



APRIL 26TH, 2026

BEHOLDING: DISCIPLINES FOR IMAGERS FINDING FREEDOM: DISCIPLINE OF CONFESSION

²³ Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both **naked** and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:23–25 (ESV)

^{1a} Now the serpent was more **crafty** than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

Genesis 3:1a (ESV)

⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were **naked**. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. ⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was **afraid**, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Genesis 3:7–13 (ESV)

32 A Maskil of David.

¹ **Blessed** is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ² **Blessed** is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. ³ For when I **kept silent**, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah ⁵ I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

Psalms 32:1-5 (ESV)

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. ¹⁹ My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰ let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

James 5:13–20 (ESV)

SMALL GROUP GUIDE: THE GIFT OF CONFESSION

Based on Psalm 32 and James 5:13-20

OPENING PRAYER (2-3 MINUTES)

Begin by asking God to create a safe space for honest conversation and to help each person be open to what He wants to teach through this time together.

ICE BREAKER (5-10 MINUTES)

Question: Share about a time when finally admitting something difficult (to a friend, family member, or God) brought you unexpected relief or freedom. What made it hard to open up? What made it worth it?

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SERMON

Sin is both a crime AND a sickness - It doesn't just make us guilty; it changes us, diminishes us, and damages our relationships with God, others, and creation.

Community was corrupted by sin - Adam and Eve went from being "naked and unashamed" to hiding, blaming, and covering themselves. We still do the same today.

Confession is a gift, not a burden - It's the discipline of freedom, allowing us to give to God what only He can deal with, cover, and heal.

We need each other for healing - There's something about confession in community that cannot be experienced confessing alone.

The question isn't "Do you have sin?" but "Who will cover it?" - We can try to cover it ourselves (which destroys us), or we can lift it to God so He can cover it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Understanding the Problem (15-20 minutes)

1. The sermon described how Adam and Eve went from "naked and unashamed" to hiding and blaming. Why do you think we find authentic community so difficult, even in the church?
2. Read Psalm 32:3-4 together. David describes the physical and emotional toll of unconfessed sin. Why do you think sin affects us this way? Have you experienced this connection between spiritual struggle and physical/emotional distress?
3. The pastor mentioned that in American church culture, there's often an unspoken pressure to "have it all together." How have you experienced this? What are the "masks" we tend to wear at church?

Understanding the Solution (15-20 minutes)

4. Read James 5:16 together. What makes confessing to another person different from confessing to God alone? Why would God design healing to work this way?
5. The sermon emphasized finding the "right person" to confess to - someone who is "righteous" (meaning they've walked with God and experienced His grace, not someone who's perfect). What qualities would you look for in someone you'd trust with confession?
6. What's the difference between "covering our own sin" (like Adam and Eve with fig leaves) and letting God cover our sin? What does each look like practically?

Personal Reflection (10-15 minutes)

7. The sermon described confession as "opening your hand" and letting go of what's killing you. Is there something you've been holding onto - trying to manage, hide, or deal with on your own? (You don't have to share specifics, but reflect on whether this describes your current reality.)

8. What fears or obstacles keep you from being more authentic and vulnerable in Christian community?

Fear of judgment?

Fear of being gossiped about?

Pride or shame?

Not knowing who to trust?

Something else?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Individual Commitments (5-10 minutes)

Choose one or more of the following to practice this week:

Identify a "righteous person" - Think of 1-2 people in your life who demonstrate the qualities of someone safe to confess to (they've experienced God's grace, they're trustworthy, they walk with God). Pray about whether God is leading you to open up to them about something you've been hiding.

Practice small confessions - Start with something "safer" - admit to someone this week when you're struggling, when you don't have it all together, or when you need prayer. Practice taking off the mask in small ways.

Be available to others - Ask God to make you the kind of person others can safely confess to. Pray for wisdom to know when someone needs you to ask, "What's really going on?"

Confess to God specifically - Spend time in prayer this week specifically naming (lifting up) sins you've been trying to cover or manage on your own. Ask God to cover them instead.

Study the pattern - Read Psalm 32 and James 5:13-20 daily this week. Journal about what God is teaching you about confession and community.

Group Commitment (5 minutes)

As a group, discuss:

How can we create a culture in this small group where confession and authenticity are normal, not exceptional?

What ground rules or practices might help us feel safer being real with each other?

Are we willing to commit to checking in with each other about our spiritual struggles, not just our surface-level updates?

PRAYER TIME (10-15 MINUTES)

Suggested prayer format:

Silent reflection (2-3 minutes) - Ask God to reveal anything you've been hiding or trying to cover on your own.

Confession to God (3-5 minutes) - Spend time in silent prayer, lifting to God whatever He's brought to mind. Remember: He already knows. You're not informing Him; you're opening your hand.

Pray for each other (5-7 minutes) - Share prayer requests (as people feel comfortable) and pray for one another. Even if people don't share specifics, pray for courage to confess, wisdom to know who to talk to, and freedom from whatever is weighing each person down.

Close with thanksgiving - Thank God that He doesn't just forgive us but heals us; He doesn't just tear up the list but restores us to wholeness.

CLOSING THOUGHT

"Confession is not an obligation owed to God, and it's not a system for managing our shame. It is the gift of God. It is the discipline of freedom."

The invitation this week isn't to perform or achieve, but simply to open your hand and let God cover what you've been unable to cover yourself. Freedom is available. Healing is possible. And you don't have to do it alone.