

*32963 Article ~ Prayer*

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### ***I Want What I Want When I Want It!***

Getting our way is the goal we seem programmed to achieve from the moment we enter the world. An infant screams until a willing responder answers the baby's anxious wails. A child, too, can fuss and manipulate its parents in an effort to get what it wants. The so-called "terrible twos" are the predictable phase when our younger members of society struggle to find the appropriate methods to express their desires and work to develop the capacity to compromise on getting them met. This is a trying experience for both parent and child. Just ask any parent of a two year old. Still, all this effort in moderating our desires is perfectly normal and to be expected as children mature toward adulthood.

But sometimes it seems that even as adults we retain a fairly childlike mindset about wanting what we want when we want it. The only difference in adulthood seems to be that we transfer the party we petition to give us what we want from our parents to God.

When we pray to God, are our prayers primarily concerned with what we want to see happen, and how we want God's influence used to achieve our vision? Do we whittle down the range of topics we address to God to just those which relate to meeting our needs? If so, this is an impoverishment of the use of prayer, which has traditionally been said to include at least four important components, which are encoded in the acronym, ACTS: for adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

In other, words, if we prayed to God, following the ACTS pattern, we would first offer praise to our great Creator and constant Provider (adoration.) Then we would acknowledge before the wise and holy One our personal shortcomings and failures and humbly ask forgiveness for these things (confession.) The next phase would be to thank God for the shower of blessings we all experience, even in times of greatest trial (thanksgiving.) And finally, after these three phases of prayer, we would at last ask God to consider our own wishes in addressing our own needs and those of others (supplication.)

The ACTS pattern of prayer is powerful, we think, in teaching us to place our desires and concerns in the most helpful perspective possible. Instead of considering our desires the starting point in every conversation with God, they become the end point – after all the other significant aspects of the relationship we hold with God are addressed first. This pattern of prayer places less emphasis on our asking for things and more emphasis on our appreciating what God has already done. This is also a corrective that recognizes that God, and not we, may know best how to manage the affairs of the world. When we learn that, we can finally give up on the old childhood goal of "I want what I want when I want it," and let God's plans prevail.