

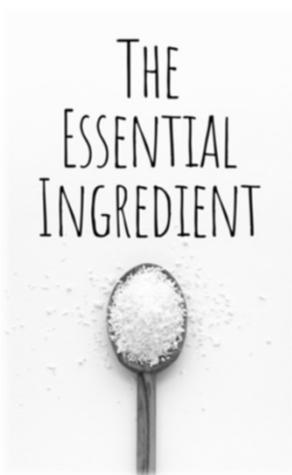
THE PRIORITY OF PRAYER

SESSION #2

**Repeat after Me:
Prayer as Confessing God's Truth**

1

What Is the Most Essential Ingredient for Prayer?



- A proper *environment* without distractions?
 - Jesus Himself “would often slip away to the wilderness to pray” (Luke 5:16).
- Plenty of *discipline* and *determination*?
 - Jesus taught that we must “pray and not lose heart,” persisting like the widow did before her judge (Luke 18:1-8).

2



- An attitude of *faith* and *expectation*?
 - James instructs us to pray “in faith, without doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind” (James 1:6).
- A spirit of *freedom* and *confidence*?
 - The writer of Hebrews reminds us that we must “draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need” (Heb 4:16).

3

- As important as these are, they are not the primary ingredient.
- The ingredient that contributes most to a healthy life of prayer is one that is necessary before prayer even begins.
- This ingredient is our *listening*—
our listening to the speech of God on the pages of Scripture.
- No other factor will influence our praying as much as this.



4

- This reality reflects God's *primacy* in all things.
- Theologians recognize this "primacy" in three basic realms:
 - (1) God is the *principium essendi* (the foundation for *existence*).
 - (2) God is the *principium cognoscendi* (the foundation for *knowing*).
 - (3) God is the *principium loquendi* (the foundation for *speaking*).
- We could not speak to God if God had not first spoken to us.
- Without God's verbal revelation, meaningful prayer would be impossible.

5

"Only God is self-sufficient. We are creatures, and every moment we're sustained by him. Even our rebellion against him is only possible because he holds the fabric of the universe together by his powerful word. Our shouts of defiance against God are only possible with the breath he gives."

—Tim Chester, *A Meal with Jesus*, 70

6

Two Vital Principles For Confessing God's Truth in Prayer

7

- **Principle #1:** Before we speak to God in prayer, He must speak to us by His word.
- **Proverbs 28:9** – “He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination.”
- God has spoken, and what He has spoken has been recorded in the pages of the Bible.
- The Bible is what *motivates* the believer to pray, *instructs* the believer how to pray, and *determines* the believer's content in prayer.



8



“Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer, after having dressed in the morning. *Now* I saw, that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, instructed; and that thus, whilst meditating, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord. I began, therefore, to meditate on the New Testament, from the beginning, early in the morning.”

—Müller, *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings*, 1.405

9

- **Principle #2:** We must confess God's truth back to Him in prayer.

- “To confess” = to express our agreement with God's revelation of Himself and His assessment of ourselves.



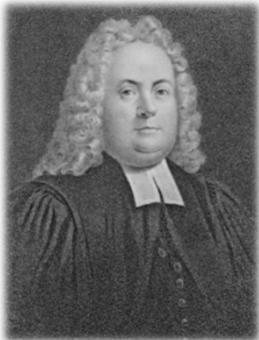
- **ὁμολογέω (*homologeō*):**

1. to commit oneself to do something for someone;
2. to share a common view or be of common mind about a matter, agree;
3. to concede that something is factual or true, grant, admit;
4. to acknowledge something, ordinarily in public.

10

- Thus, “to confess” is not to tell God something He doesn’t already know—as is often the case when we confess sins to one another.
- “To confess” is to express our acknowledgement of the way things really are as God sees them.
- Confession occurs when we are impacted by the message of divine revelation and the ministry of the Holy Spirit about *who God is* and *what He does*, and *who we are* and *what we do*.
- “To confess” is to assert God’s assertions, to restate God’s statements, to repeat God’s language.

11



“I would advise that the *sacred* dialect be most used, and made familiar to us and others in our dealing about *sacred* things; that language Christian people are most accustomed to, most affected with, and will most readily agree to.”

—Matthew Henry, *A Method for Prayer*, xiv

The content of prayer “should be cast much in the mold of Scripture, and should be marked by a free use of its language.”

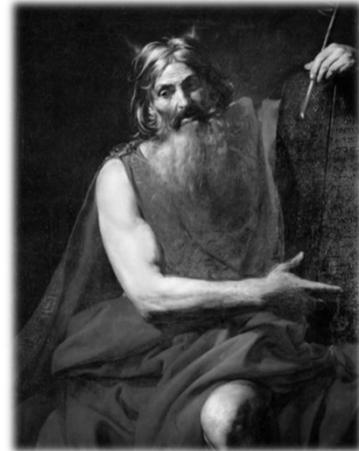
—Patrick Fairbairn, *Pastoral Theology*, 317



12

What Does Bible-Saturated Confession Look Like?

- Numbers 14:17-19 (citing Exod 34:6-7)** – “But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, ‘The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth *generations*.’ Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.”



13

- Daniel 9:2-3 (citing Jer 25:12; 29:10)** – “In the first year of his [Darius’] reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was *revealed as the word of the LORD* to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, *namely*, seventy years. So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek *Him* by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.



14

- **Acts 4:24-26 (citing Exod 20:11; Ps 2:1-2)** – “And when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, “O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, who by the Holy Spirit, *through* the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST”

15

“I have learned to see the Bible as kindling for a holy fire. Scripture is meant to inform us, and thus to inflame us. It is meant to illuminate our thoughts of God, and thus to ignite our affections for God.”

—Ortlund, *A Passion for God*, xiv

16

The entire Bible is a prayer book.

17

“One of the reasons Jesus prohibited the empty repetition of prayers is because that’s exactly the way we’re prone to pray. Although I don’t merely recite memorized prayers, my own tendency is to pray basically the same old things about the same old things. And it doesn’t take long before this fragments the attention span and freezes the heart of prayer. The problem is not our praying *about* the same old things, for Jesus taught us (in Luke 11:5–13; 18:1–8) to pray with persistence for good things. Our problem is in always praying about them with the same ritualistic, heartless expressions.

—Donald Whitney, *Simplify Your Spiritual Life*

18

“In my experience, the almost unfailing solution to this problem is to pray through a passage of Scripture—particularly one of the psalms—instead of making up my prayer as I go. Praying in this way is simply taking the words of Scripture and using them as my own words or as prompters for what I say to God.”

—Donald Whitney, *Simplify Your Spiritual Life*

19

What Do We Confess Specifically?

- We confess truth about *God*, and that this God is *our* God.
 - **Matthew 6:9** – “Our Father, who is in heaven.”
 - **Romans 8:15** – “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”
 - **Galatians 4:6** – “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

20

GOD THE FATHER - GLORY AND GREATNESS
Immortal, Invisible 36

• 1. Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise,
 • 2. Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light,
 • 3. To all, life Thou giv - est, to both great and small,
 • 4. Great Fa - ther of glo - ry, pure Fa - ther of light,

In light in - ac - ces - si - ble hid from our eyes,
 Nor want - ing, nor wast - ing, Thou rul - est in might;
 In all life Thou liv - est, the true life of all;
 Thine an - gels a - dore Thee, all veil - ing their sight;

Most bless - ed, most glo - rious, the An - cient of Days,
 Thy jus - tice, like moun - tains, high soar - ing a -
 We blos - som and flour - ish as leaves on the tree,
 All praise we would ren - der; O help us to see

Al - might - y, vic - to - rious, Thy great name we praise,
 Thy clouds, which are foun - tains of good - ness and love,
 And with - er and per - ish but naught chang - eth Thee,
 'Tis on - ly the splen - dor of light hid - eth Thee!

Words: Walter Chalmers Smith
 Music: Welsh Hymn Tune

21

- We confess truth about *Jesus*, that He is *the Christ, the Son of God, God incarnate*, and that this Jesus is *our Lord and Savior*.
 - **Matthew 16:16** – “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the *Christ*, the Son of the living God.’”
 - **John 20:28** – “Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”
 - **1 John 4:15** – “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the *Son of God*, God abides in him, and he in God.”

22

JESUS THE SON – CHRIST OUR KING

116 Rejoice, the Lord Is King



Words: Charles Wesley
Music: John Darwall; Last stanza setting and choral ending by Robert Sterling
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23

- We confess truth about ourselves, our sin, and our need for God.
 - **Psalm 32:5** – “I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.’”
 - **Daniel 9:13-20** – “Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel.”
 - **1 John 1:9** – “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

24

- Confession of sin is not just listing “mistakes.” It is about describing them according to God’s terms.

“True confession involves seeing sin as God defines it, without mitigation or blurring of the lines. Taking ownership of every nuance of offense caused by our sin and bearing the weight of it.”

—Jerry Wragg



25

- We confess truth about God’s word—that it is the truth, that we receive it as such, and that it is worthy of full obedience.
 - **Psalm 119:4** – “You have ordained Your precepts, that we should keep *them* diligently.”
 - **Psalm 119:50** – “This is my comfort in affliction, that Your word has revived me.”
 - **Psalm 119:72** – “The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of pieces of silver.”

26

365 Ancient Words

1. Ho-ly words long pre-served for our walk in this world. They re -
 2. Ho-ly words of our faith hand-ed down to this age. Came to

sound with God's own heart; Oh, let the an-cient words im - part.
 us through sac - ri - fice; Oh, heed the faith-ful words of Christ.

Words of life, words of hope give us strength, help us cope;
 Mar-tyr's blood stains each page They have died for this faith

In this world wher - e'er we roam an-cient words will guide us home.
 Hear them cry through the years these Heed words and hold them dear.

An - cient words ev - er true, chang - ing me and chang - ing you; We have

come with o - pen hearts, Oh, let the an - cient words im - part.

Words and Music: Lynn DeShazo
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27

- We confess truth about God's works—that they are purposeful, necessary, and good.
 - **Psalm 119:68a** – “You are good and do good.”
 - **Psalm 119:90** – “Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations; you established the earth, and it stands.”
 - **Psalm 145:9** – “The LORD is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works.”

28

SIX REASONS TO PRAY (CONFESS) THE BIBLE (Donald Whitney)

1. You'll pray biblically-saturated, biblically-shaped prayers (1 Jn 5:14-15).
2. You'll be freed from the boring rut of saying the same thing about the same old things in prayer.
3. You'll not only pray about the same things in fresh ways, but you'll pray about new things as well.
4. You'll be more focused in prayer.
5. You'll be more God-centered in prayer.
6. You'll find that your prayers become more like a real conversation with a real Person.

