

9. Genuinely confessing our sins to God has practical effects on how we view others. Using Titus 3:1-7 as your model, how would you describe the relational change that comes from God's forgiveness?

Additionally, James encourages us to *"confess [our] sins to one another"* (James 5:16). How might confession to another person help us and them?

Last Word: Silence brings enslavement, confession brings freedom. Freedom from the soul-enslaving effects of sin and its eternal consequences. Admitting our sin is the first step in repentance. It involves waking up to the fact that we have been deceiving ourselves and that our thoughts, words and deeds have been wrong. This process is described in Isaiah 55:6-7, *"Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."*

There is no doubt, confession is hard but the reward of spiritual freedom far outweighs the humility of saying we've done wrong. So, if you desire to *"walk in the light"* with God our Father, you'll have to humbly and continually confess your sins to Him.

Prayer: Ask God for help confessing your sins to Him. Then pour out your heart to your Father acknowledging your sins, transgressions and iniquities. Say the same thing about your sins as He has said. Then, with a clean heart accept His forgiveness.

Lesson 3

Confessing Our Sins

1 John 1:5-2:2

Have you ever kept a secret that was simply killing you to hold it inside? Maybe it was one of those good secrets such as an unannounced pregnancy or a surprise engagement. With your heart overflowing with joy you just wanted to tell someone but couldn't. On the other hand, perhaps you harbored a bad secret - something that you hoped no one ever discovered, but deep down you wanted to confess to someone, anyone so you could unload the burden you carried. Thus, caught up in the vicious cycle of shame you remain silent and needlessly suffer. But there is a way to break free of the guilt you carry.

As I grow in the faith, I am more and more convinced that the basics of what God expects of us can be laid out rather simply. In triadic form, we are called to constantly walk in God's light, contritely confessing our sins, and thankfully accepting His gracious cleansing. Of these three, the humiliating task of contritely confessing our sins demands our focus because, to our spiritual hurt, we so often neglect this most humbling act. Its basic doctrine to affirm the Christian life cannot be lived without faith; but nor can it be lived without the acknowledgment our own sinfulness. *Read 1 John 1:5-2:2.*

1. What do you envision about God when you read: *"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all"* (1:5)?

2. What mistaken view about one's lifestyle and relationship with God does John expose in 1:6, 8, 10?

In your own words, explain how this can be done explicitly and / or passively.

3. What does John mean when he calls for believers to "*walk in the light*" (1:7) as opposed to "*walk[ing] in darkness*" (1:5, 6)?
4. If we "*walk in the light*," doing what God commands, why do we need to continually rely on the blood of Jesus to purify us from all sin (1:7b)?
5. John states that he is writing these things to combat sin, but the reality is believers do sin, even grievously (2:1). In what way(s) does Matthew 26:41 and Romans 7:18-25 illustrate the tension between wanting to do right but failing to do so?

With v. 9, John turns to the issue of confessing our sins to God. Just as persistently "*walk[ing] in the light*" is an indication of belief in Christ, continual confession of our sins and ungodliness is an indication of salvation. The term "*confess*" means to say the same thing about sin as God does; that is to acknowledge His perspective about sin.

6. Select a few Bible verses and write out a short description of what God thinks about our sin.
7. Typically our confessions fall woefully short of expressing what God thinks of our sins. Why do you think we are reluctant at times to really acknowledge our sins to God?
8. Thankfully, God's promise of forgiveness rests on His "*faithful and just*" character (1:9; 2:1b-2; cf. Psalm 103:8-13). How can this truth give us strength to overcome our fears and confess our sin to Him?