

Getting to Know Jesus- Adult Bible Discovery Guide- May 24, 2020

Welcome to Adult Bible Study for this week. This study is designed for you to do on your own or with your family.

Opening Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, I give You thanks that my sins are forgiven before Your Father in heaven. By the Holy Spirit, give me grace to trust in Your promises and so live in the freedom and peace that You have won for in Your death and resurrection. Amen.*

Something to consider as we begin:

What are some ways in which people attempt to deal with sin and its consequences in their lives?

From Luther's Small Catechism:

Confession

What is Confession?

Confession has two parts. First, that we confess our sins, and second that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

What sins should we confess?

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer; but before the pastor we should confess those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

Which are these?

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, be negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?

What is a confession, exactly?

In a broad sense, a confession is a truthful statement publically made by an individual, or group of individuals. A confession of sin is admitting to God what you have done wrong according to His Law- the Ten Commandments. A confession of faith, such as the Apostles', Nicene, or Athanasian Creeds, is a public witness made by Christians to the faith they believe and teach. Here we speak of confession in the sense of admitting our sins to God and trusting His promise of forgiveness. This confession can be made publicly or privately.

Read- 2 Samuel 11:1-12:15

For you to answer:

- *How does David attempt to deal with the sin of adultery?*
- *How is David brought to confess his sins?*
- *What does the absolution spoken by Nathan do?*

Read- Psalm 51

For you to answer:

- *How does life change when we recognize that every day is a day for repentance?*

As Christians, when we confess our sins, we acknowledge the truth that we have failed to fear, love and trust in God above all things. Christ's Absolution declares me free of my sin through His Word placed in the mouth of another sinner.

Why do we need to repent of our sins?

God calls us to confess and, ultimately, it is God whom we have offended with our sins.

See: Luke 12:3; Romans 6:23

What will happen if we don't repent?

Guilt has a way of exerting a powerful pressure on us. If we hide our sins or unwisely attempt to justify them in God's eyes, a destructive stress grows on the mind and even the body. We long to "come clean" as it were. God truly offers complete forgiveness to all who believe that Jesus carried all their sins to the cross.

See: Psalm 32:3-5

What is the difference between public and private confession?

In public confession, all the members of a congregation publicly confess their sins together. These sins are summed up in general and confessed to God. Then the pastor announces God's forgiveness or absolution-since Jesus paid the full price for all sins in His suffering and death on the cross. Sometimes a specific sin weighs heavily on your conscience. When this is the case, private confession gives you the chance to confess that specific sin and be assured that God forgives that very sin for Jesus' sake.

See: Acts 3:19

When a congregation confesses its sins during a church service, does that mean they are all forgiven?

On the cross Jesus won forgiveness for every sin of each person who has ever lived or will ever live. In the church service God indeed offers that complete and free forgiveness to each person there. Those who trust in Jesus are completely forgiven. If people are merely pretending, denying in their hearts, or "going through the motions," then no, God is not fooled, and their sin remains.

See: 1 John 1:8-10

"If only sins that can be named are forgiven, consciences could never find peace. For many sins cannot be seen or remembered." (Augsburg Confession XXV 9)

Question to Ponder:

Why is it so easy to fall into the rut of just going through the motions when attending church?

To whom should we confess our sins privately?

Any fellow Christian can offer you God's forgiveness. A pastor may be preferable because he knows the expectations of God's Law and passages of Scripture to reassure you God has forgiven your sin no matter how grievous. Also, he has publicly taken an oath before God to never repeat sins confessed to him.

See: James 5:16

Question to Ponder:

What do you think are some reasons Christians may be reluctant to go to their pastor for private confession?

NOTE: Individual Confession before the pastor is not a Biblical requirement to receive the gift of forgiveness. However, it is a precious gift that should not be despised or neglected, for here a troubled sinner is given the opportunity to hear the Absolution personally. In worship we make a general confession of our sins and receive Christ's Absolution from the pastor.

I am not sure I like the idea of another person "forgiving" me of my sins. Isn't God the only one who can forgive sins?

Like Baptism, Absolution is anchored in Jesus' saving work on the cross. Jesus paid the full price for all sins when He suffered and died, meaning God offers forgiveness to every man, woman and child. So it is not the person who is forgiving you of your sins. He or she is merely a vessel, a vehicle, delivering the forgiveness-filled Word of God to you. It is actually God who is forgiving you in that moment. One of the ways God shares His Word is through the office of the pastoral ministry, delivering grace and mercy to His people. This is as valid, in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, stood before us and spoke those words of forgiveness with His own lips.

See: John 20:22-23

"Our people are taught that they should highly prize the Absolution as being God's voice and pronounced by God's command." (Augsburg Confession XXV 3)

Can I be sure that my private Confession to the pastor will remain confidential?

In the Rite of Ordination, the pastor promises before God never to divulge the sins that have been confessed to him. Never means never, for God Himself in Christ has removed these sins.

See: Psalm 103:12

NOTE: *"When you become aware of a sin, however, do nothing but turn your ears into a tomb and bury it..."* (Large Catechism 8th commandment paragraphs 265-266)

Can I forgive people who confess their sins to me too?

Yes, you can! It's not uncommon for people to wrestle, struggle, and even find themselves tormented by their own personal dark, innermost sins. Any Christian that understands the power of Confession and Absolution can serve as an instrument of God's Word, and assure a struggling individual of God's wonderful forgiveness.

See: Proverbs 11:13

"Forgiveness is the only real answer for sin. Sin can't be ignored. When we try to ignore sin and just move on, resentment, un-forgiveness, animosity, lawlessness, legalism, and other sinful attitudes build up and the heart begins to harden. In the short term, ignoring sin may seem easier. But in the end, it is very destructive to relationships with God and with your neighbors. The art of confessing and forgiving is a tough one to learn. It can only be done by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Counselor! Only when we have experienced the unconditional grace of Jesus can we even begin to find the power to give that grace to others. (Getting to Know Jesus p. 114)

Closing Prayer: *Heavenly Father, You delivered Your Son for our offenses and raised Him for our justification. Grant that we may also trust in the word of forgiveness, which You have given, that clinging to Your good and gracious promises, we might be brought to eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen!*