

## Wiping Clean the Slates: Prayers of Repentance and Forgiveness Prayer, Part 4

### Open

- Ask the group: Have you ever hurt someone you like or love and then had to face them again? What does it feel like to see the person again? What is the first thing you want to do?
- When we want to come before God but have sin in our heart, if we recognize that we have sinned and leave that old sin behind, then we can come before Him clean and holy because of Jesus.
- How did Jesus make it so that we can be forgiven and able to approach the holy, living God? Does His grace permit us the freedom to keep on sinning or does He give us the grace to overcome sin?

Genesis 50:15-21

*When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.*

*His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.*

*But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.*

- This story of Joseph and his brothers illustrates two very important parts of prayer that must happen for us to have a right relationship with God. Like Joseph's brothers, we must repent of our wrongdoing and ask forgiveness and mercy from God. And like Joseph, we must have the mercy to forgive those whom have hurt us in any way.
- The brothers recognized that they had sinned greatly against Joseph and they felt really bad, so much so that they pleaded for their lives and even offered to be his slaves. Feeling bad about what we have done is not the only part of repentance; we must also recognize that we have greatly offended God and are completely at His mercy to do with us as He wishes. We have to allow Him to change us from the inside out so that we do not sin anymore.
- Joseph was extremely merciful; he had no ill-feeling towards his brothers and even promised to take care of them. As Christians we are called to be merciful as God is merciful.

## **MORE THAN CONFESSION**

### **Rend Your Heart**

*“Rend your heart and not your garments.” Joel 2:13*

- Confessing our sins—or recounting them to God—is not the only part of repentance. We must be broken-hearted over our sinfulness and grieved because we have grieved and offended God, who is our very life.
- In the Old Testament, people would rend, or tear, their clothes to show humility and grief. It was an outward sign of what was going on inside.
- God tells us that we are to rend our hearts—be broken-hearted—because of our sins and not just outwardly sorrowful. We cannot just pretend to be sorry for something we have done wrong, while on the inside we still long to be doing it again.
- David fasted and wept and prayed before God after he recognized his great sin against God when he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband killed. God forgave him when He saw that David was truly sorry for what he had done.

### **Return to God**

*“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart.” Joel 2:12*

- The kindness of God is so great that no matter how terrible the sins are that we have committed, if we repent and return to Him wholeheartedly, He will accept us. For this is what God longs for, a relationship with every person.
- God is calling every person to turn away from his sins and return to Him broken and devoted to Him alone so that He can mend and perfect him and use him to bring God’s love to others.
- Once when Jesus was eating at a Pharisee’s table a woman came in and wept at His feet, washed them with her own tears and hair, and then kissed them and poured perfume onto them. She had been a notorious sinner that the Pharisee recognized, but Jesus forgave her and told everyone that whoever is forgiven much loves much. She left her life of sin and came to Him with all that she had.

## **A BROKEN, CONTRITE HEART**

### **Brings Forgiveness**

*...he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us. 1 John 1:9*

- If we are truly sorry for our sins with a godly sorrow that brings repentance, then we can come to God in prayer for forgiveness.
- God's forgiveness comes because of Jesus, and through it He wipes clean our slates, cleansing us from all sin and making us like new.
- When we are forgiven, it is like a debtor being forgiven his debt by his creditor; he no longer owes the creditor anything and the creditor has nothing against him.
- When God sent Jonah to prophesy against Nineveh, one of the most wicked cities in the world, they listened to him, and the king told everyone to humble themselves, call on God, and give up their evil ways. When God saw this, He had compassion on them and withheld His wrath. If He forgave this very evil city, how much more will He forgive those who belong to Him?

### **Brings Restoration**

*...the Lord your God will restore your fortunes... Deuteronomy 30:3*

- When we receive forgiveness in Jesus, we are restored to a right relationship with God and can participate in full fellowship with Him because we have been cleansed and made pure again.
- Because we no longer have any sins against God, we can pray to Him unhindered and He hears us clearly. We have been restored to the abundant life promised to us and can then pray in faith believing God will hear.
- King Manasseh was one of the most evil kings in all of Judah; he build high places, sacrificed to idols, built altars to idols in the temple, and sacrificed his own children to idols. When God punished him and he was led away as a prisoner, he humbled himself greatly and sought God. God heard him and restored him to his place in Jerusalem and restored to him his kingdom.

### **Brings Healing**

*"...I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14*

- When we lose all our pride and come to God in submission, humility, and repentance, He can come in and heal us of physical and emotional hurts that have been bothering us because of the guilt of our sins.
- God can also bring healing to our spirits as we come before him to receive forgiveness. As David prayed in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." If we have sins we have not repented of, our spirits grow dull and weary and in need of life. God can heal us when we swallow our pride and come to Him, ready to leave behind the sin and accept His healing.

### **Brings Freedom**

*...there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1*

- When we come to God in prayers of repentance, with a broken and contrite spirit, we experience freedom. We can know we are forgiven and that He does not hold our guilt against us.

- Isaiah 30:15 says, “In repentance and rest is your salvation.” We repent of our sins and then just trust God to show us how to live; we have freedom to follow His Spirit, not held back by sin or guilt or condemnation.

### **Brings Joy**

*Restore to me the joy of my salvation... Psalm 51:12*

- All of these things mentioned should bring us great joy: being forgiven, being restored to God, being healed, and being free.
- When we are humble enough to admit our sin and ask for God’s forgiveness and grace to live without sin, He is faithful to us. Because of this, we can be sure that we are forgiven and that we are assured of our salvation in Jesus, and this is a great reason to be joyful!
- When Jesus was hanging on the cross, there were two criminals being crucified alongside Him. One mocked Jesus, but the other rebuked him and recognized that he deserved his punishment whereas Jesus had done nothing wrong. He asked Jesus to remember him, and Jesus told him that he would be with Him in paradise. To know we are forgiven and invited into the kingdom of heaven is a great joy.

## **SHOW MERCY AS GOD SHOWS YOU MERCY**

### **Forgive to be Forgiven**

*But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:15*

- One other condition exists in the word in order for us to be forgiven by God. Jesus tells us that if we do not forgive other people when they hurt us—as we expect God to do when we hurt Him—then God will not forgive our sins.
- We do not forgive based on how badly the person hurt us or on how we feel or on whether they ask for our forgiveness or not. We forgive because it is commanded and so that we may also be forgiven.
- Jesus forgave even those who beat, mocked, and put Him to death; we follow His example. Stephen, too, was killed for his faith, but he also forgave those who were stoning him to death.

### **Forgive Before Praying**

*And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him... Mark 11:25*

- When we come before God in prayer, not only should we seek forgiveness for ourselves, but we should also seek God and ask if there is anyone we need to forgive.
- Ephesians 4:31 tells us to “get rid of all bitterness.” If we are bitter against anyone—we can even feel this bitterness when we think of or see that person—we have unforgiveness in our hearts towards them. We must remedy this before we continue in prayer, so that our prayers can be heard, unhindered, by God.

## **Close**

Psalm 103:8-14

*The Lord is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.  
He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbor his anger forever;  
he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.  
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;  
as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.  
As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;  
for he knows how we are formed,  
he remembers that we are dust.*

- God is a holy, consuming fire, and no one can come before Him without holiness. Thanks to Jesus, we are made clean and holy because of His sacrifice, but we must continue to walk in holiness and leave behind those things considered sinful in order to approach God.
- When we come before God in prayer, we must remember to forgive those who have hurt us so that we can be forgiven. We must be like God, slow to anger and abounding in love.
- We know that God is compassionate, ready to forgive those who repent and return to Him wholeheartedly. He will not treat us as we deserve, but He will have mercy and remove our sins from us.