

Let us look at Step 5, as we look into the 12 Steps with God**Step 5 – Admit – We admitted to God, ourselves, and to a brother/sister in Christ the sins in our lives.**

Tonight, in the Step 5 we will begin looking at the need to and the value of admitting our sin to God, to ourselves, and a brother/sister in Christ. This is an important act of obedience to God and a truly positive step in our recovery! Through the years it has been duly recognized that open honesty about personal struggles with God, ourselves, and others has helped free people from the difficulty of bearing guilt all by oneself. The Bible is clear about the need/value of candid honesty about our sin/struggles.

James 5:16, “Confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other so that you will be healed.”

This verse contains two imperatives: confess and pray. This is God’s direction to us as believers and to ignore this command is sin. By failing to confess and pray, we further compound the existing sin and greatly hinder our growth in Christ. Let us consider these two concepts for a minute.

Confession is a verbal and open statement where we acknowledge our sin and its consequences. When we confess our sins to each other we are being completely honest about our departures from godliness. We swallow our pride, admit our shortcomings, and do not sugar coat it. Prayer is a means whereby we communicate with our God and too many believers do not fully grasp the breadth of wonderful things can happen as we speak sincerely with our God. It is often through prayer that He directs and works in our lives and circumstances (e.g., Dan. 9:21-22; Luke 9:29).

There are two possible interpretations of this verse. First, we may not tell everyone, but we do tell someone. This is where a discipler becomes an important part of your life. He or she can be trusted with your dirty laundry, in confidence, and walking alongside you as one who encourages and supports you in the restoration process. Restoring your relationship and usefulness to God is the objective.

As we are learning the importance of confession, it is important to remember that those you confide in will be praying for you. It is likely there will be others that are aware of the situation/relationship that will also be praying for an outcome that honors God. Praying for one another is one way of loving one another.

Intercessory prayer is a critical aspect of how the body of Christ is to function – this is one way we demonstrate our love for one another. It stands to reason that we can better pray for one another when we better know one another and understand some of the struggles in their lives. Taking time to build relationships is important in this step.

When our lives are marked by a consistent habit of confession and prayer, by the grace of God we will find healing. It is easy to focus on a physical response to a spiritual work, but the healing response may be much more than just the meeting of a physical need. There are other important dimensions to our healing - spiritual, emotional, and mental healing are all potential outcomes for confession and prayer.

The second possible interpretation is that we confess our sin to the one we have sinned against. This takes our confession to another level. It is one thing to admit your sin to a mentor, or discipler; but to admit your error to the one you have wronged is a much tougher. Yet, this is such a vital part of the healing and reconciliation process because a relationship impacted by sin is broken in the short-term and will likely deteriorate further without our confession and reconciliation efforts.

On the receiving end of your confession, it is possible that the offended person is praying for you. Though he, or she, has been hurt; their love may continue through prayer for you, even though you have offended them.

When we put the two thoughts together, it comes to a beautiful resolution: healing. Broken relationships are always one of the worst results from sin; yet when we confess our sin to those we have wronged and they are praying for us, the potential for healing and reconciliation in the relationship is high.

I would suggest that these two interpretations are not mutually exclusive, in fact there is a synergy between the two – they are more powerful together. Let us live with both as true – confess your sin to your discipler, but also confess it to those you have sinned against.

At this point we also want to encourage you to pray for those who have sinned against you. Today may be the day that they confess to you their sin – will your heart be prepared to forgive them their transgression and restore the relationship?

Another text that fits our discussion well is found in the Old Testament. It appears in the primary book of wisdom, Proverbs.

Proverbs 28:13, “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”

It does not seem like this verse requires very much explanation. When we try to hide our sin, we continue in failure. On the other hand, when we admit our sin and turn away from it, God grants mercy by withholding our collapse. You notice two keys to gaining the mercy of God, confession, and repentance. You cannot do one or the other and expect complete success – both are necessary.

It is obvious that these matters are challenging at best, and almost impossible at worst in our own strength. Though you may be scared, worried, or intimidated, the right thing to do is admit your sin and welcome God and other’s help to deal with it. We already know that Christ is the solution; but often we need someone’s help in restoring our relationship with God and possibly using that person(s) as a living example of His love, grace, mercy and forgiveness...think Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23)

Consider and Confess:

So how about it? In our previous step we looked extensively at ourselves to mine out the sin we harbor. Now it is time to get things out in the open. We suggest this progression, these action steps in order:

1. Recognize your sin against God and confess it to Him. Any sin against men is first and foremost a sin against God. Many of us have sinned against ourselves, without anyone else involved, and this too is a sin against God.
 - a. What are your sins against God?
 - b. What are your sins against yourselves and also against God?
2. Identify those whom you have sinned against and confess it to them. The reality is that often those whom we have wronged are willing and eager to forgive, but sometimes they may be bitter and angry. They may use your confession as an opportunity to retaliate and sin against you. Be ready to

forgive them if that happens. Remember, what drives you to confess is not just about feeling better yourself but attempting to restore the relationship. Do your part.

- a. Who have you sinned against that you need to confess to and ask their forgiveness?
 - b. If your confession was not well received and they lash out at you, are you ready to forgive them.
 - c. Is there anything else that you can say or do to help restore that relationship?
3. Identify those who have sinned against you and lovingly pray for them. It is a healthy exercise to regularly pray for those who have wronged you. They are people, just like you and me. They have a sin nature. They fail too. Reflect God's character in your life and show mercy and grace to those who have sinned against you, praying for them.
- a. Who has wronged you and for whom do you need to pray?
 - b. Knowing that they need to walk the same confession and prayer process that we have been talking about, what else can you specifically pray for in terms of this relationship that needs to be reconciled?
4. Honestly admit your sin to someone you trust, and they can help you. Perhaps your pastor, an elder/deacon in the church, or a friend you know who maintains a healthy life with Christ. These people become a great means of fellowship and encouragement. Let God's people in and together with Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit, sin will be less and less a part of your life.
- a. Who will you confide in, who can you trust, and who will be faithful as a prayer partner with the issues/struggles in your life?

We will be diving into the work of assessment to identify those we've sinned against in greater detail in step 8, but this is a necessary part to help with that step.

Looking ahead:

We are interested in moving quickly from sin identification, confession, and repentance to blessing as we grow, mature in Christ, and begin to find greater joy in our lives. Our next step, Step 6 - Surrender, helps move our attention away from ourselves and onto those around us whom we may serve. Be ready to get out of your comfort zone with this next step.