

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”

- JOHN 15:5 NLT

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION:

PRAYER IS A CONVERSATION WITH GOD.

- ***It does not need to be fancy.***
- ***It does not have to be long.***
- ***It does not have to be public.***

WEEK 4

PRAYER

Staying connected to the True Vine is vital for the life and growth of a Christian.

When we get together with friends or family members, it seems really easy to navigate a conversation. Why? Because we know them, they know us, and this is not our first time talking to them. In fact, the more you get to know someone, the easier it is to strike up a conversation. Sometimes people have had such a close relationship with someone else that they seem to pick up right where they left off, even if it has been years since their last conversation.

Prayer is no different. Prayer is simply talking with God. The more you know Him — by reading His love letter for you — the easier it gets.

On a scale of 1 — being no communication, to 10, being constant communication, how is your prayer life?

If you are below a 5, what can you do to better communicate with God?

If you are above a 5, what has helped you in your communication with God?

We are going to look at an easy strategy that will take even the most stale prayer life to the next level. This is called “The A.C.T.S. Strategy”. A.C.T.S. is an acronym for *Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication*. In our time together this week, we will look at how these four simple steps will help you successfully navigate conversation with God. Our hope is that through practice and consistency, this strategy will become second nature.

THE A.C.T.S. STRATEGY

A — ADORATION

To adore God is to worship him for *who* He is and not just *what* He does — *this comes later*. In adoration, you verbalize your worship, praise, honor, and exaltation of God. Worship literally means *worth-ship* — giving something, or in our case, Someone, the glory and dedication deserved. Many of the Psalms can help us to focus on the attributes of God such as His loving kindness, mercy, and majesty. Adoration is an expression of love and trust.

“I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises. 2 I will boast only in the Lord; let all who are helpless take heart. 3 Come, let us tell of the Lord’s greatness; let us exalt his name together.”

[Psalm 34:1-3 NLT]

Have you ever thought about starting your prayers out this way?

Why is this a good first step when praying?

C — CONFESSION

As you begin your prayer by worshipfully adoring God, the Holy Spirit will often reveal any sin in your life that needs to be confessed. To confess means to “agree with.” In other words, you agree with God in regards to your sin — that it is, in fact, sin; you have missed the mark; you are not perfect; Jesus’ death on the cross has paid for that sin; and you are fully forgiven as a result of that perfect sacrifice. This leads you to ask God for forgiveness and thank him for doing so.

“...If we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.” [1 John 1:9 NLT]

Do you think this is a healthy practice? Why or why not?

How does this practice help you see yourself more clearly?

T — THANKSGIVING

Giving thanks to God is an expression of faith and faith pleases God. In saying, “*Thank you!*”, you are expressing your gratefulness and appreciation for what God does. Thanksgiving is also saying, “*God, I trust you!*”. It is the opposite of whining and becoming bitter when things don’t work out the way you want them to. The Bible tells us that God’s will is that we give thanks to Him in all circumstances.

“Always be joyful. 17 Never stop praying. 18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” [1 Thessalonians 5.16-18]

What do these verses tell us about how God wants us to live?

How does this standard of living compare to your current lifestyle?

S — SUPPLICATION

Supplication means entrusting all your needs and desires to God. He is the Creator of the universe, and He wants you to tell Him what’s on your heart, however minor it might seem. Anything that concerns you, concerns God. That includes difficult areas in your personal life or the needs of others.

When you pray, don’t forget that listening to God is just as important as speaking to Him. Listen to Him as the Holy Spirit speaks to you through the Bible or even in the quiet stillness of your heart.

Remember that a clear answer might not come right away or in the way you may expect, but God is always listening and He does respond. The more you pray and spend time with Him in His Word, the more you will get to know who He is and see Him at work.

“Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy.” [John 16:24 NLT]

Why do you think this is positioned last in our prayer time?

How often do you find yourself tempted to start with supplication? Why?

Praying “The A.C.T.S. Strategy” will help you to have healthy, God-honoring conversation with God. It puts the focus on Him and off of you. This can be done every morning, every evening, and sprinkled all throughout your day. A healthy prayer life will help free you from the spiritual rollercoaster you may be riding. Jesus is clear about the importance of staying connected to Him through prayer in John 15:5.

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”

Next week, we will look at generosity. We will focus on how God has been and is generous to us, and how we get the opportunity to be generous to others as an outpouring of Jesus’ work in our lives.