



new life fellowship

Sermon Title: Spiritual Disciplines: The Way of Confession

Speaker: Sherin Swift, Connections & Equipping Pastor

Scripture: James 5:13-16

Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

(NRSV)

Sermon Outline:

The spiritual life is one that is not quick but takes time to grow, where we need to come back to time and time again. You can't earn God's love by practicing spiritual disciplines, for you have already earned God's love. Practicing spiritual disciplines open us up to God's grace and love more deeply.

When we think about confession, many of us don't associate this with experiencing God's love and grace, but instead think of this as a burden. Some of us squirm when we hear about confession because we have not seen good examples of this, or the examples we have seen have been handled very poorly. Others of us fear confession will expose us to criticism and the judgement of others. Confession as a spiritual discipline is not a burden but a gift of grace.

For Christians, confession is more than therapeutic – it is transformative.

Confession is an ongoing process. One in which we are living out our salvation bit by bit day by day, where God's posture towards us is one of love and forgiveness. He still looks towards us with love, mercy and forgiveness and can't wait to show you mercy, compassion, love. God makes his power available to us in our confession.

Confession frees us from the power of sin. God's power is always available to us, and it is in confession that we can open ourselves up to his mercy, grace, and power to live differently.

In Christ, confession doesn't condemn us, it liberates us.

Repentance and confession go alongside one another. Not only are we to acknowledge our sins and weaknesses but are also to begin to make things right and live differently. We receive the power of the Holy Spirit to help mature us more and more into the image of Christ. Without acknowledging our needs or weaknesses it is hard to acknowledge what our next step is and where we need God's help.

In today's scripture, James is writing to Jewish believers in Christ during a time when they were scattered and going through different types of suffering and trials. James is encouraging them to pull together as a community of faith and to share in one another's difficulties and joys, so that they can hold each other up. James is encouraging this body of believers to turn to one another and confess.

We know that we don't need to confess our sins to others, but there are times when we need to share this with someone else. We are forgiven in Christ, and as sisters and brother in Christ, we don't have to fear condemnation.

**“When we confess our virtues we are competitors. When we confess our sins we are brother and sisters.”
-Karl Barth**

James is alluding in this scripture to there being a sense of community when we confess to one another. By being present and offering a safe space for others to confess, we are becoming Christ to one another during our moments of confession.

We do not have to be perfect to please Christ. It is in our confession to others that we can free up those around us. Your freedom in Christ by being honest and vulnerable can be an example for others who need to be free in Christ.

Sermon Summary:

This Sunday, Sherin Swift, Connections & Equipping Pastor, continues our summer series on Spiritual Disciplines. Today Pastor Sherin explores The Way of Confession and how we can look to change our negative association with confession into a liberating practice than can open us up to transformation.

Sermon Questions:

1. How does this scripture connect for you the topic that was discussed today? What words resonate with you? Why?
2. In your family of origin, did you grow up in a home where you felt it was safe space and you were able to be open and vulnerable, admitting your shortcomings? Or were you taught to never show your weaknesses and if you did were judged, criticized, or made to feel shameful? How did your experience growing up influence whether or not you are able to be vulnerable and admit your shortcomings today? Find time this week to journal about this your experience and offering this up to God, asking for healing to take place.
3. Are you able to start practicing a lifestyle of confession? Maybe you begin by practicing "confession light", turning to God daily, confessing and admitting the ways that you have gotten it wrong? Maybe it is apologizing to a co-worker, a staff member, your family, your spouse, or a friend?
4. What is an area that you want to grow in when it comes to confession? Where is God inviting you to stretch yourself in this spiritual discipline? Do you need God's help to be honest and vulnerable? Can you be a safe place for others to confess? Offer this up in your quiet time with God, seeking his wisdom regarding this spiritual discipline.