



Teach Us to Pray – David's Prayer

July 6 | Group Guide

This series is designed not to teach us *about* prayer, but to teach us *to* pray. Learning is easy. Doing is difficult. This Sunday we talked about confession. Talking about confession is easy. Confessing our sins to God and to another person is hard.

And yet, when Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, He teaches them to pray,
“Forgive us our sins ...”

Our prayer for this week comes from Psalm 51.

Read Psalm 51 and this introduction together with your group (10 minutes).

Read all of Psalm 51. Then, read the following introduction with your group.

Confession may be the hardest prayer to pray. To confess our sins requires humility. It requires that we come face to face with the reality that our lives are not all that put together. Sometimes we think that we can only come to God in prayer when our lives are put together, when everything is going well, when we have things under control.

But Jesus tells a parable in Luke 18 that sets the stage for us.

⁹ To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

¹³ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

¹⁴ “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

“God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Later in Luke 18:38, Jesus comes upon a blind man who cries out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” When the people rebuked the man and told him to be quiet, he shouted all the louder, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”



For hundreds of years people have found it helpful to combine the prayer of the tax collector and the prayer of the blind man. They simply call it “The Jesus Prayer.” Consider writing it out somewhere so everyone can see it. It goes like this:

*Jesus Christ,
Son of God,
Have mercy on me,
A sinner.*

When we pray this prayer, we find ourselves in the company of the blind, the lame, the lost, the outcasts, the sinners. We find ourselves in the company of the very people Jesus said He is drawn toward. Like the blind man, we pray it all the more... over and over, until it sinks its way into the soundtrack of our lives. Would you say this prayer out loud together?

*Jesus Christ,
Son of God,
Have mercy on me,
A sinner.*

On Sunday we discussed four movements in a prayer of confession. Tonight, we will pray through each of these movements together. You may wish to stay in a large group for this or you might split into smaller and/or gender specific groups.

Go through each prayer movement in your group (30 minutes).

Movement 1: Appeal to God’s Character (Psalm 51:1-2)

- David appealed to God’s mercy, love and compassion.
- Why do you think it was important to David to appeal to God’s character?
- *Let’s take a few moments to pray, telling God who He is and why it matters to us.*

Movement 2: Acknowledge my Condition (Psalm 51:3-6)

- David does not hide. And yet, he had been hiding for months before Nathan the prophet confronted him.
- Why is hiding so natural for us? How would you describe the difference between hiding and healing?
- *Let’s pray out loud, naming our sins (generally or specifically where appropriate), our struggles and how we have missed the mark.*

Movement 3: Ask for Cleansing (Psalm 51:7-13)

- Read verse 10. This seems to be the climax of the psalm. David doesn’t just want to be forgiven; he wants to be a different kind of person. He wants to be clean.



- Why do you think cleansing of the heart and renewal of the spirit is so important to David?
- Proverbs 4:23 says:

*Above all else,
Guard your heart,
For it is the wellspring of life.*

- *Ask God to do in your heart what you cannot do for yourself.*

Movement 4: Adoration and Consecration (Psalm 51:14-19)

- We began with praying the Jesus Prayer.
- As we close tonight, we will pray this prayer several times. Each time we will shorten the prayer slightly.
- With each movement, simply ponder the final word spoken.
- Please repeat after me:

*Jesus Christ,
Son of God,
Have mercy on me,
A sinner.*

*Jesus Christ,
Son of God,
Have mercy on me,*

*Jesus Christ,
Son of God,
Have mercy*

*Jesus Christ,
Son of God*

Jesus Christ



Jesus

Amen.

Return together as a large group to share about your prayer time (10 minutes).

- Have you ever prayed a prayer of confession before? How was that for you?
- What resistance did you feel as you prayed?
- What gospels truths do you need to know as you walk away from this time of confession?

Finish by having someone pray over your whole group (5 minutes).