity of God in answer to your prayer. I find this all the way through the Scripture, when God’s people prayed, He responded.

When I pray, I immediately begin to watch for what happens next. I prepare to make adjustments to what begins to happen in my life. When I pray, it never crosses my mind that God is not going to answer. Expect God to answer your prayers, but stick around for the answer. His timing is always right and best. (*Experiencing God Student Workbook*, pg. 92)