

AUGUST 29/30, 2020
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
RAISE YOUR VOICE | FORGIVE ME
PSALM 51:1-19

Hello! It's good to be back.

I'd like to provide you with a few calendar updates and the fall sermon schedule.

First, I will be doing Life Group Sign Ups at church on 8/30, 9/6 and 9/13. We'll also promote them in our video announcements. I honestly have no idea how this is going to go. I have been talking with other Small Group pastors around north county about what they are seeing, and they are telling me that it's a mixed bag and that they're also not sure what to expect. This is such a different season. If you could, would you pray that people sign up. And would you pray that we get some more leaders. Thanks.

Second, here is the calendar for the fall.

9/13/2020	Fall Week 1
9/20/2020	Fall Week 2
9/27/2020	Fall Week 3
10/4/2020	Fall Week 4
10/11/2020	Fall Week 5
10/18/2020	Fall Week 6
10/25/2020	Fall Week 7
11/1/2020	Fall Week 8
11/8/2020	Fall Week 9
11/15/2020	Fall Week 10
11/22/2020	
11/29/2020	Fall Week 11
12/6/2020	Fall Week 12

Third, here is the preaching calendar for the fall.

September 12/13	Daniel 1
September 19/20	Daniel 2
September 26/27	Daniel 3
October 3/4	Daniel 4
October 10/11	Daniel 5
October 17/18	Daniel 6
October 24/25	Daniel 7
Oct 31/Nov 1	Daniel 8
November 7/8	Daniel 9
November 14/15	Daniel 10
November 21/22	Daniel 11
November 28/29	Daniel 12/Advent Week 1

For this week, the discipleship value that the text presents to us is that of wholeness. The Scriptures teach us that Jesus came to give us an abundant life (John 10:10). Wholeness results in abundance. But sin robs us of wholeness, which prevents abundance. The beginning of the way back from sin (which needs to be confessed) and brokenness (which needs to be healed and which causes us to sin in the first place), is to confess our sins and to repent of them. In his notes, Ryan says, "True healing demands honest confession. We can't go through the motions of religion and expect to be restored by God." He also said, "Confession allows us to experience God's forgiveness and move toward wholeness." Confession and repentance are part of God's restorative process whereby He continually brings us the healing which leads to the wholeness which leads to the abundance He has planned for us all along in and through and with Christ.

But what about the model (Being With, Becoming Like, Doing As)? Where do confession and repentance fit in? In our thinking we have put them under Becoming Like. Not because Jesus ever had to do them, but because in doing them we are modeling Christ's character. Jesus was humble. Confession and repentance require humility. Jesus was submitted to God. Confession and repentance require submission. Jesus always agreed with God. Confession and repentance require us to agree with God. Jesus always lived His life to please God. Confession and repentance please God.

So, we'll talk about things we need to learn and practice in order that we might confess and repent in order that God might grow us into followers who are increasingly more whole than we were days, weeks, months and years ago. Our wholeness leads to abundant living which leads to goodness for us and glory for Him.

But first, a totally random Icebreaker Question.

Engaging with Each Other

1. What are you interested in that most people aren't?

Reading law or about Supreme Court Justices. Over the past few years I've read a biography about former Justice Antonin Scalia. I've read a book of speeches from him. I just ordered a book he wrote called, "On Faith." I have read "Thinking Like a Lawyer" by Frederick Schauer. And I've been known to read Supreme Court Decisions.

How about you?

Engaging with the Scriptures

2. We were presented with five "R's" in the message. After reading the passage, remind each other what they are and then spend some time discussing the difficulties and delights of each. This will be the "learning" portion of the night.

Before you start reading further, you'll see there is a lot there. As I write this, I'm thinking that I will probably try to spend an equal amount of time on each of the five, meaning I won't be taking a deep dive into any one in particular. You may choose to approach it differently, and

that's certainly okay. I just wanted to share with you how I'm planning to go about it. And the reason I'm going to attack it the way I am is because there is a flow from "recognition" to "restoration" and I am wanting my group to talk about all five as part of the process of confession.

Here are the five R's.

- Recognition
- Responsibility
- Remorse
- Repentance
- Restoration

Recognition

Difficulties -

- It's easier to ignore our sin to recognize it. We would rather it just go away. If we turn a blind eye to it, maybe it will.
- We are prone to minimizing it and trying to act like it's not that big of a deal (got any kids or grandkids who do that?!)
- We don't think we have it because we think that the way we are is simply the way we were born. If I was "born this way" (Lady Gaga song) how in the world can I be guilty of sin when I am simply living out the way I was created to live? How can being true to myself be sinful?
- We don't think sin may even exist. We talk about messing up or slipping up or making a bad decision or showing poor judgement, but we don't talk about or think in terms of sin.
- How can you recognize something that you don't even believe is there? (A quote from Ryan's notes, "Sin blinds us to reality and causes us to walk in lifeless deception.")
- What other difficulties do you see?

Delights -

- 51:1b-2, "blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!"
- The delight is that we receive complete cleansing from them when we recognize them for what they are and ask for forgiveness. Humility and confession may be hard, but try living for a long time with unconfessed sin!
- The delights of forgiveness, the removal of guilt, feeling clean again in your soul, and having shame removed are not things you can even begin to put a price tag on.
- The delights that come from confession and receiving God's forgiveness should be more than enough to motivate us to confess our sins a.s.a.p. Why aren't they? (Maybe this is another discussion question?)
- What other delights do you see?

Responsibility

Difficulties -

- Our disdain for taking responsibility for the sinful choices we make.
- Taking responsibility forces us to admit that what we did was not an accident, that what we said didn't "slip out," that what happened wasn't someone else's fault but was in fact ours.

- We very much like to blame. The problem is we cannot blame and confess at the same time. They are mutually exclusive. The other problem is we cannot blame and be transformed at the same time.
- When it comes to God bringing further wholeness into our lives, the difficult consequences of not taking responsibility are found in the truths that our growth, maturation and transformation demand that we take responsibility for our actions.
- There are difficulties which prevent us from taking responsibility and then there are difficulties which arise when we do not.
- What other difficulties do you see?

Delights -

- Maturity. When we take responsibility we grow in maturity.
- Relief. Agreeing with God, agreeing with another person, getting the sin out in the open and confessing it, brings a tremendous amount of relief. Concealing sin takes a toll. We'll see that in the next R on "remorse."
- Forgiveness for specific sins. Darica had a mentor in college who used to say, "You didn't commit general sins, so don't confess general sins." Being able to name "this" or "that" and confess and ask for and receive forgiveness brings great delight. I know you have experienced it.
- Growth in integrity. Admitting to ourselves and others and God our sins brings internal integrity and increases our integrity in our vertical relationship with Him and in our horizontal relationships with others. People want to see that we have an accurate assessment of ourselves. When they see integrity, it will lead to trust, which will lead to intimacy and depth of relationships. Those things bring delight.
- What other delights do you see?

Remorse

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." (Psalm 51:17)

Difficulties -

- From Ryan's notes, "Contrite literally means crushed. Broken and crushed. David is saying he honestly regrets the past. I'm sure you've heard people say, 'I don't regret anything I've done, it made me who I am...' You can't confess and have that attitude." One huge difficulty for feeling remorse is a lack of regret for past decisions or actions. (Why do you think people tend to not regret their actions? Perhaps a discussion question.)
- Two difficulties of an unwillingness to express remorse are: (1) physical effects (Psalm 51:8; 32:3) and (2) spiritual effects (Psalm 51:10).
 - When it's difficult to express remorse, that leads to a fractured relationship with God.
 - Ryan said, "The more affection we have for God, the more broken we'll be over our sin - because we'll realize that our sin drives a wedge between us and the presence of God."
- Another difficulty of an unwillingness to admit remorse are the effects it has on those around us.
- Pride is a difficulty.
- Expressing our own emotions can be a difficulty.
- Feeling our own emotions can be a difficulty.

- Feeling the hurt we caused God and others can be a difficulty.
- From Ryan's notes, "The pain of remorse is one of the reasons we're more comfortable calling sin 'brokenness' or blaming other people or minimizing. But coming to terms with the way our actions have dramatically affected ourselves and others is a necessary part of the process of transformation."
- What other difficulties do you see?

Delights -

- Physical side effects go away.
- Connection with God restored.
- Relationships with those we've hurt restored.
- God's transformation is activated.
- What other delights do you see?

Repentance

Difficulties -

- We are unwilling to rethink the way we think.
- We are unwilling to admit that repentance was and is a central part of Jesus' ministry (Mark 1:14-15) and that it is to be a normal and consistent part of the Christian life.
- We are unwilling to make lifestyle changes in areas where we are doing things which are contrary to God's heart.
- We are stubborn people who think we know best.
- We don't trust God like we say we do.
- It could be too costly or complicated.
- Again...pride.
- What other difficulties do you see?

Delights -

- Repentance is powerful.
- It's beautiful.
- It allows God to do a good work in us as we align ourselves with His ways and His heart.
- It leads to maturity in Christ.
- It leads to restored relationships with God and people.
- It really changes the course of our lives.
- What other delights do you see?

Restoration

Difficulties -

- A difficulty is that maybe we don't want it? Why wouldn't we want it? I'm not sure. But if we won't go through the first four R's then we won't experience the fifth, which leads me to think that sometimes I don't want it.
- Getting to restoration might seem like it's too hard or too costly.
- Ryan wrote, "David knows that God's restoration is founded on His love for us. God doesn't want to see us destroyed by our sin and David knows that our sin doesn't stop God's love." Perhaps a difficulty is a misunderstanding or lack of confidence in God's love.
- We aren't really sure restoration is even possible. There might be lack of faith or lack of conviction that God can make us clean and restore us. (Psalm 51:6b and Exodus 12:22)

- We go at it the wrong way.
 - Ryan wrote, “One of the things David wants to make clear is that the restoration God provides does not come through ritual or religious observation, but through relationship.”
 - Psalm 51:16-17, “For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”
 - Forgiveness is received, not earned.
 - We cannot go through the motions of religion and expect to be restored by God.
- What other difficulties do you see?

Delights -

- Healing.
- Close to God again.
- Made clean from our sin.
- Awareness that our forgiveness is purchased through blood (Psalm 51:6b; Exodus 12:22; John 1:29; 19:5).
- Revival.
- There may be too many to list!
- What other delights do you see?

Engaging the Scriptures with Life

3. What are one or two of the more important things you believe God to be saying to you through the message? Why? How might you seek to apply them this week?

Now we are at the “practice” portion of the night.

How can we practice confession? How can we practice asking for forgiveness? What are some steps we can take?

Here are some thoughts which come to mind.

- Follow the five R’s when you have to confess a sin. You don’t have to spend a lot of time on each one, but spend some time on each one.
- At least once each day pray for further growth in each of the five areas.
- Memorize and use Psalm 139:23-24 as a template.
 - “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
 - And then, as God shows you, cry out, “Forgive me.”
- Confess your sins specifically and not generally. Name them, one by one.
- Keep short accounts with God.
- What else comes to mind, and what will you choose to do? I’m going to try the five R’s when I practice confession, along with using Psalm 139 as a template.