

Thirsty #3: Walking

Objectives: As Christians our relationship with God will never change, but not confessing sin can greatly impact our fellowship with God and our dependence on the Holy Spirit. We will look at how to daily confess sin and live in the light of God's truth.

Launch

Can't seem to get clean.

Researchers at the University of Toronto published experiment results suggesting that people experience a powerful urge to wash themselves when suffering from a guilty conscience. Researchers asked a portion of the volunteers to think about immoral acts they had committed, then all of the volunteers were offered an opportunity to clean their hands. Results showed that those mulling over their sins were twice as likely to jump at the offer to clean their hands.

- Why do you think people felt like their hands needed to be cleaned?

Postsecrets

Each year, thousands find solace in mailing their deepest secrets to Postsecret.com and in so doing, confess their deepest secrets and most shameful sins. If you could write a postcard to God and confess something that has been causing you guilt and remorse, what would you write? Here, have a postcard . . . (Bring some MSU postcards or bring notecards to have people fill out. Let them know that they will not be collected or read by anyone.)

Explore

Read 1 John 1:5-2:2

- What are your observations?
- What does it mean to walk in darkness? What does it mean to walk in light?
- What is the result of walking in the darkness and walking in the light? (v.6-7)
- Why does John choose to use 'light' as a metaphor? What does light do, and (Biblically) what does it represent? (purity, holiness, sinlessness, moral perfection, beauty, awesome, revelation)
- What is the difference between saying we have no sin in our lives and confessing our sin? (v8-2:1)

- What is the promise in verse 9?
- How does not confessing sin affect our fellowship with God and with others?
- To yourself, thinking back to the last few days and try to count how many times you remember confessing your sin to God?
- Does your answer suggest sensitivity to sin, insensitivity to sin, or something in between?

Confession and Truth

*For the nonbeliever, sin stands as a barrier to a **relationship** with God; for the Christian, it stands as a barrier to **fellowship** and to the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.*

- What is the difference between having a "relationship with God" and having "fellowship with God"?

***Relationship**, as we have seen, is our being adopted by the Father through Christ, and being sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1). It is a positional truth that is never in jeopardy because of the grace of Christ to those purchased by His blood.*

***Fellowship** is the healthy, ongoing development of the relationship with God, which can be significantly hindered by walking in the darkness of disobedience and lack of confession of sin.*

- How have the times you have been slow to confess sin to God (or to others) affected your fellowship with them? (This is a good place to share specific examples.)
- How would you define 'confessing your sins'?

To receive God's forgiveness, simply confess your sin and accept his forgiveness by faith. The Bible promises that if you confess your sins to him, God is faithful and just to forgive you and to purify you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). To confess your sins means to agree with God about your sins.

Your agreement is threefold:

1. Agree that your sins are wrong and grieve God.
2. Agree that God has already forgiven your sins through Christ's death and the shedding of his blood on the cross.
3. You repent. You change your attitude, which results in a change of action.

We call this process "spiritual breathing." Just as you exhale and inhale physically, so you must also breathe spiritually. You exhale spiritually when you confess your sins.

Exhale: Confess your sin the moment you become aware of it. Agree with God concerning it and thank him for his forgiveness.

Inhale: Surrender back control of your life to Christ and—by faith—rely upon his Holy Spirit to lead and empower you with his presence.

- In what ways is this definition of 'confession' similar to how you've understood 'confession' in the past? In what ways is it different?
- How is confession like "preaching the Gospel to yourself daily"?
- How should it impact you that Christ did not run away from our dark secrets but rather stepped into them and carried them to the cross? (notice Christ's greatness—v. 7, 9, 2:1-2)

Feeling Forgiven

Our **relationship** with God is not affected by sin. By virtue of our new birth, we will forever be his children and he will always be our Father. But as with any **relationship**, sin does hinder **fellowship**. If you've confessed your sin, then your guilt has been forgiven and

your **fellowship** with God has been completely restored. Yet for some sins—those ground-in, tough-to-get-out stains—you may find that feelings of guilt linger.

Apply

Look back at what you wrote on your postcard and take some time to personally reflect and if you're ready confess your sin to God.

- Would anyone like to share something you wrote down with us? Would you like to share anything you did not write down? (Don't force people, but encourage them to take the opportunity to do so knowing that none of us is without sin, but all covered in Christ's grace)

Read 1 John 1:9 out loud, have them write it over what you wrote on your card and tear them up together.

- How can spiritual breathing and confession throughout your week help satisfy your thirst the way God intended?

Although we can't see God, sometimes others can model his forgiveness to us. This is why Scripture tells us, "Confess your sins to each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

- Who could you connect with on a weekly basis to share your struggles, sin, and prayer requests?
- How can you encourage each other to walk in the light? (By pointing each other to God's truth)

Let's finish by offering some prayers of praise to Christ for his light that dispels our darkness.