



Transformation – A Lenten Journey

Spiritual Practices have been a large part of the Christian faith. These spiritual practices open us up for the Holy Spirit to *TRANSFORM* our lives. Anything in life calls for some sort of discipline whether in a sport, a job, a relationship, and especially our faith journey. As people of faith, we are called to run the race with endurance. Hebrews 12:1-3 says, “So then, with endurance, let’s also run the race that is laid out in front of us, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us. Let’s throw off any extra baggage, get rid of the sin that trips us up, and fix our eyes on Jesus, faith’s pioneer and perfecter. He endured the cross, ignoring the shame, for the sake of the joy that was laid out in front of him, and sat down at the right side of God’s throne. Think about the one who endured such opposition from sinners so that you won’t be discouraged, and you won’t give up.”

During this Lenten season, would you consider the call of Christ to deepen your faith through these spiritual practices? Some of these practices might be new to you and some might be challenging.

CONFESSION --- March 5th – March 8th

“A man who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person. As long as I am by myself in the confession of my sins, everything remains in the clear, but in the presence of a brother, the sin has to be brought into the light.” *Dietrich Bonhoeffer - “Life Together”*

March 5th

1 John 1:8-10 “If we claim, “We don’t have any sin,” we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we’ve done wrong. If we claim, “We have never sinned,” we make him a liar and his word is not in us.”

In Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve disobeyed the Creator, it can be said that was the moment that all humanity lost peace with God. This brought that separation between us and God, us and others, and even us and creation. How do we find that peace again? It is recognizing that we all sin and confessing that we all struggle with that separation but in Christ we can have this peace restored and that peace can give us comfort knowing that we are loved beyond all measure.

Prayer Focus: Confession on things that separate us from God and others.

March 6th

Matthew 6:9-13 “Pray like this: Our Father who is in heaven, uphold the holiness of your name. Bring in your kingdom so that your will is done on earth as it’s done in heaven. Give us the bread we need for today. Forgive

us for the ways we have wronged you, just as we also forgive those who have wronged us. And don't lead us into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one."

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us" (Matthew 6:12). If the prayer that Jesus taught us includes a plea of confession, then clearly believers need to ask for forgiveness regularly. And since the confession of sin in the Lord's Prayer involves our relationships with others, it makes sense to pray this together, as a community of believers who receive and extend forgiveness. Confession does convey the depressing reality of sin's impact on our lives. In Psalm 51, David is overwhelmed with guilt as he is made aware of his sin. His anguish moves him to repentance. Jesus, who taught us to pray, "Forgive us our sins," is the one by whom those sins are forgiven.

Prayer Focus: Pray that we not only ask for forgiveness for ourselves but that we also forgive others.

March 7th

James 5:13-18 'If any of you are suffering, they should pray. If any of you are happy, they should sing. If any of you are sick, they should call for the elders of the church, and the elders should pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. Prayer that comes from faith will heal the sick, for the Lord will restore them to health. And if they have sinned, they will be forgiven. For this reason, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous person is powerful in what it can achieve. Elijah was a person just like us. When he earnestly prayed that it wouldn't rain, no rain fell for three and a half years. He prayed again, God sent rain, and the earth produced its fruit.'

We often sin against one another even in the church, we're also in the best of places to deal with it. We do so by acknowledging it, confessing it, and forgiving it, and that can even lead to forgetting it. Churches are made up of forgiven sinners who also become forgivers! God can use forgiven and forgiving followers of Jesus Christ in amazing ways to attract -others into fellowship with him and with each other. People have even been known to say, "There's forgiveness and acceptance with those folks."

Confessing and forgiving are also the hallmarks of a healthy relationships and family. Just as God loves and forgives us, he calls us to love and forgive the people around us. When we have sinned against one another, we must confess. And then, though it can be difficult, we must also forgive, for we are called to love one another.

Prayer Focus: Pray that we are open vessels of forgiveness for others.

March 8th

Psalm 32:1-5 "The one whose wrongdoing is forgiven, whose sin is covered over, is truly happy! The one the LORD doesn't consider guilty—in whose spirit there is no dishonesty—that one is truly happy! When I kept quiet, my bones wore out; I was groaning all day long—every day, every night!—because your hand was heavy upon me. My energy was sapped as if in a summer drought. Selah So I admitted my sin to you; I didn't conceal my guilt. "I'll confess my sins to the LORD, " is what I said. Then you removed the guilt of my sin. Selah"

The psalmist confessed his sin, he could not go on. But finally, he said to God, "I admitted my sin to you; I didn't conceal my guilt... And then you removed the guilt of my sin." Unconfessed sin brings guilt. And guilt robs us of our peace and takes away our joy. It affects our health and our well-being. Confession brings forgiveness—for each one of us. Whatever your sin may be, confess it to the Lord, and receive his forgiveness because of the Lord Jesus. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins."

Prayer Focus: Confess any sins that you may be struggling with, and that God would forgive those sins.