

Our Daily Bread - 1 John Devotionals

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A Clear Conscience

January 8, 2011

Read: 1 John 1 | Bible in a Year: Genesis 20-22; Matthew 6:19-34

I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. —Acts 24:16

After Ffiona Campbell became famous as the first woman to walk around the world, her joy was short-lived. Despite the adulation she received, something troubled her. Guilt overtook her and pushed her to the brink of a nervous breakdown.

What was bothering her? “I shouldn’t be remembered as the first woman to walk around the world,” she finally admitted. “I cheated.” During her worldwide trek, she broke the guidelines of the Guinness Book of World Records by riding in a truck part of the way. To clear her conscience, she called her sponsor and confessed her deception.

God has given each of us a conscience that brings guilt when we do wrong. In Romans, Paul describes our conscience as “accusing or else excusing [us]” (2:15). For the obedient follower of Christ, care of the conscience is an important way of maintaining a moral compass despite moral imperfection. Confessing sin, turning from it, and making restitution should be a way of life (1 John 1:9; Lev. 6:2-5).

Paul modeled a well-maintained conscience, saying, “I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man” (Acts 24:16 NIV). Through confession and repentance, he kept short accounts with God. Is sin bothering you? Follow Paul’s example. Strive for a clear conscience.

There is a treasure you can own That’s greater than a crown or throne: This treasure is a conscience clear That brings the sweetest peace and cheer. —Isenhour

If God’s Word guides your conscience, let your conscience be your guide.

The Big Comeback

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. —1 John 1:9

Bill Crowder

June 30, 2014

In today’s reading we see how God has provided a gracious means of cleansing us from our personal sins and reestablishing fellowship with God. It comes through confession of sin and redirecting our choices to the path of obedience (1 John 1:9).

Today’s Devotional

Chad Pennington is a former American football player who has suffered multiple career-threatening injuries. Twice, his injuries forced him to endure surgery, months of physical therapy, and weeks of training to get back onto the field. Yet, both times he not only returned to playing but he also excelled at such a high level that he was named Comeback Player of the Year in the National Football League. For Pennington, his efforts were an expression of his determination to return to football.

Spiritually, when sin and failure break our relationship with God and sideline our service, determination alone is not what restores us to rightness with God and usefulness in His kingdom. When we are sidelined because of sin, the path to a comeback is confession as well. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

For us to be able to recover from our spiritual failings, we are absolutely dependent on the One who gave Himself for us. And that gives us hope. Christ, who died for us, loves us with an everlasting love and will respond with grace as we confess our faults to Him. Through confession, we can find His gracious restoration—the greatest of all comebacks.

Reflect & Pray

Just as I am, without one plea,

But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come. —Elliott

Confession is the path that leads to restoration.

Words That Matter

September 25, 2016

Read: 1 John 1:1–4 | Bible in a Year: Song of Solomon 6–8; Galatians 4

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes . . . this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 1 John 1:1

Early in my days of working as an editor for Our Daily Bread, I selected the cover verse for each month's devotional. After a while, I began to wonder if it made a difference.

Not long after that, a reader wrote and described how she had prayed for her son for more than twenty years, yet he wanted nothing to do with Jesus. Then one day he stopped by to visit her, and he read the verse on the cover of the booklet that sat on her table. The Spirit used those words to convict him, and he gave his life to Jesus at that very moment.

Words that point us to Christ are always words that matter.

I don't recall the verse or the woman's name. But I'll never forget the clarity of God's message to me that day. He had chosen to answer a woman's prayers through a verse selected nearly a year earlier. From a place beyond time, He brought the wonder of His presence to my work and His words.

John the disciple called Jesus "the Word of life" (1 John 1:1). He wanted everyone to know what that meant. "We proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us," he wrote of Jesus (v. 2). "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us" (v. 3).

There is nothing magical in putting words on a page. But there is life-changing power in the words of Scripture because they point us to the Word of life—Jesus.

Thank You, Father, that Your Word is living and powerful!

Words that point us to Christ are always words that matter.

INSIGHT:

In the Greek language in which it was originally penned, the verbs in 1 John 1:1–2 are in the perfect tense. They describe something completed in the past with abiding results into the present: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. . . . The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it." These verses connect remarkably with John's gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . Through him all things were made."

By Tim Gustafson

We Touched Him!

May 5, 2006

Read: 1 John 1:1-4 | Bible in a Year: 1 Kings 19-20; Luke 23:1-25

That which . . . our hands have handled, . . . we declare to you. —1 John 1:1,3

Mythology is filled with legends of ancient gods who descended from heaven and took human form, but no one ever heard or saw them, and no one ever touched them. These were dreams born of human desire for God and the hope that someday He would draw near. The incarnation of Jesus—God who came in the flesh—is how those dreams came true.

Author Dorothy Sayers put it this way: "[God] can exact nothing from man that He has not exacted from Himself. He has Himself gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death. When He was a man, He played the man. He

was born in poverty and died in disgrace and thought it well worthwhile.”

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the irrefutable proof that God will do anything to draw near to us.

Augustine said, “[God] gave Himself for a time to be handled by the hands of men.” And we have the written record of John, a man who actually did touch Him. We can trust his account—and we can trust that God wants to be near to you and me.

Absolutely tender! Absolutely true!

Understanding all things; understanding you;

Infinitely loving, good and kind and near—

That is Christ our Savior. What have we to fear? —Anon.

Love was when God became a man. —Walvoord

By David H. Roper

The Right Light

February 3, 2005

Read: 1 John 1:1-7 | Bible in a Year: Exodus 31-33; Matthew 22:1-22

He put the lampstand in the tabernacle of meeting, across from the table, on the south side of the tabernacle. —Exodus 40:24

Eating in the dark is no fun. Low light in a restaurant is one thing; eating in a room with no light at all is another. The same is true in our walk with God. Unless we take advantage of the light He gives, we will miss seeing what He is doing for us.

We have an Old Testament picture of this—the tabernacle. As the priest entered a room called the Holy Place, he could see only by the light of a golden lampstand (Exodus 25:31-40). Like everything else in the room, it had been carefully fashioned according to the pattern God gave Moses (v.40).

The lampstand is a picture of spiritual light. The gold speaks of value. The oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit. The six branches coming out from the center shaft portray unity in plurality. The symbol of the almond blossom is linked to God’s anointed priesthood (Numbers 17:1-8). When all this is combined with a New Testament reference that uses a golden lampstand to represent the church (Revelation 1:20), we have the complete picture. God gives light through the Spirit, who works through His congregation of anointed people (1 Peter 2:9).

Yes, the Holy Spirit provides us with the light we need. Are we daily spending time in prayer and reading God’s Word so that we can take advantage of it?

Holy Ghost, with light divine,
Shine upon this heart of mine;
Chase the shades of night away,
Turn my darkness into day. —Reed

The light of God’s holiness convicts the sinner and guides the saint.

By Mart DeHaan |

The Truth About Sin

December 23, 1998 — by Dennis J. De Haan

Read: 1 John 1:1-10

We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. —1 John 2:1

Bible in a Year:

Nahum 1-3; Revelation 14

A man rebuked me for admitting that I still sin and often need forgiveness. He quoted verses 6 and 9 of 1 John 3 and said that a Christian does not sin, implying that I was not a Christian. I assured him that I don’t want to sin, but that I can’t say I’m Christlike in everything I think, say, and do. I suggested that the verses in 1 John 3 refer to a sinful lifestyle, and I pointed him to other verses in 1 John which teach that Christians still need forgiveness (1:8-10; 2:1).

Becoming like Christ is a lifelong process. Only in heaven will we be without sin. I believe that's why John warned us to beware of three lies about sin: First, saying "we have fellowship with [Christ]" while we "walk in darkness" (1 Jn. 1:6). Second, saying "we have no sin" (v.8). And third, saying "we have not sinned" (v.10). Following each lie he gave us the truth. First, if we walk in the light, Jesus' blood cleanses us from all sin (v.7). Second, if we confess our sins, He forgives and cleanses us (v.9). And third, if we sin, Jesus speaks in our defense before the Father (2:1).

In our struggle with temptation and sin, let's pray as David did, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins" (Ps. 19:12-13).

Please help me, Lord, in all I do
To act and think with motives true;
And by Your love reveal to me
Those sins that only You can see. —DJD

Christians are not sinless, but they should sin less.

An Insult To God

January 4, 1996

Read: 1 John 1:1-10 | Bible in a Year: Genesis 10-12; Matthew 4

He who does not believe God has made Him a liar. —1 John 5:10

A woman who was extremely upset phoned me several years ago. She said she was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Apparently she had strayed far from the Lord, but now had returned to Him and truly wanted to do His will. The memories of her days of spiritual wandering, however, kept haunting her. She somehow couldn't accept the fact that God had forgiven her sins, and she had no peace or joy. But worse than that, by her attitude she was saying to God, "I don't believe You. You don't mean what You say!"

I said to her, "Suppose that one of your dearest friends was careless and broke a piece of your best china. Feeling very sorry, she sincerely apologized for not being more careful. You assured her that you would not hold it against her. Now, what would you think if every time you saw that person, she recalled how foolish she had been and again asked for forgiveness? After a while you would probably become exasperated and say, 'Listen, put the matter out of your mind. I have sincerely forgiven you, and I don't want you to mention it again!'"

God is also true to His Word, for He promises to cleanse us when we acknowledge our failures. So confess your sins to the Lord. Then believe that you're forgiven.

In the deep, silent depths, far away from the shore
Where they never may rise to trouble me more—
God has buried my sins where no mortal may see;
He has cast all of them in the depths of the sea. —Anon.

Having given your sins to God, don't try to take them back.

By Richard DeHaan | [See Other Authors](#)

The Biggest Lie

September 6, 2002 — by Herbert Vander Lugt

Read: 1 John 1:1-10

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. —1 John 1:8

Bible in a Year:
Psalms 148-150; 1 Corinthians 15:29-58

A minister was walking down a street when he noticed a group of boys standing around a dog. Concerned for the dog's safety, he walked over and asked what they were doing. A boy replied, "This is an old stray, and all of us want it. We decided that whoever told the biggest lie would get it."

“You boys shouldn’t have a contest telling lies,” said the minister. “Don’t you know that lying is a sin? Why, when I was your age I never told a lie!” There was silence for about a minute. Then, just as the minister thought he had gotten through to them, one boy gave a deep sigh and said, “All right, he wins. Give him the dog.”

We smile, but the fact is, we’ve all told some whoppers. Oh, we tolerate some lies, calling them exaggerations—like when we add a few inches to the big fish we caught. We aren’t that tolerant, however, when lied to and cheated in a business deal or when an untruth threatens our reputation. Yet, anyone who says he’s without sin is telling the biggest lie of all.

So where does that leave us? Guilty, according to 1 John 1:8. But notice the good news that follows in verse 9. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” That’s a truth we all need to hear. And that’s no lie! —HVL

Deceit lies hidden in our hearts—
We all have told a lie;
Yet Jesus can forgive and cleanse—
That’s why He came to die. —D. De Haan

A lie may cover your tracks, but it cannot hide the truth.

Totally Clean

August 5, 2012 — by Bill Crowder

Read: 1 John 1:1-10

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. —1 John 1:9

Bible in a Year:

Isaiah 28-30

A friend was updating me on his past year—a year in which he had been receiving ongoing medical treatment for cancer. The smile on his face was a powerful testimony to the good news he had just received. He said that at his one-year checkup the doctor announced that the test results all pointed to one thing: “You are totally clean!” What a difference two words can make! To my friend, totally clean meant every trace of the disease that had threatened his life only months before had been wiped from his body. We rejoiced to hear that he was totally clean!

King David, after his moral failure with Bathsheba, longed for a similar thing to happen in his heart. Hoping for the stains of his sin to be washed away, he cried out, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). The good news for him and for us is that our sins can be taken care of. When we need cleansing, John’s familiar words bring hope: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

We can’t cleanse our own hearts; only God can do that. If we confess our sins to Him, He promises to make us totally clean!

Search me, O God, and know my heart today
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray.
See if there be some wicked way in me;
Cleanse me from every sin and set me free. —Orr

Confession to God always brings cleansing from God.

Contact

August 24, 1996 — by David C. McCasland

Read: 1 John 1:1-4

We . . . declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. —1 John 1:2

Bible in a Year:

Psalms 116-118; 1 Corinthians 7:1-19

When Apollo 11 neared the moon in July 1969, the editors of The New York Times felt their coverage of the first step on lunar soil should go beyond headlines and photos to embrace an achievement shared by all humanity. So they asked Pulitzer Prize-winner

Archibald MacLeish to write a poem. The day after Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin Jr. walked on the moon, the front page contained these words:

You were a wonder to us, unattainable, a longing past the reach of longing, a light beyond our light, our lives—perhaps a meaning to us . . . our hands have touched you in your depth of night.

That day, through the hands of others, we touched the moon.

The apostle John wrote some memorable words about an even more significant historical event—the visit of God's Son to this planet. He wrote, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life . . . we declare to you" (1 Jn. 1:1,3).

John touched Jesus. And today, so can we. As surely as John held Him in the flesh, we can grasp the Son of God through faith. We too can experience the joy of having a close relationship with the Father and the Son (vv.3-4).

In faith, in fellowship, in times of greatest need, we can say, "Our hands have touched You."

We can come to Jesus because Jesus came to us.

The Needed Antenna

January 26, 1997 — by Vernon C. Grounds

Read: 1 John 1:1-4

The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life. —1 John 1:2

Bible in a Year:

Exodus 14-15; Matthew 17

How would you answer the question, "What is the meaning of life?" Jonathan Gabay of England has published a book containing the answers of well-known individuals to that query. One of them, a church leader, gave an arresting testimony. As a child, he says, he watched his family's black and white TV, wishing that he could get a clearer picture. But he was glad they had even that unsatisfactory set.

Then his family learned that an outside antenna was needed. "Suddenly," he said, "we found that we could get clear and distinct pictures. Our enjoyment was transformed." Then he draws this comparison: "Life without a relationship with God through Jesus Christ is like the television without the antenna."

Without a knowledge of God and His purposes revealed in Scripture and in Jesus Christ, we finite humans with our sin-darkened minds have at best a blurred picture of the invisible, holy Creator. But when we pick up the Bible and encounter Jesus, the Man who was God-in-the-flesh, the fuzziness vanishes. As the Savior Himself declared, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9).

Have you seen Jesus clearly in God's Word? Are you helping others to see Him too? (1 Jn. 1:1-3; Acts 1:8).

O send Thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me,
That He may touch my eyes and make me see;
Show me the truth concealed within Thy Word,
And in Thy book revealed I see Thee, Lord. —Lathbury

You can't get a clear picture of Christ unless you see Him in the Bible.

Eyewitness

By David C. McCasland

Read: 1 John 1:1-7

That which we have seen and heard we declare to you. —1 John 1:3

Bible in a Year:

2 Chronicles 34-36; John 19:1-22

“You don’t want to interview me for your television program,” the man told me. “You need someone who is young and photogenic, and I’m neither.” I replied that we indeed wanted him because he had known C. S. Lewis, the noted author and the subject of our documentary. “Sir,” I said, “when it comes to telling the story of a person’s life, there is no substitute for an eyewitness.”

As Christians, we often refer to sharing our faith in Christ as “witnessing” or “giving our testimony.” It’s an accurate concept taken directly from the Bible. John, a companion and disciple of Jesus, wrote: “We have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you” (1 John 1:2-3).

If you know Jesus as your Savior and have experienced His love, grace, and forgiveness, you can tell someone else about Him. Youth, beauty, and theological training are not required. Reality and enthusiasm are more valuable than a training course in how to share your faith.

When it comes to telling someone the wonderful story of how Jesus Christ can transform a person’s life, there is no substitute for a firsthand witness like you.

Let us go forth, as called of God,
Redeemed by Jesus' precious blood,
His love to show, His life to live,
His message speak, His mercy give. —Whittle

Jesus doesn't need lawyers, He needs witnesses.

The Witness Of Friends

By David C. McCasland

Read: 1 John 1:1-7

We have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. —1 John 1:2

Bible in a Year:

1 Chronicles 22-24; John 8:28-59

Pulitzer Prize-winning author David Halberstam died in a traffic accident 5 months before the publication of his landmark book about the US war in Korea. In the days following the author’s death, fellow writers and colleagues volunteered to conduct a national book tour on his behalf. During every engagement, they paid tribute to Halberstam by reading from his new book and offering personal recollections of their friend.

When it comes to conveying the essence and importance of a person, there’s no substitute for a friend. After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, His followers began to tell others about the unique Person they had known. “We have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us” (1 John 1:2). Their purpose was that others might come to know God the Father and Christ His Son (v.3).

At times we may feel that witnessing to others about our faith in Christ is a frightening task or a burdensome duty. But talking about a Friend whose presence and influence have transformed our lives helps us see it in a new light.

The gospel of Christ has always been most powerfully presented by the witness of His friends.

Lord, help us see, through transformed eyes, This world of people in despair; We want to reach out with Your love To tell them just how much You care. —Sper

The more you love Jesus, the more you’ll talk about Him.

Time Off

March 2, 2001 — by Dave Branon

Read: 1 John 1:1-7

Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. —1 John 1:3

Bible in a Year:

Numbers 26-27; Mark 8:1-21

Is there such a thing as a superstar Christian who is so close to God or so godly that he can take time off in his relationship with God?

The idea sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? It's absurd to think that our walk with God is anything but continual, everyday, all-the-time. But in reality, don't we sometimes go our own way and neglect our fellowship with Him?

This principle has a parallel in the world of sports. Grant Hill, a superstar professional basketball player, made this comment about his off-season practice schedule: "I just didn't feel that I could take a week off. When I take one day off, I feel like I'm lacking a bit."

If we as Christians "take time off" from our relationship with God, we too will be "lacking a bit." We will miss the guidance of His Word and the fellowship we experience in prayer. We will be more likely to forget our priorities and drift into forbidden areas that could lead to our downfall.

No matter how long you've been a child of God through faith in Christ, you need to guard your relationship with Him. It's not just about going to church or having daily devotions. It's a continual relationship. Taking time off will seriously weaken your walk.

The time we spend in fellowship
With God each day in prayer
Will strengthen us to stand against
Temptation's evil snare. —Sper

To keep spiritually fit, walk daily with Christ.

True Fellowship

"Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3

I remember a time when I talked to a woman about prayer. With a starry look in her eyes, she asked if I had ever prayed with a Mormon. I said, "Well, no. Not that I can remember." She told me that she and her Mormon neighbor often got together to pray. And then she said, "We have such wonderful fellowship with each other and God."

Many Mormons are fine people and share a lot of our values. But, since Mormonism denies that Jesus is God and Savior, we can never get beyond friendship to true fellowship. John made this truth clear when he said, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

You may be thinking, "Why all the talk about fellowship? I'm feeling nice and cozy where I am, thank you! I've got all the latest Christian books and music. I watch church services on the Internet—I've got it covered."

Well, not really. We need each other! Think of how often Scripture challenges us to do something to, with, or for "one another." True Christianity is about true community. And true community is about the blessings of fellowship with those who share one big thing in common—a love for Christ and His Word.

True fellowship happens when believers spend time together encouraging each other from the Bible. It's not about a warm fuzzy feeling or a tingle down your spine. It's about praying together, bearing one another's burdens, encouraging one another to do good works and keeping each other focused on what truly counts. When trouble comes and you need someone you can trust with the core issues of your heart, there's no one like another believer who can pray with you and help you carry the cross. Granted, sometimes authentic fellowship isn't all that pleasant. Have you ever had a brother or sister lovingly point out a fault in your life? That hurts! You may want to say, "No thanks, I don't want to be a part of that." But hang in there! That's what fellowship is all about—facing ourselves as we really are and finding someone to encourage us to get off the dime of our lame attitudes and actions and get back on the journey of becoming more like Jesus.

But whether comforting or convicting, engaging in mutually beneficial fellowship is the heartbeat of true Christianity.

Of course, there are times when we all let each other down, which means that even true fellowship with other Christ-followers is imperfect. The only person who will never disappoint you is Jesus. And the good news is that you are called to have fellowship with Him! You are called to walk with Him each day—to take part in His suffering if necessary, to sample the luxury of His love, and to be free from the slavery of sin. In John 15:15, Jesus said: "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends."

Welcome to the joy of not having to go it alone! Welcome to the community of fellowship with one another and with Jesus.

YOUR JOURNEY...

How much true fellowship do you have in your life? When you spend time with believers, are you only about having fun, or is there a deeper purpose?

Do you have a Christian friend to whom you would give permission to graciously show you where you fall short and help you back into the way? Let that person know you are ready and willing—and don't get upset when he takes you up on the offer!

If you have a concordance, look up all the New Testament references to "one another" and make a list of specific ways that you can fellowship with fellow followers of Jesus.

Why We Need Others

October 4, 2000

Read: 1 John 1:1-10 | Bible in a Year: Isaiah 20-22; Ephesians 6

Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. —1 John 1:3

Although Christians look forward to having joyful fellowship with each other one day in heaven, our relationships here on earth can often be anything but joyful. Someone has described it this way: "To live above with those we love—that will be grace and glory. To live below with those we know—now, that's a different story!"

Isolating ourselves from others doesn't resolve this problem. The one thing we all need, particularly when life is difficult, is fellowship with other believers. First John 1:3 says that Christian fellowship is "with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ," but it's also with each other.

We need more than our private "Jesus and me" fellowship, as fundamental as that is. God also made us for a "Jesus and we" fellowship. Reuben Welch wrote, "Christians are not brought together because they like each other, but because they share a common life in Jesus and are . . . learning how to love each other as members of the family."

How can this deeper love become a reality? We must walk in God's light (v.7), be honest about our sins (v.8), and confess them to God for forgiveness and cleansing (v.9).

If we are to grow more Christlike and learn to love, we need one another.

Christian fellowship provides us
With encouragement and love;
It will help us in our journey
Till we reach our home above. —Sper

No Christian is meant to be an island.

By Joanie Yoder | [See Other Authors](#)

Are You Happy?

June 19, 1996 — by Richard De Haan

Read: 1 John 1:1-10

These things we write to you that your joy may be full. —1 John 1:4

Bible in a Year:
Nehemiah 12-13; Acts 4:23-37

An elderly woman was once asked by a friend about the spiritual welfare of a mutual acquaintance. She replied, "Well, she's in a very bad state of mind. She's got just enough Christianity to make her miserable when she's doing wrong, but not enough to make her happy in a prayer meeting."

The most unhappy people, it seems to me, are not the unsaved but Christians who are disobedient to Christ. When they continue to sin, they are inviting God's loving chastening and are asking for much sorrow and loss. Because they have the benefit of the

indwelling Holy Spirit and a knowledge of God's will through the Scriptures, they feel more wretched in their backslidden state than those who have not accepted the Savior. Every Christian who has lived for a time with unconfessed sin knows what I'm talking about.

To avoid such heartache and to be a happy Christian, we must seek to know God's will through Bible study and prayer. Then in the power of the Holy Spirit we must strive to do God's will, walking in the light as He is in the light (1 Jn. 1:7). We are not without sin (v.8), but we must be honest and open with God about our sin (v.9) and strive to overcome it.

Trust and obey—
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus
But to trust and obey. —Sammis

Sin causes the cup of joy to spring a leak.

The Smile Of Joy

September 16, 2002 — by Richard De Haan

Read: Habakkuk 3:17-19

These things we write to you that your joy may be full. —1 John 1:4

Bible in a Year:
Proverbs 25-26; 2 Corinthians 9

Remember those round, yellow, happy-face stickers that showed up frequently on stationery and postcards? They were often accompanied by the one-word message, "Smile." They implied that you can put a smile on your face as easily as you can put a hat on your head. In a sense, that is true. A good actor can look happy even when his heart is breaking.

Favorable circumstances can also produce smiles. A person with good health, an adequate income, and a nice house finds it easy to look happy. The best smile, though, comes naturally from within. It reflects a joy that remains even when a person has few of life's material blessings. It comes from knowing God, believing and obeying His Word, being assured of sins forgiven, possessing eternal life, and anticipating the glories of heaven. The believer who depends on God for these blessings can smile despite adversity.

In today's Scripture reading, the prophet Habakkuk declared triumphantly, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:18). Even if everything were taken from him, the Lord would be his strength. He didn't need to "put on" a smile, because the joy in his heart would do it for him. —Richard De Haan

A smile can conceal our pain
And lighten our despair,
But trust in God gives inner peace
And joy beyond compare. —Sper

Happiness depends on happenings, but joy depends on Jesus.

Hidden Sin

June 1, 2011

Read: 1 John 1:5-10 | Bible in a Year: 2 Chronicles 15-16; John 12:27-50

O God, You know my foolishness; and my sins are not hidden from You. —Psalm 69:5

Chuck had slowed to a stop when his car was hit from behind and was pushed into the vehicle ahead of him. A sickening, crunching sound indicated that additional vehicles had collided behind them.

As Chuck sat quietly for a moment, he observed that the vehicle directly behind him was pulling out into traffic. Obviously hoping to avoid an encounter with police, the escaping driver neglected to notice he had left something behind. When the police arrived, an officer picked up the hit-and-run driver's license plate from the ground and said to Chuck, "Someone will be waiting for him when he arrives home. He won't get away with this."

Scripture tells us: "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23), as this man who fled the accident discovered. We may

sometimes be able to hide our sin from the people around us, but nothing is ever “hidden from [God’s] sight” (Heb. 4:13). He sees each of our failures, thoughts, and motivations (1 Sam. 16:7; Luke 12:2-3).

Believers are given a wonderful promise: “If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). So don’t let unconfessed, so-called “hidden” sins come between you and God (vv.6-7).

We cannot hide from God No matter how we try; For He knows all we think and do— We can’t escape His eye. —Hess

Sin may be hidden from others, but never from God.

By Cindy Hess Kasper |

The Sin Buildup

By Cindy Hess Kasper

Read: 1 John 1:5-10

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. —2 Corinthians 4:7

Bible in a Year:

Genesis 33-35; Matthew 10:1-20

For hundreds of years, windmills around the world have been used to pump water and to process grains. But in the last few decades, as wind turbines producing electricity have become more prevalent, a “fly in the ointment” unexpectedly occurred.

Researchers discovered that windpower generators worked fine at slow speeds, but at high-wind velocity, bugs on the blades reduced power output. Operators found that it was necessary to regularly wash off the buildup of dead insects to avoid having them slowly decrease the turbine’s power.

A buildup of sin in a Christian’s life can be a problem as well. God has provided a way to clear the accumulation of sins from our lives. First John 1:9 reminds us: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” But unless we do that often, we’ll be running on diminished power. That’s because the power for living comes from God and not us (2 Cor. 4:7). When we try to live the Christian life in our own strength, we’ll feel defeated—like windmills robbed of their energy.

God’s power can be more easily seen and experienced in our lives when we get rid of sin’s buildup every day.

The power in our Christian life Will be diminished by our sin; Confession will restore our strength— When we’re forgiven, cleansed within. —Sper

Sin drains our spiritual power; confession restores it.

How To Clean Anything

November 29, 2004 — by Haddon W. Robinson

Read: 1 John 1:5-10

The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. —1 John 1:7

Bible in a Year:

Ezekiel 35-36; 2 Peter 1

Consumer Reports published a booklet with the intriguing title How To Clean Practically Anything. It offers advice on what solvent to use to remove a wide assortment of stains. Living as I do with drips and drops, that is my kind of book.

Did you know that glycerin will remove stains made by a ball-point pen? Boiling water can remove berry stains. Parents of small children should keep a gallon of vinegar handy to get rid of crayon marks. Bleach works well for mildew. Lemon juice performs minor miracles on rust stains.

I haven’t tried them all, but I assume that scientists have put these common cleansing agents to the test.

What you will not find in this little book is how to deal with the most serious stain of all—the stain made on your life by sin. Deep, ugly stains made by hostile words and shame-filled actions. Tears won’t touch them. Zeal can’t erase them. At times we are

convinced that we have gotten on with our lives and the sins are gone, but in an unguarded moment we notice the stain seeping through.

The Bible tells us just what we need: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). That's the only remedy that works.

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain—
He washed it white as snow. —Hall

We may whitewash sin, but only Jesus' blood can truly wash it white.

Walk For Your Health

March 1, 1998 — by Mart De Haan

Read: 1 John 1:5-2:6

If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. —1 John 1:7

Bible in a Year:

Numbers 23-25; Mark 7:14-37

Physical exercise may help us fight off colds and infection. The theory is that a good workout puts our body in a condition similar to what happens at the onset of a fever. That's not all bad. A fever is the body's way of fighting back when micro-intruders get into our system. Increased body temperature aids our white blood-cell defense system while slowing down the action of bacteria and viruses. Exercise does the same thing. It releases chemicals into the blood that stimulate the brain to make our temperature rise.

The first two chapters of 1 John indicate that a regular practice of good spiritual exercise is beneficial to the health of our soul. To ward off sin, we must "walk in the light as He is in the light" (1:7) and obey Jesus each day.

Disobedience, however, cools our spiritual temperature. Fellowship with God and other believers is neglected. Sin is neither confessed nor forsaken. If we have a lukewarm faith (Rev. 3:16), we are not taking advantage of the defense mechanisms necessary to fight spiritual infection.

The right exercise program is one of faith and obedience. It is essential to spiritual health. Walk with Jesus every day, and you'll truly be walking for your health.

God's Exercise Program

- * Confess your sins to God (1 John 1:9).
- * Follow His instructions (2:3).
- * Walk as Christ walked (2:6).

For a healthy heart, give your faith a workout.

Something More To Give

October 1, 1994 — by Henry G. Bosch

Read: 1 John 1

The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. —1 John 1:7

Bible in a Year:

Isaiah 11-13; Ephesians 4

When evangelist John Wesley (1703–1791) was returning home from a service one night, he was robbed. The thief, however, found his victim to have only a little money and some Christian literature.

As the bandit was leaving, Wesley called out, "Stop! I have something more to give you." The surprised robber paused. "My friend," said Wesley, "you may live to regret this sort of life. If you ever do, here's something to remember: 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin!'" The thief hurried away, and Wesley prayed that his words might bear fruit.

Years later, Wesley was greeting people after a Sunday service when he was approached by a stranger. What a surprise to learn that this visitor, now a believer in Christ and a successful businessman, was the one who had robbed him years before! "I owe it all to you," said the transformed man. "Oh no, my friend," Wesley exclaimed, "not to me, but to the precious blood of Christ that cleanses us from all sin!"

John Wesley really did have something more to give the thief that night—the good news of salvation. And we have the same responsibility to share the gospel with those who cross our paths.

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains. —Cowper

The gospel is a priceless gift to be freely given to others.

Secrets

May 17, 1998 — by Haddon W. Robinson

Read: 1 John 1:5-10

The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. —1 John 1:7

Bible in a Year:

1 Chronicles 1-3; John 5:25-47

God is light," the apostle reminded us, "and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn. 1:5). But if that is true, how can a holy God have anything to do with the likes of us?

Fyodor Dostoevsky, in *Notes from the Underground*, writes what we all know: "There are certain things in a man's past which he does not divulge to everybody but, perhaps, only to friends. Again, there are certain things he will not divulge even to his friends; he will divulge them perhaps only to himself, and that too as a secret. But, finally there are things which he is afraid to divulge even to himself, and every decent man has quite an accumulation of such things in his mind."

If we have so many deep dark secrets, how can we hope to have fellowship with God? An illustration from Martin Luther's life shows us. Luther had a dream in which he stood before God. Satan was there to accuse Luther, and when the books were opened the accuser pointed to sin after sin in his life. Luther despaired. Then he remembered the cross and, turning to the devil, he quoted 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

Because of Jesus, sinners can be forgiven and stand before a holy God. How do you stand today?

Thinking It Over

"God is light" (1 Jn. 1:5). What does that mean?

What creates distance between us and God? (vv.6,8,10).

What is the solution to the problem? (vv.7,9).

No sin is so secret that it is beyond God's forgiveness.

There When You Need It

June 30, 1999 — by David C. Egner

Read: Hebrews 9:11-22

The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. —1 John 1:7

Bible in a Year:

Job 17-19; Acts 10:1-23

When I donated blood some time ago, a nurse gave me a card to read while a pint of the vital red fluid was flowing out of my vein. The card showed the percentages of people who have the different blood types. Here are some of them:

O Positive 37.4%

A Positive 35.7%

A Negative 6.3%

B Negative 1.5%

The rarest, AB Negative, is found in only 1 in 167 people, or 0.6% of the population. Then the card made this eye-catching statement: "The rarest blood type is the one that's not there when you need it."

That reminded me of a supply of blood that is one of a kind and always available to those who ask for it. First John 1:7 states, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

It was the death of Christ, the shedding of His blood, that satisfied the demand of a holy God as payment for our sins (Heb. 9:12,22). So now, whenever a person cries out in faith to God, repenting of his sin and pleading for forgiveness, his prayer for salvation is answered.

I am deeply grateful that Jesus was willing to die on the cross, giving His blood for me, so that forgiveness was available when I needed it. Aren't you?

Lord, I believe Your precious blood,
Which at the mercy seat of God
Forever does for sinners plead,
For me, e'en for my soul was shed. —von Zinzendorf

Jesus takes our sin and gives us His salvation.

Thanksgiving Pardon

November 24, 2011 — by Jennifer Benson Schuldt

Read: 1 John 1:1-10

The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanses us from all sin. —1 John 1:7

Bible in a Year:

Ezekiel 22-23; 1 Peter 1

Each year at the end of November, the President of the United States issues an official pardon for the National Thanksgiving Turkey. During this lighthearted ceremony, one president remarked: "Our guest of honor looks a little nervous. Nobody's told him yet that I'm going to give him a pardon." The poor turkey had a good reason to be uneasy—without an acquittal, he was doomed to be Thanksgiving dinner.

We are in a similar situation when it comes to our sin. Without God's pardon, we're on our way to certain demise. This condition is a direct result of our own wrongdoing. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). However, we can be set free from this death sentence because God's Son bore our sin in His body on the cross, "that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). First John 1:7 tells us that Jesus' blood "cleanses us from all sin."

We can accept God's pardon for our sin and receive eternal life when we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and believe that God raised Him from the dead (Rom. 10:9). Today, consider how you will respond to God's offer of forgiveness.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide.
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow—
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! —Chisholm

Through faith in Christ,
we receive God's pardon and escape sin's penalty.

Tyranny of the Perfect

Read: 1 John 1:5–2:2 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 140–142; 1 Corinthians 14:1-20

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:8

Dr. Brian Goldman obsessively tried to be perfect in treating his patients. But on a nationally broadcast show he admitted to

mistakes he had made. He revealed that he had treated a woman in the emergency room and then made the decision to discharge her. Later that day a nurse asked him, “Do you remember that patient you sent home? Well, she’s back.” The patient had been readmitted to the hospital and then died. This devastated him. He tried even harder to be perfect, only to learn the obvious: Perfection is impossible.

As Christians, we may harbor unrealistic expectations of perfection for ourselves. But even if we can somehow manage the appearance of a flawless life, our thoughts and motives are never completely pure.

John the disciple wrote, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). The remedy is not to hide our sins and to strive harder, but to step into the light of God’s truth and confess them. “If we walk in the light,” said John, “as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (v. 7).

In medicine, Dr. Goldman proposes the idea of a “redefined physician” who—in a culture where we are hesitant to admit our errors—no longer toils under the tyranny of perfection. Such a physician openly shares mistakes and supports colleagues who do the same, with a goal of reducing mistakes.

What if Christians were known not for hiding their sins but for loving and supporting each other with the truth and grace of our God? What if we practiced a risky yet healthy honesty with each other and with the watching world?

Father, it’s so difficult for us to share our faults with each other, but You call us to wholeness as Your people. Empower us by Your Spirit to live courageously in love and honesty.

Honesty with God about our sin brings forgiveness.

Insight:

Verse 9 of today’s passage is one of the most well-known verses in the New Testament. It speaks of the faithfulness of God to forgive our sins when we confess them. But it is interesting to note that verses 6-10 begin with the condition “if.” The word if ties results to our actions. John is saying that our condition—walking in darkness or walking in light (vv. 6-7) and being deceived or being forgiven (vv. 8-9)—depends on the choices we make. Although in our standing with God we are eternally forgiven through Christ’s sacrifice, we will miss out on fellowship with God when we neglect confession of sin. J.R. Hudberg

By Tim Gustafson

Fox Trouble

March 12, 2007

Read: 1 John 1:5-10 | Bible in a Year: Deuteronomy 17-19; Mark 13:1-20

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. —1 John 1:8

The British are having trouble with foxes. According to The Wall Street Journal, the sly little fellows have moved into London and are making a general nuisance of themselves. They knock over rubbish cans, swipe shoes left out to dry, destroy gardens, and leave a foul odor. With the city borders being pushed farther into the countryside, the little troublemakers are adapting rather than moving—and many Londoners are frustrated and upset.

When you stop to think about it, little “foxes” can become great aggravations for followers of Christ who are trying to honor Him. What we may consider “little” or “harmless” sins can be our downfall. “Stretching the truth,” for example, is actually lying. And gossip is nothing less than character assassination. The trouble is that those little sins will inevitably grow larger. Before we know it, we’ll need to do some serious repenting and confessing.

If some little foxes have crept into the backyards and gardens of your spiritual life, the time to deal with them is now. With the help of the Holy Spirit, identify them. Admit your guilt, confess these pesky little practices to God, and get rid of them before they ruin the entire landscape of your life.

Today pull up the little weeds,
The sinful thoughts subdue,
Or they will take the reins themselves
And someday master you. —Anon.

The most deadly sins do not leap upon us, they creep up on us. By David Egner | See Other Authors

I'd Rather Die Than Lie

October 22, 1998 — by Joanie Yoder

Read: 1 John 1:1-9

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. —1 John 1:8

Bible in a Year:

Isaiah 65-66; 1 Timothy 2

Children who are taught to tell the truth are blessed. One grateful adult said, "Today, as a result of my upbringing, I'd rather die than lie."

Being honest with others is vital, but another aspect is equally important—being honest with ourselves. Most of us easily see the faults of others but fiercely resist admitting the truth about ourselves.

Pastor and author Bob Smith lists some of our self-deceptions: "Others have prejudices, but we have convictions. Others are conceited, but in me it's self-respect. When you spend time on your personal appearance, it's vanity; in me, it's just making the most of my God-given assets. In you, it's touchiness; but in me, it's sensitivity. In you, it's worry; in me, concern."

The apostle John teaches that if we say one thing but practice another, we are lying (v.6), deceiving ourselves (v.8), and even making God a liar (v.10). Having diagnosed our dishonesty as sin, John gave the prescription in verse 9—confession, or calling it what it is.

If we confess our dishonesty to God, we are forgiven and thoroughly cleansed. The glorious reward of that cleansing is the freedom to walk in the light (v.7). As always, honesty pays!

All falsehood we would cast aside,
From You, O Lord, we cannot hide;
Lord, by Your Spirit grant that we
In word and deed may honest be. —DJD

Truth is so precious that some people use it sparingly.

The Eraser Of Confession

By Dennis J. De Haan

Select a Language

Read: 1 John 1:5-10

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. —1 John 1:9

Bible in a Year:

Psalms 46-48; Acts 28

From the time that Joseph Dixon (1827-1869) began producing the pencil during the US Civil War, the only substantial change in its design has been the addition of an eraser. Consider for a moment this unique little writing stick. At one end is a hard black point and at the other a small rubber tip. This simple instrument can be used to scribble, sketch, compute complicated formulas, or compose lofty poetry. But it can also quickly correct an error, change a figure, or start all over.

Each day the Christian inscribes words and deeds on the record of his personal history. But as he reflects upon what he's said and done, he becomes aware that some of what's been written is not of the quality that will please the Savior. He remembers attitudes and actions that should never be part of a believer's life. Yet these sins are forgiven and fellowship with God restored through honest confession and repentance.

In John's first epistle, he told us how to walk uprightly and enjoy fellowship with Christ and with one another. But John was a realist, knowing that some of the pages of our composition would be marked by daily flaws and failures. That's why 1 John 1:9 is such a blessed promise. It tells us we can use the eraser of confession and start over.

We're thankful, Lord, that when we fall
We can begin anew

If humbly we confess our sin,
Then turn and follow You. —Sper

Confession is the soil in which forgiveness flourishes.

“I’m . . . Uh . . . Sorry”

Read: Psalm 51:1-17 | Bible in a Year: Psalms 81-83; Romans 11:19-36

Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. —Psalm 51:1-2

The news is quick to report all the details of famous people’s wrongdoings and their subsequent confessions. Perhaps it’s an athlete who was arrested for driving while drunk. Or it could be a politician caught in an indiscretion. Only God knows the heart, but when we hear a stuttered “I’m . . . uh . . . sorry,” we may wonder if they are truly repentant or just sorry they got caught.

When we read the confession of the famous King David we see what looks like genuine contriteness. In his public discussion of his sins in Psalm 51, this disgraced monarch—who had an embarrassing record of flagrant sins which he had kept hidden (2 Sam. 12:1-13; Ps. 32:3-5)—pleads for mercy.

He recognized that his sin was an affront to God—not just to people—and that God alone can judge him (Ps. 51:1-6). He realized that he must be cleansed by God (vv.7-10), and he celebrated his restoration through service and worship (vv.11-17).

All of us sin and fall short of God’s glory. When we feel the heavy burden of sin weighing us down, we have the blessing of confession and forgiveness (1 John 1:9) to lift us up. Isn’t it just like our great God to turn even our sins into an opportunity to grow in His grace and power and love!

Dear Lord, please give me a humble heart
and the courage to confess my sins before You
and others. Thank You for Your promise to be
faithful to forgive my sins and to cleanse me.

Confession is agreeing with God about our sin.

By Dave Branon | See Other Authors

Here Comes The Boss!

By Anne Cetas

Select a Language

Read: Joshua 7:16-22

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. —1 John 1:9

Bible in a Year:
Daniel 8-10; 3 John

A number of computer games come with a special feature called the “Boss Key.” If you’re playing a game when you’re supposed to be working, and someone (like the boss) walks into your office, you quickly strike the Boss Key. Your computer screen changes immediately, hiding what you’ve been doing.

Trying to hide from others when we’ve done something wrong comes naturally. We may feel guilty, but our desire to avoid admitting our responsibility is often stronger than our guilt.

Achan tried to hide his sin. He had stolen silver and gold and hidden it in his tent (Josh. 7:20-21). But when the Israelites were defeated in battle, the Lord told their leader Joshua that the loss was due to sin in the camp (vv.11-12). The Lord identified Achan as the one who had sinned. And even though Achan confessed, he and his family were executed (v.25).

We may not understand why God dealt so harshly with Achan’s sin, but we do know He was instructing His people in His holiness and their need for obedience to His commands (Ex. 20:17).

If you’ve been disobedient, it’s time to come out of hiding. God is lovingly calling you and offering His cleansing, forgiveness, and restoration.

O Lord, help me to come to You
When I would rather hide my sin;
Give me the courage to confess
So I can be made clean within. —Sper

Confession is the key that opens the door to forgiveness.

Breaking The Grip Of Guilt

November 16, 2001 — by Dave Branon

Read: 1 John 1:5-2:2

I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins . . . I will remember no more. —Hebrews 8:12

Bible in a Year:

Ezekiel 3-4; Hebrews 11:20-40

Can you think of anything too hard for God to do? Put yourself in the shoes of a fellow Christian who has committed a sin so awful that the person simply cannot imagine that God would forgive it. Think about what he or she considers to be impossible for God.

In an article on forgiveness, Pastor Charles Stanley wrote about talking to a teenager who was having a hard time believing that God could forgive her sexual sins. She told him she was a Christian and had asked Jesus many times to forgive her. Even though she knew the Bible says God had forgiven her, she still felt dirty in her heart.

This teenager thought she had found something that was too hard for God to do—forgive her. When we tell ourselves that our sin is so bad God won't forgive us, we are doubting His power. We are robbing ourselves of the great gifts of a clear conscience and fellowship with God (1 John 1:5-10).

Does guilt for sin have its icy hands around your heart? Is it strangling your joy and making you forget that God's forgiveness is not based on what you do but on what Christ has done? Ask for His forgiveness. Then thank Him for it, and moment by moment remind yourself of the wonder of God's grace.

Thinking It Over

If you're struggling with accepting God's forgiveness for something you've done, meditate on these verses: Psalm 32; 51; Ephesians 1:3-8; Colossians 1:13-14.

When God forgives, it's time for us to forget.

Bouncing Back

Read: 1 John 1:5–2:2 | Bible in a Year: Job 20-21; Acts 10:24-48

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. —1 John 1:9

On January 18, 2012, the longest winning streak in US intercollegiate varsity sports history—252 consecutive victories—ended when Trinity College lost a squash match to Yale. The morning after the team's first loss in 14 years, Trinity's coach, Paul Assaiante, received an e-mail from a friend, a prominent professional football coach, who wrote, "Well, now you get to bounce back." Ten days later, that football coach's team lost in one of the most widely seen athletic events—the NFL Super Bowl. All of us must cope with defeat.

The feeling of failure after an athletic loss mirrors our greater self-condemnation following a spiritual collapse. How can we recover from grieving God and others, along with disappointing ourselves? The apostle John wrote, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9). God forgives us because Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins (2:2).

God's pardon sets us free to begin again and focus on today's opportunity rather than yesterday's defeat. His faithful cleansing allows us to start over with a pure heart. Today, God invites and enables us to bounce back.

When you've trusted Jesus and walked His way,
When you've felt His hand lead you day by day,
But your steps now take you another way,

Start over. —Kroll

Instead of living in the shadows of yesterday, walk in the light of today and the hope of tomorrow.

By David McCasland

Paint Specks

June 18, 2004 — by Dennis J. De Haan

Read: 1 John 1:5-2:2

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. —1 John 1:9

Bible in a Year:

Nehemiah 10-11; Acts 4:1-22

Pushing a paint roller high overhead had produced a shower of fine droplets that left tiny white specks on my glasses. Although they were noticeable to others, I was not aware of them. But one morning as I came to work, the angle of the bright sunlight through the lenses of my glasses suddenly made those tiny specks visible and annoying.

So it is with some of our small moral imperfections. Others can see them, but we can't. Then, as we study God's Word, the true light of the Lord Jesus Christ shines on us, and our moral flaws become alarmingly visible. His pure character, genuine love, and unmixed motives reveal specks of sinfulness in everything we do. Little white lies, selfish anger, small hypocrisies, and muddy motives stand out vividly. And they are in all of us to some degree.

How perceptive was the apostle John! He wrote, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1:8). But thank God, "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (2:1). When we confess our sins, He intercedes with the Father on our behalf.

When we confess our shortcomings, God cleanses us—even those tiny specks we don't always see.

Search out in me all hidden sin,
And may Thy purity within
So cleanse my life that it may be
A temple wholly fit for Thee. —Swallen

Detecting sin is the first step to deliverance from sin.

CHRISTINGLE

VOLUME 3, DAY 360

That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. —John 1:9

Christmas celebrations often include Christingles. A Christingle is an orange, representing the world, with a candle placed in the top of it to symbolise Christ the light of the world. A red ribbon encircles the orange, symbolising the blood of Jesus. Four toothpicks with dried fruits are placed through the ribbon into the sides of the orange, representing the fruits of the earth (or, God's provision on the earth).

This simple visual aid vividly represents the purpose behind Christ's coming—to bring light into the darkness and to redeem a broken world by spilling His blood.

In John's account of Christ's life, the disciple describes Jesus as the Light of the world. He wrote of Christ: "That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world" (John 1:9). Not only did Christ the Light come to light up our world's darkness, but He is also "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (v.29).

Think of it! The baby of Bethlehem became the living, risen Christ who has rescued us from our sin. And so John instructs us to "walk in the light as He is in the light" (1 John 1:7). May all who have experienced His rescue find in Jesus the peace of walking in His light.

THE NEWBORN CHRIST-CHILD BECAME THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD AND THE LAMB OF GOD.

AUTHOR

Bill Crowder

Pardon Me!

March 3, 2001 — by David C. McCasland

Read: 1 John 1:5-2:10

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. —1 John 1:9

Bible in a Year:

Numbers 28-30; Mark 8:22-38

Hijackers terrorized the passengers aboard an Indian Airlines jet for 8 days. Then, on December 31, 1999, the gunmen issued a final demand before releasing their hostages. "Sorry, but everyone has to say that I am forgiven," said the hijacker code-named "Burger." When the disbelieving passengers stared back at him, he ordered them to say, "I forgive you." After hearing the words, the hijackers disappeared into the desert.

Not many of us would be so arrogant as to insist that someone forgive us. And we certainly wouldn't demand that of God. Why? Because most people sense that His mercy and pardon can be received only by a humble, sincere, and repentant heart.

The apostle John wrote, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The word translated "confess" means "to speak the same thing or agree with." When we confess our sins to God, we agree with Him about our sin, our need to be cleansed, and our need to forgive others who have wronged us (Matthew 6:15). We cry out, "Pardon me!"

None of us is truly free without forgiveness. We need God's, and others need ours.

Forgive me, O Lord, for all of my sin,
Please make my heart pure and cleanse me within;
Confessing to You what I have done wrong,
Restore now my joy—to You I belong. —Fitzhugh

Confession is the key that opens the door to forgiveness.

God Wants Your Garbage

By Joanie Yoder

Read: 1 John 1:5-10

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. —1 John 1:9

Bible in a Year:

2 Chronicles 17-18; John 13:1-20

Once a week, a truck moves slowly down our street, pausing at every house. Full and sometimes overflowing garbage containers are picked up, emptied into the truck, and returned to each house. During the next week, as the rubbish accumulates and the odor increases, we become eager for the return of the garbage truck.

More repulsive than this is the personal trash that accumulates in our hearts and minds. Some of our garbage— hatred, gossip, bitterness, lust— obviously foul. But even what looks like good deeds or upright behavior can reek like garbage if contaminated by our selfish pride.

The Bible calls our inner garbage "sin." In 1 John 1:9, God's disposal system is outlined: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Confession means calling our sins what God calls them. We needn't fear revealing them to Him, for He already knows them.

Thank God, His sin-disposal service is available everywhere and every day, not just at church on Sunday. He wants to get rid of your garbage. Why not let Him? The moment you confess your sins to the Lord, He casts them "into the depths of the sea" (Mic. 7:19).

He has buried them there—
Where no mortal can see!
He has cast all our sins

In the depths of the sea! —Anon.

The best eraser in the world is an honest confession to God.

Repenting And Rejoicing

Read: Psalm 51 | Bible in a Year: Ecclesiastes 7-9; 2 Corinthians 13

Let the wicked forsake his way . . . ; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him. —Isaiah 55:7

A Christian woman asked another believer how he was doing. With a broad smile he replied, “Repenting and rejoicing, sister!”

I believe this man was walking in a spirit of repentance—daily confessing and turning from sins and rejoicing in God’s forgiveness.

Because honest repentance involves sorrow, we may forget that repenting leads to rejoicing. When we first repent and become new believers, we experience great joy. But if we then choose to live with unconfessed sin, our joy is lost.

David believed his joy could be restored. After pouring out his prayer of repentance to God, he made this humble plea: “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation” (Psalm 51:12). As David turned back to the Lord, his sense of purpose returned: “Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You” (v.13). Through his faith in a forgiving and merciful God, David began rejoicing again in his salvation (vv.14-15).

Do you sometimes lose the joy of your salvation because you fail to deal with your sins? If you’ll confess them, God will forgive you (1 John 1:9). He’ll restore your joy and help you overcome sins that trouble you. That’s what it means to be a “repenting and rejoicing” Christian.

When we confess our sins to God,
We’re washed as white as snow,
And He keeps on forgiving us
Each time to Him we go. —Sper

Conviction makes us sad—confession makes us glad.

By Joanie Yoder

The Sanity Of Confession

By Richard De Haan

Read: 1 John 1:1-10

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. —1 John 1:9

Bible in a Year:
Isaiah 53-55; 2 Thessalonians 1

In 1976, a psychiatric examination was ordered for a woman who admitted she “willfully and knowingly” attempted to kill President Ford. When she was informed that there was a possibility she could be sent to jail for life, she replied that she could see “no reasonably honest and honorable” way of avoiding it. “There comes a point,” she declared, “when we each have to answer to ourselves, and it is with our own conscience that we must make peace.”

The woman’s sanity was questioned because she admitted her guilt. The judge ordered the tests after she had openly acknowledged her wrongdoing instead of offering the expected denial.

This woman’s experience reminded me of the sanity of confessing our sins to the Lord. In our modern world, owning up to one’s guilt rather than trying to “beat the rap” may be considered a sign of instability, but in God’s sight it’s the only sensible thing to do. The Bible says, “He who covers his sins will not prosper” (Prov. 28:13). But remember that the Bible also says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 Jn. 1:9).

If you have disobeyed the Lord, admit it and receive His forgiveness. It’s the only sane thing to do!

I’ve wasted many precious years—
Now I’m coming home;
I now repent with bitter tears—

Lord, I'm coming home. —Kirkpatrick

Confession of sin is not an admission of weakness but a sign of strength.

River Of Forgiveness

By David H. Roper

Read: 1 John 1:5-9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. —1 John 1:9

Bible in a Year:

Nahum 1-3; Revelation 14

According to Greek mythology, King Augeus owned a stable with 3,000 oxen. Their stalls had not been cleaned out for 30 years—hence our English word Augean, which refers to something exceedingly filthy from long neglect. Hercules, the mythical strong man, was commanded to clean the Augean stable in a single day.

When Hercules first saw the stable, he was dismayed by its size, filthiness, and stench. Then he noticed that it was located between two great rivers, the Alpheus and the Peneus. He put his great strength to work and diverted the rivers so they flowed through the building. Within a short time the stable was rinsed clean.

The story is a myth, of course, but myths by their very nature preserve the yearnings of the cultures that embrace and perpetuate them. The story reflects, I believe, our own longing for someone to wash from our lives the accumulated waste and filth of the years.

There is a powerful river of forgiveness that flows from the cross of Christ. No defilement, even though Augean, can withstand its cleansing flow. When we humbly confess our sins, all of our unrighteousness is washed away (1 John 1:9). We can be sure that our “sins, which are many, are forgiven” (Luke 7:47).

Lord, give me courage to confess,
To bare my sinful heart to Thee;
Forgiving love You long to show
And from my sin to set me free. —D. De Haan

Confession to God always brings cleansing from God.

Why Can't I Feel Forgiven?

January 27, 1997 — by David C. Egner

Read: 1 John 1:5-2:2

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. —1 John 1:9

Bible in a Year:

Exodus 16-18; Matthew 18:1-20

The anguish in the caller's voice revealed her pain. It wasn't the first time she had called. The reason was always the same. She had said and done some things that hurt her sister badly, and now she was having trouble feeling forgiven.

Oh, it's not that she hadn't done everything the Bible tells us to do. She had. She confessed her sin to the Lord—repeatedly—and went several times to her sister to ask for complete forgiveness. But she could not accept it. She simply could not believe that she was truly forgiven.

Why can't some people accept God's forgiveness? The cause is often their unbelief. God has promised to forgive us when we confess our sins (1 Jn. 1:9). To doubt His forgiveness is to doubt His integrity. We are forgiven because He declared it, not because we feel it. We have no reason to let unbelief block the joy and peace and freedom that we have every right to experience.

Perhaps you are feeling unforgiven. Ask God to help you accept His forgiveness. Believe His truth and reject the lies your feelings are telling you. Your trust will glorify Him, and your inner joy and peace will return.

God keeps His word. So when we ask Him to forgive us, we can be confident that we are forgiven.

The vain regrets of yesterday
Have vanished through God's pardoning grace;
The guilty fear has passed away,
And joy has come to take its place. —Ackley

When God forgives, it's time for us to forget.

Inside Out

Read: John 15:1-8 | Bible in a Year: 2 Chronicles 23-24; John 15

You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. —John 15:3

During an international publishing conference, a young Frenchman described his experience at a book-signing event. A woman picked up one of his books, browsed through it, and exclaimed, "At last, a story that's clean!" He replied gently, "I write clean because I think clean. It's not an effort." What he expressed in print came from within, where Christ had altered the very core of his life.

John 15 records Jesus' lesson to His disciples about abiding in Him as the only means to a fruitful life. In the midst of His imagery of the vine and the branches, Jesus said: "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (v.3). Bible scholar W. E. Vine says that the Greek word for clean means "free from impure admixture, without blemish, spotless."

A pure heart is the work of Christ, and only in His power can we remain clean. We often fail, but "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to . . . cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Renewal is an inside job.

Jesus has made us clean through His sacrifice and His Word. Our speech and actions that strike others as being fresh and pure flow from inside out as we abide in Christ.

Admitting that we're guilty, Acknowledging our sin, Then trusting in Christ's sacrifice Will make us clean within. —Sper

Confession to God brings cleansing from God.

By David C. McCasland

Taking Out The Trash by Joe Stowell

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12

My wife usually has to remind me to take out the garbage on trash pick-up days. It's not one of my favorite jobs, but I muster up the determination to get it done and then just do it. Afterward it's a nice feeling to have it out of the house, and I forget about it till the following week.

Just as we need trucks to pick up the garbage that accumulates in our homes, we need to let Jesus remove the "trash" that inevitably accumulates in our hearts. When we forget to take out the trash, it's not a pretty picture. Jesus wants us to dump it regularly at the foot of the cross. In fact, He has promised to remove it and forget it.

But wait a minute! Could we be rummaging through the cans, trying to find that thing we weren't quite ready to part with? A sinful habit we don't want to give up, a fantasy we want to cling to, a revenge that we still want to ignite? Why are we wanting to hang on to the garbage?

Taking out the trash begins with confession, and then counting on Jesus to get rid of it. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Today is garbage day. Take it out and then leave it there!

Lord, help me not to cover sin,
Those secret wrongs that lurk within;
I now confess them all to Thee;
Transparent I would always be. —D. De Haan

Confession is the key that opens the door to forgiveness.

Totally Clean

Read: 1 John 1:1-10 | Bible in a Year: Isaiah 28-30

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. —1 John 1:9

A friend was updating me on his past year—a year in which he had been receiving ongoing medical treatment for cancer. The smile on his face was a powerful testimony to the good news he had just received. He said that at his one-year checkup the doctor announced that the test results all pointed to one thing: “You are totally clean!” What a difference two words can make! To my friend, totally clean meant every trace of the disease that had threatened his life only months before had been wiped from his body. We rejoiced to hear that he was totally clean!

King David, after his moral failure with Bathsheba, longed for a similar thing to happen in his heart. Hoping for the stains of his sin to be washed away, he cried out, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). The good news for him and for us is that our sins can be taken care of. When we need cleansing, John’s familiar words bring hope: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

We can’t cleanse our own hearts; only God can do that. If we confess our sins to Him, He promises to make us totally clean!

Search me, O God, and know my heart today
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray.
See if there be some wicked way in me;
Cleanse me from every sin and set me free. —Orr

Confession to God always brings cleansing from God.

By Bill Crowder

The Big Comeback

By Bill Crowder

Read: 1 John 1

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. —1 John 1:9

Bible in a Year:
Job 17-19; Acts 10:1-23

Chad Pennington is a former American football player who has suffered multiple career-threatening injuries. Twice, his injuries forced him to endure surgery, months of physical therapy, and weeks of training to get back onto the field. Yet, both times he not only returned to playing but he also excelled at such a high level that he was named Comeback Player of the Year in the National Football League. For Pennington, his efforts were an expression of his determination to return to football.

Spiritually, when sin and failure break our relationship with God and sideline our service, determination alone is not what restores us to rightness with God and usefulness in His kingdom. When we are sidelined because of sin, the path to a comeback is confession as well. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

For us to be able to recover from our spiritual failings, we are absolutely dependent on the One who gave Himself for us. And that gives us hope. Christ, who died for us, loves us with an everlasting love and will respond with grace as we confess our faults to Him. Through confession, we can find His gracious restoration—the greatest of all comebacks.

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come. —Elliott

Confession is the path that leads to restoration.

Insight

In today’s reading we see how God has provided a gracious means of cleansing us from our personal sins and reestablishing fellowship with God. It comes through confession of sin and redirecting our choices to the path of obedience (1 John 1:9).

