

Prayer

I. Review of Previous Teaching on Prayer

A. Prayer Quotes

1. How often have we prayed something like, “O Lord, be with cousin Billy now in a special way?” Have we stopped to consider what it is we're requesting? Imagine that you are a parent who is preparing to leave your children with a babysitter. Would you dream of saying, “O Betsy, I ask you now that you would be with my children in a special way?” Of course you wouldn't do that. You would say, “Betsy, the kids need to be in bed by 9 pm. They can have one snack before their baths, and please make sure they finish their homework. You can reach us at this number if there's any problem. Any questions before we go?” We are very specific with our requests and instructions for our babysitters because we want them to know specifics. It should be no different with prayer. (David Jeremiah)
2. Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire? (Corrie Ten Boom)
3. Those who know God the best are the richest and most powerful in prayer. Little acquaintance with God, along with strangeness and coldness to Him, make prayer a rare and feeble thing. (E. M. Bounds)
4. It is not enough to begin to pray, nor to pray aright; nor is it enough to continue for a time to pray; but we must patiently, believingly, continue in prayer until we obtain an answer. (George Müller)

B. As we continue our study of prayer, I want to remind you that we are currently looking at prayer in relation to praying for ourselves. In an effort to provide direction in praying for ourselves, we have looked at:

1. Help me Prayers,
2. Teach me Prayers,
3. Proactive and Preparatory Prayers

C. Today we are going to look at Corrective Prayers and Confession Prayers.

D. Pray

II. A Look At Praying for Ourselves

A. **Corrective Prayers** – have to do with talking to God about the things we are aware of that need changing through God's prescribed process of removing them and replacing them with godly thinking, godly desires, godly habits, godly communication, and godly behavior. And most often, the removal of entrenched sin requires going further in dying to self.

1. We start down the path of corrective prayers when we honestly acknowledge to God where we are in the spiritual growth process in regard to a particular weakness, unholy habit, or outright sin. So let me give you four examples of where you might be in the process of spiritual growth.
 - a. You may know the truth but have not yet begun taking the necessary steps to apply the truth you know.
 - b. You may have begun applying the truth you know, but not in a way that is equal to the need so that your efforts are unproductive.
 - c. Or, you have just recently begun applying the truth you know – which means you are at the beginning of the change process and probably struggling to keep on track.
 - d. Or you might have made great progress over a period of time, but are currently falling back in to old ways.
 - e. So why is honestly talking to God about where you are in the process of change an important part of corrective prayers? Because denying reality or altering reality prevents you from dealing with the real issue – which in turn keeps you from praying and doing what needs prayed and done to make commendable progress.
2. Corrective prayers include reviewing with God what He says you ought to be in a particular area. Knowing scripture is important for this part of corrective prayers. If you don't know what God says about a particular weakness or sin in your life, then start with Nave's Topical Bible and let it point you to pertinent scriptures concerning what you ought to become as a Christian. If you cannot find help in Nave's, ask your pastor or Bible Study group for help. But the point here is – know the word of God sufficiently in the area you are praying about to review with God what He says about it.
3. Corrective prayers ought to include what you would like to become in relation to the weakness or sin you are wanting to correct.
 - a. Though you may know what God says about your sin, you may still be unwilling, or at best grudgingly willing to submit to what God wants. Talk to God about that in relation to what you would like to be.
 - b. Or, you may be ready to willingly submit, but not to the furthest extent of spiritual growth possible in this life. In other words, you may agree with God that a change needs to take place and agree with God's word as to what that change must be, but you still want to cling to a bit of your old fleshly ways or worldly attractions. Tell God this, as honestly as you can. And I am urging this

because no sincere Christian can tell God, day after day, that he wants to change, but not too much, without being convicted of holding back in the change process. And if you let conviction have its intended result, it won't be long before you are wanting, from your heart, to go the distance with God on this issue.

- c. Of course, some truly do want to go the distance in putting off the old and putting on the new. If this is true for you, affirm this with God whenever you pray about a matter you are wanting to change. The reason to affirm this with God is that each time you tell Him you want to go as far as humanely possible, you affirm your love for Him and you strengthen your own commitment to press on to the end.
4. Corrective prayers naturally lead to Help Me prayers and Teach Me prayers.
5. **Spirit Of God, Descend Upon My Heart** (George Croly, 1780-1860)

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth, through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
No sudden rending of the veil of clay,
No angel visitant, no opening skies;
But take the dimness of my soul away.

Hast Thou not bid us love Thee, God and King?
All, all thine own, soul, heart and strength and mind;
I see Thy cross there teach my heart to cling:
O let me seek Thee, and O let me find.

Teach me to feel that Thou art always nigh;
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.

Teach me to love Thee as Thine angels love,
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The baptism of the heav'n-descended Dove,
My heart an altar, and Thy love the flame.

6. One last thought on Corrective Prayers – your honesty with God will nurture a deep inward longing to be holy – as God is holy – and that longing for holiness, along with your honesty with God will, over time, nurture an intimacy with God that will open the door to sweet fellowship and communion with Him. In other words, when you are intimately sharing the truth about yourself with God in a serious pursuit of holiness, it will produce the kind of thinking and behavior that draws you nearer and nearer to God. And as you draw nearer to God, He draws nearer to you – so that it isn't all that long before you feel close to God and you feel His closeness to you. And once that happens, you are at the door of Fellowship Prayers.

B. **Confession Prayers** – have to do with making things right between God and yourself after you have sinned. In essence, confession prayers are the practical application of **I John 1:9**.

1. As in all our praying, honesty with God is essential here.
 - a. You cannot agree with God about your sin – that is, confess your sin to Him – without being honest about what you have done, and honest about what you have done to Him in committing your sin.
 - b. Now I am not pointing out our need to be honest in Confession Prayers as if there are times when it is wise or even acceptable to be dishonest with God in anything. I am reminding you of the importance of honesty in confessing your sins because by nature we usually lean in the direction of dishonesty, and downplay or explain away the evil of what we have done.
2. Therefore, in striving to be honest with God about my sin, I find it helpful to be fully honest about at least these three things:
 - a. **First**, I want to be honest about what I have done and if I knew it was wrong before doing it.
 - b. **Second**, I want to be honest about what God's word says about what I have done (*discussed further in B, 3*).
 - c. **Third**, I want to be honest about how my sin has affected the one I have sinned against and how it has affected my relationship with the one I have sinned against. And I want to acknowledge this, beginning with God and moving on to the person or people I have sinned against.
3. Being honest with God about what His word says about your sin requires knowing your Bible (Nave's Topical Bible can help here). And using Bible language in confessing your sin promotes a broken and contrite heart along with humility before God and men. With

this is mind, let me give you some examples of Bible language in relation to sin.

- a. In a general way, God's Word defines sin? God says that sin is an act of lawlessness (**I John 3:4**). And lawlessness is rebellion against the authority – which in this case is God. Therefore, lawlessness is choosing to go my own way in defiance of God's rule and way. In other words, doing what I know is wrong is equal to deliberate rebellion against God and the rule of God over me. Therefore, honestly confessing my sin includes admitting to God that in knowingly sinning, I was rebelling against Him.
- b. Once again in a general way, the Bible says that when I choose the way of the flesh or the ways of the world, I am acting in hostility toward God and making myself an enemy of God (**James 4:2-4**). Honestly confessing my sin, then, includes admitting that I have turned against God in a way that forces Him to turn against me (i.e., I have made myself His enemy).
- c. Very few Christians are so foolish or untaught in the scriptures as to say they have never sinned. But some Christians – though they admit they are sinners in a general, non-specific way, and though they have committed recent sins, as attested by those around them – have not confessed any specific sins to God for some time. And regardless of their reasoning, **I John 1:10** says that when we deny having sinned when we have, we are labeling God a liar and His word is not in us.
- d. According to the **Ephesians 4:26-27**, sinful anger opens me up to the devil's influence in my life. And the Bible says in **James 1:19-20** . . . that we must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; because the anger of man does not achieve or produce or bring about the righteousness of God.
- e. Do you hate anyone, or despise and look down on someone, or no longer want anything to do with a particular individual? What does the scripture say? According to **Matthew 5:21-22**, you are guilty of committing murder. And if you publicly claim to love God or if you privately tell God you love Him while hating someone, then according to **I John 4:20**, you are a liar. (**I John 4:20** . . . *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.*)
- f. Are you lazy or for some other unjustifiable reason failing to financially provide for your family as you ought? Then according

to **I Timothy 5:8**, you have denied the faith and are worse than an unbeliever.

- g. Do you lie – knowingly and deliberately – in order to deceive someone for your own benefit? Here is what the Bible says about liars: **Revelation 21:8** . . . But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and **all liars**, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.
 - h. Do you look and lust or fantasize and lust or look at images on the internet and lust or read magazines and lust? What does the scripture say about this? “You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; [28] but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (**Matthew 5:27-28**). And again: “Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (**Hebrews 13:4**).
 - i. Is pursuing and accumulating earthly treasure too important to you? Or do you long for earthly treasures even if you cannot obtain them? If so, you are showing where your heart is, because according to the scripture, your heart is where your treasure is (**Matthew 6:19-21**).
 - j. Do you join us each Sunday for worship – as if worshiping in spirit and in truth – even though you are the reason a particular conflict between you and someone else continues unresolved? Whatever your excuse for this, the Bible says you have things backward. You are to resolve conflicts first and worship second, rather than worship while being the reason an unresolved conflict is hanging over a particular relationship you are in (**Matthew 5:23-26**).
 - k. Do you compromise your godly values, or withhold biblical truth, or appease certain people in order to keep them happy with you or ensure their acceptance and approval of you? The Bible calls this unbelief in God (**John 5:44**).
 - l. Do you give to God what belongs to Him before spending on yourself or do you spend on yourself and give what is left over? According to God’s word, this is equal to robbing God (**Malachi 3:8-10**).
4. I won’t burden you with any more examples of what God’s word says about sin in general or about specific sins. But I do trust these examples will help you in being honest in your prayers of confession

to God, and in making things right between you and those you have sinned against.

5. The last few points I want to make about Prayers of Confession are:
 - a. We ought to humbly, patiently, and without complaint, accept the consequences of your sin.
 - b. We should seek to see the true spiritual loss that comes as a result of sin and work at recovering that lost territory – including the personal and intimate side of our relationship with God. (tightrope walker)
 - c. Always rise from confession determined to return to walking the narrow path and growing in grace and fellowship with God.

6. **There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood** (William Cowper)

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.

Then in a nobler, sweeter song, I'll sing Thy power to save,
When this poor lispings, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave.

III. Conclusion