

Admit

Principle 4

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

“Happy are the pure in heart.” Matthew 5:8

Step 5

We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” James 5:16

This week we are going to focus on confessing (admitting) our sins, all the dark secrets of our past, to another person.

Full stop.

We’re going to do what?

For years, Scott Whaley and I would lead Discover together, and he’d start out the ice breaker section at the beginning by telling everyone to turn to someone at their table and confess their deepest darkest sins to them. It was a joke - the most ridiculous thing you could ask someone to do - utterly terrifying.

So, as we set out on this truly daunting and countercultural task, let’s take a look at the scripture surrounding that directive. And let’s do that inductively.

- Proof texting - You also know, or maybe you’re finding out today, that it’s rarely a good idea to look at a single verse of scripture in isolation. It’s popular but can give you a biased interpretation because it lacks the larger context surrounding that single verse.
- The CIT - Assuming the author is competent and working to communicate the most important stuff clearly and putting the primary content right at eye level.

Let’s dive in to James 5:13-18:

“**James 5:13** Are any among you suffering? (Looking around the room, yes! We are suffering) They should **pray**. Are any cheerful? They should **sing songs of praise (a form of prayer)**. **James 5:14** Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them **pray** over them, anointing them with oil in the

name of the Lord. [James 5:15](#) The **prayer** of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be **forgiven**. [James 5:16](#) Therefore **confess** your sins to one another, and **pray** for one another, so that you may be healed. The **prayer** of the righteous is powerful and effective. [James 5:17](#) Elijah was a human being like us, and he **prayed** fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. [James 5:18](#) Then he **prayed** again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.” (James 5:13–18 [NRSV](#))

Now, the bible, and Jesus specifically, talk about repentance and seeking forgiveness a ton. There is no question that those things represent cornerstones of the christian life and are critical to receiving the enormous blessing of grace. Also, this text definitely calls us to confess our sins to one another. That’s clear, eye level stuff. We’re on solid ground here. But is this passage about confessing? Is that the Central Idea of the Text?

Nope. This pericope, this section of scripture, is clearly about prayer. There are at least two things to love about that! The enemy, or our addiction, however you want to frame that up is constantly whispering in our ear, or for some of us shouting at close range, that we are alone and insufficient. Prayer knocks both of those ideas right down into the dirt! Can I get an amen?

The first, that you are alone, is simply a lie! The moment you turn your heart to prayer, that illusion of isolation vanishes! You are powerfully reminded that God lives in you! Did you hear that? The Holy Spirit is in you! Just like God is three and one and therefore never alone. God is in you, and you can never, ever, ever face anything alone. This is why **Psalm 139: 8-10 says: “[Psalms 139:8](#) If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.[Psalms 139:9](#) If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,[Psalms 139:10](#) even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.”** (Psalm 139:8–10 [NRSV](#))

We are not alone! Amen!

The second, that we are insufficient, is utterly, totally, completely correct - and we hate that! We want nothing more in this world than autonomy. We want to check in with God, fill up on direction, strength, and hope, and be on our way. Moving under our own strength, facing the challenges of day to day life with our own stamina, in our own way. Just like John Wayne - we all want to live out that American Dream of rugged individualism and independence.

That fantasy, and it’s brutal impossibility, cripples us because we so often come up against challenges that are too big for us. God created us to live in community - awash in healthy **interdependence**. We don’t have the strength! We can’t do it on our own. Not me, not Eric, not Jodi, not Shane, not Steven Furtick or Tom Brady, not Beth Moore - none of us. Thank God for prayer!

Prayer connects us directly to the divine power of God’s presence, to the father, son,

and spirit! Prayer helps open the floodgates of God's redemptive, restorative, revolutionary love and game changing grace! In **Isaiah 41:10** God tells us: **"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."**

Now, as you are preparing yourself to do the most ridiculous and scary thing possible, imagine praying with a friend - someone you trust, someone who loves you, and someone who relishes the opportunity to meet you at the foot of the cross and pray with you. You are not alone. Instead you are in human and divine community.

When you pray and confess your sins to another human being, you invite them to join your fight, you rob your sins of the power to drown you in shame, and the two of you seek God's presence and power together! That my friend is the pathway to redemption, freedom, peace, hope, and joy! Amen!

"James 5:13 Are any among you suffering? They should **pray**. Are any cheerful? They should **sing songs of praise**. **James 5:14** Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them **pray** over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. **James 5:15** The **prayer** of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be **forgiven**. **James 5:16** Therefore **confess** your sins to one another, and **pray** for one another, so that you may be healed.

Alright, I like to start with the why because we need strong motivation to do hard things. That was my best shot, so let's move on with the nitty gritty of how -

Why admit my wrongs?

Alongside everything we just talked about -

1. We lose our sense of isolation

Well, OK, we just talked about that. But, it's important and worth repeating

2. We will begin to lose our unwillingness to forgive

By golly I love this one! It can be so easy to get sucked into the idea that our recovery is mostly about us, but God rarely calls us to tackle anything this big just for ourselves. Being forgiven, receiving God's forgiveness, especially in the presence of another, really warms us up to forgive others.

Luke 6:37 **"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."**

3. We will lose our inflated, false pride

In place of pride we receive a more accurate and humble view of ourselves that can

truly set us free

4. We will lose our sense of denial

We experience being clean and honest rather than the cloying filth of denial

1. We gain healing that the Bible promises.

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

Our sin, the damage we do others, hurts us. And, it continues to hurt us until we confess it, receive forgiveness, and begin forgiving others. That's healing!

2. We gain freedom.

“They cried to the Lord in their troubles, and he rescued them! He led them from the darkness and the shadow of death and snapped their chains.” Psalm 107:13-14 TLB

No longer bound, frozen, and unable to move we gain the freedom to run in the path of God's commands!

So much better than David's experience in Psalm 34:3,4 **“When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat.”**

3. We gain support.

Our partner helps keep us stay focused and provides feedback. They help us stay honest with ourselves and others. Most importantly, they're present and they listen.

How do I choose someone?

Choose carefully. This can be delicate. We don't need a judge and jury or someone who's convinced that their road to recovery is the only road to recovery. We want truth in love - both are required. Truth without love can be difficult to receive and destructive. Lacking empathy, just truth on its own, misses the critical nature of individual context.

At the same time, love without truth fails to provide that component of awkward, painful stretching that growth and transformation require.

1. Choose someone of the same sex as you whom you TRUST and RESPECT.

2. Ask the person if he or she COMPLETED Principle 4 (or steps 4 and 5).

This can be your sponsor or accountability partner. The process will go more smoothly if the person is familiar with what you're doing. If he or she also has a sense of empathy and can share personal experiences, you will have a healthy exchange.

3. Set up an appointment with the person, a time without interruptions!
Schedule at least two hours of time away from all distractions.

It usually takes two to three hours to share your inventory.

The leader's guide says, "I've heard of some inventories that have taken eight hours to share. That's perhaps a little dramatic."

It's also perhaps important to point out that the length of your testimony is not an evaluative tool to determine the quality of your testimony. What's important here is that you dig in, get truly vulnerable and honest, and provide the spirit plenty of room to work in you and through the person you're meeting with. You can't experience the blessed freedom of forgiveness for things you haven't brought into the light.

Guidelines for your meeting

1. Start with prayer. Ask for courage, humility, and honesty.

You pray in the way that makes the most sense for you and connects you most directly with Jesus. I will say that your prayer does not need to be lengthy or fancy. Just express your heart to God and ask for courage, humility, and honesty.

2. Read the Principle 4 verses in the participant's guide.

"Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed."
(James 5:16, TLB)

"You were dead in sins, and your sinful desires were not yet cut away. Then he gave you a share in the very life of Christ, for he forgave all your sins, and blotted out the charges proved against you, the list of his commandments which you had not obeyed. He took this list of sins and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross. In this way God took away Satan's power to accuse you of sin, and God openly displayed to the whole world Christ's triumph at the cross where your sins were all taken away." (Colossians 2:13 – 15, TLB)

“If we say that we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves, and refusing to accept the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he can be depended on to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong. (And it is perfectly proper for God to do this for us because Christ died to wash away our sins.)” (1 John 1:8 – 9, TLB)

“For God was in Christ, restoring the world to himself, no longer counting men’s sins against them but blotting them out. This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others.” (2 Corinthians 5:19, TLB)

“A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance.” (Proverbs 28:13, TLB)

“Yes, each of us will give an account of himself to God.” (Romans 14:12, TLB)

“There was a time when I wouldn’t admit what a sinner I was. But my dishonesty made me miserable and filled my days with frustration. All day and all night your hand was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water on a sunny day until I finally admitted all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, ‘I will confess them to the Lord.’ And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.” (Psalm 32:3 – 5, TLB)

“So there is now no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1, TLB)

3. Keep your sharing balanced—weaknesses and strengths!

That’s the only guidance the leader’s guide provides. I can see advantages in getting the worst stuff out first and ending on the high note of the good things God has done through you. I can also see the benefit of mixing the good in with the bad to keep the mood from getting to dark. This isn’t about you feeling shame - like you’re a total piece of garbage - it’s about coming clean, recognizing patterns to help guide your path forward, and embracing God’s love, forgiveness, and redemption.

4. End in prayer. Thank God for the tools He has given to you and for the complete forgiveness in Christ!

“But if we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins, because we can trust God to do what is right. He will cleanse us from all the wrongs we have done.”

1 John 1:9 NCV

Pray out!