

## Not First #3: CONFESSION

### Word

#### Scripture Reference

1 John 1:5-2:2

#### Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever had to confess to someone something that you did wrong? How did you feel about it? Share the experience with your group.

2. Oftentimes, people are reluctant to say sorry because it is an admission that they have done something wrong. Pride hinders us from saying we ever did anything wrong, and so we reject the spiritual discipline of confession which the Bible clearly teaches we as believers must practice. Read 1 John 1:5-2:2. In this letter of the apostle John to the Church where he tells us about the spiritual discipline of confession, he first reminds us about three important theological truths to help us fully accept the idea of confession:

- a. **Truth #1: God is holy, and He is never wrong in anything He does (v. 1:5).** God's character of holiness is very much emphasized in the Bible. God's holiness means that no sin is found in Him. It means He makes no mistakes, His motives are always pure, and that He is never wrong. If God's holiness means all these things, then in our relationship with the Lord, who is always right? Does God ever owe you an apology for the difficulties and trials that you experience in your life? Why or why not?
- b. **Truth #2: Sin is inconsistent and contradictory with God's holiness (v. 1:6).** As light and darkness are on the opposite sides of the spectrum, so is sin and holiness. To a holy God, there is no big or small sin; sin is sin. Just because

God is gracious, merciful, and forgiving does not mean that He has relaxed His standard with regards to sin. Have you ever justified something wrong that you did by comparing it to other "major" sins? What are some things you are doing now that you think are wrong but that are "not really a big deal"? What excuses do you give to justify your actions? How does knowing that God is never ok with any sin change your perspective?

- c. **Truth #3: Jesus cleanses us from ALL sins so we can fellowship with God (v. 1:7).** A holy God cannot have anything to do with sin. But because He loves us and wants a relationship with us, Jesus, God the Son, had to die on the cross in our place to cleanse us from our sins and allow us to "hang out" with God. Jesus already paid the ultimate price for sin. There is no sin that God the Father cannot forgive through the cleansing blood of Jesus. But why is it that many Christians try to fix their sins with another sin? Do you go to Jesus when you have a sin problem, or do you try to fix it yourself? Discuss the deadly cycle of trying to cover up your sin with another sin. Compare it with how the blood of Christ deals with your sin problem.
3. Knowing now these truths about God, as believers we are called to do these things:
  - a. **Self-examination to reveal imperfection (v. 1:8).** An honest examination of our actions, motives, speech, and intentions reveal that none of us are perfect. That is why we do not like to do it. When was the last time you looked at your life to see areas in which you have not done right in relation to God, family, and friends?
  - b. **A daily need to practice the spiritual discipline of confession (v. 9-10).** Unless we realize that we are not perfect, that we have wronged the Lord and we have wronged others, we will never find the need to confess. What is confession? What does your confession through prayer look like? Read King David's confession in Psalm 51. What two actions does this psalm teaches us that an honest confession should include?

4. Why do we need to confess? The apostle John gives us two reasons:

- a. **Confession helps us avoid more sin (v. 2:1a).** When you do not deliberately think about your wrong actions, you tend to repeat them. Confessing your sins gives you a heightened sense of awareness of your sins. What sin--any kind of sin--do you find yourself repeatedly doing? Have you ever tried to confess it to God, or do you simply ask for forgiveness “for all the things I did wrong”?
- b. **Confession reminds us of God’s grace, love, and sacrifice (v. 2:1b-2).** The word *propitiation* means that Jesus Christ’s death satisfies God’s rightful wrath toward our sins. It means that God’s rightful anger is appeased through His Son. It means that we don’t receive the penalty for our sins because Jesus Christ received it in our place. “*I deserve God’s punishment, yet through His Son Jesus Christ I received forgiveness instead.*” Is this at the forefront of your thoughts everyday? How do you daily remind yourself of God’s grace and mercy to stop yourself from sinning?

### Walk

*“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)*

When we think about admitting that we are wrong, we feel reluctant because we associate it with shame. But these words from Scripture tells us that there is no shame in confessing to the Lord our sins. There is forgiveness instead. Isn’t that awesome? Through Jesus Christ, God forgives ALL of our sins. But this is not a license to keep on sinning. As a follower of Jesus Christ, you are called to daily self-examination and confession of unrighteousness so that you will be reminded of God’s grace, love, and forgiveness, which in turn should remind you to no longer sin. What sins do you find difficult to confess to God? If it would help to write it down, do so. Then find a quiet time and place where you won’t be interrupted, when you can, one by one, confess those sins to God. You’ll find that instead of feeling shame, you will instead feel the embrace of a gracious, loving Father who tells you, “You’re forgiven, my child.”

### Worship & Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, you are good and faithful and just. You are grace, love, mercy, and forgiveness personified. Oftentimes I abuse those qualities of yours and sin. Many times I also forget those qualities of Yours and sin. And when I sin, I feel ashamed and try to hide my sin with more sin. Then I try to make myself feel better by simply asking You to “forgive all the wrong things I did.” I “confess” my sins without really admitting I did anything wrong. Forgive me, Father. Forgive me. Thank you for the reminder through Your Word that Your Son Jesus Christ has already paid the penalty of my sins. I come to you now with the assurance of His blood on the cross, asking you to forgive me for

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For all these sins, Lord, I ask for Your help--for strength and guidance to overcome it. I ask for help in finding godly people who will hold me accountable and help me to change. I ask you, Lord, to create in me a clean heart, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. I ask all these in Jesus’ name. Amen.