

**Thesis:** Effective communication is a key to any healthy relationship. Our relationship with God through Jesus Christ is no exception. He communicates with us through His Word, and we communicate with Him through the avenue of prayer. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus provides a model prayer to emulate. Effective prayers include Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication (ACTS).

**Support:** Genesis 28:10-22

## I. Greeting

- a. Good morning!
- b.

## 2. Introduction

- a. This morning, I'd like you think about that one person you are closest to in the entire world.
  1. Your spouse.
  2. Your girlfriend or boyfriend.
  3. Your brother or sister.
  4. Your Mom or Dad.
  5. Your friend at school.
    - a. Think about that person.
    - b. Do you have him or her in your head.
  - ii. Now, imagine that person not talking to you anymore.
    1. I shouldn't see any husbands smiling.
    2. How would that make you feel?
    3. How long do you think your relationship would last?
  - iii. What if you decided to quit talking to him (or her)?
    1. How would he feel?
    2. How long do you think he would stick around.
  - iv. Here's my point: every successful relationship depends on effective two-way communication.
    1. If one or both of the parties quits communicating, the relationship will break down.
    2. It's inevitable. It will certainly happen.
    3. However, if both parties communicate, and they do it effectively, the sky is the limit for that relationship.
- b. Our relationship with God through Jesus Christ is no exception.
  - i. Its success depends on effective communication.
    1. God speaks to us today through his Word.
      - a. Paul writes in **Romans 10:17**, "17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."
        - i. If you want a deep, and vibrant, and strong relationship with God through Jesus Christ, you have to spend a lot of time in his word.
        - ii. Spending little or no time in his word tells God you're actually not that interested in what he has to say.

- iii. God communicates with us through his word, so read and study your Bibles. When you do so, your faith will be strengthened, and you will grow closer to our God.
- 2. We speak to God through prayer offered in the name of Jesus Christ, our mediator (**I Timothy 2:5**).
  - a. Paul writes in **Colossians 3:17**, “<sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”
  - b. A successful relationship with God also depends on a robust prayer life.
    - i. Prayer is how we communicate with God.
    - ii. That’s why Paul encourages us to “pray without ceasing” (**I Thessalonians 5:17; cf. Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2**).
    - iii. Luke says in **Luke 18:1**, “<sup>1</sup> And he [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.”
  - ii. If you want a meaningful relationship with God through Jesus Christ, you will spend a lot of time:
    - 1. Reading his word, since this is how he communicates with you.
    - 2. Praying, since this is how you communicate with him.
- 3. **This morning, let us spend a few moments discussing the latter point – effective prayer. Let us be like one of the disciples who asked of Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 6:5-15. Here Jesus teaches us how to pray using a model prayer.**
  - <sup>5</sup> "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
  - <sup>7</sup> "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. <sup>9</sup> Pray then like this:
    - "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread, <sup>12</sup> and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
  - <sup>14</sup> For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, <sup>15</sup> but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
- 4. **Before turning to our main points, I have a couple of brief comments on the negative, that is how not to pray.**

- a. First, we are not to pray to be seen by others; prayer is not supposed to be for show (**6:5**).
    - i. It would be wrong for one of us to go to Times Square, raise our arms, throw our head back, and start praying aloud to God.
      - 1. There is a proper time, place, and motive for prayer. Jesus condemns praying for public show.
  - b. Jesus also condemns heaping up empty phrases (NASB, KJV – meaningless or vain repetition; NIV – babbling) (**6:7**).
    - i. Believe it or not, short prayers are effective, since our Father knows what we need even before we ask (**6:8**).
    - ii. In 1932, the Democratic National Convention nominated Franklin D. Roosevelt as its candidate for President.
      - 1. At the convention, Aimee Semple McPherson, a well-known female preacher at the time, offered a “prayer” in which she droned on for 31 minutes and 10 seconds.
      - 2. Will Rogers, the comedian, followed her and quipped, “Well, I didn’t know anybody could think up that much to impress the Lord in favor of a Democrat?”
      - 3. We know from **Matthew 6:5-8** that the Lord wasn’t impressed.
  - c. Prayer is not for show, and we need not heap up word upon word to get the ear of our God.
5. **Instead, using a simple model prayer, Jesus teaches us how we ought to pray. I submit to you four main points in the form of an acronym – ACTS. First: A is for Adoration.**
- a. Jesus starts and ends the model prayer in with adoration.
    - i. **6:9b**, ““Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”
      - 1. These are words of praise and adoration directed towards God, not to Mary or some other “saint,” but to God.
        - a. God is “our Father.” Not only is God the Creator, the Sustainer, the Almighty, the Great God, his is also our Father.
          - i. Paul writes in **Romans 8:14-17**, “<sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”
            - I. Christians are adopted sons and daughters of God, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.
              - a. As such, we can call him our heavenly Father.
  - b. His name, however, remains hallowed; his name is to be treated as holy.

- i. Our heavenly Father is not our homeboy.
        - 1. The Psalmist declares, “Holy and awesome is his name!” (**Psalm 111:9**).
        - 2. The Fourth Commandment states, “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain” (**Exodus 20:7a**).
      - ii. It is true we enjoy a close intimate relationship with God under the New Covenant, but we still must approach him in prayer with a profound sense of awe.
      - iii. His name is holy and must be treated as such.
    - ii. Jesus ends with praise to God **6:13b**, “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen”
      - I. The earlier manuscripts do not include this doxology, yet the words are true.
        - a. The kingdom (the church) is God’s. The Son reigns over it today, but he will turn it over to God the Father at his second coming (**I Corinthians 15:24**).
        - b. As omnipotent, God has unlimited power.
        - c. He is a glorious God and we ought to proclaim his glory.
        - d. All of these things are true, forever.
  - b. A is for Adoration. We ought to adore our God in our prayers.
6. **Second: C is for Confession.**
  - a. **6:12-13**, “<sup>12</sup> and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”
    - i. One of the sad realities of being human is that we will sin.
      - 1. Paul writes in **Romans 3:23**, “<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
        - a. Even as Christians, we all sin and fall short of God’s glory.
        - b. Consequently, we need to confess our sins to God and ask for forgiveness.
      - 2. Luke records an interesting account of a magician named Simon in **Acts 8**.
        - a. **8:13**, “<sup>13</sup> Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.”
          - i. Simon was a Christian, yet he still struggled with things magical.
          - ii. So much so, he wanted to buy the power to pass along the spiritual gifts (**Acts 8:18**).
          - iii. Peter rebuked him saying, “<sup>22</sup> Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you” (**Acts 8:22**).
          - I. Peter told Simon the magician to repent, confess his sin to God, and pray for forgiveness.



3. We know that if Simon the magician sincerely did what he was told, then he was forgiven. John writes in **1 John 1:8-9**, “<sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

a. As Christians, we will sin; however, God will forgive us if we confess them to him and ask for forgiveness.

b. C is for Confession. We ought to confess our sins and ask for forgiveness in our prayers.

## 7. Third: T is for Thanksgiving.

a. Jesus does not specifically address this aspect of our prayers in his model prayer.

i. Yet, the apostle Paul encourages us to be thankful as we pray.

1. He writes in **Colossians 4:2**, “<sup>2</sup> Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

2. Elsewhere he states, “<sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (**Philippians 4:6**).

a. As we talk to God, we ought to remember to thank him for everything he does for us.

i. **James 1:17** says, “<sup>17</sup> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

I. Our unchanging God showers upon us every good gift and every perfect gift we enjoy.

ii. God is the ultimate source for every blessing. An old verse reminds us:

Back of the loaf is the flour,  
And back of the flour the mill;  
And back of the mill is the wheat  
That waveth on yonder hill;  
And back of the hill is the sun  
And the rain and the Father’s will.

iii. We owe our very lives to God. Job says, “<sup>12</sup> You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit” (**Job 10:12**).

I. God gives us life, and love, and he preserves our inner spirit.

iv. God loves us so much the he sent his Son to die on the cross for our sins (**John 3:16**).

v. And in him, God blesses us in with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (**Ephesians 1:3**).

b. Each of us here is incredibly blessed, and we owe everything to God. He is the source for our lives, our families, our material blessings, and our spiritual blessings, and we ought to thank him for these things. T stands for Thanksgiving.

## 8. Fourth: S is for Supplication

- a. A great deal of the model prayer can be understood as supplication. Jesus says in **Matthew 6:10-13**:
- i. <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread, <sup>12</sup> and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
    1. Notice the emphasis in the model prayer.
      - a. Jesus' primary focus is on spiritual concerns.
        - i. He prays for the coming kingdom, the church.
          1. Remember, it had not yet been founded; it did not begin until Acts 2.
        - ii. He prays for God's will to be done, everywhere (on earth as it is in heaven).
        - iii. He instructs us to pray for forgiveness and for deliverance from temptation.
        - iv. Most of the model prayer centers on spiritual concerns.
      - b. However, Jesus also did address physical needs.
        - i. He said, "Give us this day our daily bread."
          1. He didn't say, "Give us this day our daily dessert."
            - a. Our prayers ought to focus on daily needs, not extravagances.
            - b. Paul writes in **1 Timothy 6:8**, "<sup>8</sup> But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content."
    2. Although Jesus didn't address it here, our supplication may also include prayers for others.
      - a. James writes in **James 5:16**, "<sup>16</sup> Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
      - b. Paul adds, "<sup>1</sup> First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people" (**1 Timothy 2:1**).
      - c. We can and should pray for the welfare of others.
  - b. As we address God in prayer, let us remember S is for Supplication. We ought to pray for spiritual matters, physical needs, and the welfare of others.

## 9. Conclusion

- a. Like every other relationship, our relationship with God depends on effective communication.
  - i. God communicates with us through his word, and we ought to spend countless hours in it over a lifetime.
  - ii. We communicate with him through prayer.
    1. God does not expect, nor does he want us to drone on for 31 minutes and 10 seconds like Aimee Semple McPherson.

2. Rather Jesus provides us a model prayer consisting of 65 words including the doxology; it takes about 20 to 25 seconds to read.
  - a. Through its study, we see our prayers should include ACTS.
    - i. Adoration.
    - ii. Confession.
    - iii. Thanksgiving.
    - iv. Supplication.

### 10. Invitation

- a. As powerful as prayer is, and it is powerful, it will not save you.
  - i. Many believe they are saved by praying the so-called “Sinner’s Prayer.”
  - ii. But, this “prayer” is not mentioned, alluded to, or presented anywhere in the Bible.
- b. Instead, we are saved by grace through faith when expressed as obedience to biblical commands:
  - i. Believe in Jesus (**John 3:16**).
  - ii. Repent (**Acts 2:38**).
  - iii. Confess Jesus is Lord (**Romans 10:9-10**).
  - iv. Be baptized (**Mark 16:16**).
  - v. Live righteously (**Revelation 2:10**).
- c. If you’d like to obey the gospel today and become a child of God, we invite you to come forward as we stand and sing.
- d. Let us stand and sing.

