



river west church

Confession

Luke 11:2-4

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2.14.2010

“Forgive us our sins...”

The word *confession* elicits a mixed bag of mental images for most people. For some, this word conjures up the image of a priest in a confessional booth. For others, the word brings to mind television clips of CEO’s and public officials airing their indiscretions. It’s no wonder that, for many, the word confession feels a bit...well...dirty. However, for those who are seeking to pray as Jesus taught, confession is not a dirty word...it’s a daily word.

“Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins...” (Luke 11:2-4)

Did you catch that? Right after line about “daily” bread Jesus adds, “And forgive us our sins...”, which is a bit surprising. It’s almost as if Jesus expects confession to be a daily practice for His followers, which is a bit unsettling. If Jesus taught His disciples to confess their sins, why are so few Christians actually doing it today?

Barriers to Confession: Shame and Fear

How many people do you know confess their sins to God on a daily basis? Chances are, not many. We live in world where the most natural thing to do is keep things to ourselves. We’re experts at hiding from God and hoarding secrets. This is nothing new of course. It started way back in the Garden. Have you ever really thought about what happened after Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden? The Bible tells us they sewed fig leaf loincloths for themselves and hid from God (Gen 3:6-7). They covered themselves out of shame and hid from God out of fear. Shame and fear are the two greatest barriers that keep Christians from confessing their sins as Jesus taught. Shame keeps us busy sewing fig leaves over ourselves—covering up our sins and secrets. Fear keeps us hiding in the bushes from God.

Unconfessed Sin Makes Us Sick

The Bible is filled with stories of men and women who went to great lengths to keep their sins and secrets hidden. Take King David for instance. He spent a whole year keeping his sins a secret (Psalm 32). We often skip over details like this as we read through stories in the Bible. A year is an awfully long time to keep the murder of an innocent man and a one-night stand to oneself. As David reflected on that year in hindsight he wrote,

“For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the
heat of summer.” (Psalm 32:3-4)

Keeping secrets makes us sick. Unconfessed sin is bad for the bones. Ask anyone who’s ever carried around a secret. In my experience, Christians who confess their sins daily are the healthiest, happiest people alive. In order to have the courage and confidence to confess our sins we must first have the courage and confidence to believe the Gospel!

The Gospel: Our Courage and Confidence to Confess

If you truly want to know what a person believes about the Gospel ask them what they think about confession. If they run and hide they're probably afraid an unmerciful God will stumble upon their sins and secrets. The only people that are truly free from hiding from God and hoarding secrets are people who believe the Gospel. People who truly believe the Gospel have nothing to hide! They don't sew fig leaves or carry around unconfessed sins! That's because the Gospel of Christ reveals God's infinite mercy, love and forgiveness toward sinful people (Psalm 51:1-2)! As the Gospel reveals the merciful, loving forgiving character of God the way that we pray changes dramatically! We gain the courage to come out of hiding! We gain confidence to confess our sins to God! We enjoy newfound fellowship and intimacy with God!

This week as you pray, spend some time reflecting on the mercy, love and forgiveness of God in the scripture passages below. As you do, confess your sins to God believing that He will forgive you.

1 John 1:5-9; Psalm 51; Psalm 32