

🕒 35 min

## Confession & Repentance

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Confession simply means telling the truth about our sin. Repentance flows from confession, where we turn away from thoughts and actions that misalign with the way of Jesus. Scripture shows that confession and repentance:

- Bring us out of hiding and enable us to live openly before God and others (1 John 1:5-9)
- Flow from the confidence that Jesus has already paid for our sins (Prov 28:13)
- Grow us in honesty before others, leading to healing (James 5:16)
- Allow us to experience the joy of our salvation (Ps 32:3-5)

Scripture encourages us to confess not only our personal sins, but our corporate sin as well: Isaiah repented on behalf of the Israelites (Isa 6:5), Jeremiah confessed the sin of his generation and his ancestors (Jer 3:25, 14:7, 20), and Nehemiah's prayer led to corporate repentance (Neh 1:6-9, 8:9-11, 9:1-2).

Corporate sin refers to sin that is committed by a group, organization, or society. It does not negate individual responsibility but highlights the idea that communities and societies can collectively stray from God's will and may need to repent, seek forgiveness, and undergo a process of restoration as a group.

We might avoid confession around race-related issues because in our world, the price for admitting any fault in this area is often brutal. We worry that our most vulnerable confessions will be exploited, or that we will be labeled and shamed.

We haven't always created safe spaces for mutual confession of race-related sins. When we regularly receive God's mercy and grace, we will regularly be able to extend that same mercy and grace to those around us. **We pray that this guide would allow your community to grow as a safe space for honest confession and repentance.**

### EMBODIMENT EXERCISE | 3 min

Begin with two minutes of silence, allowing everyone to settle in. Invite everyone to practice a breath prayer, saying the first line in the minds as they breathe in, and the second line as they breathe out.

[as you inhale] *Grace of God ground me.*  
[as you exhale] *Take my burdens and my sin.*

### OPENING PRAYER (RESPONSIVE) | 1 min

- One* God of justice and mercy,  
give us courage to be honest  
about our sin.
- Many* **Give us grace to have humble  
and contrite hearts.**
- One* We confess that we have not  
loved you with our whole being.  
We have not loved our neighbors  
as ourselves.
- Many* **Forgive us, O God, and cleanse  
us from all unrighteousness.**
- One* Forgive us for judging others,  
misusing power, and for not  
honoring each other as image  
bearers of God.
- Many* **Form us into a community that  
can truly share one another's  
joys and pains.**
- All* **Free us Jesus from guilt, shame,  
and unforgiveness that binds us.  
Transform us, O God, so we may  
love and live as Jesus did.**

### SCRIPTURE READING | 3 min

1 John 1:5-10

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

*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive  
ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess  
our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us  
our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If  
we claim we have not sinned, we make him out  
to be a liar and his word is not in us.*

### INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION | 5 min

*Ask the Holy Spirit to direct your reflection and  
allow emotions to surface. You might want to  
record your thoughts in a journal.*

How have you dismissed or diminished the  
image of God in people nearby or worldwide?  
Where are things not as they're supposed to  
be and you had an active or passive part in  
that brokenness? What biases or stereotypes  
have you, your family, or your people harbored  
against other communities? Confess to God and  
receive his forgiveness.

## COMMUNITY PRAYER | 15 min

We invite you into a time of corporate repentance. Reflect then confess aloud any personal sin or the sins of your people group or community. After each prayer, the community responds “Lord, have mercy.” This might feel vulnerable, so feel free to pray as generically or specifically as you are comfortable.

Examples of corporate confession:

- “God we confess the American church’s complicity in perpetuating injustice, abuse, and violence.” (Lord, have mercy.)
- “God we confess that we have failed to listen to the cries of the vulnerable and hurting.” (Lord, have mercy.)
- “Lord, I confess that my community has harbored hatred against other ethnic and religious groups because of generations of war.” (Lord, have mercy.)
- “God, I confess that as Christians we have too often based our understandings of injustice on political categories of ‘liberal’ or ‘conservative’ instead of your Word.” (Lord, have mercy.)

## A PRAYER FOR THOSE WITH A CONTRITE HEART | 1 min

*One person prays aloud.*

Righteous and holy God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed. We have sinned through what we have said and done, and through what we have left unsaid and undone.

We have not created safe spaces for honest confession. We have clung to images of ourselves and our communities that are not fully honest. We have allowed fear to stop us from following you wholeheartedly in this area.

Lord, we humbly ask that you would shine your light into the places we have tried to hide, knowing that your love cleanses us and brings healing.

Give us ears to hear your voice leading us in our steps of repentance. Give us faith and courage to follow you in saying yes to your call.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we might reap the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Thank you that just as the father ran toward the prodigal son, you run toward those who turn to you.

We pray that you would make us into instruments of your healing in our broken world.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*Pray aloud together.*

**God of mercy,  
You welcome us out of shame and into your presence. Give us grace to be honest and humble before you and others. We ask this through Jesus who died and rose again.  
Amen.**