

## Coming Into Focus

### *1 John 1:5--2:14*

This is what most of us know as an “eye chart.” The actual name for this piece of paper is a Snellen Chart, and it is used to test your vision. More specifically, it is used to test how well your eyes can focus. At a distance of 20 feet, if you can read the red line on this chart, then you have 20/20 vision. Now, if all you can read is one of the larger letters, then this tells the eye doctor that your vision is out of focus.

Do you ever have times when you try to see God and find God, but He is totally out of focus? Have you ever prayed and felt like your prayers were falling on deaf ears? Have you ever felt like God was a million miles away? Even though you are a follower of Christ, would you say right now that your relationship with God is distant at best? That may be just a feeling or it may be a fact. You may be very distant from God. That is the bad news. The good news is you don't have to be.

God wants the most intimate, close relationship you have to be with Him. I thought it absolutely incredible to think that the Creator of this universe wants a one-on-one intimate, personal, 24/7 relationship with me and with you. The word for that kind of relationship is fellowship.

Jesus Christ came to planet earth to enable us to establish a permanent relationship with God that would lead to personal fellowship with God, but there is a difference between those two things.

Once you trust Jesus Christ as your Savior and become a Christ-follower you enter into a permanent relationship with God. It is one that is eternal and unending, but your fellowship with God can be interrupted and hindered.

If you are a married man you know this is true. If you are a single man, about to get married, you had better realize this is true and that is, “If Momma ain't happy ain't nobody happy.” If God isn't happy you shouldn't be happy. There is only one thing that makes God unhappy and that is sin. There are two kinds of sin that make God unhappy- 1) Unforgiven sin; 2) Unconfessed sin. One is a problem for the unbeliever. The second is a problem for the believer.

An unbeliever and by that I mean someone who has never trusted Christ as their Savior cannot have a relationship with God, because of unforgiven sin. It is true that Jesus Christ came to provide forgiveness by His death on the cross, but it is only when we receive (we trust Christ as our Savior) and repent of our sinfulness that we receive God's forgiveness. It is at that moment that we enter into a relationship with God.

An unbeliever cannot have a relationship with God, because of unforgiven sin. A believer cannot have fellowship with God if there is unconfessed sin. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, but you know you are not hitting on all eight cylinders with God and you are talking, but He is not listening, you are knocking, but He is not answering the door is that a fact or a feeling? One question can determine the answer- - “Is there any known unconfessed sin in my life?”

The psalmist wrote in ***Psalm 66:17-18, “I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue . If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” (Psalm 66:17-18, ESV)***

The psalmist was talking about how he was praying to God and praising God and yet, he said, “If there were sin in my life that I treasured, sin in my life that I cherished, sin in my life I would not let go of the Lord would not have listened.” Unconfessed sin will keep you from being close with God.

When you want to have a deep, private, personal, intimate conversation with someone you do it up close. You do it face-to-face. Have you ever tried to engage someone up close that had bad breath?

Unconfessed sin is like bad breath to God. It doesn't lessen His love for us and it doesn't affect His relationship to us, but it does affect our fellowship with Him.

Just as there are two types of sin (unforgiven and unconfessed) there are two types of unconfessed sin. There is unconfessed sin against God and there is unconfessed sin against others. The only remedy for either is confession. If you have unresolved, unconfessed sin either with God or with others, you cannot get up close and personal until that sin is resolved. Main Thought: Confession must be up and down and all around.

*[Turn to **1 John 1**] We are going to deal with sin that affects our vertical relationship with God and we are going to deal with sin that affects our horizontal relationship with others. The first thing we are going to learn is this...*

## **I. We Must Confess All Sin Vertically That Is Against God**

Before we get into this text specifically I want to begin by saying that all sin ultimately is against God. Even sin that you commit against someone else is, first of all, a sin against God. One of the greatest illustrations of this is found in the life of the greatest king of the Old Testament whose name was David.

I am sure you know this particular story about David, but as great a king as he was he was just as great a criminal. In fact, he committed one of the greatest, most sordid crimes in all of history. One evening he walks out on the balcony of his palace and looks out on a rooftop and sees this beautiful woman named Bathsheba who is bathing. He invites her to his palace that very night. They have a one night fling, but that one night fling was an all day wrong for two reasons. First of all, she was married to a man by the name of Uriah, who was off in battle. Secondly, she got pregnant.

David finds out that she is pregnant and brings Uriah home from the battlefield and does everything he can to get Uriah to sleep with his wife to cover up the deed, but Uriah refuses. David knows the baby bump is about to show and it will be more than just a bump in the road. He sends Uriah back out to battle and has him killed and then takes Bathsheba for his wife.

Even though David had a relationship with God he was out of fellowship with God and he kept his sin concealed until a prophet, by the name of Nathan, came to him, and confronted him and God convicted David of his sin. Later on, David writes about the process of confessing that sin in the 51st Psalm. This is what he said, ***"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight." (Psalm 51:4, ESV)***

Wait a minute. Isn't murder and adultery a sin? Didn't he sin against Uriah and his family? Yes. But what David was saying ultimately was that every sin is first and foremost against God and therefore the first confession we make in sin is always to Him. If you want to be close with God just remember you can't get in with sin, but you can get rid of that sin and we are told how to do 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, ESV)***

Notice the very first part of this, ***"If we confess our sin."*** The first thing you've got to do if you are going to deal with sin is admit you have sinned. That is very hard for people to do.

Think about how seldom people even use this word even more. How many times do you hear a politician, an athlete, a celebrity who gets caught in some kind of terrible, terrible sin say something like this, "I made a

mistake.” There is a big difference between a sin and a mistake. If a man accidentally walks into a women’s restroom that is a mistake. If a man purposely walks into a woman’s bedroom who is not his wife that is a sin.

There is a big difference being a “mistaker” and being a “sinner.” If my problem is a mistake and not a sin then I am not a sinner. If I am not a sinner then I don’t need a savior. If I am a mistaker I just need to do better and not make the same mistake twice.

Furthermore, you never really feel guilt over a mistake. When we make a mistake what do we do? We shrug our shoulders and say, “Everybody makes mistakes.” Mistakes don’t bring guilt. Sin brings guilt.

That is why a healthy conscience will experience guilt where an unhealthy conscience won’t. A healthy conscience understands the difference between a sin and a mistake.

Once you realize there is a sin problem then the only remedy for that is to confess it. The word **“confess”** comes from two words in the Greek language – the word “homo” which literally means “the same” and the word “logeo” which literally means “to say.” So the word literally means “to say the same thing.” When you confess sin you simply go to God and say, “I want to say about my sin what you say about my sin. I want to call it what you call it and I want to condemn it the way you condemn it. Do you know why that is so hard for us to do? What you are doing in effect is testifying against yourself.

If you want to have real fellowship with God, if you want to enter into the presence of God and get up close and personal you literally have to come into the “no spin zone.” You can’t spin sin with God. When you mess up you have to fess up.

Author Kent Crockett tells this classic story about his two year old son, Scott, who was sitting on the floor crying. Kent went into the room to investigate and he noticed a plastic baseball bat on the floor and asked his four year old daughter what happened. His little girl, Hannah, said, “He hit his head.” Kent said, “On what?” She pointed to the floor and said, “The bat.” Kent said, “Where was the bat?” She said, “In my hands.”

Admitting sin is not confessing sin. Confessing sin is when you come to God and you agree with God about your sin. You let Him know in no uncertain terms what you have done – it was wrong you broke His law and broke His heart and you want to repent of it and turn away from it. Then, you ask His forgiveness.

The good news is when you do, no matter what that sin is God will forgive you, put you back into fellowship, and get up close and personal.

Listen to the verse again.

***“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, ESV)***

When you do your part and properly confess your sin God does His part and immediately forgives your sin. Again, keep something in mind. You don’t need to get forgiveness in order to have a relationship with God. In that sense, all of our sins past, present and future have already been forgiven through Jesus Christ, but you must confess your sin in order to have fellowship with God. How do we know that God will forgive?

Two reasons.

### **First, God is faithful.**

*Isaiah 55:7 says, "Let the sinful turn from his way, and the one who does not know God turn from his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have loving-pity on him. Let him turn to our God, for He will for sure forgive all his sins." (Isaiah 55:7, NLV)*

When you keep your end of the bargain God always keeps His. You confess. He forgives. You confess. He forgives. You confess. He forgives and that sequence never fails. It never misfires.

The word "faithful" there means "every time." Ladies, how many of you would marry a man who would say to you, "If you will marry me I will be faithful to you 364 days a year." Sorry. Faithful never gets a break. Faithful never takes a vacation. Faithful never gets a day off. The Marine Corp is right. You are to be "Always faithful."

Want to hear some great news? When you take your sins to the cross of Jesus Christ, God must forgive you. If He did not, He would not be faithful to His word, nor would He be faithful to His son.

### **Second, God will forgive us is because He is just.**

God can't simply write off sins, pretend as if they didn't happen, sweep them under the table, and let bygones be bygones, because He is a holy and righteous God. If a judge allows a criminal to go free even though he is guilty the judge himself must become a criminal.

Because Jesus Christ died on the cross and secured our forgiveness He guaranteed by His blood that whenever we go to God for forgiveness we will find forgiveness. Otherwise, God would be unjust. If we want to get close and personal with God we must confess all sin vertically that is against God. There is one other type of sin we must confess.

## **II. We Must Confess All Sin Horizontally That Applies To Others**

Not every sin against God is a sin against others. The first four commandments talk about sins specifically against God. If I have any other god before me that is not a sin against you. If I engage in idolatry that is not a sin against you. To take God's name in vain alone is not really a sin against you. Not every sin against God is necessarily a sin against others. However, every sin against others is a sin against God, because all sin is first and foremost as we have already seen is a sin against God.

That is important for this reason. You can be right with other people without being right with God. There are husbands and wives today who do not know God, but they have a good marriage. They have a strong relationship with each other. They love each other. You can be best friends with someone and neither one of you know God and yet be totally right with each other, have a tremendous friendship, and a great relationship. You can be right with others without being right with God.

However, you cannot be right with God unless you are right with others. If you are holding a grudge against someone, if you have done something wrong to someone, if you have hurt someone and you have that in your heart and you've never confessed that to that person (you never made it right with that person) until you do, you are not right with God.

That is why we need to read one other verse dealing with confession. It is the only time in the New Testament and the only place where we are specifically commanded to confess sin. James 5:16 says, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." (James 5:16, ESV)

This is one instance where even confession to God doesn't get you completely off the hook. If I hurt you, if I do you wrong, if I steal from you, if I slander you, if I cheat you, I can go to God all day long and confess that sin. God, I cheated her. God I stole from him. God, I gossiped about her. God I hurt his feelings, please forgive me. If I do not go to the one who has been affected and I do not go to the one that has been offended, then I am still not right with God and I still can't get up close and personal.

When you confess your sin vertically to God that leads to restoration, but when you confess your sin to others that leads to reconciliation. Restoration with God and reconciliation with others always go together.

Yes, step #1 when there is unconfessed sin in your life is to go to God and make things right with Him, but the moment you do that He will move you to make things right with others.

There are some of you here today and the reason why you are so far from God and you feel like God is so far from you is not just because of something, but because of someone. You have wronged someone. You have hurt someone. You've never made that right with that person. Listen carefully. Things are never all right until they are right with all.

We've all done things at one time or another that we are deeply ashamed of.

I ask you today, "Do you need God to come back into focus? Would you be willing to let Him put your heart under His microscope and give you a thorough examination? Whatever you find in your heart that is against Him or against others, would you be willing to confess it and make it right, so God will again come back into focus!