# Introduction …

In May 2013, Reese Witherspoon was arrested for disorderly conduct shattering her “America’s Sweetheart” image. She later apologized saying *“It’s completely unacceptable. And we are so sorry, embarrassed and we know better. We made a mistake and it’s something that will absolutely never happen again. Just bad judgment, you know?”*

She was going so well!! Just bad judgment? Reese, you swore at a police officer, and threatened to use your influence against him!! That’s not just bad judgment!! We all know bad apologies when we hear them. What about “Look I’m sorry”!! Did you feel that was genuine? I didn’t think so!! Or “I’m sorry, I didn’t know you were that sensitive!!” We feel bad apologies in our hearts!! An apology or confession seeks to restore the relationship. That’s why a fake apology is so hurtful, enflaming the conflict. We must get our apologies right. This is the focus of our REC series tonight. On the card you received you see seven simple statements, beginning with “A”, to help us. Bring it each Friday.

# Making a good confession …

It so good the Bible is real and practical. Conflict, sin and horrible actions abound. It is not a good book in some ways. Yet sometimes we see people do the right thing and confess their horrid heart and actions. Like King David. A lusty, murderous King who Acts 13:22 describes as a man after God’s own heart. How can a murderous lusty king be also after God’s heart? Because he confessed. The “big sin” David is most known for (and there were others) was sleeping with Bathsheba. She is naked bathing on her roof one night, and he wants her. But she’s married to Uriah, one of his loyal generals. But that’s no obstacle to horny David. He calls Bathsheba to his home, they have a night of passion!! And she falls pregnant. Hmmm, he’s got a problem to cover up. So David calls Uriah back from the battlefield so he can sleep with his wife. Out of honour to the King and his troops, Uriah doesn’t, and David, concocts another plan, sending Uriah to lead a suicidal attack to his death. And David then marries Bathsheba, and his sin is covered up.

Not quite. You can’t hide from God. Two years later the prophet Nathan tells David what only David knows: he stole a man’s wife, arranged his death and covered it up. David can’t run: 2 Samuel 12 and Psalm 51 record his confession. Let’s see these seven A’s in it.

## Address: everyone involved …

We find David’s immediate response to Nathan’s rebuke in 2 Samuel 12:13, *“I have sinned against the Lord.”* David immediately identifies who he has sinned against – God. Our first “A”: We must **address everyone involved**, including God. Remember the first G? Go to higher ground - bring God into the conflict!! Our conflict also impacts him. Why? Because those idols in our hearts are at work, replacing Him with other things.

Jesus also encourages us talk with those we are in conflict. Matt 5:23-25, *“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”* In other words, **address everyone involved**. We are not called to lay our dirty washing for all to see, but nor are we to hide it secretively like David tried to do. Things must be “private, not secret”. We must address all involved in our conflict. Identify who has been hurt by your actions, and confess to them, even those indirectly impacted. If I disrespect Robyn before the boys, I should apologize to her AND the boys for showing them how NOT to relate to women.

## Avoid: ifs, buts and maybes …

Secondly, **Avoid if, buts and maybes**. We know how to undermine the honesty of an apology: I am sorry, if I my shouting hurt your feelings! It really says, I am not sure I did anything wrong!! And the “I am sorry, but …” and we launch into an explanation for our actions cancelling out everything we just confessed! After Mel Gibson made anti-Jewish remarks during an arrest in 2006, he apologized, saying, *"I want to apologize specifically to everyone in the Jewish community for the vitriolic and harmful words that I said to a law enforcement officer the night I was arrested on a D.U.I. charge."*

Sounds great … until the last phrase – yep I was wrong, *but remember I was DUI!!* Psalm 32 was another Psalm David wrote out of his experience with Bathsheba. Listen to the openness of verse 5, *“Then I acknowledged 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.”* No covering up, no ifs, buts, maybes. Lord if …. , but … just confession of it all.

## Admit: specifically …

Address … , avoid …, and now **Admit specifically**. We love being vague about apologies, its one way we seek to cover up and yet amazingly specific about others!! We have to turn it around: be amazingly specific about our contribution, and vague on others, letting them identify their contribution to the conflict. The Hunts have to learn this: our apologies can be so vague, “I’m sorry it wasn’t what you wanted”.

David was specific in his admission. In 2 Samuel 12:7-12 Nathan lays out all the detail of David’s sleeping with Bathsheba, arranging for Uriah’s death and his covering up. David says “I have sinned.” Yep, it me. I admit it all. A specific apology promotes restoration. I don’t need to point out the speck in your eye!! You see it. Now we can put things right!

## Acknowledge: the hurt …

Address …, avoid … admit … and the fourth A goes with this admission of all, **Acknowledge the hurt**. My conflicts always hurt someone. A true apology recognizes that hurt. Not saying “I know how you feel”, this minimizes our appreciation of the hurt. Stephen and James hate me saying “I have been a teenage boy once.” “Yeah Dad, but you’re not THIS teenage boy!!” I may have had similar struggles when I was 16, but don’t say it. Just acknowledge you’ve hurt them. Perhaps Ben won’t hear that so much!!

We see this behind David’s comments in Psalm 51:11, *“Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.”* God is hurt by the conflict between them: it would drive God away, breaking God’s heart. Lord I am sorry, I have caused you hurt!! Admitting someone else’s hurt, opens the way for restoration*.*

## Accept: the consequences …

The fifth “A” is: **Accept the consequences.** Admitting specificallyyour contribution to the conflict, and acknowledging the hurt must always be matched by this and the next A. Accepting the consequences shows my apology to be real, not just a “get out of jail free” card: “I’m sorry, let just move on!!” No, sometimes you can’t just move on, consequences come from conflict, and I must accept the ones for me.

We see this again with David. In 2 Samuel 12:14 Nathan sets out God’s response to David’s sin, *“14 But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you will die.”* His son from this illicit union with Bathsheba, would die. The passage goes on to say the boy got sick and David fasted and prayed passionately for God to heal. When the boy died his attendants were scared to tell David for fear he might do something desperate. When David finds out he gets on with life as normal. The attendants asked what are you doing? David replied in verse 22, *“While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, ‘Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.’* *23 But now that he is dead, why should I go on fasting? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.”* David accepted the consequences, didn’t keep arguing, trying to avoid them, he embraced them head on. So should we.

## Alter: your behaviour …

The next A reflects the other side of this truth. Accepting consequences necessarily means I must **alter my behaviour**!! Consequences presume things will change: If my conflict with Robyn is over how much we aren’t engaging deeply with each other and staying watching movies, sport or playing games on my iPad is contributes to this, my apology means nothing to her, unless I change my behaviour … stop staying up watching or playing games Matt!! Now this is not always easy. It’s my log, so I must share with her, my plan, with God’s help, to change. A real apology is like a promise: words are tied to future actions. Doing this means I am not just sorry I got caught!! I am genuinely sorry and am committed to change in the future to see more peace in our relationship.

David reflects this in Psalm 51:13-15, his I will statements of his confession: I will teach transgressors your ways (13), my tongue will sing of your righteousness (14), and, my mouth will declare your praise (15). He will praise God, express his love for Him, instead of running after the next hot naked woman bathing on her roof before him.

## Ask: for forgiveness …

Lets go through these six A’s: **Address** … (everyone) involved. **Avoid** … (ifs, buts and maybes). **Admit** … (specifically). **Acknowledge** … (the hurt). **Accept** … (the consequences). **Alter** … (your behaviour).

And finally: **Ask** … for forgiveness. Jesus way of resolving everyday conflict is to start with changing my behaviour. But we will see He also calls us to speak into other’s lives. Yet once again it doesn’t start with “you know you need to …” It starts with “please forgive me.” Starting with our own contribution to a conflict necessarily leads us to begin our speaking into the other party’s life with asking for forgiveness. It is natural outcome of a real apology: Giving them the opportunity to contribute to restoring our relationship by expressing forgiveness. Many public confessions ignore this. Tiger Woods, after being quiet for months, publicly apologized after he cheated on his wife with more than a dozen women, saying, *“I brought this shame on myself. It’s now up to me to make amends. And that starts by never repeating the mistakes I’ve made.”* Shame on himself? No, he didn’t apologize. No recognition of hurting others, no sorrow for his actions, and no ask for forgiveness!! In stark contrast, David’s begins his confession in Psalm 51 with,

*“1Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions.  
2Wash away all my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”*

Forgive me. I have sinned against you. Hurt you. Done wrong to you. Sorry. Forgive me.

# An example of a real apology …

Many public apologies fall way short of what we have talked about: little contrition, accepting consequences, change behaviour, or asking for forgiveness. On the other hand, Marion Jones won gold for the US at the Sydney Olympics in 2000, but it was later found she did it under the influence of drugs and steroids. When she was found out she publicly apologized. Unlike other public apologies, it is a wonderful example of what we’ve been saying. Watch and tick off the seven A’s as you hear them. I don’t think she was thinking about ticking off boxes, this is a real, heartfelt apology … *Watch Marion Jones apology*

# Conclusion …

The seven A’s are a real helpful list to help us learn to apologize and accept responsibility rightly. But don’t treat it as merely some list to tick! Page 25 gives us three things to consider in putting this into practice. First, allow time for people in this: you may ask for forgiveness, but someone might not be ready. Allow them to work it through. After all you have taken time to prepare your confession: they need time to process it.

Secondly, be very careful not to use your confession to point out the failures of others. Now is not the time to point out their contribution. That’s their journey to walk, you should not help start it!! Remain focused on your heart and contribution to the conflict

And thirdly, are you really sorry? Check your heart. These seven A’s are merely a helpful way to express our sorrow. Like David ask God to change your heart to be genuinely sorry for the hurt you’ve caused and you offence to God and the other person.

And finally, to go back to the first G: get back to God. Like David, don’t merely deal with it horizontally, but vertically too. Our failures toward each other are also an offence to Him. We need to own that, be willing to change, and cry out for forgiveness like David in Psalm 51. The wonder of the gospel is God forgives!! The glory of God is the Lord Jesus lived, died and rose again bring forgiveness for sin and give us life, joy and delight forever!!

I want to finish reflecting on a song. Watch and listen before I lead us in a time of praying.

*… play Lord have mercy …*

David wrote in Psalm 51:11-12

*“10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.  
12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.”*

Because of the gospel, this can be true for you. If you genuinely and truthfully from your heart, come in contrition toward to Him. So let’s spend time confessing our sin embracing Him.