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# STRESS BUSTERS

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## Session 3 *The Secret to Peace*

*"He restores my soul."*  
Psalm 23:3a

40 DAYS WITH THE SHEPHERD

### **BIBLE STUDY**

As explained in Sunday's message, the soul connects God and God's life to our life. There are things that damage our soul and decrease its capacity to receive God's life. One is the self-inflicted damage caused by our own sin. The second is damage inflicted on us by the sins of others. In this study we are going to look at the ways God uses to restore us from this damage so that our souls can be restored and we can experience God's peace in our lives.

#### **I. The Damage of Sin**

*"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul." 1 Peter 2:11*

Read Romans 6:12-14, James 1:14-15 and Psalms 32:1-5

1. How do these verses describe the damage sin causes in our life?
2. In Psalm 32, what did David do to free himself from the damage of his sin?
3. How do you feel about confession? Do you see confession as a gift or a punishment? Is confession something you embrace or shy away from? What are your reasons for feeling this way? How do your feelings compare to David's description of how he feels after confessing his sins?

Read 1 John 1:9, Psalm 103:10-12 and Romans 8:1

4. A Case Study: Joe is plagued by guilt over past sins and believes that although he is saved he is of little use to God because of his past. How can these verses encourage Joe and change his view? How does confession restore our soul?

## **What is Confession?**

Confession is admitting you did something wrong – period -- no excuses. Confession is also specific. You have sinned in specific ways and you need to confess specific sins. Saying a generic, “Forgive me of my sins” just won’t cut it. Confession also means making a commitment to turn away from that sin. Otherwise, your confession is inauthentic.

## **Who do I Confess to?**

Your sin is first and foremost against God. Further, God is the only one who can forgive your sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, your confession needs to be directly to God in prayer. You should also confess to those who have been hurt by your sin. Tell them what you did; that you were wrong (no excuses); that you are sorry and ask their forgiveness. You may also want to confess to a trusted friend or friends in order to ask them to support you and keep you accountable in avoiding that sin in the future.

## **II. The Damage Done by Others**

*They repay me evil for good and leave my soul forlorn. Psalm 35:12*

5. What reasons would prevent people from forgiving? What benefits would be personally gained by forgiving?

Read Matthew 18:23-35

6. What reason does Jesus give us for forgiving others? Does this make sense and is it a strong enough reason to overcome the things that prevent you from forgiving?

### **Thought to Ponder:**

The crucifixion was excruciating but it was followed by resurrection. Forgiveness may be painful but it will be followed by the resurrection in your life!

## **APPLICATION**

1. The Seven Deadly Sins are a useful list for identifying sins that need to be confessed. After reviewing this list, which area of sin are you most likely to struggle in?

Pride – was I prideful in any way?

Envy – was I envious about anything?

Anger – did I demonstrate any anger inappropriately?

Lust – did my mind run away in a lustful way?

Greed – was I greedy in any way?

Gluttony – did I overindulge in anything or activity?

Sloth – was I lazy about anything?

2. In silence say a prayer of confession for specific sins that came to your mind as you went through the list above. Use the following simple prayer as a way to confess.

“God I confess to (specific sin) and I renounce it as wrong. I am sorry for doing it and commit myself to turning away from it. I ask for your forgiveness and for your strength to resist (specific sin). Amen.”

3. Authentic forgiveness from the heart requires you to identify the person you need to forgive, the specific action they did, and how it made you feel. Until you get to the feelings, you haven't gotten to the heart.

**Go home and do the following:**

- a. Pray and ask God to give you the strength to forgive others. Then ask God to reveal to you people you need to forgive.
- b. Make a list of everything God brings to your mind writing down who, what, and how it made you feel.
- c. For each item on your list (it may be a long list) pray the following prayer of forgiveness.  
“Lord, I forgive (person) for doing (specific action) and making me feel (feelings). Amen.”

**Should I tell a Person that I forgave them?**

If the person who hurt you has asked for your forgiveness or is willing to receive it then you should tell them. However, telling someone you forgive them when they do not believe they have done anything wrong or do not know they've done something to hurt you, could make things worse instead of better. In those cases, forgive them in prayer before God and move forward freed from their pain.