

Prayer Tool: Identificational Repentance

What?

Identificational repentance is a form of prayer where we confess before God the sins of our family, church or nation. This prayer tool will demonstrate how to outwork identificational repentance.

Why?

"Praying men are a necessity in carrying out the divine plan for the salvation of men." E. M. Bounds

Bible reference:

"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

A quick introduction to Identificational Repentance

An often ignored Biblical example of confessional prayer is what some refer to as Identificational Repentance (IR). This long clunky term simply describes a form of prayer that identifies with and confesses before God the sins of our family, church and nation.

This is where the prayer of confession and the prayer of intercession merge into a heart cry for God to pour out his spirit on a church, people-group or nation. It is the groundswell of this type of prayer which precedes any significant move of God in history.

The Origins of Identificational Repentance

The principle of IR originates in passages of the Old Testament. Following in the footsteps of the remarkable intercession of their leader Moses on behalf of his (God's) people, Israel were encouraged to repent on behalf of the sins of the nation and on behalf of the sins of their ancestors.

The best examples of IR in the Old Testament are found in Nehemiah (1:6), Jeremiah (14:20) and Daniel (9:8, 20). None of these characters were necessarily committing the sins they were confessing, but as leaders, they representatively identified with and confessed the sins of their people. God heard and God responded.

Understanding the corporate identity dynamic helps us as we read scripture. For example, the Psalms which were written generations after the Exodus often say things like:

“We have sinned as our forebears did; **we** have done wrong and dealt wickedly.”
Psalm 106:6

This worldview can still be recognised in Jesus’ and the Apostles’ ministry. They spoke to cities (Matt 11:21-24, Luke 10:13-15) and churches or corporate bodies of believers within whole regions (Rev 2&3) in regard to their actions and their sin.

The Bible indicates strongly, while God most definitely engages with individually and personally, He also relates us as families, tribes and nations. In the West in particular, where individualism and consumerism have infiltrated the church, we need to address this imbalance.

Taking Corporate Responsibility

God may be personal, but He is never private. Therefore, it falls on the church in each generation to take corporate responsibility for the spiritual state of their church, people-group and nation.

It’s important to be clear on the Biblical premise for this- God does not punish the children for their fathers’ and mothers’ sins but the consequences of the iniquity of their forefathers can be ‘visited’ (‘have an influence’) upon the children.

The charge to each generation is to recognise their priestly (mediatorial) mandate in Christ - 1 Peter 2:9 says, “you are a royal priesthood” - discern and confess the sins of their present generation and repent on behalf of their ancestors. In doing so, they break free from the sinful patterns of the ‘spirit of the age’ and from the influence of past sins which have lingered over the current generation.

Do it: Identificational Repentance

Follow these practical steps:

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1. **Confer:** This shouldn't be done alone – talk about this with your church leadership first or a group of other mature believers
2. **Pray:** Begin by asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the spiritual climate of your area. Ask Him to show you some of the things in your community that are sinful patterns which need repented of.
3. **Research:** Do some research (sometimes called spiritual mapping) on the history of your town/city/nation. Some areas you might want to explore are:

The origins of your area: What are some of the founding principles or historical phenomena of your area it would be good to be aware of?

Blockages to the gospel: What are prevalent sins or sinful cycles in your community that particularly affect the generations? e.g. racism, sectarianism, alcoholism, family breakdown, materialism, suicide.

Sovereign foundations: What could be the sovereign foundations or redemptive roots of your area? This may come out of your research e.g., a past move of God, the church's history, some healthy founding principles you have discovered about your area. But I'd also ask God to give you a promise from scripture which is His promise for your area. What is it He says about your people, city or nation? This promise should serve as a foundation of all your prayers for your area.

4. **Worship:** As you come to confess the sin begin by worshipping Jesus, declaring His character and nature and posture yourself in humility.
Note: if there is a key area in the area that represents the particular sin you are speaking of you might want to go there as a group and pray on site.
5. **Confess:** Confess the sin – name the particular sinful act or sinful pattern that you are repenting of and ask God to have mercy and show His forgiveness. Allow yourself to sense the heart of God in these moments.
6. **Communion:** Apply the blood of Jesus – if suitable, taking communion is a good idea as in the act of remembering the sacrifice of Jesus you are declaring the forgiveness of sins and appropriating his victory over evil, the sins and the strongholds in your town/city/nation.
7. **Thanksgiving:** Finish in worship and thanksgiving to God for His forgiveness and declaring His goodness and right purposes in the life of this particular area.
8. **Observe:** Discern in the days to come the answers to your prayers. Notice any shifts in the atmosphere, local newspaper articles that indicate something

has changed, general conversations you have had with people which indicate God has moved.

Books on Identificational Repentance

- Gaining Ground - Martin Scott
- Healing America's Wound - John Dawson
- Sins of the Fathers - Roger Mitchell and Brian Mills