

# Confess Your Sins...

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“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. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.<sup>8</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:7-9).

When we read this passage there are often a lot of questions about how this confession is to take place so that we may be able to “walk in the light.” Who do I confess to? God or people? How many people have to be involved? Does it have to be in public, or can I confess to God in private? Can I confide to a brother or sister in private? Can I just say that I have sinned, or must I spout forth the embarrassing specifics?

Every sin is ultimately committed against God (Psalm 51:4). The Bible consistently emphasizes our need to confess our sins to Him (Psalm 41:4; Acts 8:22). The confession and apology should match the impact. Those impacted by the sin should hear the confession. If a sin involves a large number of people in public, a brother or sister must then extend the confession to the members of the church. As for the confession of our sins to people, the Bible gives no specific command as to how often and who. We are told many times to confess our sins to the Lord, but the only direct command to confess to someone else is in the context of church elders praying on behalf of the sick. “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 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 effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:14-16). Therefore, it seems the general rule is that if you sin publicly, a specific public confession is in order, a private sin that does not affect another man, go in your closet to confess and pray, (Matthew 6:6). If your trespass involves another individual only, see that individual in private (Matthew 5:24).

Honesty about sin means very little if it is not backed up with repentance! God is looking for heartfelt confession of sin by a contrite heart. Our relationships within this church need to be such that we can be as honest with one another about our sin as the men of old were about theirs. We are to edify one another in the spirit of what is meant in James chapter 5.

For the elders,  
Tony Williams