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## 6. Prayer and Confession

*Exposed. He had tried so hard to keep it in the shadows, to hide it from the eyes of the people and the eyes of God. But now he stood there, exposed by God himself for who he truly was: an adulterer, a murderer, a liar, and a terrible excuse for a king.*

*It all began so small. . . he allowed his eyes to linger over another man's wife, and he couldn't control his desire. He sent for her, violated God's gift of marriage with her, and then attempted to cover up his actions by murdering her husband and taking her for his own wife. He acted quickly, hoping that no one would realize their secret: She was already carrying his child.*

*Now that it all was over, King David got on with his life. But as the days passed, he felt a heavy weight settling on his shoulders. Did anyone notice that he had hardly slept for months? Could anybody else see the guilt that was slowly killing him inside?*

*The prophet walked in as the king sat on his throne. Nathan told David a disturbing tale of a cruel rich man who killed and ate his neighbor's pet lamb, even though he had thousands upon thousands of sheep of his own. Without even being asked what should be done, David's sense of justice rose up within him, and he declared, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die!" The prophet responded with just one sentence: "You are the man." King David had lusted, committed adultery, and murdered. He was the one who deserved to die.*

*Exposed. What should David do now? There was only one place to turn. He confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord." And now the prophet spoke a sweet word of forgiveness. "The Lord has taken away your sin. . . you are not going to die." As David heard that beautiful gospel, the weight was lifted off his shoulders. There would still be earthly consequences for what he had done. But the eternal consequences of his sin separating him from God were removed. God had forgiven him.*

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**(adapted from 2 Samuel 11)**

This story is a sobering example of how sin seeks to grow and take over our lives. King David's sin drew him away from the Lord, but God graciously sent his prophet to both lead him to repentance and pronounce God's forgiveness. In this lesson we examine how God listens to our prayers, including prayers of confession, so that he may reassure us also of his forgiveness.

## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT PRAYER?

*Psalm 50:15* Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.

*1 Peter 5:7* Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Prayer is a direct line of communication with God. We talk, and God listens to us.

Let's not take for granted what a miracle this is, considering our natural state before God.

*Isaiah 59:1-2* Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

*Romans 8:7-8 (NIV84)* The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Whose fault is the disconnect between God and mankind?

However, observe how God "bridges the gap:"

*1 Timothy 2:5* For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.

*Galatians 3:26* In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

Without faith in Jesus, would God respond to our prayers?

However, since we have Jesus serving as our mediator, we can have full confidence that God does hear and answer all of our prayers.

*"Our Father in heaven.'* With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and we are his true children, so that we may pray to him as boldly and confidently as dear children ask their dear father.' (Luther's Small Catechism)

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Read Luke 11:1-4

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Discuss the different things Jesus is praying for. If desired, consult “Explanation to the Lord’s Prayer - Appendix, p. 77-78

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*Read Luke 11:5-8*

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What does this parable teach us about prayer?

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*Read Luke 11:9-10*

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Jesus wants us to be confident that we will receive what we pray for. But that doesn’t exactly mean that 100% of the things we pray for will automatically take place.

Discuss the three different answers that God gives to our prayers:

- “Yes” (see *1 Kings 17:19-22*)
- “Wait” (see *Revelation 22:20*)
- “No - I have something better in mind” (see *2 Corinthians 12:7-10*)



And even if we don’t know what to pray for:

*Romans 8:26* The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

## WHY SHOULD I CONFESS MY SINS REGULARLY?

When a Christian gives into temptation, faith responds by seeking God’s forgiveness. We call this **confession**. Let’s read and discuss the psalm of confession King David wrote after God sent the prophet Nathan to convict him of his sin with Bathsheba:

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*Read Psalm 51.*

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## A REPENTANT HEART

Look through David’s Psalm, and mark the places where you see the following attitudes at work:

1. Admitting he has sinned
2. Sorrow over sin
3. Faith in God’s forgiveness
4. Desire to leave the sin (“to **repent**” literally means “to turn away”)

*1 John 1:9* If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

*Acts 3:19* Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

*James 5:16a* Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

**Confession** (uncovering our sins before God) and **absolution** (being assured of God's forgiveness) have been referred to as the "spiritual heartbeat of the Christian."

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## TAKING IT DEEPER

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### Agree or disagree?

- We aren't forgiven unless we confess our sins to the pastor.
- There is no value in confessing my sins to another person, since I can confess them directly to God.
- We shouldn't bother God with prayers about "little things."
- If we live a good life, God will answer our prayers.
- When we pray, we should expect to receive what we ask for.
- After we pray, we should listen hard in order to hear God's response.

### Discuss

- What does it mean to pray "in Jesus' name?"
- Why do we say "Amen" at the end of prayers?

### Homework

Consider praying the Lord's Prayer every day this week in a devotional way, that is, pausing after each petition and praying for those things our Father in heaven wants us to bring to him in prayer. Use Martin Luther's Small Catechism as a guide (Explanation of the Lord's Prayer in the Appendix pgs.77-78)