
Confession

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” – James 5:16

Confession is the practice of letting other safe and trusted people know our deepest weaknesses and failures. One of the best ways to receive nurture and grace from others is through the practice of confession. There is also no more effective way to deal with sin in our lives. Over the centuries, confession somehow became a practice between an individual and God. But in the Bible, confession is both a practice between an individual and God (1 John 1:9) and an individual and other supportive believers (James 5:16 is one example).

A huge part of confession is forgiveness. Richard Foster has said, “It is God who does the forgiving, but often He chooses human beings as the channel of His forgiving grace.”¹ It is important to understand confession as a process. Since forgiveness is a process and almost always takes a significant amount of time, the practice of confession becomes an integral part of this process. There is nothing more healing for sin than bringing it into the light. The best way to bring sin into the light is through confession.

It is also very important to be sure that confession is practiced in an atmosphere of safety and grace. If confession is done with people who are judgmental, critical, or attempt to “fix” you as a person, it will only exacerbate the problem. So prior to spending time in confession, be sure the other people involved are as committed to giving grace, love, and forgiveness as you are.

- Read and meditate on 1 John 1:9. Choose an area of sin that you need to tell God about. As you share it with him, picture God’s face full of compassion and love. Allow yourself to feel and experience God’s grace and forgiveness of this area.
- Choose a friend who knows you better than anyone else. If you have never discussed confession together, spend some time exploring how the two of you might benefit from sharing the deepest parts of yourself. If you have mutual agreement about sharing issues of struggle and sin, share an area of your life that has been in the darkness and needs to be brought into the light. Allow yourself to feel your friend’s acceptance and grace. Spend some time praying for each other with what you have shared.
- If you are part of a small group that is very safe, consider how you might practice confession in the context of community.

¹ Richard J. Foster, *Richard J. Foster’s Study Guide For Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), 59.