

Why Prayer?

Praying Forgiveness & Confession Daily



[Jesus said,] *“When you pray... pray like this: Our Father in heaven... Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.”* MATTHEW 6:9A,11-12

When I pray, confession and forgiveness are not areas of prayer that I spend much time on. Sure, if there’s something big going on that is impacting my daily life, I might spend some time in prayer asking God to forgive me or help me forgive... but even then, it’s often just easier to push it aside for another day. My prayers usually consist of some variation of *Dear God, I love you, thank you for loving me. Thank you for your promises. Please help me, help her, help him...*

While those are all important things to be praying for every day, I’m realizing that I rarely take the time to unburden myself of the small trespasses of the day, both my own and those that may have been done to me. My spouse is late. My sister hasn’t called. Again. I snapped. I judged. I argued. In and of themselves, each of these seems a minor issue, not really worth losing sleep over. Or if it’s something big, it’s just easier to ignore it and pretend it’s not there. Until the weight of the infractions builds and builds. Can you relate?

The Bible tells us that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us and make us clean (1 John 1:9). It also tells us that as God forgives us, so we are called to forgive others (Ephesians 4:32) and that if we confess our sins and pray for each other we will be healed (James 5:16). So, why aren’t we making confession and forgiveness a part of daily prayer?

Christian writer, Lysa Terkeurst, said, “When Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew chapter 6... [Approximately 25%] of that prayer [is] around confession and forgiveness. And... it’s supposed to be a daily prayer... [Yet] confession is kind of a lost art and most of us aren’t forgiving every single day. So I started to realize [that] forgiveness is not just for the big epic things of life, it’s actually supposed to be part of our prayers every single day. When God’s forgiveness flows to us, but we don’t allow it to flow *through* us, I really believe *that* [leads to] the emotional weight of depression and anxiety that so many of us are carrying around. [This is] because we have hearts that we’re not sweeping clean with all the hurts and offenses that happen to us every day.”¹

“More and more scientists document the healing power of forgiveness... and the mentally and physically corrosive effects of not forgiving... Forgiveness, in other words, is the best form of self interest, both scientifically and spiritually.”²

Putting It into Practice

Practicing Confession and Forgiveness in your prayers:¹

1. “Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas in your life—any thought, any deed, any way—that you’ve [fallen short of what] God wanted you to do. [Write down anything the Spirit brings to mind.] Don’t rush this. Allow God to speak to you, about you.”
2. Do the same for any offenses against you that you’re holding onto.
3. “Thank God for Christ’s death and resurrection, which provided the way for our forgiveness” and the forgiveness of others.”
4. Ask for God’s help to forgive and let go of any wrongdoing against you.

Taking It Further

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

Listening for God: The **Daily Examen**² is an ancient spiritual practice in which you review the day to connect with and hear from God in reflective prayer. “It invites us to find the movement of God in all the people and events of our day. The Examen is simply a set of introspective prompts for you to follow or adapt to your own character and spirit.”

1. “Begin with a pause and a slow, deep breath or two; invite the presence of the Holy” Spirit into your reflective prayer. Ask for the wisdom to see yourself clearly as God sees you.”
2. Reflect: What am I thankful for this past day? Where did I find joy? Where was I troubled or challenged? Where did I fall short? What am I holding onto that God may want me to let go of? Who do I need to make amends with or forgive?
3. Where did I notice God’s presence in my day?
4. Going into tomorrow, what state of mind do I want to bring into my day? Ask God to help with this.

1. Lysa Terkeurst in conversation with Cary Nieuwhof: Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast Episode 327, March 12, 2020.

2. Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu, *The Book of Forgiving* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 16-17.

3. This practice adapted from and quotes from <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/prayer/what-is-a-confession-prayer.html>.

4. Adapted from and quotes from <https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/jesuit-a-z/terms-e/daily-examen>.