

THE COMPASS**What I Did With Bathsheba***Untidy Christianity, Part 8*

Doug Brendel

2 Samuel 11; 12:1-25

NARRATOR: In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said,

THE MAN: "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

NARRATOR: Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. (She had purified herself from her uncleanness.) Then she went back home. The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying,

BATHSHEBA: "I am pregnant."

NARRATOR: So David sent this word to Joab:

DAVID: "Send me Uriah the Hittite."

NARRATOR: And Joab sent him to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah,

DAVID: "Go down to your house and wash your feet."

NARRATOR: So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house. When David was told,

THE MAN: "Uriah did not go home,"

NARRATOR: he asked him,

DAVID: "Haven't you just come from a distance? Why didn't you go home?"

NARRATOR: Uriah said to David,

URIAH: "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"

NARRATOR: Then David said to him,

DAVID: "Stay here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back."

NARRATOR: So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. At David's

invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master's servants; he did not go home. In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote,

DAVID: "Put Uriah in the front line where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die."

NARRATOR: So while Joab had the city under siege, he put Uriah at a place where he knew the strongest defenders were. When the men of the city came out and fought against Joab, some of the men in David's army fell; moreover, Uriah the Hittite died. Joab sent David a full account of the battle. He instructed the messenger:

JOAB: "When you have finished giving the king this account of the battle, the king's anger may flare up, and he may ask you,

DAVID: 'Why did you get so close to the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall? Who killed Abimelech son of Jerub-besheth? Didn't a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?'

JOAB: If he asks you this, then say to him,

MESSENGER: 'Also, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.' "

NARRATOR: The messenger set out, and when he arrived he told David everything Joab had sent him to say. The messenger said to David,

MESSENGER: "The men overpowered us and came out against us in the open, but we drove them back to the entrance to the city gate. Then the archers shot arrows at your servants from the wall, and some of the king's men died. Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead."

NARRATOR: David told the messenger,

DAVID: "Say this to Joab:

MESSENGER: 'Don't let this upset you; the sword devours one as well as another. Press the attack against the city and destroy it.'

DAVID: Say this to encourage Joab."

NARRATOR: When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the Lord. The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said,

NATHAN: "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him.

Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him.”

NARRATOR: David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan,

DAVID: “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.”

NARRATOR: Then Nathan said to David,

NATHAN: “You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says:

GOD: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’

NATHAN: “This is what the Lord says:

GOD: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’ ”

NARRATOR: Then David said to Nathan,

DAVID: “I have sinned against the Lord.”

NARRATOR: Nathan replied,

NATHAN: “The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.”

NARRATOR: After Nathan had gone home, the Lord struck the child that Uriah’s wife had borne to David, and he became ill. David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground. The elders of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them. On the seventh day the child died. David’s servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they thought,

DAVID’S SERVANTS: “While the child was still living, we spoke to David but he would not listen to us. How can we tell him the child is dead? He may do something desperate.”

NARRATOR: David noticed that his servants were whispering among themselves and he realized the child was dead.

DAVID: “Is the child dead?”

NARRATOR: he asked.

DAVID'S SERVANTS: "Yes,"

NARRATOR: they replied,

DAVID'S SERVANTS: "he is dead."

NARRATOR Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate. His servants asked him,

DAVID'S SERVANTS: "Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!"

NARRATOR: He answered,

DAVID: "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.' But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

NARRATOR: Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The Lord loved him....

Confession. What a loaded word.

Where do you have this word filed in your brain? Is it a legal term? A cops and criminals thing? Is it a religious term? A parenting term?

In any case, it's sort of a negative term, isn't it? Confession is not something we look forward to.

This is a pretty friendly gathering, but would anybody here care to confess your sins from the past, say, 3 or 4 days?

Probably none of us would seize upon the opportunity to recite all of our wrongdoing from the past 72 hours.

I don't want you to know what I've done wrong; I want to keep that stuff covered up.

And yet, there does seem to be some kind of boundary marker inside of me, where if I do something really bad, that crosses that imaginary boundary, I urgently want to confess it.

I don't know why, but I just want to get it off my chest.

What's up with that?

What in the world would prompt me to reveal something negative about myself, to admit that I've done something wrong?

Does that somehow HELP me?

Does it make me a better person?

And there's another wrinkle to this confession thing:

What if somebody MAKES me confess?

How do the dynamics change if I'm forced to confess — by some kind of government or

authority figure, or even by the rules of my church?

Down through the centuries, under English common law, if you confessed to committing a crime, no matter what the circumstances, the court would accept your confession.

It wasn't until about 65 years ago that our United States Supreme Court, in the case of *Brown v. Mississippi*, said, "Uh, excuse me, wait a minute here — please don't torture the suspect into confessing; that's cheating.

Somebody who's being tortured may confess just to get out of the torture."

I'm so glad the Supreme Court made that little observation, aren't you?

But many of our religious institutions require us to confess our sins in one form or another.

Many of us come from a Roman Catholic background — so many of us have experience with a formalized, or institutionalized form of confession, where the traditions of your church dictate that you actually confess your sins according to certain regulations:

you go to your church, you go to a certain place in the church, you confess your sins to a priest, according to certain arrangements and traditions.

And Catholics are not alone in this.

There are a number of non-Catholic religious traditions that require the act of confession in one form or another.

Some of us grew up in less formal Protestant religious systems, where there's a tradition of what's often called "testifying" or "giving testimony":

people are free to stand up at a certain point in a church service and tell what God is doing in their lives,

and in many cases this includes confessing sins that you've decided to turn away from, or sins that you're just NOW deciding to turn over to God.

But what's the TRUTH about confession?

Why should I confess my wrongdoing?

And what actually HAPPENS when I confess?

God gives us the answers, many of them in the experience of David that we've just recounted this evening.

Confession is nothing more, nothing less, than agreeing with God about who I am.

This is what David did.

Nathan the prophet described how David had sinned — and David replied with stark, total accuracy:

"I have sinned against the Lord."

He did not mince words. He did not rationalize. He did not finesse the fine points. He confessed. He agreed with God about who he was. A sinner.

Confession compels me to see myself honestly — and this is something I am horrified to do. I want to be better, and I want somehow to be better without having done better.

But every time I do badly, I realize what I am: a bad-doer. An evildoer. A sinner.

I asked our lead pastor, David G. Brown, to give me his perspective on confession.

David has done his share of sinning and confessing. Here's what he told me he has learned:

There is nothing mystical about confession.

My confession does not change God. It changes me.

Confession is not about punishing myself.

It is not about coming to some emotional goal line where I finally prove to God that I am really, truly sorry.

It is all about seeing myself from God's perspective and saying honestly, "God, you are right about me."

* * *

This sounds somewhat difficult to me. Brutal, actually.

So then why should I engage in such an exercise? I can think of 3 important reasons.

1. Confession helps me feel better.

Confession is **physically** and **emotionally** healthy.

If I do wrong, and I cover it up, it grinds at my gut.

It eats me alive.

We're talking heartburn here; we're talking ulcers.

Of course there are other ways to get heartburn or an ulcer, but living with the guilt of a secret sin is a great way to get there.

We saw this evening how David sinned and covered up. But in one of the best songs he ever wrote, he talks about what you go through when you do something wrong and you don't come clean.

It's Psalm 32, and the beginning of it goes like this:

Psalm 32:

1 Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

2 Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

He says God's hand was "heavy upon" him.

In other words, God designed human beings to live honestly — and when David decided to live dishonestly instead, he was violating God's design for his life.

There was a contradiction between the way he'd been designed to live, and the way he was actually living;

and he was feeling the weight of that contradiction.

It's like the difference between riding a bike with fully inflated tires, and riding a bike with flat tires.

It's WORK to push those pedals when the tires are flat — that's not how the bike was designed to be ridden.

You feel the whole weight of the bike.

And when you're carrying around some unconfessed sin, it weighs on you.

And in a group like Compass Fellowship, in a church or in a family or on a work team, when one person does wrong by another person, it can be like a poison. In the New Testament, the apostle James actually recommended confession as a healthy part of life in the church family:

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed....

We shouldn't misread this — he's not making a rule here, where first you have to confess and then you get healed.

But I think it's significant that he urged Christians to engage in the practice of confessing to each other.

Some churches don't believe in confessing to a priest; they say you should only confess to God.

They effectively ignore this piece of advice in the Scriptures.

And I observe that these churches tend to pay a real price for this.

There's a black hole in the church family; the fabric of their community is frayed.

Their relationships have a falseness to them that makes it impossible for the church to grow healthy and strong, and help people as fully and effectively as they might have.

As the Bible says here, it's vital that we confess to "each other" — in other words, to the specific people we've hurt.

There's wisdom in just going to someone privately and saying, "Hey, I realize now, I did you dirty. I apologize. Would you please forgive me?"

There's wisdom in that discreet approach.

And, there's real healing.

Confession is physically healthy for me.

2. Confession clears my head.

Confession is **intellectually** healthy.

And this makes it healthy in a **practical** way.

Here's what I mean:

When I've done something wrong and I'm covering it up, it's a distraction.

I can't focus clearly on constructive stuff.

It's like having some gross bug splattered on the windshield of my life, and no matter how I try to look past it and see my way down the road, it's still there;

it's in my way; it's reminding me that it needs to be cleaned up.

But confession releases me from that distraction.

It lets me focus on productive stuff.

And that makes me more productive, more effective.

I'm better able to manage the important details of my life.

Some people think they have bad luck.

And certainly bad things do sometimes happen to good people.

But if I'm carrying around some secret sin in my heart, I'm very likely to find myself making stupid errors, bumping into problems, that I would never fall prey to if I

had my head together.
 If I am carrying around unconfessed sin, I am just asking for what people typically call
 “bad luck.”

This is why the Bible says in Proverbs 28:13,14,

Proverbs 28:

13 He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

14 Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.

“Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord” is the old-fashioned way of saying,
 “People are better off when they consistently respect God’s design for their lives.”
 But the person who says, “Hey, come on, I don’t really buy that ‘God’s design for my life’
 stuff”—

or who says, “Hey, come on, maybe this IS God’s design for my life, but I don’t really
 need to worry about it; that’s religious stuff, it doesn’t affect my everyday life”—
 that’s the person whose sin, whose error — the part of their life that’s out of synch with
 God’s design — proves to be a nagging distraction,
 and winds up distracting them right into some kind of trouble that they wouldn’t have
 had otherwise.

“He who hardens his heart falls into trouble.”

But this isn’t just a deal where I’m trying to avoid the negatives.

Confession is also proactively positive.

As I studied the Scriptures in preparation for this message, I came to think of confession
 kind of like an exclusive club membership:

it gives me access to certain advantages.

We see here in verse 13 that by confessing and renouncing my sin, I’m going to get
 mercy.

God is going to see to it, over the long haul, that life cuts me some slack.

The great myth about confession of sin is that people will think less of you when you tell
 the truth about yourself.

But in fact, the opposite is more often true.

The last time a string of Cabinet-level appointees were scheduled to go before the
 Senate for confirmation, Matthew Cooper ran an item in *Time* magazine offering
 advice to the nominees on how to get the Senators’ approval. Here’s one of his
 suggestions:

“Don’t let the *Washington Post* inform the world that you once regurgitated on your
 classics professor — get the bad news out before Bob Woodward does.”

He was saying, “Confess — and people will appreciate you for it.”

In 1884 when Grover Cleveland was first running for president, word leaked out that he
 had had an affair years before, and fathered a child.

Cleveland’s campaign people shot him a telegram asking him what to do, and he shot
 back a telegram of just 3 words: “Tell the truth.”

The whole story came out — and Cleveland won the election.

Many of us, myself included, have found that when we've been forthright about some failure in our lives, instead of denying it or covering it up or making excuses for it, the people around us gave us credit... they cut us some slack... they could relate to our struggle, and they still accepted us. Sure, maybe I found that some turned out to be fair-weather friends, and they turned their back on me, but those weren't the people who were long-term in my life; those weren't the people who were going to matter in my life over the long haul. The important ones, the significant ones, gave me grace when I confessed my failure.

3. Confession sets me straight.

Confession is **spiritually** healthy.
It gets me back into God's design.
It tears down the walls I've built.
It frees me from the prison I've built.
It sets me free to love God again.

There is nothing more fundamentally disturbing to a human being than to be out of sorts with his or her Creator.

It's a disconnect that there is no way to get comfortable with.
Sometimes we talk about it as a God-shaped void in the human spirit, a void that only God can fill.

When I'm not acknowledging my need for God ... my need to live by his design for my life ... my need for his love and his provision... there's always something missing, something out of sorts, deep down inside me. But when I acknowledge that God is perfect, and I'm imperfect, and I need him to bridge the gap between us because I'm not able to— THEN I start to experience the freedom, the relief, the joy ... of God's love, God's care, God's personal attention.

Some people think if they acknowledge their sin, God is going to be mad at them. But the Bible never says that.
The fact is, God already knows about what you've done wrong.
It's no surprise to him!
He's not looking for information; he's looking for intimacy.

When I confess my sin to God, I don't have to cower anymore, wondering what he thinks of me.

In that song that David wrote, that we looked at a few minutes ago, he goes on to talk about what happened when he finally confessed his sin to God:

Psalm 32:5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"— and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

God forgave him — gave him a clean slate — set him free — let him off the hook —
declared him innocent!

That's what I want.

That's the feeling I'm craving, when I've done something wrong.

And that's what God promises.

* * *

When I was in elementary school I lived in northern Indiana, just outside Chicago.
It was way back in the Dark Ages, before they made it illegal to pollute the air by
burning your garbage.

So my mom would send me out to the alley behind our garage to burn the garbage;
but her rule was, you set the fire, you put the lid on the can — it had holes in it, so the
fire could breathe—

and then you come straight back in the house.

You DO NOT play in the fire.

So of course I often played in the fire.

During the summer, my mom kept the heavy winter blankets folded up on a shelf in the
garage;

and one summer day I got the idea that if I lit the fire in the garbage can, and then took
one of those blankets and threw it over the can,

I could build up a lot of smoke in there, and then pull the blanket off and make smoke
signals.

Cool, huh?

And I did exactly that.

I threw that blanket over the top of the garbage can, and then I waited.

I wanted to build up a lot of smoke in there.

I was going to have so much smoke that I was going to send smoke signals to the
Indians in — I don't know, Wyoming or somewhere.

And then, just as I was about to pull the blanket off of the garbage can,
a black circle, exactly the size of the garbage can lid, suddenly formed in the center of
that blanket;

and that entire charred middle of the blanket fell into the flames.

I was horrified.

I pulled the remains of the blanket off of the garbage can — held up the blanket—
now I had a lovely winter blanket with a black-edged hole right in the middle of it.

And what did I do?

Did I remember what I had learned in Sunday school about telling the truth?

Did God whisper quietly to my spirit that I would someday be serving as teaching pastor
at The Compass in Phoenix, Arizona, and I should not embarrass the fellowship
years later by covering up my crime?

No.

In the panic of the moment — and in my utter deviousness — I carefully folded up the

remains of the blanket so that the hole was hidden inside, and all that showed were the edges, the good parts.

I put the blanket back up on the shelf in the garage, with all the other blankets.
And I WAITED FOR WINTER TO FALL.

Week by week, month by month, I dreaded the day when the temperatures would drop enough that my mother would go out to the garage and pull down the heavy blankets.

Day after day, I re-ran my crime in the VCR of my mind — and they hadn't even invented VCRs yet.

Not a single day went by but what I thought about what I had done.

Finally, the days grew shorter; the air grew brisk.

Mom went for the blankets.

And I heard those awful words:

“What in the WORLD...?”

My father was at work, so she couldn't start with him.

And my little brother was still a preschooler, so he could probably not be implicated.

So she came to me.

“Doug, do you know what happened to this blanket?”

Now you can see the whole situation. The facts are very clear.

I am the member of the family who burns the garbage.

Here is a blanket, smelling of smoke, with a black-charred hole in the middle, EXACTLY the size of the garbage can lid.

So of course I squared my shoulders, drew my eyebrows together in a solemn scowl, and answered,

“Wow, Mom, I have no idea....

Maybe some kind of animal got in there and ... chewed on it?

Moths, maybe?”

Somehow, my mom decided not to push me on it.

She quizzed my dad when he came home; he was clueless.

She tossed the ruined blanket in the garbage.

Life went on.

You might think that I could relax.

I had gotten away with it.

The case had been closed.

But in the files of my conscience, the case was still very much open.

Every day, in my memory, I could smell the smoke.

I could see the black circle falling into the flames.

I could see my mom holding the wretched remains in front of her.

I could hear her voice asking me,

“Doug, do you know what happened to this blanket?”

Now I tend to be very clinical about my own failures.

I would say my biggest character flaw is that I don't take responsibility for pain; I dissociate from it.
 I make excuses for myself; I let myself off the hook, in my mind.
 I don't really deal with it.
 So this should have been easy to forget, to walk away from.

And on the surface, life did go on.
 I kept right on doing well in school.
 I kept right on playing with my friends in the neighborhood.
 I kept right on sitting in Sunday school on Sunday mornings and being a good boy.
 But the images wouldn't stop flickering on the screen inside my mind.
 No matter where I tried to tuck it away, it wouldn't stay tucked away.
 No matter how much fun I had playing,
 no matter how much I flung myself into my little elementary-school activities,
 it was there — with me.
 There was a drip, drip, drip that couldn't be turned off.
 I was living a lie.
 It was ridiculously insignificant — it was a small crime, a small-potatoes kind of sin —
 and yet, it was coming to dominate my little elementary-school-aged life.

I would lie in my bed at night, and the pressure would overwhelm me, and I would begin to cry.
 Sometimes my mom would hear me, and she would come in to see what in the world was the matter.
 Sometimes I would get SO CLOSE to confessing — I would say something like, "I feel like Jesus wants me to do something ... but I just can't!"
 My mom gave me the benefit of the doubt; she went back to her own bedroom and told my dad she thought God was calling me to be a missionary to Africa.

It was the following spring, almost a full year after the incident — I can still see the scene in my mind:
 our backyard in Indiana, the clothesline, the little sidewalk that went around the garage back to the alley where the garbage cans were.
 My mom was hanging out clothes.
 There was no special reason for THAT to be the moment, instead of some other moment,
 but for whatever reason, I finally caved in.
 I just crumpled to the grass; the tears and the sobbing came lurching out of me.
 My mother ran to me from the clothesline; she thought I was ill.
 "What's wrong! What's wrong!" she was yelling.
 It's probably a miracle I didn't give her a heart attack.
 Then I would have had THAT to feel guilty about too!

And I said, "I burned the blanket!
 I'm so sorry, Mom!
 Punish me however you want, but I JUST — HAD — TO TELL YOU!"

My mother held me tight ... she let me sob for a while ... and finally she said,

“Well, I think you’ve punished yourself enough.
I forgive you.”

She let me off the hook.
And the burden ... LIFTED!
I was FREE!
For the first time in almost a year, I had nothing to hide.
No dread — no anguish.

* * *

The wonderful thing about the way God has designed confession is that it has no expiration date.
It doesn’t matter how long ago you stumbled.
It doesn’t matter how long ago you burned the blanket.
It doesn’t matter how many years you’ve been ignoring God, or running from God, or thumbing your nose at his design for your life.
Confession always starts helping you, whenever you do it.
It begins working to your advantage, starting from the moment you lay down your pride and admit, “I’ve done wrong.”

My favorite detail in the story of David and Bathsheba is where David confesses to Nathan — he says, “**I have sinned against the Lord**” — and in the very next line, Nathan replies, “**The Lord has taken away your sin.**”
There was no delay, no probation period. There was only confession — and forgiveness.

Let me read you something else our lead pastor David G. Brown wrote to me on this subject:

It bothers me when people talk about God forgiving us IF we confess. That’s not the way it actually is. We ARE forgiven — there is nothing else we have to do — we have Jesus’ righteousness.

Confession is all about us being honest with ourselves. Until we are honest with ourselves, all of our relationships are hindered, including the one with God. It’s not that God hasn’t forgiven us — or that he is holding us at arm’s length because we have failed him — it is our own wall of separation: a self-made prison.

If I secretly cheat on my wife, there is going to be a wall between her and me — it has nothing to do with her building one — she does not even know; but I am not acting in integrity, so I have built the wall.

Same with us and God when we sin. In essence, God does not even see it when we sin — when he looks at us, he sees the righteousness of Christ.

But there is a problem — and that is us.

We were created to live in harmony and integrity.

When we don’t, it sets in motion all kinds of ill inside us.

Like you and the blanket: there was a wall between you and your mom, but your mom didn’t build it. You did.

It is a built-in defense mechanism.

If I defraud you, I will build a wall so that I don't have to face you and be reminded that I defrauded you.

Out of sight, out of mind — we wish.

* * *

In fact, you may have no specific junk you need to confess.

You may have nothing but the sense that you've never really fessed up to your imperfection;

you've never said to God, "Okay, I admit it — I have blown it in many, many ways, and I'm sure I'm going to make a lot more mistakes in the future.

But I trust you to be telling the truth, God, when you offer to give me a clean slate, in spite of my failures.

I recognize that I need you in my life.

I need your love.

Please take me as I am, and make out of me whatever you have in mind."

Here's what the Bible says about it, in

1 John 1:

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

2:1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

If you've never looked God in the eye and said, "Okay, I admit it, I am a mistake-maker — I have not lived by your design, and I realize that I can't — so please forgive me and help me to walk with you from here on out"—

if you've never turned yourself over to God that way,

I would encourage you to do so right now.

If you're already a committed Christ-follower, but you sense this evening that you've got some area of your life that you really need to turn over to him,

I would encourage you to do so right now.

The moment you confess your shortcoming, the healing begins.

God's help and health begin flowing into that part of your life.

I also wouldn't blame you, after listening to a talk like this, if you had some questions or issues that you weren't quite sure how to deal with.

Maybe you've got an issue with a friend; maybe it's an old issue, and you don't know whether it would really be good idea to go to that person and dredge up all that stuff now—

but still there's a part of you that wants to make it right.

If that's the case, maybe you'll want to talk with your TouchPoint contact this week.

If you don't have a TouchPoint contact, you can sign up this evening; I can explain it to you in about 20 seconds.

Or if you don't feel like your TouchPoint contact is the way to go, you'd rather talk to me about this, or talk to our lead pastor David G. Brown, please feel free to contact one of us this week by email, phone, whatever.

You don't have to reveal the details of your situation if you don't want to, but we can talk about it in discreet terms and maybe help you get a handle on what the best course of action would be for you to take.

The bottom line is this: Don't keep carrying around the hurt. Lay it down. Be honest with God. Turn it over to him. This is why Jesus came — to take your wrongdoing and replace it with his love.

King David wrote a song of confession after the prophet Nathan confronted him.

I think it would be appropriate, as we prepare to receive communion, for us to read it together.

Psalm 51:

DOUG: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

PEOPLE: Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

DOUG: For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

PEOPLE: Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

DOUG: Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

PEOPLE: Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

DOUG: Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

PEOPLE: Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

DOUG: Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

PEOPLE: Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

DOUG: Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

PEOPLE: Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

DOUG: Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.

PEOPLE: Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

DOUG: O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

PEOPLE: You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

DOUG: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise....