

# **BaptistWay Press® Adult Online Bible Commentary**

By Dr. Duane Brooks  
Pastor, Tallowood Baptist Church  
Houston, Texas

## **Studies in 14 Habits of Highly Effective Disciples**

---

Lesson Two

### **Confession**

#### ***Focal Text***

Psalm 51; 1 John 1:9

#### ***Background***

Psalm 51; 1 John 1:9

#### ***Main Idea***

Disciples confess their sins to God in order to receive forgiveness and restoration.

#### ***Question to Explore***

How current and comprehensive is the confession of my sin?

#### ***Quick Read***

The completed work of Christ secures our relationship with him. However, our daily fellowship with God is affected by how we live. Confessing our sins and repenting from them enables us to maintain close fellowship with our Father.

---

### ***Introduction***

I took my family to sin city. In this lesson on confession, I want to be clear that we flew into Vegas because it was the cheapest way to get to the football game and because it gave me a chance to go to the Grand Canyon and check that off my bucket list. I had been to Vegas before at a preachers' convention. A roller coaster in the hotel kept me awake all night that time so I thought I would let two of our kids ride it while my wife and I ate pizza in our room and watched TV.

Page 1 of 9

*Adult Online Bible Commentary. 14 Habits of Highly Effective Disciples—Lesson Two. Copyright © 2014 BAPTISTWAY PRESS®. A ministry of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Go to [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) or call 1-866-249-1799 toll-free for additional Bible study materials for all ages. **This lesson is not to be sold or distributed beyond the subscription agreement. The copyright notice and identifying information in this note must be included on any copies made.***

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in *Adult Online Bible Commentary* are from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 Biblica. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Gambling holds no particular appeal to me. In the morning when I jogged I marveled momentarily at the monuments man makes out of money. I saw the impressive architecture and buildings in so-called “sin city.” But I also saw an ugly underside of the city. A young woman argued with an angry young man who appeared to threaten her with violence. She sat down beside the street because it seemed safe. Scary stuff!

Truthfully, sin does not reside in a particular destination, but in our hearts. My city, your city, and every city is “sin city.” Our real issue is that we have turned the gospel into, as Dallas Willard said, “sin management.”<sup>1</sup> He meant that we reduce the gospel to simply trying to manage our sin a little better. Unfortunately, it doesn’t work. Under our own management, we still manage to sin. How do we move beyond sin management?

Let’s look together at a beautiful penitential psalm from the Old Testament and a wonderful promise in the New Testament.

## **Commentary**

### **A Prayer for Forgiveness**

Have you noticed that we are sometimes most vulnerable after we are most victorious? The writer of 2 Samuel tells us that David had subdued his enemies - the Arameans and the Ammonites. Kings typically went off to war in the spring, but David sent his General Joab instead of going himself (2 Samuel 11:1). One pastor observed, “David was out of position.”

Temptation often strikes when we are not where we are supposed to be. Grady Nutt, the Baptist comedian who died before his time, told of a man who explained that he had broken his leg in three places. He asked his doctor what he should do. “Stay out of those places,” answered his physician.

Despite our best efforts to do all the right things, temptation will find us. On the roof of his own palace the king saw a woman bathing. Instead of turning away, he sent for her and discovered she was the wife of one of his soldiers, Uriah the Hittite. David committed adultery with Bathsheba. Soon he discovered she was expecting a child (2 Sam. 11:2-5). Then in a tangled web of intrigue, David tried to get Uriah to come home and cover up his mistake.

Uriah showed more integrity than David by refusing to return to his wife while his fellow soldiers were in the conflict. Finally, David abused his power by sending Uriah with sealed orders, back to the battle. There General Joab fulfilled David’s command and exposed Uriah to danger that resulted in his death. David, the man after God’s own heart, found himself guilty of both adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11:6-17).

After a season, David married Bathsheba and she bore a child to him (2 Sam. 11:26-27). David tried hard to salve his conscience during the months that followed his deed. Maybe

if he pretended innocence the people in leadership around him would all pretend not to know. Still, David himself knew what he had done.

Like Lady MacBeth in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, David could not cleanse his conscience of the relentless guilt. And as Nathan revealed, God knew David's deeds. The prophet whose name means "gift," gave King David the gift of accountability by telling David a story. A wealthy man had stolen the pet lamb of a poor man instead of killing one from his own flocks. Incensed, King David pronounced judgment. The man who did this will die. Nathan indicted David with the powerful pronouncement, "You are the man" (2 Sam. 12:7).

In Psalm 51 we hear David's open and honest confession. With this penitential song, he is praying and saying, "I am the man."

Forgiveness is rooted in the very nature of God. David knew his sin, but even more he came to know God. God's mercy, love, and compassion gave David confidence to bring his sin into the presence of the God who forgives when we confess. John explains this principle with a promise. When we confess our sins to God he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us completely (1 John 1:9). The full revelation of God's character is found in Jesus, and his atoning death becomes the basis upon which any of us and all of us can be forgiven.

This is such good news for us. The more we try to manage our sin, the more we manage to sin. What if we came under new management? Wouldn't things change? We must move beyond the management of sin. Our gospel is more than that. The more we know God's love and mercy, the more we find greater freedom to confess and find release from our sins. Because God is the way he is, he can change the way we are. So we confess because we confide in God – we trust him to transform us.

***Our Confession: We Do Not Conceal Our Sin but Confess it to God***

As "sin-managers" we may try to conceal our sin. Like Adam and Eve trying to hide from God in the garden, we too may try to conceal our sin (Genesis 3:8). David moved beyond that and so must we.

Remember, David initially tried to conceal his sin, and this caused his soul to ache (Psalm 32:3). I'll never forget teaching this story of David's sin to a group of students at Houston Baptist University a few years ago. One young man had been lethargic and apathetic, apparently waiting for class to end until I told this story. Before long, he sat up and started shaking his head "No!" as I told of David's adultery with Bathsheba. His jaw visibly dropped when I told about David's murder of Uriah.

Our best efforts to cover our sin only make a bigger mess. In another penitential psalm, David wrote in Psalm 32:3-5,

When I kept silent my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said I will confess my transgressions to the LORD and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

It is so dangerous to dwell in the dark. I heard that approximately 700 people live in the water tunnels under Las Vegas in a community of graffiti artists. One of them explained that it is cheaper and cooler there and they have less problems from the police for their illegal activities. It may sound safe but it isn't. Many have died in flash floods that have swept through the tunnels over the years. Likewise, trying to conceal our sin does us absolutely no good.

### **When We Understand God's Character We Confess**

Psalm 51:1-6 reminds us that God is merciful, with unfailing love and great compassion. David knew he had sinned and that his sin was against God. He further knew that his sin nature came with him at birth. David comes completely clean with his fault.

God so embodies truth that we cannot live a lie and stay comfortably in his presence. The truth is: we are always in his presence. Knowing who God is causes us to come to terms with our sinfulness and confess who we are. Susan Wise Bauer offers a helpful distinction: "An *apology* is an expression of regret: I am sorry. A *confession* is an admission of fault: I am sorry because I did wrong. I sinned."<sup>2</sup> David accepted personal responsibility and owned his sin.

Frederick the Great was the King of Prussia in the Hohenzollern dynasty. It is told that he once visited a prison at Potsdam. Every prisoner said, "I have been framed. Get me out of here. I am innocent." One man sat silently, intriguing the emperor. "Why are you here?" "Because I committed the crime," he answered. Frederick called for the guards to remove the man for fear that he might corrupt all the innocent men in the prison. By contrast David was not only broken over his sin, but he was broken beyond human self-repair.

Reportedly during the Great Awakening, when the Spirit of God revived much of our nation's early faith, Jonathan Edwards was presiding over a massive prayer meeting. Eight hundred men prayed with him. Into that meeting a woman sent a message asking the men to pray for her husband. The note described a man who had become unloving, prideful, and difficult.

Edwards read the message in private and then, thinking that perhaps the man described was present, made a bold request. Edwards read the note to the 800 men. Then he asked if the man who had been described would raise his hand, so that the whole assembly could pray for him. Three hundred men raised their hands. Would you have raised your hand? I would have. Confession leads to cleansing.

John reminds us of God's character (1 John 1:9). God is *faithful* and *just*. Because God is who he is we can confess our sin to him. God's very kindness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). What will God do when we confess? John says, "He will cleanse us from all our sin."

Is your computer like mine? On my computer a little box of reminders of past events periodically pops up on the screen. I often click out of it. The reminders build up over time and recently I noticed that they dated back to November. I bravely pressed delete. And a message said, "Are you sure you want to dismiss all of these reminders." Yes, I am sure.

What if we could do that with our past failures? There are so many reminders of our sin and guilt in this world. What if we could just delete them? Are we even sure we would want to delete them? Yes we are sure. So instead of running from God when we sin, we must learn to run to him.

Do you want to make the act of confessing your sin as pleasant as possible? Then make a full rather than a partial confession. That's the message from a recent study conducted by researchers in the U.S. and Israel titled "I Cheated but Only a Little."<sup>3</sup> Based on a series of studies involving over 4,000 people, the researchers found that people who only partially confessed a transgression felt worse than those who do not confess at all.

Dr. Eyal Pe'er, the study's lead author, had a surprisingly biblical angle on the results. He said, "Confessing to only part of the guilt of one's transgression is attractive to a lot of people because they expect the confession to be more believable and guilt-relieving than not confessing. But our findings show the exact opposite ... People seeking redemption by partially admitting their big lies feel guiltier because they do not take complete responsibility for their behaviors." The Harvard Business Review summarized the research this way: "Confession is a powerful way to relieve guilt, but it works only if you tell the whole truth."<sup>4</sup>

***Our Confidence: God Cleanses Us from Our Sin and Restores Relationship with Us!***

David knows who God is, so he knows what God can do. He approaches God and addresses him as the loving and compassionate and merciful God. Knowing God, he is not afraid to confess. When David prays, "Hide your face from my sins" (Psalms 51:9) the thought seems to be "if I can't hide from you then please hide my sins from yourself."

What does David mean by "Create in me a pure heart" (Ps. 51:10)? Certainly he does not say "dust me off and clean me up." He says, "Start over." Using the word for creation, David suggests that the God who created the world might start over again like Jeremiah's potter with the clay (Jeremiah 18:1-6).

Houston pastor Bill Hinson once told a memorable story about the woman whose children played hide-and-seek in their apartment complex. For his hiding place, the youngest boy found a roofing tar barrel, and hid in it.

He won the game but when he came out covered in tar, his siblings did not know what to do. So they carried him to the front door and tried to sneak him in. His mother caught them coming in, took one look and said, “Son it would be easier to make another one than to clean you up.”

Could we blame God if he felt that way about us? Good news: God is both able and willing to cleanse. He can make us new! Paul wrote, “...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...” (2 Corinthians 5:17). God can give us a right spirit if we will receive it.

Is David afraid of losing his relationship with God when he says, “Do not cast me away” (Ps. 51:11). From the time Samuel anointed him as future king, David had lived with a constant consciousness of God’s presence. This is what salvation restores. We begin to live a “with God” kind of life. He is with us and we are with him. He is for us and we are for him.

Sometimes it is hard to leave “sin city.” About an hour after we left Las Vegas on our recent trip, our plane lost an engine and we had to go back and land with one engine. Fire trucks were everywhere. What happened in Vegas was *we almost stayed in Vegas!* When the plane turned, we looked down into the Grand Canyon flying with one engine. I was nervous, but the captain kept talking about how safe we were and how he had done this before in a simulator. We landed safely.

It occurred to me that the Grand Canyon was on my bucket list, but I never wanted it to be the bucket I kicked. After a few hours, the airline found another plane and another crew. By coincidence, the original captain sat beside me on the way home. I noticed he was reading a Christian book. There was turbulence, but he was calm; so I was calm. I was having a more enjoyable “with the pilot” kind of flight and I remembered Dallas Willard’s words about a “with God” kind of life.

Recently we dedicated the organ in our church with a hymn sing. Our building is five-years-old and it has taken that long to get the organ right. As we sang that night, our music minister, Carlos Ichter, reintroduced us to a hymn of confession. The words of Horatius Bonar’s hymn *No, Not Despairingly* are so moving. Sitting in the “surround-sound” of our newly restored organ, played by Al Travis, joined by our choir, I sang these words and wept.

No, not despairingly, come I to Thee;  
no, not distrustingly, bend I the knee:  
sin hath gone over me, yet this is still my plea:  
Jesus hath died.

Ah! Mine iniquity crimson hath been,  
infinite, infinite sin upon sin:  
sin of not loving Thee, sin of not trusting Thee,  
infinite sin.

Lord I confess to Thee sadly my sin;  
all I am tell I Thee, all I have been:  
purge Thou my sin away, wash Thou my soul this day:  
Lord make me clean.

Faithful and just art Thou, forgiving all;  
loving and kind art Thou when poor ones call:  
Lord let the cleansing blood, blood of the Lamb of God,  
pass o'er my soul.

Then all is peace and light this soul within  
Thus shall I walk with Thee, the loved Unseen  
Leaning on Thee my God, Guided along the road  
Nothing between.<sup>5</sup>

Imagine; forgiveness so complete that nothing is between our souls and the Savior! In the same way, God's forgiveness is complete and comprehensive in Christ. John says, "If anyone sin . . ." Well, we all have. Good news: we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours but for the whole world.

This means that the only way the whole world can be forgiven is through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. People in Vegas under the city, and people in the tallest high rises in Dallas and Houston, as well as the people in the smallest community in Texas, all have the same essential need which only God can meet.

### **Conclusion**

In *The Testament*, novelist John Grisham paints a portrait of one man's surrender to God's will. Nate O'Reilly is a disgraced corporate attorney plagued by alcoholism and drug abuse. After two marriages, four rehab programs, and a serious bout with dengue fever; Nate acknowledges his need for God.

Grisham describes the transformation,

With both hands, he clenched the back of the pew in front of him. He repeated the list, mumbling softly every weakness and flaw and affliction and evil that plagued him. He confessed them all. In one long glorious acknowledgment of failure, he

laid himself bare before God. He held nothing back. He unloaded enough burdens to crush any three men, and when he finally finished Nate had tears in his eyes.

"I'm sorry," he whispered to God. "Please, help me." As quickly as the fever had left his body, he felt the baggage leave his soul. With one gentle brush of the hand, his slate had been wiped clean. Louisa Fletcher said, "How I wish there were some wonderful place called the land of beginning again where all our mistakes, and all of our heartaches and all of our poor selfish griefs could be dropped like a shabby coat at the door never to be put on again."<sup>6</sup>

The cross is that place; and God brings us back to a place beyond sin management.

We are under new management.

---

***Meet the Writer: Dr. Duane Brooks***

Dr. Duane Brooks has been the pastor at Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston, TX since 1998. He has been a member of the Texas Baptist Executive Board and the Human Welfare Board of the BGCT. Dr. Brooks is currently Adjunct Professor at Houston Baptist University and serves on the Board of Regents at Baylor University. He holds the Ph.D. from Baylor University.

Duane was called to preach while in middle school in Germany and ordained in Great Falls, Montana. He has served as pastor in four Texas Baptist churches - New Hope Baptist Church in Cedar Park, Williams Creek Baptist Church in Mart, and Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Rosebud. Duane and his wife, Melanie, have two sons, Graham and Chase, and a daughter, Casey.

**BaptistWay Press®**

See [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) for additional study materials on

***14 Habits of Highly Effective Disciples***

and more than fifty other Bible studies by BaptistWay Press®,  
or call 1-866-249-1799 (M-Fri 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. central time).

---

Another book by Dr. Brooks,

*This Magnificent Salvation: What Salvation Means in a World Like This*,  
is also available from BAPTISTWAY PRESS®.

The price is only \$7.95 each plus shipping and any applicable taxes.

See [www.baptistwaypress.org](http://www.baptistwaypress.org) for a free *Teaching Guide* and PowerPoint®  
presentation for *This Magnificent Salvation: What Salvation Means in a World Like  
This*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), ix.

<sup>2</sup> Susan Wise Bauer, *The Art of the Public Grovel: Sexual Sin and Public Confession in America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 2.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/psp-a0035392.pdf>. Accessed 5/29/2014.

<sup>4</sup> <http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/02/a-partial-confession-makes-you-feel-worse-than-full-disclosure-or-no-disclosure/>. Accessed 5/29/2014.

<sup>5</sup> Horatius Bonar, “No, Not Depairingly” *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1991), Hymn #270.

<sup>6</sup> John Grisham, *The Testament* (New York, New York: Bantam Dell, 1999), 326.