

Spiritual Discipline of Confession

Psalm 32:5 (TNIV)

*⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD."
And you forgave
the guilt of my sin.*

1. The church is both a fellowship of saints and a fellowship of sinners. What do the following scripture passages teach us concerning our need for confession and forgiveness?
 - Isaiah 59:1-9
 - Romans 3:10-18
2. In your own words, try to describe the theology that lies behind the discipline of confession.
3. St. Alphonsus Liguori writes, "For a good confession three things are necessary: an examination of conscience, sorrow, and a determination to avoid sin." Richard Foster explains Liguori's quote by saying:
 - a. (Examination of Conscience) Opening our souls to the "gaze of God" and specifically identify sin
 - b. (Sorrow) Express your genuine sorrow for your sin; take your sin seriously
 - c. (Determination to Avoid Sin) Resolutely determine to avoid the confessed sin in the future; ask God to give us a yearning for holy living and a hatred for unholy living (Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 151-152)Of the three necessary things, which is most difficult for you?
4. Is private confession (just between you and God) sufficient or do we need brotherly confession (confession to a trusted brother or sister or a small group of believers) too? Explain your response.
5. Should we include the offended party in our confession (i.e., should we go to the person we have wronged and confess the wrong and ask for his/her forgiveness?)?
6. What role does the body of Christ have in the process of forgiveness? What insights do the following scriptures provide to your answer?
 - John 20:23
 - James 5:16
 - 1 Peter 2:9
7. Why is it so difficult to include other believers in one's personal confession?
 - What are the risks of doing this?
 - What are the rewards of doing this?
 - What can Fellowship Church do to become a "safe place" for its people to confess their sins?
8. What are the results of confession? What does 1 John 1:5-10 say about the assurance of forgiveness when we practice confession?