

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

Can we pray wrongly? Absolutely! That is the point of Jesus' parable about the publican and the pharisee (Luke 18:9-14). The pharisee prayed a prayer of self-righteousness (Luke 18:9, 11-12), while the publican noted his unworthiness and asked for God's mercy (Luke 10:13). It is important that we humbly come before God and ask for His mercy (Luke 10:14). We have all sinned (Romans 3:10, 23) and need to repent of our sins (Acts 17:30b).

The Lord wishes for us to recognize our sinful nature and repent and turn from our sins. We see examples of believers confessing their sin throughout the scriptures (Psalm 32; 51; Jonah 2). Any sin we commit hinders our relationship with the Lord, so we find ourselves returning to Him and confessing sin quickly (1 John 1:9) as we would to mend a relationship with our spouse, sibling, or friend.

Recognize that God knows. As we pray, we recognize that God knows everything about us (Psalm 139:1-6). This can be comforting as we note that He still loves us (Psalm 139:17). So, we periodically want to pause and ask Him to identify sin in our lives (Psalm 139:23-24). He will do it. Perhaps this is why we stay so busy at times. We know God will confront us about our sins by bringing them to our remembrance when we pause. As we pause, we recall unholy thoughts, or the way we have mistreated others—sins we need to confess.

Specifically acknowledge and confess sins. After identifying our sin, we should specifically acknowledge and confess these sins to the Lord (Psalm 32:3, 5; 51:3), and recognize evil done is against God (Psalm 51:4, 17; Proverbs 28:13; 2 Corinthians 7:10). We cannot move on until we have done this. When we have sinned against others, it is important to make restitution whenever possible to truly address the sin (Matthew 5:23-24).

Repent. Pray and repent (Acts 3:19) of our sins and seek God's mercy (Psalm 51:1-2; 7-9). Scripture (and life) is filled with people "repenting" who weren't really repenting. Saul's comments to Samuel in 1 Samuel 15:24-30 *sound* like repentance, but they were not. It appears Saul was more like those who express sorrow for their sins only because they "get caught" or experience consequences. Genuine repentance results in *forsaking* sins (Ezekiel 18:30b; 36:31) like the Prodigal Son, who rejected his old lifestyle (Luke 15:21). We cease the sinful behaviors of our past.

Embrace God's forgiveness (Romans 6:23) and transformation (Psalm 51:12-13). Heartfelt prayers of confession allow us to bask in the gracious gift of forgiveness imparted to us through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23). It also allows us to enjoy the fruit of forgiveness as the Lord transforms us into a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). It is good to pray for this as David did, asking that our joy in the Lord would be restored (Psalm 51:12). Then, we should "go on offense," so to speak, helping others by pointing them toward Christ and away from sin (Psalm 51:13).

We encourage you to look at the many prayers of confession by believers found in Scripture and pray them as your own. Here are a few suggestions:

- + Psalm 32; 51
- + Jonah 2:1-8
- + Job 40:4-5; 42:2-6
- + Nehemiah 1:5-11
- + Daniel 9:1-19

JEREMIAH 29
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