Opening Prayer

O most gracious God, You sent Your only Son to die for me, to take all my sins — my thoughtless words, my darkest thoughts, the "pet" sin that will not let me go, my senseless deeds, my prideful attitude, my critical nature, my past, present, and future transgressions — and throw them as far as the east is from the west so that I may be Your child and live with You in heaven. Open my eyes today, O Lord. Teach me anew each day to see what it means to live forgiven and forgiving here on earth so that You may take joy in Your child and so that my joy in life with You may be filled to overflowing. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

At an LWML fall rally years ago, the pastor leading the opening devotions said, “We, as Lutherans, know how to confess our sins, but we don’t know how to live forgiven.” I don’t remember anything from that rally except that statement God implanted into me. How do I live forgiven?

What Do I Think?

Which of these hamper me from forgiving?

Irritating people
Disappointment
Hurt feelings
Death
Guilt
Lack of effort
Failure
Negative people
Fear
Family
Other(s)?

Define Forgiveness:

Does this describe how I treat others? How I think of myself?

What Does God Say?

Read Christ’s words: Matthew 6:12.

What Does This Mean for Me?

When is it hard for me to forgive?

What/who is hardest for me to forgive?

How do I forgive as others have forgiven me?

Why is the ability to forgive a key to living forgiven?

What Does God Desire For Me?

Micah 6:8

Jeremiah 29:11–13

John 1:14

John 8:32

John 14:6

2 Corinthians 5:17

John 10:10

Where Do I Start?

What Do I Think?

Confession is:

What happens first when I’m ready to forgive someone?

When I’m ready to ask for forgiveness?

When I’m ready to forgive myself?

by Sheila Lutz
What Does God Say?
Psalm 32:1–5a
Proverbs 28:13
1 John 1:9
James 5:16
1 Timothy 6:12

What Does This Mean for Me?
When do I confess my sins to God? How often?

When do I confess my sins to others?

When do I hide my sins? Why?

When do I confess my faith?

Confession Is Good for the Soul, But …

What Do I Think?
Even after we confess our sins and know we are forgiven, sometimes there’s a problem.
Guilt comes when:

What Does God Say?
Romans 8:1
Psalm 32:5–7
Hebrews 10:19–24
2 Corinthians 5:21
Psalm 103:12

What Does This Mean for Me?
We should always apologize when a wrong is done to another. Sin cannot be ignored, but how do I deal with any guilt that lingers?

What has made me feel guilty in the past? How does/did Satan use guilt against me?

How long do I remember what harm another has done to me?

How do I react when someone confesses sin to me?

Do I trust God to take care of the guilty — even when it’s me?

What should I do when guilt overwhelms me again?

Is My Heart Really Unforgiving?

What Do I Think?
In your own words define:
Advice
Criticism
Condemnation
Gossip
How can each of these lead to an unforgiving heart?

To whom do I talk first when something is wrong (wrong with myself and/or with others)?

What Does God Say?
Proverbs 16:28
Proverbs 26:20
Luke 6:31
James 3:2–12
1 Thessalonians 1:6
3 John 1:11
1 Peter 2:9
1 Peter 5:7

What Does This Mean for Me?
Why is it hard for me to confess sin(s) to another?

How do I react when in the middle of a gossip conversation?

How do I stop myself from speaking wrongly?

Do I speak in a demeaning way about myself?

Closing
Pray together Ephesians 3:20–21 (paraphrase): *Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

Sing a hymn of praise together before you leave: “Holy Spirit, Light Divine” *(LSB #496; LW #166; or TLH #234)* or “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” *(LSB #770; LW #516; or TLH #457).*

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