

Biblical Foundations of Confession

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One of the biggest hurdles in addressing confession is our **presupposed sense of familiarity**.

- To categorically dismiss confession **would be to our own harm**. Just because something has been practiced poorly doesn't mean it is unbiblical.

Defining “Confession of Sin”

In Scripture, to “*confess*” literally means to “acknowledge or agree with the truth.” Confession of sin is openly admitting our wrongs - telling the **truth** about our sinfulness instead of **hiding it**.

Scriptures *consistently* show that *honest confession* is not only necessary to build proper worship of God, but also helpful to build genuine faith and spiritual growth.

Confession of sin has two dimensions in Scripture.

1. **Vertically**, we confess our sins to God, since ultimately **all sin is against Him** and only He can grant forgiveness.
2. And **horizontally**, there is also a place for **confessing our sins to one another**.

1 John 1:7–9 (ESV)

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins...”

Psalms 32:3–5 (ESV)

“I acknowledged my sin to you... and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.”

Daniel 9:4-5 ESV

I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying [...] ‘we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled...’

Luke 11:4 ESV

“...and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.”

Psalms 51:1–4 (ESV)

“Have mercy on me, O God... against you... have I sinned...”

1 John 1:7-10

- One of the **clearest marks of the Spirit's regenerating work** in us is that it gives us a *tender conscience toward God*.
- Verses 8–9 then give two contrasting possibilities:
 - *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*
 - *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

There is no third option. Either we deny sin and live in delusion, or we acknowledge and confess it and walk in the light.

John wants us to feel the weight of this: **claiming sinlessness makes God out to be a liar.**

But then, just a few verses later: *"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (2:1).*

James 5:16 - Confessing and Praying Together

Mutual, open honesty and prayer among the members of the church - *everyone with everyone.*

- James "*connects mutual prayer with mutual confession*" = a church that is **honest** to one another, **prays** with one another, is **restored** and **reconciled** one to another, and is thereby a church that is *not easily ruptured by the divisiveness of sin*.
- A "hiding church" - A place where everyone wears a mask of perfection, nobody admits struggles, and sin festers in the dark.
 - This kind of mutual confession is a **safeguard against sin's deceitfulness.**
 - Sin loses much of its **power** when it's dragged into the light.

Practicing Confession Wisely

1. Every Christian should practice regular confession privately before God.
2. Beyond private confession to God, Scripture (as we saw) commends having faithful, trustworthy believers with whom you can be honest about your sins.
3. There are purposeful "confessional" aspects of the call to worship, the songs we sing...
4. Confess with discretion - is this making a spectacle of sin? Am I overrun with despair, or is there gospel joy in my acknowledgement of my failings in light of Christ's work?
5. Follow-up and accountability is crucial - not once and done.
6. Maintain confidentiality and trust (only in serious circumstances will an issue need to be elevated outside of confidentiality.)