

Confession and Commitment

When younger children at a Catholic parochial school couldn't remember their sins when they entered the confessional, the priest suggested that school teachers have the students make lists of their sins. The next week when one child came to confession, the priest could hear him unfolding paper. The youngster began, "I lied to my parents. I disobeyed my mom. I fought with my brothers and. . ." There was a long pause. Then a small angry voice said, "Hey, this isn't my list!" [Rev. Douglas F. Fortner in Reader's Digest]

"Confession is good for the soul" is a popular saying but who believes it, let alone practises confession? Not many of us! The Bible contains amazing prayers of confession. Some short, some quite long. The shortest is "God be merciful to me a sinner." Jesus assures that the man went home forgiven.

Confession is "reality therapy." This occurs when we confess our sins, not just to ourselves, but also to God and then finally to the individual or group we have offended. Confession in the New Testament is "taking God's perspective of sin as our own. It acknowledges freely before God our guilt and calls on God's character as our only hope of forgiveness and cleansing. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" 1 John 1:9.

Nehemiah contains two prayers of confession, confessions that are very open and transparent, Nehemiah 1:4-11 and Nehemiah 9. Nehemiah recognises that God must deal with sin. When we cherish our hidden sin, we deny God's justice (Nahum 1:3). In confession, I identify my sin for what it is. Foster notes our sins cannot be called errors in judgment, nor is there any room to blame them on upbringing or family or mean neighbours. This is Reality Therapy of the best sort . . ."

The people expressed their repentance by not only making a verbal commitment, but by putting their commitment in writing, Nehemiah 9:38-10:39. Notice their commitment included never marrying an unbeliever, not allowing money to become their god, giving to support the work of "the house of God," honouring God with every increase He gives and giving in such a way that the storehouses of the "house of God" will always be full.

Can we make this our personal commitment?

- I commit to knowing God's Word, the Bible, so I live a life in obedience to the Lord Jesus including never marrying a non-Christian, 10:28-30.
- I commit to keep making space in my week so I take time to worship and honour the Lord Jesus, 10:31.
- I commit to a life of responsible stewardship by giving money to the Lord and His work via the offering at CGCC, 10:32-39.