

SESSION 03

Confess Your Sins



Overview

There is an age-old enemy to life in community that holds more power than the modern deterrents of digital distraction and transience. Its roots can be traced all the way back, before cell phones and cities, to the garden days in the book of Genesis.

It's the ancient enemy of shame.

Shame is the great disconnecter between us and God, and us and each other; it fosters and follows the life of sin. It's what makes all of us wonder, "Would I be loved if they really knew me?" While Jesus and his Gospel have answered this question with an emphatic "Yes," we still have a part to play in order to truly hear that word in our shadows; that part, in the language of Scripture, is to "confess our sins."

While the practice of confession is not a silver bullet, it is one of the most powerful tools we have to deal a lethal blow to this ancient enemy of shame, and open ourselves up to experience what our hearts most long for — the healing love of God and community.

Reflection Questions

When instructed, circle up in triads (smaller groups of 3-5 people) and discuss the following questions:

- 01 How did it go sharing your highs and lows around the table at your last meal?
- 02 Where did you personally experience resistance while sharing your own highs and lows?
- 03 How did this exercise shift the dynamic or sense of connection in the group for the remainder of your time together?
- 04 This week's skill for living in community is confessing your sins. How would you describe your experience with confession?

Teaching

Key Scripture

Romans 7v21-25, 8v1-2

Session summary

- While there are many challenges to living in community — busyness, transience, distraction, flakiness, emotional immaturity — there is no challenge greater than that of shame.
- Shame is a:
 - Fear that you are unlovable as you really are.
 - Disconnector from yourself, others, and God.
 - Byproduct of sin, and often a cause of sin.
- We deal with shame through the practice of confession.
- Confession is naming the sin done by you, to you, and around you to a loving community or “confessor.”
- A confessor is anyone who you trust to proclaim God’s love and truth to you in your sin.
- If shame is a disconnector between us and God, and us and each other; confession is the great reconstructor.

Teaching Notes

As you watch Session 03 together, feel free to use this page to take notes.

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Discussion Questions

Now it's time for a conversation about the teaching. Pause the video for a few minutes to discuss in small groups:

- 01 Where did you feel challenged or invited as you listened?
- 02 What do you notice about how shame affects your interactions with God and others?
- 03 What thoughts or feelings emerge when you consider the possibility of being “fully known and fully loved” in community?
- 04 In what ways do you think the Gospel influences how we confess or receive someone else’s confession?

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Closing Prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

Help us Father, to not live in the shadows of shame and fear, nor to believe in the lie we're unwanted, or unlovable. Teach us to share the load, and to help others release theirs, that in confessing and receiving one another we may be more like you in this world.

Amen.



Exercise

Find a confessor and confess your sins.

You may not call this person “a confessor.” Maybe they’re a trusted friend, pastor, mentor, therapist, or spiritual director — anyone who you feel safe with and believe would love you no matter what.

- Ask them to get together and let them know you want to share how you’re really doing
- You can start small by just naming an ongoing struggle in your life. Or, depending on the level of trust and the relationship, you can lay it all bare and tell them something you’ve been hiding for years, like an addiction, abortion, or affair.
- Be discerning in what you share, but we invite you to be courageous in taking this step deeper into community and towards healing.

And if you’re the one receiving the confession:

- Listen with attention, attunement, and a heart of compassion. When they are done, you can say, “In Christ’s name, you are forgiven.”
- If you want, you can also say something like, “I’ve never loved you as much as I love you right now.” Community is the place where we come out of hiding and experience the love of God through each other.

Reach Exercise

Explore forming what John Wesley and the Methodists called a discipleship band.

This is a triad of around three people (five people is the absolute max) who meet regularly for prayer and confession.

Your band could be with a subgroup of your weekly table community or small group, or totally different people. While it's ideal to be together in person, your band can also meet digitally, which makes it possible to join with close friends who may live farther away.

Just like a weekly meal is the optimal way to build the kinship layer of community into your Rule of Life, or your regular routine, a discipleship band is a way to build that more intimate layer of brothers and sisters into your Rule of Life as well.

Our friends from the modern Methodist church have put together a great primer on how to start and run your own discipleship band that you can download for free. They've also created an app you can use to keep your group on track.

To form your own band:

- 01 Go to discipleshipbands.com, download the free ebook, and give it a read.
- 02 Identify and invite a few others to start a band with you. (It may be ideal if your band is a subgroup of your “kinship group” or home community, simply because it's less relationships to stay up to date with).
- 03 Put a date on the calendar and begin meeting regularly following the simple questions in the ebook, also found on the following page.

IN COMMUNITY — LEARN

- 04 How is it with your soul?
- 05 What are your struggles and successes?
- 06 How might the Word and Spirit be speaking in your life?
- 07 Do you have any sin that you want to confess?
- 08 Are there any secrets or hidden things you would like to share?



Practice Reflection

Before your next time together with the group for Session 04, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions:

- 01 Where did I feel resistance in confession?
- 02 Which emotions did I expect to experience? Which was I surprised by?
- 03 In what ways did I encounter God as I confessed my sins?

Note: As you write, be as specific as possible. While bullet points are just fine, if you write it out in narrative form, your brain will be able to process your insights in a more lasting way.

Reflection Notes

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Keep Growing (Optional)

The following resources were created to enhance your experience of this Practice, but they are entirely optional.

Read

Made to Belong by David Kim (Chapters 06–07)

Listen

Rule of Life Podcast on Community (Episode 03)

Bonus Conversations

If you would like to slow down this four-week Practice to give your community more time to sit in each week's teaching and spiritual exercise, you can pause and meet for an optional conversation in the Appendix.



