

The Sorry Prayer

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[0:00] Right, okay. Morning, everyone. Morning. Good to see you all.

It's good to be here. Lord, would you steady our hearts, calm our minds.

We come for you. And only you. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

Hey, so we've been going through this series on prayer. I'll tell you, it's been hard. And, you know, I realized doing the same thing is much easier than changing it up and doing something different. It would have been so much easier just to keep going with the standard service. Hey, sing some songs. Do a little talk. Prayer again. Finish. And we're all good. We all high-five each other and we go.

[1:15] But just trying this was like, oh, my goodness. This feels so out of control. It feels so chaotic. But I've been learning. I hope you have, too. I've been really been blessed by this time.

The first week we did the simple prayer. That you just pray what you've got. The ABC prayer. It doesn't really matter. It doesn't really matter if your thoughts are all over the place. It doesn't matter if you are praying like a child because you have needs.

That's okay. You just pray it out. And the hope is that we will be childlike and not childish. And that was the first prayer. It was the simple prayer. Then last week we did the prayer of surrender. Which is, hey, the Lord builds the house.

If we just do it, we do it in vain. And so we surrender. Our children, we surrender. Our building projects, we surrender. Everything, we surrender. And actually, it's not perfect. And, of course, as proven to you by me last week, it wasn't perfect.

Even your pastor says wrong words in the scriptures. Oh, man. And then it made me feel, isn't that what this is about? Just grace. This week I've been thinking, you know, our understanding of prayer is actually based on our understanding of the gospel.

[2:26] If we don't understand the gospel, then we don't really understand prayer. If we don't truly appreciate the gospel, then we won't need to pray. Does that make sense? So actually, what we need to do is actually understand why it is that we even pray and what it is even about.

And this, to this psalm today, actually really hammers home that point. The last two weeks we've been doing Lectio Divina where we've been learning to read, learning to reflect, learning to respond, and then learning to rest.

We won't speak too much on this today, but we will read this four times. But I'm going to mix it up a little bit. Instead of reading the same version four times, we're going to read the same verse, same passage, but different versions.

Just to, again, just to mix it up. So if you've been using the body prayer, if you've been using ABC prayer, if you've been using whatever it is, I encourage you, take it, use it. When you get bored of it, twist it, make it, adjust it.

Whatever you need to do to keep you just constantly yearning for Him. So we're going to read it again, Psalm 130. We're going to read it four times. So I just invite you, invite you just to ask the Lord to share with you what is on His heart today for you.

[3:35] Psalm 130. Lord, we read your word knowing that it is these words that give us life, that guide us. Out of the depths I cry out to you, O Lord.

O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy. If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. I wait for the Lord. My soul waits, and in His word I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning.

More than watchmen for the morning. Of Israel. Hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love. And with Him is plentiful redemption. And He will redeem Israel from all His

iniquities.

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord.

[4:41] Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

I wait for the Lord. My whole being waits. And in His word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning. More than watchmen wait for the morning.

Israel, put your hope in the Lord. For with the Lord is unfailing love, and with Him is full redemption. He Himself will redeem Israel from all their sins. For a third time we read from the NLT.

From the depths of despair, O Lord, I call for your help. Hear my cry, O Lord. Pay attention to my prayer. Lord, if you kept a record of our sins, who, O Lord, could ever survive?

But you offer forgiveness, that we might learn to fear you. I'm counting on the Lord. Yes, I'm counting on Him. I put my hope in His word.

[6:03] I long for the Lord. More than centuries long for the dawn. Yes, more than centuries long for the dawn. O Israel, hope in the Lord. For with the Lord there is unfailing love.

His redemption overflows. He Himself will redeem Israel from every kind of sin. And one final time from the message.

Help God. I've hit rock bottom. Master, hear my cry for help.

Listen hard. Open your ears. Listen to my cry for mercies. If you, God, kept records on wrongdoings, who would stand a chance?

As it turns out, forgiveness is your habit. And that's why you're worshipped. I pray to God. My life a prayer. And wait for what He'll say and do.

[7:04] My life's on the line before God, my Lord. Waiting and watching till morning. Waiting and watching till morning. O Israel, wait and watch for God. With God's arrival comes love.

With God's arrival comes generous redemption. No doubt about it. He'll redeem Israel. Buy back Israel from captivity to sin. This is the word of the Lord.

So as we try these different ways to pray, to really seek to hear God's voice, this week I wanted to introduce you to another friend of mine.

He's called Paul. Can we just give him a round of applause? I'm going to bring him up here. You may have noticed Paul on the worship team normally.

He's also on Spotify if you want to check him out. He's a dear friend. He's been part of this church longer than I have. And he's been just faithfully worshipping and leading that.

[8:08] And so I just wanted to bring him up because actually him and I were having a great time this week and just talking a little bit. And he shared a little bit about his practice with me that I thought, man, that's cool. We need to hear about that from you.

So, Paul, let's start with the first question. We sang a song, Heart of Worship, earlier at the beginning, which is kind of saying, hey, it's more than just singing. But, of course, your career is music and it is singing.

How do you keep that posture and that heart for worship when it's something that you do just all the time? Just give us some insight into that. Yeah. I think it sometimes can be difficult just because, like, you're thinking, okay, this is what I do to try and, like, actually have a profession.

But then at the same time, I'm using this to try and serve and then it's not about me. Right? But I think it's really to try and keep that, it really comes down to, for the most part, doing that in my own private life as well.

So, I think if all my, like, worship here is just, like, public and that's it, I think that's going to be very hard to maintain really what I do any worship for.

[9:26] So, having that time of personal worship and even understanding then not just, like, how I use music in a very, like, obvious church setting but just how I want to live out all areas of my life.

That has to be for God and not, like, compartmentalised so much. But all of it is, yeah. That difference between private and public is actually key.

And actually, a long, long time ago, I was on the worship team when the standards were a lot lower. And I remember saying to people, actually, there's a difference between practice and rehearsal.

Practice is what you do on your own so you can learn that song and get to know all the parts and rehearse is when you get together and actually practice together.

But for a musician, there's another stage before that, the practice, which is actually musicians in worship teams will know this. You end up just playing the songs that you're going to sing this weekend and you don't have that time where you pray and worship God just yourself without any agenda, without any preparing for anything.

And so there's another step that you do. And so I want to pick a little bit more about your private life and what's prayer look like for you and what things have you tried? Yeah. Obviously, like, some weeks, some days are better than others.

[10:48] So I don't want to be up with any pretense that I've, like, got it down, firstly. But, yeah, so, but usually I'll try and spend some time in worship in some devoted prayer just myself.

And, like, and then also, so having some dedicated time but then also trying to do, like, pray through the day.

So through different things as I'm going because I think we can't just do one or the other. It's like this is a God time, then it's everything else time. But at the same time, we need that space as well just for focus.

So some things I'd like to do because I'm actually, I find it difficult just to, you know, have that focus even for, like, half an hour of, like, this is just like me and God.

So trying to, might be writing out prayers or just spending that time worship. And one thing I've tried, just started doing this year is just writing out some psalms and then just being able to, like, pray through that, which I found is helpful because, you know, when I'm not inspired, then we've got, like, scripture that's already inspired.

[12:13] So I don't have to, like, come up with my own inspiration. I found that's something that I did at the beginning of the year, which actually just writing out scripture. Even if I'm not truly absorbing it and thinking it, and we've all read scripture and it's gone in one ear and out the other.

We've all done that before. But even just soaking in it and just writing it and just knowing that this is good, this is God's word, and this will bless me whether I'm intellectually stimulated or not is helpful. And, of course, even just writing down your prayers has been a blessing to you. Is that right? Like, what does that look like? Do you write, like, for half an hour or do you write for five minutes? What does that look like? I'm about to release a few volumes of just, like, no.

No. I think, yeah, it's sometimes, like, I just find that really helpful because there are a couple of things. One is just, like, you know, if I lose my train of thought, then I can just come back to this. And I don't have to be so on, oh, like, it's easier to not be distracted. But then also I think it's, like, similar to a degree in just, like, we might lift our hands in worship.

[13:21] It's not a magical thing, writing it out, but it just helps. Having some sort of, like, physical connection just helps with our heart as well. It helps our heart get in the right place.

And then sometimes it's, like, might be at home. But also more recently I've just tried as well just at lunch or something.

So it's just, like, I have, like, lunch with friends or something. So I've just tried, well, I'm just going to have lunch, lunch with God, write out prayers, I have lunch. And that might, you know, I'm eating and I'm, like, let's chat.

And it's, like, trying to have that space as well. Like, that as well gives me space where I'm not, like, just writing but also can be listening and reflecting.

So I find that helpful too. Thank you. Hey, we're going to talk more about that. And you'll notice there's a piece of paper and a pen near you. If you don't, see if you can find one near you. We'll be trying a little bit of that out later.

[14:22] But thank you, Paul. Thank you for coming up. And let's give him a round of applause. Thank you. I'm exactly the same as Paul in the sense that I try to pray for people.

And I start with my family. And I'm, like, God, pray for Christina. I lift her up to you. And then within 30 seconds or so, I've drifted off a little bit. I've thought about something else. And so as I go down the list, even of my family, I mean, Micah never gets prayed for because my mind's just somewhere else now.

So I started writing them. But actually writing out the prayer was something that was helpful for me. And maybe it will be helpful for you. This psalm here, Psalm 130, it's one of the most well-known psalms to be used for a different kind of prayer, which is the breath prayer, which is you pick one sentence.

And then when you breathe in, you think half the line. And then when you breathe out, you think the rest of the line. And you just keep basically meditating on that.

So if I give you an example, if you look at Psalm 130 with me, if you've got your Bibles, feel free to have a look. Actually, Eunice might put it up. You can put the ESV version, Eunice. So it's when I breathe in, it'll be like, out of the depths, I cry to you.

[15 : 37] Lord, hear my voice. Out of the depths, I cry to you. Oh, Lord, hear my voice. And so this kind of prayer, this breath prayer has been going on for hundreds of years.

People have done this throughout the whole day. And I've known people who have picked different lines, different verses every day. And throughout the day, when you're walking, when you're working, you just breathe it in and then you pray it out.

And the whole idea is just to meditate on it day and night, just as Psalm 1 says. How can you just have it? Now, you can't do a whole chapter or a whole book, but you can do one line. And that's just one way to pray.

This prayer, this psalm here is an interesting one because it goes, Out of the depths, I cry to you, Lord. Oh, Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy.

We're going to talk about an interesting topic today, one which the church doesn't really like to talk about that often because it doesn't really feel that good. At least at the beginning, it doesn't feel good.

[16 : 38] And that is addressing this issue of sin and confession. When he says, Lord, save me, I am out of my depth. I am overwhelmed. I am drowning.

And I'm crying to you for mercy. What is mercy? Mercy is, can you spare me from what I deserve? If grace is, can you give me something that I don't deserve? Mercy is, can you spare me from something that I do deserve?

What is that? That is sin. That is going, God, I have picked my own way. And now I'm drowning in my own sin, in the consequences of my sin. And I need you to save me.

How often have we prayed that prayer? If we ordered each other's prayers, we'll have prayers about, hey, can you grant us health? Can you help us with this project? Can you do this? Can you help us with this? But how often have we gone to a place where, God, would you save me?

And that is the gospel. If we're to pray like this, we need to understand the gospel. I preached on Acts 2 a couple months ago.

[17 : 43] That early church that was just booming. And people were devoted to all these things. What's the requirement for that? Just before that, in Acts 2.37, it says, Peter preached the gospel and they were cut to the heart.

That group of people were devoted to all these things because they were cut to the heart. If we're honest with ourselves, how often are we cut to the heart because of our own depravity, because of our own sin?

Just a quick definition of what sin even is. I mean, S-I-N, I is right in the middle. If you put yourself in the middle of your life, that is sin. And we know that when we put ourselves in the middle, we do all kinds of stupid things, which means we have the consequences of sin.

And ultimately, the wages of sin is death. And we know that. We, I think, now the Catholic Church are great at this. I think the church as a whole is weak at this, which is we have lost the art of confession.

Confession of saying sorry. I know that Canadians like to say sorry a lot. How do you guys say it? You don't say it in the normal accent way. Sorry. Sorry.

[18 : 52] When was the last time you said sorry to God? I think we've lost the art of confession. We're in a day and age where you're not supposed to be sorry for anything.

Right? You are who you are. You do you. You be you. You be true to yourself. No one can tell you that you're wrong. You don't need to apologize. You are who you are and do not have any regrets because of it.

Of course, if you're married, then you will learn that sorry is a very important word. I mean, I say sorry on a daily basis, often for things I don't even know I'm sorry for. But I say sorry first anyway. But to God. Do we say sorry to God? Do we confess regularly? And that word confession is so hardcore. It's so religious. But my goodness, it is so beautiful.

Do we understand what that means? Because we need to understand what the gospel is. That the gospel is basically grace as a free gift to us. And because of that, we pray.

[19:57] Prayer mirrors the gospel, is what Paul Miller says. Your prayer life mirrors your understanding of the gospel. Do we truly have that? Ephesians 2 says, we were dead in our trespasses and sins.

We were following the course of this world and the prince of the air, and we were dead. But God being rich in mercy. Jeremiah 17 says, the heart above all things is deceitful.

I don't know what your heart is like. My heart is constantly deceiving me. Constantly telling me things that I should be thinking and feeling, and I know it's wrong. Do you have that? Jesus knew that.

And John 2, he said, hey, he knew what was in the heart of man. Do you understand what is actually going on inside you? 1 John says this.

Hey, if you don't think you've sinned, I don't know. Maybe we all sat here and we feel pretty good about ourselves. You know, I'm a pretty good person. If you don't think that you've sinned, then actually what you're doing is you're deceiving yourself, is what John 1 says.

[20:54] Now, but not to be just somber here. And I want to, as you can see from this psalm, it doesn't end that way. But sometimes I don't think we even start this way. And we go to God as though we have no problems, that we're actually completely okay and that we deserve to be here and we're entitled to ask for things that we're asking for.

But no, this psalm starts off with, God, I am drowning. I am overwhelmed. I am out of my depth. I'm asking for your mercy. And we're going to try that today.

But I guess for us, I just wanted to make sure that we understand what the gospel is. Because if you don't understand the gospel, then actually prayer isn't that important to you. Because Jesus is an add-on anyway. Because you don't really think that you need him.

And if you don't think that you need him, then you won't really talk to him. But when we go through trials, when there are health issues that are out of our control, when people are not behaving the way we want them to behave, and suddenly we're losing and our lives are falling apart, it's only at that moment when you realize that Jesus is all you have, is that's when you realize that Jesus is all you need.

And that's where prayer comes in. Where we talk to him knowing that he is here for us. That's what we're going to try and do today. Because the verse that really stuck out to me this week was this.

[22:10] If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? This is Romans 3.23.

This is, hey, everyone all fall short of the glory of God. If God walked in here and all his glory came in here, I don't know what you'd be doing, but I would be face flat on the floor. If the Lord counted the things that we did wrong, we wouldn't be able to stand.

And this is where confession really comes in. St. Augustine was actually the first one, actually his masterpiece was his book called Confessions. And he said this, in failing to confess, what we're actually doing is that actually I, he says, In failing to confess, Lord, I am not really hiding you, I am hiding you from me, but not really me from you.

What he means is when we don't confess, what we're actually doing is this. God, you're not here, I don't, you don't see me, you don't see me. When we don't confess, we're basically saying, God, I can't see you, I can't see you.

But really God can see us this whole time, is what he's saying. But you know that feeling when you've done something wrong. When you are doing something wrong, where you're just like, God, please don't look at me, please don't see me.

[23:28] Well, I can't see you, so that means you must not be there. But Augustine says that's a pointless pursuit, because God can see you. But the thing that we don't understand is that God loves us.

Oh Lord, who should mark iniquities, oh Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness. If we don't understand that forgiveness, then we won't confess. Because when we think about confession, we think, I don't want to fess up to this, because when I do, I'm going to get into trouble. Right? I want to be punished. But God's saying, confess. Confess not because you're going to get into trouble. Not because I am a judgmental, harsh God. But confess because I love you.

And I want to remove this painful thing from you. That is sin. Something that we're doing to ourselves that is destructive. Christina was sharing with me the other day.

She's been, we have different plants around our house. Some of which I killed over the summer.

When I wasn't around, and Stephen was the one who kind of inspired us and taught us how to use,

how to look after plants.

[24 : 32] But then she came back, and of course I got into trouble because they were all dead. But then she started pruning them, and she started to cut out the bits that were unhealthy. And then this last week, she was overjoyed.

Well, maybe overjoyed is a bit of an exaggeration. She was like, oh, that's, because why? Because when you prune the unhealthy ones away, healthy ones grow back out. And I was like, oh, isn't that what really confession is?

Isn't that what really God is trying to do with us? He's saying, surrender. Get rid of those unhealthy things. Not because I want to inflict pain on you so I can punish you and ground you. Get rid of them because they're not good for you.

And if you let me get rid of them, then you will grow. And you will be healthy. And you know that. You know whatever sin that you've got going on in your life, you know it's not good for you. And somehow you just still keep holding on to it.

God is often described as the great physician or the surgeon who comes in incisively and tries to get rid of the thing that isn't good for your body. It's going to be painful.

[25 : 36] But we need it. So often when we think of grace, we think of this great, beautiful blessing where we finally just receive love, even though we don't deserve it. What we do ignore, though, is this fact that actually grace, at the very beginning at the very least, hurts.

Because grace comes with healing. Healing does come with hurting sometimes. Because we have to get rid of those things that are destructive to us. So in order for us to have that kind of freedom, to have that kind of redemption, we need to go through this process of healing and hurting.

And how do we get there? We start with confession. That's why we confess. The question then becomes, how do we confess? And one way we do it is actually a different kind of prayer.

Richard Foster calls this prayer the prayer of examine. Where you basically go, God, examine me. Do a body check.

Do a heart check on me. Because the things that I don't know exist in my body. The things that I don't know about in my soul. This prayer is the one where you open up your hands and you go, God, search my heart.

[26 : 47] Test my thoughts. If there is any anxious or offensive way in me, lead me in the way everlasting. The Psalm 139.

What I want us to do today is to practice a little bit of that. Is that okay? Now, it's going to be a safe space. Because when we're talking about sin and when we're talking about confession, I know there's a lot of us are, well, I don't even know the person next to me.

I'm not going to confess all the little things. And I respect that. Of course, if you're actually devoted to and part of this community right here, I would encourage you.

Confess your sins and be healed. Confess your sins to someone else who loves you. Who knows you. Who can hold you accountable. And you will feel the freedom that comes.

If you've got this monkey on your back, if you're chasing the shadow, you can't do it on your own. Confess it to people. But first start by confessing it to God. Now, so this is our time today.

[27 : 44] If you're here for the first time, welcome you. We're not usually this somber. But this is part of the prayer for us today. Because I think we've also lost the art of this. Because we've lost our understanding of the gospel.

And when you truly understand that there is a freedom that comes from it. When that unhealthy part of the plant is trimmed off. Or when that tumor is taken out. Suddenly you feel freedom and you feel health. And that's my prayer for all of us.

That's why God says, come to me with all of your burdens. Because in me there is forgiveness. But before I do that, I wanted to read you one of my favorite, favorite stories.

That I think I actually have read before. It's from the Chronicles of Narnia. And it's from the Voyage of the Dawn Treader. And it's one of my favorite stories. Some of you will have heard this before. Because it's just this beautiful picture of what grace truly is.

And how grace and healing can bring hurt. The Voyage of the Dawn Treader. Does anyone know what I'm about to share? The story I'm about to share? I think Ellen will. Now this is a story. Oh yes, Annabelle.

[28 : 43] So, in the Voyage of the Dawn Treader. They've got these four kids who go into this wardrobe. That's Narnia. And then they have this cousin. This cousin is selfish and obnoxious and

arrogant.

And so he constantly causes trouble throughout the whole story. There's one moment where he runs away. And he runs into a dragon's cave. And when he sees the dragon's cave, there's loads of treasures. And so he's overcome with greed.

And so he takes all the treasures. And he puts on this bracelet. And then he falls asleep. And without knowing, when he wakes up, he's now a dragon. Okay? And he's terrified. He doesn't know why he's become a dragon.

And so he goes out. And he meets his cousins. And they try everything to try and help him stop being a dragon and become a human being again. But they couldn't do it. And so that's the premise of this story. And I'm going to read the rest of you.

Do forgive us. This is a little bit of kind of older English here. Because despite all his attempts to try and shed the skin of this dragon, he can't do it.

[29:41] And then one night, Aslan shows up. Who's Aslan? Aslan is the lion. And these stories represents God. Okay? So, and here's the story. So just, it'll take two minutes or maybe.

So just embrace it. And if you need to close your eyes, whatever it might be, you can do this. So, Eustace himself retells the story of his encounter with Aslan. I was just going to say that I couldn't undress because I hadn't any clothes on.

When I suddenly thought that dragons are snakey sort of things and snakes can cast their skins. Of course, thought I, that's what the lion means. So I started scratching myself and my scales began coming off all over the place.

And then I scratched a little deeper. Instead of just scales coming off here and there, my whole skin started peeling off beautifully. Like it does after an illness. Or as if I was a banana. In a minute or two, I just stepped out of it.

I could see it lying there beside me looking rather nasty. It was a most lovely feeling. So I started to go down into the well for my bath. But just as I was going down to put my feet into the water, I looked down and saw that they were all hard and rough and wrinkled and scaly.

[30:46] Just as they had been before. Oh, that's all right, said I. It only means I had another smaller suit on underneath the first one. And I'll have to get out of it too. So I scratched and tore again.

And this underskin peeled off beautifully. And out I stepped and left it lying beside the other one and went down to the well for my bath. Well, exactly the same thing happened again though.

And I thought to myself, oh dear, however many skins have I got to take off? For I was longing to bathe my leg. So I scratched away for the third time and got off a third skin, just like the two others, and stepped out of it.

But as soon as I looked at myself in the water, I knew it had been no good. Then the lion said, but I don't know if it spoke. You'll have to let me undress you. I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now.

So I just lay flat down on my back to let him do it. The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt.

[31:45] The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off. You know, if you've ever picked the scab of a sore place, it hurts like Billy-O, but it is such fun to see it coming away.

Well, he peeled the beastly stuff right off, just as I thought I'd done it myself the other three times. Only they hadn't hurt. And there I was lying on the grass, only ever so much thicker and darker and more knobbly looking than the others had been.

And there was I, as smooth and as soft as a peeled switch and smaller than I had been. Then he caught hold of me. I didn't like that much, for I was very tender underneath now, that I had no skin on, and threw me into the water.

It smarted like anything, but only for a moment. After that, it became perfectly delicious. And as I soon started swimming and splashing, I found that all the pain had gone from my arm. And then I saw why.

I turned into a boy again. The symbolism in this scene is so powerful. Because Eustace tries time and time again to get rid of the layers himself.

[32:47] It doesn't hurt as much, mind you. But he keeps trying, and it goes off for a bit. And then he realizes there's more, and it's still just as ugly, and it's still just as rough. It's only when Aslan comes in and pierces much deeper does he experience the true liberation and freedom and redemption that comes.

That is confession. Psalm 139, when it says, search my heart, test my thoughts, what you're saying is, God, examine me together. Because I'll tell you what, when you do it yourself, when you just examine yourself and just review yourself, what will end up happening is either excessive blame or excessive praise.

You either jump to your own defense. When you're defending yourself, you're like, oh yeah, James, give yourself a break. It's okay, that person was being obnoxious, so that's why you were justified to say what you had to say.

And I'm like, it's okay, and that person doesn't know. And so you have all these thoughts that go into your mind if you just review your own sin. Or you go the other way, and if you review your own sin, you end up just wallowing.

You're like, I am such a terrible person. I will never get out of this slump. I deserve to be here. I am nothing. I am worthless. And honestly, both those extremes are not good.

[33:57] When we invite God in to examine with us, we're saying, God, show me. Walk with me in this. Highlight to me anything that is in my heart that isn't of you.

And then help me get rid of it. And I know it might hurt. But I know that hurt leads to healing. And that healing leads to redemption.

That's what we're going to try to do today. And I'm going to invite Kelly just to jump on the keys. And we're going to do it this way.

You have a piece of card there. And just as Paul shared with us about how he does it, we're going to use this card just as a sample, as an example for you.

You don't have to share it. You don't have to give it to anyone unless you want to. Write out a confession. Well, first of all, just open up your heart and your mind to God.

[34:53] And go, God, is there anything that's actually even I don't realize I'm doing? Any sin in my life that actually is really tearing me apart? But I've become so used to it. I've become numb to it. And now I'm hurting people with it.

Invite him in. But remember, when you invite him, he does not come with judgment. He comes with a sword. But that sword isn't to destroy. That sword is to come and take away the hurt, to take away the unhealthy, just like a surgeon would, just like a gardener would.

And let's open ourselves to him. And when you've reflected, then actually, right, it might be a confession to God. Maybe it starts off with, God, I'm sorry.

Maybe it's a confession to someone. In which case, feel free to write that and also pass it to that person at your own time as well.

But let's spend a bit of time in that confession space. And this is, again, we're not going to be able to cover everything here, but it's, at least I hope for us, a start. Why don't I start with a word of prayer just to help us enter into that space.

[36:02] And maybe before we even write, can I invite you to open up your hands? What I actually really wanted to do was to invite us all to kneel and bow.

But I think with the room constraints, we're not going to do that. But if you feel compelled to do it, there's something so beautiful about kneeling and bowing. It's just a complete act of surrender and opening to God.

Our culture is one that is more conservative, so I know that's not always easy, but consider this your permission if you actually feel the need to bow.

But right now, Lord, we open up our hands. We trust you. We know that you are good.

We know that you bring healing. But we know that healing sometimes comes with hurting. Would you search our hearts?

[37:08] Would you test our thoughts? If there is any anxiety or anything offensive that isn't of you, would you give us the strength to confess it?

To surrender it to you? When you're ready, feel free to just start journaling and writing on your card.

I think we've lost the art of confession because we've lost the knowledge of who God truly is.

Holy and righteous. To be feared. But in him there is forgiveness. I'm reminded of the story in Exodus where the Israelites, they've seen miracle after miracle after miracle.

And then Moses heads up to the mountain. And then they mess up. And they have a little calf that they start to worship instead. And Moses comes down and slams the tablets and breaks them. [38:30] He goes back up again. And at that moment, can you put yourself as an Israelite? Oh my goodness. We have messed up. Big time.

The God who parted the sea is now going to send a lightning bolt and destroy us all. This is it. This is our last day. And then what does God say? We should never, ever take for granted what God says in that moment to Moses in Exodus 34.

The Lord descends in the cloud after the mistake and stood with him and then said this. The Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.

Can you imagine that? I confess, I'm pretty sure my kids don't feel that when they make a mistake. They're like, oh man, dad's going to, dad's going to come down hard on me now.

And I don't say, children, I, your father, am slow to anger, gracious and merciful. I think our lost art of confession is because we've forgotten who God truly is.

[39:50] And that's God's message to us. Come to me, even with your hurt, even with your sin. It is so much bigger than that teeny mistake that you've made that you think is incredibly big.

Come to me. I'm gracious. I'm compassionate. I'm slow to anger. I'm abounding in steadfast love. My redemption is plentiful.

You've been finding different things to redeem yourself in. Maybe relationships that help you feel better about yourself. Maybe you throw yourself into your career because that will help you feel better about yourself. Maybe there's people who you want to hear their voice because they will help you feel better about yourself.

Those things have limited redemption. But in him there is plentiful. And he says, I've got this. I've covered you completely.

Would you just come to me? And this is where it lifts up and finishes on a nice note. Because when we take that confession, there's a few things that happen. And then we just wait. But wait expectantly.

[40:54] Like watchmen wait for the morning. Because you know that the morning is coming. Maybe the remotely similar thing that we experience is when we're feeling jet lag and we're like, oh, can it just be morning?

But you know morning is coming. And you know redemption is coming. That's why you can confess easily. Because you know redemption is coming. So you wait. You wait expectantly.

And you wait in community. He says, oh, Israel. When he's talking after talking to God, he then turns and says, oh, Israel. We're in this together. And we wait in community.

Oh, Israel, hope in the Lord. For with the Lord there is steadfast love. And that's why we gather. Because we are sinners in need of a Savior.

And there is a Redeemer. In Ecclesiastes 7, it says this. Surely there is no one righteous on this earth who never sins. And I agree. There is no one righteous on this earth that never sins. There is no one righteous in here who never sins.

[42:00] But we so happen to know there was one. There is one. Who was righteous and who is righteous and who will ever be righteous who never sinned. Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

So let us carry whatever sin that we have and we release it. Knowing that it is just a part of the journey where God is just pruning so that we would grow.

If you have written a card and it is for God, then please fold it, keep it to yourself. Continue on this as you go home. If you have written a card and it is actually to someone, I pray that you will have the courage just to take it to them.

And just go, this is all the Lord showed me. And I just wanted to say, I'm sorry. A couple of years ago, one of the pastors that I grew up watching and really admiring from afar, he had a big scandal and he fell.

As with so many church leaders and that's something that terrifies me often. He's recently come back out and him and his wife did a podcast and they were sharing about their journey of redemption.

[43 : 13] And there's one thing that just his wife just said, I haven't watched all of it, but there's one thing his wife said that just really just struck me. And she was talking to the people who are caught in sin, who are caught in infidelity.

She's like, she's saying, confess, confess, not because you need to be judged and because you need to be punished. Confess because there's something beautiful on the other side.

Confess because there's something beautiful on the other side. And as someone who had gone through it, she still stood there saying, confess because it is so freeing. It is so beautiful.

That is the prayer of confession. That we would go there daily. Because I don't know about you, I confessed something last week. But I'll need to confess it again today and tomorrow.

Every day. Because the heart is deceitful above all things. But then we wait. In expectancy. In community. Because we have a redeemer.

[44 : 24] Jesus, we thank you. That you come and you make all things new. That you are our redeemer.

And your redemption is plentiful. You take away the sins of the world. And so we confess.

Knowing that grace and mercy awaits us. Thank you, Lord. In your name we pray.

Amen. Thank you.