

STUDY NOTES

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES IN ADVENT

a series at New City Church

The following content is based on the message “Advent Hope: Confession” spoken on 11/27/16 by Nate Benner at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective communities.

PRAYER

Pray and ask God to lead the discussion as everyone gets to share.

THE SCRIPTURE: 1 JOHN 1:5-2:2

CONFESSION

- What do feel like confession is?
- What are your experiences with confession?

WHY DO WE CONFESS?

John describes God as light. He said, “God is light, and in him there is no darkness”. Throughout the Scriptures, light is referred to as holiness, and darkness is referred to as sin. The apostle Paul tells us that light is all that is “good, and right, and true” (Ephesians 5:8-11). As children of him, we are able imitate him, to stay away from sin, and to be able to walk in his light. The light exposes our sin. We have to be ready to confess that the darkness is trying to mold us. If not, it will try to take us over.

- *Why do you think it is hard to see God as holy (light) and see ourselves as sin (darkness)?*

WHAT IS CONFESSION?

Confession was mostly used in the ancient world in legal documents describing a courtroom setting, often before a government official, and in public.

Plato described it like this: True confession, which is agreement on a moral demand, necessarily includes action. The opposite is the childish prattle which does not even take itself seriously.

Confession is seen as a legal declaration, that always includes action.

If you are a Christian, you have confessed your sin (legal declaration), placed your faith in Jesus (acting on it). Because of that we share in the light of Christ.

- *Why do you think “true confession” always includes action?*

SO WHAT DO WE DO?

While we have the power of Christ to *not* sin, we still do. So what do we do as people who want to walk in the light? We let the light continually expose the sin that is trying to mold us. We let Christ expose our sin. But when Christ exposes our sin, we want to react. We want to fight and deny it. We try to justify ourselves.

- *How do you react when your sin is exposed?*
- *In your human relationships, how does your reaction to your sin being exposed make you lose fellowship with others?*

JESUS, OUR ADVOCATE

If we confess our sin, rather than trying to hide or fight, Jesus is there as our Advocate. We all already know that we are broken, and isn't it what everyone wants, to be accepted as they are? Jesus does that.

- When we are feeling exposed, Jesus is there defending us.
- When we are feeling shame for our sin, Jesus is there glorifying us.
- When we are feeling like we need to fight, Jesus is there having already taken the blows for us.
- When we are feeling like we need to justify ourselves, Jesus is there having already justified us.

Confession allows us to live in a state of knowing that we are forgiven, which should make us want to walk in the light of Christ.

- *How does knowing that Jesus accepts you as you are make you want to confess?*
- *How should knowing that we are forgiven make us interact with others?*
- *What are some ways that you can make confession a regular part of your life?*
- *Pray that the Holy Spirit strengthens you to confess as He has led you to do.*