

CONFESSION: THE REDEEM'S REFRESHMENT

Jason Grissom / General

BUILDING AN A.C.T.S. CULTURE

In the 1800's, Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard said, "When you read God's Word, you must constantly be saying to yourself, 'It is talking to me, and about me.'"

You must learn to follow our Savior for yourself, but never follow Him by yourself.

Henri Nouwen says. . . .

The greatest work we can do is to give our lives to one another and to the world. Maybe that is what makes real community so irresistible: the sight of men and women giving of themselves to one another in love. When we think about our being given to each other, what comes immediately to mind are our unique talents: those abilities to do special things especially well. . . .

However, when focusing on talents, we tend to forget that our real gift is not so much what we can do, but who we are. The real question is not "What can we offer each other?" but "Who can we be for each other?" . . .

It is the gift of our own life that shines through all we do. As I grow older, I discover more and more that the greatest gift I have to offer is my own joy of living, my own inner peace, my own silence and solitude, my own sense of well-being.

When I ask myself, "Who helps me most?" I must answer, "The one who is willing to share his or her life with me." Henri Nouwen

James 5:16 *ESV*

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

1 John 1:7 *ESV*

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

When we remain silent about our sin before our Heavenly Father and our faith family we cut ourselves off from spiritual fullness and refreshment.

The effects of unconfessed sin are as follows . . .

Sin Soils The Saint

Psalm 51:2 *ESV*

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

Sin Saturates The Mind

Psalm 51:3 *ESV*

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

Sin Stings The Conscience

Psalm 51:4 *ESV*

Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.

Sin Saddens The Heart

Psalm 51:8 *ESV*

Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

Psalm 51:12 *ESV*

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

All sin, even adultery and murder is against God more than it is against others.
And David confessed it to God.

But he didn't confess it only to God. He also said to Nathan the prophet, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13). He confessed it to someone else, not just to God.

James 5:16 says, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. We are to confess our sins to one another. Certainly we need to do that when we have sinned against each other to seek forgiveness, but it isn't limited to that. Confessing our sins to others in our fellowship is a way of walking in the light, a way of bringing others into our lives so they can help us to say no to sin and yes to righteousness.

We need others to be aware of what is going on in our hearts and lives because of the warning of Hebrews 3:12-13, which says...

Hebrews 3:12-13 *ESV*

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading

you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Sin Sickens The Body

Psalm 51:8 *ESV*

Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

David's sin has begun to take a physical toll on him. Sin does this! It can damage your health - Paul's warning to the Corinthians - 1 Corinthians 11:30

1 Corinthians 11:30 *ESV*

That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

On a recent *NPR* interview with neuroscientist, Dr. David Eagleman, said this about his current research.

"You have competing populations in your brain, one part that wants to tell something and one that doesn't. There is a real physiological battle going on in the brain.

Keeping certain behaviors secret, especially behaviors that are seen and understood to be 'wrong' means a continual struggle with yourself. The internal dissonance and lack of sense of personal integrity is draining. The struggle involved in keeping a secret is stressful.

This means your brain will register the fact that there are increased levels of stress hormones going through your bloodstream as a result of this struggle to keep your secret. Your brain does not enjoy this stress. Those living duplicitous lives live with the stress of keeping a whole section of their lives secret from the people they see every day and care about.

The fact that their brains are marinated in stress hormones due to keeping the secret over and above the effects of the wrongdoing themselves can cause an impairment in the person's ability to stay healthy and function well."

This is science catching up to the Bible.

In case that wasn't sufficient. There was a massive study completed by James Pennebaker at the University of Texas in Austin.

He used blood tests and EEG measurements to measure what physically happens to people who confessed. He did it in two ways. Those who would confess out loud and those who wrote it down to be shared.

Here's what he found. Pennebaker found that whether secrets were confessed to another person out loud or were merely written down privately and shared later, there were tangible health benefits, both physical and mental. The research found it not only improved relationships in regards to depth and intimacy but better sleep and an improved immune system.

You have science saying, "Don't live a duplicitous life. Don't hold onto secrets. Come into the light because confession brings about deeper, more intimate relationships. By the way, it will make you a healthier person." This is the secular world going, "The Bible is right." They just don't know they're saying that, which is one of my favorite parts. "The Bible is right."

Here's my appeal to you. If you can feel yourself in this Psalm. If you have a gnawing in your gut. If you're having difficulty sleeping at night, you feel just exhausted...stop.

The cost of confession could be severe but you're saying that as though you're not paying a deep price right now for not confessing. Confessing secrets.

Maybe it's an addiction to pornography. Maybe it's an eating disorder. Maybe you're cutting. Maybe you're really struggling with depression. I don't know what it is. Maybe you're actually flirting or having an affair with somebody at work. I don't know.

There could be a billion things going on across this congregation but I'm telling you that **the only way to kill darkness is to drag it into the light. You will not win on your own.**

Sin Sours The Spirit

Psalm 51:10 ESV

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

David had a wrong spirit - 2 Samuel 12:1-7.... Sin does this to a saint. The backslider will be cantankerous, critical, sour and judgmental. The saint in sin is impossible to satisfy and quick to attack others to make themselves look better. They feel so miserable, they attempt to compensate by pushing their pain off on others. There is only one solution for the sour saint - REPENT!

Sin Seals The Lips

Psalm 51:13–15 ESV

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

Finally, the Scriptures also teach us the importance of *community* in dealing with our sin. Confession of sin in the presence of others is applying and celebrating the gospel, *together*. We are sanctified sinners who all need more grace for holiness, and we must rehearse this together. John beautifully captures this: “My little children, I write these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, *we* have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for *our* sins, and *not for ours only*, but also *for the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:1–2).

Confession to one another celebrates the expiation of our sin *and* the sanctifying work of God through the cross of Christ (1 John 1:9).

1 John 1:9 ESV

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Confession to another Christian also guards us from absolving ourselves without true repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10).

2 Corinthians 7:10 ESV

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Bonhoeffer writes that God gives us certainty that we are dealing with the living God “through our brother” (116).

1 John 1:9 ESV

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2 Corinthians 7:10 ESV

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

When we bring our sins to another Christian, they become concrete and their ugliness cannot be hid from view. Confession, whether in secret prayer or in the presence of a caring fellow Christian, honors Christ (Galatians 6:2).

Galatians 6:2 ESV

Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

“It is fitting, that by the confession of our own wretchedness, we show forth the goodness and mercy of our God, among ourselves and before the whole world”
Bonhoeffer

Now understand we are not talking about a “woe is me” attitude here. God isn’t calling us to a perpetual state of self-condemnation where we moan that “I can never do anything right, miserable worm that I am.”

Ongoing confession of sin doesn’t mean we deny the activity and gifts of God in our lives. We will continue to celebrate those things and be encouraged where we see the grace of God at work, and if you are a believer then he is most certainly at work.

Ongoing confession of sin is simply about walking in the light, about admitting where we have gone astray from God’s revealed will, and desiring to be open about that for the purpose of forsaking our sin and growing in godliness.

Confessing sin need not be (and in fact should not be) a discouraging or threatening activity. In fact, God motivates us to this very thing by providing powerful and hopeful incentives in our text.

The design of our meeting is, to obey that command of God, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed..." To this end, we intend:

- To meet once a week, at the least.
- To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reason.
- To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour, with singing or prayer.
- To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt, since our last

meeting.

- To end every meeting with prayer, suited to the state of each person present.
- To desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations.

Some of the questions proposed to every one before he is admitted among us may be to this effect:

Have you the forgiveness of your sins?

- Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?
- Have you the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God?
- Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?
- Do you desire to be told of your faults? Do you desire to be told of all your faults, and that plain and home?
- Do you desire that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you?
- Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you?

- Do you desire that, in doing this, we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?
- Is it your desire and design to be on this, and all other occasions, entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart without exception, without disguise, and without reserve?

John Wesley's Small Group Questions:

- Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
- Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
- Do I confidentially pass onto another what was told me in confidence?
- Am I a slave to dress, friends, work , or habits?
- Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
- Did the Bible live in me today?
- Do I give it time to speak to me everyday?
- Am I enjoying prayer?
- When did I last speak to someone about my faith?
- Do I pray about the money I spend?
- Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
- Do I disobey God in anything?

- Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
- Am I defeated in any part of my life?
- Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
- How do I spend my spare time?
- Am I proud?
- Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisee who despised the publican?
- Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I going to do about it?
- Do I grumble and complain constantly?
- Is Christ real to me?