

## **Start Timer!**

### **I. Introduction**

**[Slide 1]** We are in a middle of a series called, **Life Change from the Heart**.

This is a series about how God changes us from the heart through the gospel. How does change from the heart happen?

We start with acknowledging our powerlessness to change ourselves. The Bible talks about this as sinful nature that we are powerless to. That's step 1.

Then, we go on a spiritual quest to seek power greater than ourselves. We made the case that believing in Jesus is both intellectually credible and it restores us to sanity. That's step 2.

Then, we come to a point of surrendering our life to God who kisses us with love and grace even when we were all messed up. That's step 3.

We said that we are not zapped into life change after we surrender our life to God. Rather, we start the process of cleaning the inside of the cup, our heart. We can't change ourselves just by trying to clean the outside of the cup, meaning by trying to change our behavior. We have to first focus on cleaning our heart, which Jesus said is full of self-indulgence. So, step 4 is about examining our heart for self-indulgence so that we can start the process of cleaning our heart. It is critical to find the self-indulgence in our heart if we want to change our life. But, our spiritual blindness makes it difficult to find self-indulgence directly. There is an indirect way to find our self-indulgence, though. It is by looking for *resentment*, a more noticeable byproduct of our self-indulgence. So, one way we find self-indulgence is by examining our resentments and asking, "How might each of the following forms of self-indulgence be at the real root of the resentment: pride, self-pity, dishonesty, and self-centeredness?" As we do so, we will find self-indulgence. It is very important for us to take the time necessary to ask this question for every feeling of resentment we experienced. A lot of people find this too hard to do. But if you want real change, you should go through this process even if it takes months to complete. This is at the core of examining our heart: Step 4.

**[Slide 2]** Today, we are going to be talking about **Step 5: “Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”**

**[Slide 3]** That’s why today’s sermon is entitled, **“Confessing Our Sins to One Another.”**

After we examine our heart, after we go through the process of self-examination and finding resentment, and various forms of self-indulgence and idolatry, we need to confess them to God, to ourselves and to one another.

Imagine entering an old house that’s been shut off for many years.

- covered with dust
- cobwebs
- stale odors of mildew and mold
- forgotten pictures—fading-- hanging on the wall

Our lives are like this old house.

- we have shameful secrets
- embarrassing behaviors
- spoiled hopes

The air of our lives is stale because we have been afraid to open up our doors and windows for fear that we might be found out, and rejected and shamed.

Step Five is about opening the doors and windows of our lives.

We do that by admitting the exact nature of wrong to God, to ourselves and to another human being.

We are going to talk about the three elements Step Five:

1. Admitting our sins to God;
2. Admitting our sins to ourselves; and
3. Admitting our sins to another human being.

**[Slide 4]II. Let’s start with the first one: Admitting to God the exact nature of our wrong.**

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**[Slide 5]** Let's read Psalm 32:3-5. This passage tells us that if we don't confess our sins to God, we suffer physically and spiritually.

<sup>3</sup> When I kept silent,  
my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.  
<sup>4</sup> For day and night  
your hand was heavy on me;  
my strength was sapped  
as in the heat of summer.

Does this sound familiar to you?

- Do you feel like your bones are wasting away, in other words, something insider is rotting away?
- Do you feel like you are groaning all day long, in other words, you have no peace in your heart and you feel something crying out?
- Do you feel a sense of heaviness on your life, in other words, you feel a strong sense of guilt for something you have done wrong?
- Do you feel like your strength has been sapped as in the heat of the summer, or in other words, feel powerless?
- Why did King David feel this way? He kept silent. He had secret sins that he did not want to tell anyone.
  - We also have secret sins we don't want to tell anyone.
  - Compulsive lying, sexual sins, crimes, violent behavior, stealing, cheating, bitterness, jealousy, resentment, anger, and self-indulgence.
    - Refusing to admit our wrong can manifest itself in many ways: depression, sleepless nights, physical illness, drug addiction, alcoholism, etc.

Brothers and sisters, there is a way of recovery from this misery.

This passage also tells us that if we confess our sins to God, God will heal us from our suffering.

**[Slide 6]** Verse 5 says: <sup>5</sup> Then I acknowledged my sin to you  
and did not cover up my iniquity.  
I said, “I will confess  
my transgressions to the LORD.”  
And you forgave  
the guilt of my sin.

- When we acknowledge our sins, stop covering up our sins, in other words, confess our sins, God will forgive us and heal us from the guilt of our sins.
- When we confess our sins (when we admit the exact nature of wrong) to God, he not only forgives us, he heals us and empowers us.
- Illustration: King David committed adultery, tried to cover it up, lied, deceived, and ultimately murdered. This sin was a secret. He did not tell a soul. Only Bathsheba and David knew. But, the passage today tells us that when he confessed his sin to God, he was freed from the bondage of guilt in his life.

**[Slide 7] III. Let’s go on to the second and third points together: Admitting it to ourselves and to another human being.**

**[Slide 8]** Read 1 John 1:8-10.

<sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

**[Slide 9]** Read James 5:16:

<sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Why do you have to confess our sins to each other? Why can’t we just confess them to God?

Let me give you two reasons:

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(1) I think it is because of our tendency to deceive ourselves to think that we are without sin; in other words, we think we are okay. We don't go very deep. We don't see the self-indulgence. That's why we should confess to another person who can help us sharpen our self-examination and confession.

Look, it's really hard to see ourselves, especially the stuff we don't really want to know about. I think the tool of finding resentments, which is like the bloodhound that finds self-indulgence, is really helpful, but there is a lot of defense mechanism that gets triggered along the way. We don't want to admit what's really going on deep in our hearts. Denial is our primary defense mechanism.

That's why we need someone to guide us through the confession process.

Have you ever heard yourself on a recording? I am more used to it now, but when I first used to hear my own voice in recording, I used to think that that was not me. I hear through my inner ear; so, what I hear and what you here is differently. But, what you hear is closer to the reality of what my voice sounds like. In the same way, we need other people in order to see reality of ourselves. We need feedback from others.

It's fascinating how much of ourselves is so obvious to other people but so not to ourselves. I constantly see that in my relationship with Grace. She sees so many blind spots that I don't see. People can see pride in us. They can see greed. They can see selfishness. They know when we are defensive. Yet, it is really hard for us to see ourselves. That's why we need other people. That's why we need to confess our sins to other people. They help to sharpen our self-examination and see ourselves more clearly.

(2) It is very powerful to admit our wrong to another human being. There is a sense of release. As we were preparing for this, Manny told me about the many days of Step 5 confession, and how powerful it was. How he dreaded going to do it, but always came out lighter with an experience of release.

Bonhoeffer wrote:

A man who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the

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other person. As long as I am by myself in the confession of my sins everything remains in the dark, but in the presence of a brother the sin has to be brought into the light.

It is a way of turning on the light, opening the window and the door of our closed lives.

There is a release of grip of hidden sin and healing.

Richard Foster wrote:

But if we know that the people of God are first a fellowship of sinners, we are freed to hear the unconditional call of God’s love and to confess our needs openly before our brothers and sisters. We know we are not alone in our sin. . . . We are sinners together. In acts of mutual confession we release the power that heals.

But, how do we actually go about doing confession?

**[Slide 10]** I want to ask Jonathan Paredes to come and share how he went through the process of confession and what God has done in his life.