



# Open and Shut: The Keys



## What's In the Heart?

Every parent has done it. Confronted with yet another misdeed from our young offspring (but their powers are increasing exponentially each day), we lose it when they say, "Sorry," without taking a breath. We are bound and determined not to let an interjected "sorry" be their "Get Out of Jail Free" card. "You're not sorry, buster! You go right into your room right now and don't come out until you are sorry."

What will we do if they pop their head out of the room in 15 seconds?

I wonder if this is where penance came from. Oh, I know it is a discipline imposed by the Catholic Church, but so many of our religious practices also have one foot in human behavior and psychology. I wonder if this was the priest's way of finding out if you were really sorry. "Say five Hail Marys, six Our Fathers." If you did your penance, you were obviously sorry. Unless you popped your head out of the room in 15 seconds. It turns out you could act like you were sorry, but you really weren't sorry, and that would or you could even want to be sorry, but couldn't find the emotions or the time. And if none of that were satisfactory, there was always Purgatory. To a Lutheran, this spells such uncertainty that a person could never be certain they were really forgiven. Lutherans don't like uncertainty.

Can you think of another way to instruct your little one what repentance means?

## Chief of Sinners Rats Himself Out

Read 2 Samuel 12.1-13

Explain Nathan's parable.

Parable	Reality (*every comparison limps!)
Rich man	
Poor Man	
Lamb	*

How does David show the severity of his own sin when he hears Nathan the prophet?

How does David show his hypocrisy?

Does Nathan, fearing for his life, go easy on David by telling this parable?

How do you know David is sorry?

How does David's confession show itself to be true?

Why did the Father take the Prodigal Son back?

Why did Jesus keep Peter as a disciple?

David himself tells us why he confessed his sin. Why?

*Then I acknowledge my sin to you  
and did not cover up my iniquity.  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"—  
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*

Psalm 32.5



## What should I confess?

*Forgive us our sins.*

Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful and that I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity.

*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

Psalm 51.5

*If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*

Matthew 5.23-24

## To Whom Should I Confess? (and why)

1.

2.

3.

4.

## What If They Are Lying to Me?

What is the purpose of confession?

What if that is not the purpose of the one “confessing”?

*If I had cherished sin in my heart,  
the Lord would not have listened.*

Psalm 66.18

Compare this to the situation of the unworthy communicant:

*Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.*

1 Corinthians 11.27, 29

Is my proclamation of “your sins are forgiven” or “I forgive you” or “It’s all right” valid?

What has the “repentant” sinner done with that valid absolution and how does it affect them?

Why is forgiveness the weapon the gates of hell will not stand up to?

