

Lord, Teach Us to Pray-Supplication!

Today we wrap up our series, Lord, Teach Us to Pray. We are using the ACTS model of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and today we wrap up with Supplication. These are the things we ask God for.

A prayer of supplication is not a magic Jennie lamp. It's not a Capitol One Card. It's not the giant piggy bank in the sky.

A prayer of supplication is a humble, earnest request made to God for a specific need or desire. It is the type of prayer we offer when we are asking for help or guidance often arising from a time of urgency. These prayers acknowledge God's power and ability to provide for the request made.

Today we want to explore 8 characteristics of a prayer of supplication.

I. Humble Petition!

It involves asking humbly rather than demanding or claiming.

James 4:10, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

So, James encourages us to be humble before the Lord, but how does this apply to prayer? James was the half-brother of Jesus so let's look at Jesus demonstrating to us what humility looks like in prayer.

Matthew 26:39, "Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

These were Jesus' words in the garden. He brought His request, "may this cup be taken from me." But then He yields His will to God's by saying "not as I will, but as you will."

To go before God in humility with our requests is the example Jesus gave us. Confusion arises with some who feel that their prayer of faith needs to demand to prove their faith that God will answer their prayer.

We all know that God can do anything, He is all powerful. But He is also all knowing and cannot be manipulated by a demonstration of our faith. If He was the power wouldn't be in God's acting, it would be in our belief. Do you see the difference?

In churches that adhere to prosperity theology we find more examples of this demanding type of prayer or claims of results. The problem is that it puts the focus not on God, but on the one praying and that the answer is somehow empowered by the prayer. It's not! No matter how noble that request may be.

Even in the Lord's prayer we see the words, "thy will be done." Our prayer should be aligned with God's will, not ours.

If it isn't, how can we differentiate between a prayer for someone's healing vs. God giving us the winning numbers for the lottery? It would then turn into our negotiating what is a noble prayer vs a selfish prayer, again putting us in the driver's seat determining the value of any given prayer.

Personally, I think it is a lot easier simply to acknowledge that God's will should be done. And again, isn't that the example of Jesus' prayer in the garden?

The second characteristic is:

II. Specific request!

A specific request focuses on a particular need such as strength, healing or guidance.

Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

You'll notice that once the request is made, that the result is not the provision of what was requested, but rather the peace of God. Give me the peace of God over anything any day!

Paul here tells us to bring those requests to God and to do it in every situation. But he does also tell us to do it with thanksgiving. If you remember, last week we discussed the importance of thanksgiving in our prayer because it will help guard our hearts from asking for the things that would lead us away from God or prayers contrary to God's will for our lives.

The third characteristic is:

III. Sense of urgency!

This type of prayer can be more serious or urgent than other forms of prayer, often coming from a place of need.

We all know what this is, a parent or child with a serious illness. It's the kind of need that drives us to our knees in prayer.

Ephesians 6:18, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

The fourth characteristic is:

IV. Recognition of God's power!

The act of simply asking God for something acknowledges His ability to grant that request by the power of His divine authority.

John 14:13-14, "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

The qualifier here is "in my name." We will talk more about this element shortly.

The fifth characteristic is:

V. Pray with faith and persistence!

Believe that your prayer will be heard and answered, and do not give up on praying for your request. Do you remember the story of the persistent widow?

Luke 18:1-5, "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'"

Sometimes part of the journey of faith is demonstrated by you being persistent with God. This is how we should pray for our prodigal children. And maybe, just maybe, while we are praying for our children God is working on you, His child, to deepen your faith.

One time when I was praying for my children God revealed to me that He cares just as much as I do for my children. This blew my mind. My prayer was and is in alignment with His will. That's powerful.

The sixth characteristic is:

VI. Submit to God's will!

While making your request, it is key to also surrender them to God's ultimate will, asking that His will be done. This means that in submission we understand that our request may go unanswered.

James 4:3, "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

Do you want your prayers to be answered? Pray God's will. When we align with Him and His will and that fills our prayers we are now more likely to see fulfilled prayers.

When we look into our own heart and can honestly answer the simple question, "why am I asking this from the Lord?" Then honestly answer that question, it will help us to align our prayers with God's will. Then you enter into powerful prayer with God.

Let me illustrate it like this. When your child comes to you and asks you to have the matches, do you give them to him? Notice I said 'him', it's a boy thing.

No, we won't answer requests from our children that won't be good for them, do we?

Now, imagine your child asking you to make green beans for supper or some other veggie. Parents, will you answer that request? Do you see the difference? This is how our prayers sound to God.

Align your prayers with God's will!

The seventh characteristic is:

VII. Ask boldly!

Once you know you are praying God's will, you can pray with boldness and belief.

Ephesians 3:12, "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."

Once your request is at this point, you can enjoy the confidence that the knowledge of God's will produces. You now know you're praying His will and can in humility remind God that you are praying His will with boldness.

Humility and boldness go hand in hand at this point.

The eighth characteristic is:

VIII. Remember God's faithfulness!

Reflect on what God has done in the past to build faith and confidence in what He can do for you now.

Deuteronomy 7:9, "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments."

Psalms 77:11-12, "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. 12 I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds."

All over Scripture we see God's people reciting God's mighty works when they are faced with a challenge. They did this to remind themselves that God did mighty works in the past. He can do them now; He can do it for me.

When we ask anything, in His will, He will do it. Now, you may say, "Troy, I've been praying for my prodigal for 35 years." First, pray for 36! Second, God won't

force someone else to follow Him because we prayed for it. God has given each one of us free will.

No matter how much we want to make that decision for them, we can't. We can only be an example, be a good one.

I say this because there are many factors in how God responds to our prayers. If you don't see movement on your request, just stay persistent. Ask yourself if you are praying for His will. Then go boldly before His throne.