

# **INTRODUCTION TO ACTS PRAYER**

*Prayer practice that helps us move through adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication – based on the Lord's Prayer.*

## **PART 1 – VISION FOR SPIRITUAL PRACTICES**

It is our prayer for Citizens that we would be abiding missionaries — that we would know how dearly loved we are by God and remain (abide) in his love throughout our days. Then, from a place of deep restedness in God's love, that we would be motivated to share the good news of his love in word and deed with our friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

Spiritual practices to help us to do that — to make our home in the love of God. As a church and as a community, we are collectively engaging in several spiritual practices this year. This quarter, we are focusing on Prayer as a practice to help us be with Jesus.

## **PART 2 - PRAYER**

The foundation of our discipleship is being with Jesus. We can do nothing apart from Jesus (John 15) and so we must learn to be with Jesus throughout our days, to make our home in his love. Central to being with Jesus is prayer. That's why Paul invites us to, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). What does that mean? It means to live in a constant state of connection to and awareness of God.

The problem is that we often don't do that. How do we make progress towards this goal? It takes practice. Dallas Willard writes:

"The first and most basic thing we can and must do is to keep God before our minds. This is *the* fundamental secret of caring for our souls. Our part in thus practicing the presence of God is to direct and redirect our minds constantly to Him. In the early time of our 'practicing' we may well be challenged by our burdensome habits of dwelling on things less than God. But these are habits—not the law of gravity—and can be broken. A new, grace-filled habit will replace the former ones as we take intentional steps toward keeping God before us. Soon our minds will return to God as the needle of a compass constantly returns to the north. If God is the great longing of our souls, He will become the pole star of our inward beings."

### **PART 3 - ACTS PRAYER**

One practice that can help "our minds [to] return to God as the needle of a compass constantly returns to the north," is ACTS Prayer. This is a simple tool based on the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6) that offers structure for prayer to shape our thoughts and focus, a path to adhere to when we run into the impulse to stop, and a way to cultivate a balanced prayer life (ex. not exclusively supplication).

Just as our Gospel Identities are rooted in who God is, we want to begin prayer with a similar posture, starting with adoration — acknowledging God's character and his worthiness of worship. He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. From there, we acknowledge how we aren't like him and confess his love for us. We then move towards thanksgiving,

and then end with bringing requests to him. ACTS Prayer is one of many ways to pray that Christians have found helpful for centuries and that we will try out together this month.

- **A**doration
  - Adore God for who He is.
- **C**onfession
  - Confess your neediness and your sin.
  - Confess how dearly loved you are by God.
- **T**hanksgiving
  - Give thanks for the good gifts God has given you and his ultimate gift of Jesus.
- **S**upplication
  - Ask God for your needs and the needs of others.