

Tips for Confessing Sin One to Another

There's a right way and a wrong way to spill your guts. Here are some guidelines about biblical confession.

In a rush to unburden his heart, John released a torrent of painful information to his wife. JoAnn, deeply wounded and betrayed, exploded and ran from the room sobbing, "I never want to see you again!"

Confessing sins, especially when they involve broken covenant or violated trust, can be very devastating to the person hearing the information for the first time. There is no clear scriptural procedure to lead us through this dangerous minefield. But there are some principles that will help in the process.

Be honest with yourself. Have you yourself acknowledged your sin? Pastoral counselor David Seamands says you cannot confess to God what you will not first admit to yourself.

Scrutinize your motives. Ensure that by the grace of God you are sincerely humbling yourself. Make sure you are not engaging in a blame game, shifting responsibility for your behavior to someone else's failure. ("I'm sorry I did this, but you never")

Ask God for wisdom. He stands ready to give it. We have His promise in James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (NIV).

Consider the "load." Bible teacher Jack Frost says you should never drive a 10-ton truck over a 5-ton bridge. Is the person you're confessing to strong enough to bear the weight of what you are about to disclose?

Seek godly counsel. If you think you need this, get it first. A trusted pastor or experienced counselor can be enlisted to hear your confession and advise you how to approach the one you have wronged.

An excellent secular book that deals with this subject is *Disclosing Secrets: When, to Whom, and How Much to Reveal* (Gentle Path Press). The authors, Deborah Corley and Jennifer Schneider, have researched the effects of disclosure on relationships.

They write: "Despite the sense of pain and loss, enough good had come out of the process that the majority said they would recommend disclosure to other couples."

Harvey Brown Jr. is president of Impact Ministries in Wilmore, Kentucky. He is featured on a new DVD, *Living in the Freedom Christ Gives: Finding Healing and Wholeness in a Sexually Broken World*. It is available at .