

REASON TOGETHER STUDY

What If the Accusation Is True?

2 Samuel 12:7



REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

www.ReasonTogether.Church

HOW DO I ANSWER AN ACCUSATION?

What If the Accusation Is True?

Aloha!

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

Whether you are joining us here in the sanctuary or joining us through one of our online studies, we are glad that you are here.

At Reason Together Church, we believe that sincere questions do not threaten the Word of God.

They give us another reason to open it.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

The Lord said in Isaiah chapter 1 and verse 18:

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD.”

That invitation is still before us today.

If this is your first time with us, we want you to feel welcome without feeling singled out.

There is a guest card available if you would like to leave only your first name and email address.

That is all we ask for.

We are not going to show up at your home unexpectedly or put you on a list of people to pressure.

It simply gives us a way to thank you for being here and to let you know how to find future studies.

We also do not pass an offering plate.

If you are our guest, you are never expected to give.

If you are visiting from another church, please continue supporting your home church.

There is a giving box in the back for anyone who feels led to give, but there is no pressure and no expectation.

Second Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 7 says:

“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give;

“Not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

I admit that I have not seen many people jumping for joy as they place a tithe or offering in the box.

But Biblical cheerfulness means that the gift is freely and willingly given.

We do not want anyone to give grudgingly, under pressure or because they feel compelled.

Give only as the Lord leads you.

You are here to reason together with us through the Word of God.

After the study, please join us at the Reason Together Café.

The coffee is free and so are the refills on conversations.

COFFEE reminds us that Christ Offers Forgiveness For Everyone Everywhere.

Our Keiki Kids Center is also available for families who need it.

Let us begin with prayer.

Our Heavenly Father,

Thank You for bringing us together today.

Thank You for giving us Your Word as the standard by which we can examine our thoughts, our conduct and even the accusations that are made against us.

Give us honesty when we examine ourselves.

Give us courage when we must speak the truth.

Give us humility when we must confess the truth.

Protect the innocent from false judgment.

Bring the guilty to genuine repentance.

Keep us from gossip, retaliation, pride and fear.

Help us hear not merely what we want to hear, but what Your Spirit would teach us through Your Word.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

Our primary Scripture reading comes from 2 Samuel chapter 12, beginning with verse 1.

“And the LORD sent Nathan unto David.

“And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

“The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds:

“But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up:

“And it grew up together with him, and with his children;

“It did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

“And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him;

“But took the poor man’s lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

“And David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man;

“And he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:

“And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

“And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.”

Then we read David’s response in verse 13:

“And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD.”

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His Word.

Today we are going to consider a subject that nearly everyone understands from personal experience.

We are going to talk about being accused.

Most messages about accusations begin with the assumption that the accusation is false.

We think about Joseph being falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife.

We think about Daniel’s enemies searching for a charge against him.

We think about Nehemiah being accused of planning a rebellion.

We think about Paul answering charges brought by his enemies.

Most importantly, we think about Jesus Christ standing before false witnesses.

Those are necessary lessons.

False accusations are real.

They can damage a reputation, divide a family, injure a church, end employment and sometimes even take away a person’s freedom.

An innocent person needs to know how to respond Biblically.

But today we are going to ask the question that is often left out.

What if the accusation is true?

What if you actually did what someone says you did?

What if part of it is true and part of it is false?

What if the person confronting you does not have every detail right, but has enough of it right that you need to listen?

What if you have been calling accountability persecution?

What if you have been preparing a defense when God is calling you to make a confession?

That is not a comfortable question.

But Reason Together Church cannot exist merely to ask interesting questions about everyone else.

We must be willing to open the Bible and allow it to ask questions about us.

Some time ago, I was making a visitation at a local hospital.

I had pulled into the parking lot, parked my vehicle and started walking toward the main entrance.

There was nothing unusual about the situation.

I saw someone get out of a car and begin walking quickly toward the hospital.

Another person stopped his vehicle and called out to her.

Out of curiosity, I looked over, even though the matter was none of my business.

The man was upset.

He asked whether the car parked in front of him belonged to her.

She indicated that it did.

He then said rather forcefully that the space was reserved for him.

There was even a sign with his name in front of it.

The situation was tense, but it did not become a major confrontation.

The woman moved her car and found another space about four stalls away.

That was the end of what I witnessed.

I do not know what either person was experiencing that day.

I do not know whether the woman was rushing inside to see a sick relative.

I do not know whether she was late for work.

I do not know whether she saw the sign and ignored it or simply did not notice it.

I do not know whether the doctor had just argued with his wife, had been called urgently to the hospital or was simply tired of finding someone in his assigned space.

I will probably never know.

From my perspective, both people might have handled the conversation better.

But that is not the important part of the illustration.

The woman was accused of parking in a space reserved for someone else.

The accusation was true.

Her car was there.

The sign was there.

The person whose name was on the sign was there.

At that point, the useful question was not, “How can I prove I did nothing wrong?”

The useful question was, “What should I do now?”

And what she did was simple.

She moved the car.

That ordinary event came back to me while preparing this message because the way we answer an accusation matters.

Sometimes we are innocent.

Sometimes we are guilty.

Sometimes we made a mistake without intending harm.

Sometimes the accuser is correct but speaks to us in a way we do not appreciate.

We can become so focused on the accuser’s tone that we never consider the truth of the accusation.

We say, “He should not have spoken to me like that.”

Perhaps he should not have.

But were you parked in his space?

We say, “She embarrassed me in front of other people.”

Perhaps she did.

But was what she said true?

We say, “They did not follow the proper procedure.”

Perhaps they did not.

But did you do what you were accused of doing?

The accuser’s wrong conduct does not automatically make the accused person innocent.

Two people can both handle a situation badly.

One person can make a true accusation in an unkind way.

Another person can use that unkindness as an excuse not to face the truth.

Our first responsibility is not to decide how quickly we can defend ourselves.

Our first responsibility is to determine what is true.

Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 13 says:

“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

Before we answer an accusation, we must hear it.

What exactly is being alleged?

What words did I supposedly say?

What action did I supposedly take?

When and where did this happen?

Who actually witnessed it?

What evidence exists?

What standard did my conduct supposedly violate?

Vague accusations are difficult to answer fairly.

“People are concerned” is not a specific charge.

“Everyone knows what you did” does not tell us what is alleged or who actually knows it.

“I heard that you said something” may mean the person speaking has no firsthand knowledge at all.

Truth requires clarity from the accuser and honesty from the accused.

When someone brings a concern to us, we should resist the temptation to interrupt before the person has finished.

We should resist the temptation to prepare our counterattack while the other person is speaking.

We should be able to say, “Tell me specifically what you believe happened.”

We may discover that the accusation is completely false.

We may discover that there has been a misunderstanding.

We may discover that some of it is true and some of it is distorted.

Or we may discover that the accusation is substantially correct.

Lamentations chapter 3 and verse 40 says:

“Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.”

Psalm 139 says:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

“And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Those are dangerous words to pray if we only want God to agree with us.

“Search me” means I am willing for God to show me something I would rather not see.

“Try my ways” means my version of the story is not the final standard.

“Turn again to the LORD” means that if I am wrong, I am prepared to change direction.

Our natural instinct is self-protection.

We remember the parts that make us look reasonable.

We forget the words that make us look cruel.

We explain what we intended while ignoring what we actually did.

We describe our conduct as a mistake and the other person's conduct as a character defect.

We demand that the accuser give us the benefit of the doubt while giving no such benefit in return.

Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 2 says:

“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.”

The fact that I can explain my conduct does not prove that my conduct was right.

The fact that an accusation hurts me does not prove that it is false.

The fact that I have done much good does not make me incapable of doing something wrong.

And the fact that the accuser has faults does not erase mine.

An accusation is not proof of guilt.

But our dislike of an accusation is not proof of innocence.

So let us look first at the circumstance most sermons emphasize.

What should we do when the accusation is false?

David gives us a powerful example in 1 Samuel chapter 24.

Saul treated David as an enemy of the kingdom.

He believed David wanted to seize the throne.

He pursued David with armed men.

David had an opportunity to kill Saul in the cave.

Instead, David cut off the skirt of Saul's robe.

Even that troubled David's conscience because Saul was the Lord's anointed.

When Saul left the cave, David called after him and showed him the evidence.

David said in 1 Samuel chapter 24 and verse 11:

“Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand:

“For in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand.”

David did not merely say, “Trust me.”

He presented evidence.

He had been close enough to kill Saul, but Saul was still alive.

The piece of the robe in David's hand demonstrated that Saul's accusation was false.

David defended himself.

But notice what David did not do.

He did not stab Saul and then claim self-defense.

He did not answer a false accusation with a sinful act.

He did not decide that Saul's injustice gave him permission to take revenge.

David said in verse 12:

"The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee."

That is Biblical self-defense.

David stated the truth.

He presented evidence.

He refused retaliation.

He placed the final judgment in God's hands.

Nehemiah faced a different accusation.

Sanballat sent an open letter claiming that Nehemiah intended to rebel and become king.

The letter was open because the accusation was meant to spread.

It was not a sincere private question.

It was an attempt to frighten Nehemiah, damage his reputation and stop the work.

Nehemiah answered in chapter 6 and verse 8:

"There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart."

That was not a thirty-page response to every insult.

It was a direct denial.

There are no such things done as thou sayest.

Then Nehemiah prayed:

"Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands."

He corrected the falsehood and continued the work.

Sometimes the best defense is a short statement of truth followed by a faithful life.

Paul also defended himself.

In Acts chapter 25 and verse 8, Paul said:

“Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.”

Paul did not believe that trusting God required him to abandon every lawful protection.

He answered the charge.

He gave testimony.

He asserted his rights as a Roman citizen.

He appealed unto Caesar.

There is nothing unspiritual about presenting facts, identifying witnesses, preserving evidence, requesting a fair hearing or using an appropriate legal process.

But a Christian defense must remain Christian.

Romans chapter 12 and verse 17 says:

“Recompense to no man evil for evil.”

Defending the truth is not the same as destroying the accuser.

We do not defend ourselves Biblically by threatening people.

We do not expose unrelated failures in the accuser’s life.

We do not call everyone we know and recruit them to our side.

We do not turn a prayer request into a gossip campaign.

We do not exaggerate a countercharge.

We do not say something false merely because the other person said something false first.

A false accusation does not give us permission to become false accusers.

First Peter chapter 3 and verse 16 says:

“Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.”

Our goal is not merely a cleared reputation.

It is a clear conscience.

We may prove that the accusation was false and still dishonor God in the way we answered it.

We may win the argument and lose our testimony.

We may expose the accuser and reveal something ugly in ourselves.

An innocent person needs courage to speak the truth, but also restraint in how that truth is spoken.

Now we come to the question on the cover of this study.

What if the accusation is true?

For that answer, we return to David.

Saul's accusation against David was false.

But Nathan's accusation against David was true.

The same David who properly defended himself before Saul had no truthful defense before Nathan.

David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

When she became pregnant, David attempted to conceal what he had done.

He brought her husband Uriah home from battle.

When Uriah's integrity interfered with David's plan, David arranged for him to be placed where the fighting was fiercest.

Uriah died carrying the instructions that led to his own death.

David then took Bathsheba to be his wife.

Perhaps David believed the matter was over.

Second Samuel chapter 11 ends with these words:

"But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD."

People may not know.

The records may be hidden.

The explanation may sound convincing.

But God knows.

The Lord sent Nathan to David.

Nathan told him about a rich man with many flocks and a poor man with one little ewe lamb.

The rich man took the poor man's lamb to feed a traveler.

David was furious.

He could see another man's injustice clearly.

He declared that the man deserved to die and should restore fourfold.

Then Nathan said four words:

"Thou art the man."

David was the accused.

The accusation was true.

David did not ask Nathan who else had been talking about him.

He did not demand to know why Nathan had not first listed all of David's accomplishments.

He did not remind Nathan that he was king.

He did not blame Bathsheba.

He did not say that Uriah died in a lawful military operation.

He did not attack Nathan's tone.

He did not appoint a committee filled with people loyal to him.

He did not call accountability persecution.

David said:

"I have sinned against the LORD."

When the accusation is true, the answer is not a better defense.

It is an honest confession.

Psalm 51 gives us the heart of David's confession.

"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me."

David called them my transgressions.

He did not call them Nathan's interpretation.

He did not call them Bathsheba's fault.

He did not call them the unavoidable pressures of leadership.

He said, "My sin."

Then he prayed:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

David did not merely want the accusation to disappear.

He wanted his heart changed.

Proverbs chapter 28 and verse 13 says:

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

Confession without forsaking is only admission.

Repentance means we turn.

We stop doing what we confessed.

We correct what can be corrected.

We make restitution where possible.

We accept appropriate consequences.

We do not demand that trust be restored immediately because we apologized.

We do not insist that forgiveness requires someone to place us back into the same position of authority.

We do not use the mercy of God as a way to avoid accountability before people.

God forgave David, but David's actions still produced terrible consequences.

Forgiveness and consequences can exist together.

Mercy and accountability are not enemies.

Zacchaeus understood this.

In Luke chapter 19 and verse 8 he said:

“Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor;

“And if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.”

Zacchaeus did not merely say, “I am sorry.”

He considered what restoration required.

If money was taken, money should be returned.

If a false statement was made publicly, it may need to be corrected publicly.

If property was damaged, it should be repaired or replaced.

If trust was broken, rebuilding it may require patience, transparency and time.

If someone has committed a crime, repentance does not mean hiding the evidence and avoiding lawful consequences.

A true confession identifies the wrong.

It does not say, “I am sorry if you were offended.”

It does not say, “I am sorry, but you also did something wrong.”

It does not say, “That is not who I really am.”

It does not say, “Everyone makes mistakes.”

It does not say, “I am sorry this became public.”

Those statements may express embarrassment without expressing repentance.

The Biblical response is:

“I did this.

“It was wrong.

“I am sorry.

“I ask forgiveness.

“I will make right what I can.

“I will accept the consequences.

“And with God’s help, I will turn from it.”

There is another possibility we must consider.

What if the accusation is partly true?

These situations may be the most difficult.

Perhaps something happened, but the story has been exaggerated.

Perhaps your action was wrong, but the motive assigned to you was false.

Perhaps you said the words, but they have been removed from their context.

Perhaps the central concern is correct even though some details are not.

Our temptation is to use the false portion to deny everything.

We say, “That detail is wrong, therefore I did nothing wrong.”

But a mistaken detail does not erase a genuine offense.

The opposite temptation is to accept everything because admitting one part makes us feel that we must accept the rest.

That is not required either.

A truthful answer may sound like this:

“This portion is true and I accept responsibility for it.

“This other portion is not accurate and I would like to explain the facts.”

Confess everything that is true.

Correct everything that is false.

Do not use the false portion as a shield against repentance.

And do not confess something untrue merely to end the conflict.

How, then, should accusations be handled among believers?

Jesus gives us a process in Matthew chapter 18.

Verse 15 says:

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone:

“If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

The first step is not to tell six friends.

The first step is not to post a carefully worded accusation where everyone can see it.

The first step is not to build a group that already agrees with us.

When it is safe and appropriate, we go directly to the person.

We tell him his fault between us and him alone.

The goal is stated clearly:

“Thou hast gained thy brother.”

The goal is not to defeat a brother.

The goal is to gain him.

That private conversation may reveal that there was a misunderstanding.

It may reveal that the accusation was false.

It may reveal that the accused person did wrong and is ready to repent.

It may reveal that the accuser misunderstood something and needs to correct it.

Matthew 18 is not simply a weapon for the person making the accusation.

It is a process through which everyone involved submits to truth.

Jesus continues in verse 16:

“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”

The additional people are not supposed to be friends recruited to pressure the accused.

They should be responsible, impartial people who can listen.

They can help clarify exactly what is being alleged.

They can hear the response.

They can examine available evidence.

They can identify where the parties agree and where they disagree.

They also become witnesses to the conversation itself.

Deuteronomy chapter 19 and verse 15 says:

“One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth:

“At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”

An accusation is not proof.

Repetition is not corroboration.

If ten people repeat a story that came from one person, we do not suddenly have ten independent witnesses.

We have one source repeated ten times.

Establishing a matter may involve firsthand testimony, messages, documents, photographs, recordings, financial records, admissions or other reliable evidence.

The purpose is not to count how many people like each side.

Truth is not established by popularity.

If the matter remains unresolved, Jesus says in verse 17:

“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.”

This is orderly escalation.

It is not permission for uncontrolled gossip.

It does not mean every detail should immediately be announced to every person in the congregation.

The church and its responsible leadership must address the matter in a way that seeks truth, correction, protection, repentance and restoration.

First Timothy chapter 5 gives special instruction concerning accusations against elders.

Verse 19 says:

“Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.”

An elder should not be condemned by a careless or unsupported allegation.

Pastors and church leaders can become targets of false accusations.

But that verse is not a shield behind which a leader can hide proven sin.

The next verse says:

“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”

There is balance.

Do not accept every allegation automatically.

Do not dismiss credible evidence automatically.

Protect leaders from malicious accusations.

Protect the church from leaders who misuse their position.

No title places a person beyond examination.

And no accusation should become a conviction before the facts are established.

We must also be clear about something important.

Matthew 18 must never be used to conceal criminal behavior or place someone in danger.

It must never be used to tell a victim of violence, abuse or a serious threat that he or she must meet privately and alone with the alleged offender.

Romans chapter 13 teaches that civil authority has a God-given responsibility concerning wrongdoing.

If someone is in danger, move to safety.

If a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed, report the matter to the appropriate authorities.

If criminal conduct is alleged, preserve evidence and seek qualified help.

Church discipline does not replace lawful authority.

Reporting serious wrongdoing is not revenge.

Protecting vulnerable people is not a lack of forgiveness.

No pastor, church or ministry should use “go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone” to isolate a victim or protect an institution’s reputation.

The seriousness of the accusation helps determine the proper process.

A private misunderstanding may need a private conversation.

A church matter may require responsible church leadership.

A workplace accusation may require a formal organizational response.

A criminal accusation belongs before lawful authorities.

A public falsehood may require a public correction.

We should answer the proper audience.

If one person has misunderstood us, we do not need to announce our defense to the entire world.

If a false accusation has been stated publicly and harmed other people, a private correction may not repair the damage.

The answer should generally reach the people affected by the accusation, but it should not be spread farther merely because we want an audience.

Our goal is to correct the record, not to collect supporters.

And after we have told the truth, used the proper process and done what is right, we must accept that we cannot control what everyone believes.

Some people will continue believing a false accusation after it has been disproven.

Some will repeat the first report and never repeat the correction.

An innocent person may never receive a public apology.

A guilty person may confess sincerely and still face necessary consequences.

Our responsibility is a clear conscience before God.

Psalm 37 says:

“Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.
“And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.”
We can present the truth.
We cannot force someone to accept it.
We can confess our sin.
We cannot demand that another person trust us immediately.
We can make restitution.
We cannot undo every consequence.
We can ask forgiveness.
We cannot dictate the injured person’s timetable.
We can submit ourselves to a Biblical process.
We cannot guarantee that every person involved will behave Biblically.
But we can choose how we will answer.
Look again at the two accusations against David.
Saul accused David falsely.
David denied the charge, presented evidence, refused revenge and entrusted judgment to God.
Nathan accused David truthfully.
David confessed, sought mercy and accepted the consequences.
David’s response was not determined by whether the accusation embarrassed him.
It was determined by whether the accusation was true.
When Saul accused David falsely, David defended the truth.
When Nathan accused David truthfully, David confessed the truth.
That is the heart of this study.
When an accusation comes, do not begin with the question, “How can I win?”
Do not begin with, “How can I silence this person?”
Do not begin with, “Who will take my side?”
Do not even begin with, “How can I defend myself?”
Begin with one question:
“What is true?”
If the accusation is false, speak the truth.
State the facts.

Present appropriate evidence.

Use the proper Biblical or lawful process.

Protect people who may be harmed.

Refuse revenge.

Trust God with the outcome.

If the accusation is true, confess the truth.

Name the sin.

Stop blaming others.

Repent.

Make restitution where possible.

Accept accountability.

Ask for mercy.

If the accusation is partly true, admit what is true and correct what is false.

Do not defend what God is calling you to confess.

Do not confess what is false merely because someone demands it.

An innocent person needs the courage to speak the truth.

A guilty person needs the courage to confess the truth.

Both require humility.

Perhaps you have been falsely accused.

You have tried to explain, but the accusation continues.

You may need wise counsel about the next appropriate step.

You may need to preserve evidence or ask responsible people to help establish the facts.

You may simply need the strength to keep doing what is right while God works in ways you cannot yet see.

Perhaps the accusation against you is true.

You have been explaining it, minimizing it or blaming the person who confronted you.

The person speaking to you may not be your enemy.

That person may be doing for you what Nathan did for David.

The words “Thou art the man” were painful, but they opened the door to confession and mercy.

The most dangerous accusation is not always the false one that other people believe.

It may be the true one that we refuse to believe about ourselves.

Perhaps you have made an accusation against someone else.

Have you followed the Biblical process?

Have you spoken directly with the person when it was safe and appropriate?

Do you know the facts firsthand?

Are you seeking restoration or an audience?

Have you repeated something that was never established?

Are you willing to correct your accusation if you discover that it was false?

The duty to love truth belongs to the accuser as much as it belongs to the accused.

Before we prepare our defense, we need the courage to pray:

“Lord, what if the accusation is true?”

And before we accept another person’s accusation as fact, we need the wisdom to ask:

“Lord, has this matter been established?”

Truth protects the innocent.

Truth confronts the guilty.

Truth corrects the accuser who is wrong.

Truth restores the person who repents.

Jesus Christ is not threatened by the truth.

He said in John chapter 8 and verse 32:

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Freedom does not come from winning every argument.

It comes from walking in truth before God.

If you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Saviour, the greatest accusation against every one of us is true.

Romans chapter 3 and verse 23 says:

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

We cannot answer that charge by comparing ourselves with someone worse.

We cannot answer it by listing our good works.

We cannot answer it by blaming our circumstances.

We are guilty before a holy God.

But the Gospel does not end with the accusation.

Romans chapter 5 and verse 8 says:

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Jesus bore the judgment our sin deserved.

He died on the cross.

He was buried.

He rose again.

First John chapter 1 and verse 9 says:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

God does not ask us to produce a clever defense for our sin.

He calls us to confess it and receive the mercy provided through Jesus Christ.

If you have questions about salvation, repentance, forgiveness or anything we have discussed today, please speak with me after the study.

You may also send your question through the Reason Together Church website.

You do not need to pretend that you have everything figured out before you ask for help.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us reason together through the Word of God.

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father,

You know every accusation that has ever been made against us.

You know which ones were false.

You know which ones were misunderstandings.

You know which ones were partly true.

And You know which ones were completely true.

Protect those who have been falsely accused.

Give them wisdom to answer with truth, patience and restraint.

Provide witnesses, evidence and fair processes where they are needed.

Keep bitterness and revenge from taking root in their hearts.

For those of us who have been accused correctly, remove our excuses.

Give us the humility of David when he said, “I have sinned against the LORD.”

Lead us to confession, repentance, restitution and changed conduct.

Give wisdom to churches as they examine difficult matters.

Keep us from believing rumors merely because they are repeated.

Keep us from protecting wrongdoing merely because the accused person is respected.

Help us protect the innocent, confront sin, care for the injured and restore those who truly repent.

Where crimes or danger are involved, give people courage to seek safety and contact the proper authorities.

Teach every one of us to value truth above pride, position and reputation.

Thank You that Jesus Christ offers forgiveness to everyone who comes to You in repentance and faith.

Help us leave this study with a clear conscience and a renewed commitment to walk in truth.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

Before we leave, take this question with you into the coming week:

When someone corrects you, do not decide immediately that you are being attacked.

Pause long enough to ask what is true.

If the accusation is false, answer honestly without revenge.

If it is true, confess honestly without excuses.

If it is partly true, have the humility to separate the two.

You may find this lesson useful beyond your own circumstances.

If a friend tells you about an accusation, do not immediately encourage retaliation or assume that the friend must be innocent because you care about that person.

Listen carefully.

Ask whether the facts have been established.

Encourage a Biblical process.

Help your friend tell the truth, whether that truth requires a defense or a confession.

That may be one of the most loving things you can do.

Please join us at the Reason Together Café.

The coffee is free and there are free refills on conversations.

If something in this message touched a personal situation and you would like prayer or pastoral counsel, please remain for a few minutes or speak with me privately.

You do not have to carry a false accusation alone.

And you do not have to hide from a true accusation when the mercy of God is available.

May the Lord give us courage to defend the truth, humility to confess the truth and wisdom to know the difference.

Aloha Nui Loa.

034 COMMENTARY

How Do I Answer an Accusation?

Cover Question: What If the Accusation Is True?

Primary Text: 2 Samuel 12:1–13 KJV

Primary Supporting Text: 1 Peter 3:16 KJV

Central Principle: When the accusation is false, defend the truth. When the accusation is true, confess the truth.

Commentary Purpose

This study deliberately refuses to place every listener in the role of the innocent victim. Scripture contains many examples of false accusation, but it also contains confrontations in which the accused person was guilty. A complete Biblical treatment must preserve both possibilities.

The sermon therefore asks a prior question before addressing self-defense: What is true? That question governs every later decision. If the accusation is false, truth may require denial and evidence. If it is true, truth requires confession and repentance. If it is partly true, truth requires both admission and correction.

This approach also protects the study from two opposite errors. The first is assuming that every accusation proves guilt. The second is assuming that the person hearing the sermon must be innocent. Biblical justice permits neither assumption.

Title and Cover Question

The title “How Do I Answer an Accusation?” is broader and more accurate than “How Do I Defend Myself?” The word defend can imply that the accused person has already been judged innocent. The word answer permits several faithful responses: denial, clarification, partial admission, full confession, silence, appeal or a request that the matter be examined properly.

The cover question “What If the Accusation Is True?” supplies the necessary RTS turn. It challenges the expectation created by the usual sermon about false accusation. The question is intentionally uncomfortable, but it is not intended to presume guilt. Its purpose is to prevent automatic self-justification.

The Primary Text: Nathan Confronts David

Second Samuel 12 follows David’s adultery with Bathsheba, his failed attempt to make Uriah appear to be the child’s father and his arrangement for Uriah’s death. The final verse of chapter 11 gives the divine assessment that human concealment could not change:

“But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.” —2 Samuel 11:27 KJV

Nathan approaches David through a judicial story. A rich man with many animals takes the single beloved lamb of a poor man. David hears the account as though he were judging another person. His anger is immediate and severe.

“And David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die.” —2 Samuel 12:5 KJV

David can identify injustice clearly when he believes another man committed it. Nathan’s parable passes beneath David’s defenses and allows David to announce a moral judgment before recognizing himself in the story.

Nathan’s declaration is direct:

“Thou art the man.” —2 Samuel 12:7 KJV

The confrontation is not vague. Nathan recounts God’s generosity toward David and identifies David’s contempt for the Lord’s commandment. David cannot truthfully reduce the matter to a misunderstanding or disagreement over leadership style.

David’s response is equally direct:

“I have sinned against the LORD.” —2 Samuel 12:13 KJV

The brevity of this statement should not be mistaken for superficiality. Psalm 51 reveals the spiritual depth of David’s confession. He acknowledges transgression, appeals to mercy, asks for cleansing and seeks a renewed heart.

Nathan then announces forgiveness, but the chapter does not erase consequences. This is an essential pastoral distinction. Divine forgiveness is real, yet forgiveness does not require God or other people to pretend that harm never occurred.

“Against Thee, Thee Only” in Psalm 51

David prays:

“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.” —Psalm 51:4 KJV

This verse must not be interpreted as though David denied sinning against Bathsheba, Uriah, his family or the nation. The narrative makes the human harm unmistakable. David’s point is that every sin is ultimately rebellion against God and that God’s judgment is final and righteous.

The verse should never be used to bypass human accountability. Confessing sin to God does not remove the obligation to acknowledge harm done to people, make restitution where possible or submit to appropriate consequences.

David Before Saul: The Necessary Counterpart

The sermon pairs Nathan's true accusation with Saul's false treatment of David. This is not merely a convenient contrast. It shows that one faithful person may need different responses in different circumstances.

In 1 Samuel 24, David possesses physical evidence that he had been close enough to kill Saul but refused. He displays the portion of Saul's robe and says:

“Know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.” —1 Samuel 24:11 KJV

David does not regard every defense as pride. He states his innocence and presents evidence. At the same time, he refuses to become what Saul accused him of being. He will not seize the throne through violence or kill the Lord's anointed.

“The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.” —1 Samuel 24:12 KJV

David's restraint is not passivity. He speaks, reasons, displays evidence and appeals to judgment. What he refuses is personal vengeance.

The contrast can be stated simply:

Before Saul, David had evidence of innocence and gave a defense.

Before Nathan, David had evidence of guilt and gave a confession.

David did not respond according to how embarrassing the accusation felt. He responded according to whether it was true.

The Primary Supporting Text: A Good Conscience

First Peter 3 addresses believers who may suffer for doing well. Peter instructs them to answer with meekness and fear while maintaining a good conscience.

“Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.” —1 Peter 3:16 KJV

The word conversation in the KJV commonly refers to manner of life or conduct, not merely speech. The falsely accused believer's continuing conduct becomes part of the answer.

Peter does not promise that every accuser will retract the statement or that vindication will occur immediately. He directs attention to conscience and conduct. The accused person cannot control every opinion, but can refuse to make a false charge plausible through sinful retaliation.

The phrase good conscience also prevents self-defense from becoming the only concern. A person who disproves an accusation through deceit, intimidation or revenge has not preserved the kind of conscience Peter describes.

Hear the Matter Before Answering

Proverbs 18:13 says:

“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

This principle applies to everyone involved. The accused person should hear the precise allegation rather than reacting to a vague impression. The accuser should hear the response. Church leaders, friends and observers should resist deciding the matter after hearing only one account.

Proverbs 18:17 adds:

“He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.”

The proverb does not declare the first speaker false. It recognizes that an unexamined account naturally appears persuasive. Questions, contrary evidence and another perspective may confirm it, qualify it or disprove it.

This is why phrases such as “people are concerned” and “everyone knows” are inadequate in a serious process. An accusation must be clear enough to examine. The accused person should know what act, statement or omission is alleged. Fairness also requires distinguishing firsthand knowledge from repetition.

Self-Examination Is Not Self-Condensation

The sermon asks the accused person to begin with prayerful self-examination. This does not mean assuming guilt. It means refusing to assume innocence merely because the accusation is painful.

*“Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.” —Lamentations 3:40
KJV*

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts.” —Psalm
139:23 KJV*

An accused person may honestly conclude after examination that the charge is false. Self-examination prepares that person to defend truth with a clean conscience. It may also reveal a true portion hidden within an exaggerated accusation.

Intent must be considered but should not be allowed to replace action. A person may not have intended harm, yet still have acted carelessly, spoken falsely or violated a responsibility. “I did not mean it that way” may clarify motive without resolving conduct.

Four Possible Findings

Entirely False

The event did not occur as alleged or the accused person did not commit it. A truthful defense may include denial, evidence, witnesses and an appropriate appeal.

Joseph illustrates how tangible evidence can be used to support a false interpretation. His garment was real, but Potiphar's wife supplied a false story about why it was in her possession. Evidence must therefore be interpreted, not merely displayed.

Nehemiah illustrates a concise response to a fabricated public charge:

"There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart." —Nehemiah 6:8 KJV

Nehemiah denies the charge, prays and continues the work. He does not allow endless engagement with accusation to become a substitute for his calling.

Misunderstood

Hannah and Eli demonstrate a false accusation that may not have arisen from malice. Eli observed Hannah's lips moving while hearing no voice and concluded that she was drunk. Hannah answered respectfully:

"No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD." —1 Samuel 1:15 KJV

Eli accepts the explanation and blesses her. This case prevents the study from treating every mistaken accuser as a deliberate liar.

Joshua 22 offers a larger example. The western tribes interpreted the altar near Jordan as rebellion and prepared for war. A delegation first heard the eastern tribes' explanation. The direct conversation revealed that the altar was intended as a witness of unity, not a rival place of sacrifice. An inquiry prevented violence.

Partly True

Many real accusations fall into this category. An event occurred, but details were added. The words were spoken, but context was omitted. The action was wrong, but a motive was invented. The accused person may bear responsibility without bearing every responsibility alleged.

The proper response requires two forms of courage. The accused must confess the true portion even when other details are false. The accused must also correct the false portion even after admitting fault.

A useful form of response is:

“This portion is true and I accept responsibility for it. This other portion is not accurate and I would like to explain the facts.”

The true portion must not be hidden behind the false portion. The false portion must not be accepted merely because the true portion creates embarrassment.

Substantially True

When the central accusation is correct, continued self-defense becomes resistance to truth.

Proverbs 28:13 joins confession to forsaking:

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

The phrase confesseth and forsaketh distinguishes repentance from reluctant admission. A person may admit facts because evidence has become undeniable while remaining unwilling to change.

Second Corinthians 7 distinguishes godly sorrow from the sorrow of the world. Regret over exposure, loss or embarrassment is not necessarily repentance. Godly sorrow produces earnest change.

Confession, Repentance and Restitution

These terms should not be collapsed into one idea.

Confession acknowledges the truth of the wrong.

Repentance turns from the wrong and produces changed conduct.

Restitution attempts to repair identifiable harm when repair is possible.

Zacchaeus declares:

*“If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” —
Luke 19:8 KJV*

Restitution does not purchase salvation or forgiveness. It demonstrates that repentance takes the harm seriously.

Depending upon the wrong, restitution may mean returning money, repairing property, correcting a public falsehood, restoring an altered record, paying an obligation or cooperating with an investigation.

Not every injury can be repaired fully. Uriah could not be restored to life. A damaged reputation may never be recovered entirely. In those circumstances, the impossibility of full repair does not excuse the person from making whatever correction remains possible.

Forgiveness Does Not Eliminate Consequences

Nathan tells David:

“The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.” —2 Samuel 12:13 KJV

The next verses nevertheless describe consequences. This must be held carefully. Consequences are not evidence that God failed to forgive. Nor does forgiveness require others to ignore safety, trust or qualification for responsibility.

An apology does not entitle the offender to immediate restoration of trust. A church leader who repents may be forgiven while no longer meeting the qualifications or prudential requirements for the former position. A person forgiven of criminal conduct may still face civil judgment.

Forgiveness releases personal vengeance and reflects the mercy of God. Reconciliation requires truth and participation by the parties. Trust is ordinarily rebuilt through demonstrated faithfulness. These related realities should not be treated as identical.

Matthew 18: The Goal Is to Gain a Brother

Matthew 18:15 begins:

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.”

The text directs an appropriate interpersonal and church offense toward an initially private conversation. Privacy protects both people and limits unnecessary damage. The stated goal is not victory:

“If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

The process is restorative, but restoration does not mean pretending that sin did not occur. A brother is gained when truth is heard and the relationship can be addressed faithfully.

The process also tests the accuser. A direct conversation may reveal that the concern was mistaken or exaggerated. Matthew 18 is not a weapon placed exclusively in the accuser’s hand. Everyone involved remains accountable to truth.

One or Two More

Matthew 18:16 continues:

“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”

The additional people should not be selected merely because they already agree with one side. Their presence brings accountability, clarity and the possibility of wise judgment.

The phrase every word may be established indicates that they witness the present process as well as consider the underlying matter. This does not mean their presence magically proves the original accusation. If they did not witness the original event, they cannot honestly claim that they did. They can, however, examine testimony and evidence and establish what occurs in the present meeting.

Deuteronomy 19:15 supplies the underlying principle that a serious matter should not be established by one unsupported witness. The concern is protection from arbitrary condemnation.

The principle should not be manipulated in either direction. It should not be weakened until an unsupported claim becomes proof. It also should not be narrowed so severely that concealed wrongdoing can never be examined unless two people physically watched it occur. Documents, messages, admissions, physical evidence and independent corroborating circumstances may all be relevant to a responsible inquiry.

“Tell It Unto the Church”

Matthew 18:17 represents escalation after private and small-group efforts fail. It is not a command to spread every detail without restraint. The church must know enough to exercise its responsibility, but disclosure should remain connected to truth, discipline, protection and restoration.

The precise way a church carries out this responsibility may depend upon its Biblical governance and the nature of the offense. Leadership should not hide behind confidentiality to conceal wrongdoing. Neither should it release unnecessary private information merely to satisfy curiosity.

The passage assumes a church willing to hear truth. If leaders are themselves implicated, conflicted or unwilling to act, outside help may be necessary.

Accusations Against Elders

First Timothy 5:19 says:

“Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.”

Elders occupy public and spiritually responsible roles and may be exposed to malicious accusations. The verse protects the office and the individual from careless reception of charges.

The protection is not immunity. The following verse says:

“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.” —1 Timothy 5:20 KJV

The two verses together oppose both gullibility and favoritism. A church must not accept every accusation merely because it is made. A church also must not dismiss credible evidence merely because the accused person is respected.

The word receive is important pastorally. A church may need to receive information in order to determine whether the required support exists. The verse should not be turned into a reason to refuse even to hear a report. The allegation must not be treated as established guilt until it is properly supported.

When Matthew 18 Does Not Require a Private Meeting

Matthew 18 must not be applied in a manner that creates danger or conceals crime. A victim of violence, abuse, exploitation, stalking or a serious threat should not be required to confront the alleged offender alone.

Romans 13 recognizes civil authority as a minister of God concerning wrongdoing. Church discipline and civil responsibility have different functions and may operate at the same time.

Reporting a crime is not necessarily vengeance. Seeking safety is not unforgiveness. Preserving evidence is not a lack of faith. Protecting a child or vulnerable adult is a moral responsibility.

The phrase “when it is safe and appropriate” belongs with the sermon’s presentation of private confrontation. This safeguard prevents a text designed for restoration from being used as a tool of coercion.

Jesus’ Silence Was Selective

Some believers have been taught that Jesus’ silence before His accusers prohibits all self-defense. The Gospel accounts do not support an absolute rule.

Jesus remained silent before many accusations because the proceedings were corrupt and His mission involved willingly going to the cross. Yet He answered direct questions concerning His identity. In John 18:23, after being struck, He challenged the injustice:

“If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?”

Jesus did not strike back, but neither did He call the wrongful blow just. His example distinguishes nonretaliation from the refusal to state truth.

Paul’s conduct further confirms that lawful defense may be faithful. He gave testimony, asserted Roman citizenship, objected to unlawful treatment and appealed to Caesar. These actions were not a rejection of providence. They were among the means through which providence carried him to Rome.

The Proper Audience

The scope of an answer should ordinarily correspond to the scope of the accusation and its effects.

A private misunderstanding usually deserves a private answer. A formal workplace allegation needs a formal response. A church matter may require responsible church involvement. A crime belongs before lawful authority. A public falsehood that has injured others may require a public correction.

This principle prevents two errors. The first is answering too narrowly, so that a damaging public falsehood remains uncorrected. The second is answering too broadly, so that a private matter becomes a campaign for public support.

The sermon's line is useful: "The goal is to correct the record, not to collect supporters."

Commentary on the Hospital Illustration

The parking-space incident works because it is ordinary, brief and morally understandable. The woman's vehicle occupied a space assigned to someone else. Whatever explanation may have existed, the immediate accusation concerning the location of the car was correct.

The illustration also contains deliberate uncertainty. Nothing was known about either person's pressures, intentions or history. The woman may have overlooked the sign or may have ignored it. The doctor may have needed the space urgently or may have reacted from accumulated frustration. The sermon should not invent facts.

The illustration does not excuse the accuser's manner. Its point is that the accused person cannot make the truth disappear by concentrating exclusively upon tone. Both people may handle a confrontation badly. One person's wrong response does not establish the other person's innocence.

The resolution was proportionate. The woman moved the car approximately four stalls away. The illustration therefore supports prompt correction rather than prolonged self-justification.

Because the matter is minor, the sermon appropriately limits the illustration. It should not be used as a comparison that minimizes abuse, criminal allegations or complicated disputes.

The Accuser Also Faces Accountability

Although the cover question addresses the accused, the sermon eventually turns toward the person making or repeating an accusation.

The accuser must ask:

Do I know this firsthand?

Have I stated the matter accurately?

Have I spoken directly with the person when safe and appropriate?

Am I seeking restoration or an audience?

Have I allowed the accused person to answer?

Would I correct my statement if new evidence proved it false?

Scripture's concern for false witness means that good intentions do not excuse careless repetition. A person may sincerely believe a rumor and still bear responsibility for spreading it without verification.

The sermon should not shift so far toward the accused person's possible guilt that it minimizes the sin of false accusation. Both truths remain necessary.

The Gospel Movement

The sermon closes by applying the central question to every person before God. Romans 3:23 states:

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

In this ultimate accusation, humanity has no truthful defense based upon comparison or good works. The Gospel does not deny the charge. It announces God's provision for the guilty.

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” —Romans 5:8 KJV

This movement unites truth and grace. Grace is not God pretending that sin is false. Christ bears judgment and offers forgiveness. First John 1:9 therefore calls for confession:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

The Gospel conclusion keeps the study from becoming merely a manual for conflict management. The deepest need of the guilty is not a more persuasive defense but reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ.

Pastoral Balance

Several balances must remain visible whenever this study is taught.

An accusation is not proof, but discomfort is not proof of innocence.

Self-examination is necessary, but it is not automatic self-condemnation.

A Christian may defend truth, but may not seek revenge.

A true confession seeks mercy, but does not demand removal of every consequence.

Forgiveness is required, but safety and accountability remain legitimate.

Privacy is valuable, but secrecy must not conceal danger or crime.

Witness standards protect against false judgment, but must not be manipulated to make concealed abuse impossible to address.

Church leaders need protection from malice, but position must never create immunity.

Silence may be wise, but it is not the only faithful response.

Public correction may be necessary, but public humiliation is not the goal.

Suggested Responses to Likely Questions

Should I answer every false accusation?

No. Nehemiah answered briefly and continued working. Jesus did not answer every hostile claim. Consider the seriousness of the accusation, the audience affected, the possibility of harm and whether the hearer is willing to consider truth.

Does remaining silent make me look guilty?

It may to some people, but appearance alone cannot determine the response. A formal or damaging accusation may require an answer. A provocative or trivial accusation may grow through continued engagement. Seek wisdom and counsel.

Can I forgive someone and still request a retraction?

Yes. Forgiveness rejects personal vengeance. A correction may still be needed to repair harm, protect others or restore an accurate record.

What if the accusation is true but the accuser behaved sinfully?

Both matters can be true. Confess your wrongdoing without using the accuser's conduct as an excuse. The accuser's conduct may then be addressed through its proper process.

What if only part of the accusation is true?

State the distinction plainly. Admit the true portion without qualification and correct the false portion without hostility.

Must two witnesses have seen the original event?

Not every kind of evidence operates identically. Scripture rejects unsupported condemnation. Firsthand testimony is especially important, but documents, messages, admissions and corroborating evidence may also establish facts. The witnesses in Matthew 18 additionally witness the resolution process.

Does repentance restore a person to leadership?

Not automatically. Forgiveness, fellowship, trust and qualification for leadership are related but distinct questions. The nature of the conduct, Biblical qualifications, safety and demonstrated change must be considered.

Should criminal conduct stay within the church?

No. The church must not use spiritual language to conceal crime or obstruct civil authority. Safety and lawful reporting must be honored.

Commentary on the Closing Application

The expanded closing after prayer intentionally places the study into the coming week. The listener is asked to pause before interpreting every correction as an attack. The application also addresses the friend who hears someone else describe an accusation.

Friendship does not require automatic agreement. A loving friend can listen, ask whether facts have been established, discourage retaliation and help the accused person tell the truth. If the friend is innocent, truth supports a defense. If the friend is guilty, truth supports confession.

This application is important because accusations often spread through supportive relationships. A person tells a friend, the friend assumes innocence and soon an entire group possesses certainty without evidence. Biblical friendship should interrupt that process rather than accelerate it.

Final Interpretive Summary

The sermon's controlling command is not "Always defend yourself" or "Always remain silent." It is "Walk in truth."

David's two confrontations display the two major paths. Saul's false charge called for evidence, restraint and an appeal to God. Nathan's true charge called for confession, repentance and mercy.

Matthew 18 provides an orderly process for appropriate church offenses, beginning privately, adding responsible witnesses and involving the church when necessary. The process serves truth and restoration rather than gossip or coercion.

Civil authority and safety remain necessary when danger or crime is involved. Forgiveness does not eliminate evidence, reporting, boundaries or consequences.

The final theological center is the Gospel. Before God, every person is guilty of sin. Christ does not save us by helping us construct a better defense. He saves through His death and resurrection, offering forgiveness and cleansing to those who confess and believe.

An innocent person needs courage to speak the truth. A guilty person needs courage to confess the truth. Both require humility before God.