

If you try to hide your sins from God, your spiritual life won't succeed (Prov. 28:13).

14. Failure to confess results in divine discipline (Psalm 32:3–4).

15. Confession doesn't remove divine discipline from the person who sins.

The life of David illustrates the relationship between confession, forgiveness, and divine discipline. Even though David confessed the sins of adultery and murder ("I have sinned against the Lord" 2 Sam. 12:13), and even though God forgave them ("The Lord also has taken away your sin" 12:13) and waived the legal penalty ("you shall not die" 12:13), David still received divine discipline, both immediately in the death of his child (12:14–23) and for the rest of his life (12:10–12). Confession cancels the guilt but not the discipline for sin. The discipline, however, may be reduced. Had David not confessed immediately, he may have died according to the Law of Moses (capital punishment for murder, Exod. 21:12–14; Lev. 24:17, 21; for adultery, Num. 35:16–21; Deut. 19:11–12; Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22).

Years later David confessed his sin of numbering the people (2 Sam. 24:10), but God still disciplined him (24:11–17). The point is, sin results in discipline—discipline if you confess and discipline if you don't. This should slow down those who try to work the system, thinking, "I can always sin, confess it, and receive God's forgiveness!" Yes, and you'll also receive His discipline!

16. Sins must be confessed and forsaken.

God promises to show compassion to those who confess and forsake their sins (Prov. 28:13). Confession is not enough; forsaking transgressions is also necessary. To forsake (Hebrew אָזַב, *'azab*) is to stop doing something you enjoy (cf. Ezek. 23:8). We all have favorite sins, ones we commit over and over, evil habits that are hard to break. They keep us from receiving God's compassion. If you confess without forsaking personal sins, you'll be forgiven, yes, but you won't receive compassion. Compassion is an attitude that inclines God to treat others well, to do favors for them, and to give them gifts.

17. Why confess if our sins are already forgiven at the cross?

Because faith in Christ cancels the penalty of sin which is spiritual death (John 3:16, Col. 2:13–14), whereas confession cancels the guilt of sin (Psa. 32:5).

18. No sins are too big for God to forgive.

1 John 1:9 is a promise: If you confess, God forgives. All you have to do is believe your sins are forgiven. Some can't, however. They think their sins are too big, too bad, too many. Take God at His word. If you confess, you're forgiven!

19. Isolate the sin.

When you confess your sins, God forgives. The next thing to do is forget them. God has. Put them out of your mind. Don't keep resurrecting them from the dead. And don't keep brooding over them. You'll just make yourself depressed—or sick. Why keep punishing yourself for something God has already forgiven? When God buries our sin in the deepest sea, He posts a sign, "NO FISHING!"

20. Confession makes us responsible for our sins.

Confession is for our benefit, not God's. He knows when we sin and what the sin is—and doesn't need to be told. But, you say, "If He already knows, why does He want us to confess personal sins?" Several reasons.

- Confession forces us to deal with known sins so we can have fellowship with God.
- Confession forces us to recognize our guilt. Adam, for instance, tried to hide his sin (Gen. 3:8; Job 31:33); failing that, he tried to pass the blame to Eve (3:11–12). Eve, in turn, tried to pass the blame to the serpent (3:13). In general, man hates to take responsibility for his sins.
- Confession reminds us of the enemy within—the flesh and its desires.
- Confession reminds us of God's authority, that we're accountable to Him.

If you quit praying, stop going to church, and neglect the Word, chances are you'll forget to confess your sins. Fellowship isn't automatic. You have to want a relationship with God enough to maintain a moment by moment sensitivity to unconfessed sin. Why don't you make confession a regular part of your prayer life? You'll be glad you did.



Glendale Baptist Church
12338 Coulson
Houston, Texas 77015
Robert C. Lewis, Pastor
713-453-8351

CONFESSION OF SIN



If we confess our sins,
he is faithful and just
to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us
from all unrighteousness.
~1 John 1:9~

1. Confession is agreeing with God you've committed a sin.

Confession is telling God "I have sinned!" David, after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband Uriah the Hittite, confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:13). And immediately the prophet Nathan proclaimed God's forgiveness: "The Lord also has taken away your sin" (12:13). David's confession was an admission of guilt regarding two personal sins.

The Greek word for confession is *ὁμολογέω* (*homologeō*). It means 'to agree, admit, acknowledge, confess' and is used in extra-biblical literature

- of friends who have agreed to do something together (Josephus, *Ant.* 17.39),
- of a general who captured a town by negotiation, that is, through agreement on the terms of surrender (Josephus, *War* 1.21),
- of admitting you have treated others with contempt (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1380a5), and
- of admitting your faults to others, such as timidity (Epictetus 2.21.1ff.).

Agreeing with someone and admitting to something are closely related. In admitting faults, for instance, you agree that they exist. Agreement always precedes an admission of guilt. In confession a believer must agree with God before he'll admit to wrongdoing.

2. Confession is judging yourself correctly (1 Cor. 11:31).

This is self-judgment—rendering a verdict of guilty with respect to personal sins.

3. The clearest statement of confession is 1 John 1:9.

This is not the only verse on confession: there are many more in both the Old and New Testaments. Cf. Exod. 32:31; Lev. 26:40–41; Num. 14:40; 21:7; 22:34; 1 Sam. 15:24, 30; 2 Sam. 12:13; 24:10; Psa. 32:5; 38:18; 41:4; 51:4; Prov. 28:13; Neh. 1:6–7; Jer. 3:13, 25; 14:20; Dan. 9:4–5; Hos. 5:15; Luke 18:13.

4. Confession makes fellowship with God possible (1 John 1:5–9).

Confession is the mechanics of forgiveness and fellowship. It produces three things: forgiveness of sins, cleansing from all unrighteousness, and fellowship with God. The Christian walk begins with confession, for without it there is no fellowship with Absolute Holiness. Confession is a bar of spiritual soap that washes away the guilt of personal sins in order to have a relationship with God. Now, let's make this personal. If you have unconfessed sin in your life, your fellowship with God is

broken. The moment you sin, you drop out of fellowship; the moment you confess, fellowship is restored. At any moment you're either in or out of fellowship. So, the moment you become aware of unconfessed sin, confess it immediately!

In other words, when you sin, the Holy Spirit is grieved (Eph. 4:30), His power is quenched (1 Thess. 5:19), fellowship is lost (1 John 1:9), and you become carnal (1 Cor. 3:1–3). Confession restores fellowship, frees the Spirit to fill you again, and renews your spirituality.

5. Confession is a choice.

The word "if" in 1 John 1:9 introduces a third class (future more probable) condition: it implies uncertainty with a better than average chance of fulfillment. In other words, maybe you'll confess your sins, maybe you won't. The choice is yours.

When you sin, every time you sin—regardless if it's a known or unknown sin—you drop out of fellowship with God. And every time you commit a known sin you have a decision to make: shall I confess or shall I not? If you do, you're restored; if you don't, you remain out of fellowship. How can you ever be happy in the Christian life unless you spend most of your time in fellowship with God?

Here's the real tragedy: many Christians don't know about confession. As a result they seldom have fellowship with God even though they've been saved for years! They go to church, put money in the collection plate, teach a Sunday school class, serve on various boards and committees—and rarely walk in fellowship with their God.

6. Confession always precedes forgiveness (2 Sam. 12:13; Psalm 32:5; 1 John 1:9).

7. Confession cleanses from known and unknown sins.

How can unknown sins be confessed? They can't. You can't confess what you're not aware of. So God set up a procedure by which unknown sins are automatically forgiven when you confess known sins. Otherwise unknown sins would pile up and never be forgiven because they can never be confessed. Upon confession God forgives all known and unknown sins committed since you confessed last. This is pure grace because God wants to have a relationship with you.

8. Confession is a part of prayer.

Confession is, for example, an integral part of the prayers of Ezra (9:5–15, note especially 10:1), Nehemiah (1:5–11), and Daniel (9:4–19, note especially 9:20). In each case, they confessed their sins and the sins of their people to God (cf. Psa. 32:5).

9. Keep short accounts.

Self-inspection is a good habit to cultivate. Ask yourself several times a day, "Have I committed any known sins in the past few hours?" If one comes to mind, confess it right away. Don't let another second go by. When you do, your fellowship will be restored—that's a promise.

One way to keep short accounts is to pray without ceasing. If you pray frequently throughout the day, maintaining fellowship won't be much of a problem. Begin each prayer with confession and you'll automatically keep short accounts. Remember, prayers offered with unconfessed sin in the heart aren't heard (Psa. 66:18).

10. It never hurts to be specific.

In confessing the sin of his people, Moses specifically named their sin: "They have made a god of gold for themselves" (Exod. 32:31). This is a good habit to develop. When you confess, name your sin—identify it. You don't have to name the sin to be forgiven; there's no such command in the Bible. David didn't name his sin when he confessed to murder and adultery: "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:13). Or, "I have sinned against Thee" (Psa. 41:4). Or, "Against Thee, and Thee only, I have sinned" (Psa. 51:4). Nor did he name his sin of numbering the people: "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But, now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have acted very foolishly" (2 Sam. 24:10). The important thing is to be clear in your own mind what sin you're confessing, because confession is agreeing with God that you've committed a specific sin. If you name the sin, there's no doubt in your mind which sin you're confessing. It forces you to be specific and removes any possibility of hiding the sin from God. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel also named specific sins in their prayers (Ezra 9:10–12, 14; Neh. 1:7; Dan. 9:5, 6, 10, 11, 14).

11. Continual, uninterrupted fellowship with God is not possible in this life.

Periodic, interrupted fellowship is possible, however, and that's better than nothing! Not until we shed this body of sin will we experience a perfect, uninterrupted relationship with God.

12. Don't let the yo-yo effect discourage you.

When I first began confessing my sins, the Christian life seemed like a yo-yo. I was in fellowship one minute and out the next. In. Out. In. Out. In. Out. Just like a yo-yo. I was confessing all the time. But as my growth in the Word progressed, the yo-yo effect became less and less. Soon long stretches of time elapsed between prayers of confession.

13. The opposite of confession is keeping silent about personal sins (Psalm 32:3–4).