

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

As we consider the disciplines of community, James gives us a tough one: confessing our failures to each other.

When Adam ate the forbidden fruit, he instinctively hid his failure from God. The instinct to hide is so strong that even a toddler will act on it, and as we age, it gets stronger.

The Pharisees were experts at hiding failure. Jesus called them hypocrites and white-washed tombs – beautiful on the outside but full of death and everything unclean. Instead of confessing, they preferred *conforming*. Why? Because it's easier to *act* holy than it is to *be* holy. Jesus doesn't want actors, he wants *authenticity* – a community of confessing believers being cleaned up from the inside out. See Matthew 23.

Here's the challenge: you can't clean what you're unwilling to see. That's why James gives us the discipline of confession. Confession exposes what we're hiding. It gets failure out in the open where the light of grace can convict, forgive and heal.

There are two actions required for nurturing the discipline of confession. The first is *my* willingness to confess my failures to you. The second is *your* willingness to receive my confession with grace as you confess your failures to me. This creates a healing cycle of confession, a discipline that builds authenticity. That's what Jesus wants for his Church, *authentic community*, and confession is one of the disciplines that gets us there.

My friends, conformity shows the world how good we are - and smells like death. Confession reveals how good *Jesus* is - and is the sweet fragrance of healing hope and life. Through the discipline of confession, let's continue to build an authentic community of faith.

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