

About the Author

Joshua Cornist was born and raised in San Diego, California with his five siblings. Growing up in a Christian home, Joshua made a profession of faith at the age of 8 years old as his father's prayer life made an indelible impression upon him. Just before his 16th birthday, his entire family moved to the suburbs of Phoenix, Arizona. This was a summer to remember, not just because of the dramatic climate change, but primarily because his (future) wife made the same transition from San Diego to the Phoenix area as well. They met at the local high school and started a relationship at the age of 16 years old.

Joshua and Mary were married in 2008 at age of 19 and served in a local church for five years before moving back to San Diego, California in the spring of 2013 with their three children. In 2015, after attending and serving in a local church, the couple became aware of major doctrinal issues. This naturally prompted a change in denomination. Simultaneously, with their fourth child brewing, the Cornist family relocated approximately 80 miles north to Riverside County in California.

While seeking a ministry direction, Joshua sought to enroll in seminary at Masters University and stumbled upon the church recommendation function of their website. From this, Joshua was directed to attend Faith Bible Church of Murrieta, California where he eventually enrolled in the Training Center. Joshua and Mary currently serve at Faith Bible Church in Murrieta, California with their five children ranging in age from 12 down to 2 years old (Nyelle, Neriah, Jubilee, Nava, Joshua Jr.).

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To my sweet love, Mary.

*You have been the greatest testament of God's love, grace, and
mercy in my life.*

I truly love you.

Introduction

I have a firm conviction that outside of salvation man's ability to communicate with the Creator of the Universe is the greatest gift He has given us. The fact that He would consider having an intimate relationship with insignificant men and women is a great honor and privilege. Think about it for a moment, the One who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and measures the universe with the span of His hand (Isaiah 40) has given us the ability to know Him intimately. The One who transcends time, space, and matter has allowed us to humbly beseech Him. He has cast off all obstacles and given us unlimited access to Himself by the person and work of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. What a magnificent blessing He has bestowed upon us by the power of His glorious gospel.

The Word of God records His intimate interaction with men such as Abraham, Moses, David, and Paul. It also highlights events regarding Enoch, who walked with God and was taken up. These things are recorded to convey His desire to have an intimate relationship with mankind. This relationship is intended to be eternal because He is eternal. He has an eternal relationship with the Son and an eternal relationship with the Spirit and seeks an eternal relationship with the individuals He has chosen. Jesus proclaimed in John 17:2:

just as You gave Him authority over all mankind, so that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.

Jesus goes on to proclaim one of the most profound utterances concerning eternal life within the Scriptures in John 17:3:

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Eternal life is knowing God intimately, and the journey begins while we are on the earth. To know God you must know His attributes as they give insight into His person. It is important to note that there is a profound difference between knowing about God and knowing Him intimately. Many people know facts about God, but knowing Him intimately is directly correlated to the Christian's spiritual growth. (Philippians 3:8-10).

This guide isn't meant to solely fill one's head with knowledge but to proactively lead one in a more fervent relationship with the self-existent One. I recognize that there are other ways to grow in intimacy with God, namely, reading His word; however, prayer is the expression of our relationship with the Almighty. Confession, Exaltation, Supplication, Adoration, Intercession, and Thanksgiving are all forms of prayer that express our dealings with the omnipotent One. Each form of prayer appeals to certain attributes that belong to Him. They are not limited to the attributes that are highlighted within this guide, but there is a focus on one or two attributes per type of prayer. This focus is intended to assist the reader in addressing which attribute of God most anchors that type of prayer, thereby enabling one to approach the throne of grace with confidence and precision. It is important to note that His attributes are inseparable; no one attribute can be raised higher than the others and deemed as more important.

This guide is expository in nature as it intends to draw out the truth of Scripture so it can be easily digested and applied. There are exercises that require the reader to actively search the Scripture and deeply meditate on the Scriptures. These exercises can be done in haste, but there will be little value when this approach is employed. I encourage readers to be thoughtful and diligent regarding these exercises as more will be gained.

*All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the
New American Standard Bible.*

Chapter 1

Confession - My Gracious and Merciful Forgiver

Agreeing with God about Your Sin

Confession can be seen as the most controversial form of prayer because it is scandalous. Think about it, the very concept of a person presenting their vile and filthy sin to a holy and righteous God is unimaginable. The audacity to expect God, the righteous judge of all the earth, to pardon their iniquity is inconceivable. God is holy and disdains sin. The scriptures declare that He cannot look upon iniquity (Habakkuk 1:13). As a matter of fact, God's relationship with sin is to judge it and then destroy it (Romans 1). So what would lead anyone to believe that bringing your sin to Him is feasible? We have to remember the gospel of Jesus Christ! (Ephesians 2) The Gospel reveals God's attributes in a cinematic fashion as we sit back and watch the story unfold. From beginning to end, God's grace and mercy are on display in the Gospel. His willingness to forgive the most heinous sins in the blink of an eye is obvious. One might ask "If He is holy and hates sin, how can this be?" Well, before we can understand this dilemma, we must first understand God's grace and mercy and how the confession of sin through prayer is the means by which we can obtain them.

Exodus 34:6-7 proclaims one of the greatest dilemmas known to man. What is the dilemma presented here?

“The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, 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, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

If merciful and gracious are omitted in Exodus 34:6, the entire passage becomes contradictory. Why? Because God's mercy and grace permit Him to accept a sacrifice on behalf of someone else, enabling Him to forgive sins and transgressions. We have to understand that God does not overlook sin or simply sweep it under the rug. All sin is accounted for.

What do the following scriptures affirm regarding God's mercy and grace?

Psalm 103:8-13

Nehemiah 9:17

Jeremiah 3:12

1 Peter 1:3

God's attributes of mercy and grace drive prayers of confession. If He was not merciful and gracious, there would be no need for a prayer of confession. His mercy and grace are proactive as He is anticipating, even longing for, people to become penitent. God looks on a person who has a heart of contrition, and He blesses them with the gift of forgiveness. Confession is the pathway to forgiveness.

There is a common misconception that confession is strictly revelatory. This may be true when we are confessing to one another, but God is all-knowing. He is fully aware of your sins, and He knows when you are going to sin. He knows all the details of your sin as well. Therefore, what is the point of confessing? Taking a deeper look at the word in its original language, it means "agree with" or "saying the same thing." This is found in scriptures such as 1 John 1:9:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Therefore, coming alongside and agreeing about your sin with an omniscient (all-knowing) God makes perfect sense (Psalm 139:2). God is not surprised or caught off guard by our confessions. This should

encourage the believer to run to Him to confess their sins. Not only will we receive forgiveness, but we will also receive cleansing from all unrighteousness.

How does 1 John 1:9 convey the role confession has in our ability to obtain forgiveness?

A Biblical Example

King David, described as a man after God's own heart, has given us a vivid example of someone who is praying a prayer of confession. David wrote most of the psalms as he was known for being the sweet psalmist of Israel. He also showed great faith and zeal for the name of the Lord by fighting and defeating Goliath the giant. David was not perfect and found himself in a heap of trouble due to sin. He committed a heinous sin by committing adultery, and in a failed attempt to cover it up, he murdered the woman's husband. After being confronted by Nathan the prophet, David wrote Psalm 51. Let's take a deeper look.

Psalm 51:1:

Be gracious to me, God, according to Your faithfulness;

*According to the greatness of Your compassion, wipe out my
wrongdoings.*

In the first verse, we notice that David petitions God according to His attributes. He quickly follows with a request to have his sins blotted out. David is making this bold and desperate request solely based on God's character. True confession considers the attributes of God, specifically mercy.

Psalm 51:2:

*Wash me thoroughly from my guilt
And cleanse me from my sin.*

David is not only concerned with obtaining a clean slate, but he desires to be washed and cleansed of the filthiness of his sins. He does not want any residue or stains left behind from sin. He wants no traces of sin. Purity and holiness is the objective of confession prayers.

Psalm 51:3:

*For I know my wrongdoings,
And my sin is constantly before me.*

He knows sin does not simply disappear, and he is aware of sin's eternal effects on the soul. Prayers of confession should maintain an eternal perspective.

Psalm 51:4:

*Against You, You only, I have sinned
And done what is evil in Your sight,
So that You are justified when You speak
And blameless when You judge.*

Although he sinned against his fellow man through adultery and murder, he is aware that all sins are directly against God because he is the ultimate authority. Confession prayers need to accurately appeal to God, who is the perfect judge.

Psalm 51:5:

*Behold, I was brought forth in guilt,
And in sin, my mother conceived me.*

The realization of our depravity and inability to please God in our own strength is acknowledged. This should be an ongoing reality when confessing sins.

Psalm 51:6:

*Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,
And in secret You will make wisdom known to me.*

Our need for truth is vital since we are born obstinate to it. Truth directs us, guides us, and sheds light on our sin. Truth needs to be continually

cultivated within the deepest part of our being. Truth is the measuring rod that leads us to confession.

Psalm 51:7-8:

*Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
Cleanse me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness,
Let the bones You have broken rejoice.*

This is His second request for cleansing which he follows with a request for the restoration of his spiritual senses. He is not hard of hearing, but he's magnifying the bleakness and depression one walks in when separated from the joy of God due to sin. Although David's bones are not physically broken by God, it's important to note that sin has a physical element to it that causes inner pain and turmoil. This pain is caused by God's chastisement, which is an element of His love for His children. Confession of sin to God soothes the chastisement and relieves the pain of sin.

Psalm 51:9-10:

*Hide Your face from my sins
And wipe out all my guilty deeds.
Create in me a clean heart, God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

David's repetitive request to have his sin forgiven reveals his penitent heart. Upon this request, he understands that forgiveness is not the only thing needed, but a clean heart that seeks to do God's will and not his own. The request for a renewed spirit conveys his desire to be willing to do the will of God. A penitent heart is a prerequisite of true confession.

Psalm 51:11:

*Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.*

The desire to be reconciled to God is imminent as he is well aware that the Spirit of God cannot have fellowship with sin. Confession is the pathway to reconciliation.

Psalm 51:12:

*Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And sustain me with a willing spirit.*

Restoration is the ultimate goal in confessing.

Psalm 51:13:

*Then I will teach wrongdoers Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.*

Sharing the ordinances of God with people is a great privilege. When an individual is found in sin, the ability to evangelize the lost or restore a brother is quickly lost. True confession removes the log in the eye and reinstates a person to speak God's truth with conviction and confidence.

Psalm 51:14:

*Save me from the guilt of bloodshed, God, the God of my salvation;
Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.*

The specificity of the type of sin is presented in anticipation of relief from the affliction this sin is causing. Confession should be specific.

Psalm 51:15:

*Lord, open my lips,
So that my mouth may declare Your praise.*

David knows that he cannot praise God superficially; praise must be authentic and granted from God. Confession grants the privilege to praise God unencumbered.

Psalm 51:16-19:

*For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;
You do not take pleasure in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;*

A broken and a contrite heart, God, You will not despise.

By Your favor do good to Zion;

Build the walls of Jerusalem.

Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices,

In burnt offering and whole burnt offering;

Then bulls will be offered on Your altar.

God values genuine repentance rather than superficial apologies. David recognized that his external remorse was not enough to satisfy God. Once a genuine confession is perceived by God, then He will accept outward displays of penance such as sacrifices. The genuine confession comes from a heart that is broken over sin.

In what way has the prayer of King David changed your view of confession prayers?

Why is confession vital to our relationship with God?

Believers are justified before God because of Christ's sacrifice for sins. We are made righteous before God, putting us in good standing and no longer under His wrath from a legal standpoint. This doesn't mean our battle with sin is over as we still have vestiges of sin in our flesh that surface at times (Romans 7:14-21). These sins still offend God even though they don't change the fact that you are justified before Him. While choosing to gratify the flesh through sin, a Christian cannot function the way he is supposed to. Growth will certainly be stifled as spiritual gifts will begin to become diluted and misdirected.

Sin disrupts our relationship with God, causing a loss of fellowship with Him. *"But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear "* (Isaiah 59:2). One of the consequences of this separation is a deaf ear toward prayers from God (1 Peter 3:7). The bottom line is that our sin isn't taken lightly because it causes a rift in our relationship with God, putting us out of sync with Him by delaying sanctification. With that being said, the greater objective in confession is restoration and reconciliation to God. King David said very plainly, *"Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit"* (Psalm 51:12). More importantly, God desires to be reconciled with us: *"But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful"* (Nehemiah 9:17). Confession is the catalyst for reconciliation and restoration because it allows God to open His ears toward us.

After we are reconciled to God and the joy of salvation returns, intimacy with Him can now be cultivated. True believers can pick up where they left off and continue pursuing God as they were created to do. Once the believer is forgiven, as God's grace is experienced, a deeper level of gratitude is developed in the heart of a believer for God. This process of forgiveness and gratitude naturally flows into a deeper level of intimacy within the relationship. Psalms 51:14 captures this interaction well:

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

Once you begin to know your God, intimacy begins to grow stronger between you and Him as He captivates you with His mercy and grace. You will quickly come to know Him as your merciful and gracious forgiver.



Prayer Time:

Write out a concise list of sins that you are battling against.

Take 10 minutes to confess your sins before the Lord. He is ready to pour out His mercy and grace (Psalm 103:11).

Chapter 2

Exaltation - My Holy Exalted One

Elevating God Above All Others

Humans have a long history of practicing idolatry. Idol worship has been a raging battle in the heart of mankind since the Fall (Genesis 3). We have become so efficient at producing idols within our hearts that we do it effortlessly. The late theologian John Calvin famously wrote, “The human heart is an idol factory, churning out new idols like the conveyor belt in a manufacturing plant rolling out new widgets.”

As you can imagine, these idols create a great conflict between God and man. Idolatry wouldn't be an issue if God didn't call us to exalt Him exclusively. He desires our allegiance to Him and Him alone. Why does God require exclusivity? Is He insecure? Is He selfish or egotistical? No, He is holy! His holiness transcends Him above all others as Creator of the universe and the King of heaven. He is exalted!

We fail to recognize this truth as we have a proclivity to exalt things other than God. So how can we begin to exalt this high and lofty God as He deserves? We must remember the Gospel because it conveys His holiness. Through the gospel, God has made known His abhorrence of sin. For this reason, He sent His son to absorb His holy wrath against sinners. Holiness comes from the Hebrew word “*qadosh*” which means separated, marked off, placed apart, or withdrawn from common use. This separation makes Him distinct and is the predominant attribute from which all His other attributes flow. This distinction calls for Him to

be elevated above all others. Prayers of exaltation give us an avenue to properly elevate Him. One must have a thorough understanding of God's holiness to exalt Him.

What do the following scriptures affirm regarding God's holiness?

Isaiah 57:15

Exodus 15:11

1 Samuel 2:2

Job 15:15

Isaiah 40:25

God's attribute of holiness drives prayers of exaltation. There is no one like Him, not even a close comparison. He is awesomely distinct. This should captivate the one who seeks Him, allowing him to place God above everything else. The prophet Isaiah had a glimpse of the unique majesty of God. Isaiah 6:1-3 reads:

In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim were standing above Him, each having six wings: with two each covered his face, and with two each covered his feet, and with two each flew. And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of armies. The whole earth is full of His glory."

Can you recall a moment in which the reality of God’s holiness made an indelible impression on your life? In what way did it change your view of Him?

Isaiah’s revelation of God’s holiness allowed him to obtain the proper view of the King of heaven. This set the tone for Isaiah’s entire ministry. Could you imagine if Isaiah didn’t have a holy reverence for God? What would his ministry look like? Isaiah’s response in verse five gives us insight into the heart and mind of someone who has beheld a portion of God’s majesty and glory. Isaiah 6:5 reads:

Then I said, “Woe to me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of armies.

Isaiah immediately became aware of his position in the universe as a lowly sinner. It also allowed him to have a proper view of others, indicated by the “unclean lips” of the people among him. The proper view of one’s self and the people around you is critical. No one else must be contending with God to be exalted in your heart. Having the proper perspective is vital in the process of cultivating intimacy by exalting God through prayer.

What people or things have you exalted above God in your life? How has this affected your relationship with Him?

The essence of idolatry is placing any object or person in the place of God. This act renders God as common in the life of the believer and is the highest insult. Idolatry is so offensive to God that He addresses every angle of it in the first three commandments seen in Exodus 20:3-5:

You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them nor serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, inflicting the punishment of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing favor to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

These are the only commandments that activate His immediate jealousy as a result of being broken. It speaks to the massive offense taken when idolatry is practiced. The unregenerate are blinded and don't know any better, so they are not able to hold a proper view of the high and lofty One. He has made the believer an object of His great love and expects it to be reciprocated through exclusivity. His desire for the Christian's

loyalty and allegiance is the reason He becomes jealous. That begs a very important question. Is God’s jealousy the same as ours?

What’s the difference between God’s jealousy and man’s jealousy?

How does God’s jealousy display His holiness?

J.I. Packer eloquently describes the difference between God’s jealousy and human jealousy. Packer states, “Thus, for instance, his wrath is not the ignoble outburst that human anger so often is, a sign of pride and weakness, but it is holiness reacting to evil in a way that is morally right and glorious. ‘Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires’ (Jas 1:20)—but the wrath of God is precisely His righteousness in judicial action. And in the same way, God's jealousy is not a compound of frustration, envy and spite, as human jealousy so often is, but it appears instead as a (literally) praiseworthy zeal to preserve something supremely precious.”

God's zeal for His own glory is a part of His holy nature, and because he has set Christians apart—making them holy—they are to be zealous for His name as well. Zeal fuels our desire to exalt God above all others. The only form of human jealousy that can be likened to God's is the jealousy a husband experiences toward His wife when there is a suspected suitor. This jealousy is born out of the strong intimacy a husband and wife share which brings forth zeal at any indication of being replaced. Believers are to have this same zeal for God's glory when created things attempt to replace the Creator who sits on the throne within their heart.

Biblical Example

God is unique in the universe and, therefore, cannot be compared. Isaiah 40:12-25 lays a firm foundation for prayers of exaltation. The Lord is addressing idolatry head-on in an attempt to expose the futility and foolishness of idolatry. He does it by truth and clarity regarding His character and person. Although it is not a prayer within itself, it is filled with truths that lead to high and lofty thoughts about God. I often turn here to peer into the loftiness of God and to obtain the proper perspective before prayer. This passage sets the tone for prayers of exaltation. Let's take a deeper look at this passage.

Isaiah 40:12:

*Who has measured with his palm the waters,
marked off the heavens with a span,
held in his fingers the dust of the earth,
weighed the mountains in scales*

and the hills in a balance?

We must obtain the proper perspective to exalt God. Prayers of exaltation require a proper perspective of God.

Isaiah 40:13-14:

*Who has directed the spirit of the Lord,
or instructed him as his counselor?
Whom did he consult to gain knowledge?
Who taught him the path of judgment,
or showed him the way of understanding?*

The omniscience of God is brought to bear upon the reader to assist in our understanding that there is no one more knowledgeable than He. The Creator has never held the position as a pupil, unlike every created being. Prayers of exaltation should trust and acknowledge that God is the only omniscient being in the universe.

Isaiah 40:15-20:

*See, the nations count as a drop in the bucket,
as a wisp of cloud on the scales;
the coastlands weigh no more than a speck.
Lebanon would not suffice for fuel,
nor its animals be enough for burnt offerings.
Before him all the nations are as nought,
as nothing and void he counts them.*

*To whom can you liken God?
With what likeness can you confront him?
An idol? An artisan casts it,
the smith plates it with gold,
fits it with silver chains.
Is mulberry wood the offering?
A skilled artisan picks out
a wood that will not rot,
Seeks to set up for himself
an idol that will not totter.*

Isaiah writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to expose the irrational practice of idol worship. Sin is irrational and needs to be exposed as it is an affront to God's holy character. Prayers of exaltation need to consider God's abhorrence toward idolatry.

Isaiah 40:21:

*Do you not know? Have you not heard?
Was it not told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the founding of the earth?*

The sequence of rhetorical questions here is used to convey the fact that there is nothing new that will be presented. But rather, ancient truths will be called to remembrance. Prayers of exaltation should be rooted in facts about God and His character.

Isaiah 40:22:

*The one who is enthroned above the vault of the earth,
its inhabitants like grasshoppers,*

Isaiah draws the stark contrast of God's position as the High King of heaven seated above the earth and our position as lowly earth dwellers. This reality induces humility in the heart of the seeker. Humility is a prerequisite for prayers of exaltation.

Isaiah 40:22:

*Who stretches out the heavens like a veil
and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in,*

God absolutely dominates the universe and makes the heavens His home. This truth is an affront to all false deities as no one else can make this claim. Who can be compared to Him? Prayers of exaltation should offend all false gods by exposing their inability to dominate the universe.

Isaiah 40:23-24:

*Who brings princes to nought
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.
Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely their stem rooted in the earth,
When he breathes upon them and they wither,
and the stormwind carries them away like straw.*

Isaiah highlights the reality of God’s sovereignty over earthly rulers. Their power and authority are rendered insignificant when compared to God’s. Prayers of exaltation should properly place God as the ultimate authority.

Isaiah 40:25:

*To whom can you liken me as an equal?
says the Holy One.*

The Lord Himself poses this question to make the point that He has no rivals. It follows by calling Him the Holy One to further drive home the point of God’s uniqueness. Prayers of confession should address God’s uniqueness.

In what ways has this passage given you insight into the unique position God holds in the universe?

Why is it essential that we maintain a high view of God?

We were created to highly esteem our Maker as the nature of Adam's relationship with God was one of deep intimate fellowship. God allowed Adam to name all the creatures. He could have easily named them Himself as the Creator, but he allowed Adam to participate. He was very considerate of Adam's need for a companion in creating Eve as well (Genesis 2). My point is that God did not intend to be a distant unapproachable ruler, but rather a close intimate friend.

Unfortunately, Adam cast an idol by believing the lie that there was something better than intimate fellowship with his Creator. This is the central lie of idolatry, that there is something better, the grass is greener, and so on. This lie is responsible for billions of people over the ages who have never had and never will enjoy deep intimate fellowship with the Holy One. It is imperative that we do everything we can to remove the idols that are attempting to eclipse our view of God. It is important to note that God is not like His creatures—exhaustible, finite, and limited. He is inexhaustible, infinite, and unlimited, so He cannot be elevated too high. As you begin to develop the practice of exalting the King of Kings, you will be drawn closer to Him as He reveals His glory and majesty. Like Moses, your heart will cry out, “Show me Your glory,” and He will begin to become your Holy Exalted One.



Prayer Time:

Write 5-10 reasons the Lord should be exalted above all others. Take 10 minutes to tell Him why He is exalted above all others. He is ready to receive your exaltation (Psalm 34:3).

Chapter 3

Supplication - My Faithful Benefactor

Humbly Asking God

Have you ever been a part of some sort of trust exercise? You know, the one where you have to fall backward and trust that someone will catch you, or the one where someone will lead a blindfolded group of people. They have always caused me to be curious about human nature and our lack of trust in others. A few years back I was a part of a trust exercise being conducted for a leadership training course. I had to lead a group of people while their eyes were closed as the instructor watched. As I led, we walked hand on shoulder in a single file line down the sidewalk. Of course, I had my eyes open as the lead person, so from time to time, I'd glance behind me to see what was going on, only to find the nervous squinting eyes of people who were full of doubt. They simply did not trust that I could safely lead them. After the exercise concluded, I realized that their lack of trust wasn't because of my inability to safely lead them but because of their own fears and worries that they conjured up inside of themselves.

After being a part of several of these exercises, I find that it is very unnatural for most human beings (older than two) to trust someone with their immediate safety and well-being. I'm thoroughly convinced that most of us believers treat God and prayer in a similar fashion. We have entrusted Him with our eternal soul, yet in the same thought, we stress about other people's perceptions of us. God has never let us down or given us a reason to be doubtful. It is our misguided perceptions that malign our view of His faithfulness. What will give us

the correct view of God as faithful? The Gospel! His faithfulness is on full display in the Gospel. He is faithful to judge sin, faithful to provide a sacrifice for sins, faithful to raise Christ from the dead, and faithful to justify those who trust in His redemptive work. So why do we fail to trust Him with the less vital areas of our life? It's not because He's been unfaithful. We simply create our own obstacles. These obstacles are rooted in doubt and obscure our view of the Faithful One.

What does 2 Timothy 2:11-13 proclaim about God's faithfulness?

The saying is trustworthy, for:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

if we endure, we will also reign with him;

if we deny him, he also will deny us;

if we are faithless, He remains faithful—

for he cannot deny himself.”

This passage is certainly symmetrical in structure by its use of conditional statements. “*If we have died with him, we will also live with him*” and so on. Then it goes on to present a negative statement, “*if we deny him, he also will deny us.*” This negative statement serves as a dramatic introduction of what is to be presented next, which is as

follows: *“if we are faithless, He remains faithful for he cannot deny himself.”* The symmetrical aspect of the passage is still intact, but the conditional aspect suddenly takes a different turn. It objectively highlights the nature of God’s faithfulness as not being dependent on our actions. So we can doubt all we want and it will not affect His ability to be faithful.

What do the following scriptures affirm regarding God’s faithfulness?

Romans 3:3

Deuteronomy 7:9

Psalm 91:4

1 Corinthians 10:13

2 Thessalonians 3:3

The word supplication can be defined as a petition or an entreaty. Prayers of supplication go beyond these simple definitions and begin in the heart. The heart of the petitioner must be filled with humility. Humility reveals the sincere need of the one who is entreating the faithful God. God rejects those who lack humility (1 Peter 5:5). This denotes His regard for those who maintain a lowly view of themselves. Humility serves as the bridge between man and God's heart.

A Biblical Example

Psalm 143 is David's last penitential psalm. The motivation for this psalm isn't directly connected to a specific incident or circumstance but it reveals David's struggles and needs in his daily life. David displays

humility in a strikingly vivid fashion as he makes desperate pleas for help from the only One who can assist, the faithful God.

Psalm 143:1:

Hear my prayer, Lord, Listen to my pleadings!

Answer me in Your faithfulness, in Your righteousness!

A sincere plea for the Lord's attention exemplifies faith. The psalmist then addresses God by His faithfulness and righteousness, which further exudes the trust one needs in prayers of supplication.

Psalm 143:2:

And do not enter into judgment with Your servant,

For no person living is righteous in Your sight.

The psalmist is clearly aware that he is unworthy to petition the King of righteousness, so he wisely addresses sin in His life. Prayers of supplication require great humility and transparency.

Psalm 143:3:

For the enemy has persecuted my soul;

He has crushed my life to the ground;

He has made me dwell in dark places,

like those who have long been dead.

The realization of our vulnerability to enemies and the circumstances of life breeds dependence and faith in God in the life of a believer. This will be reflected in prayers of supplication.

Psalm 143:4:

Therefore my spirit feels weak within me;

My heart is appalled within me.

He reveals his circumstances and how they are affecting him. He's formulating the premise for his supplication.

Psalm 143:5:

I remember the days of old;

I meditate on all Your accomplishments;

I reflect on the work of Your hands.

He begins to bolster his faith by recalling God's track record. Remembering God's accomplishments serves as a reminder for our feeble minds. This assists our attempts to avoid being double-minded. Prayers of supplication require a mind that's rooted in God's ability to deliver.

Psalm 143:6:

I spread out my hands to You;

My soul longs for You, like a weary land. Selah

A strong desire to have communion with the Lord is a prerequisite for effective supplication. A yearning desire for intimacy is a fountain from which supplication flows.

Psalm 143:7:

Answer me quickly, Lord, my spirit fails;

Do not hide Your face from me,

Or I will be the same as those who go down to the pit.

The request for a timely response followed by a plea of availability conveys a sense of urgency as he is aware of the consequences of God's lack of intervention. It speaks of his confidence in God's ability to affect an outcome of a situation or circumstance. Confidence is essential in supplication prayers.

Psalm 143:8:

Let me hear Your faithfulness in the morning,

For I trust in You; Teach me the way in which I should walk;

For to You I lift up my soul.

The psalmist again addresses God by His attribute of faithfulness. He quickly declares his trust in the Lord and humbly requests guidance as he relinquishes his desires. Humbling oneself to this point is a bold display of faith that serves as a firm foundation for a prayer of supplication.

Psalm 143:9:

Save me, Lord, from my enemies; I take refuge in You.

The psalmist highlights another aspect of God's role as protector.

Psalm 143:10:

Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God;

Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

The psalmist is aware that his requests are conditional as God requires us to be obedient followers of Him. The foundation of supplication prayers is obedience.

Psalm 143:11-12:

For the sake of Your name, Lord, revive me.

In Your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.

And in Your faithfulness, destroy my enemies,

And eliminate all those who attack my soul, For I am Your servant.

The psalmist calls God to act according to His faithfulness once again. His request upon his enemies is not limited to the physical realm but includes spiritual enemies as well. His trust in God to destroy and eliminate all threats is profound because he insists on God as his protector when the most common option of his day would be to seek an earthly alliance for one's protection. Prayers of supplication recognize God as an ally.

In what way has David's prayer affected your view of supplication?

In what way has your view of God's faithfulness changed?

There is absolutely no reason for the blood-bought believer to doubt God in any circumstance whatsoever. There are many accounts recorded in the word of God that reveal His faithfulness. Think about the life of Abraham; God repeatedly showed His faithfulness to him. He faithfully

brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, He faithfully provided for him, He faithfully protected him, and He faithfully gave him a son, even in his old age.

Abraham reciprocated faithfulness to God by his obedience and exclusivity of worship. He proactively constructed altars to offer sacrifices to the Lord of hosts. This proactive worship is directly correlated with his spiritual growth and intimacy with God. Abraham pursued intimacy with the King of heaven and that is what he obtained as he became known as a friend of God (James 2:23). A friendship was cultivated through faith. Abraham trusted God so much that he was willing to sacrifice his own son. He knew God would be faithful to raise him up from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19). What great faith Abraham possessed.

This level of faith is available to the Christian who is willing to cultivate it by trusting in God. Begin to trust Him in all things and whenever there's doubt pray that He provides faith. He will surely supply the need, and when He does, you will come to know Him as your Faithful Benefactor.



Prayer Time:

In what areas of your life are you most doubtful, and why? Write them down and then pray for 10 minutes that God will give you faith in these areas of doubt. He will be faithful to provide it (2 Timothy 2:13).

Chapter 4

Adoration - My Precious Love

He First Loved Us

We were once enemies of God, harboring hate in our hearts exclusively for Him. Marching to our own drumbeat, we sought to be captain of our own ship, sailing in the waters of self-love. Drinking sin like water, to quench our thirst for unrighteousness, our affections were driven further and further away from the One who is to be adored. Men have a long history of committing some of the most hateful crimes to each other. Sadly, even the ones we do love have been subjected to those crimes. This ongoing reality in the recesses of man's stony heart (Ezekiel 36:26) renders men hopeless and obstinate to their Creator. What could possibly cause a person to cross enemy lines and willingly submit to the authority of the Almighty? What would lead them to demote themselves from Captain to a lowly deckhand? How would once God-hating human beings eagerly set their love upon Him? It is revealed in His glorious Gospel. The Gospel has served as a platform for God to put His love on display. The Lord proactively reaches out to His enemies in love, provides a sacrifice for sins out of His love for justice, and bestows His love upon His redeemed people.

Our willingness to cease the self-seeking pleasures of our own will and worship Him exclusively is mysterious in the least. So, the question is: what could change our hard hearts and cause us to become such devoted pilgrims? To relieve a portion of this tension, we must have a

thorough understanding of the love of God and the way that prayers of adoration assist us in reciprocating that love to Him.

How does 1 John 4:19 help us in understanding the dynamics of a believer's relationship with God? 1 John 4:19 reads:

We love, because He first loved us.

Our love for God is predicated on His love for us. I am saying that we would have not come to love Him if He had not loved us first. God is the initiator of the adoration we have for Him. He is also the sustainer of the adoration as He continues to saturate us in His love. John 3:16 says:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.

Love is an essential part of God's motivation to send His Son to be a sacrifice for the sins of many. Without God extending his love toward us, there would be no intimate relationship between Him and us. His proactive love caught us and wrestled us down, causing us to willingly submit. Romans 5:8 elaborates on his dynamic love for us:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Notice that the verse states “*while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*”, this amazing truth should resonate in the heart of all followers of Christ. It gives us a window into the nature of God’s love. It reveals the unconditionality, relentlessness, and assertiveness of His love. His love gets what it wants even if He has to become a man, walk this earth and die on a tree for it.

What do the following scriptures affirm regarding God’s love?

Jeremiah 31:3

1 John 3:1

Romans 8:35-39

Ephesians 3:17-19

1 John 4:8-9

Many aspects of God's love are revealed in the scriptures above. It's sacrificial, proactive, protective, thoughtful, impartial, exclusive, and unconditional along with other characteristics. This alone should cause

us to look up to the heavens with a heart full of love toward the One who is love. It should provoke a life of worship. This should motivate believers to adore Him. Love is the fuel for our prayers of adoration. Our love is conveyed through intimate worship of the God who produces love (1 John 4:7-8).

The psalmist in Psalm 116 is unknown, but what is known about the psalm is that the author had a deep affection for the Lord. He demonstrates an intimate relationship with God by his choice of words. Let's take a closer look at Psalm 116.

Psalm 116:1:

*I love the Lord, because He hears
My voice and my pleas.*

The psalmist openly proclaims his motivation for loving God. One should be completely comfortable in acknowledging their motivation in prayers of adoration.

Psalm 116:2:

*Because He has inclined His ear to me,
Therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.*

God's reliability belongs exclusively to His own character and can be found in no one else. This produces a fondness within the worshipper as they know God listens to their worship.

Psalm 116:3:

*The snares of death encompassed me
And the terrors of Sheol came upon me;
I found distress and sorrow.
Then I called upon the name of the Lord:
“Please, Lord, save my life!*

Faced with death, the psalmist proclaims from whence his help is to be obtained. In a time of deep need, he is driven to beseech the one who is able to save, even in the direst circumstances. Prayers of adoration need to be full of faith.

Psalm 116:5:

*Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;
Yes, our God is compassionate.*

A declaration of the Lord’s graciousness, righteousness, and compassion is made. One must acknowledge attributes to maintain the proper perspective and the reality of who God is. Prayers of adoration need to be founded on God’s attributes.

Psalm 116:6:

*The Lord watches over the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.*

Humility is imperative to an intimate relationship with God. The psalmist clearly understands this reality and how this affects the dynamic of his relationship with the Almighty. Prayers of adoration should be rooted in humility.

Psalm 116:7:

*Return to your rest, my soul,
For the Lord has dealt generously with you.*

The psalmist comforts himself by reminding himself of his past interactions with the King of Glory. Prayers of adoration need to be reflective in nature.

Psalm 116:8:

*For You have rescued my soul from death,
My eyes from tears,
And my feet from stumbling.*

As the psalmist continues to reflect on his interactions with God, he becomes more specific. Prayers of adoration need to reflect on specific aspects of our relationship with God.

Psalm 116:9:

*I shall walk before the Lord
In the land of the living.*

The psalmist confidently proclaims his eternal destiny in the Lord. Prayers of adoration need to be confident in God's ability to guide us into eternity.

Psalm 116:10-11:

*I believed when I said, "I am greatly afflicted."
I said in my alarm, "All people are liars."*

The psalmist further glorifies God as he compares ordinary men to the Almighty. He has a firm conviction that no one can be compared to God. Prayers of adoration should be motivated to glorify God.

Psalm 116:12:

*What shall I repay to the Lord
For all His benefits to me?*

The psalmist acknowledges the invaluable benefits that he has gained from knowing the Lord. Gratefulness should flow from prayers of adoration.

Psalm 116:13-14:

*I will lift up the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the Lord.
I will pay my vows to the Lord;
May it be in the presence of all His people!*

The psalmist proclaims his commitment to the Lord amongst people. Prayers of adoration should be bold and unapologetic, conveying one's zeal for the Lord. Zeal for the Lord should ignite prayers of adoration.

Psalm 116:15-16:

*Precious in the sight of the Lord
Is the death of His godly ones.
O Lord, I surely am Your slave,
I am Your slave, the son of Your female slave,
You have unfastened my restraints.*

The psalmist acknowledges his lowly position before God without objection and shows gratitude for the freedom he has in the Lord provided by their intimate relationship. Gratitude should flow from prayers of adoration.

Psalm 116:17-19:

*I will offer You a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
And call upon the name of the Lord.
I will pay my vows to the Lord,
May it be in the presence of all His people,
In the courtyards of the Lord's house,
In the midst of you, Jerusalem!
Praise the Lord!*

The psalmist is totally unashamed of his fondness for the Holy One as he looks with anticipation to declare his allegiance in the presence of all people. Prayers of adoration are shameless in nature.

In what way has Psalm 116 affected your view of prayers of adoration?

In what way has your view of God's love changed?

We love our God because of what He has done for us and for what He is doing for us. Not that we are to seek His works alone, but the person from which those works flow. He has lavished His great love upon us, and for that we adore Him. The psalmist made it clear that he has set his finite love upon the Living God in response to His attentiveness toward him (Psalm 116:1). God is the initiator of love and continues to teach us how to love through His perfect demonstration.

The Apostle Paul, before his abrupt and dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, wreaked havoc on the early church. He persecuted many

by throwing some in jail and murdering others. Amid his hunt of believers on the road to Damascus, he became suddenly aware that he had been persecuting not just Christians, but Christ Himself. He fell to the ground and heard that voice in the midst of that bright light say in Acts chapter 9:

“I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.”

Paul now understands that he has been working against God and is susceptible to His wrath. Paul later recalls this account in 1 Timothy 1, expressing much gratitude for the Savior's abundant grace, faith, and love toward him in his ignorance. 1 Timothy 1:13-14:

even though I was previously a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; 14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.

Paul eagerly awaited departure from this earth to be with Christ. Although not recorded in the scripture, it is widely accepted that Paul was martyred for the name that he once fought against. He expressed his desire to depart to be with Christ in Philippians 1:19:21-23:

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;

This longing to be with Christ is a direct response to the Savior's great love that has been lavished upon him. We are to constantly recall God's glorious gospel and the love that was poured out on the cross. The more we express our adoration by seeking Him through prayer, He will surely introduce us to new depths of His endless love, and He will become our precious love.



Prayer Time:

Write out a list of circumstances in your life that cause you to forget God's deep affection toward you? Take 10 minutes to pray, that you would realize that there is nothing you can do to escape His Love (Romans 8:35-39).

Chapter 5

Intercession - My Righteous Mediator

Be Like Christ by Praying for Others

A good lawyer is highly sought after especially when the stakes are high. A lawyer acts as an advocate. Whether the defendant pleads innocent or guilty, the lawyer is to advocate. Christ is the believer's advocate with the judge of all the earth. Christ not only pleads on the behalf of saints; He actually sacrificed Himself in the place of guilty people so that He may bear their punishment. The Gospel makes this crystal clear with verses such as 1 John 2:1-2:

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Christ's plan to stand in the chasm between sinful humanity and a holy God has been forged long ago. His willingness to be the Lamb, the Door and the Way attest to His great humility and sacrificial love. But being willing is only one aspect of being a sacrifice. Think about it for a moment, a dedicated father or mother would willingly give their life in the place of their child. Soldiers willingly give their lives for fellow soldiers and their country. While these acts convey a great sacrifice to save a life, it is not enough to save a soul from the effects of sin. Therefore, it is not enough to appease God's wrath. So what's the fundamental difference between Christ's sacrifice and all others? Christ

is a worthy sacrifice! Yes, He was impeccable, morally perfect as God on earth. Never has He caused the Father any grief by His thoughts or actions. He is truly Christ the Righteous. Jesus' right-standing before God the Father enables Him to be the perfect sacrifice, giving Him the ability to be the perfect advocate for those who trust in Him. He has called Christians to imitate Him by interceding on behalf of others through prayer. Before we can truly understand intercession prayers, we must first understand the righteousness of Christ and His sacrificial love.

What do the following scriptures affirm regarding God's righteousness?

Isaiah 45:21

Psalm 145:17

Psalm 71:19

Isaiah 51:8

Psalm 11:7

The righteousness of Christ allows Him to be the chief intercessor and model mediator who intercedes on behalf of believers. We know that Christ was impeccable; He was absolutely perfect in every way imaginable. Jesus simply did not have a sinful nature like the rest of humanity because He was born of God (Luke 2). Although He felt the allure of sin externally, He had no inclination to sin internally. This was

due to His divine nature which enabled Him to triumph over sin (Hebrews 4:15). Being both divine and human, a choice still had to be made. He chose righteousness every second of every day.

Adam was once blameless before God as a man, but he eventually succumbed to sin by choice (Genesis 3). This caused Adam to lose intimacy and the privilege to stand in the presence of God. Christ's decisions won Him the privilege to stand in the presence of God the Father. Psalm 24:3-5 says:

*Who may ascend onto the hill of the Lord?
And who may stand in His holy place?
One who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to deceit
And has not sworn deceitfully.
He will receive a blessing from the Lord
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

This verse has a conditional undertone indicating that a person has to be worthy of righteousness. Can you see the correlation between righteousness and accessibility to God, and how does this resonate with you?

Righteousness is a consequence of right doing. It is granted by God the Father, the author of righteousness. Righteousness is a state of being that manifests itself as a position before Him. All who come before Him must hold this position of righteousness, or he will not be accepted. One may even be destroyed; this can be seen throughout the scriptures, (Numbers 11:1), particularly in the Levitical priesthood.

The tribe of Levi was designated to be mediators between the children of Israel and the Lord. This distinguished position of authority and holiness was due to their bold act of righteousness for God. The Levites did not withhold their sword from striking down those who betrayed God concerning the golden calf in the desert of Sinai. Their obedience to Moses revealed with whom their allegiance was. The high priest was a cut above the rest as He had the duty and privilege of entering the Most Holy place on behalf of the people. He would bring the blood of bulls in before the Ark of the Covenant to make atonement for the people. When the priest entered the most holy place, everything had to be perfect. The priest even had to offer an atonement offering for his own sin before entering in to make atonement for the people (Leviticus 16:6). To paint a picture of the intensity and seriousness of these offerings, the high priest went in with a rope tied around his waist just in case he fell dead due to sin or a mistake incurred while in the most holy place. Others would then be able to pull him out without being subjected to God's wrath.

The Levitical priesthood served as an example of the eternal priesthood that Christ would eventually occupy. Christ would eventually carry His own blood before God to make atonement for the souls of those who

would believe in Him (John 3:16). One of the many differences between Christ and the earthly high priest is that Christ didn't have to make an offering for Himself before he offered Himself for the believer. This made Him a true and untainted mediator. To accomplish this great feat of being *the sacrifice* and *the high priest*, He had to deny Himself. Christ placed the needs of others before His own. A true intercessor must be selfless and seek the will of God Almighty. Jesus manifested His role as intercessor through His fervent prayer life. Prayer was a big part of His life as we see Him slipping away to pray in the gospels, even after long days. His righteousness and His prayer life were dependent upon each other.

The sacrificial love of Christ manifests itself through intercession prayer. The fact that He regards the well-being of others is noble, but what is mind-blowing is that He is mindful of people who have sinned directly against Him, people who wage war against Him. As mentioned before, He laid down His life for His enemies. Offering the ultimate sacrifice, it is a natural progression for Him to intercede on behalf of those for whom He has died.

A Biblical Example

Daniel, known as a devout man of God who practiced righteousness in a heathen culture, was compelled to intercede on behalf of his people. Daniel is not commonly known as a great intercessor, but rather, for his overnight stay in a lion's den. We must remember what landed him in this precarious situation. It was his righteous living that ultimately got the unwanted attention of his jealous peers. The entire scheme was to

entrap him through a technicality that was dependent upon his faithful living and dedication to prayer (Daniel 6). Daniel's character was valued by the heathen kings of his day; he looked outside of himself to address the needs of others as Christ did. We have a window into an intercessor's heart and mind. Let's take a deeper look into Daniel's intercessory prayer recorded in Daniel 9:4-19.

Daniel 9:4:

I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed, and said, "Oh, Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and faithfulness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,

Like the Levitical priests before him, Daniel had to make an atonement offering for himself before he could make an offering for the people. Daniel had to first confess his sin before petitioning the King of Righteousness. He then addresses God by His faithfulness toward His followers. The intercessor must repent of his sin before seeking the pardon of those on whose behalf he is interceding.

Daniel 9:5:

we have sinned, we have done wrong, and acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances.

Daniel includes himself as he acknowledges the sins of the people for whom he intercedes.

Daniel 9:6:

Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants, the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our leaders, our fathers, and all the people of the land.

He further elaborates on the depth of their sin, showing a genuine submission to the authority that God has put in place. Intercession prayers need to be rooted in humility.

Daniel 9:7:

Righteousness belongs to You, Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You.

The distinction of the Lord's righteousness and their shortcomings as a people is acknowledged. An intercessory prayer must recognize that the Lord's righteousness is the standard from which we must make our petition.

Daniel 9:8:

Open shame belongs to us, Lord, to our kings, our leaders, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.

As he elaborates on the effects of sin, every level of leadership is addressed. Intercessory prayers are thorough.

Daniel 9:9-11:

To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, because we have rebelled against Him; and we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. Indeed, all Israel has violated Your Law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has gushed forth on us, along with the oath which is written in the Law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.

Recognition of active judgment is necessary because it acknowledges that there are consequences for our wrongdoings. Intercession prayers must confront the consequences of our sins.

Daniel 9:12-13:

So He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great disaster; for under the entire heaven there has not been done anything like what was done in Jerusalem. Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our wrongdoing and giving attention to Your truth.

He acknowledges the stubbornness of the people in refusing to adhere to the truth. Intercession prayers do not embrace the faults of others, but rather, expose them in hopes of grace from God.

Daniel 9:14-16:

So the Lord has kept the disaster in store and brought it on us; for the Lord our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has

done, but we have not obeyed His voice. And now, Lord, our God, You who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and made a name for Yourself, as it is this day—we have sinned, we have been wicked. Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the wrongdoings of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become an object of taunting to all those around us.

After an in-depth confession of sins, Daniel begins to plead for relief from the consequences. Confession and intercession go hand in hand when seeking relief from judgment.

Daniel 9:17:

So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his pleas, and for Your sake, Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary.

He takes a step further in his plea for relief with a request that God listen as he makes a case that forgiving them would benefit God Himself. Intercession prayers are persuasive in nature.

Daniel 9:18:

My God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our pleas before You based on any merits of our own, but based on Your great compassion.

The repetitiveness of Daniel's request for God to hear and see reveals his strong desire for reconciliation for people. He readily acknowledges

that he has no merit but rather appeals to God's compassion. Intercession prayers should always appeal to the character of God.

Daniel 9:19:

Lord, hear! Lord, forgive! Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.

Daniel continues his progressive plea for the Lord to hear, forgive, and take action on behalf of the people. Then he attempts to provide motivation for the Lord to act. Prayers of intercession have a persuasive element to them.

In what way has Daniel's prayer changed your view of intercessory prayer?

Daniel's righteous living is directly linked to his desire to intercede for others. This sacrificial exercise of praying for others is born out of a holy and righteous character. Even more so, Christ's holiness and righteousness produced a sacrificial love that enabled him to carry on a ministry of intercessory prayer for the saints. Hebrews 7:25 reads:

Therefore He is also able to save forever those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

The efficacy of Christ's intercession reveals the selflessness it takes to be a dedicated intercessor. He continues to give of Himself on behalf of the saints. The Scriptures call Christians to become like Christ in every way (1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 John 2:6). If we are to imitate Christ, we are to walk like Him, talk like Him and intercede like Him. Our position as genuine believers before God never changes because of Christ's redemptive work on the cross. We are able to intercede for others in the name of Jesus because we have obtained a position of righteousness before God through substitutionary atonement. 2 Corinthians 5:21 states:

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Although we hold a position of being righteous, our unsanctified living takes a toll on our relationship with God and hinders our prayers (1 Peter 3:7). We must take heed to our daily walk to make sure we can be dedicated intercessors. As we faithfully attempt to work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Philippians 2), our relationship with the almighty is unencumbered. As He leads us in paths of righteousness, we begin to behold His glory. As we behold His glory, we become captivated by Him. As fondness grows, the heart of an intercessor evolves. The heart of an intercessor is born out of a shared burden with God's own heart. The prophets of old walked faithfully with God, so the Lord was inclined to reveal things to them. Moses spent forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai as a mediator for the people. His time spent with the Creator of the universe afforded him the privilege of harboring the

words of the Living God on two stone tablets written on by the very finger of God.

Notably, Moses maintained an extremely intimate relationship with the Great I AM, connecting with him face to face in the tabernacle of meeting regularly (Exodus 33). Moses, the man of God, committed his life to know God intimately. He took extreme measures to interact with the Almighty, spending 40 days and 40 nights without food or water at the top of a desert mountain. Out of his interactions with the divine Creator came the oracles of God. This was no coincidence. This deep fellowship was permitted primarily because of Moses' righteous living. By righteous, I am referring to his dedication and efforts toward pleasing God through right living according to the Lord's moral standard. This is not to be confused with sinless perfection. Moreover, there is a direct correlation between Moses' righteous living and his ability to intercede. Could you imagine Moses worshipping the golden calf along with the rest of the congregation and still attempting to intercede on their behalf? Neither can I.

We must pursue righteousness so that we bear the burdens of God's heart. It is the greatest blessing when the One who is seated at the right hand of the Father shares His thoughts and His will with us. When this becomes routine a deep bond will be formed with the Triune God, and you will surely come to know Him as your model mediator.



Prayer Time:

Think about certain people and circumstances that you are concerned about, and why. Write down your concerns regarding these people and circumstances. Bring them before the Lord in intercessory prayer for 10 minutes. Christ never ceases in interceding, neither should we (1 Samuel 12:23).

Chapter 6

Thanksgiving - My Good and Kind King

A Heart of Continual Reflection

A woman with a heart full of gratitude walked into a room with the sole intent of worshipping the God who rescued her from her sin. She didn't give much attention to the "esteemed" men who filled the room as she made her way to the One to whom she desired to express her overwhelming gratitude. Her hands were occupied with carrying an expensive perfume reserved for special occasions. This flask represented her family's wealth and was comparable to a year's salary in that day and time. It was made of a variety of marble constructed to preserve costly perfumes. As she began to wet His feet with her tears and wipe her tears off His feet with her own hair, she broke the bottle open and proceeded to kiss His feet and anoint them with the costly perfume. This lowly act of humility performed by this woman was born out of gratitude for Christ. This gratitude manifests itself in the form of thanksgiving. The question is: what moved this woman to convey such an expression of gratitude? Was she attempting to win Jesus' favor? Or maybe she was attempting to pay for her wrongdoings? Not so, but it is the goodness and kindness of God that causes us to bless the Lord with thanksgiving. The goodness and kindness of God are spelled out in the gospel. His goodwill toward men (Luke 2) was conveyed when He sent His Son to be born and to die in the place of sinful men. It is His kindness that leads sinners to repentance. This woman knew that her sins were many, so she was well aware of God's kindness toward her

through His Son. Before we can begin to cultivate genuine prayers of thankfulness, we must first understand God’s kindness and goodness.

God’s goodness speaks to His morality. He is good! This means that He does not do evil, which is the antithesis of good. From His goodwill flow acts of kindness. These acts of kindness are a reflection of His goodness. Kindness is always descriptive of the action. Kindness is an outpouring of His goodwill, whereas goodness is the source that causes the outpouring. For example, if someone does evil actions, they are operating out of evil and not good. We will be taking a closer look at these two attributes to gain a deeper understanding.

What do the following Scriptures affirm about God’s goodness and kindness?

Psalm 145:9

Romans 2:4

Psalm 25:7

Titus 3:4-5

Psalm 86:5

Mark 10:17-18

Thankfulness is a grand mirror from which we can reflect on God's goodness and kindness in our life. Non-believers cannot truly be thankful because God's wrath looms over them. God is good and kind to unbelievers as He was to all believers before they were His (Romans 2). The veil that shrouds unbelievers from reality does not allow them to see their position (as an enemy) before God and the glory of the gospel. This renders them thankless instead of thankful. Believers have escaped this wrath by the hand of the One who was fixing to destroy them (Psalm 7:12). This is the inception of a relationship filled with gratitude. Thankfulness is the natural reaction to one's soul being saved from eternal torment and destruction. It is the expression of the deepest appreciation in response to an act of kindness. Thankfulness is the outpouring of the heart in response to God's kindness. It is the outward expression of a heart overflowing with gratitude.

How often do you reflect on God's goodness and kindness in your life?

There's an old saying that goes like this: "You don't miss the water until the well runs dry!" This speaks to our lack of appreciation of things about which we have grown complacent. Believers can grow complacent when it comes to showing thankfulness for the forgiveness of our sins. Unlike the well that ran dry, God's goodness and kindness never dissipate.

Let's revisit the account regarding the woman who anointed Jesus in Luke chapter 7. The latter part of the account sheds more light on her motivation and reveals her deep reflection of God's kindness toward her. Luke 7:38-50 reads:

and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and she wiped them with the hair of her head, and began kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner!" And Jesus responded and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." "A moneylender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred denarii, and the other, fifty. When they were unable to repay, he canceled the debts of both. So which of them will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I assume the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly." And turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she has not stopped kissing My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My

head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but the one who is forgiven little, loves little.” And He said to her, “Your sins have been forgiven.” And then those who were reclining at the table with Him began saying to themselves, “Who is this man who even forgives sins?” And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Jesus addresses the faulty thinking of Simon by explicitly revealing the woman's motivation behind her actions. He parallels Simon's actions with the woman's, uncovering a sharp contrast between the two. Simon's focus was horizontal as his concern was on her. Her focus was vertical as her concern was on God the Son. Simon was concerned about the temporal, and she, on the other hand, was concerned about eternal things. Her deep debt of sin had been paid! The burden and consequences of sin were lifted. She became a child of God, and for that she was thankful.

Have you been guilty of focusing too much on the horizontal and temporal things in life? What will you do to shift your focus on our vertical and eternal interactions with God?

A Biblical Example

Psalm 107 is a reflection on the Lord's goodness. The psalmist will give us more insight into giving thanks to the Lord. The psalmist is anonymous, but his deep reflection conveys a heart that is thankful for the goodness of God.

Psalm 107:1:

*Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,
For His mercy is everlasting.*

This opening declaration of God's goodness sets the tone and rhythm of the entire psalm as the psalmist begins his deep reflection. Prayers of thanksgiving should be declarative.

Psalm 107:2:

*The redeemed of the Lord shall say so,
Those whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy*

The psalmist begins reflecting on the Lord's redemptive acts. Prayers of thanksgiving should always be reflective in nature.

Psalm 107:3-7:

*And gathered from the lands,
From the east and from the west,*

*From the north and from the south.
They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region;
They did not find a way to an inhabited city.
They were hungry and thirsty;
Their souls felt weak within them.
Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble;
He saved them from their distresses.
He also had them walk on a straight way,
To go to an inhabited city.*

The psalmist reflects on the history of Israel and God's track record of saving His people. Prayers of thanksgiving are bolstered by the deep reflection of God's track record throughout history.

Psalm 107:8:

*They shall give thanks to the Lord for His mercy,
And for His wonders to the sons of mankind!*

The psalmist calls for his audience to respond with thanksgiving as he continues to offer praise to the Lord.

Psalms 107:9:

*For He has satisfied the thirsty soul,
And He has filled the hungry soul with what is good.*

Prayers of thanksgiving are not limited to God's mighty works but it reflects on His consistent provision of natural needs.

Psalm 107:8-14:

*There were those who lived in darkness and in the shadow of death,
Prisoners in misery and chains,
Because they had rebelled against the words of God
And rejected the plan of the Most High.
Therefore He humbled their heart with labor;
They stumbled and there was no one to help.
Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble;
He saved them from their distresses.
He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death
And broke their bands apart.*

Reflecting on one's prior sinful condition brings the reality of our unfavorable position before God. The Almighty has mercifully humbled us, enabling a pathway of salvation that gives us a favorable position before Him. Prayers of thanksgiving are cultivated by our reflection on who we were before Christ and who we've become in Christ.

Psalm 107:15:

*They shall give thanks to the Lord for His mercy,
And for His wonders to the sons of mankind!*

The psalmist again calls for his audience to give thanks to the Lord. This denotes the importance of glorifying God for His works.

Psalm 107:16-22:

*For He has shattered gates of bronze
And cut off bars of iron.
Fools, because of their rebellious way,
And because of their guilty deeds, were afflicted.
Their souls loathed all kinds of food,
And they came close to the gates of death.
Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble;
He saved them from their distresses.
He sent His word and healed them,
And saved them from their destruction.
They shall give thanks to the Lord for His mercy,
And for His wonders to the sons of mankind!
They shall also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,
And tell of His works with joyful singing.*

We were all foolish in our sin and lacked understanding, yet God sent His word that we might have the opportunity of salvation. Prayers of thanksgiving should reflect on the reality that God has rescued us from trouble.

Psalm 107:23-31:

Those who go down to the sea in ships,

*Who do business on great waters;
They have seen the works of the Lord,
And His wonders in the deep.
For He spoke and raised a stormy wind,
Which lifted the waves of the sea.
They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths;
Their soul melted away in their misery.
They reeled and staggered like a drunken person,
And were at their wits' end.
Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,
And He brought them out of their distresses.
He caused the storm to be still,
So that the waves of the sea were hushed.
Then they were glad because they were quiet,
So He guided them to their desired harbor.
They shall give thanks to the Lord for His mercy,
And for His wonders to the sons of mankind!*

The Lord has intervened in perilous circumstances on the earth. We must thank Him for His intervention which has spared us in times of trouble. Prayers of thanksgiving reflect on His intervention in times of distress.

Psalm 107:32:

*They shall also exalt Him in the congregation of the people,
And praise Him at the seat of the elders.*

The psalmist calls for the exaltation of God corporately and amongst the leaders. Exaltation is a prerequisite for thanksgiving because it gives us the proper perspective.

Psalm 107:33-42:

*He turns rivers into a wilderness,
And springs of water into a thirsty ground;
And a fruitful land into a salt waste,
Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it.
He turns a wilderness into a pool of water,
And a dry land into springs of water;
And He has the hungry live there,
So that they may establish an inhabited city,
And sow fields and plant vineyards,
And gather a fruitful harvest.
He also blesses them and they multiply greatly,
And He does not let their cattle decrease.
When they become few and lowly
Because of oppression, misery, and sorrow,
He pours contempt upon noblemen
And makes them wander in a pathless wasteland.
But He sets the needy securely on high, away from affliction,
And makes his families like a flock.
The upright see it and are glad;
But all injustice shuts its mouth.*

The psalmist highlights God’s sovereignty in the earth and over the people of the earth. The reality of His sovereignty produces humility within believers that in turn provides comfort to the believer’s soul. Prayers of thanksgiving should acknowledge God’s sovereignty as well as His other attributes because they are interconnected, constituting an occasion of praise.

Psalm 107:43:

*Who is wise? He is to pay attention to these things,
And consider the mercy of the Lord.*

An exhortation to be wise by taking heed to this psalm is fitting. Prayers of thanksgiving are rooted in wisdom and essential to the Christian life.

In what way has Psalm 107 changed your view of thanksgiving prayers?

What are the benefits of offering prayers of thanksgiving to God?

King David, a man after God's own heart, makes his way to sit before the Lord after receiving news that the Lord has made an everlasting covenant with his posterity. King David was moved with gratitude and responded with a heartfelt prayer as he reflected deeply on God's goodness and kindness toward himself and Israel. This prayer is recorded in 1 Chronicles 17:16-27. King David's intimate relationship with the Holy One of Israel was evident. Their very intimate relationship was no coincidence either. King David cultivated an everlasting bond with God who is good.

How can we be like King David—a man, woman, or child after God's own heart? We must proactively seek Him and never cease to reflect on His goodness and kindness.

Amid our reflection of God's character and works, we will naturally begin to grow fonder of him. Our thanks to Him acknowledge our need and cultivates our dependence on Him. Going to His throne daily and thanking Him solidifies the reality of His kindness toward us. The habit of offering thanksgiving dispels the false claims of the adversary that attempt to impugn God's goodwill and loving-kindness toward us. Our faith will begin to be bolstered as we recall His acts of kindness. We will

then begin to tell others of His goodness, and He will become our worthy Lord.



Prayer Time:

Reflect on the goodness and kindness the Lord has shown you and write out a list of things that have left an indelible impression on your heart and life. Take 10 minutes to pray with thanksgiving for the things He has done (Psalm 9:1-2).

Conclusion

All the forms of prayer are an expression of your relationship with the Father. When you sin, you will seek mercy and grace and you will be led to confession. When the reality of His holiness comes to bear upon your heart, mind, and soul you will exalt Him. When you have a need you will beseech him with humble supplication because you know He is faithful. When you are overwhelmed by His great love, you will adore Him. When He reveals His concerns regarding others, you will be encouraged to intercede. When you reflect on His goodness and kindness you will offer Thanksgiving.

The goal of this guide was to provide a foundation to build your prayer life upon. It is up to you to cultivate intimacy between you and your Lord. I have strategically placed 10-minute prayer sections after each chapter to assist in the process. Six chapters, 10 minutes each totals 60 minutes of prayer time. This is only one hour out of twenty-four hours in a day. I encourage you to set an hour away each day to pray. If you have utilized the prayer sections effectively this should not be difficult to accomplish.

Make your time with God a priority by setting your alarm and blocking out your calendar. Many distractions will be presented to you on your journey. The flesh, fatigue, and busyness will attempt to rob you of your precious time with God. Be on guard by planning and keeping a schedule. This will assist in creating the infrastructure to lead a life dedicated to exploring the greatest treasure known to man.

If you commit to seeking Him every day you will begin to thirst for Him. There will be a deep longing in your soul for a moment with Him. The psalmist knew what it felt like to thirst for the Lord as He declared in Psalm 42:1-2:

*As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So my soul pants for You, God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;
When shall I come and appear before God?*

When you have gotten to this point you will be experiencing a portion of eternal life, knowing Him (John 17:3). I have to warn you that other things in life may become boring and unattractive. Things that you enjoyed in the past will become of no interest. This world and what it has to offer will become worthless. This will become true because you will have found the most beautiful treasure in the universe, the God of eternity.

Dear brothers and sisters, when I say this I mean it with everything in my being, He is the greatest treasure that you will ever find! Everything good, righteous, and noble comes from Him. He is the only true treasure! If there was one principle I'd like you to take away from this guide it would be to seek the Lord with all your heart, mind, and soul. If you seek Him, you shall find Him (Deuteronomy 4:29). He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). Commit your life to this wonderful quest of knowing Him intimately.

Bibliography

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