**"Confession"**

***Overview***

They say confession is good for the soul. That may be true – but it is not easy. In confession we face what we know to be the worst about ourselves – and that is never an enjoyable undertaking.



Nevertheless, we know confession is a necessary part of the Christian experience. Each of us begins this life with a lost soul that can be redeemed only as we seek forgiveness for the sin that is inherent in all of us.

And then beyond that moment when we initially lay our sin at the cross and receive Christ as Savior, there is still the remnant of our sin nature that makes regular times of confession unavoidable. It’s not fun – but this lesson calls us to approach confession as a discipline – one which promises healing and life for those who dare to practice it.

***Getting Started***



1. Can you think of an embarrassing or humorous moment when you had to

confess something you had done? Share that with your group.

1. Children often instinctively try to hide the things they need to own up to. What

strategies have you seen them use to avoid confession?

3. Share an interesting fact about yourself that people would likely not guess to

be true about you (unusual hobby, odd experience, unique ability, etc.).

***The Text***

16So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.



2 Cor. 5:16-21 (NIV)

***The Audio (optional)***

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"Confession" - by Kyle Corbin, Nov. 17/19

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***Understanding***

1. What did Jesus accomplish on the cross according to 2 Cor. 5:16-21? How



does this passage inform our understanding of Christ’s work? Other people? Our ministry? Confession? Forgiveness?

2. Is the confession of our sin before God a one-time act or an ongoing practice?

Consider Romans 8:18-25, Gal. 5:15-26., Phil. 2:12.

3. What is God’s attitude to us when we come to Him in confession and ask

forgiveness? Read Luke 15:11-24, 1 John 1:9-10.

4. What are the benefits of confession? How does our failure to confess and

seek forgiveness affect us? Review Ps. 32:3-4, Ps. 38, Matthew 5:23-24.

5. Is confession a corporate or a private activity? Consider 1 Timothy 2:5 and

James 5:16. What are the pros and cons for each?

6. What should our response be when we hear the confession of someone?

Check out Matt. 18:21-22, Luke 17:3-4, Eph. 4:32? Why does God call us to respond in this way? What makes this a hard thing to do? What makes it easier?

7. What does it mean for us to forgive someone? What are some

misconceptions people have about forgiveness (i.e. what does it NOT mean)? What is the ultimate goal of confession and forgiveness (see 2 Cor. 5:18, Matt. 18:15)?

***Applying***

1. Should we view the church first and foremost as a fellowship of sinners or



as a fellowship of saints? What implications arise from each of these perspectives for the practice of confession in the Body of Christ?

2. One writer (St. Alphonsus Ligouri) has suggested that a “good” confession

requires three things: an examination of conscience, sorrow, and a determination to avoid sin. Would you add anything to this list? Which of these do you find the hardest to practice?

3. What makes it difficult for us to confess our sins to one another? What

would make it easier for us to do this?

4. Are there limits to the amount of confession we should offer? Are there

limits to the granting of forgiveness (remember your answer to question #6

in the previous section but read also Mark 11:25 and 2 Cor. 7:10)?

5. Do you need to spend some time with God in order to confess and

surrender something to Him? Take some time in the coming week to do this.

6. Is there anyone in your circle of relationships that you could go to practice

confession on a regular basis? What will you do in the coming week to

establish this discipline or practice in your spiritual walk? Remember the

following:

When confessing:

i) Invite God to reveal areas that need forgiveness and healing.

ii) Express sorrow.

iii) Become determined to avoid sin.

iv) Find someone to confess to.

When receiving confession:

i) Be prepared.

ii) Be quiet.

iii) Make the cross central.

iv) Pray for the person confessing.

***Memory Verse(s)***



16Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so

that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

James 5:16 (NIV)

***Extra Resources***

* *"Confession"* by Pastor Kyle Corbin ("Immanuel Church" website, Nov. 17, 2019). Pastor Kyle uses this sermon to explain the importance and practice of confession (before God and with others).



* *"The Discipline of Confession”* by Richard J. Foster (chapter 10 of “Celebration of Discipline”, HarperOne, 2018, pp. 143-157). Foster discusses the importance of confession, providing some excellent suggestions for how to give (and receive) a confession.
* *“Don’t Keep Your Sins a Secret”* by Zach Howard (“Desiring God” website, Feb. 5, 2019). In this brief article, Howard reviews Augustine’s wisdom on the “what” and “how” of confessing to God before others.