



HOW DO WE PRAY?

AN 8 PART STUDY ON INTIMACY WITH GOD

Session 6: Forgive Us Our Sins

*Receiving God's grace and
learning to extend it to others*

Introduction – The Prayer of Honest Hearts

Up to this point in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus has taught us to pray about:

God's character

God's kingdom

God's will

God's provision

Now the prayer turns toward something deeply personal.

Jesus teaches us to pray:

“Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.”

This line acknowledges something every person experiences.

We fall short.

We fail.

We hurt others.

And others hurt us.

Prayer becomes the place where we bring both our guilt and our wounds before God.

Scripture Reading

Read the Lord's Prayer slowly.

Scripture: Matthew 6:9–13

⁹Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. ¹⁰May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today the food we need, ¹²and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. ¹³And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

Notice that after teaching this prayer, Jesus immediately emphasizes forgiveness again.

Scripture: Matthew 6:14–15

¹⁴“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Forgiveness is central to the life of a follower of Christ.

Key Idea



Prayer invites us to receive God's forgiveness honestly and to extend that same grace to others.

Movement 1 – Naming Our Need for Forgiveness

The prayer begins with honesty.

“Forgive us our sins.”

The Bible consistently teaches that all people fall short of God's standard.

Scripture: Romans 3:23

²³For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

Sin is a universal condition. It says “ALL have sinned,” not “Y’ALL have sinned.

Sin is also not simply about breaking rules.

It reflects a deeper reality: we often live apart from or outside of God's will. The word “sin” literally means “trespass.” Especially in light of our prayer of submission and living in His Kingdom, and in His will be done, the word should be understood as us living outside of where we belong.

Sin affects:

our relationship with God
our relationship with others
our own hearts

Prayer creates space for confession and restoration.

Movement 2 – The Gift of God's Grace

The good news of the Gospel is that forgiveness is possible because of Jesus.

Scripture: 1 John 1:8–9

⁸If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. ⁹But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

God does not respond to confession with condemnation.

He responds with grace.

Forgiveness means that God releases the guilt and shame that sin creates.

Through Christ, our relationship with God is restored.

Forgiveness is not something we earn.

It is a gift we receive.



Movement 3 – Why Forgiveness Matters

Unconfessed sin often produces hidden burdens.

People carry:

guilt
shame
regret

These burdens can quietly shape how we see ourselves and how we relate to others.

Confession allows those burdens to be brought into the light.

Scripture: Psalm 32:3–5

³When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. ⁴Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. ⁵Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.” And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.

When forgiveness is received, the heart experiences freedom.

Prayer becomes a place of healing rather than hiding.

Movement 4 – Forgiving Others

Jesus then adds a challenging phrase:

“as we forgive those who sin against us.”

This does not mean we earn God's forgiveness by forgiving others.

Instead, Jesus teaches that people who truly understand God's grace begin to extend that grace to others.

Scripture: Colossians 3:13

¹³Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

Forgiveness does not mean pretending that harm did not happen.

It means choosing not to hold bitterness or revenge in our hearts.

Forgiveness releases the desire to retaliate.

But there is another important reason forgiveness matters.



When we hold on to offense, it becomes like **bait in a trap**.

A trap is designed to capture and hold something in place. In the same way, unforgiveness can quietly capture our hearts and keep us bound to the moment when the hurt occurred.

The person who caused the harm may move on with life, but the one carrying the offense remains emotionally and spiritually tied to that moment.

Unforgiveness rarely harms the person who caused the wound.

Instead, it slowly harms the one who carries it.

It keeps the heart trapped in resentment, bitterness, and pain.

Forgiveness does not excuse wrongdoing.

But it releases the trap.

It allows us to move forward rather than remain captive to the past.

Holding on to offense also contradicts the prayer Jesus has just taught us to pray.

If we ask God:

“Your Kingdom come, Your will be done,”

we are asking for God's rule to shape our lives.

God's Kingdom is marked by mercy, reconciliation, and grace.

When we refuse to forgive, we resist the very work of God's Kingdom within our own hearts.

Forgiveness, however difficult, becomes a way of opening our lives to the transforming work of God.

Movement 5 – Why Forgiveness Can Be Difficult

Forgiving others can be one of the most difficult spiritual practices.

Sometimes the wounds people carry are deep.

Forgiveness does not ignore justice.

It does not require immediate trust.

It does not erase consequences.

Instead, forgiveness is a decision to release hatred and entrust justice to God.

Scripture: Romans 12:17–19

¹⁷Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. ¹⁹Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the Lord.



Forgiveness frees the heart from the burden of bitterness.

Movement 6 – Living as People of Grace

When we receive God's forgiveness and extend it to others, something changes within us.

We begin to reflect the character of God.

Jesus tells a powerful story about forgiveness.

Scripture: Matthew 18:21–35

²¹ Then Peter came to him and asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?” ²² “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven” ²³ “Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. ²⁴ In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars.^[c] ²⁵ He couldn’t pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt.

²⁶ “But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ ²⁷ Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. ²⁸ “But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. ²⁹ “His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it,’ he pleaded. ³⁰ But his creditor wouldn’t wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full.

³¹ “When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. ³² Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt. ³⁵ “That’s what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters^[e] from your heart.”

The story reminds us that those who have received great mercy are called to show mercy.

When we choose instead to hold onto bitterness and resentment, the result can become torture for our lives. Choosing to forgive, doesn’t only set the other person free—it frees us!

Forgiveness becomes a defining characteristic of the Christian life.

Summary – Forgiveness

When Jesus teaches us to pray for forgiveness, He reminds us that:

All people fall short of God’s will.



God freely offers forgiveness through Christ.

Confession brings healing and restoration.

Receiving grace leads us to extend grace.

Forgiveness frees the heart from bitterness.

Prayer becomes a place where guilt is lifted and relationships begin to heal.

Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus places forgiveness in the center of this prayer?
 2. What makes it difficult for people to confess their sins honestly?
 3. How have you experienced God's forgiveness in your life?
 4. Why can forgiving others sometimes feel so difficult?
 5. How might forgiveness bring freedom to your heart?
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Personal Notes

(Use this space to record insights, questions, or reflections.)

Practice for the Week

This week, include these two questions in your prayer time:

“Lord, is there anything I need to confess?”

“Is there anyone I need to forgive?”

Bring both honestly before God.

Allow prayer to become a place of healing and restoration.

Closing Thought

Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Gospel.

When we pray for forgiveness, we are reminded that we live by grace.

And when we extend forgiveness to others, we become living reflections of that grace.

