

The Seven A's of Confession
2 Corinthians 7:8-11

Public confessions have become quite common. Some of them are both sad and humorous, as famous individuals attempt to appease the public without admitting their wrong doing. Paul Slansky and Arleen Sorokin compiled hundreds of these confessions in a book. They observed, *"the public apology has come to provide forgiveness for its author without the discomfort of disgrace. It's like going bankrupt and getting to keep the credit cards."* (Paul Slansky and Arleen Sorokin point out in their new book, "My Bad: 25 Years of Public Apologies")

Confession is most often the result of having **no other option**.

We're **CAUGHT**, and we need a way out.

BUT WE'RE NOT READY to accept **full responsibility**.

This is because we are focused on the HUMAN consequences, and not on GOD.

When David finally confessed his sin, he did so by saying, *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...* Psalm 51:4

This moment is the moment that we **"Come to our senses."** Gordon MacDonald calls this *"the moment of PERSONAL INSIGHT, the instant of ruthless truth. It's a startling moment. When it's experienced, one will never forget it, especially if one has been avoiding the truth for a while and has gotten out of the habit of facing personal facts. It's an event that almost everyone who has had a broken-world experience would wish had come much earlier so as to avoid the choices that led to terrible consequences."* (Gordon MacDonald, "Rebuilding Your Broken World, 56)

Note the following biblical examples:

Luke 15:17 *"When he **came to his senses**, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!"*

2 Timothy 2:25–26 *Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will **come to their senses** and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

Jeremiah 31:19 *After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.'*

REPENTANCE "in its fullest sense it is a term for a **complete change of orientation** and a **deliberate redirection.**" Myers, A. C. (1987). *The Eerdmans Bible dictionary*

(880). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

Let's take a look at a passage that gives us a clear example of proper confession, and also improper confession. That passage is **2 Corinthians 7:8-11**

- The "letter" referred to was either 1 Corinthians, or a "lost" letter written after 1 Corinthians
- Paul describes **WORLDLY SORROW**. We see this exemplified in:
 - ★ **SAUL**. 1 Sam 15:12-31
 - ★ **JUDAS**. "This was not a worldly sorrow which brings death (like Judas' "sorrow" after he betrayed the Lord; Matt. 27:3-5). (Bible Knowledge Commentary)
- The opposite of worldly sorrow is **GODLY SORROW**
 - ★ 2 Cor 7:9. "Godly sorrow leads to repentance"
 - ★ 2 Cor 7:10 "Brings salvation"
 - James 5:19-20 *My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*
 - ★ "Godly sorrow means feeling bad because you have offended God. It means sincerely regretting the fact that what you did was morally wrong, regardless of whether or not you must suffer unpleasant consequences. It involves a change of heart - which is possible only when you understand that sin is a personal offense against God himself." (Sande, 118-119)
 - ★ 2 Corinthians 7:11 See what this godly sorrow has produced in you:
 - what earnestness,
 - what eagerness to clear yourselves,
 - what indignation,
 - what alarm,
 - what longing,
 - what concern,
 - what readiness to see justice done.
 - At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.
- ★ They were **MOVED** to respond in a godly manner.

To help us evaluate whether our personal confession is genuine, or self serving, Ken Sande has given us some helpful checks to apply to our lives. He calls these "The Seven A's of Confession" (Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*, (126-133)

1. **Address Everyone involved**

- a. Sins in your HEART are confessed to the LORD
- b. Sins against OTHERS are confessed to ALL those offended
- c. PUBLICLY KNOWN SINS are confessed to the church
 - i. 1 Corinthians 5:1–2 *It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. 2 And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?*
 - ii. 1 Timothy 5:20 *Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.*
 - iii. Galatians 2:14 *When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"*

2. **Avoid if, but and maybe**

- a. "If I hurt you, I'm sorry..."
- b. "Jason, I know that I said you are a TOTAL LOSER, BUT you made fun of fruit trees..."

From "**My Bad - 25 years of Public Apologies**" (Paul Slansky & Aileen Sorokin) **Daryl Gates**, *"If anyone has been offended, I'm sorry for that"* (101)

Chicago White Sox announcer, **Jimmy Piers** all, *"It was never my intention to hurt anyone. If my remarks offended anyone, I am sorry."*

Former Heavyweight champion **Larry Holmes**, *"I want to offer my apologies to Rocky Marchiano's family for remarks I made - If I hurt them, I regret it."*

3. **Admit specifically**

4. **Acknowledge the hurt**

- a. Confession is MORE than "I'm sorry," but confession INCLUDES a recognition that our actions brought pain to someone else.
- b. Recognize that hurt.

5. **Accept the consequences**

- a. Because of JUSTICE. We must pay back what we have taken.
- b. Because of LEARNING. So we will learn not to do it again.
- c. Because of EXAMPLE. So that others will learn.

6. **Alter your behavior.** *"Godly sorrow bring repentance that leads to salvation..."*
2 Cor 7:10

7. **Ask for forgiveness (and allow time)**

- a. 1 Kings 8:46 “When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin...
- b. 1 John 1:8 “*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* “

CONFESSION brings HEALING

Confession cannot UNDUE the PAST,
but it can RESHAPE your FUTURE

One person who had suffered a **very public and disgraceful downfall**, remarked, “*If there had been no confession, there would have been no chance for the people of God to respond to me. They would simply have had to wait in silence, wondering. But as soon as I spoke--hard as it was to do--it released them to reach out in love and forgiveness. The healing process could begin.*” -- Dean Merrill, THE GOD WHO WON'T LET GO (Zondervan, 1998), pp. 90-91