

Small Group Guide: THE LORD'S PRAYER: WORDS YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW - Everyday Forgiveness

Opening Question: What's the funniest or strangest "excuse" you've ever heard (or used!) for being late or messing up? (*Tie-in: we all tend to explain, excuse, and rationalize things—just like Pastor Dan talked about with guilt.*)

Opening Prayer: *Heavenly Father, Thank you for bringing us together today. As we talk about guilt, confession, and your forgiveness, help us to be honest with you and with ourselves. Give us courage to face what we'd rather hide, and help us to hear your truth and your grace clearly. Guide our conversation and draw us closer to you and to each other. In Jesus' name, amen.*

KEY SERMON POINTS

Main Ideas

The Lord's Prayer is a lifestyle, not just words. "Forgive us our debts" is something we live out daily, not just recite.

Two major peace-killers: guilt and resentment. Guilt and resentment steal the peace God wants us to experience.

1. **Believers are fully forgiven (justified) once and for all.** When we trust Christ, God the Judge pardons us completely—past, present, and future sins. *Romans 8:1* – No condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.
2. **But our "feet" still need daily washing.** (See Jesus washing the disciples' feet in John 13) Once you're "bathed" (saved), you don't need another bath—but your feet get dirty as you walk through life. Daily confession is like washing our feet: bringing our sins to God so our fellowship is restored and our hearts stay clean.
3. **Hiding sin blocks prosperity and peace; confession brings mercy.** *Proverbs 28:13*: Concealing sin keeps us from prospering; confessing and forsaking it brings compassion/mercy.
4. **Confession = agreeing with God.** Not "I'll never do it again," but "God, you're right and I'm wrong." Sin isn't only "big" acts—anything less than God's perfection misses the mark.
5. **Repentance includes turning.** Take responsibility (no blame game). Turn away from sin (change direction and behavior). Turn toward God's grace (depend on Him, not willpower alone).
6. **God offers both mercy and grace.** Mercy: forgiveness for our past. Grace: power to change in the future.
7. **We receive forgiveness by faith, not by feelings.** We don't beg, bargain, or bribe God. We trust His promise: if we confess, He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse (1 John 1:9), even when we don't "feel" forgiven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Read Matthew 6:9–12.** How does seeing the Lord's Prayer as a "life to live" instead of just "words to say" change the way you hear the phrase, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors"?
2. **Read Proverbs 28:13.**
 - What are some common ways people "conceal" sin today (including Christians)?
 - Can you think of an example (from your own life or generally) where hiding sin clearly prevented someone from "prospering" spiritually, relationally, or emotionally?
3. **Read 1 John 1:8–9.**

- John says we deceive ourselves when we claim to be without sin. What are some ways we “deceive ourselves” spiritually?
 - What does it practically look like to “agree with God” (confess) about our sin?
4. **Read Hebrews 4:15–16.** How does knowing Jesus was tempted in every way, yet without sin, affect your willingness to “approach the throne of grace with confidence” when you’ve blown it?
 5. **Pastor Dan talked about “rational lies” (rationalizing sin—telling our heart that what we know is wrong is actually okay).**
 - What are some examples of “rational lies” believers can tell themselves?
 - Which types of rationalizing are you personally most tempted to use?
 6. **He explained that God has already justified believers once and for all, but we still need our “feet washed” regularly.**
 - How does this help you balance security (I’m forgiven) with seriousness about sin (I still need daily confession and repentance)?
 - Has misunderstanding one side or the other (either constant fear or careless attitude toward sin) ever affected your spiritual life?
 7. **Pastor Dan said, “You will stop defeating yourself when you stop deceiving yourself.”**
 - Is there an area where you suspect you might be “deceiving yourself” or minimizing something God calls sin?
 - Without sharing details you’re not ready to share, what might it look like to move from self-deception to honesty in that area?
 8. **Many of us struggle with guilt from past sins that we’ve already confessed.**
 - What helps you move from “I know I’m forgiven” in your head to actually living like someone forgiven in your heart and daily life?
 - Is there a specific truth or verse from this message that could help you when old guilt resurfaces?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS (Choose 1 or 2 that apply to you.)

1. **Set aside a “Psalm 139” check-in.** Spend 10–15 minutes in a quiet place, read Psalm 139:23–24, and ask God to “search” your heart. Write down anything He brings to mind instead of excusing or minimizing it.
2. **Practice true confession and repentance.** Take what you wrote (or what God shows you) and specifically confess each item to God:
 - Name it plainly (no spin).
 - Tell God you agree with Him about it.
 - Ask for His help to turn from it and then make one concrete change (block a site, end a harmful pattern, apologize to someone, etc.).
3. **Memorize and pray 1 John 1:9.** Use it as a “truth anchor” when you don’t feel forgiven. When guilt hits, say it out loud and thank God by faith for His forgiveness and cleansing.
4. **Replace a rational lie with God’s truth.** Identify one lie you tend to believe about your sin (e.g., “everyone does it,” “it’s not that bad,” “God could never forgive this”). Find a Bible verse that contradicts that lie (your group can help) and speak that verse over your life whenever the lie comes up.
5. **Take a step toward accountability.** Consider sharing one area where you want to walk in more honesty and freedom with a trusted, mature believer. Ask them to pray for you and check in with you this week.

MEMORY VERSE for the Week:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9, NIV)

Closing Prayer: *Lord, Thank you that in Christ there is no condemnation, and that when we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us. Help us not to hide, excuse, or rationalize our sin, but to agree with you quickly and turn toward you. Give us courage to walk in honesty and freedom this week. Wash our “feet” as we go, and help us to live as people who are truly forgiven. In Jesus’ name, amen.*