

*OK, so I did it?*

1 John 1:4-10 July 17, 2011

- I. How many of you find the Prayer of Confession to be your favorite part of the service?
  - A. When I was a kid in church, my least favorite part of the service was the Prayer of Confession.
    1. I'd sit there listening to all this stuff that had nothing to do with me.  
And as a kid most of it probably didn't.  
But that didn't mean that I didn't have plenty to confess -- even at that age.
    2. Let's be real, for all that stuff about kids being so innocent, it just ain't true.  
Kids learn quickly how to be mean, how to be self-centered, how to be selfish and greedy.  
Kids know how to hold a grudge.  
Kids know how to make other kids cry by teasing them.  
This list could get rather long.
    3. In fact, babies really do believe that the whole world revolves around them; and oddly, to have a healthy baby, we kind of need to bring co-dependant support to that notion for a good year or so.

4. But then it's largely the human social task over the next couple decades to learn that the world doesn't really revolve around us and that love is not just a one way street.  
Love is not just what is done for us, but love is what we do for others.
5. Anyway, my point is, that despite the fact that those prayers of confession when I was child weren't real relevant, I still had plenty to confess.

B. At the Rocky Mountain Conference Annual meeting that I attended a couple weeks ago in Salt Lake I heard of a church that was struggling with doing the prayer of confession.

The new pastor there was reinstating it and there was a little push back because people didn't like focusing on their sins.

1. They came to church to be inspired, not to focus on their failings.
2. They would tell the Pastor, "All this talk about sin only discouraged people from coming to church."  
And I heard this from someone other than the Pastor.

3. Yet, the scriptures are quite clear -

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.  
If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

## II. So why do we do the Prayer of Confession?

- A. To start with – it's not to make us feel guilty; it's really to make us feel better.
- B. The first thing any person must do to solve a problem is to recognize that there is a problem.  
You can't take control of a situation unless you are aware there is a situation that needs addressing.  
And feeling out of control is not a good feeling; in fact it tends to be exactly what make us feel depressed.
- C. Way too often people want to use church the way some folks use the car radio.
  - 1. You turn up the music and that annoying sound in the engine compartment goes away.
  - 2. I've really known people to do this – and they're not all blonde.

3. What would be even better is if you had a mechanic who'd just charge you a couple of bucks to fix the car and just told you the problem would go away if you just turned up the music.
4. So people go to church and turn up the praise music and sure enough the problem goes away.
5. If the pains of the world and the suffering caused by your actions get too loud, just turn up the praise music and just keep turning it up until you've gone deaf;  
then you'll never have to take responsibility for your action or confess your sins, because now it will take nothing less than a miracle of Jesus to open your ears.
6. The pain from a crying world will never bother you again;  
your free do whatever pleases you, just as long as you can hear that praise music playing in your head.
7. But even though you don't have those nagging symptoms, the disease is still there eating away at your soul – till one day the pain killers just don't work.

**III. Yup, confession's not fun, but it does do a couple of very important things.**

**A. First, it keeps our ears unplugged.**

1. Hearing the cries of a suffering world may be a bit painful and it may too painful to acknowledge our culpability in causing some of that pain, but it is the only way we can then begin to solve the problem.
  2. It's the only way we can address more than the symptomatic pain and begin to cure to disease.
- B. But even more important is for us to understand, as I pointed out a couple weeks ago, that failing to take responsibility for our freedom is one of the primacy sources of moral evil in our world.
- C. It's not just the original action that may have been morally evil; but the failure to take responsibility for it just compounds the situation and make it worse and makes it more likely to occur again.
- D. The failure to take responsibility is in itself a sin.

#### IV. "What's a sin?" you ask. Good question.

- A. Put most simply, a sin is something that separates us from God. It is something we do that pushes God away.
- B. In every moment of our lives God provides us with what God wants us to be aiming at.

1. This initial aim is what God calls us to do in every moment.
2. We then have the freedom to say “yes” and accept that aim, or something less than a clear “yes” all the way to a clear “no.”
3. With any response other than a clear “yes” we are just pushing God away.
4. In missing the mark that God intends for us to aim at -- we have sinned.

C. For instance, let’s see what we could do with that egomaniacal guy in the Escalade who knows the world revolves around him and who pulls in front of you making you hit your breaks.

1. God tells you to forgive him and pray for his enlightenment, that he may come to see the error of his ways and not endanger any more people. That is what God has provided for you to aim at.
2. So do you hit the mark or do you choose to ignore God’s lure to righteousness and try something else.
3. There are some who would already have their ears totally closed to God’s voice and just take out their Uzi and give good attempt at shooting and killing the offender.

4. Getting closer to the target God has provided, you could pay a little attention to God and go ahead and just run into the guy, that would teach him.
5. You might hear God's aim clearly, but decide you have a better idea and you could honk your horn and display that instructive gesture.
6. Getting closer to hitting the mark, you could use some creative combination of four letter words and mention something about his ancestry.
7. You could get a little closer to the mark still and just brush him off with some side comment like –  
“You dip.”
8. You could even just totally ignore him and just think of him as rock in the river of life you have to get around.  
So you're getting closer, but you still don't quite have accurate aim.  
You're still brushing God off.  
You're still doing nothing to love your enemy or to pray for those who persecute you.

- D. So let's say you chose the option where you just called him a "dip."  
You're feeling pretty good about the fact that you did a fairly good job of anger management;  
but you know deep down,  
(maybe not even that deep down)  
that you still didn't do what God really wanted you to do.
1. Now at this point you still have some options, because the sin, shall we say, is still in play.
  2. It's still in play, because you haven't confessed your sin and asked for forgiveness for pushing God away and missing the mark God wanted you to aim at.
  3. At this point, you could just be proud of how well you did and just ignore God's voice telling you that you still missed the mark.

4. You're still not taking responsibility for your action and for not using the initial aim that God provided.  
You're still pushing God away – you're still sinning.  
You're still not allowing God to heal you and show you a better world.  
You're still being an obstacle for the building of God's realm;  
building that begins with you and your accepting God's aim.

E. The different path, the path that God seeks for you is to stop pushing God away, accept responsibility for your actions, stop the sin and be forgiven.

1. Then you can learn from God how to improve your aim.
2. But without confession, you are still pushing God away, still keeping the sin in play.

F. So let's hear that passage again and see if it has anymore meaning than it did before.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.  
If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- G. Like pulling the thorn from your foot, or the abscessed tooth from your mouth, the Prayer of Confession is not something you should want to avoid (even though it might be a little painful), but rather something to look forward to as the beginning of redemption.
  
- V. So the scenario with the guy in the Escalade, -- that was a true story, and I will confess that had Keri not been sitting next to me on our way back from the Pridefest – I would probably have had more to confess.
  - A. As much as God would love for us all to be perfect, God is quite aware that this isn't going to happen.

- B. The Apostle Paul tells us that it was because Jesus was able to hit the mark God provided him to aim at, even when it lead to death on that cross;  
it was because of that ability, that God “highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, [Phil 2:9-11].
- C. But Paul confesses that not even he could do that.
- D. Certainly God knows we won't do it, even if we would like to, so God has given us a way to keep the burdens of sin from piling up on us and bring us to despair that paralyzes us and makes us useless in the building of God's Realm.
- E. So, it's good to get use to saying,  
“Ok, so I did it – forgive me.”  
AMEN.