

ABC of Prayer - Part 1 - A

A is for Adoration

To adore is to love. The dictionary definition is, "To love deeply. To worship as divine."

Although the word 'adoration' does not appear in the KJV of the Bible, what it describes does. This includes falling in adoration out of sheer delight and love. Think of Psalm 27:4 "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple."

"Oh come let us adore him, Christ the Lord," we sing at Christmas. Christ as an infant was adored by shepherds, kings, angels and no doubt by his parents.

With Solomon we can declare: " We rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine. How right they are to adore you" (Song of Songs 1:4)

When we say we adore something - a beautiful scene, an intricate painting, or an item of clothing - we usually mean we admire it along with the detail and beauty that the creator has given to it.

So when we look at the Son of God, let us concentrate on the beauty of his character, his relationship with God, and the details of his care for others. He was created by the Creator of all things and conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Spend time meditating on him and his character, what he has said and done in revealing himself, what he shared with his disciples. Think of him now in heaven - at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us. And sit in his presence and let him love you in return. Love the Lord your God with all our heart, all your soul, all your strength and all your mind (see Matthew 22:37)

Look for the word 'love' in your Bible and then let expressions of his love and yours blend in abandoned worship and adoration.

A is for Aloud

Not all prayer is quiet or silent. Some forms of prayer require us to be wild and enthusiastic. In Psalm 55:17, David says, "At noon, I will pray, and cry aloud." He was in distress and gave full expressions to his emotions. And in Psalm 59:16 (AV) he says, "I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning." God is worth praising. In Psalm 149:5 we are exhorted, "Let the saints rejoice in this honour and sing for joy on their beds. May the Praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands." Again, the AV uses the words "sing aloud".

In his prayer of repentance for his sin, David asks God, "Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness" (Psalm 51:14). And one of the golden oldies of spiritual songs begins, "Clap your hands all you people, shout unto God with a voice of triumph," quoting Psalm 47:1. Deliverance from sin and from the power of the enemy requires us to shout for joy.

Once, when leading a prayer seminar, I encouraged those who had never prayed out loud before to have a go. In one triplet group a lady who had been a Christian for more than 30 years had never been able to pray aloud before, but once she started the others couldn't get a word in edgeways!

So how can we get started on audible prayer? Start on your own, either at home or when out walking - by singing aloud a favourite worship song. And then continue in words of your own making to tell God what you feel about him.

Sometimes when I'm driving alone I pray aloud for the sheer exhilaration of knowing that only God can hear what I'm saying. It doesn't have to be public to be aloud. In fact, praying aloud in public can even be a bit of a show, unless it arises out of a genuine relationship with our Father in heaven, or is appropriate for the occasion - like when trying to pray above the noise of traffic in an open air meeting.

Get used to the sound of your own voice. When reading the Scriptures, read out loud. Do the same when praying. This can even be a remedy for wandering thoughts as well.

Prayer aloud is allowed! You have biblical warranty for praying aloud.

A is for Asking

"Ask and it will be given to you", says Jesus (Luke 11:9). In his upper room ministry, recorded in John 13 -17, six times Jesus invites us to ask God for anything (see John 14:13 and 14, 15:7 and 16, and 16:24 and 26) in his name.

Even in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray, we have the words, "Give us this day our daily bread". God invites us to ask him for things. It is not wrong to ask God for things. In fact, it's encouraged in the Bible and should be seen as a part of normal prayer.

But, sadly, millions of people persevere in a world that revolves around themselves and their own ability. This is surely one of the devil's ploys to keep us from a life of faith. For a life of faith in God implies a willingness to ask him for anything at any time and place.

On the other hand, many people's only experience of prayer is of asking God for things. It's almost as if they make up a 'shopping list' of requests to God, rather like a child writing a list for Father Christmas. But God is our Father, and his desire is that the relationship with us progresses beyond the childhood wants of a toddler or baby. He is looking for a genuine trusting relationship where on one hand we will be able to ask him for anything but not take his grace for granted.

There are certain things that God invites us to ask him for. "Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession" (Psalm 2:8). When did you last do that? The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-19 and Acts 1:8) is also something God wants to be fulfilled. Remembering this, as we pray meaningfully and with faith for what God wants, that our prayers for what we need will be heard in the right context.

What a wonderful God we serve! Let's keep asking of him, while keeping a notebook of prayer requests against which we can write the date as every one is answered.

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