

## DISCUSSION GUIDE :: WEEK 6

**STOP, COLLABORATE & LISTEN**  
**GOD WON'T LET ME TAKE A WALKMAN ON GUILT TRIPS**  
**1 JOHN 1:8-10; JAMES 5:16**  
**10/15/2017**



### MAIN POINT

Confession of sin paves the way for freedom and restoration in relationships.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is the most memorable time you remember asking for forgiveness? What happened?**

**What, to you, feels different between asking for forgiveness and forgiving someone else? Which is harder for you? Why?**

**Has your perspective on forgiveness changed as you've gotten older? How?**

True forgiveness is a precious gift, and it begins with confession. When we humbly admit to God and to others how we have sinned against them, we open the door for forgiveness. That forgiveness brings a greater intimacy and freedom in that relationship than ever before. But forgiveness doesn't come without a cost. The person extending that forgiveness has to let go of their anger if they've been wronged; that letting go is an example of taking the cost onto themselves. The truth is that we are sinners and that God willingly forgives those who admit their sin. That forgiveness is not without cost, though. The fact that we are completely forgiven came at the price of Jesus. But because of Jesus' death, God wants us to let go of the past and embrace the complete and total forgiveness He offers us in Jesus Christ.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 1:8-10.**

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**What does verse 8 say happens if we claim to have no sin?**

**What is the result of confessing our sins? Is this a conditional or unconditional promise (v. 9)?**

The false teachers John was addressing claimed they did not need cleansing from sin because they denied they had any sin. John pointed out that those who claim to be without sin are deceived and the truth is not in them, meaning, the truth of the gospel has not changed their lives. In reality, the closer we become to God and experience His holiness, the

more we become aware of our sin problem. John says if we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. However, this is a conditional promise. We must first admit our sin by confessing it to God, and then He will forgive us.

**Practically speaking, what does it mean to confess our sins?**

**According to verse 10, if we claim to be without sin, what is not in us? What are the implications of this verse for our lives?**

Confessing our sins doesn't mean reciting a shallow history of our shortcomings. It involves owning up to our wrongdoing, feeling sorrow over it, and confessing to God our specific area of sin. Confession of sins involves more than a short prayer that says, "God, forgive me of my many sins." Confession calls for specifics. John says in verse 10, if we claim to be without sin "His word is not in us." However, when we confess our sins God is not only faithful to forgive, but also to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**Do you confess your sins on a regular basis? If so, do you make it a habit to do so as soon as you realized you've sinned, or do you wait until later?**

**How does confessing sin restore fellowship with God?**

Jesus taught His disciples in the Lord's Prayer to regularly seek the forgiveness of sins. We confess our sins out of respect and love for the person whom we have sinned against. As a result, God forgives our sin, purifies us from all unrighteousness, and restores us to His fellowship. That is step one. Step two is confessing sin to the person we have sinned against.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 5:16.**

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**Tucked in a passage about prayer, James encourages his readers to confess their sins to one another. Why is this important if we truly desire to be free of the guilt that can ruin relationships?**

**Confessing sin to others is not easy. What do we need God's power to do in us to help us be open and honest in our confessions of sin?**

**On the other hand, receiving a person's confession of sin can be challenging as well. What do we need God's power to do in us if we are the ones to whom sin is being confessed?**

James included confession of sin as an important part of godly relationships. Once we have confessed our guilt to God, we must confess it to those we have hurt. A righteous person has a close relationship with God and demonstrates faith through obedience. The idea is that you demonstrate righteousness when you confess, so your prayers are now more effective.

## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What does Jesus' death and resurrection tell you about God's desire to offer you forgiveness?**

**How does denying or ignoring our sins harm us? More specifically, how does it harm our relationships?**

**How can you make confessing your sins a routine spiritual discipline? Share some ways this has (or hasn't) worked for you in the past as encouragement for one another.**

## PRAY

Thank God for His willingness to forgive sins and restore us to fellowship. Pray for the courage to make confession of sins a regular part of your relationships with others. Also pray for any specific steps group members need to take toward confession in the immediate future.

## COMMENTARY

### 1 JOHN 1:5-10

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The message John declared is that God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. In a number of places, Jesus referred to Himself as light (John 9:5; 12:35-36,46). Light is a picture of truth, knowledge, and righteousness, while darkness is a picture of falsehood, ignorance, and sin. John declared that God is light and in Him there is no darkness. Since God is light and there is no darkness in Him, no person can claim that he is living in full fellowship with God while walking in sin at the same time. If anyone makes that claim, he lies and is not living according to the truth (vv. 5-6).

On the other hand, when we walk in the light (live in light of truth, knowledge, and righteousness), two things happen. First, we have fellowship with God. The second thing that happens when we live in the light is that the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. This strengthens the interpretation that the fellowship is between God and the Christian. To be "purified from all sin" means that those who are walking in the light have sin's defilement removed and that they experience a progressive sanctification—a progressive character transformation into the image of Jesus. All sin means every kind of sin and shows there is no limit to the categories of sin that Christ is willing to forgive. His sacrificial death made every type of sin forgivable (v. 7).

We do not know if the false teachers were suggesting that the Ephesian believers were without sin, or if that is an error the Ephesian believers fell into by themselves (v. 8). Either way, it needs to be corrected. A person might not be conscious of sin, but this does not mean he or she is free from it. On the other hand, when we grasp that we are to do all the things that Jesus would do if He were in our shoes, we fail continually. None of us loves perfectly as Jesus did. Therefore, we sin, because a failure to love perfectly is a sin. If we think we are without sin altogether, we are deceived and we live a lie.

John comforts us, however, with the truth that even though we have sin in our lives, we can still be purified from this sin and maintain our fellowship with God (and resultant fellowship with other believers). God's forgiveness of our sin is based on His justice. He is just and will forgive our sins. We might expect that forgiveness in this instance is based on God's mercy, but it is based on His justice. God is just because Jesus paid the penalty for our sin when He died on the cross. God has promised to forgive our sins in Christ (2:2) when we confess them, and He will abide by His promises.

### JAMES 5:16

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5:16a. Because God hears the prayers of penitent people and forgives sin, Christians should confess their sins to one another and pray for one another. The mention of "healing" at the conclusion of this verse makes it likely that the sins to be confessed are those which have caused illness. The healing shows the purpose of the confession and prayer.

Since the intent of the confession of sins is to experience physical healing, it seems best to refer the command to the confession of sins which may hinder healing. The confessor of sins is seeking healing by the act of admitting sins. Two interesting observations come from this verse. First, the entire church is to be involved in this praying. It is not confined to the elders. Second, the power to heal appears in the act of praying, not in the elder or other one praying.

Confess means "to say the same thing." It suggests that in confessing, we must identify the sin by its true name and call it what it is. We must acknowledge and repent of specific sins, not merely offer a general confession of guilt. Placed so close to the discussion of prayer for the sick, this verse likely has its primary application in confession of sin by people who are sick. However, the application is easily extended to confession of sin in any of life's situations. This confession of sin seeks to secure faithful prayer support for stumbling Christians from trusted spiritual friends. It is confession to dedicated, trusted prayer warriors who will intercede for you with God.

5:16b. Translators have disagreed widely over the translation of the last half of this verse. Some translators emphasize

that James was commenting on the effect of the prayers of righteous people. Other translators emphasize that James taught that righteousness and earnestness were requirements for uttering powerful prayers.

We learn two features of effective prayer in this verse. First, prayer must come from righteous people. A person must have a living faith shown by an obedient life. Second, effective prayer must have energy or persistence. Effective prayer comes from the heart of a believer whose passion is to see the will of God worked out in life.