

# JAMES

## EXPLORING YOUR TRUE COLORS

### James: Exploring Your True Colors

Week 4/4 – The Path to Healing

#### TEACHING OBJECTIVE

Sin and guilt work together in secret. They weigh you down, burn you out, and keep you up. That is why James offers a life-giving action toward emotional healing — confession. I hear you. Yes, it's hard, but it's healthy. Confessing your sins to someone, even a trusted friend, is uncomfortable and awkward. It requires vulnerability, trust, and humility. However, as we push past the discomfort, healing is on the other side.



***BIG IDEA:***

Confession leads to restoration.



***SMALL GROUP OBJECTIVE:***

We will encourage students to seek out the healing of confession tonight — whether it's a text or tough conversation.



***SCRIPTURE USED:***

James 5:16

## ILLUSTRATION

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Frank Warren had a crazy idea. In the early days of social media, he asked people to mail him postcards that contained their deepest, darkest secrets. You heard that right. He encouraged strangers to mail their secrets directly to his doorstep. How many do you think he received? A dozen? A hundred? After twelve years, Frank has received over two million postcards.

These cards contain shocking, gut-wrenching statements. Some will make you uncomfortable and others will make you want to cry. Submissions include:

- At my job, people have asked me for help and I tell them I don't work there.
- I am terrified that I will try my hardest and not be good enough.
- People think I've stopped drinking, but I've just gotten good at hiding it.
- I play piano in church, but I don't believe in God.

Where does the mass-success of this postcard project come from? My theory is that people crave confession.

It feels good to get something off your chest, doesn't it?

- Secrets make us feel stuck -- spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.
- We've all encountered the "weight on our shoulders" type of guilt. It turns out that there is actually some science to back that up.
  - A Princeton researcher, Martin Day, discovered that test subjects literally perceived a heavier sense of weight and discomfort when recalling memories associated with guilt.
- Guilt is a sickness.
  - Confession is the medicine.
  - A crucial step in the journey of integrity is honest, open confession.
  - James closes his entire letter by encouraging confession. Why? Because it leads to healing. There is relief in release.
  - We are closing a series on integrity called "Exploring Your True Colors." Each week, we have discovered a key to integrity. As we conclude, we are unearthing the most important key of all — forgiveness.
    - Why? Because we all fail.
    - No one here has lived a perfect life of absolute integrity. So, what do we do when we fall short?
      - We seek forgiveness.
      - Take a look at what James says in the last chapter of his short letter.

**BIBLE STUDY:**

James 5:16 pg. 488

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

**CONTEXTUALIZING THIS PASSAGE**

- Sickness was unavoidable in this era in history. There were constant plagues, zero hospital systems, and medical professionals were basically witch-doctors.
- James encouraged his friends to pray for the sick during their services. He teaches, "Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well" (14-15).
- When someone needs physical healing, they need prayer. Then he parallels this physical healing with spiritual and emotional healing.
  - We understand the importance of restoration for our bodies when they are sick, but we often ignore spiritual and emotional damage that also needs restoration.
    - James gives us a prescription.
      - Confession is the prescription. This is why he says: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."
      - What do we actually need healing from though?
        - It's easy to see the need for a cast when our arm is broken, but how do we pinpoint spiritual pain?
        - It's usually caused by two sneaky concepts that, when left untreated, can wreak havoc on our health — body, mind, and spirit.
        - The two spiritual pains we need to heal from are sin and guilt. They are like poison to people. Together, they can create unthinkable damage, but we often choose to ignore it.

**APPLICATION & LANDING**

- **ILLUSTRATION:** Describe two things that work together to create something dangerous.
  - People die every year by combining two relatively innocent cleaning products together.
    - We are all familiar with Bleach. It's commonly used to kill germs, disinfect spaces, and tie dye shirts.
    - It's one of the most common ingredients in products used to clean the kitchen and bathroom.
    - It's relatively harmless, however, it can become deadly when combined with another common ingredient.
  - The active ingredient in Windex is ammonia. While also relatively harmless, when combined with bleach, it becomes extremely toxic and dangerous.
    - When combined together, these two ingredients create Mustard Gas — a literal chemical of war.
      - Thousands of people die every year because of this innocent combination.

- Like bleach and ammonia, Sin and guilt work together in secret. When combined, they are dangerous and deteriorating.
  - They are poison.
- They weigh you down, burn you out, and keep you up at night.
  - That is why James offers a life-giving action toward emotional healing -- confession. I hear you. Yes, it's hard, but it's healthy.
  - Confession is medicine for the soul.
  - Confessing your sins to someone, even a trusted friend, is uncomfortable and awkward.
    - It requires vulnerability, trust, and humility. However, as we push past the discomfort, healing is on the other side.
    - Are you spiritually sick? Confession is your prescription.
    - We have all fallen short or failed; that's part of life. Integrity is not about being perfect, it's about owning your imperfections and forgiving others when they fall short.
- Here is your prescription, Confession. These are three steps of confession to help you head towards healing.
  - **ONE: Admit the sin.**
    - James is specific. He calls us to confess our **sins**.
      - Whether you struggle with an action, addiction, thought pattern, or behavior, it's crucial to admit it specifically.
      - We must fight the urge to sugar-coat or tone-down the true nature of our transgressions. Confession cannot exist without the admission of wrongdoing.
      - This means that the first step to healing is acknowledging the sin.
  - **TWO: Accept the blame.**
    - It's so easy to project or reject the blame.
      - People are tempted to recite, "I am sorry you feel that way" instead of "I'm sorry for what I did."
        - The first rejects blame while the second accepts it. You must own up to your wrongdoing.
          - Don't try to minimize it.
          - Don't try to rationalize it.
          - Just admit the sin and accept the blame.
          - Then, you are ready for final step.
  - **THREE: Ask for forgiveness.**
    - Whether you are seeking forgiveness from a friend or from God, actually ask.
    - After you've come clean, ask for forgiveness. It is a chance to start fresh without the weight and hassle of guilt.
    - Freedom is found in those simple words, "I forgive you."

- You have admitted the sin, accepted the blame, and asked for forgiveness. What's next? Here is the good part. This passage contains a promise. James explains that we do this so "you may be healed" (5:16).
  - Regardless of what you've done, healing is possible.
  - Are sinful secrets making you feel like you're carrying a barbell around your neck?
    - Maybe what you said shattered someone's heart.
    - Maybe you've allowed a lie to become your lifestyle.
    - Maybe you've fibbed, cheated, or stolen.
    - Whatever the sin, it's time to seek healing and forgiveness.

### **Landing:**

- It's possible to live a life of integrity while also falling short. Like we said, integrity means owning your imperfections. How do we do that? By being honest and open about our shortcomings.
  - We have all missed the mark. We cannot change that reality, but we can change how we react. That's the power of confession. That's the power of forgiveness.
  - Confession leads to restoration. Honesty leads to healing.
    - Start your journey towards healing tonight in your small group. Admit your struggles. Accept the blame. Ask for forgiveness.
    - We are going to commit to this place being a place of healing tonight. Do you need to reach out to someone to ask for forgiveness? I encourage you to send that text — right now. Are they in this room? Go to them.
    - Honesty leads to healing. Confession leads to restoration.
      - Yes, it's hard, but it leads to healing.

— Break for Small Groups —

## TALK IT OUT

- Have you ever tried to hide something because you knew it was wrong? How did that make you feel?
- Why do you think feelings of guilt over something you did increase our stress and anxiety?
- How/why does confessing our sins help to relieve feelings of guilt?
- Do you think it is important to confess something wrong you have done if the person you wronged has no idea? Why or why not?
  - Is it the same if what you did had no affect on anyone? Is it still beneficial to confess those things?
- When we do confession, do we only need to confess our sins to God or is it also beneficial to go through the steps of confession with other people? Why or why not?
- What prevents people from accepting the blame for their sinful actions?
  - How can we overcome those barriers as we pursue healing from guilt?
- What's the most challenging part of healing from past mistakes for you: admitting the sin, accepting the blame, or asking for forgiveness?
- Is there anything you need to confess to begin healing from past mistakes? You can share something with the group, or you can commit to reaching out to a friend privately this week.