Back to the Basics: Confession

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 February 2026

Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0:00] Will you pray with me this morning? Father God, this morning we come to you with a prayer of confession.! We recognize that all too often, instead of worship, we worry.

! Instead of grieving loss or hardship with hope and part of your perfect plan, we harbor bitterness towards you. We may even begin to distrust you.
Father, have mercy on our self-righteous hearts. You've treated us far better than our sins deserve, and how often we tend to forget that. This morning we confess that we can be often a double-minded people.
We bless you with our lips, but with the same mouth we criticize or even curse others made in your image. Father, convict and correct us when we do this, and I pray that you would help us all to be better.
Father, we often ask you for wisdom. And yet we don't look to your scriptures for daily guidance. We come to church and listen to a sermon, only to accept what we feel comfortable hearing, and ultimately sometimes walk away unchanged.
[1:12] We may tend to blame this on our attention spans or our preaching styles, but the root of the issue is really the condition of our hearts. We don't want to come face to face with what the Bible actually says about us or our prideful or selfish behavior.

We often tolerate your word in our lives, but we rarely treasure it because we know it often speaks directly of and to our sin.
It speaks of our unrighteous anger. It speaks of our lusts and our pride. It speaks to the locked doors in the house of our hearts. Father, instead of allowing your truth to penetrate and expose the darkness within us, we slam the door shut.
We try to put extra locks on the door, thinking we can hide from you and from others. Father, in our natural fleshly desires, we hate the light.
We want to keep hiding from it. Father, forgive us for our foolishness. Father, instead of being quick to listen, we are quick often to defend ourselves.
[2:22] Instead of seeking to love others and put them first, we demand to be heard by others and for them to do ultimately what we want. Convict us in our pride, O Lord, and create a humble and peacemaking spirit in each one of us.

Father, every blessing we receive is from you. And every blessing we don't receive is according to your wise plan for our lives. Lord, forgive us for taking blessings for granted and for pouting and becoming angry or bitter when we don't get our way.
Father, please forgive us. Forgive us for not being tenderhearted and compassionate. Cleanse us of our pride and our stubbornness.
Forgive us for ever charging you with wrong. Forgive us for not worshiping you even as you give and take away. And we ask all these things in Jesus' precious and powerful name.
Amen. Welcome here for this Sunday, February 8th. Thank you to everyone who braved the icy and treacherous streets. Thank you to Connor and Gabriel for helping me usher people from cars to building.
[3:45] I checked before I came in to make sure we had nobody down in the parking lot. So I think we're good. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my joy to be the pastor here.

Today we're continuing in our four-week series called Back to the Basics. And it's interesting. Many of you know that I was at a pastor's retreat this past week, and our speaker for the week actually used that phrase.
And I thought, huh, interesting, right? You hear me often talk about that, how God will show up in different ways in different areas of our lives. People will say to me, oh, you preached on this

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

passage, and I just read it in my devotions.
So God is at work. I don't know if you knew that, but God is at work in and through things that we can't even begin to understand or recognize. And so in this series, it's about the basics, right?
It's about the foundations of our faith, the important elements of our discipleship journey. Two weeks ago, we started with considering, everybody remember? Oh, that was good.
[4:50] Say it boldly. Prayer. Then last week, we continued in our series, and we considered, yeah. Is it on the slide? No, it's not on the slide.

I was thinking, everybody's cheating, which I would do if I had the opportunity. That's right. You know what today's is. There you go. So if you haven't been able to be with us in person so far, you can definitely check those out, those sermons on the website.
You can catch up. So this week, as I noted, we're going to be talking about confession. And so you often hear me talk about how we water down language, right?
We water down concepts. How often have you heard or said this phrase? Well, I must confess, I didn't do the homework, right? I didn't do the reading. I didn't listen to last week's sermon.
Those kinds of things, right? So we water that concept down. I have a confession to make, right?
Have you ever heard somebody say that or you've said it yourself? Generally, it's not an earth-shattering thing we're about to say.
[5:54] I have a confession to make. I've never watched L.A. Law, right? So we tend to water that kind of concept down. So confession is a word that probably means different things to different people, depending even on what faith tradition you grew up in or around.

Because for Catholics, for example, that word, confession, has a very specific meaning, and it also has very specific related activities. You probably know that.
You may have also had Hollywood imagery go through your head. Have you heard about a confession, right? Maybe you picture an overworked police sergeant working hard to get a confession out of a suspect, out of a hardened criminal, right?
I pictured when I thought about it, that kind of concept, a gooseneck lamp, right, with the light shining directly in somebody's face. There's no other light in the room because they didn't pay the electrical bill. It never makes sense.
But that's the concept I think we get in our minds. So we certainly bring our own attitudes and filters to our understanding of it. But it's important that we balance what we've seen, what we heard, what we've learned through experience and the concept with what the Bible says about it.
[7:12] So thankfully, in this case, confession has some beautiful biblical truth and instruction behind it. So let's jump in together and see what biblical confession is all about.

You may be asking yourself why something like confession is considered to be a basic part of the Christian faith and our discipleship journey. Have you ever thought about that?
So other things, some of the things we've actually been talking about, in fact, like prayer, reading your Bible, attending church even, may feel like they fit better.
And over the centuries, we've come to understand that these are things that we do as disciples, as followers of Jesus. And so praying and reading scripture and being in fellowship with other people like we are this morning should absolutely be priorities for us.
because we wouldn't do these things, I don't think, anyway, if we didn't at least think that they were important or necessary. But there's also something divinely powerful about confession.
[8:18] And confession is, as we're about to learn, both healing and liberating. So if you zone out and don't think of anything else for the rest of the sermon, I will forgive you.

But think of confession as being healing and liberating. And now we're going to dive into that a little more deeply. So first of all, I want to talk a bit more about what confession means.
So the basic definition of confession, I looked up different definitions and this is one that really stood out. Confession is a formal statement admitting that one is guilty of a crime.
It's pretty clear, right? Pretty specific. It can also be an admission or an acknowledgement that one has done something that one is ashamed of or embarrassed about.
So to me, that feels a little bit more, a little bit softer, a little bit more about, oh, I feel bad, right? And so, but there's more to it than that as we're going to see. So in a religious sense, confession is an admission of sins or wrongdoing.
[9:22] That's what you'll see in definitions. With the motives to somehow be absolved or forgiven.
So I'd also suggest that repentance, and you've heard me say this many times over the years,

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

repentance is also a key element of confession.

Because it's one thing to confess something, but then to go back and continue to do it again, you're missing something there. Because we need to seek to change our direction and as I've said, what repentance means really is going in a different direction, making better choices afterwards.
So to summarize then, just really briefly, confession is a personal acknowledgement of wrongdoing or a perceived wrong. And we can all probably agree that it generally feels good to admit it, to own up to things that we've done wrong or maybe hurt that we've caused others.
And now, when you think about this, or maybe it doesn't feel that great for you, right? And we'll get to why it may not feel that great. And so, but you may have heard people say, after confessing something, after getting something off their chest, they'll say things like, I feel like a weight was lifted off my shoulders, right?
I got this off my chest is an expression we often hear. About coming clean about something. About clearing the air about something. So the practice of confession has actually been happening for a very long time.
[10:51] Maybe you didn't know, but maybe you did. So let's hear the words of Nehemiah 9, verses 1 to 3. And you can go ahead and turn there if you like. Nehemiah 9, 1 to 3.

Old Testament. That helps. Don't be ashamed of using your index. It is all good. Nehemiah 9, verses 1 to 3. On the 24th day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth with dust on their heads.
Those of Israelite descent separated themselves from all the foreigners and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. While they stood in their places, they read from the book of the law of the Lord, their God, for a quarter of the day and they spent another quarter of the day in confession and worship of the Lord, their God.
Nehemiah shares that early confession picture for us. So I think this is a really good picture of communal confession that happened in the ancient world, right?
This is a long, long, long time ago. And in this case, as we've heard, this is specifically the Israelites. God's people acknowledging their wrongdoing while also, you see the other piece that's there, worshiping the Lord together.
[12:13] So this isn't like, it felt like a complete concept to them, right? confession and worship all under recognizing God. So I think this particular scene is beautiful because it comes on the heels of a long and difficult time of slavery and captivity by foreign powers, the Israelites under captivity, by people like the Babylonians.

And the Israelites at this time are a broken and scattered people. They're seeking forgiveness and they're looking for healing and they recognize that healing comes through confession.
So back quickly to our focus of understanding confession then. We can probably already agree, all agree, that it takes a good measure of humility to admit you're wrong.
Right? Anybody married? Anybody been married? Okay. Does it take humility to admit you were wrong? Even to a sibling or a friend?
Because who's wrong? I'm never wrong. I may be slightly incorrect. Right? Does that feel familiar though? And what gets in the way of admitting that we're wrong?
[13:31] It's pride. Right? It's pride and not wanting to feel embarrassed. Not wanting to feel ashamed. But really, healing and in humility, we have to be humble before we can be healed in confession.

Because if we're not willing to recognize and admit that we're wrong and seek forgiveness, seek to confess what we've done, how can we be healed from it?
God says in 2 Chronicles 7.14, go ahead and turn there, and you know this passage. If my people who are called by my name, that's you and me, by the way, will humble themselves and pray, two factors there, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, what will God do?
He says, I will hear from heaven, I will forgive their sin, and I will heal their land. land. Seems like a pretty amazing trade, if we will humble ourselves.
Forgiveness and healing. Actually, forgiveness is healing. Confessing the wrong things that we've done allows healing to happen.
[14:51] And healing, I think we'd all agree, usually feels pretty good. Time for some personal reflection. Think about a time in your life when you were either on either end of confession and healing.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

So by on either end, I mean before you had confessed and then after you had confessed. And think of how amazing it felt to have the weight lifted.
Can you think of a time when you had, you felt, you felt called to confess something, and you did it? What did it feel like before? And what did it feel like after?
I think we can all relate to that. Hopefully we can. Or, think about a moment when it felt amazing to extend forgiveness to someone else for something they did.
Again, there's pride, right? Do we perceive that somebody wronged us when maybe that's an us issue, not a them issue? But if someone has actually wronged you, being willing to forgive, now, when it becomes really hard is when there's no apology, right?
[16:05] There's no recognition of a wrong having been done to you. That makes it even harder. But it's still really, really powerful. So one final thought about the healing power of confession.

Let's hear the words of James 5, verse 16. If you want to go there, again, you'll know this passage. I rarely, so if you're familiar with scripture, I will rarely quote something so obscure that you have no idea.
James 5, verse 16. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.
The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Do you recognize those connections? We are being called to forgive, to confess, to receive forgiveness from God, which then unlocks the amazing power of a praying life.
I think we often move towards confession to find healing and freedom. So it's important to pray with other people through the process. Now, I don't know if you have prayer partners.
[17:18] I know lots of you are very, very prayerful in your lives, and so I believe that you probably do have folks that you trust. But if you don't, it's important to have someone that you can confess to.

Now, I'm not saying you're getting absolution. Now, this is where all my Catholic friends would be going, yeah, but, so I'm not saying you receive absolution and forgiveness from another human being.
What I am saying, though, is airing the challenges that you're facing with someone else, it's not a solo journey, right? We know that. So trying to hold on to stuff on your own is not easy, and I don't believe it's healthy.
But then, obviously, it's most important for us to invite God into all of it and seek his guidance. Galatians 5, verse 1.
Galatians 5, verse 1, says, For freedom, Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit yourselves again to the yoke of slavery.
[18:28] If Jesus has set us free, don't go back to slavery. Unconfessed sin will enslave you. But Christ came to bring freedom and healing, both.

So confession is about healing. But more than that, it's liberating. And I've touched on that a bit already. Confession and forgiveness set you free from past sin and wrongdoing.
So I think we can all recognize that being healed also has a way of setting us free, right? When we've been set free of something that was weighing us down in our lives, in our minds, in our heart, in our spirit.
When Jesus began his ministry, the gospels say he came teaching, preaching. What's the third one? Healing.
God knew we weren't right. light. He knew we were in a bad situation on our own. He knew that we needed a savior.
[19:41] Jesus helped shine a light on that need. And he came to set us free. Let's hear the words of 1 John 7 and 8.

1 John 7 and 8. You know this well too as well, I'm sure. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin.
And then there's a however, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
If we confess our sins, I love this verse, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
Confession leads to forgiveness, leads to freedom. Listen to that line again. If we say we have no sin, we what?

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[20:49] We deceive ourselves. It's not a matter of if you have sin and wrongdoing in your life. maybe you do, maybe you don't. Wrong. It's more of a matter of what you're bringing into the light.

What you're allowing the light of Christ to shine upon in your life. Friends, I hope you know this, Jesus works exclusively in the light.
He is the light. Forgiveness only happens in the light. forgiveness happens when we confess our sins.
My friends, sin will without question enslave you. No matter what it is, however big or small it may seem to you, I can say with full confidence that Christ is able and willing to forgive your sin.
Period. Full stop. But, here's the but, everyone's got a big but as they say, but you need to confess your sin and bring the wrongdoing to his feet.
[22:05] That's an amen to. Bring your sin into the light of Christ. Sin in the darkness, sin trying to be hidden, festers.

Romans 10 verses 9 and 10. Another passage you know. If you confess with your mouth, what are the three words?
Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with your heart you believe and are justified, and with your mouth you confess and are saved.
Go, Paul, go, right? Confession is healing, and confession brings freedom. I want to say it again. Confession isn't easy, but it's powerful. There's a reason it's counted as one of the core pillars of our faith, and it's also easy to see why that's true.
[23:15] As we've heard in Romans 10 verses 9 and 10, 1 John 7 and 8, but I also want to caution anyone here. Here comes some more freedom for you.

I want to caution any of you who hear what I'm saying this morning and think you need to go back through every single transgression, everything you've done wrong in your life to be healed.
Are you carrying a list? Does your list weigh you down? guess what? You don't have to list and itemize everything, especially to a God in heaven who already knows.
Nothing is hidden from God. The thing that you don't want to talk to anybody about that happened when you were 12 years old, he knows. you can still bring it to him now.
It's never too late. Friends, nothing is a secret from God. That's not to make you feel ashamed or bad. It's to encourage you to let it go, to bring it to him, and to live in freedom from now forward.
[24:31] It's just as effective to simply say, Father, I'm a sinner. I need forgiveness. there are some folks here today who know exactly what they need to confess.

Often when I spend my time in prayer, I will do that. I will say, yeah, I know you know about this, but I'm just going to lay it right out. I usually feel pretty free.
So maybe you're here this morning and you know exactly what you need to confess. So if there's a specific sin that's at the top of mind for you, something that may make you feel unworthy, that's what I'm trying to get at for you this morning, something that makes you feel ultimately unworthy of God's love, unworthy of God's forgiveness.
If he knew this about me, I am unlovable. He knows and he loves you anyway.
If there's something for you that is festering in the dark, bring it to the light. I beg you to bring it to the light. Lay that thing, whatever it is, big or small, at the feet of Jesus.
[25:53] As scripture tells us, cast, cast your cares upon him because he cares for you. Whichever group you find yourself a part of today.

Maybe you're here this morning going, I don't know, I don't, I'm not generally a bad person. Or, if you know exactly what you need to confess.
Or even if you find yourself, God bless you for this, feeling free and unburdened today, in these days of your life. the answer is all the same for us.
It's Jesus. Jesus to whom we need to bring our confession. Jesus to whom we need to bring our praise for the freedom that we receive and the forgiveness that we receive.
It's all the same. Jesus. Jesus is the reason that we can find freedom and healing and forgiveness.
[26:59] In fact, he is the very reason that we even have a faith to be here talking about today at all. And so, I can only encourage you today to simply bring yourself to him.

Confess if you need to. Ask forgiveness if you need to. If you feel so inclined, pray with the person next to you this morning.
If you need to. do whatever you need to do today and trust that he is faithful. My friends, confession is healing.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Confession brings freedom. Lay your burdens at Jesus' feet today. Amen. Amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host