

How should we pray? (Part 3)

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Introduction: Our knowledge of God will lead us to understand prayer.

- A. Fundamental to all prayer is for us to see our need of God.
 - 1. There is a humility and urgency that comes with this. **(Jer 29:12-13)**
 - 2. Why do we drift from such a view of God and our real needs?
 - 3. Some actually stopped asking God for help! **(James 4:2)**
- B. What is necessary to have the privilege of prayer?
 - 1. We must have a heart committed to righteousness and learning. **(Ps 91:14-15)**
 - 2. What happens when we treat prayer like a formula?
 - 3. What happens when we approach God with untouched hearts and untouched lives?

I. What is confession of sin?

- A. **Confession** - ὁμολογέω - from a basic meaning say the same thing; (2) as confessing that something is true admit, agree (3) in judicial matters make a binding statement, confess, bear witness (AC 24.14); as making a public acknowledgment of allegiance confess, declare, acknowledge (JN 9.22); ...
 - 1. We are to confess all sin to God in prayer. **(Acts 8:22-23)**
 - 2. This confession is an ongoing practice for an ongoing forgiveness. **(1 Jn 1:9)**
 - 3. We are confessing (admitting or agreeing) with God as to what He has said about sin and admitting what we have done.
 - 4. Today men are divorcing their minds from rational thinking. Many simply | proclaim whatever they do as right! **(Deut 12:8; Prov 16:2)**
- B. What kind of heart will give an acceptable confession?
 - 1. How do we view God? How do we view our own sin?
 - 2. Have you ever had your child quickly say "sorry" just to stop your instruction?
 - 3. The reason we struggle in prayer is that we have lost sight of God.
 - 4. We are to mourn over our sin. Mourn (pentheo) means "to bewail, lament, mourn for." **(Mt 5:3-4; Lk 6:21)**
 - 5. Let each of us look into our hearts right now. Are we here because of a deep gratitude for the sins God has forgiven us? **(Joel 2:12-13)**
 - 6. This mourning will always lead to repentance. **(2 Cor 7:10)**

II. How should we confess our sins?

- A. We should tell God what He already knows! **(Heb 4:13)**
 - 1. We are tempted to water down the seriousness of our sin. We need to humbly admit to God what we have done and then be touched by His mercy!
 - 2. Our hearts will be destroyed when we lose this tenderness. **(Mt 23:27; Jn 5:42)**
- B. Be specific about your sin because God wants us to come clean.

1. There is a big difference in what and when I am to confess to God and what and when I am to confess sin to a man or men.
2. What is the purpose of a general confession?
3. Does this communicate anything that we did not already know? Ex. "If I have offended anyone" or "I was wrong, I have sinned." What have you actually done?
4. If I am to pray for you in a struggle with sin, what should I pray about for you? **(James 5:16)**

C. Confession should be both painful and cleansing.

1. We should never fear the response of our God to a genuine confession.
2. David poured out a broken heart to God from which God restored his heart to one of joy. **(Psa 51:2-4, 12)**

"A religion that is coldly ritualistic, that does not feel and mourn, is not the religion of Christ." - Joe Corley

III. Consider these Bible examples of confession in prayer.

A. David's prayer for forgiveness. **(Psa 32:1-2)**

1. This gives instruction on the nature of God and the kind of heart we bring.
2. When confession is delayed and we are mindful of God, it is like broken bones and an oppressive burden. Why would we delay? (Ps 32:3-5)

B. The confession of the publican. **(Luke 18:13)**

1. What does his posture in prayer indicate?
2. Which prayer glorified God?

C. Ezra's prayer for Israel. **(Ezra 9:6-7)**

1. In many churches there is a lack of openness and honesty because we have failed to deal with sin as God would have us. Would Ezra be welcomed here?
2. Because we may understand some doctrinal issues does not mean that we have a pure heart!
3. Ezra knew the character of God and his confession expressed confidence in God! **(Ezra 9:9-10, 13-15)**
4. The prime work of this church is this! Let us open our hearts! **(2 Cor 7:2)**

D. Nehemiah's prayer for Israel. **(Neh 9:1)**

1. We need to watch out when you see one about to lead prayer in sackcloth!
2. The confession was personal, specific and full of mourning. **(Neh 9:32-37)**
3. Notice how the character of God was emphasized throughout this prayer! God "keeps covenant," He is "just" and He has "dealt faithfully."
4. I believe some of my brethren would be embarrassed at this prayer. "Oh we are not that bad!" "He is just too emotional!" "Sure we have sinned, but..."
5. Where do we find the strength to grow and to live in suffering? **(2 Pt 1:9)**

Conclusion: May we learn to mourn and confess our sins to a faithful God!