

Spiritual Disciplines / A.C.T.S. Prayer

- *ACTS Prayer is praying through the pen from a posture of surrender.* It's semi-formatted, which helps those who struggle with filling blank journal pages, yet doesn't constrain those who enjoy journaling. It has proven to be an effective in-between.
- **Surrendering to the word of God:** It begins with writing a simple one or two sentence prayer of surrender. Pray for the passage to be illuminated as well as your heart to be in a posture to receive what God might be saying.
 - Although it's only a quick sound-bite of a prayer, it's valuable in posturing your heart, as well as building a threshold from what you just left. It has proven to be a good "punctuation mark" for me as I ready my heart for the Bible.
- **Reading with a "listening eye."** What I mean is, read your selected passages with an eye for what God is holding out above everything else.
 - All scripture is equally inspired but not all scripture is equally inspiring. This is why Deuteronomy isn't your favorite book.
 - Also, the Holy Spirit will highlight certain portions from time to time and what was powerful for you last reading might not register as powerful this reading - and vice versa.
 - This is where inspiration and illumination (both works of the Holy Spirit) cooperate as you read with a surrendered heart.
- **Praying with a pen:** When finished with your reading for the day, take the time to form 3-4 sentences or bullet points regarding these four categories...
 - **A: Adoration:** How does God reveal who he is in the passage? What are some characteristics and attributes you notice immediately? How is he different from us?
 - Basically, How do you see God in this passage?
 - **C: Confession:** Where do you stand in contrast? You may see yourself in someone in the passage (Pharisee) or notice where someone is different than you.
 - Either by comparison or contrast, where is your fallenness revealed and where do you need to repent?
 - **T: Thanksgiving:** What has God done to remedy your fallenness? How does the life-death-life of Jesus alter your course regarding this place of failure?
 - Simply, how is the gospel good for you in this passage both today and going forward into forever?
 - **S: Supplication:** This word means to passionately beg or ask. What would you like God's Spirit to work *in* you in light of what you've seen/written so far?

- What one thing would you like to see transformed by God's power?
- This format is what we'd call "Story Formed" in that it follows the *throughline* of most stories, especially the storyline of the Bible. For instance, every story has a:
 - Beginning: A storyline is established and the main characters introduced
 - Crisis: The characters find pain and trials they cannot fix on their own.
 - Climax: There is a great reversal, where the characters discover their remedy.
 - Resolution: The character, via remedy, finds self in a place better than the beginning.
- All stories that have worked along the framework above work because they came from the original story. Take for example:
 - Garden: In the beginning, *God and man exist together without trial or strife*.
 - God's characteristics and attributes are on display as his holiness is defined.
 - God is with us, but very different than us.
 - We were created to enjoy him fully as we were given paradise and belonging.
 - In the ACTS method, we'd call this *adoration*. God is on display.
 - Fall: Crisis ensues as *mankind enters a problem without remedy*.
 - Man broke this paradise with a rejection of the grace and gifts.
 - God was not enjoyed fully, nor was he worshiped.
 - Pain, chaos, trial, and even death would permeate man's existence.
 - Mankind's problem would continue as mankind would need help and rescue.
 - In the ACTS method, we'd call this *confession*. Our shortcomings are on display.
 - Redemption: We find climax as *God extends a remedy to helpless mankind*.
 - Rather than God being set-apart and totally different, he'd become mankind in order to rescue mankind.
 - With all of humanity's broken attempts to self-rescue, God himself in Christ would come as the second Adam to reverse what the first Adam fractured.
 - This good news is grace and paradise and belonging given once again.
 - In the ACTS method, we'd call this *thanksgiving*. God's work on display in Jesus.
 - Restoration: As our resolution, *God restores all that is broken, building a new kingdom*.
 - Being collected into a new city and kingdom is belonging and enjoyment that exceeds even the first paradise.

- Until then, we exist here by the power of the Holy Spirit as we look like our rescuer and image a new kingdom to a broken world.
- In the ACTS method, we'd call this *supplication*. The Holy Spirit's work is on display in us.
- So, (1) God is on display, (2) We are on display, (3) God's handiwork in Jesus is on display, and (4) The Holy Spirit's work in us is on display.
- I'd also like to consider a *fifth* rhythm to this method some have found helpful: Extension.
 - This drives the moment into community or even mission. It's direct application that moves this time from a solely vertical one to a moment with horizontal implications.
 - This is helpful if you're in a group that's moving through the same passage. You'll be encouraged to see how a passage, although with a single interpretation, *has a multitude of applications*.

“So, which passages do I read?”

- One of the issues people I find with reading plans is that they find themselves racing to catch up from being behind and eventually fall off feeling shame. Catching up is overwhelming.
 - This is why so many reading plans perish around Deuteronomy or Numbers. It's not that those books are unapproachable, but that folks are behind by this point in the plan.
- (1) Choose a book of the Bible and move at your own pace until you've finished the entire book.
- (2) Go over a select passage the church is preaching that week, or move through whatever material your community group has chosen.
- (3) Choose any reading plan you want. There are tons of free ones online to fit your pace and focus.

<p>(1) Adoration:</p> <p>Q: <i>Who is the <u>God</u> in this passage?</i></p>	<p>(2) Confession:</p> <p>Q: <i>Who are <u>you</u> in this passage?</i></p>
<p>(3) Thanksgiving:</p> <p>Q: <i>What has <u>Jesus</u> done?</i></p>	<p>(4) Supplication:</p> <p>Q: <i>What do you want to ask of the <u>Holy Spirit</u>?</i></p>
<p>(5) Extension:</p> <p>Q: <i><u>Who</u> can you encourage with this today?</i></p>	