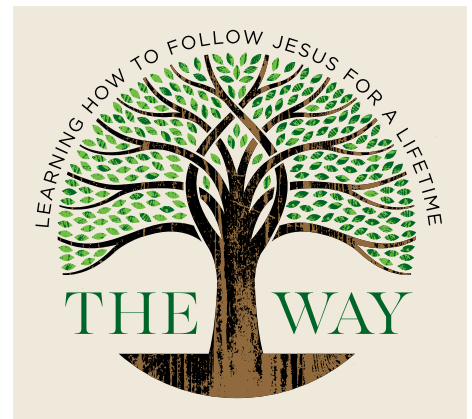


# LOOK IN: CONFESSION

**MAIN IDEA** - To regularly engage in self-examination; confession to God, myself and another; and to make amends to those I've harmed



Watch this week's introduction video at [menlo.church/theway](http://menlo.church/theway)

## CONNECT - HOW DOES THIS TOPIC RELATE TO US?

Choose 1 or 2 questions to get your discussion started.

1. What is your comfort level in confessing a fault?
2. Describe a time when you came clean about something. How did it feel before and after doing it? How did the person receiving your confession respond?
3. How has unconfessed sin impacted your life?

## ENGAGE - WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH US?

Read the following two passages in light of the idea of confession.

*David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.' "This is what the Lord says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'" Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die." - **2 Samuel 12:5-13***

1. How did David respond to Nathan's story of "another" person's wrongdoing? How did his response change when Nathan revealed that the story was about David? What did each response reveal about David's character?
2. In light of what God had given David (e.g. king of Israel, deliverance from Saul, etc), what can David's sin teach us about human nature?
3. What does Nathan's revelation demonstrate about the effect of secrets?

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. - **James 5:16***

*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. - **James 4:7-10***

1. Why is confession to another believer necessary for healing to take place?
2. What kind of healing does prayer and confession produce?
3. The imperatives in James 4:7-10 include commands to submit, resist, purify and humble. How are these commands interrelated?

## APPLY - HOW CAN THIS CHANGE OUR LIVES?

1. A recovery slogan states that “Expectations are premeditated resentments.” With whom have you set unrealistic expectations that lead to resentments? What steps can you take to begin making amends?
2. In *The Case for Christ*, author Lee Strobel said, “Few things accelerate the peace process as much as humbly admitting our own wrongdoing and asking forgiveness.” How can you be a peacemaker - not a peacekeeper - by admitting wrongdoing and asking for forgiveness?
3. What is your greatest fear? How do you respond to that fear when it comes up?

## ACTION STEP

During this coming week, practice taking a moral inventory (see Going Deeper section). Share the results with another person as appropriate.

## PRAYER - ASK SOMEONE TO READ PSALM 32 AS A PRAYER FOR THE GROUP

*Loving God, Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin you do not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; 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 transgressions to the Lord.” And you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them. You are our hiding place; you will protect us from trouble and surround us with songs of deliverance. Amen.*

## GOING DEEPER - FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

*Search me, God, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. - Psalm 139:23-24*

- What does this request of God demonstrate about human self-awareness? In what ways could God “report” the results to us?

*Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. - Proverbs 28:13*

- Compare “not prospering” with “finding mercy.” Why is mercy of more value?

*Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. - 2 Corinthians 7:10*

- What is the difference between these types of sorrow? How would you recognize which type of sorrow is being expressed?
- When have you experienced or witnessed godly sorrow?

## Modified Moral Inventory

In the Twelve Steps, Step 4 is an opportunity to take an honest, revelatory inventory of ourselves. This empowers us to recognize specific places and ways in which we are stuck so that we can continue moving toward becoming un-stuck and living fully in Christ.

For the simplified inventory below, each question is meant to be completed in its entirety before moving to the next. Answer the first question by creating a list of every response that comes to mind and then number your responses. After this, move to the second question and write a response for every response from the first question, and do the same for the third and fourth questions. Proceed in this manner by starting with the four questions under Resentments. After you are done, move to the next area until you have covered all four. Once you are finished, pause to look over what you have written. Ask God to help you discern where you need to start making amends.

- |                              |   |   |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Resentments (Grudges)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Toward whom am I angry?</li><li>• Why am I angry?</li></ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does the anger show up in my life?</li><li>• Where am I to blame?</li></ul>                   |
| <b>Fear</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What am I afraid of?</li><li>• Why am I afraid?</li></ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does the fear show up in my life?</li><li>• What do I normally do to numb the fear?</li></ul> |
| <b>Harm (Hurt)</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who have I harmed?</li><li>• What did I do (or fail to do)?</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What motivated my action?</li><li>• What should I have done instead?</li></ul>                    |
| <b>Sexual Conduct</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who did I not honor?</li><li>• What did I do (or fail to do)?</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the exact nature of my wrongs?</li><li>• What should I have done instead?</li></ul>       |

**Recommended Resources** A. Read Chapter 8 of *The Life You Always Wanted* by John Ortberg.

B. Try the app “Reimagining the Examen”.

