

Ash Wednesday ~ Wednesday, March 1, 2017  
“Unclogging our Spiritual Pipes: The 5 Steps of Repentance”  
Hebrews 12:1-13

We can get clogged up by the things of life—things that can \_\_\_\_\_ our relationship with God and each other; things that can stop the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit, and keep us from being everything that God created us to be. When this happens, we too need a little spiritual unclogging—we need to clear out our \_\_\_\_\_ pipes—so that God’s Spirit can freely flow in and through us.

Lent calls us to see ourselves for who we \_\_\_\_\_ are; to reflect on our \_\_\_\_\_, actions, and \_\_\_\_\_—and to return to God through \_\_\_\_\_ and prayer.

“Let us throw off everything that hinders [in other words holds us back, prevents our progress] and the sin that so easily entangles us. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

It’s easy to get stuck in our \_\_\_\_\_, overwhelmed by our \_\_\_\_\_, paralysed by \_\_\_\_\_; or beaten down by \_\_\_\_\_ that we just stay where we are, and never complete the race that’s God has given us. Living this way destroys our \_\_\_\_\_, defeats our \_\_\_\_\_, damages our relationships, and drowns our \_\_\_\_\_.

God has provided a way through the roadblocks, detours, and traffic jams of life: \_\_\_\_\_—actively turning from sin and coming to God in an attitude of \_\_\_\_\_ and regret for the things we’ve done and left undone—the things which separate us from Him and other people—is the only way we can run the race that God’s set before us, free from those things that hinder and entangle us.

“You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins. Confess them and give them up and then God will show you mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

### 5 STEPS IN THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE

**Step #1:** \_\_\_\_\_.

Together with \_\_\_\_\_, we need to take a spiritual assessment and \_\_\_\_\_ list all those things that have come \_\_\_\_\_ you and God—the things that make you feel \_\_\_\_\_—consciously or unconsciously—the regrets, \_\_\_\_\_, and failures, the sources of \_\_\_\_\_—things done and left undone.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you. And lead me along the path of everlasting life.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

### 4 FEW THINGS ABOUT THIS REVIEW PROCESS

- It’s not for the \_\_\_\_\_ of heart. Sometimes it’s easier to \_\_\_\_\_ the truth—to forget it or \_\_\_\_\_ it away, than face it head on. No one likes to be reminded of their \_\_\_\_\_; no one likes to look into their own dark places. However, it’s only in \_\_\_\_\_ these things and dealing with them, that we can be \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ it down. It makes it more \_\_\_\_\_ and more \_\_\_\_\_—it allows you to go back and \_\_\_\_\_ on what you’ve written and provides a plan for moving \_\_\_\_\_. Writing it down also helps to provide a more \_\_\_\_\_ picture—it’s hard to make excuses or rationalize when you can see it on paper.
- It’s a \_\_\_\_\_. This isn’t something that’s done in a hour. We need to engage in this process of reflection \_\_\_\_\_.
- It can be \_\_\_\_\_. Stuff builds up over time and it takes time to deal with it. However, once it’s done, the discipline of doing a daily assessment will go much \_\_\_\_\_.

The great thing about this process is it’s between you and \_\_\_\_\_—no one else needs to see what you’ve written—and since God already knows the things that are on your list and still \_\_\_\_\_ you—you’ve got nothing to \_\_\_\_\_!

“Let us test and examine our ways.” (Lamentations 3:40)

**Is this a step you’re prepared to take—are you willing to risk being vulnerable enough to enter into this kind of a process?**

**Step #2:** \_\_\_\_\_.

Once we’ve made our list, we need to \_\_\_\_\_ of the things on that list.

“Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.” (Acts 3:19)

Repentance is more than just saying “I’m \_\_\_\_\_.” It involves 3 things.

- Taking \_\_\_\_\_ our sins—not \_\_\_\_\_, ignoring them, or \_\_\_\_\_ someone else.

- Intentionally \_\_\_\_\_ away from those things. How many times have you said sorry for doing something, yet kept on doing it?
- Turning towards \_\_\_\_\_ and His \_\_\_\_\_. Repentance is saying; “God I don’t want to do this any more. I take responsibility; I turn away and I turn to you.”

We won’t get very far in this process if we aren’t \_\_\_\_\_ with ourselves.

Often the biggest hindrance to \_\_\_\_\_ life’s hurts and moving forward is us—our inability to, and fear of, facing the \_\_\_\_\_ about ourselves.

“If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (1John 1:8)

In order to get rid of all the \_\_\_\_\_ habits in our lives, we need to stop \_\_\_\_\_ ourselves—we need to stop rationalizing, making \_\_\_\_\_.

“Let us turn again in repentance to the Lord. Let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven and say, ‘We have sinned and rebelled.’” (Lamentations 3:40-42)

**What are you pretending not to know?  
What are you pretending not to feel guilty about?**

**Step #3:** \_\_\_\_\_.  
It is sometimes necessary to \_\_\_\_\_ what we’ve done—to make it \_\_\_\_\_.

“What can I do for you? How can I make amends so that you will bless the Lord’s people again?” (2 Samuel 21:3)

Restitution not only releases us from the \_\_\_\_\_, but opens up the way for \_\_\_\_\_.

**Is there anyone that you need to make restitution with?  
What do you need to make right?**

**Step #4:** \_\_\_\_\_.  
**THREE THINGS ABOUT GOD’S FORGIVENESS**

- It is \_\_\_\_\_.
- “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will cleanse us from all

unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8)

- It is \_\_\_\_\_. We don’t have to be afraid, \_\_\_\_\_, or hesitant about coming to God for forgiveness.  
“Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God and there we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it.” (Hebrews 4:16)

When we come to God with our sin we don’t find anger, punishment, or rejection—but \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Mercy is forgiveness for the things we’ve done in the \_\_\_\_\_ and grace is the power to \_\_\_\_\_ in the future.

- It is \_\_\_\_\_. When God forgives us of something He wipes it away and it is gone \_\_\_\_\_.  
“I’ll wipe the slate clean for each of them. I’ll forget they ever sinned!” (Jer 31:34)

“He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.” (Ps 103:12)

“No matter how deep the stain of your sin I can take it out. I can make you clean as freshly fallen snow.” (Isaiah 1:18)

**Do you need to know God’s forgiveness?**

**Step #5:** \_\_\_\_\_.  
Through Christ, God has set it up so that we don’t have to carry the garbage of \_\_\_\_\_ into \_\_\_\_\_.

Everyday is a new opportunity to experience God’s \_\_\_\_\_ and forgiveness.

“But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:21-23)

**Where are you in this process of repentance?**



**Maybe it’s time for you to do a little spiritual house cleaning  
and take the garbage out!**

**I encourage you to take the next 40 days—this Lenten Season—to do just that!**



“Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.” (Hebrews 12:13)