

Confession Lesson Two

Focal Texts: Psalm 51; 1 John 1:9

Background: Psalm 51; 1 John 1:9

Teaching Aim: To lead members to identify the primary aspects of a meaningful and effective time of confession and to apply these to their own times of personal confession of sin to God.

Connect with Life: Begin by asking members to name some of the factors that contribute to a meaningful time of fellowship with God. These will include Bible study, prayer, meditation, etc. Then say that while a lack of these factors will reduce the quality of fellowship with God, what one factor will make fellowship with God impossible? Their response should be un-confessed sin.

Then share with members that we will identify several aspects of effective confession in our study for today. Each of us will be encouraged to apply these to our own times of personal confession.

Guide Bible Study: Enlist someone to read 1 John 1:9 and ask members to name ways that this verse should motivate us to practice a time of regular confession of sin to God. Responses should include:

1. God will forgive our sins if we confess them. “Once we acknowledge and confess our sin, this passage teaches us what happens next. God’s forgiveness is immediate.”
2. God will purify us from all unrighteousness. “He then moves to purify us from our unrighteousness. This is a process. He forgives us immediately-but it may take a while to clean us up!”

Then share the following from the Study Guide: “From a theological standpoint, we must acknowledge this verse addresses our fellowship with God, not our relationship with God. Our relationship with God rests securely upon the finished work of Christ on the cross. Once we are redeemed by his grace, we are securely his children forever. However, our daily fellowship with God fluctuates based on our obedience to him. We receive his forgiveness as his children so that our fellowship with him can be restored and renewed. Our relationship with God is not threatened by our daily transgressions or our serious moments of failure. The blood of Jesus was shed on the cross for our sin. Our acceptance into the family of God is made possible by God’s grace manifested through Jesus. But we can choose to be out of fellowship with our Father. This verse helps us understand the pathway to renewed intimacy with God in our daily life.”

Then share with members that since confession is so very important to our continued fellowship with God, let’s examine Psalm 51 in order to identify aspects of an effective time of confession to God. Write each of these on the board as they are identified and discussed. Suggested characteristics include the following:

1. Appeal to God's mercy and love (51:1a). Refer to the material just read from the Study Guide as a reminder of the certainty of God's love and mercy for his children. This (plus the assurance found in 1 John 1:9) is the basis for our confidence in approaching God in a time of confession. Remind members of the sin of David for which he was asking forgiveness in this psalm. "David appealed to God's covenant love in verse 1 as the basis for God's merciful response to his actions." We appeal to God based on our conversion experience.
2. Then ask for God's forgiveness and cleansing that are promised in 1 John 1:9 (51:1b-2). "The comprehensive nature of David's offense is revealed in the vocabulary he chose to describe both his failure and the response he requested from God. Notice he used three different terms to describe his actions-transgressions, iniquity, and sin. He also used three different words to communicate his request-blot out, wash away, and cleanse."
3. Admit your sin against God and accept his judgment (51:3-4). "The first step is to acknowledge our sin before God. We must first confess and agree with God about our sin. We must be willing to view our sin through his eyes. Once we recognize the truth that we have sinned, we then confess it to our Lord." "He didn't seek to blame Bathsheba or anyone else. In his quiet moments, his sin was always before him. Before we ask God for his forgiveness, our sinful failures remain on our minds. Even if we think we have gotten away with something, we are still convicted by what we have done." "God's law had been abrogated and David took full responsibility for his actions."
4. Recognize the necessity for purity in our soul and in-most being (51:6). "David recognized God's desire was for him to be honest and open in his admission of guilt. Hiding or constructing barriers within ourselves is not the way to deal with sin. Openness and honesty is the path to restoration and healing."
5. Pray for a restoration of God's holiness in your life (51:7). Only God can remove the stain of our sin and restore us to His righteousness. "The hyssop plant was used in ritual cleansing practices by priests in the ancient world. Hyssop is a plant belonging to the mint family and was recognized for its antiseptic qualities. The priests in Israel would take stalks from the plant and bind them together to form an anointing tool for ritual cleaning purposes. These stalks would be dipped in water and the water was sprinkled on both people and objects."
6. Ask for a restoration of your joy and gladness (51:8). "As the process of restoration continues, we need to experience the freedom and refreshment that accompanies God's forgiveness in our lives. David asked God to restore his joy in spite of the crushing nature of his failure."
7. Pray for a restoration of the joy of His salvation (51:9-12). "David asked God to give him a pure heart and to restore his spirit. Perhaps David was weary from carrying the burden of his wrongdoing. He needed a fresh start. He longed for a new day. He

needed new resolve. He needed a purified heart and a cleansed will. David lived in a time before the Holy Spirit indwelt God's people. He had a real fear that God would abandon him in his sinful condition. David understood the reality of joyless living. He was ready for life beyond his guilt!"

8. Ask God to help you continue in your witness for him (51:13). "Can we still be useful to God after we have failed him? Praise God, we can! His life could become a testimony of God's grace and redemption. Only through humility and honesty is this possible."
9. Pray for a restoration of meaningful worship (51:14-15). "What the psalmist knows and feels will be turned into lyrics-forming a song of deliverance, redemption, and abundant life-sung everywhere he goes."
10. Make a commitment to obedience (51:16-17). "David understood God was interested in his heart, not just his performance of ritualistic worship. Our confession and repentance must be heartfelt and true. Our actions always reveal the authenticity of our inner person."
11. Ask God to restore the privilege of praying for others (51:18-19). David was the spiritual and military leader of his country. He had temporarily lost this privilege. "David was the king. He was supposed to model a life of integrity and holiness for Israel. He was a political, military and spiritual leader. He had failed in his duty." "The good news is that we can become useful servants in God's hands even after episodes of failure. God does not discard us because we are broken. He specializes in restoration projects! We can be transformed by his grace, restored by his mercy, and energized for his service. This is truly good news!"

Encourage Application: Lead members in a time of review of these eleven aspects of confession. Some may be willing to share experiences they have had with one or more of these aspects. Close with a time of prayer that members apply these aspects to their times of confession.