

## Prayer regarding lust

Dear Father, I have a problem; I have abused and perverted what You created for fellowship and bonding with my lifetime mate and the responsibility that goes with it—to love and care for her and the children our intimacy produces. I have used the beauty and glory of this physical union for my own selfish purpose, to gratify my lust. In so doing, I've shirked my responsibility as a husband and father and contributed to the emotional and spiritual destruction of the women I've used [and abused?] [and the children who have resulted?].

I've excused myself in any number of ways: by saying it's what they wanted anyway; it's my bad upbringing; and it's normal now—everybody does it, even many of the “Christians.” In fact, it has become so much a part of my lifestyle, I hardly feel it's wrong anymore. The women I've used would get it and are getting it from others anyway. Which is why it's hard to feel convicted about it.

It even bothers me when I hear preachers or jail chaplains and volunteers say it's sin, especially since the Bible says that lusting after a woman in your heart is the same as committing adultery with her. So everybody's guilty. (Mt 5:27-28)

Yet I know deep in my heart these are only excuses, and that true Christians nip their lustful thoughts in the bud before they grow into willful, deliberate mental pornography and sexual imagery. Because my acts of lust started there, but I let them blossom into acts of sin, leading to the lifestyle I can't quit and don't even *want* to quit.

But God, I don't want to go to hell. And Your Bible says that those who have sex outside their own marriage will end up in the lake of fire. So I ask You now to please change my heart about this wickedness. Please help me renew my mind so I don't think about it all the time. Show me how to give my mind a bath with Your Word so I have clean, pure thoughts. Please take away my love of the music, rap, pornography, reading, TV, movies, Internet, and conversations which contaminate my mind with sex: no wonder I'm so addicted. My mind needs a complete overhaul. (Rev 21:8; Jn 15:3-4).

But I can't do it on my own. It's impossible! I go back to it again and again, deeper and deeper, like a dog eating his own vomit. But at least now I truly repent about it from my heart: I honestly *want* to be set free. I long for a pure mind, a pure heart. (2 Pet 2:22)

Psalms 119 says, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You” (vv. 9-12a).

Please show me how to replace the evil words and images I've been feeding on with Your Word until my mind is renewed and clean (Rom 12:1-2; Col 3:1-10). Teach me how to “put off” my old nature and “be renewed in the spirit of [my] mind” and “put on” my “new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:22-24).

Father, I ask you to work on my whole worldly lifestyle, because it's all fleshly, given over to what I want, not what You want. Change me from being a taker to a giver, from always wanting things to go my way, to feeling the needs of others. Train me how to be a blessing to others instead of a drain on them, *causing* conflict and demanding my rights when I should be a peacemaker, willing to turn things over to You for what I can't handle. (Mt 5:9; Php 2:3; Jam 3:16-18)

Set me free from all the addictions that feed my selfish lifestyle and cause inconvenience, irritation, frustration, or pain and sheer agony to those around me. Rebuild my conscience; make me sensitive to things that aren't good for me and those around me, and give me the power to overcome. Because without You I “can do nothing,” but through You, through the power of Your Spirit and Word, I can do “all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Php 4:13; Jn 15:4-5).

Father, I surrender my will to You, inviting You to take up residence in every area of my being, cleaning out every room, one by one, or all at once, as You give me grace. Break down my resistance,

my carnal reasoning, my pride, ego, self-importance, and everything not compatible with You. I long to change from one You *resist*, from one who is an *abomination* and horribly disgusting to You, to one You draw to Yourself and speak to and use for good, not evil. (Jam 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5; Pr 16:5; 2 Cor 10:5)

I know it seems impossible, but didn't You say that with You *all* things are possible? So I'm going to believe that the good work You have begun in me, You “will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Php 1:6; Mt 19:26; Mk 9:23; 10:27; Lu 1:37; 18:27).

Lord, I also realize that to depend on You means to become a part of Your family. I've been slack in this area; it has not been important to me, which explains one main reason I've become what I've become. So please give me the desire to be around Your people; give me understanding how to relate to them, how to receive from them without judging them and seeing their faults or feeling offended and angry because of the way they see me. Teach me how to deal with the huge log in my own eye before I attempt to deal with the speck of dust in someone else's.

Give me the willpower and discipline to get out of bed on Sunday morning and make a decision to place my body in the presence of Your people as they worship and receive Your Word, because otherwise I'll too easily forget this prayer and all my good intentions. I know I'll drift right back into my old ways, and no telling where that will lead me next. And actually I'll need more than one church service a week; increase my desire so I'll want to be with Your people as much as possible, that I'll hang around those who influence me toward You the way I've allowed the wrong friends to influence me toward evil.

Well, I've asked a lot, but You are big enough. Which also means, I realize, that whom You love, You discipline and chasten. I've had a habit of running from this, of undoing any attempt of You or anyone to correct or break me. I'm so sorry, Father. This resistance is so much a part of me, I don't see how I can change. So again, what's impossible for me is easy for You. So here I am. First give me a chance to go the easy way; give me an ear to listen. Then if I don't get it, speak louder, whatever it takes. Because life is too short and eternity is too long to lose it over a brief “vapor” of meaningless pleasure. (Ps 39:5; Jam 4:14)

There. Amen—“so be it.” I mean this prayer with all my heart. Do whatever it takes. My life no longer belongs to me; it belongs to You. I'm Your property, Your temple, Your home. Clean it up so You'll be comfortable to live here and proud to call me Yours, so I will no longer be a stumbling stone and an offense to others, but a blessing. That when people see me, they won't see a phoney, a hypocrite, but one who is real, a genuine product of Your grace and mercy. Someone they'll want to be around for the right reasons, not the wrong.

I love You: please increase my love until I can honestly say I love and serve you with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. Because this is how I know I'll change. (Lu 10:27; 2 Cor 3:18)

Your child, \_\_\_\_\_

Trust in His strength, not yours: Ps 37:3-9; Pr 3:3-8; 2 Cor 3:4-5; 12:9-10; Eph 3:16; 6:10; Col 1:11; Is 40:29-31; 41:10; 45:24

God's judgment on sexual Immorality: Rom 1:28-32; 1 Cor 6:9-10, 18; 10:8, 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19-20; Eph. 5:5-6; Col 3:5-6; 1 Thes 4:3-8 (2 Thes. 1:8-10); Heb 12:16; 13:4; 2 Pet 2:10; Rev 2:14, 21; 9:21; 20-23; 21:8; 22:15; Pr 2:10-19; 5:1f; 6:20f; 7:1f; 9:13f; 11:6; 22:14; Ecc 7:26; Judg 16; 1 Sam 2:22-24; 2 Sam 12:1f; Num 25; Gen 35:22; 49:3-4 (2 Chr 5:1)

## Prayer regarding anger and/or depression

Sometimes when I feel overwhelmed I write my prayer. Then I put myself in God's place, answering me. I'm always amazed how encouraged I feel when He speaks in this manner. So here's one for you—your prayer (change to match your need) and His answer:

Dear Father, I come to You now about my anger problem. Victor, that white dude who comes as a chaplain volunteer, says there are three major causes of anger or depression: our relationship to You, God, our relation to people, and our relation to the material world—money, home, food, convenience, and so on. I add relation with myself, but he says that still comes under one or more of those three categories.

He says some medical experts have done research to prove our brains are “hardwired for God,” and when our thinking lines up with You, our body and brain chemistry balances out, like taking an antidepressant. He said he never took antidepressants during his twenty years of “severe, suicidal depression” because he found what he calls five “antidepressants” in the Bible: Job 3, Psalm 22, 38, 88, and Lamentations 3:1-42. He says they worked because these chapters described men in deep depression and yet they were in the Bible, right under Your nose, where You were carefully observing them, displaying them as models of patience, of trusting and waiting for Your grace.

So maybe it's true: maybe I have been angry toward You because You seem so far away, so far from helping me. It feels like I'm battling my issues alone and there's no end in sight; I feel alone, abandoned, misunderstood, and the harder I try, the behinder I get.

Why do others have it so easy and I have it so hard? Why can't I be *normal* like most everybody else? And why is it so hard to forgive those who wronged or failed me? And why did You stand by and allow them to do it when You're supposed to be “the Good Shepherd” who “gives His life for the sheep”? (Jn 10:11)

And if I'm so wrong, why can't I seriously take responsibility for what I've done to them or to myself? And how can I help but worry about *things*—my basic needs—when I've burned so many bridges behind me and people won't give me a chance to prove myself?

No wonder I'm angry (or depressed)! In fact, when I think about these issues, I get too angry to pray, at least to pray effectively. Which might be why my prayers don't get through. So at least help me listen so I can find out what's wrong with me and what to do about it. Thank You. Your wayward, discouraged, frustrated, angry kid.

My dear child: I *am* the Good Shepherd and I'm here to help you. I've always been closer to you than you can possibly imagine, and now I will give you understanding. First I want to tell you how to open the door to fellowship with Me through faith. You hear that word often, but faith is believing and trusting with your heart what you can't see, hear, or touch physically. You are discouraged and angry for the very thing that could actually make you one of My closest friends, like Abraham, whom I called My *friend*. (Heb 11:1; 2 Chr 20:7; Is 41:8; Jas 2:23)

Why was he My friend? Because I talked with him so much? No. I talked with him, true, but I talked with others who didn't stand in the dead silence, with everything caving in around as Abraham did, or allowed the lure of physical pleasure to replace the fellowship of My love—which is much easier to experience in darkness than in the comfort of earthly convenience. (Jud 2:17; 1 Ki 11; 2 Chr 16; Jer 7:13)

When I called him to leave Ur and go to the land of Canaan, he obeyed and built an altar to Me when he arrived. Abraham is known not only as the father of faith and as My friend, but by the altars he built. This is the first secret of faith. The altar is a place of surrender, similar to marriage vows, your commitment to Me for better or worse, even in thick darkness. It signifies your intent to obey no matter what, and willingness to *wait* for My grace to enable you to obey. (Gen 12:7-8; 13:4, 18; Ex 19:9; 20:21; 1 Ki 8:12; Pr 25:2; Is 45:15)

This is the heart of faith—*willingness* to obey as I give you grace. Because if you're not willing, we both must wait until you are. (Ps 34:18; 51:17; 78:8, 37; 119:2, 10; Jer 29:13)

Even I made an altar out of the lowest pit of My life until then, in the Garden of Gethsemane, where I battled the powers of darkness in yielding My will to My Father. It was not easy because I'd become like you in order to experience your weakness. As a result of My struggle that night and victory the next day at the cross, My will, My obedience is now available to you as a gift. But it comes only through faith, and even that I offer to you as My gift, the fruit of My sacrifice, My death, and confirmed by My resurrection. (Lu 22:43-44; Heb 10:9-10, 16)

The second key to faith is waiting. True, faith is all about My Word, but it is the Word that comes from My *mouth*, like fresh insight from heaven to speak to your heart. Why is waiting so critical to faith?

Because it's not merely using up time, as many do without any profit at all—years and years of pointless waiting for the wrong things.

Waiting for “the word of faith” is maintaining a sense of expectancy, knowing I speak in “thick darkness,” when you're not trusting in a physical, earthly answer, but in Me alone. For if you seek Me first, I'll add everything else you need when you need it. (Ex 20:21; Mt 6:33)

This is how Abraham became “rich in faith.” Read his story in Genesis 12 to 24. There you'll read of long periods—many years—when I didn't speak to Him. One of his worst lifetime trials was not long after he entered Canaan in obedience to Me. A famine threatened to ruin his livestock and livelihood, so he went down to Egypt. Years later his son Isaac also experienced famine, but I spoke, telling him to stay there; he obeyed and saw My great blessing on him. (Gen 12, 26)

But I withheld My Word from Abraham to test his faith to the depths. There, out of fear for his life, he allowed Pharaoh to take his wife. Still I remained silent. Most men would have caved in long before and do all the time. That's where his altars came in. Like Job, his attitude was trust no matter what. (Gen chps 12-13, 15; Job 13:15)

To stand in faith, he had to trust Me when I didn't give him direction during the famine; then he went to a deeper level of trust when he failed his wife and became a bad example to Pharaoh. (Ps 40:1-8; Is 50:10-11)

The next test he also failed, when he allowed his wife, Sarah, to persuade him to have Ishmael by Hagar, their Egyptian servant girl. This would cost him thirteen more years of waiting, with the added burden of conflict between Sarah and Hagar, which continues to this day in the Middle East. But he came to the place where the reality of his altars became a spontaneous part of his character, when he no longer “wavered” at My promise “through unbelief.” His faith was now strong enough to give Me *all* the glory, seeing he was beyond hope in his own ability; he was “fully convinced” that what I had promised” I was also “able to perform.” That's when I gave him and Sarah the long awaited promise of Isaac. This is what it means to “overcome.” It's overcoming fear and doubt and fully trusting Me. (Gen 16; Rom 4:13-22; Is 30:18; 50:10-11; Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7)

Yet his greatest test came many years later when I asked him to offer this son as a burnt offering. He would have failed it if he had not learned to trust Me in previous years. But by then he believed I would raise him from the dead and prepared to slay him after he'd bound him on his greatest altar of a *lifetime of altars, of surrender!* (Heb 11:17-19)

Not only had I prepared a ram for the sacrifice in Isaac's place, but Abraham's trust in Me brought forth from Me a deeper revelation of My love—“the Lord will provide,” by which one of the songs of the church is named: Jehovah Jireh. (Gen 22)

So, My child, Victor is almost correct, but not quite. All problems with anger and depression depend not on those *three* areas, but really only one: Me. Once you build an altar in your heart to Me and learn to trust Me in the darkness without impatiently “lighting your own fire,” you will begin to see that I do provide. I'll give you love and wisdom in all your relationships and I'll provide for your financial and physical needs. (Is 50:10-11; Jn 13:34; 14:12-18; 15:7; Php 4:19)

I long to prove Myself sufficient to you, your Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. But I *must* do it when you learn to *trust Me in the darkness*, or you will never emerge with strength like a butterfly as it struggles to open its cocoon and thereby gains the power to fly and survive as earth's most beautiful insect. (1 Cor 15:42-44; Rev 1:8)

Look at your problems as things that contribute to the darkness in which your faith will grow strong. And in that darkness you will learn to hear and understand My Word, My provision. This is how those I use develop faith—through testing and trials in hardships and darkness. (Rom 5:3-4; 8:35-37; 2 Cor 4:17-18; 12:9-10; Heb 11; Jam 1:2-4, 12)

Your problems entitle you to a level of grace you would never need and receive if you had it easy. All you need is to build that heart-altar, surrendering yourself to My will. Then learn to wait. (Ps 25:3, 5, 21; 27:14; 37:34; Lam 3:25-26; Is 30:18-19; 40:31)

But I must warn you about waiting. Waiting is not “killing time,” but learning to be faithful in things which indicate your trust in Me in the *obvious needs around you*. For it places your mind and heart in a listening mode, directs your attention away from yourself toward the needs of others, and sensitizes your conscience to My voice so you're not misled by a “voice” that pulls you toward selfishness. (Mt 25; Mk 13:34-37; Lu 16:10-13; 19:12-17; Ps 123:1-2)

That leaves you with the problem of how to be faithful doing the right thing when you're so used to doing wrong things. But it's still a matter of *trust*. Like Abraham who failed regarding his wife two times, he kept at it and learned to trust until his trust turned to a faith that became the working model for all who followed him. (Rom 4:16)

Dare to *trust Me, My child*. Use every failure and setback as all the more reason to trust me, and when you feel most helpless and in that helplessness build an altar of surrender in your heart, I'll come

through. I'll even help you build that altar. And I'll make you, as I made Abraham, a testimony to those around you, including your family.

I AM all you need: Jesus, Yeshua—"salvation, deliverance," "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Through Me, you'll *stand!* (Ex 3:14; Is 9:6; Eph 6:10-18)