

Confession

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

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Good morning. It is good to be with you here today as we dig into God's Word. Last week, we looked at Jesus' invitation to rest in the book of Matthew chapter 11, and we saw that true rest is found in a life of discipleship to Jesus. And we define that as to be with Jesus, to become like Jesus, and to do what Jesus did. And in that life of discipleship, there are spiritual disciplines or spiritual rhythms.

And there are spaces through which the Holy Spirit tills up the ground of our hearts so that we can be ready for gospel fruitfulness. And so today, we are going to look at one of those spiritual disciplines, confession. Now, what comes to your mind when I say the word confession? For me, I immediately think like Catholic confession. Anybody grow up in that tradition this morning? Yeah. Maybe also you think of a police interrogation.

You're thinking, "Give me the confession. Tell me you did it." Or maybe if you're into like soap operas or your life has been a soap opera, you think of like a spouse confession. I want to give you a little insight into my background and the family I grew up in, which they're actually all here today, if you want to wave. My siblings, my parents. We grew up in a very loud home. My siblings and I have an older brother and a younger sister were all musicians.

So I was the drummer of the family, always beaten away on the drum set. My brother's the electric guitarist. So not only is it loud, but the house revolved around him. I'm just kidding. That's a music joke. My sister's the more refined one of the bunch. She played the harp, also plays other instruments. But her home was not just loud because of the music we played. We're just loud people. We talk loud. We celebrate loud. We laugh loud.

My parents have my parents both love Jesus. They have lived what it means to be faithful to your marriage vow. They've been together for 35 years of marriage. And especially in the early years of our home, they modeled what I would say is a less than quiet, strong disagreements. My parents know how to tell it like it is.

But one thing I will forever be grateful for about the home I grew up in is that I had a mother who valued honesty. I don't think it was ever stated in our home, but you just knew lying was the worst of all sins in our home. You're going to make mistakes. You're going to get it wrong sometimes, but you better not lie about it. And so from an early age, I realized that, and the truth is throughout my life, I've made many mistakes, some small, insignificant, some pretty massive and life-altering.

But I can confidently tell you this morning, there is no more miserable time in my life than the times I've lived in dishonesty. Absolutely miserable. I know what it is to feel what David wrote in Psalm 32 when he said, "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night, your hand was heavy on me.

My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Absolute misery. And so it's from these seasons in my life of experiencing that misery, as well as God revealing the truth of His Word to my heart, that I have come to this conclusion, and that is that confession is one of the most central practices of being a disciple of Jesus.

Confession is one of the most central practices of being a disciple of Jesus. And so my prayer today, as we get into God's Word, is that the Holy Spirit would minister to us today, and that you would leave with a further understanding of what Scripture talks about as confession, but also a further discipline to practice this discipline of confession. So would you join me in praying to that end this morning?

God, you know that I'm just a man, and I have no business being up here on my own merit or own authority to speak your truth. But God, I thank you for the grace that you give to us. I ask that these would not be my words, but they would be yours. And God, that you would stir in your people, that you would do something new in us. And God, teach us to be with you and to become like you and to do what you did.

And we want to do that through confession today. In Jesus' name. Amen. I'd like to take you on a journey this morning, and I'm going to be direct with you. This is not the normal type of sermon that I preach as far as content and structure. And I have prayed about this and been like, "Lord, are you sure that's a little different?" And God has continually come back and said, "No, this is what I want you to say." So I want you to buckle up.

We're not going to be in one passage like normal, and we're going to cover a lot of ground this morning. So as we begin this journey together, I'd like to start by defining a few terms. First, I'd like to define the term truth. What is truth? The definition of truth is that which is true, go figure, or in accordance with fact or reality. I want you to think truth equals reality.

And throughout Scripture, God refers to this term of truth or reality with this idea of light. I want you to imagine going into a dark room and you flip on the light and you see what is around you. Reality is exposed to you. Light exposes reality. Second, we have this term lies, that which is not in accordance with fact or reality. And as truth equals reality, lies equal unreality.

I want you to imagine you're in that same room and the light never gets turned on. You have no idea what reality is in front of you because darkness hides reality. And so all throughout scripture, we see this battle between truth and lies, reality versus unreality, light versus darkness. And as Christians, we believe that all truth by very nature is found in God.

God is the Creator of all things. God is the sustainer of all things. And therefore, truth and reality are found in Him. Scripture says that God is light. In 1 John 1:5, it says, "God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all." On the other hand, we have Satan, who is referred to as the father of lies. He has no power to create anything on his own doing.

He's focused on destroying what God has created, and he does this by speaking lies. And this brings darkness, a sense of a lack of reality to our lives. In John 8:44, it says he was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

So then I ask, how does this battle between truth and lies, light versus darkness, how does this impact you and me as humans? Well, you can go all the way back to the beginning of creation in the garden where Satan lied to Eve. God had specifically told Adam and Eve, "You are not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because if you do, you will certainly die." There was a truth, a reality to what God had said, and yet Satan spoke lies when he said, "You will not certainly die."

For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." And so it started with a lie in the garden. And that lie then enticed Eve and played to her desires. In Genesis 3: 6, we see that the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom.

Satan's lie played to Eve's desires. And she then sinned by acting upon those desires in affirmation of the lie. It says she took some and she ate it. It was a willful act to fulfill the desires that were based in lies. And then finally, sin has consequences. And for Adam and Eve, just as God had promised, when he said, "When you eat from it, you will certainly die," there was death, there was separation.

And so in the garden, we see lies that played to desires, that led to actions which are sin and had consequences of death. And you and I see the same progression at work in each and every one of our lives as well. We are confronted with lies, with unreality every day. And this could be about all kinds of categories. It could be lies about God, lies about ourselves, lies about those we are around, lies about creation, you name it.

And these lies can come from multiple sources. We live in a sinful society, and so sometimes there are just lies that we experience because of where we live. Scripture also speaks that these lies can well up within us because of the sinfulness of our bodies. There are also, we know, demonic forces at work pushing against the goodness and truth and light of God. And so sometimes the enemy is speaking lies to us.

But we're confronted with lies. And these lies then play to the desires of our bodies. James 1:14 says, "But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed." Let's just be honest, evil is enticing sometimes. Just as Eve was drawn to the pleasure and the promise of the fruit, we hear lies every day that speak to the desires of our bodies, our flesh, the lusts of our flesh.

And then out of these desires, we act either mentally or physically. James 1:15 says, "And sin, and then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin." We make a willful decision to fulfill our desires, and we act out either mentally or physically. And I want to encourage you, yes, you can act out in sin mentally. Jesus spoke about this with the sin of lust and the sin of anger.

You can make a willful decision to fulfill your desires based on a lie in your mind. But we also can act upon those. And this sin then brings about destruction and death in our lives. As James 1:15 says, "And sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death." Spiritual death, relational death, physical death. So we have lies that play to our desires that lead to sin, that leads to death.

And we live in a world that is in bondage to sin and death. And ultimately, the root cause of this bondage is lies. We live in darkness. And the sad truth about this is in that state of darkness, we then run from the light. John 3:20 says, "Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed." We've been in this process of running from the light all the way since the garden.

After Adam and Eve sinned, they hid. It says, "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden." Adam and Eve were embarrassed. There was a shame. And in that place of believing a lie, they ran from the Lord, and we do this same thing. We love to hide. I see this at work as a parent every day.

We have a two-year-old daughter named Forrest, and there is nothing more terrifying in our home than when I turn to my wife and I say, "Where's Forrest?" We both know we are about to go on a journey of uncovering mad chaos in our home. Something has been broken, something has been spilled, something has been done, and she's hiding. We, by very nature, hide.

And even in spite of this process of believing lies and sinning, and then running and hiding, God made a way for us. In John 3:16 and 17, we read, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him." And later in 2 Corinthians 5, we read, "God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people's

sins against them. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." God took our shame that we don't have to run and hide anymore.

That thing that you feel most embarrassed of right now in the back of your mind, Jesus bled for it. He endured the harassment, the shame. He died our death. And so in Him, there is no need to be ashamed anymore because of Christ. And this is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ that we speak to one another in church and we proclaim to the world. Now let's begin to put all of this together as it pertains to this spiritual discipline of confession.

What is confession? Confession comes from the Latin word *confetti*, which literally means to acknowledge. When you confess, you acknowledge. And there are two sides to this acknowledgement. There can be positive confession. I acknowledge the truth. I acknowledge the truth about who God is and who He created me to be. But there's also negative confession.

This would be acknowledging sin and acknowledging the lies that led to that sin, the unreality that we've believed and we acknowledge it. And then there are two categories that Scripture calls us to practice this acknowledgement. There's confessing to God, which would be upward confession, and that can be positive and negative. We confess truth to God and say, "God, I believe that you are." And we affirm that truth.

God, I know that you are. God, I know that you created me to be. But then we also confess negatively to Him and we say, "God, I just admit to you the desires in my life that I've fulfilled in sin and the lies that led to Him. And I acknowledge that to you." And then Scripture doesn't leave it just as acknowledging that to God. It says, "We're to be acknowledging that to other people, both positively and negatively." This is why we gather for church every Sunday.

We are here to confess truth through the songs we sing, through reading God's Word, through the counsel we give to one another. We are acknowledging reality to one another and this builds us up. But we also acknowledge the sin and the desires and the lies one to another. And we say, you know what? This is where I'm really at. This is the darkness of my heart.

And that's what Scripture calls us to do. And so then I ask, how is this confession practically lived out in the life of a disciple? We know that first off, confession happens at conversion. There's a negative confession to God and to others that says, "I'm a sinner. I can't do this on my own. I need a Savior." And we tell the Lord that, but we admit that to others.

And then there's a positive confession that says, "I know that Jesus died for my sin. I know that Jesus rose again and he paid for that. And I am confessing Him as my Lord. This is my new reality. Later, we're going to have baptisms that are talking about this exact confession that has been made to God and to others. Unfortunately, I think this is where we often leave confession in the church.

Yep, you do that when you become a Christian. This first process is referred to as justification. When we confess positively and negatively at the moment of conversion, by faith, we receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And so when God looks at us, He says, "I don't see your sin anymore. I see the perfect sacrifice of Jesus." And that happened through a positive and negative confession.

But second, confession happens throughout our entire journey of discipleship. Though we are no longer guilty before God the Father in His eyes, Jesus wants to form us into His image. That is the whole process of discipleship to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and to do what He did. And this involves a lifestyle of confession, both positive confession, when we gather together as a church, when we get in God's Word privately and pray to Him privately.

A negative confession we confess to God and to others when we walk in sin and lies. James 5:16 says, "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed." This is not optional in

the life of a believer. And this is how God begins to root out the lies that have plagued our minds and have plagued to our desires and have brought sin and destruction in our lives.

And God wants to change us at those very root level lies within us. This is what the apostle Paul spoke of in Romans 12:2 when he said, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, His good, pleasing, and perfect will. This is a beautiful gift for the disciple of Jesus to learn how to walk in reality.

This is not some dirty word. But I genuinely believe at the core of my being that a lack of regular positive and negative confession in the Church of Jesus Christ has crippled our intimacy and has crippled our effectiveness, both with him and with each other. I see that at work in my own life.

I see that at work in our church. I see that at work in many believers. In the area of positive confession, the people of God have become less and less committed to both private and corporate acknowledgment of truth. Commitment to church has become casual at best. I know we should go to church, but God has put that in our lives that we might regularly acknowledge the truth of who He is.

Commitment to private time in God's Word and in prayer and in devotion to Him is all but lost in the younger generations. And in this area of negative confession, we've become less and less committed to repenting and admitting the deep depths of our heart. First to God, this practice of saying, God, I just want to reveal what's really in there.

Got some really dark, nasty desires inside, and they're based on lies, and I just want to admit that to you. But we especially do not do that with one another. We don't talk about it. We find ourselves stuck in this place of darkness and a lack of intimacy, a lack of reality. I want you to look at the blessing that confession has as a process in our lives.

When we regularly confess our sin, it brings about a humility within us as believers. Because I have to admit, boy, if I say that to the Lord and I say that to a brother or sister that I trust, that's the real deal. There's no more manipulating that in my mind. And so it brings about a humility in the life of a believer. And then as I acknowledge that, I'm reminded I need a Savior and I'm drawn to dependency on Christ.

And as I seek the Lord again, I'm reminded of the truth of what God has already done to pay for that sin. And so I am given a great place of gratitude to say, "You know what? Jesus, I praise you. You paid for that." And out of that, I'm able to experience tangible expressions of forgiveness in my life as God speaks to me and says, "You know what, Sam, you're forgiven." But as other brothers in my life can say, "You know what, Sam, thank you for sharing that.

Jesus bled and died for that. You're forgiven. It's time to get up. It's time to rip that lie out of your life." And out of that, that brings about a sense of community and intimacy, and God equips us in His presence and in the presence of His people to root out those lies and guide us towards growth. This is the gift of confessing sin to the believer. And the flip side, I want you to see the negative side of this.

A lack of confession of sin in the life of a believer ultimately brings about isolation and bondage. Because when I conceal my sin and keep it to the narrative of my own mind, I can rationalize all day long. Not that bad. And there's a deception that sets in, even in my own inner awareness. And out of that, if I'm deceived about the level of my sin, I'm really deceived about my level of need for a Savior.

And so there's a pride that begins to come up and root itself in the life of a believer. And then when I'm not focused on what Christ has done for me, I begin to have to do it on my own. And this brings about an effort and a performance in the life of a Christian. And we kind of try to make ourselves look shiny and do the right thing. And then the enemy flips the script, and there's a sense of shame that sets in as the accuser comes to us and says, "You're not good enough." And we feel worthless and we feel shameful inside.

And out of that sense of shame, we isolate. We start pulling away from true accountability, truly being known, true intimacy with the Lord. And guess what? Without that community, without that intimacy, what are we going to go back to? The lies. And the grip of unreality and darkness takes hold even in the mind of a believer. Confession is beautiful to the people of God.

I believe that just as you cannot be saved if you're not willing to confess, both positively and negative, confess your sin, and confess Jesus as Lord. We will never know the intimacy and power of Christ as His people without a regular lifestyle of confessing our sin and confessing truth. This is essential to the body of Christ. I don't say that to shame you this morning. I don't say that to try and embarrass us.

We know God loves us, and He wants us to know the blessing of living in reality, and He desired that so much that He willingly came and bled and died and suffered and was embarrassed and felt the shame of everything that's on your mind right now. It's paid for. And through this practice of confession, acknowledging truth, acknowledging lies, he wants to draw us into his heart, to wrap his arms around us as a father.

I love you. I've got better for you and mold us into the image of His Son, Jesus. And so this morning, I just ask, what might the Holy Spirit be laying on your heart today? How is God calling you to practice the discipline of confession? Because I genuinely believe God has something for each of us to grow in this category. Maybe this morning you might have said, "I've never confessed Jesus as my Lord.

I've never confessed that I need a Savior." Today is the day. We would love to talk to you and pray with you about that. But if you already have made that first act of confession, maybe God is calling you this morning to be more committed to the confession of truth in the positive category. You say, "You know what?

Yeah, we come to church here and there, but true commitment, true value of gathering as believers has been low on your priority." And the Holy Spirit is saying, "Today is the day for a change." I want you to be in a space and with a group of people that truth is reminded in your heart through God's Word and through worship and through prayer. And that happens as the people of God together. Maybe God is calling you to that this morning.

Maybe God is calling you to set us out time for positive confession in your life, to get into God's Word regularly, to set Simon aside for prayer in your private spaces. How are we ever going to root out the lies of our heart and of our minds if we're not looking at the truth? And the Holy Spirit is saying, "Today is the day to make a change.

I want to fill your heart with reality." Or maybe this morning there's a part of your story, a part of your heart that nobody knows. And it's that thing that you say, I'll take that to my grave. I want to encourage you, the enemy is lying to us.

Trying to tell us, boy, you could never really be known. And God is saying, I bled for that, I died for that, and I have so much more for you. And until you really admit the darkness of your own heart, the act that was brought about by a desire that's based in a lie, you are never going to know the truth that I want to replace that with. And today is the day.

Today is the day to say, I want the light. I want to be known. I would encourage you. Maybe you want to just do business with the Lord as we close, and you want to come and pray at the altar. There is nothing magical about these altars. They are wood and foam and fabric.

But there is something meaningful about drawing a line in the sand in your life and even acting upon that that says, "Today is the day." And I can look back to moments in my life where I took a step of faith, and God has seared that into my journey and my experience. Maybe you want to come forward today. Our prayer team is going to be available at each side of the stage this morning, and you may want to talk to somebody.

Maybe there's something you'd like to share. On a deeper note, maybe you need to have a conversation with your spouse later today. And you need to say, "This is me." And I want to encourage you that the enemy right now is probably lying to you and saying, "Your life will blow up." If people knew that, it'll bring chaos.

That chaos is not created in confessing. That chaos was created in the sin. And the enemy loves to put us in a place of fear to say, "I can avoid that. You cannot avoid that." Scripture says, "Be sure your sins will find you out." And that generally happens in this life, and even in miraculous ways, God reveals the contents of our heart.

But if not, your option is to live a life of isolation and brokenness and a lack of intimacy with God's people and with him. Is that worth it? God already bled for that sin. He died for that sin. And today may be the day where you say, I got to come to the light. Don't miss it.

And my prayer is that as a church and for myself individually and for us as a body, that this would stop being the dirty word, and that we could get real with one another. In wise spaces with a godly brother or sister, doesn't always have to be up on stage. God does that sometimes. There's power in that. But find someone. Would we be committed to his truth as well?

We're going to sing a closing song in a moment, and after that, we're going to actually have two baptisms. One is my daughter, one is Pastor Josh's son, not daughter. Sorry, Cohen. Two young people that have said, "I confess my sin, and I confess Jesus as Lord, and I want everyone else to acknowledge that with me." What a beautiful expression of confessing to one another. Would you pray with me?

Lord Jesus, I cannot change anyone's mind or heart today. I'm incapable of changing my own heart and mind. But I also believe right now that we are speaking to the God who parted the Red Sea. And there was a wall of water on the right and the left of the Israelites.

And the God who made a virgin pregnant to enter humanity and a God who would bleed and suffer and die for us and rise from the dead to defeat death in the grave. And so I believe there is nothing too hard for you. And so God, I pray for someone right now who says, "I am not doing that," no one will ever know.

I pray by the power of your Spirit that you would bring a sense of openness to their mind and their heart right now to say, "I want to live in the light." And that you would walk them through that step, and God, you would honor that, and you would bless that, and you would wrap your arms around them this morning. And God, as a church, when we confess to one another, would we be the forgiveness of Christ to one another? Not the judgment, not the shame. Those are lies from the enemy, but God that we would be the forgiveness of Christ to one another.

So, Lord, we love you. We trust You in Jesus' name. Amen.