

Family Confession and Forgiveness

By Ted Kober

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“I didn’t do it!”

David insisted when I confronted him with evidence of his wrong. My son was a junior in high school. I wasn’t in the mood for his denial.¹

My response? Anger. I raised my voice accusing him again. He adamantly claimed innocence. We both lost control. We launched into a yelling match. My wife was in tears. David and I had never fought like this before.



Finally, exhausted from battle, we both sat down in silence. I thought to myself, *Now, how should you have handled this as a Christian father?* My answer? *He deserved it! He’s broken the commandment to honor his father and mother. He knew this was wrong.*

What do you call that kind of thinking? Rationalization. Self-justification. Self-righteousness. *But wasn’t my thinking true? David broke God’s commandments, disobeying his parents. I’m his father. I have a responsibility to raise him as a child of God.*

And there’s the rub—child of God. How does a godly father raise a such a child? Certainly not with yelling, screaming accusations, and calling him names. Rather with love, kindness, and gentleness, even when disciplining (Galatians 6:1).

I reflected back to my confirmation instruction. Pastor said when we became parents, we needed to absolve our children. I knew what absolution was, but no one showed me how to do it *in my family*. I told my son perhaps we could handle this in a different way. We could use the form from the hymnal for private confession and forgiveness. I would change the words since I wasn’t a pastor, but that form would guide us.

As my son got to the place where it says, “what troubles me particularly,” he admitted his sin. By faith he knew what to do. No longer arguing with his dad, he was confessing to God. When he was done confessing, by faith I knew what to do. I proclaimed God’s forgiveness to him. Then I forgave him personally. Praying together Psalm 51, we cried in a family hug. We delayed talking

¹ I have my family’s permission to share this story with my commitment not to share the details of my son’s sin.



about consequences until the next morning when we were rested.

A year later, another incident occurred with my son. (Amazing how these things occur when you have teenagers!) I confronted David with the evidence. Once again, he denied it. But this time I kept my big mouth shut. Finally, he said, “Yeah. I did it. But you don’t have to tell Mom, do you?”

“No, David, that’s your privilege. Your mother and I will wait downstairs until you’re ready to talk.”

After several minutes, he came to admit his wrong. I said, “David, you’re becoming an adult, and soon you will be leaving our home. How do you want to handle this?”

“Dad, can we go through that form for confession and forgiveness?”

Tears filled my eyes as I realized how much my son yearned to hear that comfort, “You are forgiven!”

Some weeks later, my wife was cleaning house and ran across one of our son’s school papers. Entitled, “Someone I Appreciate,” David wrote about his parents. “I appreciate my Mom and Dad because I know no matter what I say or do, they will always love me and forgive me.”

The most valuable gift you can give anyone, especially those in your family, is forgiveness. First, we have the privilege of proclaiming God’s forgiveness based on Scriptures’ promises: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

Then, as God has forgiven us, we can forgive. “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

After that first incident above, I developed a form for use in the family. You’ll find it the book *Confession and Forgiveness: Professing Faith as Ambassadors of Reconciliation*. You can also acquire a version called *Proclaiming God’s Forgiveness* (see below for link).

Learn more from the book *Confession and Forgiveness*, with answers to such questions as these:

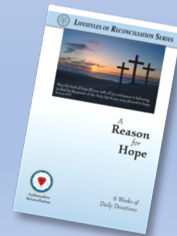
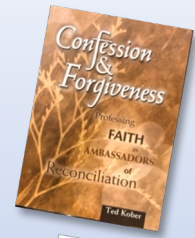
- What about consequences?
- When should I forgive?
- What is the difference between proclaiming God’s forgiveness and granting personal forgiveness?

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For more information...

Ambassadors of Reconciliation provides a wide array of resources on forgiveness.

- *Confession & Forgiveness: Professing Faith as Ambassadors of Reconciliation* by Ted Kober (Concordia Publishing House, 2002). Explore how Christians can serve as ambassadors of reconciliation through daily confession and forgiveness. Learn from the Scriptures and contemporary stories how to recover and employ this blessing in your own life.
<https://www.aorhope.org/product-page/confession-forgiveness>
- *Proclaiming God's Forgiveness*. This pamphlet features guidelines for confession and forgiveness within the family and with other Christians. Download a copy for FREE at <https://www.aorhope.org/product-page/proclaiming-god-s-forgiveness-form>
- *Forgiveness* Reproducible Bible Study. Forgiving as the Lord forgives us is so misunderstood in our society today, even among Christians. Review what Scripture teaches regarding biblical forgiveness.
<https://www.aorhope.org/product-page/forgiveness-reproducible-bible-study>
- Two Devotion booklets: *Forgiven to Forgive* and *A Reason for Hope*. Each features six weeks of daily devotions on forgiveness and reconciliation.
<https://www.aorhope.org/devotions>
- Find more resources at www.aorhope.org or call Ambassadors of Reconciliation at 406-698-6107.



Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit. (Psalm 32:1-2)

