

# Draw Near 7

## Confession, April 14

### Purpose

The practice of confession draws us nearer to God by helping us to lay bare our souls to him. Allowing us to be totally honest with ourselves in front of him. It also enables us to repair relationships with others so that we not only successfully Love God, but we successfully Love Others.

### Sharing Time

Review Devotionals: Has everyone completed some devotionals from this past week? There is no penalty for not completing them. They are there to help you and guide you. Let's share for a minute what we have learned from those you have done.

### Learning Experience

1. Introduction: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Many Christians are unthinkably horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living lies and hypocrisy...He who is alone with his sins is utterly alone."
2. What do you think about this quote? Is it true? Have you ever experienced this?
3. Read Matthew 7:1-5, 12 - Jesus paints a picture of a life in which we do not judge others but instead recognize our own flaws and limitations. He also calls on us to treat others in the way we want to be treated. The primary way to accomplish this is through confession.
  1. The Sermon on the Mount does not use the word "confess" or "confession," but the concept is there. There is no way to come to awareness of need to take a plank out of an eye without confession! There must be an awareness of sin, confession of those sins to God and the one offended. Then you are able to go and speak to another.
  2. Always when we deal with Matthew 7 we talk of "different kinds of judging". James Bryan Smith shares his definition of judging in "The Good and Beautiful Life". Everyone has been judged unfairly and harshly by someone else. We need to distinguish between judging and assessing someone's performance or behavior. One is negative, the other is positive.

1. "Assessing is simply evaluating a person's behavior." Parents assess the behavior of their children and make modifications, teachers grade papers and assess student performance, employers do the same thing.
2. "Judging is making a negative evaluation of a person without standing in solidarity with that individual." This is the correcting of a person and then walking off. This is the attempt to engineer their life by offering suggestions without any real help. If we are willing to stand with them and help them, then we are assessing them and accomplishing something different.
3. Too often Christians are known for judging a person in an attempt to change behavior instead of expressing a desire to honor and help another person work through change in their life. Too often a Christian is not seen as the person who is willing to come along side you in your sin and help you overcome your sin.
4. A cure for this tendency is confession. The facing of the reality of our sin in our life.
5. The reality: on the negative side confession keeps us from judging the failures in the lives of others because it reminds us of our own failures. We don't judge other people because we know we also fall. On the positive side confession enables us to treat flawed people with the same mercy we want to be treated with.
4. Corporate or Personal Discipline? You may be wondering why talk about confession when our focus should be outward on people.
  1. We usually talk of confession as a personal issue - something we do by ourselves to God. 1 Timothy 2:5 speaks of only one mediator between God and man - Jesus. And it is true that it will deepen our relationship with God and is a form of piety, a way to draw near to God.
  2. But in reality, confession works in our lives to change our relationships with people. The immediate impact of confession is on others - not just ourselves. James 5:16 points out the value of communal confession as well. We need to be aware we are a fellowship of sinners, not a fellowship of saints. When we confess, it impacts more than just ourselves.
  5. How should we go about confession? There are various approaches expounded by teachers throughout history. But most all point out these three concepts that must be worked through at some point in the process.
    1. Self-Examination. We begin confession by first becoming aware. Throughout these lessons we have already talked of Examen - where

you take time each day to look back over your day and see where God has been with you on that day. Also you look back and see where you have had problems/sins/mistakes. This is where confession begins.

1. Signature sins - John Ortberg uses this term for those sins that keep coming up when doing Examen. (In "The Me I Want to Be", pages 147-155) Those sins that we have a hard time getting away from, sins we have a hard time overcoming. The reality is everyone sins, but we don't all have the same weakness. And these weaknesses align with our personality. We all have strengths, but with every strength, we tend to have a weakness or sin. (Just like every home run leader in baseball tends to be a strike out leader as well.) Every strength has an equal sin on the opposite side.
  2. Characteristic Confession This is the confession focused on speaking about that sin that hits at the core of our being - the characteristic that is "us." We often have "blind spots" to these sins and so we can't see them. Therefore we need someone who is close to us, someone we can trust, who can speak into our lives and help us uncover this sin or sins and work to confess it.
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2. Being Sorrowful for Our Sin. There is a point at which we feel an amount of sorrow for what we have done with our lives. This reminds us of what Paul says about being sorry in 2 Corinthians 7:7-10. There is worldly sorrow and godly sorrow. We must be careful that we have godly sorrow. And with godly sorrow we can be guided by the Spirit to change our ways. Now at this point Chris Altrick warns between authentic confession and counterfeit confession.
    1. Authentic Confession: The focus and the result is God and humility. Confession is presenting our real self to God, bringing before God not the person we hope to be, but the person we actually are. When we are willing to do that - then we are experiencing authentic confession.
    2. Counterfeit Confession: The focus and result is failure and anxiety or pride. Counterfeit confession can lead to pride - we are so proud that we confess everything. We point out how our sins are a badge of honor showing how humble we are! No one struggles as much as we do! Any pride in sin is wrong, and we need to beware of these types of feelings when they come. Counterfeit confession also can lead to anxiety - we are worried that we are

not confessing enough, or that we are unworthy of God's love. Or we start to despair that others will see us and how flawed we are. This type of anxiety is of the devil - not of God who will always accept us and encourages our focus only on him.

3. Determination to Live Differently. This is the way of Zacchaeus, the way in which we determine we will live our life very differently than before. We are followers of Christ, we have the power of the Spirit in us, and we will lean on God for strength to overcome. This is also where we rest in God's grace that our sin is forgiven. God has promised us to forgive our sins - and we are dependent on that promise.

## **Practice**

1. I cannot emphasize enough that these practices are not to be done for God's approval - God already loves you as much as He will ever love you. These practices are for you! They will help you come to love God more, love life more, love others more, and love your possessions less.
2. This week you have a devotional on the back of the sermon outline. It has instructions on how to do it four times this week. Next week, as we come to class let's talk about what we experienced this week with God.
3. We have been given a wonderful gift. We have four great opportunities to use this gift this week. Be sure to find the 10 minutes on four days this week to practice this marvelous gift. Start today and do it!