

Theological Equipping Class

Confession

May 3, 2026

Questions to consider:

- What is confession?
- Why should we confess?
- What should we confess?
- How should we confess?
- To whom should we confess?
- When should we confess?

What is Confession?

Theological Confession: a confession of faith

- *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9–10)*
- *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:11)*

Confession of Sin

- *and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. (Matthew 3:6)*
- *Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. (Acts 19:18)*
- *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (James 5:16)*
- *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

Greek terms:

- homologeo, homologoumenos, homologia, and exhomologeo
- homo (same) + logos (word)
- Saying the same thing about our sin!
- Confession of sin is a realignment of the heart with the confession of faith.
- Speaking the truth about ourselves, our sin, our God.

Why should we Confess?

- The reality of mixed motivations.
- “The Lord... draws us to himself not only by the sweetness of his goodness, but also by the fear of punishment.” (John Calvin)
- “There is no one affection that is to be exercised alone... but many affections are exercised together.” (Jonathan Edwards)
 - “a concatenation of affections”
- “The New Testament motivates obedience with promises of reward and threats of punishment, as well as with commands and examples.” (John Piper)

Reasons to confess:

1. Obedience

2. Forgiveness

- *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 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. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:5–10)*
- *Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)*
- The errors of legalism and licentiousness.

3. Healing

- *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (James 5:14–16)*

- Is all sickness a result of unconfessed sin?
 - *As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him." (John 9:1–3)*
- *For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away. (Psalm 31:10)*
- *For 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 dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah (Psalm 32:3–5)*
- Sin can have physical consequences.

4. Reconciliation

- *Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him. (Luke 17:3–4)*
- *And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' (Luke 15:21)*

5. To avoid a seared conscience

- *...the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared... (1 Timothy 4:2)*
- *They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. (Ephesians 4:18–19)*
- *He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing. (Proverbs 29:1)*
- Why should you confess your sin? Because sin disrupts your communion with God. It dulls your conscience. It can endanger your health. And it damages your relationships with others.
- Why do we find confession difficult? Pride, shame, fear.

What Should we Confess?

- *...confessing their sins.* (Matthew 3:6)
- *... confess your sins to one another...* (James 5:16)
- *If we confess our sins...* (1 John 1:9)

What is the object of confession? Sin.

Does that mean if you forget to confess a sin, it won't be forgiven?

Confess the small stuff

Internal vs. external temptation

- *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.* (James 1:13–15)

The Danger of Morbid Introspection

- "Learn much of the Lord Jesus. For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ." (Robert Murray McCheyne)
- "Satan loves to fish in the troubled waters of a discontented heart." (Thomas Brooks)
- The pride of dragging up old sin.

How should I Confess?

- "Let me speak especially to you who desire to find peace with God and salvation through the precious blood: you will do well to make your confession before God very frank, very sincere, very explicit. Surely you have nothing to hide, for there is nothing that you can hide. He knows your guilt already, but he would have you know it; therefore, he bids you to confess it. Go into the details of your sin in your secret acknowledgments before God. Strip yourself of all excuses; make no apologies." (Charles Spurgeon)

- “God has promised that ‘if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (1 John 1:9). But that does not mean that confession is a light and easy thing, a simple mouthing of words, a verbal ritual. Mere admission is not confession. We dishonor Christ by a frivolous view of confession that fails to appreciate how much our sin cost him. Although not a spiritual self-flagellation, biblical confession does involve at least some degree of grief for the sin committed.” (Donald Whitney)
- “Let us not simply call ourselves sinners, but let us also recount our sins, going over them one by one.” (John Chrystostom)

Principles of Biblical Confession

1. Be specific.
2. Be personal.
3. Be comprehensive.
4. Be God-centered.
 - *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. (Psalm 51:4)*
5. Be humble.
6. Be repentant.

To Whom Should We Confess?

Roman Catholic (and Anglican) view of Confession

The Evangelical (over)Reaction

The Biblical Position

- *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.* (James 5:16)
- confession should be as wide and public as the offense
- accountability partners?
- The necessity of wisdom: scripture, prayer, and community.

When should I confess?

- Beware the danger of delayed obedience.
- *So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.* (Matthew 5:23–24)
 - Considering the context of the command
- *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger...* (Ephesians 4:26)
- *...and give no opportunity to the devil.* (Ephesians 4:26–27)

The Principle of Immediacy

- *Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it"—when you have it with you.* (Proverbs 3:27–28)
- *So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.* (James 4:17)
- *I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments.* (Psalm 119:60)
- *Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* (Isaiah 55:6–7)