

## Sermon Notes



**Series: Holy Habits**

**Sermon: Facing the Truth**

### **Matthew 26-69-75**

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” But he denied it before all of them, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” Again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.” Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, “I do not know the man!” At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: “Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

## Holy Habits: Ancient Truths for an Anxious Age

In its simplest form, a spiritual discipline is an intentional, regularly practiced activity that helps us to grow closer to God. Although that activity may take many forms, traditionally they are thought of as the activities that Christ participated in throughout scripture: prayer, fasting, solitude, study, etc. From its beginning the church linked the desire to know God to intentional practices that gave people space in their lives to ‘keep company’ with Jesus. These intentional practices we know as spiritual disciplines.

### Confession

At the heart of God is the desire to give and to forgive. Confession is the spiritual discipline that allows us to enter into the grace and mercy of God in such a way that we experience forgiveness and healing for the sins and sorrows of the past. In sharing our deepest weaknesses and failures with God and trusted others, we may more fully experience the abundant life Jesus offers.

Confession has to do not merely with our actions, but also with our hearts. To confess is to acknowledge before God, and sometimes to others, the wrong we have done. It is to agree with God about the state of our soul. Fredrick Buechner says “To confess your sins to God is not to tell God anything God doesn’t already know. Until you confess them, however, they are the abyss between you and God. When you confess them, they become the Golden Gate Bridge.”

Not only does confession allow us release from the guilt of sin, but it also provides an opportunity to turn from it. We are freed from guilt and given an opportunity to repent and live differently. When we present the most transparent view of ourselves to God or others through confession, we open ourselves up to deeper, more authentic relationships, allowing God to shape us into a reflection of Christ.

Confession is also to profess or declare what you know to be true about God. The practice of confession shows us the greatness and the goodness of the Creator, the love and grace of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. Confession is indeed “good for the soul.”

You are invited to practice the discipline of confession over the next week. Each day there is a suggested practice,

You may use the daily selections in this guide or choose other acts.

### Monday

What weaknesses and failures are separating you from God? Spend time today naming those sins as you seek God’s mercy.

*Prayer: Lord, have mercy on me, restore me according to your promises and lead me on the path of life. Amen.*

### Tuesday

Talk to a trusted friend or mentor about a struggle you are experiencing in your faith life. Name those thoughts or actions that are hindering your relationship with God. Release any guilt you might feel. Allow God’s grace to fill you.

*Prayer: God of healing and wholeness, grant us faith and confidence that our broken lives are made whole. Amen.*

### Wednesday

You are redeemed. You are restored. You are renewed. Remind yourself throughout the day that you are indeed forgiven.

*Prayer: In the name of Jesus Christ I am forgiven. Amen.*

### Thursday

Go to a Maundy Thursday Worship Service. Spend some time in quiet contemplation with Jesus as he prays in the garden.

*Prayer: “Abba Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.” Amen.*

### Friday

Consider participating in a Good Friday worship or prayer experience today. Walk a labyrinth, pray stations of the cross, or some other holy weekend experience.

*Prayer: “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? (My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?)” Amen.*

### Saturday

Spend time in silent reflection today.

*Prayer: God of life and death, beginnings and endings, we remember that day follows night, hope replaces despair, and life will conquer death, even today. Amen.*