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HAVE THE HUMILITY TO REVEAL YOUR SINS

By Nathan Combs

Ever since Adam and Eve hid in the bushes after eating the forbidden fruit, people have tried to conceal their sins. David impregnated the wife of a trusted soldier, and then tried to cover it up by secretly murdering him so he could take her into his harem. Judas secretly went to the Jewish leadership to betray his Lord and acted the part of a faithful disciple until the moment he approached Jesus in the garden with the temple guards. In considering these Biblical examples, the harm of papering over sin is clearly seen. But sin concealment is not just an ancient problem—we personally face it as well.

The reality is that all of us are dealing with sinful struggles. The apostle John bluntly tells Christians that “if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn. 1:8). It’s one thing to agree with this Scripture in principle, but it’s quite another to actually live like we believe it. When we take the time to actually look carefully at our own sinful attitudes and deeds, we probably don’t feel like sharing those things with other people! It’s much easier to keep our problems hidden, put on our clean Sunday clothes, smile artificially, and pretend like we have spotless lives.

James, the brother of Jesus, writes in James 5:16: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” Have you obeyed this verse recently? Have you approached a strong Christian, opened up about a sin, and asked him to pray for you? There are many excuses we might offer, such as “I just don’t have strong relationships I can trust.”

Although the verse certainly implies that we would approach a “righteous person” to intercede on our behalf, there is no human relationship so strong that it removes the painful sting of revealing sin. Regardless of how trustworthy another person is, confession is *inherently* uncomfortable. Consider Adam and Eve: they had every reason to trust their Creator, yet they did not immediately run to God and only divulged their sins when forced.

Rather than delaying confession until we can feel entirely comfortable with the situation (which will never happen), we need to embrace humility and get busy opening ourselves up. Just a chapter before James 5:16 is James 4:10: “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.” Interestingly, when God rebuked Job’s sinful three friends (Job 42:7-9), he didn’t tell them to directly pray to him for forgiveness, he told them to go to Job and have him pray for their souls. How humbling it must have been for them to ask the man they had bitterly argued with to intercede on their behalf! But then, humility was the point. Are we more interested in preserving an illusion of spotlessness or in allowing the Lord to heal us through obedience to his words?

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Everyday Gratitude

Dan Lankford

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) The routines of life can be very healthy for us. Routine exercise strengthens the body, routine communication blesses relationships, routine generosity increases our compassion, and a routine day of worship strengthens our souls.

But even healthy routines always come with an inherent challenge: we are tempted to become accustomed to things and take them for granted.

In daily life, one symptom of this is a lack of gratitude. While the Spirit instructs us to give thanks in all circumstances, sometimes the familiarity of each day deadens our spiritual senses to how grateful we could (and should) be toward God.

But every day is full of gifts from him. It is a gift to be part of a loving family. Moms & dads, our kids are gifts from God. It is a gift to have health enough to be independent. A stable job, a comfortable home, a civilized and safe neighborhood, the ability to learn, the blessing of good food... It can all seem so basic, but it ought to routinely nudge our minds to be grateful to the merciful God who has given it all.

And that's why gratitude makes sense "in all circumstances." Even small, everyday blessings are good gifts from our Father. And so while there are times when grander things make our gratitude swell, God's people are defined by simple, everyday gratitude for his many blessings.

The First Drink

by David Banning

To her parents, Katie was the perfect child. She was doing well in school, planning a career in law and dating a boy they liked. She was the least likely person to get into trouble. Just before her 16th birthday, Katie attended a party with friends. During the evening, she was passed a bottle of liquor. To her parent's knowledge, she had never taken a drink before this moment. Katie had a choice to make. Would she take the first drink?

Most teenagers face a similar choice. When your moment comes, there are some important reasons to refuse that first drink. (1) Drinking messes with your mind (Proverbs 23:29-35). From the very first drink, alcohol begins to break down your judgment. This is why people frequently get into trouble when they drink. Remember that we are fighting an intense battle with Satan (I Peter 5:8). We cannot afford to sacrifice any of our self-discipline. (2) Drinking shrinks your influence. If you saw one of your elders sitting at a bar drinking beer, would you be surprised? Upset? Angry? Of course you would! This conduct does not fit with a person striving to live a holy life (I Peter 1:13-16). (3) Drinking puts you on a slippery slope. Once you take the first drink, you open the door for all kinds of potential problems (drunk driving, alcoholism, disease, death). While these things do not happen to every person who drinks, it will certainly happen to a percentage of those who start.

What about Katie? She chose to take that first drink. In fact, she drank a lot that night. When she got home, she was barely conscious. When her dad tried to wake her up a few hours later, her body was cold. He tried to resuscitate her, but it was too late. Katie died. She made the wrong choice.

When your moment comes, make the right choice.