

The A.C.T.S. Formula for Prayer

A – Adoration

I love to begin my prayers by thinking about how awesome God is. **I think about God’s all-encompassing love, which to me is the most powerful force imaginable.** I think about the aspects of life that leave me totally in awe – everything from breath-taking natural landscapes to little acts of kindness that feel like divine intervention.

Sometimes I simply repeat the words, “I believe” over and over again. Beginning my prayer time this way helps me gain some perspective; it helps me to recognize just how cool it is that God is with me all the time.

C – Confession

Next I move onto the confessing bit. I openly recognize my shortcomings and my flaws; I think through situations where I could have behaved differently, with more compassion. **It’s important to note that, for me, this isn’t about imposing a major guilt trip or wallowing in shame.** Rather, it’s about acknowledging my lack of perfection; indeed, it’s about letting go of the need or desire to be perfect in the first place.

Confessing my mistakes to God is an opportunity for learning and growth, and a chance to recognize the full power of forgiveness and mercy and love. Experiencing these things personally helps me to show them to others more freely.

T – Thanksgiving

I talk a lot on this blog about the importance of **feeling and expressing gratitude**. **The more regularly I do this, the more joy I experience in life.**

Some of my prayers involve thanksgiving for the biggies – my health, my relationships, the meeting of my basic needs, etc. – while others involve the tiny blessings I usually take for granted – the cheerfulness of a stranger when I’m having a bad day, the beautiful flowers sitting on my table, the fact that I didn’t burn the cookies I made for my boss...you know, stuff like that.

S – Supplication

“Supplication” is a big fancy word that basically just means making a request. **I can make requests on behalf of the world (for things like poverty or the environment or peace), on behalf of others (my mom, my brother, that guy who lives down the street) or on behalf of myself.**

For years I never did that last one, believing that praying for myself was selfish and unacceptable to God. But now I really don’t think that’s the case. I’m trying to be the best person I can be, but of course I need God’s help to make that happen!

As I mentioned above, I don’t think that prayer requires any kind of formula or equation; it can happen anytime, anywhere, in any format. **And yet sometimes a little bit of structure is helpful.** In those cases, using the ACTS method helps me explore the thoughts and ideas bubbling within me, so that I can open myself up to God more fully and completely.