

Blueprint for Prayer: Confession
Week 3 of the Series
11/23/14

Good morning/welcome/intro

We're a couple weeks into a series of messages talking about prayer, week one we wrestled with the basic and very good question of why pray at all

And last week we introduced a very simple, clear, and light framework for prayer that we're working through, one letter at a time, one week at a time called ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication

The idea being that if we touch base on these four elements of prayer over the course of a couple of days or over the course of a week or every couple of weeks they provide healthy anchors for a healthy, well-developed life of prayer

And this week we're going to tackle a subject that gets a bad rap in our culture and that perhaps many of you naturally recoil at: confession

If we think about confession in the abstract or removed from our everyday lives, what it feels like is something like this: I sit there in front of a priest or by myself

And I rack my brain, dredging up every bad thing I've ever done in my life so that at the end of my confession I can feel as bad about myself as I possibly can
That sounds rather miserable, right?

You might think, "Why should I go through all of that in order to feel bad about myself afterwards?"

There are many much more enjoyable things I could do that leave me feeling bad about myself afterwards—I think I'll do those things instead!"

And our different personalities play in here in some really important ways as well.

For some of us, we have a really intense inner-world, and court is always in session and YOU are always the accused.

And the voices of critique, condemnation, and judgment on yourself are loud and constant

And for you, the conversation around confession stirs up just more voices, more guilt, more condemnation, more hard stuff to deal with

it just feels like piling on more and more onto an already intense and difficult inner-world.

On the other extreme are those of us who shrug stuff off all the time

we either convince ourselves that we don't have anything to confess or that our stuff isn't really all that bad and it doesn't really matter all that much

To these folks, confession seems like a big trumped up silly religious exercise in guilt and maybe even manipulation to keep people under the thumb of God or of the church

Unfortunately, that actually happens. Several years ago while I was working on campus a cult came onto campus

and one of their tactics was early on they had people write out a list of their worst sins that they'd committed

And they would keep that list and file it away—and if people tried to leave the cult, they would threaten to go public with their sin list—awful!

Hopefully you haven't had an experience that extreme but if you're here this morning and you've been scarred by some religious person in the past beating you up and using this idea of confession in a manipulative way

as a church guy I ask your forgiveness—us religious people we have no right to attempt to manipulate anyone or try to guilt anyone into doing anything

And what I want to suggest to all of us this morning is that confession is a gift and a doorway to thousands of more gifts

In my small group this past week I asked the question “how many of you know someone who can't ever admit they're wrong?” and I got a rousing round of groans from just about everyone in the room

How many of you know what that's like to try to relate to someone who can't ever admit they're wrong? Here's what I want to suggest this morning: it is IMPOSSIBLE to EVER have a REAL relationship with someone who can never confess they're wrong

You can't trust, you can't have conflict, you can't have real conversations, you can't deal with hard stuff—real connection, real relationships are IMPOSSIBLE with a person who can't admit that they're ever wrong

Confession of wrong-doing is ESSENTIAL to any real relationship—including relationship with God!

And those people drive us crazy in our own lives AND YET every one of us ALSO tends to run from confessing that we've done anything wrong!

What I want to say this morning is that confession is all gift, all grace, all generous and good—it has only very little to do with guilt and everything to do with grace

And if we avoid confession or forfeit it or run and hide from it because of the baggage that we've attached to it or because of baggage that's been attached to it by others

Then we forfeit one of the most powerful and important tools and paths that lead to peace, well-being, freedom, and ultimately a quality of life that is rich with mercy, wide-open spaces and most importantly our relationship with God

To help us see that we're going to look at a passage in Psalms again this week:
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Psalm 32

*¹ Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.*

*² Blessed is the one
whose sin the LORD does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.*

*³ When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.*

*⁴ For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.^[b]*

*⁵ 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.*

*⁶ Therefore let all the faithful pray to you
while you may be found;
surely the rising of the mighty waters
will not reach them.*

*⁷ You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.*

While I was working on this message on Tuesday morning I got a little indicator that there was a new version of my primary web browser available for me to download

So I'm often a little ADD when it comes to doing my preparation and I was like "sure! I'll let this distract me for 30 seconds while it downloads and then re-launches to see what this new update will do for me!"

So I downloaded the update and re-launched my browser and there were 3 things that were highlighted and touted in this latest update

And every single one of them had to do with nobody knowing where you're looking online. Every single one of them had to do with nobody able to see your viewing and browsing history

Now in theory, this has to do with not wanting to be tracked by advertisers and big brother and conspiracy theorists

Who all believe that the government is watching you while you spend too much time at work checking Facebook or watching Youtube videos about dancing cats

But thinly veiled in the descriptions of these updates and even the icons that they used for them, it was really about nobody able to discover that you're looking at pornography.

It was all about three words that this psalmist uses: deceit, silence, and covering up.

My browser company is encouraging me to engage in these practices, the psalmist is describing the stark reality that these practices are devastating to me physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

And this is basically where we have to start this morning: my web browser update is simply echoing what many people in our culture tells us:

That what we do doesn't really matter as long as no one knows about it or as long as nobody gets hurt by it—as long as we cover our tracks well enough, it doesn't matter what we do, there are no consequences.

The Scriptures tell us and show us in hundreds of places and stories and testimonials like this one that that message is completely false and a lie—

And it emphatically tells us that sin always has consequences, even if nobody can see what's in my browsing history

And to start with this morning we have to ask which fundamental message about what we do are we going to believe? Who's telling us the truth?

And I want to suggest to you that you don't have to be a Bible-person or a Christian to

see that if we're honest with ourselves and if we step back just a bit and evaluate or think about it

as much as we might wish or like for Firefox or Chrome or Safari to be our trustworthy guide through life, they're selling us a bill of goods

And we buy it because it feeds into what many of us want to be true: that I can do whatever I want to do and not have to experience any negative consequences

History confirms what the Bible tells us to be true: millions of people throughout history have attempted to live a life of deceit and hiding and covering up

And for the vast majority of them, even if they never actually got "caught," it ruined their lives and the lives of the people around them and that they loved

David here gives his story, raises his voice with the rest of the witness of the Scriptures across the thousands of years that are pointing us to the same reality of what happens when we've got sin in our lives and hearts

He starts by celebrating the relief and the blessedness of forgiveness, what happens on the other side of confession

And this anchors us and keeps us clear about what we're talking about—like we said earlier, confession is not primarily about guilt but about grace—experiencing grace in real time in our lives

Then he flashes back to what happened when he was hiding his sin—when he was silent, here's what his life was like: physical exhaustion (bones wasted away, strength was sapped) and spiritual/emotional exhaustion (God's hand heavy on me)

Notice, there's nothing public at all about these consequences. Nobody else is giving him a hard time, there's no mention of people discovering what he's done or being judged by anyone else

This is simply what's happening inside of him even though his browser has not captured his viewing history and nobody's giving him flack for what he's done: the Lord knows and he knows, and that's enough

And this is not a case of over-active conscience—David says it's the hand of the Lord that was heavy on him, making him aware of his sin

And I want to suggest to you that God's hand being heavy against David when he sins and against us is sheer grace and mercy and is a gift to David and to us

One of my favorite authors once said that "sin is the fragmenting and fracturing of the self as well as the fragmenting and undoing of our relationship with God."

Whenever you and I sin, it fragments us and fractures us. Every time we sin it's like taking a hammer to the glass vase of our souls—we end up torn up, with multiple personalities, hiding, deceiving, lying to ourselves and to others, pretending, covering up

And so God, in his grace and mercy, does not let us run forever and deeper into the fragmenting, self-destruction of our souls—he generously, patiently, zealously and passionately pursues us with his loving conviction

If all sin is the fragmenting of the the self, then confession is the point of re-assembly, the place where we are put back together, made whole again, restored as unified and healthy people

And this is the turning point in David's experience in the midst of this groaning and hiding:

***⁵ 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.***

Confession is the turning point that changes the direction of the story.

And there's this delightful contrast that I want to point out here in this Psalm:

Here in v. 5, David declares he "did not cover up" [CIRCLE} his iniquity. We all know what he means by that, we've all at various points attempted to cover up something that we've done

David says, "I'm not doing that any more!" He confesses and at the beginning of the Psalm as he's celebrating the blessedness of confession and forgiveness and the grace received he describes it this way:

***¹ Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered. [CIRCLE]***

Notice here, David celebrates that after he stopped trying to cover up what he did, he experiences the grace of God covering OVER his sin

I want to suggest to you that we will live our lives in one of two ways: we will either expend tremendous emotional and spiritual energy trying to COVER UP what we've done

OR we will relent and confess and experience the freedom of God who COVERS OVER our sin by his grace

And the question for you and me this morning is simply how do you want to spend your life?

Do you want to spend your life frantically trying to cover up what you've done, or will you accept the gift of confession and forgiveness and allow God to COVER OVER anything and everything wrong that you've ever done?

This is about authority and capability—who has the authority and capability to extend and give us forgiveness?

Much of our culture places the authority and power all on us—that the biggest and most important thing we can do when it comes to our mistakes is to forgive ourselves.

It's all about forgiving ourselves and having grace for ourselves

And I totally agree with the importance of forgiving ourselves—and for some of us, we have a very, very hard time doing this

But I want to suggest that in order for us to do this important work of forgiving ourselves, we have to start OUTSIDE of ourselves

If I broke into your house, sledge-hammered your t.v, stole your Thanksgiving yams, and burned your house to the ground and afterwards declared “It's okay, I've forgiven myself” I'd be completely deranged

That's all well and good that I've forgiven myself but my offense wasn't primarily against ME it was against YOU—so you and I need to address the issue on both a relational level AND on a legal level

Relationally, confession and apology is necessary to restore the relationship and then legally somebody has to pay for the damage that I did

Either I pay for what I did or YOU pay for what I did

And here's where we go with this: Any and every wrong-doing is an offense against God—he is the rightful owner of every person or situation

So anytime we kick one of his cats, or use or manipulate or lie or gossip about one of his kids, or cheat on our taxes, steal something from someone else, we are sinning against God

We are BOTH breaking relationship with him AND there is a cost to the damage that has been done that has to be dealt with and paid for somehow

Throughout all of history and all of Scripture, God has made allowances for that sin to be dealt with and forgiven and for us to experience reconciliation with Him.

But if we refuse to confess our sin to him and ask for forgiveness at any point in our life, then there will be NO relational reconciliation because we have refused to accept his offer of forgiveness

And so no reconciliation can happen, and justice must be done.

See, some people think it's just about doing more good stuff than bad in our lives and God will just weigh it all out in the end—but either we've stolen, lied, lusted after, used, and abused his children and his property or we haven't.

If we have done those things, then something must be done about it, no matter how much other good stuff we've done

I've helped several people through some hard marriage stuff over the past couple of years. But if I burned your house down what I did to help someone else's marriage doesn't matter at all

I either did this thing or I didn't, my record of goodness in one area doesn't cover up or counter-balance my wrong-doings somewhere else—this relationship and this property was still damaged by what I did and I must be held accountable for it

So what happens is we run from confession in part because we're not sure what's going to happen to us if we confess, right? We're afraid of being judged, afraid of the shame, afraid of having to change or afraid of what people or God might say or do to us

But David here 1,000 years before Jesus bears witness to the good news of what happens on the other side of confession

Forgiveness happens. Grace happens. The final and guaranteed and definitive COVERING OVER has happened by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, so we don't have to live a life ruined by COVERING UP

And for us on the other side of Jesus, we can approach the thought of confession with an even greater confidence because what David declares here about our sins being covered by God has been done definitively by Jesus

And so here's the promise offered to you and me this morning in Christ—we don't have to wonder about what the verdict is going to be

The Scriptures declare that mercy triumphs over judgment; Scripture declares that Jesus Christ has taken away the sins of the entire world and has reconciled ALL things—forgiveness from God's side of things is already a DONE DEAL and the offer is on the table

It's a conflict where the offended party has already forgiven and extended forgiveness but the person who did the offense refuses to accept it.

Forgiveness is a done deal before you and I were even born, before we ever sinned or did anything, Jesus had already taken every sin that you might ever commit and had already absorbed it, taken it on himself, and forgiven you

This is why Christians make such a big deal about Jesus! He is God's answer to the problem of sin and to the way that forgiveness happens.

Apart from Jesus, we do not have any promise of forgiveness. He IS God's promise of forgiveness for our sins, a perfect and beloved Son given up for us to forgive us of our sin

If it didn't really matter, if there was some other way for God to forgive us, then why put his son through all of that?

Jesus is the forgiveness of God signed, sealed, delivered, and waiting for us, Confession is how we receive that grace and forgiveness waiting for us.

This does not mean that there is not consequence for our sins here on this earth, right? Our actions have real consequences and confession to God doesn't mean that he magically erases all those consequences

Many years ago I was in a church where a man had embezzled funds, lied about it, gotten caught, he confessed and he was going to jail for a couple of years for it.

And as he was getting ready to go to jail he stood up on Sunday morning and told his story, confessed his sin, talked about how he'd met God's amazing, extravagant grace in the midst of all of it
and asked us to help care for his wife and young girls while he was gone.

It was agonizing and heartbreaking. Sin has consequences

But this man had realized that he'd sinned against God, the owner of all things, and as he confessed he experienced a God who was able and willing to forgive him his sins, redeem his mistakes

And even while he and his family would still experience the consequences of his sin here on this earth

There was ultimately no condemnation for him in God's court because he was now reconciled with the owner of the cosmos who also was HIS Lord who had forgiven him and forgiven his debt

He was no longer covering up his sin, he was allowing God to cover over his sin. And that's the promise from God himself that takes the fear and mystery out of confession

Confession brings us to the place of reconciliation with the God of the universe who is already forgiven us and stands ready to forgive and to love on us and pour out on us a re-unifying, healing, restorative grace and mercy

And beautiful people, let's be honest: isn't the hiding exhausting?

Of course it starts exhilarating, it starts with endorphins and pay-off and ease; but the cost keeps going up and up and up and the power it has over us grows and grows and grows until it destroys and consumes us

Confession is the gift of God that breaks this exhaustion-inducing spiral into death

Let's come at this from a slightly different angle and talk about the life-cycle of sin and how confession is a gift of grace to us

It starts with *temptation*: temptation is ***the promise or lie that life apart from God would be better/easier/more fun/just plain better than life with God.***

This is true whether or not you even know who this God is, it's just the essential nature of all temptation—makes a bunch of promises about a non-Godly way to have a great life

It's important to know and understand that temptation to sin is not the same thing as sinning—Jesus was tempted, he just resisted it.

You and I are tempted all the time to do things we shouldn't do and chase thoughts that we shouldn't chase

We are invited to resist temptation, flee temptation, stay far away from that edge, and I'll even often confess to being tempted in my prayers to the Lord, but that's a different thing from actually acting on the temptation

Sin [fade out definition of temptation and fade-in this and sin definition] is ***acting in faith on the promises of temptation—that life apart from God is better than life with God.***

Sin is a total faith act, you have no idea how it will actually turn out, you're just trusting that the promises loaded up in sin, acting in faith on those promises and hoping and hoping and hoping and trusting that it will turn out well for you

Every person in the world has faith in something to bring them the life that they want—we all take huge leaps of faith every single day, trusting in some set of promises to bring us the kind of life we think is valuable

And all of these are acts of faith, trusting and believing that these steps will fill us up and get us the life that we want

If we act on faith in the promises of sin and temptation, then the next step is inevitable

Cover-up: because sin is broken relationship, we often have to engage in significant cover-up—this often includes extensive self-justification and rationalization.

We start with telling ourselves a story and convincing yourself of that story—we are all master story-tellers to ourselves:

What we've done isn't that bad, it's not as bad as what other people have done, it won't hurt anyone, it's giving you all these other benefits, and on and on

We start the covering up with self-deceit--

And from that place of being firmly convinced and self-justified, we give ourselves permission to hide and cover-up what we've done from others.

But here's what comes next: **consequences**. All sin has consequences. It might take time, it might not be immediate or obvious, but all sin has consequences

Sometimes it's just internal, sometimes it's just emotional and spiritual, sometimes it's just a guilty conscience or one person who get a little bit hurt

Sometimes like in the psalm we read there are physical manifestations of our sin—this isn't ALWAYS the case, it's not like every time you get a head cold it's because you've got unconfessed sin in your life

But there is a reality that sometimes sin manifests itself in our lives as physical sickness.

And then sometimes it's massive and whopping and suddenly you're caught and exposed and in public and you're going to jail or losing your job or losing your marriage or your family or friends

Ultimately the final consequence of sin is **death**: relational, emotional, spiritual, and yeah even physical death wasn't in the picture until sin was introduced into God's good creation

This is the life-cycle of sin, and we ride this life-cycle regularly in mini-trips down this path on a regular basis, don't we? Any of you ever given into temptation, sinned, covered it up to yourself and others, then experienced the consequences?

Okay, so there are places here where we don't have choices and places here where do have choices.

And there are off-ramps off of this vicious circle all along the way that are important for us to identify that lead into a more virtuous cycle

TEMPTATION HAPPENS: all of us will be tempted, but we do not have to give into temptation—we can resist temptation, see through the empty promises of sin, trust instead in the promises of God, and walk in obedience

We can look and see that there are two sets of promises here—one set is empty and one of set has the certainty of God behind it and we can walk in his promises and trust in Him instead of trusting in the promises of sin to give us the life we want

That's *off-ramp #1: obedience instead of sin*

However, throughout our lives we will sin. That's just the nature of who we are. And for some reason we are often shocked about our capability to sin and tendency towards it, but the good news is that God is never as shocked as we are

When we sin, God doesn't say "I had no idea she was capable of that!" And so of course because he loves us and does not want us to continue down this path, he offers provision for us

And once we've sinned, all along the way, he offers us the *off-ramp of confession*. This is why confession is so important for us—it rescues us from this inevitable miserable path that leads to death and self-destruction

This is why it's so awful that confession gets such a bad rap and has so much baggage associated with it

If we run from confession we are running deeper and deeper into this pit of despair and ultimately into spiritual and emotional death

Confession is the life-raft that rescues us from swirling down this drain!

Oh my friends, grab a hold of this thing and cling onto it for dear life—it has been tossed to us from a good Father in heaven who loves us so much that he does not want us to experience all of these deaths!

Confession is the off-ramp that saves us from plunging all the way into the full consequences of our sin—we may still have to experience SOME of the consequences, but the full force of those consequences are absorbed by a good and gracious and loving God

Confession is on offer to you at every single moment of all the rest of this process to deliver you from the deepest and worst consequences waiting for you if you continue down this path

A good friend of mine made a brilliant analogy that I'm going to steal from her now: how many of you take showers regularly? OUTSTANDING and THANK YOU!

Because we all have bodies that sweat and that just experience the dirt of life, we have to shower—and no one's embarrassed about that, it's just a part of life here on this earth! We're all DEEPLY GRATEFUL that you've showered sometime this week!

My friends, you and I have embodied souls that start to smell bad about every 24 hours. And there is no shame in confessing that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God

In fact, all of us would very much appreciate it if you did so...it's just a part of life here on this earth.

Confession is the regular cleansing of our souls and the regular off-ramp off of this vicious cycle that brings us into what David celebrates in the psalm we read: *forgiveness* which is already a done deal in Christ

And the biblical understanding of *blessedness and abundance*

These words blessed and abundance easily gets wonky and we can rush to fill it with all of our wishful thinking,

so we have to push back all the images that we want to infuse it with—lots of money and stuff and or health or popularity or fortune

That's not the primary way the Bible understands the blessed life—the blessed life is marked by right relationships, marked by peace, marked by a settledness of soul and relationships and a joy in our lives

There is a promise of blessedness and refreshing and grace and mercy and a qualitatively richer, fuller, better life on the other side of confession that sin simply cannot deliver on

This cycle of sin and death only lead to more sin and more death—the only way to get to the blessed life is through these off-ramps of confession that lead us to the gift of grace and forgiveness on offer to us by Jesus

And to complete the life cycle of confession and forgiveness and grace that we experience

All this blessedness leads us to do exactly what David did here and what we talked about last week—we *worship and thank the God who forgives us*. YOU are my hiding place, YOU surround me with songs of deliverance, YOU are my forgiver and deliverer

All along this cycle of sin and death is the offer from God to get OUT of this cycle and to experience this blessed life which ends in us celebrating and thanking God for his goodness to us

And the invitation to you and to me this morning, especially those of us who are hiding and covering up, is to come into the light, take the next exit OUT of this cycle of hiding and covering up

How do we do this? What's the blueprint for confession? How do we take this off-ramp away from the vicious cycle of sin and death into the life of the beloved and the blessed life?

1. Open ourselves up to genuine conviction

In our small group this week we were talking about this whole challenge of some of us having over-active consciences and feeling guilty all the time about stuff that's not ours to feel guilty about

And some of us frankly have under-active consciences and we DON'T feel guilty about the damage that we've done

I think that there's a spectrum and all of us are on the spectrum somewhere and for all of us left to our own devices we're going to be off or skewed in one direction or another

In other words, our "feeling guilty" or "not feeling guilty" is not an infallible guide as to whether or not we actually ARE GUILTY of something

So we need to open ourselves up to genuine conviction—recognizing that my feelings or lack thereof might not be always wrong, but they're definitely not always right.

A couple of ways that we get helps here:

1. Scripture, which lays out some very clear commands like don't murder, don't steal and don't commit adultery. Some of the commands are a little less clear in terms of their applicability today, but many of the ones that matter the most are very clear.

If we violate one of those, then we've just ridden the cycle of sin and denial and hiding that leads to death and we need to take advantage of the off-ramp of confession

2. God's Spirit: part of the Holy Spirit's job is to convict us of our sin. Now sometimes it's hard to know what's the Spirit and what's my own conscience, that's where it's helpful to go back to Scripture and our third help we'll talk about in a minute

But every so often we'll get a clear sense of conviction from the Spirit---and when that happens let me just make a small suggestion: just don't duck!

When the Spirit calls us out on something, the temptation is to dig deeper into that vicious cycle of hiding and covering up that leads to death

Small suggestion: don't do that! When God's Spirit speaks, it is always in service of blessedness and life.

3. Community. A friend of mine shared something recently with me where the Lord decided to show her some sin in her life that had been there for her entire adult life—issues of control and how she related to people.

And how the Lord called her onto the off-ramp of the cycle of sin and hiding and death was he sent a friend to tell her that she needed to deal with it.

Do you know anyone well enough who loves you enough to be an instrument of God to call you onto the off-ramp of confession, away from the cycle of sin and death?

My hope is that we might be a community where this is happening in gracious and sweet and gentle and loving ways all the time.

2. Acknowledge our sin.

We start by naming **what we've done AND what we've left undone**. Sins of **thought, word, or deed**

We state these as baldly and honestly as possible. And here I'm always tempted to make excuses and justify myself even before God

"So God, here's what happened: she said this and then he did that and then sure I said something that maybe I shouldn't have said, but really I've got good reasons for that."

If there are excuses or appropriate extenuating circumstances to be applied, we can be sure that God knows all of those much better than we do and he will make application of those as is necessary.

We just need to acknowledge and name our sin: here's what I did or didn't do, thoughts, words, or deeds

3. We turn from our sin

We're not just listing the stuff we've done, there's the assumption with confession that we're embracing a call to change—It's not I lied yesterday to my boss and I plan on lying again today! Confession works as an off-ramp to the cycle of sin and death because it's leading us into a new cycle, a new pattern, and a new life

4. Open ourselves up for a moment of reflection

Some things we just do and it's dumb and we just need to acknowledge it, confess it, and move on

But many things we do have their roots in something deeper. So after confessing it's helpful to take a moment and ask the Lord to illumine or show you if there's some deeper work that needs to be done

Something like "Okay Lord, I confess I made a really rude comment to my kids yesterday, I ask your forgiveness and I'm going to ask theirs, too. But is there something deeper at work in me that you want to deal with here?"

My one-off rude comment to my kids might be symptomatic of larger issues, like maybe control—like maybe I was frustrated because they weren't moving fast enough to get with MY schedule

But if I step back and look at it, maybe my schedule and deadline there was artificial and I was just in a hurry because I'm always in a hurry

And maybe my snapping at my kid and having to confess that is an opportunity for God to tell me to just SLOW DOWN and not always be so crazy busy

All that's strictly hypothetical, of course, not that I've EVER ACTUALLY snapped at my kids!

Take a moment here and ask God if there's something deeper than behavior modification that needs to happen here.

5. We acknowledge and receive forgiveness—even if we don't 'feel' it right away

Sometimes when I'm finally done running and I'm finally dealing with my sin and confessing it, I don't feel particularly forgiven—I still feel kind of bad

In those situations I go to Scripture again and cite it, quote it, claim the promises of forgiveness and grace that are available to me.

There's two movements to confession: one is awareness of sin and going to the Lord with it, the other is receiving grace—most of us are better at one of those movements than the other

Some of us are great at feeling our sin, and the grace comes harder for us to receive; others of us are GREAT at feeling grace, not always as willing to be brutally honest about the sin

Bad and good news: both are true—both the sin is there and it's real and it needs to be and can be dealt with—it's already been dealt with in Jesus, he invites you to accept his offer of forgiveness through the delivery mechanism of confession

6. **Do any “horizontal work” necessary:** apologize, confess, make right as you can, etc.

As we close this morning, corporate prayer of confession together—read this out loud together and move into a time of worship

Scripts like this can help us when we're not in seasons or times of obvious and clear sins, but where we just need to sort of take our regular shower of confession, creating space for the Lord to clean us and maybe even convict us a bit

Going to read this together and then move into worship—some of you need help to make it to the off-ramp of confession this morning

Either stuck, or struggling to get out or struggling to trust grace or you've got significant brokenness and lots of history of same pattern.

After we get done with reading this prayer of confession together we're going to move into some musical worship and while that's happening there will be prayer ministers in the back who would love to pray with you

For some of you, today's the day you come out from hiding and covering up. For some of you, today's the day when you stop hiding and get out from underneath all the pain and small and big deaths you're experiencing.

My friends, the time has come, today's your day, your exit ramp is coming right up in the next 5-10 minutes, don't miss this one.

We're here to help you, no one's going to judge you, you know you've got to get rid of this, the day is beautiful, forgiveness awaits you and the blessed life is on the other side of this off-ramp from your cycle of sin and death

If you're ready to confess something that needs to be confessed, or if you're ready to make a decision for the very first time to come to Jesus and receive his gift of grace made available to you, they'll be back there waiting for you

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. // We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. // We are truly sorry and we humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.