



Sermon Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever heard or used the term 'stiff-necked' before? Does Karen's explanation of what the term means resonate with you?
2. Does the explanation of confession in the sermon as 'truth-telling' make it feel like an easier thing to do? Why or why not?
3. Karen said that "grace drives the sequence of confession and forgiveness from first to last." Do you see God's grace in confession and forgiveness?
4. Have you had an experience of confession, either individual or corporate, that has been life-giving and freeing?
5. In James 5:16 we heard, '*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*' How does confession allow for healing?

Nehemiah 9: 1-2, 5b-10, 16-21, 28-33

On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads.² Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors.

‘Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise.⁶ You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

⁷ ‘You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham.⁸ You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous.

⁹ ‘You saw the suffering of our ancestors in Egypt; you heard their cry at the Red Sea.¹⁰ You sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day.

¹⁶ ‘But they, our ancestors, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and they did not obey your commands.¹⁷ They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them,¹⁸ even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, “This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt,” or when they committed awful blasphemies.¹⁹ ‘Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the wilderness. By day the pillar of cloud did not fail to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take.²⁰ You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst.²¹ For forty years you sustained them in the wilderness; they lacked nothing, their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen.

²⁸ ‘But as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight. Then you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies so that they ruled over them. And when they cried out to you again, you heard from heaven, and in your compassion you delivered them time after time.

²⁹ ‘You warned them in order to turn them back to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, of which you said, “The person who obeys them will live by them.” Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen.³⁰ For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you warned them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you gave them into the hands of the neighbouring peoples.³¹ But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

³² ‘Now therefore, our God, the great God, mighty and awesome, who keeps his covenant of love, do not let all this hardship seem trifling in your eyes – the hardship that has come on us, on our kings and leaders, on our priests and prophets, on our ancestors and all your people, from the days of the kings of Assyria until today.³³ In all that has happened to us, you have remained righteous; you have acted faithfully, while we acted wickedly.