

QUICK REVIEW

Three categories of prayer,

1. Upward - adoration (praise) and thanksgiving. Praise and Thanks.
2. Inward - confession, repentance, & assurance. Confess.
3. Outward - asking, supplication as bringing requests to God. Ask.

Adoration

“An attitude of worship characterized by love and reverence to God.” (Bible Dictionary DBT)

- To express love toward God...bring reverence and honor that is due Him.
- To praise him for who he is - the biblical pattern is to highlight his characteristics, meditate, and reflect back in prayer or song.
- Examples: David in 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; Psalm 103 & 145

Thanksgiving

Thanking God for what he has done - often attached to praising God for who he is - an example is Psalm 135 - call to praise the Lord, yet also thankfulness for how he worked on behalf of Israel and Psalm 136 - call to thank God for what he has done, but characteristics of God such as goodness and steadfast love.

Psalms of thanksgiving (8) both individual (Ps 30) and corporate (Ps 107).

Psalm 75:1

“We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks for your name is near. We recount your wondrous deeds.”

Benefits - many!

- Prayers are more balanced. Full.
- Prayers are more Scriptural - patterned on Word.
- We are humbled, see God for who he is, our infinite, brokenness - see sin, led to repent.
- We gain perspective, eternal, not about us.
- We gain confidence - to then ask based on his power, patience, etc.

NEIGHBOR QUESTION

What do people think of when they hear the word “confession/confess”?

INWARD PRAYER

What is confession?

Confess - we think of interrogation room looking for confess, negative, but there is also a positive when it comes to confession in the Bible.

To admit guilt or sin *and* to state a belief in spiritual truth. "To confess" can mean to agree, promise, or admit something.

Two aspects to confession in Bible:

1. Confess sin - and guilt before God, often a particular sin. Or National sin.
2. Confess truth - affirming spiritual truth "saying the same thing" Confess faith in Christ, allegiance to him, he is the Savior and I belong to him.

"First, individuals confess that they have sinned and are therefore guilty before God. Second, they confess that Jesus is Lord. One confession often leads to the other. Confession of sin is often linked to assurance of deliverance, trust, salvation in Christ."

What is the prayer of confession?

- Based on God's character and work in Christ.

"God's kindness leads you toward repentance." (Romans 2:4)

Image of God's posture: Prodigal Son came back home, ran to him embraced him, celebrated "He was lost, and now is found."

It is a time in prayer, in the Spirit, going to the Father. Bringing in prayers of both repentance and assurance.

- **Repentance** - in admitting sin, remorse - asking God to search/reveal "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24)
- **Assurance** - of forgiveness in Christ and God's steadfast love. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

What happens in prayers of confession?

"The prayer of confession invites us to **speak words that are remarkably honest about our sin**, words that do not come naturally in our relationship with God or with our fellow human beings. Such honesty, perhaps more than **we could ever generate on our own strength**, becomes remarkably liberating when we **sense the immensity of God's grace**. In this sense we can think of confession (and the assurance of pardon that follows)...as a **gift of grace**. Along with the confession of personal sins, we confess our participation in the structures and institutions in which evil persists. **Even as we confess our sin, we are claiming God's promises in Christ...**Many classical prayers of confession feature a decisive turn from **honest confession to explicit profession** of faith and trust in Christ." (*The Worship Sourcebook*)

- *Honesty*, God knows and wants a relationship, renewal of fellowship.

- Confession comes from a *work of God* in our heart - admit sin, b/c of grace, motivated by our assurance of identity in Christ.
- Both *confession* - and *profession*, grace in Christ
- Element of personal confession but there is also power of public, corporate confession.

Examples of Prayers of Confession in Scripture

Two general types, personal and corporate.

Example from Nehemiah

Personal: Nehemiah's Prayer - Neh. 1:4-11

Corporate: Later in Nehemiah 9 they read from Scripture and spent time in corporate confession.

****Also idea of blessing of fellowship of confession** - confession to one another.

"He who conceals his sin does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." (Prov 28:13)

"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another." (James 5:16)

Psalms of Confession, prayers

- Psalm 32:1-7
- Psalm 51

Other examples of Personal and Corporate Confession

Examples of Personal Confession - Valley of Vision (book of Puritan prayers)

Yet I Sin

Eternal Father, thou art good beyond all thought, but I am vile wretched, miserable, blind;
 My lips are ready to confess, but my heart is slow to feel, and my ways reluctant to amend.
 I bring my soul to thee; break it, wound it, bend it, mould it.
 Unmask me sin's deformity, that I may hate it, abhor it, flee from it.
 My faculties have been a weapon of revolt against thee;
 As a rebel I have misused my strength, and served the foul adversary of your kingdom.
 Give me grace to bewail my insensate folly,
 Grant me to know that the way of transgressors is hard,
 That evil paths are wretched paths, that to depart from thee is to lose all good.
 I have seen the purity and beauty of thy perfect law,
 The happiness of those in whose heart it reigns, the calm dignity of the walk to which it calls,
 Yet I daily violate and contempt its precepts.

Thy loving Spirit strives within me, brings me Scripture warnings, speaks in startling providences, allures by secret whispers,
yet I choose devices and desires of my own hurt,
Impiously resent, grieve, and provoke him to abandon me.

All these sins I mourn, lament, and for them cry pardon.
Work in me more profound and abiding repentance;
Give me the fullness of a godly grief that trembles and fears, yet ever trusts and loves, which is ever powerful, and ever confident;
Grant that through the tears of repentance I may see more clearly the brightness and glories of the saving cross.

The Dark Guest

O Lord, bend my hands and cut them off, for I have often struck thee with a wayward will,
when these fingers should embrace thee by faith.
I am not yet weaned from all created glory, honour, wisdom, and esteem of others,
For I have secret motive to eye my name in all I do.
Let me not only speak the word sin, but see the thing itself.
Give me to view a discovered sinfulness, to know that though my sins are crucified they are never wholly mortified.
Hatred, malice, ill-will, vain-glory that hunts after man's approval and applause,
are all crucified, forgiven, but they rise again in my sinful heart.
O my crucified but never mortified sinfulness! O my life-long damage and daily shame!
O my indwelling and besetting sins! O the tormenting slavery of a sinful heart!
Destroy, O God, the dark guest within whose hidden presence makes my life a hell.
Yet thou hast not left me here without grace;
The cross still stands and meets my needs in the deepest straits of the soul.
I thank thee that remembrance of it is like David's sight of Goliath's sword which preached forth thy deliverance.
The memory of my great sins, my many temptations, my falls,
bring afresh into my mind the remembrance of thy great help, of thy support from heaven, of the great grace that saved such a wretch as I am.
There is no treasure so wonderful as that continuous experience of thy grace toward me which alone can subdue the risings of sin within:
Give me more of it.

Example of Service Order Themes - A Church Service Order example *Rhythms of Grace* (Call to worship, praise song, confession/assurance...preaching)

Reading: Confession/Assurance

Leader: Lord, we know that Jesus, who knew no sin and whose hands were clean, became sin for us, that we might be called righteous, clothed in white and called your children...Even our tears of repentance and our spiritual life is full of pride and selfishness...Like the prodigal son, we run to a far country, return home, crying, "Father, forgive." In your mercy, you call us your

children, and you bring us clean garments. May we live in your righteousness, work in it, share our homes in it, be found in death in it, and stand covered by it when we come before your throne.

Congregation: "May we never lose sight of the sinfulness of our sin, the righteousness of salvation, the glory of Christ, the beauty of your holiness, and the wonder of your grace. We ask this in the name in the One who makes it possible, Jesus Christ, Amen."

Practical Ideas for Confession Prayer

- Pray through Psalm 51 or 32:1-7.
- Meditate/pray over Keller's self-examination & assurance questions (*Prayer*, 218-220).
- Pray through a prayer in *Valley of Vision* (section 3) prayers of penitence.
- Meditate/pray over Respectable Sins Diagnostic Questions.
- Meditate/pray over X-Ray Questions and Idols of the Heart.
- Write out your own prayer of confession.
- Meet with an accountability partner and regularly practice confessing to one another, try it out in a group.
- Pray through the confession prayers in *A Way to Pray* by Matthew Henry, matthewhenry.org
- Luther's Method - pray through the Ten Commandments (*A Simple Way to Pray*)
 1. **Read** the commandment and meditate on it, **consider** its meaning.
 2. Use the commandment to **thank** God for something.
 3. **Confess** sin.
 4. Use the commandment to say a **prayer** of repentance and commitment.

PRACTICING PRAYER OF CONFESSION

CORPORATE CONFESSION TIME, Prayers of Confession - from Worship Sourcebook

PRAYER 1

Merciful God,

We confess that we have sinned against you,

In thought, word, and deed,

By what we have done,

And by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you,

With our whole heart and mind and strength.

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

In your mercy forgive what we have been,

Help us amend what we are,

And direct what we shall be,

So that we may delight in your will,

And walk in your ways,

**To the glory of your holy name.
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

PRAYER 2

Merciful God,
For the things we have done that we regret,
Forgive us.
For the things we have failed to do that we regret,
Forgive us.
For all the times we have acted without love,
Forgive us.
For all the times we have reacted without thought,
Forgive us.
For all the times we have withdrawn care,
Forgive us.
For all the times we have failed to forgive,
Forgive us.
For hurtful words said,
And helpful words unsaid,
God of all time,
Forgive us and help us,
To lay down our burden of regret. Amen.

PRAYER 3 (based on Matthew 5)

Loving God, you call us to be the salt of the earth,
But too often we consider your way to be bland,
And we miss the delight of life filled with flavor,
That spreads from us to those around us.
Forgive us, Lord, and help us be more like Jesus.
You call us to be the light of the world,
But too often our actions do not bring praise to you.
We make choices that help us blend into our culture,
Rather than stand out as your people.
Forgive us, Lord, and help us be more like Jesus.
You call us to settle matters quickly,
But too often we nurse grudges,
And look for ways to settle scores on our own terms.
Forgive us, Lord, and help us be more like Jesus.
You call us to go the second mile,
But too often we consider our own convenience first,
Passing up opportunities to show love to our neighbor.
Forgive us, Lord, and help us be more like Jesus. Amen.

Corporate Prayers of Assurance of Pardon:

PRAYER 1

**By true faith in Jesus Christ,
I am righteous before God
And an heir to life everlasting.**

Even though my conscience accuses me

Of having grievously sinned against all God's commandments,

Of never having kept any of them,

And still being inclined toward all evil,

Nevertheless, without any merit of my own,

Out of sheer grace, God grants and credits to me

The perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ,

As if I never sinned nor been a sinner,

As if I had been as perfectly obedient

As Christ was obedient for me.

All I need to do,

Is accept this gift of God with a believing heart.

PRAYER 2

Through the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord,

We have redemption, forgiveness of sins.

The riches of God's grace have been poured out upon us.

Praise be to our God,

Who has chosen and made us his own.

Praise be to our God,

Who forgives and cleanses us.

Praise be to our God,

Who blesses us beyond our imagination!

PERSONAL CONFESSION TIME

By yourself, pick out one of the practical ideas for confession prayer and go through it. Then with a friend or two, talk over what you did and share ideas for how you may incorporate prayers of confession into your life.