

Lenten Prayer Guide - 2022

Week 5 - Confession and Forgiveness

The central theme of the Christian faith is, we are sinners saved by God's grace. The central verse for so many people is,

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
John 3:16

The key message of the Gospels is that Jesus came to save the world from the guilt of their sin. We were dead in our sins and yet God still loved us enough to forgive us:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.
Ephesians 2:1-2

Yes indeed, before God acted upon our lives, we were dead to Him. We did not know Him. But the nature of God is love. God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). God wants to deal with our sin, remove it far from us and from Him. God's purpose in Christ is to restore the relationship that was lost through the sin of unbelief and disobedience. Our participation in this is to recognize our sinful nature and come to repentance. Sinners, by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, come to the realization of their need to repent, turn away from sin, and turn back to God.

This week our focus will be on our need and our willingness to repent and receive forgiveness. We will also learn that we have an obligation to others to ask for their forgiveness and to forgive them when necessary.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.
John 3:17

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Colossians 3:13

This week's breath prayer:

Lord, I will forgive and you forgave.

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Day 1 - He is Faithful to Forgive

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9

As you first entered into a relationship with God, when you first believed, you, like many others, were confronted with your own sense of sinfulness as compared with God's holiness. The sense of having been lost and now being found would have brought you to confront the sin in your life and to lead you to repentance.

As you grew in faith you were able to acknowledge those areas in your life that needed divine intervention. Maybe you thought some of your sins would be unforgiveable. Some sins you may have tried to hide from God. This is all the work of your enemy the devil. He wants to keep you from a relationship with God. He shames you by telling you your sins are unforgiveable. Don't believe the lie.

When you believe that your sins cannot be forgiven and you hide from God, or you mask your guilt with excuses, you are saying you cannot trust God with this sin. You believe this particular sin is too big or too bad for God to ever forgive you. How sad is that? God loves you. God wants to work with you to bring you to holiness. God wants to forgive **all** your sins and redeem you from them all.

Confess all your sins to Him:

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from **all** unrighteousness.*

1 John 1:9

So be open, truthful and honest with God. Confess and repent.

Throughout today reflect on the fact that God chooses not to remember any of your sins!

Lord, I confess that while you know all my sins, you desire to have me lay them before you, and I often choose not to. Help me to move beyond those things that hold me back from sharing all of my truth with you as you constantly share your truth of love, hope, grace, and forgiveness with me. Amen.

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Day 2 – Forgive Others as You Have Been Forgiven

How grateful are you that God has completely forgiven all your sins, every one of them? How does this reflect in you forgiving others? Do you remember the wrongs done to you? Do you harbour a long-held grudge or resentment against someone for some offence? All this is unforgiveness, something the Christian must work to correct.

In the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4) the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. In that prayer we read the words,

"...forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us."

Do you? Do you forgive easily? It is something we all need to work on.

You owe God a debt of gratitude for His forgiveness towards you. You, then, need to be forgiving others freely and quickly. And more than once if necessary.

The disciples asked Jesus how often a person should be forgiven.

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times Matthew 18:21-22"

Jesus says, in effect, our forgiving of others should be unlimited. The debt we owe to God for His forgiveness should be paid back in kind. As God has forgiven you, pass on that forgiveness to others.

Is there someone in your life or memory who has not been forgiven from your heart? Even if it is no longer possible to speak to that person, go before God today and offer Him your forgiveness of them.

Throughout the day today be ready to forgive and move on. Don't burden yourself with the unnecessary weight of unforgiveness in your heart.

Lord, bring to my mind today any unforgiveness that remains in my heart. Give me the grace to forgive. Amen.

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Day 3 – Why Did Jesus Come to Earth?

*“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”
(Luke 5:32).*

In a single statement Jesus outlines His purpose on earth. He came to call you, a sinner, to repentance. Why?

Your sin creates a separation between you and God. God is holy, God is purity, no unholiness can enter into God’s holy presence. Unless we have been cleansed from our sin and unrighteousness, we cannot enter God’s presence. Sin creates a barrier. And we are powerless to lift the barrier. But God, in His infinite goodness and love for all His creation, especially you, has lifted the barrier, removed the block, opened the way for you to re-enter His holy presence.

As you consider this today, abide a few minutes with the Lord, and dwell on this thought...God has removed all the barriers, removed all my sins, shown His love for me by coming to die for my sins and opened the gates of heaven to allow me to enter. God has already given me eternal life. I can begin living the Kingdom life right now. Freed from guilt and all my sins paid for by Jesus. I am free indeed! Dwell on this truth.

Today, go out with a bounce in your step! Feel the freedom you have in Christ. Live life joyfully today. If you have repented of your sins, then Jesus’ work has been completed in you.

If you have repented of your sins and turned your life over to Christ’s control then you are free, indeed.

*“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”
John 8:36*

Remember what God has done with your sins:

*...as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our
transgressions from us.
Psalm 103:12*

Lord, let my life today reflect the glorious freedom I have in Christ. Amen.

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Day 4 – All Heaven Rejoices

In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Luke 15:10

When you have confessed your sins to God and have received full forgiveness and are reconciled with God – heaven celebrates.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) Jesus illustrates the forgiving nature of the father – a reflection of our Heavenly Father. As soon as the father sees the son approaching “*from a long way off*” (v. 20), the father runs to him. Jesus was telling us that as soon as we come to our senses and turn back to God with a repentant heart, He too runs to receive us. This is just God’s nature to welcome back any sinner who repents and wants to come back into relationship with Him.

Just as in the parable the father throws a party to celebrate the sons return so too, Jesus says, there was a celebration in heaven when you repented and turned back to God. Imagine what the celebration will be like when you finally reach home!

Rejoice today that your sins have been forgiven. Rejoice that your name is written in heaven (Luke 10:20).

I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Luke 15:7

God has forgiven your sins through Christ’s atonement on your behalf. He will not remember your sins.

*‘For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.
Jeremiah 31:33-34*

Lord, let this day be a day I rejoice in my salvation. May my heart be filled with rejoicing. Amen.

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Day 5 – The Fruit of Repentance

*Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.
Matthew 3:8*

Before Jesus entered the scene in first century Palestine, John the Baptist was preaching a message of repentance. John was calling all who would listen to come to repentance and be baptized.

John expected the people who came forward to be the kinds of people who really understood what they were doing. He was expecting people with sincere hearts who wanted to be right with God. He found that the Pharisees also came forward.

The Pharisees were hypocrites. They placed burdens of laws upon the ordinary people. They hindered them in their search for truth (Luke 11). John rebuked them, calling them a “brood of vipers”! Jesus, too, rebuked them often.

People who come forward with a show of repentance but whose hearts are far from God are fooling themselves. God wants all to repent but repentance must be sincere.

*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
2 Peter 3:9*

If our repentance is sincere, it will be reflected in our lives. We will live lives that show we are repentant and forgiven.

*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.
Acts 3:19*

Be sincere in your repentance today. Do not take this lightly. We are repenting to a Holy God who knows our hearts.

Lord, bring to my mind, today, those areas of my life that are in need of repentance. Amen.

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Day 6 – Need Help?

Sin is a trap. Sometimes a person can be so trapped in a habitual sin that there seems no way out. This where our Christian fellowship is supposed to help. We are not alone in this struggle against the world the flesh and the devil. All three conspire against our spirit to keep us in sin and out of relationship with our loving heavenly father.

The prodigal's story tells it (Luke 15). The young man stayed in his sin until he had nowhere else to go. Then he "*came to his senses*" and returned to his father. Have you come to your senses but still cannot free yourself?

You are not alone. The Christian fellowship is there for you to draw upon for help. Ask someone you trust to pray with you. You do not need to give all the details – we all have the same kinds of struggles. But ask a trusted brother or sister in the Lord to come alongside you in prayer to overcome the sin you struggle with. The Holy Spirit is with you in the struggle – draw on His presence in your heart to confess and repent. Each day can be a struggle against some sins. This is where the battle is being fought in all our lives.

Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

James 5:16

We are all subject to the same temptations. We are all subject to temptation.

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it

1 Corinthians 10:13

As you enter this day, pray to be strong in the face of temptation.

Lord, with temptation all around me today, I need your help and strength to resist and stay firm. Amen.

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Day 7 – How Does God Deal With Sin?

The sin of the world has been dealt with once for all at Calvary. All sin, once confessed with a sincere, truly repentant heart, is taken to the cross and eliminated.

Here are some texts to focus on today. If you remain burdened by past sin or if you have yet to repent of a particular sin, these verses should prompt you to be open and honest with God.

*“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; **though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.***

Isaiah 1:18

*Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; **you have put all my sins behind your back.***

Isaiah 38:17

I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.”

Isaiah 44:22

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Hide your face from my sins and **blot out all my iniquity.***

Psalms 51:1,9

*You will again have compassion on us; **you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.***

Micah 7:19

Meditate on these verses, God has taken away your sin and buried them. He does not remember them – nor should you.

Lord, when Satan brings a past, confessed sin, back to my memory again, give me the strength to rebuke him and the thought. Remind me again that my sins are forgiven – trampled underfoot, buried in the depths of the sea. Amen.