

Confession

What is Confession:

Confession is the practice of realizing our sins and admitting them. The practice of confession heals and transforms our inner spirit through the release of fear, shame and pride. This Spiritual Discipline urges us to confess out sins to God and to one another..

Confessing your sin to God is agreeing with Him about your sin. You are not telling Him something He doesn't know., but rather, looking at your sin from God's perspective and agreeing with Him about it. The reason we participate in sin, aside from being born into it, is that we fail to see sin for what it really is - the way He sees it.

As a discipline, confession is about introspectively evaluating the things in your life through God's eyes and changing your mind if it doesn't line up with the way you have been looking at it. By constantly filtering your worldview this way, your personal holiness is refined and you become more and more conformed to the image of Christ.

Three things are involved in exercising true confession:

- An examination of conscience--this is where we allow God to bring sin to our minds so that we can seek forgiveness and healing.
- Sorrow--deep regret at having committed the sin and built a wall in our relationships with God.
- Determination to avoid sin--repentance is turning from sin. Confession without repentance is of no value.

Barriers to Confession

- Fear that others will reject us if they know who we really are.
- Lack of trust in others' ability to keep our confession in confidence.
- Fear of loss of status.
- Pride

Things to Remember

- The inability to admit our faults to others leads to hypocrisy.
- Confession frees us from wasting our time and energy keeping our mistakes concealed.
- We are all priests. (1 Peter 2:9) Jesus is only mediator between us and God.(1 Tim 2:5) Confession to others is not necessary for forgiveness from God. However, it is a valuable tool to help us make our sin more real and ultimately eliminate the guilt we have been carrying with us.

- The church is glorious, not because it's perfect, but because it's being redeemed. It is a fellowship of forgiven sinners, not (yet) perfect saints. So in the company of fellow-strugglers it is OK to be imperfect!

Getting Started:

Begin by confessing your sins to God in prayer. Simply enter into prayer and admit bluntly, plainly and in detail any sins or failings you are already aware of. Then ask God to show you other areas of your life in need of confession and healing – confess anything the Holy Spirit brings to your mind.

Ask God's forgiveness for the things you have confessed to him. Ask God's help in avoiding these sins in the future. Then read some of the verses presented at the end of this hand out – be assured that God does indeed forgive us when we humbly come before him!

Below are a few suggestions for helping you do his.

Confess sin without qualification.

Don't use words that excuse your conduct, shift blame to others or water down your confession.

The Prodigal Son rehearsed what he was going to say to his father when he returned home. He said, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants (Luke 15:18-19).

There is no blame-shifting there, no attempt to minimize what he had done. He owns up to his sin. He speaks in the first person, "I did this."

Compare that with this confession, which I have heard and probably at one time said myself. "I'm sorry if I did anything to offend you."

Now think about what that is saying. It means, "I'm not sure if I did anything to offend you. You might just be over-reacting. But just to make you feel better I'm going to say I'm sorry. And I'm only going to apologize because you seem upset, not because I think I've done anything wrong. And since I don't see what I've done wrong, don't expect me to change anything in the future."

And with that approach there will be no lasting change in that area of sin because we really don't think we need to change. There's no true repentance there.

Be specific

1 John 1:9 says we "confess our sins" not just "confess sin" generally. We can think that just because we're confessing a category of sin that we've made a helpful confession.

But until we've confessed a real event of sin we haven't really admitted to our wrongdoing.

For example, a person might say, "I really saw pride in my life this week." Now that's a good starting place. That's more specific than saying "I was a sinner this week." But describe an event where you acted in pride. What did you say or do that was proud?

If we can't think of the specifics then all we're doing is admitting that we are sinners, without admitting to any real and personal sin.

Ideas for more in-depth practice:

As followers of Christ, we have been given the authority to receive the confession of sin and to forgive in his name (John 20:23), and in James 5:16-20, we are told to confess our faults (lapses, deviations, faults, offences, sins, transgressions) to one another so that we may be healed.

Giving a Confession to another Person

- Start by writing your sins down on a piece of paper and reading them to yourself.
- Do not soften the reality of your sin by speaking in generalizations, calling it something else or laying blame at the feet of another. Confession is intended to scrub the residue of sin from your conscience so that you can start afresh.
- Ask God to reveal a wise and mature brother or sister in Christ that has a good reputation for avoiding gossip and a spirit of forgiveness. Then go to that person and ask them if they would be willing to participate in hearing your confession.
- Agree ahead of time on the expectations and rules of engagement.
- Be prepared to take confession from and grant forgiveness to your partner

Receiving a Confession

- Learn to live under the cross. In other words, we must fully recognize our own sinfulness and position as murderers of God's son.
- Keep your partner's confession in confidence.
- Regularly pray for grace and strength to share the love and forgiveness of Christ.
- Pray for discernment.
- Learn to listen and remain silent.
- Do not pry.
- Intercede for your partner in prayer, but do not make a point of it.
- Be sure to announce God's forgiveness and absolution of their sin before parting company.
- Pray openly asking God to heal the inner wounds caused by sin.

Relevant Quotes:

- "A man who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person. As long as I am by myself in the confession of my sins

everything remains in the dark; but in the presence of a brother the sin has to be brought into the light." - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

- "For a good confession three things are necessary: an examination of conscience, sorrow, and a determination to avoid sin." - Alphonsus Liguori
- "Confession is a difficult discipline for us because we all too often view the believing community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners. But if we know that the people of God are first a fellowship of sinners, we are freed to hear the unconditional call of God's love and to confess our needs openly before a brother or sister. We know we are not alone in our sin. The fear and pride that cling to us like barnacles cling to others also. We are sinners together. In acts of mutual confession we release the power that heals. Our humanity is no longer denied, but transformed." - Richard Foster

Biblical Basis:

- "Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective." - James 5:16
- "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." - John 20:23
- "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." - 1 Peter 2:9
- "If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." – 1 John 1:9
- ""As far as the east is from the west, so far does God remove my sin."" – Psalm 103 12
- "What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record....Now I say that each believer should confess his sins to God when he is aware of them, while there is time to be forgiven. Judgment will not touch him if he does" - Psalm 32:1-2 and 6