

# Interrupting Silence: Speaking Out Against Injustice





## The Cost of Silence and the Benefit of Naming Injustice



In today's class we will look more closely at reasons for silence, the impact of silence, and the transformation that can come from choosing to name things that are wrong.

# The Cost of Silence in our personal lives and in society



Blessed is the one  
whose transgressions are forgiven,  
whose sins are covered.

<sup>2</sup> Blessed is the one  
whose sin the LORD does not count  
against them  
and in whose spirit is no deceit.

# The Cost of Silence in our personal lives and in society



When I kept silent,  
my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.  
<sup>4</sup> For day and night  
your hand was heavy on me;  
my strength was sapped  
as in the heat of summer.

# The Cost of Silence in our personal lives and in society



He says we may deceive our neighbors; we may deceive ourselves; but we cannot fool our bodies. Our bodies suffer in ways that we are forced eventually to notice.

# The Cost of Silence in our personal lives and in society



**Preference falsification** is the intentional misrepresenting of one's wants because of perceived social pressures; people don't express what they really feel or believe because they want to avoid potential negative consequences.

# The Cost of Silence in our personal lives and in society



“This occupation which has lasted for nearly 50 years is **killing the moral fiber of Israel**. It creeps into all **parts of our society** and there is more anger and violence than ever before. We cannot be an occupier for all this time, and not expect that it will affect the tone of society.”

# The Cost of Silence in our personal lives and in society



We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the **appalling silence of the good people.** Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co-workers with God . . .



# OASIS Protocols for Breakout Rooms and General Discussion: A review

- Assign spokesperson/note taker at beginning of breakout session
- Ensure all participants have a chance to speak (if they want to speak)
- Be respectful in considering and giving feedback to new or different views
- When possible, a team member may be present in each breakout room to provide support

# Discussion Questions



1. Why do you think Martin Luther King Jr. was so distressed by the silence of friends? What does it mean to have help when you are suffering?
2. What are some “misdeeds” or “injustices” being committed in our society that you think need to be named or called out?
3. In your view, how do these impact the fabric of our society, its health and well-being?



# Healing Begins with Naming

<sup>5</sup>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.



# Healing Begins with Naming

“You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance”.

<sup>10</sup>“Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD’s unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him. <sup>11</sup> Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!”



# Healing Begins with Naming

The key insight is that honest talk transforms and emancipates when it is received in faithful seriousness.



# Healing Begins with Naming

“You disciplined me, and I took the discipline;  
I was like a calf untrained.

Bring me back, let me come back,  
for you are the LORD my God.

<sup>19</sup> For after I had turned away **I repented**;  
and after I was discovered, I struck my thigh;  
(beat my breast)

I was ashamed, and I was dismayed  
because I bore the disgrace of my youth.”



# Healing Begins with Naming

<sup>20</sup> Is Ephraim my dear son?  
Is he the child I delight in?  
As often as I speak against him,  
I still remember him.  
Therefore, I am deeply moved for him;  
I will surely have **mercy** on him,  
says the LORD.

--Jeremiah 31: 16-20



# Healing Begins with Naming

<sup>2</sup> “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. <sup>3</sup> So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. <sup>4</sup> They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.”

--Matthew 23: 2-4



# Healing Begins with Naming

*“In a broken and fearful world  
The Spirit gives us courage  
To **pray** without ceasing,  
To **witness** among all peoples to Christ as  
Lord and Savior  
To **unmask** idolatries in Church and culture  
To **hear** the voices of peoples long silenced,  
And to **work** with others for justice,  
freedom, and peace.”*

From A Brief Statement of Faith (10.65–71)



# Healing Begins with Naming

We believe that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must **witness against and strive against** any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;

From the Belhar Confession 4:8



# Healing Begins with Naming

“It would be easier to keep quiet, but silence is what has allowed the revision of history and denial of people’s testimonies. I have heard enough stories from those who suffered and cannot be quiet any longer.”

--Wanna Ver

# Discussion Questions



1. Brueggemann speaks powerfully about the emancipative transformation and joy that can come from speaking about our transgressions out loud and seeking forgiveness.
  - Do you think the possibility of positive outcomes can encourage people to do the hard work of naming wrongs and calling for repentance?
  - Where do you see the work of naming injustice, repenting and reconciling being done in our society today? Where do you see that more work still needs to be done?
2. What thoughts or experiences do you have about the difficulty of naming apparent injustices?