

Confession

Lesson 02 of the series, "Teach us to pray."

I. It is good to have a balanced, authentic prayer life.

- Adoration - paying honor, expressing fervent and devoted love.
- Confession - acknowledging sinfulness, admitting guilt.
- Thanksgiving - expressing gratitude.
- Supplication - asking for something earnestly and humbly.

II. Confession is a vital part of authentic prayer.

"Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and *forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.*" Matthew 6:9-12 (NLT)

a. Confession means acknowledging our sins to God.

"Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat... Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, 'I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.' And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone." Psalm 32:1-5 (NLT)

"If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."

1 John 1:8-9 (NLT)

b. Confession restores our relationship with God.

"The LORD is merciful and gracious; he is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He has not punished us for all our sins, nor does he deal with us as we deserve. For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth... The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. For he understands how weak we are; he knows we are only dust."

Psalm 103:8-14 (NLT)

Note: We should NEVER be afraid to confess our sins to God. "So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, 'Abba, Father'. For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children." Romans 8:15-16 (NLT)

c. God will show us what we need to confess if we are willing to listen.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT)

- God will convict us of sin through the Bible. "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right." 2 Timothy 3:16 (NLT)

- God will convict us of sin through others. "Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! If they correct me, it is soothing medicine. Don't let me refuse it." Psalm 141:5 (NLT)

- God will convict us of sin through consequences. "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."

Galatians 6:7-8 (NIV)

- God will convict us of sin through the Holy Spirit. "So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions." Galatians 5:16-17 (NLT)

Note: Conviction gives us hope. Condemnation makes us hopeless. “So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1 (NLT)

III. Four helpful practices regarding confession:

- a. We should confess our sins to God as soon as we realize them. (Ephesians 4:26-27)
- b. At least once each day we should ask God to reveal any sinful thoughts, actions or habits that have interfered with our relationship with Him. (Psalm 139:23-24)
- c. We should develop relationships with a few other Christians whom we trust enough to be able to confess our sins and ask for prayer. (James 5:16)
- d. We should periodically examine ourselves by prayerfully reviewing a checklist of common sins. (2 Corinthians 13:5)

IV. We must forgive others just as Christ has forgiven us.

“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.” Matthew 6:14-15 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

1. Why is “confession good for the soul”?
2. In your opinion, why do people struggle admitting when they are wrong? How does that impact relationships?
3. Read Romans 6:1-18. We all struggle with sin in our lives. What are some of the points Paul is trying to say about the power of sin in our life?
4. Read James 5:16. Have you ever confessed your sins to someone else? How did it impact your faith journey? What keeps us from admitting our faults even to people we trust? Is it pride or fear?
5. Read Ephesians 4:17-32. What jumps out at you in this passage? Why would the way we treat each other offend the Holy Spirit?
6. Have you ever considered why God ties our giving of forgiveness to others to the forgiveness He gives us? Read Matthew 6:14-15. Why do you believe that God is offended when we don't forgive others?
7. When you think about forgiving others, who comes to mind? Why have you withheld forgiveness? What do you believe God wants you to do this week about this person?
8. Pray Psalm 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.”

Confession Checklist

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.” Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT)

“Test yourselves to make sure you are solid in the faith. Don't drift along taking everything for granted. Give yourselves regular checkups. You need firsthand evidence, not mere hearsay, that Jesus Christ is in you. Test it out. If you fail the test, do something about it.” 2 Corinthians 13:5 (MSG)

Sins that keep me from growing in my relationship with God:

Ingratitude, neglect of Bible reading, neglect of prayer, unbelief, etc.

Sins that hurt my relationships with others:

Gossip, jealousy, lying, neglect of family, holding grudges, uncontrolled anger, criticism, etc.

Sins against purity:

Lust, premarital sex, adultery, pornography, dirty jokes/books/websites/movies/videos, etc.

Other sins:

Pride, materialism, greed, hypocrisy, cheating, worry, drunkenness, illegal drug use, gluttony, etc.