

UNBROKEN

"SPOTLESS"

1 JOHN 1:5-2:2

This Week's Core Competency

Prayer – I pray to God to know him, to lay my request before him and to find direction for my daily life. Psalm 66:16-20

16 *Come and listen, all you who fear God;
let me tell you what he has done for me.*

17 *I cried out to him with my mouth;
his praise was on my tongue.*

18 *If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened;*

19 *but God has surely listened
and heard my voice in prayer.*

20 *Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!*

You are no doubt familiar with the maxim, "Confession is good for the soul." It's an old Scottish proverb, but there's a word missing. The proverb actually reads, "Open confession is good for the soul." Mahatma Gandhi puts it this way: "Confession of errors is like a broom that sweeps away the dirt and leaves the surface brighter and clearer. I feel stronger for confession." Common sense tells us confession is good for our psyche.

Biblical wisdom turns the maxim on its head, "He who conceals his sins does not prosper," and then goes on to add, "but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Pr 28:13). Apparently, confession is not only good for the soul but also for

the body as well. Commenting on his own experience with sin, David says, "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long . . . my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgression to the LORD'—and you forgave the guilt of my sin" (Ps 32:3, 5). The Bible tells us confession *really* is good for the soul. When we confess our sins to the Lord, he forgives us and takes away our guilt.

John tells his readers this in his first epistle. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1Jn 1:9). And he explains that this is true because Jesus Christ "is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (2:2). The finished work of Jesus is the reason why confession really is good for the soul. One writer explains: "It is the ground upon which we can know that confession and forgiveness are realities that transform us. Without the cross the Discipline of confession would be only psychologically therapeutic. But it is so much more. It involves an objective change in our relationship with God and a subjective change in us. It is a means of healing and transforming the inner spirit" (Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 144).

Foster offers good counsel on confession as a spiritual discipline. He writes:

"What are we to do? St. Alphonsus Liguori writes, 'For a good confession three things are necessary: an examination of conscience, sorrow, and a determination to avoid sin.'

The confession of evil works is the first beginning of good works.

– Augustine

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"An examination of conscience.' This is a time, as Douglas Steere writes, 'where a soul comes under the gaze of God and where in His silent and loving Presence this soul is pierced to the quick and becomes conscious of the things that must be forgiven and put right before it can continue to love One whose care has been so constant.' We are inviting God to move upon the heart and show us areas that need his forgiving and healing touch.

"In this experience of opening ourselves to the 'gaze of God' we must be prepared to deal with definite sins. A generalized confession may save us from humiliation and shame, but it will not ignite inner healing. The people who came to Jesus came with obvious, specific sins, and they were forgiven for each one. It is far too easy to avoid our real guilt in a general confession. In our confession we bring concrete sins. By calling them concrete, however, I do not mean only outward sins. I mean definite sins, the sins of the heart-pride, avarice, anger, fear—as well as the sins of the flesh—sloth, gluttony, adultery, murder.

"Sorrow' is necessary to a good confession. Sorrow as it relates to confession is not primarily an emotion, though emotion may be involved. It is an abhorrence at having committed the sin, a deep regret at having offended the heart of the Father. Sorrow is an issue of the will before it is an issue of the emotions. In fact, being sorrowful in the emotions without a godly sorrow in the will destroys the confession.

"Sorrow is a way of taking the confession seriously. It is the opposite of the priest, and undoubtedly the penitent, ridiculed by Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales*:

'Full sweetly heard he confession,
And pleasant was his absolution.'

"A determination to avoid sin' is the third essential for a good confession. In the Discipline of confession we ask God to give us a yearning for holy living, a hatred for unholy living. John Wesley once said; 'Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God . . . such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth.' It is the *will* to be delivered from sin that we seek from God as we prepare to make confession. We must desire to be conquered and ruled by God, or if we do not desire it, to desire to desire it. Such a desire is a gracious gift from God" (151-53).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

1 John 1:5-2:2

5This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

7But 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, purifies us from all sin.

8If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, he is

faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

2:1My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline "him" in v. 5.
- * Circle "light" and "darkness" in vv. 5-7.
- * Box "if" in 1:6-2:1 indicating *conditional* clauses.
- * Circle "fellowship" in vv. 6, 7.
- * Circle "walk" in vv. 6, 7.
- * Box "yet" and "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 6, 7 respectively.
- * Insert "then" above the comma after each conditional clause.

- * Circle "confess" in v. 9.
- * Bracket "faithful and just" in v. 9.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in 2:1.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 1.
- * Underline "not only" and "but also" indicating *contrast* in v. 2.
- * Circle "atoning sacrifice" in v. 2.

day **2**

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. What do you make of a person who claims to be *spiritual* but lives an immoral life, and why?
2. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 7.
3. What does "walk in the light" mean?
4. Identify two benefits of walking in the light.
5. "If we claim to be without sin," *really*. Does any believer ever do this? Explain.
6. Put what *confession* means in your own words.
7. What if we refuse to confess our sins?
8. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 2.
9. What makes Jesus our only *fit* Advocate?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about what verse 2 contributes to the sense of the passage.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The meaning of individual parts of John's first epistle (i.e., single sentences and particular paragraphs) can only be understood in light of the meaning of the whole letter—and vice versa. Put differently, the meaning of what John is saying in *particular* must fit the meaning of what he is saying in *general*. Different "takes" on the point of the letter lead readers to different "takes" on the meaning of passages in it.

The letter has been taken in three different ways. Some take it the apostle is writing to Christians so that they might enjoy intimacy and fellowship with the Father. One writes, "He wanted his spiritual children to enter into that life of intimate fellowship with the Father and Son that he had seen the Son live with His Father and into which the apostle himself had entered" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Joy of Fellowship*, 7). Others read it with the understanding that the apostle is writing to a mixed audience, all of whom profess to be Christians but some of whom are not, so that they might enjoy assurance of salvation. According to the first interpretation, the letter is about *fellowship* with the Father; according to the second, it is about *relationship* to the Father. Some take it both ways. "In the first two chapters the emphasis was on *fellowship*: a Christian who is in fellowship with God will practice righteousness and will love the brethren. But in 1 John 3-5, the emphasis is on *sonship*: because a Christian is 'born of God,' he will practice righteousness and will love the brethren" (Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:503). Those who don't practice righteousness and love the brethren, it would seem, either lose their salvation or were never saved in the first place. I take it the first way.

Zane Hodges' succinct expression of the purpose of John's first epistle is worth quoting. "In First John the apostle writes out of a concern that certain false teachers may be given a hearing in the church or churches he is addressing. Since they essentially deny the fundamental truth of the Christian faith, namely, that Jesus is the Christ come in flesh (1 John 2:22; 4:3), their doctrine strikes right at the heart of all Christian experience. The readers, who are clearly Christians themselves (2:12-14, 21; 5:13), are therefore not in danger of losing eternal life—which cannot be lost—but are in danger of

having their fellowship with God the Father and with Jesus Christ His Son seriously undermined. Thus, the stated general aim of the epistle is fellowship (1 John 1:3)" (*The Epistles of John*, 34).

Take a sheet of paper and draw a large circle on the sheet. Imagine that all who are born again are included in that circle. Then draw another smaller circle completely inside the larger one. Imagine that all who are born again and enjoy intimacy and fellowship with the Father are included in that circle. Obviously, there are some who are in the larger *relationship* circle who are not in the smaller *fellowship* one (i.e., those are born again but "walk in darkness"). John is writing so that his readers might live in the inner circle.

According to verses 5-7, God is light. The metaphor depicts *truth* in contrast to "darkness," which depicts *error*. It also depicts *good* in contrast to "darkness," which depicts *evil*. On the meaning of the metaphor one commentator writes, "To describe God as absolute 'light' presupposes that God and darkness (error, or evil) are mutually exclusive. Indeed, as the writer says here, in God there is 'no darkness [skotia] of any kind' ([oudemia], literally 'no,' is intensive; hence the addition in our translation of the phrase 'of any kind'). This amounts to the claim that God as light (truth and righteousness) reveals darkness (error and evil) for what it is (cf. 1:1-2; John 1:4). The statement 'God is light' carries with it an inevitable moral challenge: 'his followers must walk in the light'" (Stephen S. Smalley, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 51, 1, 2, 3, *John*, 20). In order to enjoy a close relationship with God, we must "walk in the light as he is in the light" (v. 7). Those who live in openness to God and his revelation in Christ have fellowship with him and are purified from all sin by the blood of Jesus" (v. 7). "By his use of the present tense for the verbs 'to walk' and 'to purify', the author represents both the walking and the cleansing as ongoing activities" (Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, PNTC, 64). Those who claim to enjoy a close relationship with him "yet walk in darkness" are saved but living a lie.

According to verses 8-9, Christians sin. Believers who claim otherwise do not deceive their spouses, their children, or their friends—only themselves! And when we stray from the light into the

darkness, we are to confess our sins in order to be forgiven and purified from all unrighteousness so we might remain in fellowship with the Father. Confession is more than therapeutic; it really is good for the soul. It restores our broken fellowship with God.

According to 2:1-2 God's ability to remain faithful and just and to forgive us our sins is based in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

John isn't writing to tell us about the availability of forgiveness so that we might sin. He is writing to warn us of the devastating consequences of sin on our fellowship with God. BUT if we do sin, we can be certain that forgiveness is available through our Advocate, Jesus Christ, the righteous One. Because he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins as well as the sins of the whole world, we can be assured that God will hear our confession.

The Message of the Passage

If you confess your sins, God, who is faithful and just, will restore you to fellowship with him by forgiving your sins and purifying you from all unrighteousness, so you can walk with him in the light.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

- Write about how God is making himself known to you . . .

- Write about how God wants to change you . . .

- Write about how God is calling you to change your world . . .

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 5 **light** "The declaration, 'God is light' is a penetrating description of the being and nature of God: it means that he is absolute in his glory (the physical connotation of light), in his truth (the intellectual) and in his holiness (the moral)" (Smalley, 20). "This simple yet profound message about God is crucial to all fellowship between Himself and His creatures. To begin with, God is free from every moral defect. His light is unsullied by any degree of moral impurity whatsoever, **and in him is no darkness at all**. This latter statement is so emphatic in Greek, 'darkness is no in Him-none' . . . But in the second place, the statement that God is light points also to the revelatory aspect of His being and nature, God reveals Himself in and to His creation, but in doing so He also reveals the wickedness that is found in creation . . . To have fellowship with such a God, a Christian cannot hide from the light. To do so is to forfeit this fellowship, as the next verse plainly states" (Hodges, 57, 58).
- v. 6 **walk in the darkness** The present tense indicates continuing action i.e., "are walking." "To 'walk in the darkness' is the same as 'abiding' in darkness or 'living in darkness' (Glenn W. Barker, "1 John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12:310). "To say **we have fellowship with Him** is a false claim, if at the same time we are walking **in darkness**. Since 'God is light' and totally free from darkness (verse 5), a person who walks **in darkness** is moving in a moral and spiritual sphere from which God is absent. He is moving in the realm of evil, while God remains in the realm of holiness. Thus, the believer who walks in sin has lost touch with a completely holy God" (Hodges, 59). Cf. Jn 3:19-21.
- v. 7 **walk in the light** "Since according to this passage God not only is light (verse 5), but **He is also in the light**, to **walk in the light** must mean essentially to live in God's presence, exposed to what He has revealed about Himself. This, of course, is done through openness in prayer and through openness to the Word of God in which He is revealed" (61).
- v. 7 **fellowship** Walking in the light doesn't result in a relationship with God; it presumes a relationship with God. Walking in the light results in *fellowship* with God. We have fellowship with one another, i.e., we have fellowship with him and he has fellowship with us. "The words **one another** do not refer to Christians having fellowship with Christians, since that is not what the apostle is talking about" (61).
- v. 7 **purifies** "As the structure of John's sentence makes clear, when **we walk in the light** two things take place: (1) we experience **fellowship** with God and He with us, and (2) we are being cleansed **from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ**. This simply means that as we maintain an open and honest relationship with God, the many sinful failures and habits that still cling to us do not prevent this **fellowship**, because God treats us as those who are clean by virtue of the Savior's shed blood" (61).
- v. 9 **confess** These verses are not meant for the unsaved; they're meant for those who are walking in the light. "The exposure of our sin by the light confronts us with a challenge to the fellowship in which we are walking with God. If we deny what the light shows us, we have ceased to be honest and open with God and fellowship ends. [But not relationship] But if **we confess** (Greek: *homologeō*, 'agree, admit, acknowledge') the sins that the light reveals, we can depend on God to forgive them and **to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**. If this happens, fellowship continues" (63-64).
- v. 8 **all unrighteousness** When we confess sins we are aware of, God cleanses us from those we are not aware of as well. "Whenever we make confession—honestly acknowledging what we know to be wrong, whatever other sin there may be in our hearts or lives is totally cleansed away. Nothing is left uncleansed" (65). Even though believers have been forgiven and their status in heaven is secure, they have to receive forgiveness for ongoing sins to remain in fellowship with God.
- v. 2:1 **My dear children** This expression [teknia mou] is used only here in NT. "The diminutive teknon (meaning 'a little, or young, child') is used, in the plural, as a term of endearment and intimacy" (Smalley, 34).
- v. 1 **one who speaks** Greek *parakletos* translated "Advocate" in many translations (cf. NKJV, NASB, NLT). "How then does our Advocate mediate for us when we sin? The clearest biblical suggestion is found in Luke 22:31-33. There as Peter's impending failure draws near, the Lord Jesus announces that He has already prayed for Peter. His prayer is not for Peter to remain saved, but rather that his 'faith should not fail'" (69).
- v. 2 **atoning sacrifice** Cf. "propitiation" (NKJV). "Clearly, the sinning believer's Advocate is perfect. God looks at Him with complete satisfaction—He is completely propitiated or appeased with regard to any sin we commit. He is thus fully disposed to respond to our Advocate's intercession for us, since no matter what our sin may be, Christ has made satisfaction for it" (70; see also Kruse, 73, 75, 76).
- v. 3 **whole world** I.e., every person without exception. "Johannine thought and terminology leave absolutely no room for any such concept as 'the world of the elect.' Christ's death, therefore, covers the totality of human sin from the beginning of creation until the end of history when eternity begins" (Hodges, 71).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

My brother wrecked my car. It was completely his fault. He pulled out in front of a driver and SMASH - right on the driver's side door. Thankfully, he was fine but my car wasn't. We talked about it again at Christmas this past year. He apologized again and I said I forgave him again. I guess you should know this happened 26 years ago. I am mostly over it but I really liked that car and had planned on taking it back to college with me the next year. When the topic comes up at family gatherings, I remind him that he is forgiven, I just haven't forgotten about it. Forgiveness is a complicated thing for us. We sin and instead of coming clean with God and each other, we hang onto it. We bring it up 26 years later and rehash the whole event. I'm glad God doesn't do that with my sin. I am so thankful that the moment I confess, he restores me and sets me back on my path walking in the light of his mercy. I am asking Him to reveal areas of darkness in my life so I can live forgiven and free. What about you? What are you holding on to? Who do you need to forgive? Commit to doing a check up with God and your family and get rid of the sin that is leaving you in darkness.

What Does The Bible Say

Read: Read 1 John 1:5-2:2

1. Fill in the blanks. "God is _____; in him there is no _____ at all."
2. Does everyone sin?
3. What does God do when you confess your sin to Him?

What Do You Think

1. How does it make you feel to know that God forgives your sins when you confess them to Him?
2. What are some specific ways you can "walk in the light"?

What R U Going To Do

When we are living with unconfessed sin, it will hurt our communication with God and others. Gather your family and find a way for everyone to have their ears plugged (headphones, cotton balls, ear plugs, hands over ears). Try to have a conversation. It's hard to hear each other! Sin hurts relationships!

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Prayer - I talk to God so I can know Him, ask Him for things and find out what He wants me to do.

Memory Verse

1Jn 1:9 - *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sin and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC _____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade _____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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