

VOWS

IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH TIL DEATH DO US PART

3.9.2014 - GROUP DISCUSSION

MESSAGE BY JB POWELL

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

Do you have a visible scar? If so tell the story of how you got the scar?

SHARE

Welcome to part three of our series entitled, "Vows." We have all heard vows before; in fact most of us have made vows to ourselves and to others. We have vowed to lose weight, get in shape, make things right, fix that relationship, break that addiction, come through for someone. We have all sat at weddings where we have heard vows such as "...I take thee, for better or for worse, richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health till death do us part," and we wait for the crescendo by the pastor when he states, "you may kiss the bride."

Throughout this series we will study, talk and share about commitments. Among the debris of broken promises and pain, there stands one who will never walk out, give up or break his vow to us. It is God himself. The Lord will not break his vow to uphold us, love us and will never abandon us. Our entire Christian faith is based on God's promise to His people; it is the most perfect love story.

Read 1 John 1:5-10

Are you a private person? Do you have difficulty sharing about yourself with others? Why? (There may be reasons. Perhaps you have been betrayed in the past, or have never felt like anyone cared about your struggles.)

What does it mean to "walk in darkness?"

Why is it important to acknowledge and confess our sins? (Look at verses 8 & 9)

GROW

Whether you are married or not, we can all agree that we have sinned (if we are honest). The Bible says, "**For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.**" **Romans 3:23** When we acknowledge that we fall short of God's "glorious standard", then there is a great need for something to help us get "right" with God. As believers in Christ, we know that He came to make a way for us to be cleansed of our sins, so that we are able to have relationship

with God again. God does not want us to live our lives in shame. Instead, He wants us to know that we are clean with Him. He makes us new! When we are free in Him, we are able to relate to our spouse and other people in better ways.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

When we accept Christ, we literally take on a new identity. We are no longer seen as the sinner that we once were. The trouble is, we often do not believe that the inner transformation is true. We continue to struggle with sin because we do not believe that we are truly changed in Christ. We prevent ourselves from growing in Christ or gaining freedom in our struggles because we refuse to acknowledge sin and confess it. But, when we humble ourselves and confess, we begin to feel freedom. That act of humility opens the door for us to remember who God says we are. We are IN Christ, and because you are in Christ, every one of these statements is true of you.

- I am loved 1John 3:3
- I am accepted Ephesians 1:6
- I am a child of God John 1:12
- I am Jesus' friend John 15:14
- I am a Saint Ephesians 1:1
- I am redeemed and forgiven Colossians 1:14
- I am complete in Jesus Christ Colossians 2:10
- I am free from condemnation Romans 8:1
- I am a new creation because I am in Christ 2Corinthians 5:17
- I am chosen of God, holy and dearly loved Colossians 3:12

Knowing who we are in Christ is a very key part of us being able to relate to others in a healthy way. We know that we are safe to confess, because we have ALREADY been forgiven. As JB said, bringing our sins into the light can be a catalyst for real change in our lives. Admittedly, confessing sin is scary, but it brings freedom!

These questions do not need to be answered out loud, but you can if you are comfortable.

What are you ashamed of?

Is there a sin in your life that you know is affecting your relationships?

Do you feel like God and people could not forgive you if you told the truth?

Is there someone that you CAN confess to who will be loving and godly?

MOVE

Marriages and other relationships are best when there is freedom to be honest and real. God understands our brokenness and empathizes with our weaknesses. God understands our situation and knows exactly where we are in our walk with him. God always wants to help us grow closer to Him and to other people. Often, we run from God and people because we are afraid of consequences, or we don't want to face our guilt.

There is a BIG difference between Condemnation and Conviction.

The Enemy and the world bring Condemnation. Condemnation says "you are scum and will never change.", "There is no forgiveness for someone like you.", "Look what you have done. You better not tell, or no one will ever trust you again."

Condemnation leads to:

1. Continual guilt
2. Trying to make things right in our own strength
3. Self-Loathing
4. Always looking over our shoulder and possibly sinning more to cover up the original sin.

Condemnation says, "you are wrong and you can never get past this."

God brings Conviction. He shows us our sin and then offers us a way to be free.

1. Confess our sin.
2. He forgives us.
3. Surrounds us with other believers who can help encourage us to be strong in the Lord.
4. We accept our identity in Christ and begin to live according to the Scripture.

Conviction says, “you are wrong and Jesus died to make you right. All you have to do is accept Him. ”

Romans 8:1

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

As much as we have the choice to confess our sins, we also need to position our hearts to be forgiving to those who may confess to us.

Do you struggle to believe that you can be forgiven?

Do you feel like you are a forgiving person?

(NOTE: It is important to confess to other believers who will have grace and love as we confront sin. In cases where a sin needs to be confessed to a non-believer in order to restore the relationship, feel free to seek counsel about how to approach that in a safe manner. We are not encouraging people to walk into danger, but we do encourage people to live courageously and pursue a life free of guilt. If help is needed to discern what that looks like, please contact a pastor or a Christian Counselor.)

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women’s groups to talk more freely.

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

TO GO

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Another great resource to read about our true identity is “Who I am in Christ” by Neil T. Anderson. To see a list of Biblical statements on our identity in Christ, check this out!: http://vintagelawrence.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/ANDERSON_WhoIAmInChrist.pdf

Special Note about this LG Weekly:

It is important to note that this LG Weekly study can bring up some difficult topics and memories. Remember, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For many of us who have experienced the pain of broken relationships or marriages, remember that you are forgiven, loved and belong. All of us have fallen short, so you are among a group that is all broken. The important thing is to decide what you think God wants you to do next for you are already loved and accepted by God.

Don’t give up, dig in, ask for prayer and let’s move on together!

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