



Sermon Discussion Guide

THE PRAYER OF CLEANSING

Connecting With God: The Lord's Prayer – Part 5

"Forgive us our sins (debts and transgressions)" Matthew 6:16 (NLT)

"Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us, and run with perseverance the race marked out for us." Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV)

What is one of the biggest obstacles that keeps us from being all God made us to be? The Bible says that it's "unconfessed sin." Why? Because hidden sin impedes our purposes in life. As the above Bible verse from Hebrews states, our life is like running a race. Most people, however, never cross the finish line in the marathon race of life. Their path gets hindered by sins that derail and weigh them down with guilt. Everyone sins, but unconfessed sin weighs us down with guilt. This is a very destructive emotion. Many times, we'll try to ignore guilt or suppress it and even repress it, but none of that works. It just adds burdens to our life which destroys our confidence. In this fourth part of the Lord's Prayer series we are going to examine six points on how to address this part of our life that is so important to our freedom.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

1. REVIEW EVERY AREA OF MY LIFE

What are we advised to do in Lamentations 3:40?

- What are the advantages for someone who takes a moral inventory of his/her life?
- 1 John 1:9 lists the benefits of confessing our sins to God. What are some common obstacles people face that keep them from confessing *all* sins to God?
- How can people show they are serious about God's blessing in their lives?

If we want God to be honest with us, we must be honest with him. The following outlines a method to 'get honest' with God:

1. GET ALONE – According to Habakkuk 2:1, what should we do once we are alone?
2. ASK GOD TO REVEAL MY SINS – How does Psalm 139:23-24 illustrate how to reveal our sins?
3. TAKE MY TIME – What does Proverbs 20:27 say God will do if we take our time?
4. WRITE IT ALL DOWN – What advantage do we gain by writing down our sins and examining them according to 1 Corinthians 11:31?

Discipleship – It is clear that God blesses us when we examine and confess our sins. How serious are you about God's blessing in your life? Take a few minutes to write down a sin that weighs heavily on you. Examine it. Why does it affect you so much? Have you confessed it to God before now? If not, why?

2. REPENT OF EVERY SIN

What does Lamentations 3:41-42 point out as the next step after examining our sins?

- Repenting means trusting in God and being willing to change. How do we typically react when faced with the need to change?
- 1 John 1:8 illustrates how we can deceive ourselves in our way of thinking. What are some common misconceptions about hiding sin?
- Who else may be impacted when someone chooses to minimize or rationalize sin?

Discipleship – Confessing our sins is important, but repenting and changing our behavior is equally as important. God wants to see us change and become more like Jesus. What sin have you confessed multiple times? (this can be shared with the group or admitted privately) Take a few minutes to write down some steps to change your behavior and end the sin that is weighing on your life.



3. RESOLVE TO MAKE RESTITUTION

According to Luke 19:8-9, Zacchaeus resolves to pay four times the amount to anyone he has done wrong to?

- What are some ways in which we feel cheated by others or ways we cheated another person?
- What do we believe can be gained by “cheating” others?
- What do we gain by making restitution and repairing relationships that may have been cheated?

Discipleship – Restitution is the act of restoring to the rightful owner something that has been taken away, lost, or surrendered. Make a list of the people or situations where you have taken away something that rightfully belongs to or hurt another person. What relationships need to be restored? What specifically can you do today to make restitution? Share your thoughts with your small group.

4. RECEIVE GOD’S FORGIVENESS

In what way does Hebrews 4:16 tell us to approach the throne of God? What will we receive *and* find when we need it?

- We have permission directly from God to come to him when we need his forgiveness. Why do you think this is so difficult for us to do?
- For what things in our past do we need to receive God’s mercy?
- How do we benefit from receiving his grace?

According to Romans 5:1, we are justified through our faith in Jesus Christ. What does this verse say we have as a result of God’s gift of forgiveness?

- What does it mean to be justified through faith? What does this look like in our lives?
- Why are there sins in our lives that we believe are “unforgiveable?”
- How do we ask God for forgiveness?

Worship – God gives us mercy to cover our past and grace to help us make future changes in our lives. Worship is doing those things that bring glory and honor to God. Asking him for the forgiveness of those sins which we believe are “unforgiveable” is an act of worship. 1 John 1:9 reminds us that we can confess our sins to God and he can be depended upon to forgive us and to cleanse us from our sins. In your personal prayer time with God this week, resolve to bring him your unconfessed sins so that you truly can receive God’s forgiveness and live just as if you had never sinned.

5. REVEAL MY FAULT TO A FRIEND

James 5:16 reveals two life changing truths for those who desire to be healed – what are they?

- Why is it not natural for people to share their sins with others?
- In what specific ways would relationships be different were people more apt to share their sins with others?

Fellowship - In Psalm 32:1-2, the positive consequence for those whose guilt has been forgiven is happiness, relief and a record that has been cleared. For what purpose do you suppose God desires that we live a guilt free, happy life?

- For those of you who have someone whom you can share your sins in confidence,
1) how did you arrange this; and 2) how do you maintain this relationship?

- For those of you who DO NOT have someone whom you can share your sins in confidence,
1) why is this so; and 2) what actions steps might you employ to change this?

Do something good for the church and for yourself at the same time – Saddleback members just like you create these discussion guides, each working once a month in a small team after a Saturday 4:30 service. We need your help! No special skill or experience is required – just an interest in the Bible and in helping small group members benefit from the weekend sermons. We'll train you, but the work is relatively simple. Just send a note to pegr@saddleback.net.



6. REPEAT THESE STEPS REGULARLY

According to Hebrews 10:22, how are we able to draw near to God with a sincere heart, in full assurance of our faith?

- Why do you believe guilt is such a strong deterrent to sensing God's connection in our life?
- Were all of your guilt suddenly replaced, this very instance, with forgiveness, peace, relief and happiness, and you were drawn near to God with a genuine heart in full assurance, how do you think this might change your outlook?

Discipleship – Discuss the reasons for why we must repeat the five (5) steps of **Path To A Fresh Start & Clear Conscience**? Now that we agree as to the “why” of maintaining a guilt free, forgiven life, what steps can you make today that will insure you will put this knowledge into practice?

Take a moment to review any assignments/challenges made during the personal application and commitment section of your previous meeting. Seeing God at work in the lives of those who commit to Him is essential for growth.

PERSONAL APPLICATION AND COMMITMENT:

If you re-read the verses for each six points we have studied, there are many “us” references in each verse. The point is we are supposed to take these steps together, not alone. Through our church family, with our small group and with trusted spiritually mature people, we can be honest with ourselves, God and others. Through discipleship and fellowship, it assures that we have open communication to avoid concealing our sins. Sometime this week, take a personal spiritual inventory of your life.

Several bible verses reveal some important areas common to all believers: Matthew 6:12-14 – **Your relationships with others**. Matthew 6:33 – **Your priorities**. Ephesians 4:31 – **Attitudes**. Colossian 3:9 – **Integrity**. Romans 12:1,2 – **Your mind**. Acts 20:35 – **Your money and possessions**. 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 – **Your body**. 2 Corinthians 5:7 – **Walking by faith**. Hebrews 10:25 – **Your church family and ministry**. Joshua 24:15 - **Your family**. Acts 20:24 – **Your mission in the world**. Take the time and carefully review these areas. Confess your sin to God and ask forgiveness. Further, do you have a trusted spiritually mature friend to whom you can confess all your sins? If not, make it a point to pray for and seek one. If you do, contact them and share any sins that have been hidden since you have last connected.

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Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

Goals for this Week's Study

- Review the definition of guilt and how current world or economic circumstances can create a lot of it.
- Take the appropriate action(s) to address the points in the lessons and unconfessed sin.
- Pray everyone in group confesses their sins to God, connects with a spiritually mature person and cleanses their life.

Preparing to Lead Your Group

PRAY for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God's wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God's instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.

PLAN where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God's five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.

PONDER YOUR PROGRESS after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn't.

Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

This Sermon Discussion Guide is only a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. For most groups there are too many questions to answer in one session together. After considering the needs of your group you may choose one of the following options:

- One section of questions;
- One or two questions from each section

Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, add Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.

The questions relating to the five purposes are helpful to develop balance and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can bring your group to an awareness of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.

Personal application is key to everyone's growth and should be included in every discussion. When asked how he or she intends to apply a certain principle a group member may say, "I need to spend more time in the Bible and in prayer." It is important for you to help group members make applications that are more specific and commit to a specific plan of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 30 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.

As the leader your goal is to help bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their

need for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.

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