

Confession and Reconciliation

Prayer Tool: How to Pray The Jesus Prayer

What?

The Jesus prayer is one of the oldest prayers of the church. This prayer tool will help you begin to pray it in your daily life.

Why?

“This prayer can expose the sin that is living in us, and this prayer can eradicate it. This prayer can stir up in the heart all the power of the enemy, and this prayer can conquer it and gradually root it out. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as it descends into the depths of the heart, will subdue the snake which controls its ranges, and will save and quicken the soul.” St John Chrysostom

Bible reference:

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”
Luke 18:13-14

A quick introduction to the Jesus Prayer

A simple way we can grow in prayerful confession is by praying one of the oldest prayers of the church:

“Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Originating from the lips of Blind Bartimaeus and reformulated by the Desert Fathers, this prayer has been rising in humble devotion out of the hearts of millions of saints for hundreds of years.

The Jesus Prayer is a form of centring prayer or ‘breath prayer’ which facilitates our desire to practice the presence of God, carrying within it a particular focus on

confession. The Jesus Prayer has become a proven prayer tool for many Christians in their quest to mould and maintain a 'humble and contrite spirit.' (Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 66:2).

The encouragement towards repetition and rhythm with 'The Jesus Prayer' throughout our days slowly causes our hearts (and maybe even our whole bodies) to bow in humility, acknowledging in reverent awe the holy otherness and steadfast love of God.

While the essence of such a prayer acknowledges, quite rightly, our sinfulness, we must be careful an unhealthy and unbiblical imbalance does not take place - our main focus is Jesus, and if this prayer is doing what it is supposed to in us, the whispers of His grace will be increasingly amplified in our hearts and minds, over and above the sin we confess before Him.

The Jesus Prayer produces a posture within us which makes us ready to receive afresh what we have grown to become aware we need the most - the mercy of Jesus at the centre of our lives.

As temptation seeks to lure us, or fear and shame try to overwhelm us, without having to go looking for a particular prayer to pray, The Jesus Prayer quietly finds us, powerfully grounding us in a spiritual and liberating reality.

In the self-centred western-world of entitlement, where truth is relative and our moral compasses dreadfully askew, the practice of confession, though culturally unfashionable, is an urgent discipline for the church.

For this reason, the simplicity and humility of The Jesus Prayer is perhaps one of the most revolutionary weapons we possess as we seek to transcend the cultural-wars around us and journey towards Christlikeness.

Do it: How to pray the Jesus Prayer

Begin by setting your alarm on your phone, on the hour, every day for a week. Simply take a moment in silence and allow this prayer '**Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner**' to rise out of the deepest part of you.

Don't worry if it seems slightly manufactured or perfunctory initially - just allow it to keep rising from your heart and it will naturally become more meaningful for you.

Try it for a week and notice how you become aware of the mercy of God gently caressing your soul. Be at rest with God.

Books on the Jesus Prayer

- The Way of a Pilgrim: And the Pilgrim Continues His Way - Walter J. Ciszek