

# The Office of the Keys and Confession



## Confession-- Opening Yourself Up to be Loved

In the movie *The Mission*, Robert De Niro plays the role of Mendoza, a character so thoroughly vile, selfish, and brutal that there seems to be no hope for him. When he decides to repent, he is required, as an act of penance, to carry a heavy burden tied to his body everywhere he goes. Through this ordeal he begins to see life differently and discovers that everything he has built his life around has really been a burden—both to him and to those he has hurt. He comes to see his own helplessness and dependence.

One day, on a desperate climb up a mountain, Mendoza realizes that he is not going to make it and is imperiling the lives of those climbing with him. Suddenly, one of the tribesmen takes out a knife. Mendoza fears he will



be killed, but instead the knife slashes the rope that has bound him to his burden. He is free. He will live. The burden has done its work.

The giving of the burden was an act of grace. It caused pain and hardship, but it was grace all the same. The release from the burden was an even greater act of grace. So it is with confession.

When we sin, how do we know where to put the cross for forgiveness?

Psalm 91:12

Romans 3:19-20

**How Would You Respond?** “Your church talks about the Law too much. You need to talk about the love of God more. That’s what makes people feel good.”

Who then is confession really for?

Ask Yourself “Why did I Do This?”

Was it an “accident?”

Was it intentional? What did I need...want...fear

**Are we poor, miserable sinners?**

Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9–14 confronts each of us with an important question:

Am I a poor, miserable sinner?

The Pharisee in the parable is not alone. We too are often unaware of our sinfulness, or don’t want to admit it. How easy it is for us self-righteously to compare ourselves with others.

Thanks be to God, that the second man, the tax-collector, is not alone either! Jesus Christ is with him. When Jesus calls, sinners come. They receive His forgiveness, life and salvation. And thus, we too say, “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner,” for Jesus is the

friend of sinners. The precious gift of our Lord's absolution is what confession is all about.

In confession and absolution, Jesus Christ, who poured out his life-blood as the perfect and complete sacrifice for all sin, pours into our ears the life-giving promise of absolution, "My son, my daughter, go in peace, your sins are forgiven." Trusting that promise, we say, "Amen. Yes, Lord, it is true." Thanks be to God!

Now instead, you ought to *cancel the debt* and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 2 Cor 2:7



A modern example of forgiveness might be the delete key on your computer. How?

## The Bible's Words for Forgiveness

Each of the following verses gives a "flavor" to the basic idea of forgiveness. Copy them in the spaces beneath each verse. **And then explain** the picture behind the word. Give an example. Think, "How would I explain this to my friend who isn't a Christian?"

You are *pardoning* and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you. Psalm 86:5

Look upon my affliction and my distress and *take away all my sins*. Psalm 25:18

But you know, O LORD, all their plots to kill me. Do not *cover over* their crimes or *blot out* their sins from your sight. Jeremiah 18:23 (two words)

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. *Let loose*, and you will be forgiven. Luke 6:37

For if you forgive (*send away the sins of*) men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Mt 6:14

## What is confession?

Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

During the time of Joshua, God granted the Israelites one victory after another over their enemies. He had told them he would give them the land he had promised to Abraham and his descendants, and he was making good on his promise. But at Ai the Israelites were routed. In dismay, Joshua asked God why this had happened. God revealed that the Israelites had been routed because spoils, which were to have been destroyed, had been taken from their enemies. To determine who was guilty, the Lord had Joshua examine the Israelites tribe by tribe, family by family, and person by person. The examination came down to a man named Achan.

### Jos 7:19-21

What did Joshua urge Achan to do and to avoid doing?

Outline step-by-step exactly what Achan did in response to Joshua's urging.

### Ps 19:9-13

What role does God's law play in our confession of sin? (See also Romans 3:20b.)

What type of sin against God's law did the psalmist ask God to forgive?

What type of sin did he ask God to preserve him from?



**WHAT DOES CONFESSING MY SINS MEAN?**  
WITH A CONTRITE (SORRY) HEART, I ADMIT TO GOD HOW I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HIS COMMANDMENTS, EVEN IN WAYS THAT I AM UNAWARE.

### 1 Jn 1:8-10

Why does God want us sorrowfully and truthfully to admit our sins rather than to pretend we haven't sinned?

On what basis does God forgive our sins? Read ahead to 1 John 2:1,2.

### Ps 32:3-5

Why was David miserable before he confessed his sins before God?

What did God do after David honestly admitted his sin?



**WHAT IS THE BLESSING OF ABSOLUTION? I HEAR AND BELIEVE GOD'S ASSURANCE THAT HE HAS FORGIVEN ALL MY SINS BECAUSE OF THE INNOCENT LIFE AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST, MY LORD AND SAVIOR.**

### Mt 18:15

What does the Lord tell us to do when we become aware of others' sins?

### Mt 5:23,24

What are we to do if we realize that we have sinned against another person?

What affect does unforgiven sin between people have on their relationship with God?

### Jas 5:15b,16

Why is it important that Christians confess their sins to one another? (Note the word "Therefore" and what it is explaining.)

Read the following story. List all against whom Stacy had sinned. What might she do to confess her sin and seek forgiveness?)

Stacy, a senior at a Lutheran high school, used alcohol and drugs. Her use of alcohol and drugs escalated to the point where she was providing illegal substances for others at school. She was finally arrested for possession, driving under the influence, and manslaughter. Illegal substances were found in her car at the scene of an accident in which she had hit and killed a mother of three. Stacy's parents and grandparents were sorely disappointed in her, and her two siblings were devastated. Her classmates weren't sure how to act. Those who were incarcerated with her made fun of her because she was an affluent Lutheran who was "down there" with the rest of them. Her pastor visited regularly and helped her apply various Scripture sections to her life.

## **For Review:**

- 1. Work through this packet**
- 2. Know the Bible's imagery for forgiveness and how to explain them.**
- 3. Know the Keys to the Kingdom points**
- 4. Memorize**

**First:** *What is Confession?*

Confession has two parts. The one is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the pastor as from God himself, not doubting but firmly believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven.

**Second:** *What sins should we confess?*

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer.

But before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

**Third:** *How can we recognize these sins?*

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, employer or employee? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful or lazy? Have you hurt anyone by word or deed? Have you been dishonest, careless, wasteful or done other wrong?

**Fourth:** *How will the pastor assure a penitent sinner of his forgiveness?*