

**Home Study 2: Taking Responsibility for our Part – CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS****I. Introductory materials:**

Only The Incarnation - The death of Christ for us on the cross and the coming of the Holy Spirit allow us to reverse the separation and alienation brought on by our fall to sin. As we develop genuine intimacy with God on his terms we will learn to love each other more and more. We will pursue healthier Biblical relationships.

“We are praying and asking God to transform us into a people of deep unity and rich community.”

As we learn to take responsibility for our part in all our relationships there are certain key elements that we need to know about, know how to do, and take responsibility for. We will not always treat each other as God desires us to. Others will not always treat us as God desires them to either. Many of us still have the tendency to play the blame game when things go wrong. It can be hard to admit we were wrong. It means learning to confess our sins. Also when someone has wronged us they need our forgiveness whether we think they deserve it or not. God’s word tells us to, “forgive as God in Christ Jesus has forgiven us.” (Colossians 3:13) That’s a tall order – how have we been forgiven and how do we forgive? Both confession and forgiveness will be addressed in this study. We begin with confession.

**II. Confession**

Confessing our sins to God and each other is a big part of developing healthy Biblical relationships (1 John 1:9; James 5:16) In fact there is much written in the Word about confession and frankly quite a bit has been written by Christian authors on the subject as well. As much as we may know about confession it is still hard to do. It takes humility and courage, especially when we are confessing our sins to someone whom we have wronged.

Ken Sande writes: As God opens your eyes to see how you have sinned against others; he simultaneously offers you a way to find freedom from your past wrongs. It is called confession. Many people have never experienced this freedom because they have never learned how to confess their wrongs honestly and unconditionally. Instead, they use words like these: "I'm sorry if I hurt you." "Let's just forget the past." "I suppose I could have done a better job." "I guess it's not all your fault." These token statements rarely trigger genuine forgiveness and reconciliation. If you really want to make peace, ask God to help you breathe grace by humbly and thoroughly admitting your wrongs. One way to do this is to use the Seven A's.

1. **Address** everyone involved (All those whom you affected) [see Psalm 32:5; 41:4; Luke 9:18-19]
2. **Avoid** if, but, and maybe (Do not try to excuse your wrongs) [This can become the hidden blame game]
3. **Admit** specifically (Both attitudes and actions) [see Luke 15:21; 1 John 1:9]
4. **Acknowledge** the hurt (Express sorrow for hurting someone)
5. **Accept** the consequences (Such as making restitution) [see Luke 15:19; 9:18-19 again]
6. **Alter** your behavior (Change your attitudes and actions) [2 Corinthians 7:10]

7. Ask for forgiveness [allow time – forgiveness cannot be demanded]

The above list is summarized by the author from his book “The PeaceMaker” pages 126-133. [Leaders you may borrow my book or Pastor Jon’s book as you prepare to lead the discussion. The book itself is rich and very detailed and you may want to get your own copy.]

Think about and discuss the Seven A’s as a small group. Look up the suggested passages to help with the discussion.

Which of the seven do you find most difficult? Why?

How does gossip make the problem worse instead of better?

How is it possible to be forgiven and still need to accept the consequences? Can you think of any Biblical examples of this?

Note: Healthy confession will not always require all seven and the order reflects an overall attitude and a process not a set of hard fast steps to follow.

The seventh A is on forgiveness. If we desire forgiveness and know we need it then it only follows that we would take responsibility for our part in relationships and offer forgiveness to others as they need it.

### III. Forgiveness

Look at Jesus teaching in Matthew 18:21-35.

What was Peter’s question and Jesus short answer?

What is the core teaching about forgiveness from Jesus story?

How does that apply to us as we seek to learn to forgive as we have been forgiven?

How do we forgive? What does that include? From the above mentioned book, Ken Sande writes: Through forgiveness God tears down the walls that our sins have built, and he opens the way for a renewed relationship with him. This is exactly what we must do if we are to forgive as the Lord forgives us: We must release the person who has wronged us from the penalty of being separated from us. We must not hold wrongs against others, not think about the wrongs, and not punish others for them. Therefore, forgiveness may be described as a decision to make four promises:

1. "I will not dwell on this incident."
2. "I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you." [Some may exchange "to" for "and"]
3. "I will not talk to others about this incident."
4. "I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship."

By making and keeping these promises, you can tear down the walls that stand between you and your offender. You promise not to dwell on or brood over the problem or to punish by holding the person at a distance. You clear the way for your relationship to develop unhindered by memories of past wrongs. This is exactly what God does for us, and it is what he calls us to do for others. *Taken from [The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict](#), by Ken Sande (Updated Edition, Baker Books, 2003).*

Discuss the four promises as a group. Which are easier?

Which may be harder?

Is it ever ok to bring up an incident again? If so when and why?

How does our memory verse; "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." (Romans 12:18) speak to our confession and forgiving others?

[There is much more to be said on the topic of forgiveness which will be revisited when we get into our last study on reconciliation and restoration of our relationships. If you have questions please email them to Pastor Ron on the topic of forgiveness ahead of the April studies.]

Wrap-up: Share and pray for each other asking God in Christ to give us true humility to learn healthy confession and forgiveness.