

GREATER BETHEL MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH, INC.

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SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Confession

1 John 1:5-10

October 7, 2025

Introduction

The awesome God we worship is eager to forgive us, as is revealed in the words of Psalm 103: *“As far as the east is from the west, so far does God remove my sin.”*

With these words, he offers us a guilt-free existence. But without acknowledging our sins before God and depending on his mercy to help us change, guilt and shame can constantly plague us. Confession and forgiveness are realities that transform us, serving as a means of healing and transformation for the inner spirit. Some might wonder why confession is listed as a discipline, since it is possible only through the grace of God. Unless God gives the grace, no genuine confession can be made. But confession is also discipline because there are things we should do. The Bible teaches us how to confess.

In **1 Timothy 2:5**, we read that *“there is one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.”* However, we can also appreciate the teaching to *“confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed”* (James 5:16). Through confession and the promise of forgiveness, we can look forward to a genuinely changed life.

You have probably heard the saying, *“Confession is good for the soul.”* Why is that?

First key passage: 1 John 1:5-10; 2:1-2

Have you ever felt like you need to *“clean up your life”* before turning it over to

Jesus Christ? Do you sometimes think Jesus wants you not for who you are now, but for who you could be?

Sin often comes packaged in ways that make it hard for us to identify. To truly appreciate the impact of confession on us, we must first understand what sin does to us. Discuss for a moment what sin is and how it affects our lives.

Confession is a means for pursuing purity. —
Anonymous

In **Psalm 32:1-2 and 6**, we read: *“What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record.... Now I say that each believer should confess his sins to God when he is aware of them, while there is time to be forgiven. Judgment will not touch him if he does”* (The Living Bible).

What is *God’s part* and what is *your part* in the confession process?

Second key passage: James 5:16

How do you feel about this instruction? Relieved, embarrassed, thankful, uncomfortable, not sure what to think?

Richard Foster writes:

Confession is a complex discipline for us because we all too often view the believing community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners. But if we know that the people of God are first a fellowship of sinners, we are free to hear the unconditional call of God’s love and to confess our needs openly before a brother or sister. We know we are not alone in our sin. The fear and pride that cling to us like barnacles cling to others also. We are sinners together. In acts of mutual confession, we release the power that heals. Our humanity is no longer denied but transformed. How do you feel about this statement?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes:

A man who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person. If I am by myself in the confession of my sins, everything remains in the dark; but in the presence of a brother/sister, the sin has to be brought into the light.

What is your reaction?

How can confession benefit you in healing past wounds?

When you feel the need to confess a sin and seek the support and love of a Christian friend, to whom would you go (what qualities does the person have)?

What would you say and how would you react if a Christian friend asked you if he/she could confess a sin to you? How would you prepare yourself?

In the next few days, take some time to study the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Pay careful attention to the father's reaction and the son's behavior. Then turn your thoughts toward your heavenly Father. Consider the high cost he paid to redeem you and how fully he has forgiven you.

Read Psalm 103:1-14.

Examine your life regarding confession. Are there sins in your life you confessed to God, but a persistent doubt of forgiveness plagues your life? You don't feel released from that sin. You still feel hurt. You feel misery and bitterness.

Prayerfully consider whether you should confess this sin or hurt to a trusted fellow Christian so that God can show you his love and support through one of his children.

Final note: Please do not think that God won't forgive us unless we repent of

every sin we have ever committed. No, we are unable to remember all the sins we have committed, but he forgives us anyway. Jesus died for our sins, purchased forgiveness for us, before we were even born. “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, *not counting people’s sins against them*” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

BREAKOUT ROOMS

1. After reading 1 John 1:5-10, explain in your own words what it means to you that Jesus is the Advocate, the Righteous One, and the Atoning Sacrifice.
2. Do you think you take your sins too seriously, too lightly, or do you feel you have a proper perspective on them? Please explain.
3. Have you ever confessed a sin to a trusted believer and received prayers? Why did you feel the need to do so? Has anyone ever betrayed your trust?