

## **Growing Deeper in the Gospel in Forgiveness: How to Become individuals and a Community With Whom Others Can talk Openly About and Confess Sin**

### **First: Handle Your Own Sin Well**

**By continually pursuing God's forgiveness of your own sin and seeking to be mastered by His perfect provision and limitless grace. (Rom 3:21-26, Phil 3:12)**

Phil 3:12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own

### **2 Enemies That "Crouch at our Door and Must be Mastered":**

Genesis 4:6-7 "Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 "If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

1. **Self-Righteousness and Pride** - Seeks to convince you that you're a pretty decent person and you do the right thing much of the time. And forgiveness to you will seem good, but not essential.
2. **Abiding Guilt and Shame** – Seeks to convince you your sins are too numerous for the forgiveness Christ offers, or they've been repeated too often and the grace of Christ for you has run out.

**Solution: Accept the Paradox that God is both a God of Love and a God of Fury (wrath which has been satisfied completely by Christ's sacrifice for our sins – Romans 5:8-9, 1 John 4:9-10).**

"It's not that (God has) a split personality...The reason his wrath and love (hold together) is because they are not like ours—they are perfectly holy and good. When we get angry, it is usually because the things we love most are threatened... our public image, our ego, or some cherished plan... When these things are threatened, we get angry and often harm people and destroy things. When we see all the references to God's wrath in the Bible, we instinctively imagine God's anger must be like ours, and so we recoil. However, his anger is not wounded pride as ours is. God only gets angry at the evil destroying the things he loves—his creation and the human race he made for his own glory and for our happiness." Keller, Forgiveness p 74 Kindle Edition

"Perhaps it is too simplistic (but not by much) to say that if you believe only in a God of love, you will live like a spoiled child, but if you believe only in a God of wrath, you will live like an abused child. God's love and his fury are nowhere seen together as they are on the cross, where they both are satisfied and meet and coincide. It is understanding and rejoicing in Christ's work on the cross that keeps us from living as a spoiled or as an abused child." Keller p. 74

2 Sam 12:13-23 David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child who is born to you shall die."... <sup>18</sup> On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm.".... And David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" They said, "He is dead." <sup>20</sup> Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. ...<sup>21</sup> Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." <sup>22</sup> He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?'"

- Visualize you standing off to the side while The Lord says to Christ my beloved Son “I have fully accepted the offering you have made to me on (insert your name) behalf. Because of Your atonement on (insert name) behalf, It is only just unto You my beloved son that I forgive (insert name) because what You have done has made (insert name) clean before me.
- “The minimum bar to be enfolded into the embrace of Jesus is simply: open yourself up to him. It is all he needs. Indeed, it is the only thing he works with. Verse 28 of our passage in Matthew 11 tells us explicitly who qualifies for fellowship with Jesus: “all who labor and are heavy laden.” You don’t need to unburden or collect yourself and then come to Jesus. Your very burden is what qualifies you to come. No payment is required; Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly* (pp 20-21 Kindle)

**Bridge Step** – if you have a hard time believing your acceptance into the presence of Christ is that free and immediate say, “God it’s hard for me to believe you are this accepting of me in spite of my sin and that you want me around. But you say you accept faith as small as a mustard seed. So I have that much faith you welcome me, but if that’s all it takes, here I am.”

Recognize you have sins in both directions, steer it like the 2 reins used to steer a horse:

1. Rein 1 – the Sufficiency of Christ’s Atonement fully covering me at all times
2. Rein 2 – Striving in the power of Christ toward growth in obedience and holiness

“We will not grow in Christ if we view his presence and favor as a ticking clock, ready for an alarm to go off once we fail him enough. We can flourish into deeper health only as the truth settles over us that once Jesus has brought us to himself, he will never be looking for an off-ramp. He will stick by us to the end. In that knowledge we calm down and begin to flourish. One Bible scholar rightly called our growth in Christ “a strangely relaxed kind of strenuousness.”<sup>1</sup> We strain forward, but it is a straining that is at the same time relaxed, because it has been settled in our hearts that we cannot sin our way out of the grip of Jesus.” Dane Ortlund *Deeper* (pp. 29-30). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

## Then: Handle Other’s Sins Well

### 1. Actively see and communicate the good you see in this person

“As a general rule, we are not going to have growing relationships in which we help other people unless we see the good in them, and they know we see good in them. Would you listen to someone who helps you merely out of duty rather than love? Would you listen to someone who doesn’t really like you? God has determined that help takes place in the context of love and respect.” Welch, Edward T.. *Side by Side* (p. 87). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

Luke 22:31-34 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.”

### 2. Examine Yourself First (Matt 7:2-5)

### 3. Exercise Patience – a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) and a central feature of Love (1 Cor. 13:4).

- When talking about of another remember the following checklist:
  - This is an imperfect person just like I am
  - Nobody responds perfectly
  - Change for all of us is slow
  - This person needs a patient helper

“Patience is interested in what direction people face and less interested in how fast people are changing”

#### 4. Acknowledge Challenging Circumstances and Legitimate Suffering

David Powlison: “Christ’s mercy is always a **dual mercy** – to the suffering (He heals sick, raises dead, delivers demonized); to the sinner (He forgives, redeems, restores) If you run down the sin track only you become heartless. If you run down the suffering track you become despairing. Our work is a dance between sin, suffering, and gospel”

#### 5. Discuss the heart, not just the actions

#### 6. Help Develop a Plan and offer Help

#### 7. Celebrate the Gospel of Forgiveness, don’t just glance at it or mention it offhandedly.

### Be Prepared to Confront Sin

(Much of the following content taken from **Forgiveness** pp 217-219 by Tim Keller, Crossway)

#### WHEN DO WE NEED TO CONFRONT/RECONCILE?

- “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him” (Luke 17:3, ESV).
- But when do we “rebuke”? Every time anyone wrongs us? 1 Pet 4:8
- This means we are not to be thin-skinned, and it would be wrong to bring up every matter every time we have been treated unfairly or insensitively.
- We should **give correction under two conditions:**
- **First**, we should correct **when the sin is serious enough to cool off or rupture the relationship**. Matthew 18:15 indicates that the purpose of such a rebuke is to “win” your brother—i.e., rescue the relationship.
- **Second**, we should correct **when the sin against us is evidently part of a pattern of behavior that the other person is seriously “stuck” in**. Galatians 6:1

#### HOW DO WE CONFRONT?

- If someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should **restore that person gently**” (Gal 6:1)
  - This could not be more important. If the motive of the correction is the growth of the person, then we will be loving and gentle..
- **Ultimately, any love that is afraid to confront the beloved is really not love but a selfish desire to be loved.** Cowardice is always selfish, putting your own needs ahead of the needs of the other. A love that says, “I’ll do anything to keep him or her loving and approving of me!” is not real love at all.
- Nevertheless, it is clear that **there are plenty of times when we should not correct and not “seek an apology” even when we are owed one.** The stronger a Christian you are, the less sensitive and easily hurt you will be.
- **A mature Christian immediately remembers**
  - (a) times when you did the same thing to others or
  - (b) times when people who did this to you before were later revealed to have a lot on their mind and heart.
- Love should cover a multitude of sins (that is, most of them!). You should be able to treat warmly people who by rights owe you an apology but whom you haven’t corrected because
  - the slights were rather minor or
  - the time wasn’t right to speak about it or
  - you didn’t know them well enough to be sure it is a major pattern in their lives.