



# Humanitarian DISASTER INSTITUTE

## CONFESSIONS TIP SHEET

<p><b>Topic:</b></p>	<p><b>Confession: The Posture for Engaging in Justice Work</b></p>
<p><b>Aim:</b></p>	<p>To enter justice work with a posture of humility, recognizing that we come to it with hidden motivations, shortcomings, and privileges, as well as a longing for a better future.</p>
<p><b>General Information:</b></p>	<p>The work of justice is interwoven with the need for healing—in ourselves, others, and the world. We need to be transformed ourselves as we step into this work. We practice confession both with others and on our own (James 5:16). This leads us into the gradual process of healing and seeing how to better love each other. These are confessions of vulnerabilities, not necessarily sins.</p>
<p><b>Confess our Mixed Motives</b></p>	<p>We can find freedom in honestly confessing that our own need for healing is part of why we work for the healing of justice. We often approach this work with mixed motives. Here are some of the potential motives that we may carry with us that are helpful to confess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire for success</li> <li>• Our ego or search for meaning</li> <li>• Motivation by past pain</li> </ul> <p><b>Prayer:</b> <i>God and neighbor, I confess my mixed motives. Help the fruit of my efforts to be beautiful and just.</i></p>
<p><b>Confess the Desire to Feel Good When We Help</b></p>	<p>We confess our impulse to help in ways that feel immediately good to us so that we can be freed to fully engage both our hearts <i>and</i> minds for more lasting work. It's not bad to want to feel good by living generously. We should experience the joy in this, but through confession, we're freed to ask good questions, consult experts, and follow best practices. We're freed to move from "<i>What giving will make me feel best?</i>" to</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>"What giving is the best way to help others?"</i></b></p> <p><b>Prayer:</b> <i>God and neighbor, I confess that I'm tempted to contribute in ways that make me feel best, not that help the most. Help me to slow down to serve my neighbor in the best way possible.</i></p>
<p><b>Confess our Public Gestures</b></p>	<p>Social media makes it especially easy to share the good deeds we're doing and show how good and adventurous we are. But this isn't a new problem. Jesus warned us about piety and justice when he called us to give secretly, not publicly, so that we may "be praised by others" (Mt. 6:1-4). Confession frees us from giving in a way that lifts us up and puffs our pride.</p> <p>Confession also helps us choose which organizations to support. We confess that we are often caught by catchy marketing about justice rather than the work of justice itself. Confession frees us to ask if good work is being done beneath the marketing surface.</p> <p><b>Prayer:</b> <i>God and neighbor, I confess I want to be seen as good. Free me to do what is good.</i></p>
<p><b>Confess our Hero Complex</b></p>	<p>In the work of justice, our pride often emerges not in taking credit away from God but in taking credit away from the people we are serving. Practicing confession is one way to guard against both extreme and subtle paternalism.</p>

	<p>We should be aware of how we share the stories of justice and of those we serve. We want to share in a way that recognizes and honors their agency, their ability to shape their own lives and futures. Confession frees us to respect each other's stories and to partner for the thriving of others.</p> <p><b>Prayer:</b> <i>God and neighbor, I confess that I can claim too much of the credit. Grow my humility and show me how to rightly give credit to others.</i></p>
<b>Confess our Compassion Fatigue</b>	<p>It's good for us to confess honestly that our compassion can get exhausted. We shouldn't feel guilty about our fatigue. The injustices seem too big and the progress toward a better future too slow. We work for justice as though the results are up to us, so at times we burn out. We confess our fatigue so we stay honest about how this work affects us and the people we serve. Confessing our fatigue helps remind us of the importance of regular sabbath rest. We confess our fatigue because sometimes we need our community to carry us—and sometimes we need to carry others. We confess so that we can be renewed in love and hope.</p> <p><b>Prayer:</b> <i>God and neighbor, I confess I'm sometimes empty of compassion. Renew me in the deep gladness and sensitivity of the call to work for justice.</i></p>
<b>Confess our Privilege</b>	<p>Most of us have benefited in some way from the life we were born into, whether it be our race, gender, nationality, sexuality, or income level. Life may be easier for us than it is for many people in the world. By confessing our privilege, we can be freed to repent when necessary and to participate in change. For Jesus, confession includes recognizing a problem and also acting to rectify it (Mt. 7:5). In this way, we don't just say sorry, but practice justice in our response.</p> <p><b>Prayer:</b> <i>God and neighbor, I confess the privileges that benefit me. Help me to give them away again and again.</i></p>
<b>Confess our Pain Caused &amp; Received</b>	<p>As a result of living in a kingdom not yet fully come, we have all both caused and received pain. This may be on a personal level or as part of a larger group. When we are honest about how our past pain holds us back, confession helps clear the path to a more kingdom-like future.</p> <p><b>Prayer:</b> <i>God and neighbor, I confess I have caused pain of, and am hurt by, injustice. Help me participate in healing for others and myself.</i></p>
<b>Confess our Longing for Change</b>	<p>While the previous confessions admit vulnerability, this confession is one of hope. We confess our longing for God's kingdom to come fully. We seek to become active testimony to that good work among us. Our practice of confessing vulnerabilities should always include hope that "the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6).</p> <p><b>Prayer:</b> <i>God and neighbor, I confess my hope is in you and in this kingdom coming.</i></p>
<b>Other Resources:</b>	<p><a href="#">Free Online Courses Related to Compassion Fatigue</a></p>

CITATION: Annan, K. (2016). [Slow Kingdom Coming](#): Practices for doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly in the world. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

