

**One Another Series**  
**Healing Community**  
**Confess to and Pray For One Another**

Last week we started a series on the One Anothers in the Bible looking at what is Biblical community? In the New Testament we see one another commands such as Love One Another, Forgive One Another, Serve One Another, Pray for One Another, Encourage One Another etc.

My one for today is: Confess to and pray for another.

Our verse for today is. James 5:16:

*“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.”*

*“Confess and acknowledge how you have offended one another and then pray for one another to be instantly healed, for tremendous power is released through the passionate, heartfelt prayer of a godly believer!”*

**(Jas 5:16, TPT)**

Confess your sins: the word for sins in Aramaic can be translated faults, folly or offenses and is why TPT say: confess and acknowledge how you have offended one another and then pray for one another.

Let’s start with – that you may be healed. It doesn’t say that you may be forgiven. Why not?

Because forgiveness for sins comes first and foremost from God and so confession or admitting your wrong is first and foremost to God. Confession to another person is not an absolute necessity for forgiveness of sins from God. Think of the criminal on the Cross next to Jesus who had no time to speak to anyone and yet Jesus said to him; “today you will see me in Paradise.” Yes, its healing for people and relationships but not an absolute necessity for forgiveness from God.

We are instructed here by James that there is something we need to do in order to be healed. What kind of healing is in mind? If you dig a little deeper and look at the context, we can see that the healing can include physical healing from an actual physical sickness. It can include spiritual healing where we have become spiritually blind and insensitive like the Israelites in Jesus’ day.<sup>1</sup> They needed spiritual healing because their hearts had grown dull, their ears hard of hearing and eyes that were shut. Jesus offers to heal them if they turn. The healing can also include healing from the sickness of sin. Jesus viewed sin as a sickness that we need healed from.<sup>2</sup> When Jesus was asked why he ate with sinners he answered that those who are

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<sup>1</sup> “Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ““You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.” For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.”” **(Mat 13:14-15, ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> “And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” And when Jesus heard it, he said to them,

well have no need of a physician but those who are sick. Jesus viewed sin as a sickness people need healed from and he was the great physician. That's why Jesus had mercy and compassion for sinners not anger. The healing also includes healed relationships that become broken and hurt when someone sins or hurts or offends another person.

James says we are to confess our sins to one another and pray for one another. Or we are to confess to and acknowledge to one another when we have offended one another and pray for one another. If we have hurt someone intentionally or by accident we should confess or admit to the person, apologise and seek to be reconciled before offering gifts at the altar.<sup>3</sup> We should do it as soon as we become aware of it. The sooner the better. We should go directly to the offended person and ask for forgiveness.

Should we confess private sins or secret sins to one another? Again, to receive forgiveness we should first and foremost confess to God and ask for forgiveness because God is the one who forgives.<sup>4</sup>

***“People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.”***  
***Proverbs 28:13 NLT***

In his commentary *Opening Up James*, Roger Ellsworth sheds further light on why we should confess our sins to one another:

***“Confession should always be as wide as the sin. If we have sinned secretly, we should confess it to God. If we have sinned against someone else, we should confess it to God and to the person whom we have wronged. And if we have sinned publicly, we should confess it to God and in public”***<sup>5</sup>

If my sin is done within my heart alone and involves no offense to anyone else, I should confess my sin to God.<sup>6</sup>

If my sin involves offending another person, I confess my sin to God and then privately I should go to the person to confess my sin, ask for forgiveness and be reconciled.

Now our sins include our struggles, our weakness, our imperfection and our areas of vulnerability. If we have struggles in our lives, it's good to be open and vulnerable with others about our areas of weakness and ask for help. As we do this, we find healing comes through connection, compassion, community and confession. I have 2 people mainly that I can do this with easily. My beautiful wife and my dad. Recently I walked around Loch Fitty with my dad and got a lot off my chest. The deeper the connection the deeper the healing.

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“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Mar 2:16-17, ESV)

<sup>3</sup> ““So then, if you are presenting a gift before the altar in the temple and suddenly you remember a quarrel you have with a fellow believer, leave your gift there in front of the altar and go at once to apologize with the one who is offended. Then, after you have reconciled, come to the altar and present your gift.” (Mat 5:23-24, TPT)

<sup>4</sup> “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1Jn 1:9, ESV)

<sup>5</sup> Day One Publications, 2009, p. 162.

<sup>6</sup> “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1Jn 1:8-9, NIV)

I recommend starting with someone you trust completely. It may be your spouse, parent, best friend, neighbor, or whoever that person is in your life that you feel safe being open and vulnerable with. I would also recommend they be a strong Christian who is a good listener and can show empathy and pray with you.

Confession means to bring what is on the inside to the outside. As I was walking in Saline yesterday a grandmother was walking her dog with her son. The dog had just done its business on the road. The grandmother got a bag to pick it up and the young grandson's face was a picture of disgust. The dog was bringing what was on the inside to the outside. It wasn't pleasant, a little embarrassing, messy and awkward but the grandmother dealt with it beautifully. Not the best analogy for confession but it does mean to take what is on the inside to the outside.

It can be to tell someone you are really upset, really angry, really hurt, really disappointed or really struggling. It can be unpleasant, a little embarrassing messy and awkward. It is taking what is hidden and causing us shame and pain and confessing it to someone we love and trust. Why do we not do this and why do we find it difficult? Shame and fear. Brené Brown in her book "The Gifts of Imperfection" says:

***"If we want to know why we're all so afraid to let our true selves be seen and known, we have to understand the power of shame and fear. If we can't stand up to the never good enough and who do you think you are? then we can't move forward."***<sup>7</sup>

We don't let our true selves be known and seen because of shame and fear. Shame and fear cause us to pretend and keep secrets and present a 'perfect' image of ourselves to our world.

**"Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging."**<sup>8</sup>

***"Shame needs three things to grow out of control in our lives: secrecy, silence, and judgment."***

One of the reasons we should confess to one another and pray for one another is that it takes what's on the inside and puts it on the outside. It also is a perfect antidote to shame. Shame is an intensely painful feeling or believing that you are junk and unworthy of love.

Shame says; "I am bad!" It's different from guilt which can be helpful which says: "I did something bad." Guilt is about our behaviours and shame is about who I am. Our identity. Guilt is helpful to motivate us to change, say sorry or make amends.

Guilt is as powerful as shame and its effect is often positive. However, shame is often destructive. Shame says; I am bad, I am unworthy to be loved, I am useless, I am junk, I am a failure. This is not the truth which sets you free. This is not the truth of your true identity.

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<sup>7</sup> — The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are by Brené Brown

<https://amzn.eu/8LMMOhM>

<sup>8</sup> — The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are by Brené Brown

<https://amzn.eu/eGVvXA6>

You may have failed but you are not a failure. Failure is not your identity. You may have failed but you are still a child of God, still loved and accepted and known and believed in.

Secrecy, silence and self-judgment causes shame to grow out of control in your life. But confession, connection, community, compassion and prayer can bring healing from shame, leading to physical healing and spiritual healing. Brenee Brown also says:

***“Shame hates it when we reach out and tell our story. It hates having words wrapped around it—it can’t survive being shared. Shame loves secrecy. The most dangerous thing to do after a shaming experience is hide or bury our story. When we bury our story, the shame metastasizes.”<sup>9</sup>***

So yes, we should confess our sins to God. If we offend someone, we should go to them privately and ask for forgiveness and be reconciled. But I also think we should confess our weakness, struggles and challenges with one another and pray for one another.

In order to do this, we need to have good Christian friendships with people we trust that we can be open with, share with and pray with. This is what loving one another looks like. So, let me ask you a question?

Who are your close friends? Who can you be real to? Who can you be open with and vulnerable with? Who can you reveal what is on the inside and bring it out in the open? Who can you be open with and pray with?

For many people that is no-one. But as a follower of Jesus, you are called to love one another. You are called to be open and vulnerable with one another and that means having close Christian friendships. In fact, good Christian friendships may just be the single most important thing you can have in your life to help you grow spiritually.

You can ignore it. You can deny it. You can convince yourself you don’t need friendships. You can opt out of it. You can convince yourself you are better off without it. Or you can honour and trust the Word of God. Connection, community, compassion and confession is one of the ways God has designed us to remain healthy and healed. Without it we may never find healing from shame or the spiritual healing we need so that we have open hearts, eyes and ears and remain spiritually sensitive.

If someone confesses to you what should be your response? We should be humble, listen, pray, be careful and seek to restore with gentleness. If it’s serious and the person wants help you can encourage them to speak to someone in the pastoral team if they need to. Some people may need mental health support and advice, some may need counselling or marriage counselling or referral to a doctor. But for a large majority of issues community, connection, compassion and confession will be powerful and that can be with anyone who is “spiritual” or “overflows with the Spirit”

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<sup>9</sup> — The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are by Brené Brown

<https://amzn.eu/7ZhYfQ8>

***“My beloved friends, if you see a believer who is overtaken with a fault, may the one who overflows with the Spirit seek to restore him. Win him over with gentle words, which will open his heart to you and will keep you from exalting yourself over him. Love empowers us to fulfill the law of the Anointed One as we carry each other’s troubles.”***

***(Gal 6:1-2, TPT)***

The key words here are to overflow with the Spirit, RESTORE, GENTLE WORDS, LOVE and CARRY. What does RESTORE look like? Think of someone who’s body is restored after an injury. It needs care, rest, time and the right environment to heal.

Be careful with the word carry. You share their burden but carry it to Jesus and leave it and the person with Jesus.

So let me ask you a question. Who do you have a relationship with that you would feel comfortable sharing and confessing. If the answer is no-one – the first step is Biblical friendship. What first step can you take?

Pursue the right person with Biblical friendship. You may have no-one to confess to but need to confess right now. Start with this. First person you need to confess to is God.