



WEEK 2 – CONFESSION

CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... it's March! Have you started your spring cleaning yet? What does that look like for you... are you one who does the whole house top to bottom? Or are you of the ilk, "Spring cleaning? Why should I start now?"

OPENING PRAYER

God of Mercy, forgive us for the ways in which we have allowed things to stand in the way of our relationship with you.

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of how your home cleaning is going, today we're going to talk about how to do a bit of spring cleaning of the heart. Which brings us to week 2 of our series, "The SCRIPT," where we are focusing on utilizing various types of prayer in order to draw us closer to God

this Lent and prepare our hearts for Easter. Now, as I said last week, this series is something of a sequel to the series we did last year where we talked about *how* to pray. We focused on quieting yourself, quieting your mind and heart, and listening for God's voice and what *God* has to say to *you*. Only a small part of prayer is about what *you* say. Yet, what you say *is* important and, if you do it right, can be truly powerful for deepening your relationship with God. So, this Lent and through this series, we're talking about that... what do you say in prayer? Still begin with quieting yourself, spending time in silence and solitude, and listen for God's voice. But hopefully, by the time we get to Easter, you'll have a solid repertoire of what to say when you pray. And that repertoire is what we're calling... the SCRIPT. Now, the SCRIPT is not just the title of this series, it's an acronym. Each of these six letters is a type of prayer, six arrows in your quiver, as it were, that will help you with what to say when you pray and unlock the power of your prayer. The first 2 are about us, the middle 2 are about others, the final 2 are about God. Today, we'll get the 'C'. But first...

Setup Question: How did your prayer time go this week? Were you able to set aside time for silence and solitude, for deepening your relationship with God? Why or why not?

THE SCRIPT SETUP

Last week, we began filling in the letters of the SCRIPT, and we began with the S. The S stood for...

SUPPLICATION

C

R

I

P

T

Supplication was simply asking God for what we want. The root of supplication is supply... you're just asking God to supply your needs. And to help us understand this type of prayer, we looked at a prayer from the prophet Nehemiah, who went to God in humility and desperation to make for a personal request. His humble posture taught us that it's okay to ask God for what we want. (God already knows, so you might as well go for it.) But, Nehemiah also taught us that there are a few things that can help... first, he took the time to get his heart right, to search his heart for what was his true desire. And second, it also gave him the opportunity to align his desires with what God wanted for his life. And so, when we do those things, when we take the time to find the true desires of our hearts and align our desires with what God wants for our lives, and *then*, take that to God in humility, we are way more likely to get what we want. And so, we were challenged to pray our prayers of supplication with humility, knowing that we may not get everything we want, but that God loves us and wants to supply our need.

Question 1: Last week, we were challenged to pray for what we want using Prayers of Supplication. How'd that go? What did you pray for (if you're comfortable sharing?) Did you spend time aligning yourself with God's desires for you?

SCRIPTURE

Okay, let's keep moving through the SCRIPT, and take a look at the 'C'. And to get there, we're going to look at another Old Testament prayer... and this one's going to take some context. It comes from the Psalms, many of which were attributed to King David. And in them, we get some insight into his life. If he's feeling good, we get psalms of joy. If he's feeling depressed, we get psalms of mourning. If he's feeling grateful, we get psalms of thanksgiving. (He's kinda the Taylor Swift of his day... if you break up with him, you can guarantee you'll be featured on his next album of psalms.) And this is what happens with our Psalm today. Let's take a look...

Read Psalm 51, the whole thing, (including the title description.)

Yup, David done messed up. Big time. And they didn't cover anything up here. David is King, this would have been something he could have easily swept under the rug, simply made go away by royal decree, or at the very least not included in the scriptures. But there's something refreshing about the honesty and transparency here. So, let's take a moment to get the backstory. (If you want to read the whole thing, go

back to 2 Samuel, chapters 11 and 12. But here is the IMDB summary of this episode of the series.) One day, David is walking on the roof of the palace and just happens to see a “woman of unusual beauty,” (2 Samuel 11:2 NLT) and must know who she is. Turns out, her name is Bathsheba and she’s married to a soldier named Uriah. Uriah is in the army, and David, not thinking with his brain, sends word to the commander to have Uriah put on the front lines, and if he happens to die, so be it. Sure enough, Uriah is killed in battle, Bathsheba mourns, and when the mourning period is over, David brought her to the palace and made her one of his wives. The end of that chapter says, “the Lord was displeased with what David had done.” Ya think? At the beginning of the next chapter, the prophet Nathan goes to David, calls him out for his deceit, his treachery, his sin against God. Busted... David falls apart, and is compelled to pray this prayer, this psalm.

Question 2: Consider this story and the Scripture. What stands out to you? Did you know this story and what David had done? Does it change your opinion of him? How do you feel about his prayer?

REFLECTION

David has done something truly horrific. Out of his own lust, deceit, malice, and selfishness, he’s committed this awful act. And it’s a doozie... you could well argue that in this one act he’s violated 6 of the 10 commandments, (7 if he did it on a Sunday.) You almost have to be trying to pull that off. Now, if you read the rest of the chapter in 2 Samuel, he pays a pretty heavy price. But he’s still left with what to

do now. The Bible tells us he's overcome with guilt and shame, (as he should be,) but that he's truly remorseful and wants to make things right with God. And so, he goes to God with a prayer that truly reflects the desire of his heart. It's similar to a prayer of supplication in that way... but this one is a particular type of supply. This type of prayer, where you're asking God to have mercy, asking God to wash us clean from the guilt, that's called a prayer of...

CONFESSION

Confession is tricky, because we don't like it. We like supplication... "God, give me what I want." But no one wants to admit their faults. No one wants to admit they were wrong. No one wants to count their sins and bring those before God. Can't we just stick with the asking for stuff? Well, no, this one is incredibly important, too. If we're going to deepen our relationship with God, if we're going to prepare our hearts for Easter and remove anything that stands in the way of that relationship, confession *has* to be part of it. It's vital. It's necessary. Confession is *required* for a strong relationship with God.

Question 3: What is your experience with confession? Is this something that is regularly part of your prayer practice? Or is this something of a foreign concept to you?

They say confession is good for the soul... and David here shows us why. So, let's start there... what's the point of Confession? Why do it at all? Well... David gets at that very thing in verse 10.

**¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Renew a loyal spirit within me.**

Confession recreates that clean heart within us. It's a little like cleaning house... The more you let things pile up, the longer you go between cleaning, the dirtier things are, the more work you have to do to get it clean. Your heart operates the same way. The longer you go between cleaning your heart out, the dirtier things are in there, the less room you have for God, and the less hospitable a place it is for His Spirit. You might say, confession is the Lemon Pledge of our soul. Confession creates a clean heart within us. So, if the goal this Lent is to grow closer to God, Confession is required... because it removes the barriers, it breaks down the walls, it helps rid us of the things that prevent us from fully falling into our relationship with our Creator.

Another benefit of confession... take a look at verse 8.

**⁸ Oh, give me back my joy again;
you have broken me— now let me rejoice.**

The guilt and shame that comes with our sins is a heavy burden to carry. David's burden was a fully loaded cement truck on his heart.

We may not have screwed up quite that badly... but our guilt can come with a pretty hefty burden, as well, that we just haul along with us. And when you're carrying that much weight on your heart, you can't also carry the good things. It's hard to see the joy in anything. Confession unloads that burden. Confession allows you to set that weight down. And in time, as it does for David, it allows us to regain our joy. God wants that for you. God wants you to have a joyful life, not one weighed down and burdened by guilt and shame. Confession is required for us this Lent partly because it creates a clean heart that allows us a deeper relationship with God, and also because it allows us a path back to the joyful life God wants for us.

Question 4: Let's pause here for a bit of reflection. Do you feel like your heart is clean? Are there things you need to confess. This might be too vulnerable a question to answer specifically out loud if you're in a group setting, but it's worth a general discussion. (Hold space for difficult discussion.)

Okay, well, how do we do it? For that, let's look at verse 17. David says,

¹⁶ You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one.

You do not want a burnt offering.

¹⁷ The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit.

You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.

David is saying that the optics don't matter... that's not what God is after. The rituals are less important... that's not what God wants. The sacrifices demanded by the Law... that's not confession. What David is saying is that God wants us to open our souls to Him, to be honest and vulnerable and contrite. So, the first step in confession is not to pray some prayer that was written for you, not to wear black and mourn and appear sorry. The first step is to tear your heart open to God, to lay your soul bare so that nothing is hidden. We like to think we can hide things, and push things into the dark corners of our souls, hoping not even God can find them. But the more we do that, the more clutter builds up. So, step one... lay your soul bare before God.

Step two... take a look at verse 14.

14 Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves;

It's kinda easy to just say a general confession, "God, forgive me of my sins," and just hope that blanket covers everything, so you don't have to admit the exact sin. But David gets specific. "Forgive me for shedding blood." (Now, if he'd have really wanted to list things out, this Psalm would have been 8 chapters long. But this point will do...) It's important for us to name the thing that is weighing our hearts down. It's important for us to say specifically the sin that is heavy on our hearts. When you speak generally, without admitting the specifics, you're still holding on to that thing... you're not letting it go. You haven't gone to God with a broken spirit, with your heart laid bare, if you do that. You have to get specific... "God, I did <this>, I'm

really sorry.” It breaks the power that the specific sin has over you when you do. When things are brought into the light, they can be dealt with. God says, “okay, now you’re ready for me to help you.” That’s freeing. So go to God with an open heart and get specific.

Question 5: Take a moment to close with a time of confession to God. In silence, ask God to reveal to you the things for which you need to ask forgiveness. And then, if you’re ready, lay those burdens down before God. Unload that weight and allow God to clean your heart. Make this a practice of your prayer time for season of Lent.

CLOSING

So, what happens to David? Well, Nathan tells him that God has forgiven him. After all that, he’s forgiven. So, the final thing we learn from this: you are not beyond forgiveness from God. “But you don’t know what I’ve done. You don’t know my struggles or what I’m dealing with.” You’re right... but if David, after this can be forgiven, there is nothing you cannot be forgiven from, either. We often avoid forgiveness, not just because it’s uncomfortable, but also because we don’t think we are worthy of it. No matter what you’ve done, no matter how you feel about it, God still calls you His child and his masterpiece. You are worthy of God’s forgiveness. Confession is vital for this season of Lent, if you are to draw closer to your Creator. It gives you a clean heart so that you might better host the Spirit of God. So, lay your soul bare before God, and ask for forgiveness... it might just be your path back to joy.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations
and close in prayer.**