



Helping a Disciple Confess Sin

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” James. 5:16

I. The cost of forgiveness:

- A. The forgiveness we receive cost God, the Father, the life of His only beloved Son, whom it pleased the Father to crush for our transgressions. (Is. 53:10)
- B. The forgiveness we receive cost Christ, the Son, His life on Calvary.

*“Beware of the pleasant view of the Fatherhood of God.
... God is so kind and loving that of course he will forgive us
... The only ground on which God can forgive us is the tremendous tragedy of the Cross of Christ; to put forgiveness on any other ground is unconscious blasphemy.
... The only ground on which God can forgive sin and reinstate us in His favour is through the Cross of Christ, and in no other way. Forgiveness which is so easy for us to accept, cost the agony of Calvary. It is possible to take the forgiveness of sin, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and our sanctification with the simplicity of faith, and to forget at what enormous cost to God it was all made ours.”*

Oswald Chambers

II. The positional/fellowship relationship with God:

- A. Justification means to be declared innocent of all sin.
 - 1. The Christian is positionally forgiven for every past, present and future sin. (Eph. 1:7)
 - 2. Christ died to not only remove the penalty of sin, but also the guilt of sin. (Ps. 32:5)

*“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience...”
Heb. 10:22*

- B. Justification brings us into a “fellowship relationship” with Christ in which we come regularly to God to be cleansed from sin. (1 John 1:7,9)
 - 1. “Confess” in Greek means “to speak the same as,” so confession is agreeing with God.
 - 2. *Forgiveness* is sought from God.
 - a. Jesus gave His disciples an example in the Lord’s prayer, **“Forgive us our debts...” (Matt. 6:12)**
 - b. Encourage him to say, “Please forgive me for” (name the sin) or, “I confess...”
 - c. Encourage your disciple, when he sins in his mind, to use *Renewing Your Mind Outline, CTO*, which has confession included in it.
 - 3. Confession keeps a right fellowship relationship with God. (Ps. 66:18)

HELPING A DISCIPLE CONFESS SIN

4. Confession is one aspect of maintaining a clear conscience. (Ps. 32:1-5; Prov. 28:13)
5. Confession should include not only specific sins, but “root cause” sins as unbelief in God, selfishness, fear, and self-protective strategies.

Confession before the discipler, as a witness, is one of the key elements of the CTO discipleship process. The discipler is to hold his disciple accountable for acknowledging his sin against God, as well as in key past and present relationships with others. He is to help uncover motivational sins that lie behind his actions, which also must be confessed.

III. Biblical principles to help a disciple confess sin:

- A. Give the disciple hope that a verbal confession in front of a witness (Jas.5:16) will help him
 1. to be emotionally healed and set free from a sinful past.
 2. to be freed from encumbrances, such as guilt and suppression, which can hinder his Christian walk. (Heb. 12:1)
 3. to become more authentic and transparent.
 4. to be able to more freely minister to others because the disciple is not burdened with his own guilt.
 5. to be able to use his past sinful experiences to help others ~ God may or may not want him to share his past sins with others, but if he is healed, he will be free to do so.
- B. Guide the disciple through the various aspects of forgiveness in relation to people in his life.
 1. The discipler needs to help the disciple work through his primary relationships by forgiving, seeking God’s forgiveness, and seeking the offended person’s forgiveness.
 2. This procedure provides the means of dealing with most of the disciple’s past sins, which should include his sins against parents, spouse, children, ex-spouses, siblings, friends, enemies and those with whom the disciple has had emotional attachments.
 - a. First, the particular person who has offended the disciple must be forgiven. (Matt. 6:14,15; Mark 11:25,26)
 - b. Next, the disciple needs to write a list of the ways he sinned against the person who offended him and confess these sins to God, with you as a witness. (Jas. 5:16)
 - c. Then the disciple needs to seek forgiveness of the one whom he offended.All key relationships in the disciple’s life should be dealt with in an orderly, thorough manner. It is wise for you to keep records of the relationships your disciple has dealt with. (Use *Disciples’ Record*, available on CTO’s website.)

IV. Life-dominating sin confessions:

- A. The discipler may need to focus on a particular area of sin that was *life-dominating* or greatly impacted the disciple’s life.

HELPING A DISCIPLE CONFESS SIN

- B. Ask the disciple to develop a list of a particular area of sin, including his motives for his actions.
- C. This type of list will usually be done later in the discipling process. For example:
1. The disciple's mind opposing God's mind
 - a. Help the disciple to see the ramification of this root sin.
 - b. Include concepts such as not trusting God, trying to control his own life and circumstances, feeling he had a better way, blasphemy (calling God a liar), not being willing to suffer emotional pain, etc.
 - c. Include selfish goals vs. God's goals.
 2. Motives and methods of control
 - a. As the disciple progresses through *The Controllers* studies, ask him to highlight the ways he has attempted to control his world.
 - b. After he has highlighted his sinful motives and strategies, lead him through a confession before the Lord and you, as a witness.
 - c. After his confession, perhaps he should be encouraged to seek further forgiveness from his spouse for recently revealed aspects of control, even though he has already sought forgiveness earlier in the discipling process for other sins.
 3. Rebellion against authority
 - a. Investigate ways rebellion manifested itself. Was it against parents, husband/wife, teachers, church and/or civil authorities?
 - b. Help the disciple develop a list of root causes.
 4. Sexual sin
 5. Sins related to self-esteem
 6. Isolated situations – (after most other sin is confessed)
 - a. Ask, "Is there any incident in your life for which you are responsible and for which you are carrying guilt?"
 - b. Ask, "Are there any friends, other relatives, institutions or businesses that you have sinned against which you know have not been dealt with biblically?"
 - c. The disciple may need to make restitution if stealing was involved.

V. **Biblical responses to protests about sin:**

- A. The disciple may protest taking responsibility for his sin because of the following reasons:
- "I wasn't aware it was sin when I committed it."
 - "I was a child so how can I be held responsible?"
 - "It was just my reaction or response to the offender's sin."
- B. It is vital that you hold him accountable to confession and appropriate reconciliations for sins, even if the above factors are involved.
- C. These biblical principles and verses are helpful proofs that God holds him responsible:

HELPING A DISCIPLE CONFESS SIN

1. God declares a man is guilty of sin even when he is unaware that he has committed it. The Lord expresses His thoughts on unintentional sin and sin committed when one is unaware in Leviticus 5.

“If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD’s commands, even though he does not know it, he is guilty and will be held responsible.”
Lev. 5:17

2. God holds a child responsible for his sin.
 - a. God says a child’s behaviors are known; often adults carry legitimate guilt from childhood.

“Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.”
Prov. 20:11

- b. God does not refer to “an age of accountability” in the Bible. Instead, He declares man as sinful from conception and birth. Therefore, He holds children accountable for their sins.

“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”
Ps. 51:5

3. God holds man just as accountable for *responsive* sins such as bitterness, unforgiveness, anger, etc. as He does sins that are initiated in a relationship. (Eph. 4:31; Heb. 12:15; Matt. 6:14,15; 1 Pet. 4:19)

VI. Protests and responses to confessing past sins:

- A. The disciple may protest confessing past sins because they are “already forgiven” or “My past is covered by the blood, so I shouldn’t have to bring it up again.” The following are principles you can discuss with your disciple:

1. Past experiences have shaped who we are today.
2. Our *responses* to those past experiences have a large impact on how we *presently* live our lives.
 - a. We develop bitterness, suppression, guilt, fears and selfishness in response to negative experiences.
 - b. We develop controlling, self-protective attitudes and behaviors in response to life experiences of the past.
3. Our unforgiveness, guilt and/or suppression usually stem from past experiences. We are commanded by God to forgive and to confess.
4. Past sins must be dealt with biblically so they are no longer affecting our present life adversely.

- B. This experience should not be painful if he is guilt free.

Note: If a disciple is not willing to forgive and/or to confess past sins after these points are explained, then you must terminate the discipling because he is unwilling to submit to the methodology you are using. Encourage him to seek a discipling or counseling methodology that is compatible with his expectations.

HELPING A DISCIPLE CONFESS SIN

VII. Anger toward God:

- A. The disciple must handle anger toward God in a biblical manner.
- B. The disciple should **never** forgive God.
 - 1. God is perfect; He never makes mistakes. (Matt. 5:48; Ps. 18:30)
 - 2. The disciple may *perceive* God has wronged him, been unkind, not loved him, etc., but God's character, set forth in Scripture, is not to be disputed.
 - 3. God never claims to be "fair." If He were, every person would be the same, with the same appearances, opportunities, resources, intelligence, etc.
 - 4. God promises to work all things together for good.

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Rom. 8:28

- 5. God sets the terms of relationship with Himself.
 - a. The disciple must *accept* them.
 - b. The disciple who is angry at His terms is sinning against God.

"Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker..."

Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?'"

Is. 45:9a

Note: Forgiving yourself is never mentioned in the Bible and therefore is not recognized as meaningful by God. Instead your disciple needs to accept God's forgiveness through confessing his sin.

- C. The disciple can express his anger toward God in prayer, but he cannot *remain* in that attitude. (Eph. 4:26,27)
- D. Anger toward God is a result of not understanding who God is and who the disciple is in relation to a holy God.
 - 1. The disciple deserves to burn in hell.
 - 2. He is unworthy of God's mercy, grace and unconditional love.
 - 3. He is not in a position to demand anything from God.
- E. Anger toward God needs to be confessed as sin.

Note: It is crucial when you observe self-pity and anger toward people and circumstances in your disciple's life that you explain that his anger goes deeper. If he is angry at the *plan* for his life, then he must be angry at the *Planner*, who has the power to change persons and circumstances, but is not choosing to do so. Acknowledging and confessing anger toward God helps him understand his sin at a deeper level and therefore, is effective in helping him to repent through renewing his mind.

HELPING A DISCIPLE CONFESS SIN

VIII. Preparation for confession:

- A. Give your disciple the homework assignment to make a list of the ways he has sinned against the person he just forgave, being specific.
 1. Tell him to write his own list first, praying that God will bring sins to his mind.
 2. Include ways he sinned against God *in relationship to* that person.
 - a. “Lord, forgive me for my unbelief in you and how that negatively impacted my spouse.”
 - b. “Forgive me for railing against Your plan to have (name) as my spouse, boss, child, etc.”
 3. Instruct him to use the *Confession Checklist* when he has completed his own list. (Available on website)
- B. Ask him to read his list to you when he returns.
- C. Expand his list; you may use *Expanding a Confession List* available on the website.

IX. Confession teaching:

- A. Summarize the concepts of Section I, II in *Confessing Sin, CTO*.
- B. Have your disciple read aloud Section III or a couple of alternate readings aloud.
- C. Explain the principle of confessing to one another in Section IV. A, B of *Confessing Sin*.
- D. Read and discuss together the Bible verses at the end of *Confessing Sin, CTO*. Use the “*Before confessing your sins*” verses.
 1. Ask questions about the verses to make your disciple aware of important facts.
 2. Ask how these key verses impact the disciple personally.
 3. Stress to the disciple that these are God’s promises, which cannot fail because God does not lie nor break promises.

X. Prayer of confession:

- A. Instruct him to say, “Lord forgive me for,” “I confess,” or “I agree with You that I sinned” before naming each sin. Don’t get stuck on exact wording.
- B. Open in prayer, asking God to totally release the disciple from guilt and any other encumbrances caused by sin.
- C. Feel free to interrupt his prayer if the Holy Spirit brings a sin to mind that is not on his list.
- D. Pray silently for release from guilt or any encumbrances from his sins, as they are confessed.
- E. Close in prayer, asking God to free the disciple from all guilt, suppression and encumbrances of the sins confessed.

XI. Other concepts after prayer:

- A. Cover these concepts with your disciple, *if time allows*:

HELPING A DISCIPLE CONFESS SIN

1. Ask your disciple to read aloud the “*After confessing your sins*” verses, reminding him of God’s promises.
2. Go over *The Focus Factor* diagram.
3. Review the Sections VII, VIII, and the **Note** on how the disciple should respond biblically to God’s forgiveness.
 - a. These are important concepts that may have to be revisited as you continue to observe how he handles his guilt.
 - b. Do this if the disciple says, “I can’t forgive myself” and/or if he has trouble receiving God’s forgiveness.
 - c. These principles need to be reinforced if a person has a “failure” identity and keeps “beating himself” for sins.
- B. Assign the portion of *Confessing Sin* that is not covered verbally in the session.
- C. Give homework to memorize 1 John 1:9 or Is. 43:18,19 or another verse from the Scripture section.

Note: In future confessions, ask your disciple to choose several verses to read that are meaningful to him. There isn’t any need to teach the principles and to read all the verses from the study again.

XII. Confession; a way of life:

- A. Help your disciple understand that ongoing confession to God is to be a lifestyle.
- B. Explain his need to confess and then preach the gospel to himself daily to focus on Christ and the cross.
- C. Help the disciple see that he needs continuing accountability to fellow Christians for dealing with personal sin when the “formal” discipleship meetings conclude.

XIII. Discipled’s role in confession:

- A. Be willing to address sin in the disciple’s life to which he has been blinded.
- B. Reinforce that God holds him just as responsible for *responsive sins* as for *initiative sins*.
- C. Do not allow him to continue to deceive himself about his sin by blameshifting, minimizing, rationalizing, ignoring, excusing.

“Blessed is the man... in whose spirit there is no deceit.”

Ps. 32:2

- D. Realize that true hope for desired change (repentance) lies in understanding and seeing the depth of his sin.
 1. One cannot change a problem which he doesn’t realize exists.
 2. One has a harder time ignoring or excusing sin of which he is fully aware.
- E. Be a risk-taker.
 1. Review the principles in *Admonishing, CTO* to confirm your direction and encourage the use of biblical principles. (2 Tim. 2:24,25)

HELPING A DISCIPLE CONFESS SIN

2. Adhere to the following principles:
 - a. Admonish him by speaking the truth in love. (Prov. 27:5; Eph. 4:15)
 - b. Do not be controlled by fear of rejection and/or fear of hurting the disciple. A disciple often needs to experience the pain of his sin to be helped. (Prov. 27:6 NASB)

“How painful are honest words!”

Job 6:25a

- c. Accept rejection, if it comes, for righteousness sake. (Matt. 5:10-12)
- d. Realize that the disciple will only be emotionally and spiritually free if the truth is shared and he repents. (Ps. 32:2; John 8:31b,32)
- e. Be more concerned about the welfare of the disciple than you are for your own welfare. (Phil. 2:3,4)
- f. Continue to stand for the truth, without compromise, if “the going gets tough.”

XIV. Difficulties encountered with evaluations of sin:

- A. The disciple may disagree with your evaluation when you confront his sin.
 1. You should first be willing to carefully evaluate why you reached the conclusions you have.
 2. The disciple may resist your evaluation and continue to believe he is right. Ask him to look at manifesting attitudes and behavior patterns, which stem from the sin he does not recognize.
- B. Show him that sinful attitudes and behaviors, subtle or blatant, will stem from deeper sin problems.
 1. Identify the “outward” manifestations.
 2. Trace them to the originating sins.
 3. Say, “Why would you be saying, feeling, thinking and/or doing these sinful things if you did not have this particular sin problem?”
- C. Ask the disciple to pray about the sin problems you see and ask God to reveal the truth.
 1. Encourage him to pray that God will reveal his sin to him.
 2. Ask him to meditate on one more of the following verses/passages:
Ps. 139:23,24; 51:6; Heb. 4:12,13.
- D. Include in your prayers for him:
 1. that God will rebuke the demonic powers that are blinding him.
 2. that God’s power will break through the strongholds so that he can grasp truth and repent.
- E. Move on to a less threatening area if your disciple continues to deny.
 1. Continue to gather further data that relates to area of denial.
 2. “Circle back” to deal with area of denial and/or resistance when disciple has had

HELPING A DISCIPLE CONFESS SIN

success in dealing with other areas.

- a. It may become a “rubber meets the road” issue if the disciple continues to resist.
- b. The discipleship relationship may be broken until the Holy Spirit reveals the truth to your disciple.
- c. The sin you addressed often becomes harder for your disciple to ignore if he stops, or you terminate the discipling relationship.

XV. Discipler’s calling with difficult disciples:

- A. The disciple may refuse to face his sin, but you have been faithful to your calling when you have:
 1. spoken the truth in love.
 2. encouraged obedience to that truth.
 3. warned him of the consequences of disobedience. (Gal. 6:7)

“The way of the transgressor is hard.”
Prov. 13:15b KJV

“God opposes the proud...”
Jas. 4:6

- B. You have forgiven him and dealt with any judgmental attitudes toward a resistant disciple. (Luke 6:36,37)
- C. You realize you have not failed, but God chose not to apply truth at this time in your disciple’s life. (1 Cor. 3:6,7)
- D. You have accepted God’s sovereign outcome and emotionally released your disciple to God’s oversight.

***“The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome,
but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,
with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition,
if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading
to the knowledge of the truth,
and they may come to their senses to escape the snare of the devil,
having been held captive by him to do his will.”***
2 Tim. 2:24-26 NASB