



Rapha's Step Studies for Overcoming Sexual Addiction

STEP 5

**We admit to God, to ourselves,
and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**

*Therefore, confess your sins to one another,
and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.
James 5:16a*

"The Serenity Prayer" is one that is popular among those recovering from sexual addiction, and in it we find some good advice:

God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference.

There are many things about our lives that we cannot change. We cannot change our past, nor can we change the fact that we have learned to use our sexual behavior to cope with life. Happily, serenity doesn't begin with change. It begins with acceptance.

Step 5 is one through which we can discover the joy, peace, and relief that comes with acceptance. In it, we find the principle that as we are reconciled to God, we are reconciled to our fellow man.

CONFESSION

Many of us are understandably a little squeamish about confessing our sins (and our attributes) to another human being. We reason, *Isn't it enough that I tell God?* We don't believe so. There are many things that we think and do before God (in private) that we would never dream of saying or doing before others (in public). There is something about our human nature which prevents us from taking action until we have confessed our struggles to another person.



By revealing ourselves to another human being, we may feel like we have everything to lose and nothing to gain. What will we lose?

- *We will lose our sense of isolation and shame.* By confiding in another person, we are brought to a true kinship with God and man for perhaps the first time. Because the fifth step is intended to be a dialogue, and not a monologue, we will discover that we are not alone in our sinful deeds and desires. Our sense of aloneness will then begin to dissipate.
- *We will lose our unwillingness to forgive.* When we are accepted and forgiven, we realize that we can forgive others.
- *We will lose our inflated pride.* As we see, and perhaps for the first time truly accept who we are, we will begin to gain humility, an all-important aspect of our recovery. Humility is a clear recognition of what and who we really are, followed by a greater understanding of who God is and how He relates to us.
- *We will lose our sense of denial.* Complete honesty with another person tears away any denial we still may be holding onto, and confirms that we have been honest with God and with ourselves.

As Christians, it is important to understand that our confession does not make us forgiven. We are forgiven because Christ died to pay for our sins. Confession is a means for us to *experience* our forgiveness, not obtain it.

Confession should be done with an attitude of *repentance*. Repentance is not a matter of feeling sorry for ourselves because we've been caught. It is turning away from sin and turning instead to God.

The Lord Jesus realized that once He left the world, His followers would need help. The Holy Spirit, our helper and teacher, was sent to dwell within believers and to be our source of wisdom and strength. The Holy Spirit helps us to live in a way that honors Christ by convicting us of our ungodliness. Conviction allows us to deal with sin in our lives so that we can continue to experience God's love, power, and wisdom.

You may be preparing to confess your sins to God for the first time ever. If you need some help, you might use the following as a guide:

Dear Father,

The Holy Spirit has shown me that I sinned when I (name sins of thoughts and actions as specifically as possible). Thank You that I am completely forgiven, and that You choose not to remember my sins. I realize that You have declared me to be deeply loved, completely forgiven, fully pleasing, totally accepted, and a new creature—complete in Christ. Amen.



There are some additional insights on confession which we will benefit from as we move forward in our walk with God:

■ **All sin is against God.**

In Psalms 51:4, we find another account of David as he confessed his sin of adultery and murder before God:

Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight, so that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak, and blameless when Thou dost judge.

Although others had been affected by his sin, David recognized that its commission was primarily against God. In confronting David, Nathan the prophet asked, "Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight?" (2 Samuel 12:9). Notice that the focus is on God, not David or others.

From this, we realize that when we have the truth of God's Word to guide us, and still choose to sin, God says we are despising Him. Perhaps if before choosing to sin, we would say to God, "I despise You and Your Word," we would be more aware of how sin grieves our heavenly Father.

■ **Confession recognizes the full scope of sin.**

Correct confession requires us to recognize that not only is a specific act sinful, but that the ungodly thoughts and false beliefs which generated our ungodliness are sinful as well. The excuses we might use to justify our sins are part of the ungodly thoughts that cause us to act in an ungodly manner. When dealing with sin, we must deal with the root of our actions.

■ **Confession involves accepting your forgiveness in Christ.**

All too often, Christians construct a penance cycle that they believe they must put themselves through before they can feel forgiven. Once convicted of a sin, they might plead with God for forgiveness, and then feel depressed for a couple of days just to show that they are really sorry and deserve to be forgiven.

The truth is that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and has declared us justified by that deed. God not only forgives, He also forgets. Hebrews 10:17 says, "...their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." We cannot earn forgiveness by punishing ourselves. Confession is simply an application of the forgiveness we already have in Christ. Accepting our forgiveness allows us to move on in our fellowship with the Lord and serve Him joyfully.

■ **True confession involves repentance.**

Repentance means turning away from sin and turning instead to God. When we truly repent, we have a change of attitude about sin. In fact, because repentance involves recognizing the gravity of our sin, it should grieve us as much as it does God.



■ True confession may involve restitution.

In confession, it may be necessary to right a wrong. You may need to go to a specific person you have wronged and ask for his or her forgiveness, where this would not create further hurt nor lead to temptation. Step 5 is preparation for our restitution in Steps 8 and 9.

Finally, as we come before God to confess our sins, it should be with the knowledge (or reminder) that our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, was tempted in all areas of life, just as we are. There is no temptation experienced by man that Jesus hasn't also experienced. The writer of Hebrews tells us:

Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:17–18).

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:15–16).

- What confidence do these passages give *you* as you prepare to draw near to His throne?

CHOOSING A GOOD LISTENER

With a better understanding of what it means to confess our wrongs to God, we are ready to analyze the best way to complete a successful fifth step. We begin by determining who will be the best person for us to talk with. Choosing a good listener; choosing the right listener is imperative for a good fifth step. In fact, this choice should be made only after prayerful consideration.

The following may be of help to you in your selection process. We urge you to pray for this person with these guidelines in mind:



- *Choose someone who has spent several years in recovery, or who is very familiar with both the fifth step and the issues of sexual addiction.* Step 5 is a life-or-death errand; it can mean the difference between recovery and returning to addiction. A person who is familiar with this step, with recovery, or with dependency issues will understand its importance for you and your recovery.
- *Choose someone who can keep a confidence.* The information you are preparing to disclose is very personal. The person you select to talk with should be completely trustworthy in this respect.
- *Choose an objective listener.* This is not yet the time (it may never be) to talk openly with those who are emotionally involved with us, and who may find what we have to say more than they can bear. Be considerate in this respect. Sharing is a responsibility. The person you choose should be a Christian and of the same sex.
- *Choose someone who may be willing to share personal examples from his or her life with you.* The person you talk with should be a good listener, but it is often through an exchange that you will find the acceptance you especially need right now.
 - List some people who might be good listeners for you:
 - How will you choose the person best for you to talk with?
 - How will you choose the person best for you to talk with?

TELLING YOUR STORY

Once we have found a good listener, we are ready to get on with the telling. We have found that this works best as a story, the story of our lives. Refer back continually to your fourth step to interject all the significant things you have done—positive and negative—over the years.

When you do finally sit down with the person you've chosen—your sponsor, pastor, counselor, physician, or trusted friend—you may want to read from your notes, or refer back to them as an outline. This is up to you. The point is to get it ALL out; everything that is significant about your life that has never been said.



We leave you to write your story with some final words of caution: It has been our experience that some people who took the fifth step were disappointed because they experienced no immediate feelings of gratification afterward. A successful fifth step is not determined by feelings, but by disclosing the significant events in your life which need to be shared with another human being. We urge you to think on this before you take this step so that you can be realistic in your expectations. In addition, you might experience some feelings of shame after you share your story. If you do, talk with the person you shared with. If you have chosen your listener wisely, he can help you to overcome this shame through his acceptance and love.

Finally, it should be remembered that this step is for you. Regardless of whom we choose to share ourselves with, it is imperative to realize that our purpose in taking this step is NOT to please the listener, but to gain healing for ourselves.

'This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you; God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.' 1 John 1:5-7

When you conceal your sin, even if it is because of shame and embarrassment, you are walking in darkness. When you openly admit your faults, you are walking in the light and having real fellowship with God.

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