

# Confession

2 John 1:9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

To abide in the doctrine is to do what it says. We are to inwardly cooperate with God's will. This means we are to participate in the giving of ourselves into a renewal of the mind, purifying of the heart, and cleansing of the consciousness. We are to walk in correction.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

According to [biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com) confess means to acknowledge, admit, profess, and reveal.

We are to acknowledge and admit our sin. We need to learn what it is, identify it, confess it, and seek God for correction. This requires focused time and effort.

1 John 5:17 "All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death."

It says "all unrighteousness." Unrighteousness is that which is not righteous. Whatever we do think or say that is not righteous, is sin. We all have it and practice it. No one is perfect, therefore, we can all find improvement with God. We can choose righteous adjustments and improvements.

Matthew 9:13 "But go and learn what *this* means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Jesus interacted with both sinners and righteous. The righteous in this verse were likely the law abiders. These law abiders were practicing the letter of the law, but not really loving God. They were following rituals, customs, and focused on outward actions. They were not inwardly focused upon their hearts and minds. They were full of pride and self-

seeking. They practiced sacrifices and yet would not have compassion and love for each other. They lacked mercy.

When we practice mercy with compassion and love, we situate ourselves for a spiritual righteousness or spiritual experience. Spiritual sensations thrive through connection and care. Yet these righteous people sought disconnection and condemnation toward the broken. Such uncaring practices are indeed unrighteous. Jesus refers to them as righteous because that how other people saw them, not because they were actually righteous.

Real righteous seeking people will be growing in the direction of compassion, mercy, peace, truth, justice, forgiveness, generosity, and love. These are God's Elements of Righteousness. The Bible describes God using these traits. We are instructed to grow, demonstrate, and teach them. But first, we must learn what they are in real life situations through experiences. We will need to get our contaminating evil practices out of the way so we can grow in righteousness.

We must understand where we are in error. We need to practice seeking to understand our sin and confessing or sharing it someone and God.

When we confess our sin we are admitting it is true and owning it. It is ours. This is best done without blaming, justifying, or making excuses. If we blame, justify, or make excuses, we may be giving ourselves a pass to repeat it. It's also best to confess beyond mere intellectualization of wrongs. As best we can, we ought to have our hearts present as well as our minds, even if it gets uncomfortable.

In Twelve Step programs the 4th and 5th steps involve an introduction to confessing resentments and learning to evaluate ourselves for wrongdoings. As we improve our self-awareness we can discover more and more throughout our lives. So this is not a one-and-done process. It will be something we practice for life.

### **Here is a personal testimony.**

"The first time I did my 4th and 5th steps I was filled with justified anger. It was like, "Yeah, so what. The whole world is a problem. What's the

difference if I'm doing wrong when the whole world is wrong?" I did not feel much remorse. That came later.

I was blaming my behavior on the world. I believed I needed to behave the way I did to stay safe. I was surrounded by dangerous people, many of which I chose to be around. I chose my friends and hang outs. I chose the fast lane. Taking responsibility for my choices can feel uncomfortable, but until I see the truth, that I am responsible, I cannot be empowered to choose differently."

Confession is not merely an action of telling on ourselves. It helps us to see our inward part, our choices, to where we might make some changes and improve our souls through trusting God.

Catharsis can be therapeutic, but if nothing changes, it may only be a temporary emotional venting of an ongoing problematic behavior. Something will need to change to fix the problem or the hurt will continue.

We can confess again and again our wrongdoings without making much change. The goal is to come clean and make changes with God. A certain conviction can help which may be a realization that we are making choices that hurt us and others around us. We may be choosing to associate with others who create the hurt. Even isolation can deprive others the help we might otherwise be able to bring and the spiritual good we inwardly experience through helping. Blaming needs to be avoided, even self-blame leading to self-condemnation.

The word conscience is used 30 times in the NKJV New Testament. (Clean conscience, good conscience, and pure conscience). To make something clean and pure involves two practices. One is to remove the dirt or mess. The second part is to keep that dirt or mess from coming in. Removal of inward experiences with evil is only part of the process. We are to inwardly add in God's good. The focus is to bring inward good, not just avoid evil.

Learning more detail about this develops through action.

Soon after my first confession I began learning my character defects. I was at home sitting at the dining room table with a friend. On the table was a collection of Twelve Step materials and I happened upon a paper that read "The Twelve Humorous Steps." Since it said humorous I instantly believed

it was going to be funny. But it wasn't funny. I felt convicted. I will never forget steps 8 & 9.

“8. Made a list of all persons who had harmed us and became willing to go to any lengths to get even with them all.

9. Got direct revenge wherever possible. Except when to do so would cost us our own lives or at least a stiff jail sentence.”

These steps were describing me. I have a scar on my face from someone, who was at that time, on my list to avenge. I was learning I needed to let go of this grudge and I did not like it.

Although I had confessed with my mouth, I had yet to become convinced I needed to change. The convincing came about slowly over time. Reading the Twelve Humorous Steps was but one situation that helped with the convincing. I still had so much more to learn.

Proverbs 28:13 He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

People everyday ask “How are you doing” and common responses are “fine” and “good.” We can easily conclude we are ‘fine’ and ‘good’ no matter the situation. We can have a heated argument at our home and then walk into work with a smile on our face. Out of sight, out of mind. We are often in a process of convincing ourselves things are okay. There are many times we will need to set the situation aside for the moment, but if we want a resolve we will need to find a solution. We can't change the past, but we can grow with God today, which will affect tomorrow.

Being clay for the potter means we need to be shapable. If we are hard, fixed in our mindsets, or rebellious toward God's good character, then we likely won't be shaped much with God.

We must see where we are hard and resistant to change and become more flexible to grace so grace can do it's work. We will need to sit down for while and honestly evaluate our inward selves, thoughts, feelings, and soul.

To grow with God as the Bible describes God we will need to improve our discernment with how we are doing. We will need to get real with the truth about our inward selves.

Throughout this process we can experience inward conviction. Such responses are crucial spiritual influences. It is imperative we separate fact from opinion here. If it's opinion, we can consult a spiritual advisor/mentor with it. I believe we all can benefit from reality checks with others. If we draw conclusions based upon opinions it may undermine growth with God.

Here are some examples of opinions. "I'm a terrible person" I can't change," or "I'm evil and going to hell." These are not God's messages nor align with who God is. God is love. Many of us just don't get what God's love is. We must practice growth mindsets. We must be willing to set our own understanding aside, listen to opposing ideas, and then test them with an open mind.

Let's be clear that our beliefs can create our reality. We can open our minds to give God a chance to show us a new and different perspective. We can choose to put an end to self-reliance and ungodly habitual thought messages. We can choose to stop the "I can't" messages. We can choose to believe our limited understanding could be wrong. It's best to limit the words "should" and "ya, but."

Proverbs 28:13 says "Confesses and forsakes them."

Both are needed. We confess and forsake. That means we will choose to stop. The stopping of sin is not the goal. The goal is turning to God and doing God's will.

In Steps 6 & 7 we humbly pray for the removal of character defects. We will need an increasing awareness of our defects and God's goodness. We will need a practice of choosing to redirect ourselves into God's grace. Choice is and has always been our responsibility.

James 5:16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

We can choose to practice confession, prayer, and opening our hearts and minds for healing.

The words “may be healed” are used, not will be healed. And the healing is quite contingent upon our readiness. Stiff necks, hard hearts, and fixed mindsets can resist grace. Are we inwardly ready to be changed with God?

If we read a verse out of context, we can easily misunderstand what it says.

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Some might say, “all we need to do is confess our sins.” However, if we read whole chapter it can reveal more requirements.

Let’s read more and pay close attention the use of the word ‘if.’ Remember, the word ‘if’ is a clause describing a contingency. The word if is used four times.

1 John 1:7 - 10 “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

The goal is pretty clear that we are to “walk in the light as He is in the light.” And what will happen? We will “have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” You see, we have sin. We have it right now. If we refuse to acknowledge our sin we may end up with “His word is not in us.”

Confession is seeing and owning the errors in our ways. That means we need to look or seek out where we are wrong. If we don’t see it, we can ask others to help us find it.

Here are some questions that might help. Are we hurried, worried, stressed, or angry? Are patient and loving like Jesus? Do we speak sincere truth in all things or do we lie, deceive, or take advantage of others? Do we think about self-interests or isolate? How much time do we spend during the day thinking about how to help others or better serve God's interests? Are we good listeners with empathy?

It is best to be as objective as possible when answering such questions to avoid our own personal bias. If we are willing we can review these questions with another who knows us well and invite their feedback. Our goal is to learn the truth about ourselves. Whether it is comfortable or uncomfortable, we choose to do it. Spiritual growth can develop through learning things that are uncomfortable.

We must write it down like a shopping list, for it will be a list. Our minds can forget or at least be slow to recall.

Let's look at John 3:16 - 17 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Many people have learned these verses. It has been used so much I once found it stamped on the underside of a fast food restaurant's cup. But let's read more and see what it reveals.

Verses 18 - 21 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

Those who have studied themselves to learn their evil deeds and have made changes to walk in the light can inwardly relate to these verses. We can know the word better through experiences with what it describes.

Those who have done the truth, come to the light, exposed their deeds, and changed with God will likely relate more to verses 18 - 21. Confession is part of this journey.

Coming to the truth and the light is to discover more who we are inside. We can improve awareness of our thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions. We can study how the Bible describes Good and evil and relate to it. We can improve and grow with God through this process. Let's not let fear nor discomfort deter us from accepting grace into our hearts and minds. Let's humbly and faithfully gradually improve our walk with God's.

We can share this experience with others for even further growth.

Isaiah 59:20 "The Redeemer will come to Zion,  
And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,"  
Says the Lord.

Below is the "Humorous Twelve Steps."

1. We admitted we were powerless over nothing - that we could manage our lives perfectly and those of anyone else who would allow us.
2. Came to believe there was no power greater than ourselves and the rest of the world was insane.
3. Made a decision to have our loved ones and friends turn their wills and lives over to our care even though they couldn't understand us at all.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral and immoral inventory of everyone we knew.
5. Admitted to the whole world at large the exact nature of everyone else's wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to make others straighten up and do right.
7. Demanded others to either "shape up or ship out."
8. Made a list of all persons who had harmed us and became willing to go to any lengths to get even with them all.



9. Got direct revenge wherever possible. Except when to do so would cost us our own lives or at least a stiff jail sentence.

10. Continued to take the inventory of others and when they were wrong promptly and repeatedly told them about it.

11. Sought through bitching, complaining, and nagging to improve our relations with others as we couldn't understand them at all, asking only that they knuckle under and do things our way.

12. Having had a complete physical, emotional and spiritual breakdown as a result of these steps, we tried to blame others and to get sympathy and pity in all our affairs.

<https://www.soberrecovery.com/forums/friends-family-alcoholics/369330-funny-12-steps.html>

## **Depth of Knowledge**

### **Confession**

Shallow levels - Define confession, identify where it is used in the Bible, understand how to do it, listen to others talk about the experience, learn information about it.

Deeper levels - Do a confession. Confess every secret and wrong. Use your mistakes to help others. Help others with confession. Listen to others confess. Feel forgiveness, give forgiveness. Experience the process of purifying the heart and cleansing the conscience.

### **Repentance**

Shallow levels - Define confession, identify where it is used in the Bible, understand how to do it, listen to others talk about the experience, learn information about it.

Deeper levels - Practice repentance. Experience and learn the thoughts, fears, self-deception, and humbling of self involved with repentance. Learn the results in relationships through the practice of confession and repentance. Learn through experience what loving your enemy does within yourself and your enemy. Speak truth you know is right, but are afraid to say. Tell on yourself because it is the right thing to do. Know through experience what "I shall not want" feels like (psalm 23). Trust God more than anything or anyone, where all you need is God. Experience being content in difficult situations, because you are with God.