

## EIBCC – May 19, 2022

### *Serving Counselees in their Repentance*

#### *by Calling them to and Guiding them through Confession of Sin.*

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**CONNECT:** Thank you, Dave and the EIBCC Core team, for the opportunity to talk with you this morning.

**ASK:** If you're not on staff at a church, would you raise your hand? I can freely speak on behalf of your pastors or ministry leaders to say, **“Thank you for investing your life, God’s Word, and the gospel in the lives of those you do. It’s no surprise to you to say that you are why the EIBCC exists, and you’re more of a blessing to your pastor than you may know. We thank God for you.”**

*Transition:* I love this topic because, well, I’ve gotten pretty good at repentance and confession over the years due to my expertise in sinning.

I know sin is a seriously heavy topic, and I don’t want to make light of it. But our battle with sin—fighting for righteousness—is one of the most grieving and joyous aspects of the Christian life. It can be quite taxing, were it not for the grace of God that sustains us in the hope of glory!

**MY JOURNEY INTO BIBLICAL COUNSELING:** In 2011 I was serving as a youth pastor in NJ at a church I was at for 12 years (first 5 ½ yrs as worship pastor). It was a wonderful church, but we were in a season of unhealthy church life. After a couple years of prayer my wife and I followed the Lord’s leading to move to KY to pursue my M.Div. at Southern Seminary.

When I registered for my first semester I intentionally went after the Intro to Biblical Counseling and had Stuart Scott as my professor. I was in rough shape: frustrated, bitter, tired, and I knew I took that class for me...for my heart more than anything else.

While in that class, God used Dr. Scott’s biblically thorough content and passion for helping people by prioritizing the Word and intensive relationship to grip my heart for biblical counseling. And the Lord did a massive convicting and subsequent healing in my own heart.

I returned to NJ to visit family and had opportunity to confess some of my own sin to my previous pastor (and bro-in-law) and ask his forgiveness (which he gladly granted). I needed to walk through that process because I thought everyone else was the problem (shocker, I know).

By God’s grace, He’s continued to bless that friendship and Doug’s a friend I call from time-to-time for pastoral wisdom and prayer.

**TRANSITION:** As I come alongside of others in counseling, calling people to and guiding them through repentance has become an incredibly helpful aspect in our counseling, because God’s work in their heart becomes so evident. Through initial anger at times, tears, ugly cries, a realization that I’m actually trying to simply lead them to the Lord, God has written story after story of restored peace and hope for the future.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I’ve been married to Cherilyn for 16+ years and we have two boys (9 & 12). When my 12 y.o. was 2, he fell and cracked his forehead on a door hinge, square in the middle of his forehead (today it’s a war-scar).

Hospital — papoose (detail)...(that look) — stitches (face covering).

I’m convinced those things are a tool of the devil intended to fracture family relationships early on. That’s a painful, but necessary process. Because he was completely immobilized, and a skillful nurse gave him stitches, his war-mark is much smaller than it could have been.

And that’s what it can be like when calling someone to and guiding them through repentance and confession.

### **THE CHARGE**

*“Brothers (and sisters to sisters), if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”* (Galatians 6:1, ESV)

**Summary:** As we connect with counselees through Christ-like compassion and begin assessing the motives/desires of the heart, part of the way we respond with truth and grace is by helping them understand their need for repentance and confession. Repentance involves more than a cognitive understanding that their troubling response(s) to life-situations (whether sin and/or suffering) requires a change (simple behaviorism). This understanding is crucial, but it flows from repentant heart experiencing godly grief regarding what they have thought (believed) and how they have acted. **Our privilege is to guide them to this understanding and lovingly lead them *through* biblically rooted confession of sin, where peace is found, and joy is restored.**

#### **I. Clarifications and Reminders**

- a. Not *primarily* dealing with:
  - i. *How* to confront or rebuke someone in the hopes of leading them to repentance and confession (a topic unto itself).
  - ii. Interpersonal reconciliation (though this often *flows from* personal repentance and confession to the Lord).
- b. “Confession” may bring a few contexts to mind:

- i. **C**onfession and **R**epentance in the capital “C” and “R” sense when someone initially surrenders to the Lord for salvation/justification (confesses the sin and need/desire to trust Christ as Savior by grace through faith).
  - ii. A doctrinal confession
    - 1. Scripture confession (Deut 6:4-5; Matthew 16:16).
    - 2. Your church’s doctrinal statement.
    - 3. An historic/modern confessional document.
  - iii. Interpersonal confession of sin (flowing from repentance) in the pursuit of restoration and reconciliation.
  - iv. **Ongoing confession of sin (or temptation) in the context of repentance.**
- b. A primer on repentance:
- i. a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a **sincere commitment** to forsake it and walk in obedience. (New thinking that leads to new living.)
  - ii. a decision to change one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of **thought** and **attitude** with regard to sin and righteousness (see *epistrephō* below).
  - iii. Romans 2:4 (ESV) — “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?”

Repentance acknowledges that one needs grace, without any contribution of their own which would dispute grace (except the obedience that *flows from* God’s kindness).

**Four key biblical words:**

OT: *nicham*—“lamenting or regretting one’s own doings.”<sup>i</sup>

OT: *shub*— “to turn or return; console oneself” (Jer. 8:6) (In most cases, used of God (Gen. 6:6.)<sup>ii</sup>

NT: *metanoēō*—“repent” (most frequent in NT) —See Mt 3:2; Mk 6:12; Rom 2:4.<sup>iii</sup>

NT: *epistrephō*—“to change one’s belief, manner of living) in such a way as to turn to God would want.”<sup>iv</sup> (Acts 15:3 Here it is “conversion.”)

**II. Prepare yourself beforehand (timeline-permitting). Otherwise, do so as you call them to and guide them through confession.**

- a. Pray

- i. Ask for the Spirit's help to accomplish what you (counselor) are not able or expected by God to do (work heart change in another's life).
  - ii. Ask for discernment to understand how directly to lead and how hard to push.
- b. Consider my own heart and personal practice. Get the log out of my own eye (Matt 7:5).
  - i. Am I harboring sin that is unconfessed?
  - ii. Am I regularly confessing personal sin in a similar way to how I am calling them to confession?
  - iii. Am I receptive to others calling me to confession (even when I'm not ready for it)?
  - iv. Am I being honest when I say, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1)?
- c. If answer is "No" to any of the above, consider appropriate level of vulnerability and model confession genuinely.

### III. Calling counselees to confession

- a. We've been "entrusted with the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:16-19). God through Christ accomplished the work for reconciling, we get to "carry the message" every day!
- b. Remember that it is our **privilege** to **minister** the Word, including the teaching they need at the moment (connected with previous counseling).
- c. As you assess their heart motives and desires, consider their disposition (1 Thess 5:14):
  - i. Admonish (warn, instruct) the unruly (NASB95), idle (ESV), undisciplined (NET), idle and disruptive (NIV), lazy (NLT),
  - ii. Encourage (comfort) the fainthearted (discouraged),
  - iii. Help the weak,
  - iv. Be patient with everyone.
- d. Cast a **hope-filled vision** for confessing sin to magnifying God's character, bringing true and lasting joy through a restored relationship with the Father, in Christ, by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.
  - i. We're not simply telling them they need to confess. We take them to the overlook (Psalm 121).
  - ii. Help them orient their heart toward the Lord (not me as counselor), embrace their need for personal, specific confession.
  - iii. Understand the depth/severity of their sin while seeing it in view of God's character. ("Shrinking the Cross" in *The Gospel-Centered Life* by Bob Thune)

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*The path from calling them to confession to guiding them through it is often not neat or linear.*

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“For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but **because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief**, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.” (2 Corinthians 7:8–11, ESV, emphasis mine)

#### IV. Guiding counselees through confession

**Two key biblical words:**

OT: *yāqān*—“know”—See Ps 51:3 (translated *homologeō* in the Greek translation of the OT)<sup>v</sup>

NT: *homologeō* —“to say the same”—translated confess/acknowledge”—See 1 John 1:9

- a. **A clunky definition:** Confession of sin is an aspect of the fruit of genuine repentance where one (privately or corporately) agrees with God for specific wrongs committed or righteous deeds omitted against the Lord, pleads for God’s mercy and grace for forgiveness, expresses confidence in the assurance of pardon, and culminates in a desire to live for God’s glory. (Psalm 32:5; Psalm 51; 1 John 1:9; James 5:16.)
- b. **Guide counselees intentionally, narrating/dialoging as you go.** We’re pointing out glorious truths that help them follow Jesus.
  - i. Remember we’re teaching/shepherding.
  - ii. Guides often narrate as they lead. They point out what is most pertinent for those they’re guiding. Help counselees see where they are in God’s storyline and where they’re headed (creation, fall, redemption, consummation), and help

them frame their story (learning to love God's commands while looking at Christ. Always point to our treasure (Christ).

- iii. *Jim's Progression in Biblical Counseling* from one of my earlier meetings here with you
- iv. Listen to their language. Are they minimizing their sin<sup>vi</sup> by defending, faking, hiding, exaggerating, blaming, or downplaying?

c. **Consider how you may implement the C.A.R.E. model through interaction with this passage with your counselee.**

- i. Connect with Christ like compassion. (Hebrews 4:15-16)
- ii. Assess the motives/desires of the heart (Proverbs 20:5)
  - 1. Worship – What is their God substitute? (Jonah 2:8)
  - 2. Identity – Who are they living for? (2 Corinthians 5:15-17)
  - 3. Love—What do they treasure? (Matthew 6:21)
  - 4. Lifestyle—How do they walk? (Galatians 5:16)
- iii. Respond with truth and grace. (John 1:14-17) "Truth is always gracious. Grace is always truthful." (Mark Shaw)
- iv. Encourage with relevant application. (Hebrews 3:12-14)

d. **Guide them to embrace that repentance and confession is:**

- i. Genuine, heartfelt, acknowledgement of unbelief from which sinful behavior flows.
- ii. Acknowledgement that their sin (commission and omission; ignorance or presumption) is primarily against God (Ps 32:5; 41:1; 51:3-4; Rom 2:4; Gen 20:1-7ff).
- iii. Understanding—and learning to love-- that God's ways are truly the wisest and best—where true joy is found.
- iv. A progressive recognition of how their sin has affected others.

e. **Guide them through creating their own personal liturgy of confession.** (See journal article handout.<sup>vii</sup>)

f. **Focus on particular Bible passages to guide your conversation.** God works through His Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit to expose their heart (Pr 21:2; Jer 17:10; Heb. 4:12).

g. Example passages:

- i. Ezra 9
- ii. Nehemiah 1 and 9
- iii. Daniel 9
- iv. Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 73, 130, 142

- v. Jeremiah 17:5-10 (Not a specific prayer, but foundation for leading into repentance and confession.)
- vi. From Crossway.org article with sampling of historic prayers (\*marketing for ESV Prayer Bible)<sup>viii</sup>
  - 1. 2 Chronicles 36:21
  - 2. Isaiah 57:14-21
  - 3. Jeremiah 23:1-8
  - 4. Malachi 4:1-3

V. At the right time, **guide them out of** repentance and confession **toward** first steps of obedience and/or reconciliation.

VI. Homework/Growth assignment ideas:

- a. Read assigned passage and answer: 1) How is God addressed, 2) How is God described, 3) Who is speaking the prayer, 4) How does the author describe the negative “feelings” or consequences prior to confessing sin? 5) How does he describe his sin? 6) Is there a turning point in the passage? If so, describe it, 7) How does the author describe his resolve to honor the Lord in worship, 8) What is one concrete aspect of this passage that taught you something new about the Lord? Yourself?
- b. Read select passage every day for a week and write bullet-point notes about your observations. What has God done in you as a result of reading this passage.
- c. Write your own prayer of confession, patterned a select passage.
- d. What aspect of obedience are neglecting? Why do you not want to do it?
- e. Read a book chapter/pamphlet (ex. *A Personal Liturgy of Confession*).
- f. Read something about the attributes of God.
- g. Identify and map a plan to take the next step of obedience. (Or take that next step.)
- h. Ask someone they trust (advocate) to pray for them as they identify how God would have them take action.

VII. Group Work

- a. Select a passage (Ezra 9; Nehemiah 1 and 9; Daniel 9; Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 73, 130, 142)
- b. Read passage aloud as a group.
- c. Answer the questions.
- d. As a counselor, and from your text, how can you implement each aspect of the C.A.R.E. model as you call them to and guide them through confession of sin?

## Suggested reading:

- *The Gospel for Disordered Lives: An Introduction to Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling*. Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green, (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2021): 83-92.
- David Powlison, “A Personal Liturgy of Confession,” in *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 29, no. 2 (2015): 45–52.
- *Paul the Counselor: Counseling and Disciple-making Modeled by the Apostle* By Mark Shaw & Bill Hines.
- *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande.

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<sup>i</sup> J. R. Soza, “Repentance,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 684-87. “The Old Testament writers generally use nicham in reference to a change in God’s dealings with humanity (cf. Gen 6:6; 1 Sam 15:11, 35) and only occasionally in reference to human repentance (cf. Jer. 8:6).”

<sup>ii</sup> Marvin R. Wilson, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 570-71.

<sup>iii</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 2000, 640.

<sup>iv</sup> Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 41.52.

<sup>v</sup> Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds. 1999. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, (Chicago: Moody Press), 366.

<sup>vi</sup> This language comes from Bob Thune & Will Walker in *The Gospel-Centered Life*, (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press), 7.

<sup>vii</sup> David Powlison, “A Personal Liturgy of Confession” in *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 29, no. 2, (Glenside, PA: Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation, 2015).

<sup>viii</sup> <https://www.crossway.org/articles/4-prayers-to-pray-when-youre-repentant/>. Accessed May 10, 2022.