

Key Ingredients in Prayer

Years ago I was taught an acronym that spells out the key ingredients of prayer. It is ACTS, which stands for adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. A healthy, vibrant prayer life will involve each of these elements. Let's look at them.

The first key ingredient in prayer is adoration. By adoration I mean a heartfelt love for God expressed in praise for who he is. Too often our prayers are just a machine gun display of repeated requests without any meaningful time given to worship or praise. Psalm 145.3 says, "Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom." When we pray, it is good to take some time to ponder the greatness of God and to praise him for all that he is.

Another key ingredient is confession. Confession involves acknowledging our sins and failures to God and asking for his forgiveness. Psalm 66.18 says, "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Unconfessed sin in our life hinders our communication with God. We cannot expect God to hear and answer our prayers if we are living in known sin. Thus, as Jesus taught us (see Matthew 6.9-13), we should include a time of confession in our prayers, removing any hindrances that would come between God and us.

A third key ingredient in prayer is thanksgiving. Adoration meant praising God for who he is; thanksgiving means thanking God for what he has done. The importance of this is made clear in the Apostle Paul's command to us: "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5.18). It is God's will that we be thankful in all circumstances. This is especially true when we pray. I think we spend so much time asking God for things that we forget to thank him for what he's already done for us.

A final key ingredient is supplication. Supplication is where you actually ask God for things for yourself or for someone else. Jesus said, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7.7-8). I don't know what you need God to do for you today, but pray and God will be faithful to work in your behalf. He has promised to hear and answer our supplications.