

# Identificational Repentance

## [Standing in the Gap]

Quote from *'Healing America's Wounds'* by John Dawson

*"We are called to live out the Biblical practice of identificational repentance, a neglected truth that opens the floodgates of revival and brings healing to the nations."*

Also in this book John Dawson tells of the time when he had been asked to speak at a large women's convention.

It occurred to him that he should humble himself before these women and ask their forgiveness, as a man, for the multitude of hurts inflicted on women by men. To identify, as a man, with all that other men had done to women.

Incest, rape, rejection, betrayal and a multitude of other wrong actions of men against women.

This is exactly what he did.

He got up and with simple, faltering words, confessed the sins of men against women and asked for their forgiveness.

He was amazed at the results.

Floodgates of emotion opened and the tears began to flow.

After the meeting, women approached John Dawson with comments like:-

*"Something broke in me when you said that."*

*"You'll never know how much I needed to hear that."*

*"Today is the first time I ever heard a man say 'I'm sorry'."*

The example brings us to the third level of repentance.

We have looked at individual and corporate repentance but what is identificational repentance?

## Identificational Repentance

The word *"identification"* means a willingness to join ourselves to a group of people and to be counted as one of them.

So identificational repentance means a willingness to identify ourselves with the sins of a group of people.

Our family, our church, our gender, our racial group, tribe or nation.

**We repent of those sins even though we may not have been personally responsible for them.**

We do this by owning and confessing their sins as ours and repenting on their behalf where they are unready or unable to do so themselves.

**Isn't this exactly what Jesus did for us on the cross?**

**Luke 23:34** [NIV] *“Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.”*

We identify ourselves with other people by saying *“we have sinned”* rather than *“they have sinned”*.

## **Standing in the Gap**

**Ezekiel 22:17** [NIV] *“Then the word of the LORD came to me:”*

God brought to Ezekiel’s attention the moral condition of his nation.

**Ezekiel 22:27-29** [NIV] *“Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain. Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations. They say, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says’, when the LORD has not spoken. The people of the land practise extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and ill-treat the alien, denying them justice.”*

Then God called Ezekiel.

**Ezekiel 22:30-31** [NIV] *“I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so that I would not have to destroy it, but I found none. So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD.”*

To be a saviour of Israel by identifying with their sins and seeking God’s mercy and forgiveness.

**The walls of the spiritual life of our nation are broken down today.**

God is looking for people who will identify with the sins of this nation and intercede for them, repent on their behalf and *“stand in the gap”* so that God can forgive, heal and restore a holy spiritual life to our country.

**Otherwise, there can be no forgiveness, no healing, no reconciliation and God’s judgement will have to fall on our people.**

**2 Corinthians 5:17-19** [NIV] *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. **And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.**”*

This *“standing in the gap”* on behalf of our nation is part of the commission we have received for our Saviour Jesus Christ.

One of the major sins in many nations that has broken down the spiritual defences is idolatry.

**Idolatry leaves people wide open to influence of demonic spirits.**

**Idolatry** is placing anything on a higher position or equal level to our worshipping the Creator God.

**Luke 14:25-27** [Message Bible] *“One day when large groups of people were walking along with Him, Jesus turned and told them, anyone who comes to me but refuses to let go of father, mother, spouse, children, brothers, sisters, yes, even one’s own self! cannot be my disciple. Anyone who won’t shoulder his own cross and follow behind me cannot be my disciple.”*

Some people make an idol of their work, home, car or other physical possessions, but Christ said that even giving first place to our family and loved ones can be idolatry ! !

**Injustice** is another experience that can break down the spiritual defences of a person or a nation.

**Satan finds entrance when people wound each other through selfish, sinful and unjust actions.**

Injustice opens up the door for satanic oppression through unresolved anger, hostility, revenge and unforgiveness.

**People are powerless to deal with this injustice outside of the cleansing, healing grace of God.**

We who know the love and grace of God have to intercede on their behalf.

Only we who have been reconciled to God by Jesus Christ can “*stand in the gap*” on behalf of others who don’t yet know the Good News of what God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

**1 Peter 2:4-5** [NIV] “*As you come to him, the living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*”

We are called priests.

We are called to present the blood of Jesus before the Father for the sins of the people, just as the ancient Old Covenant priesthood presented the blood of bullocks to make an atonement for the nation.

We ask God to cover [atone] their sins until the time they are called to Him and they also can have their sins cleansed by Christ’s blood sacrifice.

We can only do this by identificational repentance and reconciliation.

## **Owning the Sins of the Past**

All the greatest wounds and injustices in human history have **not** happened through acts of some individual person alone.

They have happened through one group of people inflicting wrong on another group of people.

Because of this we, as individuals, are tempted to clear ourselves of personal responsibility.

We say “*what can I do personally against such a powerful group of people?*”

But if we as believers [and priests] do **not** “*stand in the gap*” on behalf of our people to confess the wrongs committed, how will healing and reconciliation come?

**Daniel 9:3-11** [NIV] “*So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: “O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. “Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame, the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. “Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you.”*”

Notice the way Daniel identified with all Israel by constantly using the word “we” in this pleading to God to show mercy on all people.

**Wounding and injustice most commonly take place at the dividing lines of society.**

Nation to nation, race to race, culture to culture, class to class, male to female, religion to religion, church to church, leaders to people, generation to generation and so on.

Where such injustices and wrongs remain unconfessed and unhealed, reconciliation never takes place and the conflict deepens.

## Repairing the Broken Walls

**Isaiah 58:12** [NIV] *“Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.”*

These people were identified in this way because of their deep concern for the oppressed by injustice.

**Isaiah 58:6-7** [NIV] *“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter, when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?”*

Their prayers and fasting was heard by God and He did respond.

**Isaiah 58:9-11** [NIV] *“Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. “If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.”*

**A great blessing to all people who are in need and oppressed.**

Four steps that lead towards healing and restoring broken relationships.

### 1 Confession

Acknowledge honestly the unjust or hurtful actions we have inflicted on other people or groups or people

### 2 Repentance

Express deep sorrow and turn from unloving to loving actions towards the other person or group

### 3 Reconciliation

Seek forgiveness and offer forgiveness and make attempts to develop closer fellowship with those who were against us

### 4 Restoration

Attempt to restore what has been damaged or destroyed and seek justice where injustice has prevailed.

**This level of repentance “*identificational repentance*” is the most difficult to act out.**

**Yet this is what Jesus did for us** and what is desperately needed to bring healing at all levels of society.

We need to ask:

*“Am I willing to be a part of this reconciliation?”*