



EASTER EASTER

Small Group Teaching Guide
APRIL 16, 2017



PREPARATION

STUDY

Read through John 12:12-19. Pray the Holy Spirit would bring to life God's Word and that you would teach these passages well to those in your group.

DETERMINE

Many questions have been included in this guide. Read through this lesson to determine which questions will work best to encourage, push, and grow your group.

PRAY

As you prepare, pray for the preaching of God's Word this coming weekend. Pray also for your time in this week's study and your group's openness to God's Word.

LANDING POINT

Confession comes from the heart and overflows in praise to God for who He is and what He has done.



GROUP DISCUSSION

■ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

■ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

■ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

■ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How much of our lives do we pretend to be someone we're not? So often we live to hide who we truly are. But that's not the life Jesus wants for us. He calls us out of hiding and into a life built on honesty and transparency. In this series, you will discuss five significant confessions and what it looks like to live without walls before God and others.

Q: *What words come to mind when you hear the word 'confession'?*

Q: *What does it take to be real or honest with someone? Why is it difficult?*



LEARN

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

| SEEING CONFESSION DIFFERENTLY

In our culture, the word 'confession' has a negative connotation. We usually think of it this way: someone confesses to a crime or to having done something wrong. This definition is used in the Bible. We are told to make a confession of our sins before God. But the Bible also sees confession in a different way – as professions of faith made by someone to declare their beliefs. Christians throughout history used confessions as a way to unite believers around a common belief in who Jesus was and what He did. Even today we make confessions. For example, the Lord's Supper is a type of confession.

BACKGROUND

In Romans 10:9, Paul gives us the greatest confession you can make. Before we get to that confession, let's look at some background. Romans is Paul's attempt to answer the question: How does someone obtain righteousness (or a right standing with God)? Is it through faith or by works? Paul's conclusion is that the way to salvation is not through your works (what you do for God), but faith in the Gospel (what God has done for you through His Son). No one is able to keep God's law without breaking it. We all fail, from the best of us to the worst. So, we are without hope unless God intervenes. Thanks to God, because He did intervene!

READ: *Read Romans 10:9-13. What stands out to you in this passage?*

Q: *Our natural tendency is to work for our salvation. Why do so many see salvation this way?*

| HOW TO GIVE

Paul's confession in 10:9 declares who Jesus is and what He did in order to save us. Jesus is God's promised Savior. He lived the obedient, righteous life we could not. At the cross, He made atonement for sin and gives us His righteousness in exchange for our sin. His resurrection demonstrated that God's salvation plan was successful and the enemies of sin, death and Satan had been defeated.

Paul emphasizes that this is a confession of the mouth and belief in the heart. Saving faith goes deeper than just words. It's an inner trust that what God did through Jesus makes you declared righteous (or justified) before God. This is the saving story of the Gospel. And it's a story that changes us.

Q: *Discuss what are some of the essential parts of the Gospel story.*

Q: *Discuss what you need to remember when sharing the Gospel with nonbelievers.*



LIVE

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

What difference does this confession make in our daily lives? Let's look at three ways this confession changes us.

| THE GREATEST FORGIVENESS

First, through this confession you declare your right standing with God. How is this so? Because Jesus gave you His righteousness. On the cross, He took your place and received the punishment for sin you deserved. Your sins have been forgiven. That means you can stop trying to work your way into heaven. Jesus did the work for you. You don't

have to let feelings of condemnation hang around your neck like a hangman's noose. Gone are your guilt and shame because Jesus makes you righteous, and that is enough!

Q: *Recall a time when someone forgave you. How did it feel to receive forgiveness from them?*

Q: *How do we live when we feel guilt and shame? How do we live when they are not present?*

| THE GREATEST HOPE

Second, this confession gives us hope that, because Jesus lives, we live also. Jesus gives us eternal life; our death here on earth will not be the end of our story. We will live on with God and be reunited with believers who have died before us. But our hope isn't just for a better day to come. This is a hope that helps us here and now.

Q: *Why is the hope we (as believers) have different from the hope others have?*

| THE GREATEST RESTORATION

Third, to be saved is to be restored, made well or healed. Salvation is more than just the promise of heaven one day. Our faith is a saving faith, which means God restores us to live the lives He planned for us before creation...and it's a life we can live now. Right now, God is making you into the man or woman He has always intended you to be!

Q: *Imagine yourself as the person God always intended you to be? What would be different about you?*



LEAD

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

| THREE WAYS TO CONFESS

How do you live out this confession? First, look to the past. Confessions point us back to the Gospel and all God has done for us through Jesus. Second, act in the present. Saving faith leads to action. It compels you to live for God out of gratitude and thankfulness. Third, hope in the future. No matter what happens to you in this life, God will never let you go. God assures you that nothing—not death, failure or tragedy—can keep you from Him.

Q: *What's one thing you could do this week to help you look to the past, act in the present or hope in the future. Be practical.*

Q: *If you were to write a confession that praises God for His saving character and activity what would it include?*



PRAY

Encourage your group to pray this confession outloud. Allow time for individuals to offer praise and thanks to God for things He has done or revealed in their life.



FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- *Read Philippians 2:5-11 and reflect on how this relates to Paul's confession in Romans 10:9.*
- *Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their life.*



COMMENTARY

JOHN'S LITERARY STYLE. What is righteousness? “The quality, state, and characteristic of being in the right.”¹ The term also denotes justice or being just. In the Bible, “righteousness” can refer to God and His divine

attribute or activity or to human beings in a legal, social or moral sense.² In Romans, Paul explains these different meanings through the Gospel story. God demands a perfect righteousness from us. However, we are unable to achieve a righteousness of our own, because we are sinners. So, God sent His Son to live as one of us and live the righteous life we could not. The cross shows God's character as being righteous, because He is just to punish sin. But it also shows His love and mercy, because Jesus became our substitute. He experienced the death and judgment we deserved.

AVAILABLE TO ALL. Paul writes that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13). These are God's words and His promise to anyone who believes in the Gospel. Salvation isn't reserved for one special group. It's not just for squeaky-clean do-gooders. It's not for the smartest or most successful. It's for anyone who puts their trust in Jesus and believes He is able to save.

CONFESSION AS PRAISE. “The Hebrew word translated ‘confess’ (יָדָה, yadah) is connected to the expression of praise and thanksgiving (יָדָה, yadah). The Greek word for ‘confess’ or ‘acknowledge’ (ὁμολογέω, homologeō) expresses the idea of confessing and praising (ὁμολογέω, homologeō).”³ In both translations, we see that confession involves praising God for who He is and what He had done. There should be an overflow of love and joy that comes with confession.

ENDNOTES:

1. Michael F. Bird, “Righteousness,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

2. *Ibid.*

3. Frank M. Hasel, “Creeds and Confessions,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).