

QC Prayer

Simply Pray takes up the counsel of a great spiritual advisor, Dom John Chapman, a Benedictine monk: Pray as you can. Talking to God in whatever words or in whatever way you can is always better than talking to God less often or not talking to God at all.

I would guess that most Christians do not spend nearly enough time talking to God.

Dom John Chapman: Pray as you can.

So, in the cause of 'talk as you can' rather than not talking at all, here is another approach.

QC stands for Quick and Complete. Like most slogans, it's less than completely true. It can be quick—though it need not be. (Would you want all your conversations with God to be quick? Even if you are not these days making much time for God, does that mean you're recommending that as a best-practice policy?) Though QC Prayer can be quick, potentially, you could take all day with it, if you love the Lord that much. As for 'complete'—nonsense. Prayer can never be complete. Do the angels standing round the throne of heaven ever finish their 'Holy, holy, holy'? No. Prayer can't ever be complete, in the sense of 'finished' but it can be complete in the sense of 'rounded', meaning the person who prays—you—tries to speak to God in more than one way, to allow God to speak to you in

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more than one way. QC prayer provides a framework for doing just that, through a formula that may keep you from getting in the rut of one form of prayer while you are developing the habit of continual prayer. You may grow out of it and if you do, good. However until you

grow out of it, maybe it's better to use something like this than to pray less or not to pray at all.

QC prayer starts from an old mnemonic: ACTS. Some of us were taught this when we were young, rolled our eyes—but never forgot it. ACTS stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication (supplication includes both prayer for oneself and prayer for others), The acronym, or mnemonic, reminds us of different ways we can, or should, talk to God: we acknowledge the Persons of the Trinity for all that they are, in the spirit of adoration; we acknowledge the ways we have fallen short in love of God and neighbour, in confession; we acknowledge the blessings God has given us and others, with thanksgiving; and we acknowledge our needs and the needs of the world, aligning ourselves with the divine good intended for all creatures, in petition and intercession.

But ACTS leaves out one important way that Christians can pray: by listening. So I would make ACTS into ACTSS—which isn't as great, as acronyms go. The extra S is for silence, which is an essential part of Christian prayer. Imagine you had a personal relationship with someone, a relative, a friend, a neighbour, a colleague. Now imagine that your conversations with this person consisted of nothing but you talking the whole time. (If you

don't see anything problematic there, imagine if the other person did all the talking.) A real relationship includes listening as well as talking. Prayer is a relationship with God; therefore prayer includes listening as well as speaking.

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So what does QC add to ACTS, aside from the extra S? The idea is to use the five major, forms of prayer (ACTSS) but in a rapid, one-after-the-other fashion. Suppose I've got a few

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minutes to kill (that's an interesting metaphor, incidentally: time is God's gift to us, to make use of or to waste, so not really something we want to squander). Maybe I'm caught, bound for a moment not of my choosing: in a queue, in a waiting room, in traffic, in some

interminable, pointless meeting. Suppose I redeem this otherwise wasted time by praying? What might I do?

Try QC prayer.

Adoration: offer one short prayer of praise: 'I adore you, Holy Trinity, abyss of love'; or 'Jesus, well of tenderness, I praise you for your endless compassion'. Then offer one short prayer of Confession: cast your mind back

quickly over your day so far and name one thing you know you thought or did was less than holy since you woke up this morning, asking your heavenly Father's forgiveness.

Thanksgiving: give thanks for for one divine gift, right now, in your life, in someone else's life or in the world: maybe something ephemeral, like fine weather, maybe something more enduring, like the support of a friend or the fact that a once-troubled country or region is starting to rejuvenate. Supplication: make one request for yourself or for another; try to remember, at least sometimes, those who are not of your own family, community or ethnicity. Finally, silence: be quiet for a moment, listening for God. If that seems daunting, you might try a breathing exercise: breathe in, inviting the Father more deeply into your life for four counts; hold your breath for seven counts, inviting Jesus to teach you perseverance in grace; breathe out for eight counts, releasing yourself into the power of the Spirit.

QC prayer is a place to start that is easy to reach for at any moment. Try it!

You could close by simply saying Amen—but in that case, try to focus on what Amen means: 'so be it' or 'your will be done'. Never say Amen on autopilot: it means, 'I desire what you desire, Lord'. Don't say Amen unless you mean that: you pledge yourself to join

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in God's desire, whatever that is, knowing that God desires only blessing for all his children. Or you could close with the Gloria Patri, 'Glory be to the

Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and always shall be'.

QC Prayer may strike you as formulaic, even glib, but unless you have already acquired the habit of continual prayer, it is a place to start that is easy to reach for at any moment. Try it!