



Class 6. Confession Brings Freedom

- Proverbs 28:13

- God is very clear that reconciliation is important to him
- Reconciliation involves four activities:
 - Repentance
 - Self-Examination
 - Confession
 - Change
- Repentance is the first step in gaining freedom from sin and conflict
- The thing about Repentance that most people don't realize is that Repentance is not something you can do yourself
- It's not something that you can accomplish by self-determination or willpower
- Repentance is a gift of God for which we should pray whereby he convicts us of our sins

- 2nd Timothy 2:24-26

- Repentance doesn't mean you feel sad or uncomfortable
- Repentance doesn't mean you simply apologize
- Repentance literally means that you change the way you think
- I like how modern versions use the term "coming to your senses"
- It means that you have woken up to the fact that you have been deceiving yourself and that your ideas have been wrong
- If this change in thinking is genuine, then it leads to a turning to God

- **Isaiah 55:7**

- Although repentance is often accompanied by sorrow, simply feeling bad doesn't mean that you are repentant

- Many serial killers feel bad after killing someone - each and every time!
- Look at the differences Paul mentions

- **2nd Corinthians 7:9-10**

- Everyone feels sad when they get caught and have to suffer the unpleasant consequences of their actions

- The problem is that that kind of sadness quickly dies away, and most people begin to behave just like did before

- Instead of changing their thinking and their actions, they simply "try harder"

- In contrast, real Repentance means that you feel bad because you have offended God

- It means sincerely regretting the fact that what you did was wrong, regardless of whether or not you have to suffer the unpleasant consequences

- John told the people to *"produce fruit in keeping with repentance"*

- Paul told people that they should *"turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds"*

- Genuine Repentance should lead to changed behavior

- This requires you to Examine Yourself

- A simple test of whether or not your Repentance is genuine, is whether or not you are willing to thoroughly examine yourself to uncover your sins

- Sin is failing to do what God commands, or doing what God forbids

- Sin is not simply an action that opposes an impersonal set of rules, but Sin is a rebellion against God

- This is true even when our thoughts, words or actions are consciously directed against God himself

- Even seemingly small wrongs against other people are serious in God's eyes

- You can even sin against God by doing nothing

- James 4:17

- Most people don't like to admit that they have sinned, so we tend to conceal, deny or rationalize our wrongs

- If we can't cover up what we've done, we try to minimize it by saying that we simply made a "mistake" or an "error in judgment"

- Another way to avoid responsibility for our sins is to shift the blame to others or say they made us act that way

- When our sins are too obvious to ignore, we say something like this, *"Well, I know that I'm not perfect, and I admit that I am partially to blame for this problem, but they are more at fault than I am, so they should be the one to ask for forgiveness."*

- Of course, we are only kidding ourselves

- Whenever we refuse to face up to our sins, we will eventually pay an unpleasant price

- Consider David

- Psalm 32:3-5

- If you are having a hard time identifying and confessing your sins, there are two things you can do:

1) Ask God to help you see your sin clearly

2) Ask a spiritually mature friend to counsel you

- Don't trust yourself to be objective in a conflict

- If you weren't blinded by your own sins, then you probably wouldn't be in the conflict in the first place, so don't think that you will be able to clearly see your involvement in the sin

- As God opens your eyes to see how you have sinned, he also offers a way for you to find freedom from those sins

- It is called Confession

- Many people have never really experienced this kind of freedom because they have never really learned how to confess their sins honestly and unconditionally

- Instead they say things like:

- *"I'm sorry if I hurt you"*
- *"Let's just forget the past"*
- *"I suppose that I could have done a better job"*
- *"I guess it's not all your fault"*
- *"Let's just move on"*

- If you really want to learn to Confess, consider the SEVEN A's of Confession:

1) ADDRESS Everyone Involved

- Confess to every person who has been directly affected your sin
- Since all sins offend God, you should first confess to him
- Whether a sin should be confessed to others, besides God, depends on whether it was a "Personal Sin" or a "Social Sin"
- A "Personal Sin" takes place only in your heart, and is only between God and you
- A "Social Sin" involves words or actions that actually affect other people, and should be confessed to all those who have been affected by it

2) AVOID If, But, and Maybe

- The best way to ruin a confession is to use words that shift the blame to others or minimize your guilt
- Saying, *"I'm sorry if I did something that upset you"* is not healthy, because by using the word "if" implies that you do not know whether or not you actually did something wrong
- What you are really saying is, *"Obviously you are upset about something. I don't know what I could have possibly done wrong, but just to resolve this, I will give you a token apology."* - *"By the way, since I don't really know what I did wrong, then I certainly don't know what I should do differently in the future, so it's only a matter of time until I do it again."*
- Clearly, this isn't a confession!
- If your Confession contains words like, IF, BUT, PERHAPS, MAYBE, POSSIBLY, or I GUESS - then they aren't really confessions

- Remove those words and they are!
- *"I guess I was wrong when I said that"*
- *"I WAS WRONG WHEN I SAID THAT"*

3) ADMIT Specifically

- The more specific you are when making a confession, the more likely you are to receive a positive response
- Being specific helps convince others that you are honestly facing up to what you have done
- Being specific also helps you identify the behavior that you need to change
- Being specific also means dealing with your attitudes as well as your actions
- Conflict starts in the heart with unmet desires that give rise to sinful attitudes
- If you explicitly identify your sinful attitudes as well as your words and actions, then others are far more likely to believe that you are genuinely repentant

4) ACKNOWLEDGE the Hurt

- Make it a point to acknowledge and express sorrow for how you have hurt someone
- You don't have to dwell on their feelings, but if you acknowledge that you have hurt them, they will be more willing to move ahead with forgiving you

5) ACCEPT the Consequences

- Don't try to worm your way out of what's coming
- Actions bring about consequences, and often wrong accept bring painful consequences
- Accept the consequences of your actions if you want to demonstrate genuine repentance

6) ALTER Your Behavior

- Another sign of sincere repentance is to explain to the person you offended how you plan to alter your behavior in the future

- Describe some of the attitude, character and behavior changes that you hope to make in your life
- Acknowledge that you cannot change on your own and are depending on God's help
- Don't be afraid to make a written plan for yourself of what you are going to change - listing some of your goals and objectives

7) ASK for Forgiveness

- If you follow the six steps above, many people will readily say that they forgive you
- If the person to whom you have confessed has not expressed forgiveness, at this point you can ask *"Will you please forgive me?"*
- Don't use this question as a means to pressure someone into forgiving you - Some people can forgive quickly, and others need time to work through their feelings
- Time alone doesn't bring forgiveness
- Forgiveness can be inhibited because a confession was inadequate
- Not every confession requires all Seven Steps