

## **James 5:12-16 - Life in the Body of Christ - Practical Applications**

Today we continue in James chapter 5, covering verses 12-16.

Memory Verses:

James 1:2-4 NKJV

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. <sup>4</sup> But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

### **Revision**

Last week we saw that James warned that Christian brethren should not grumble or complain against one another (James 5:9), especially during times of trial, because if we do we will be judged. The judgement James is referring to is the Bema seat judgement, the judgement of rewards where all believers will stand before Christ. We will not lose our salvation if we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ badly, but we will lose our reward.

Why does James speak so sternly concerning the way believers treat each other? Two reasons. Firstly, the world is watching us. We blaspheme God's name when we treat each other badly.

John 13:34-35 NLT

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. <sup>35</sup> Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

Secondly, instead of building up the body of Christ, we are tearing it down. And this brings great grief to the heart of God. Consider what God's perfect will for the church is:

Ephesians 4:15-16 NLT

Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. <sup>16</sup> He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Jude puts what James says in James 5:9 in the positive. He says:

Jude 20-21 NLT

But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, <sup>21</sup> and await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will bring you eternal life. In this way, you will keep yourselves safe in God's love.

James then went on to give us examples of those who were able to persevere during the trials and treat others well — the prophets, and of course Job.

We'll start this week by reading James 5:1-16.

### **James 5:1-16 NKJV**

**Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! <sup>2</sup> Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup> Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. <sup>4</sup> Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. <sup>5</sup> You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup> You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.**

**<sup>7</sup> Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. <sup>8</sup> You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**

**<sup>9</sup> Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! <sup>10</sup> My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. <sup>11</sup> Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.**

**<sup>12</sup> But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment.**

**<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.**

## **The Importance of Integrity**

### **James 5:12 NKJV**

**But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment.**

As is common in the book of James, his teaching is similar to that of Jesus. This is no exception. Jesus said the following in His *Sermon on the Mount*:

### **Matthew 5:33-37 NLT**

“You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the Lord.’ <sup>34</sup> But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. <sup>35</sup> And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

David Guzik sums up the main point of James 5:12 well when he says: “The need to swear or make oaths, beyond a simple and clear **yes** or **no** betrays the weakness of one’s word. It demonstrates that there is not enough weight in one’s own character to confirm their words.”

v 12 **Lest you fall into judgment:** Again, we are reminded that any lack of integrity will be revealed at the Bema Seat Judgement where all that is hidden will be revealed, good and bad. Therefore Bema Seat Judgement should motivate us to, not only treat each other well, but also live with integrity; we will be rewarded for our honesty and when we keep our promises, even to our own hurt (Psalm 15:4).

## Historical Context: Binding and Non-binding Oaths/Promises

Before we move on, it’s important that we understand that this verse, and Jesus teaching on oaths, does not prohibit oaths altogether. We need to understand the Jewish culture at the time. The problem was that in that time, the Jews used two kinds of oaths or promises; binding oaths (used the name of God) and non-binding oaths (didn’t use the name of God). In other words, there were promises you made that you intended to keep (binding oaths), and promises you made that you didn’t intend to keep (non-binding oaths). This is what Jesus said in reference to these two kinds of oaths or promises:

Matthew 23:16-22 NLT

“Blind guides! What sorrow awaits you! For you say that it **means nothing [non-binding oath]** to swear ‘by God’s Temple,’ but that it is **binding** to swear ‘by the gold in the Temple.’<sup>17</sup> Blind fools! Which is more important—the gold or the Temple that makes the gold sacred?<sup>18</sup> And you say that to swear ‘by the altar’ is **not binding**, but to swear ‘by the gifts on the altar’ is **binding**.<sup>19</sup> How blind! For which is more important—the gift on the altar or the altar that makes the gift sacred?<sup>20</sup> When you swear ‘by the altar,’ you are swearing by it and by everything on it.<sup>21</sup> And when you swear ‘by the Temple,’ you are swearing by it and by God, who lives in it.<sup>22</sup> And when you swear ‘by heaven,’ you are swearing by the throne of God and by God, who sits on the throne.”

The non-binding oath or promise was like schoolyard practice of crossing your fingers behind your back so you didn’t have to do what you said you would do; in other words you were deliberately lying or deceiving the person.

It’s also important to notice that in Matthew 23:16-22 Jesus doesn’t give a blanket condemnation of making oaths. The fact is that oaths are often used in the Bible, even by God Himself (See Luke 1:73, Hebrews 3:11, Hebrews 6:13, Matthew 5:34, Genesis 21:23, 24; 24:3, 26:28, 1 Kings 17:1–2, 2 Corinthians 1:23, Galatians 1:20, Psalm 15:4, and Hebrews 6:16).

Again, the main point here is that we need to have integrity. Our yes must mean yes, our no must mean no, and any lack of integrity will be revealed at the Bema Seat Judgement.

## How to Meet Needs Among Believers

James 5:13-16 NKJV.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Basically, James encourages the suffering to pray, the cheerful to sing psalms, and the sick to call for the elders of the church to pray for their need.

v 13 **Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray:** Jon Courson says, “There’s no way we can continue to justify our tendency to fault folks or to war against them with words when James clearly tells us that the only solution to oppression is to look for the Lord’s coming. In the meantime, when we’re afflicted, we’re to watch our words. Let them be *yea*, *nay*, and by all means—pray.”

This is such basic advice, but how often do we forget to pray when times are hard? Instead, we complain, find fault with others, get angry, depressed, anxious, and obnoxious. We miss out on experiencing the peace of God that Paul describes in:

Philippians 4:6-7 NLT

Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. <sup>7</sup> Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

Why is this such important advice? Firstly, when we are weak, we obviously need God’s strength, wisdom, and guidance. Secondly, we aren’t warring against people, but against the demonic hosts. The last thing Paul has to say about the armour of God and fighting our spiritual enemy is the need for prayer.

Ephesians 6:10-11, 18

<sup>10</sup> A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on **all of God’s armour** so that you will be **able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil**.

<sup>12</sup> For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

...<sup>18</sup> **Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.**

Think about it. Satan is constantly trying to break up marriages and other relationships, especially those between believers. He puts negative and destructive thoughts into our heads, creates situations that anger or irritate us, or he uses the difficult times to turn us against each other (we grumble and complain against each other).

When we respond to these situations by fighting and arguing, we are playing right into Satan’s hands. To use a war time scenario, we suffer the sad and devastating consequences of friendly fire. Instead of firing our artillery at the enemy, we are firing at each other, destroying ourselves. Satan can destroy us without firing a shot; if we choose not to pray. Marriages break down, friendships become strained, and unity, harmony, and Christlike love and selflessness are but distant memories.

But, when we pray, we gain the right perspective, and we make available to ourselves God's weapons, resources, power, and strength. Praying causes us to remember and recognizing who the enemy is, and so we direct our fight against the real enemy — the demonic hosts. As a result marriages are strengthened, friendships restored, unity maintained, and Jesus' church flourishes.

v 13 **Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms:** The Greek word translated as “sing psalms” generally refers to public worship, singing to God accompanied with musical instruments. The same Greek word is translated as “making melody” in:

Ephesians 5:19 NKJV

...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and **making melody** in your heart to the Lord,

Actually, we can reverse these — the praying and the praising. The cheerful can also pray, and the suffering can also sing. The Scriptures talk about the sacrifice of praise — when we choose to praise God even when times are tough.

Hebrew 13:15 NKJV

Therefore by Him let us continually offer **the sacrifice of praise** to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

I find that when I am suffering, in addition to praying, choosing to praise God can change my attitude and perspective radically, even if it's just listening and singing along to a good worship song. If I choose to praise and pray instead of pout, I will rise above the circumstances and maintain my joy and peace in my relationship with God. By choosing to pray and praise God in hard times, I am walking by faith. I am by faith declaring that God is good and that these hard times are what's best for me; I have a heavenly perspective. I choosing to submit and surrender to God's loving will for my life.

In contrast, pouting or complaining is a sign of unbelief. When I complain I am saying that I think this situation is bad for me, that God has not kept His promise in Romans 8:28-29 that all things work out for good and will result in my being transformed to become more like Christ.

v 14 **Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church:** Remember the previous verse; the first thing we do is pray to God ourselves. But after we pray to God, if necessary, we are instructed to seek prayer from the elders, or at least people who are mature in their faith.

v 14 **the elders [plural]:** Why elders not just one elder? Jon Courson has an interesting insight: “James says it is the responsibility, the privilege, the opportunity, the command, for the sick person to humble himself and to call for the elders. Notice the word “elders” is plural. When the sick are being prayed for, it is always to be by a group of men corporately rather than one man individually. Why? There are few things more potentially dangerous than for a person to be used in the ministry of healing because what begins as a simple desire to be used by the Lord can so easily end up in book-signings and a speaking tour. To keep this tendency in check, James says when someone is sick, a group of men is to pray so that no one man will get the credit.”

v 14 **Let him call:** This puts the onus or responsibility on the person who is sick to ask for prayer. We exercise our faith when we choose to call on others to help us and pray for us. This is another example of how God has designed the church so that we are dependant on each other; we need each other.

1 Corinthians 12:20-27 NLT (selected verses)

Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. <sup>21</sup> **The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.”** The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.”

<sup>22</sup> In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary.... <sup>25</sup> **This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other.** <sup>26</sup> If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honoured, all the parts are glad.

<sup>27</sup> **All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.**

v 14 **and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:** We see an example of this in the Gospel of Mark where the disciples would anoint the sick with oil before or as they healed them when they were sent out by Jesus to proclaim the gospel:

Mark 6:13 NKJV

And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.

But why the oil? There are two possible explanations. Firstly, the anointing oil in the bible symbolises the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, oil was used to symbolise the anointing of the Holy Spirit when priests, kings, and prophets were anointed with oil before they assumed positions of authority. Secondly, oil has medicinal properties. In Luke 10:34 we have the example of the Good Samaritan using oil and wine to treat the wounds of the man left for dead. So here we see James encouraging natural remedies for healing as well as seeking supernatural healing. This means that there is nothing wrong with going to the doctor when you are feeling sick. However, the order of events should preferably be, where possible: pray to God yourself, seek prayer from other believers, then seek medical help. But please use common sense. If someone is suffering a heart attack, call 000 first and then get the prayer chain happening.

v 14 **...in the name of the Lord:** in the authority and character or nature of the Lord.

v 15 **And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven:** This is interesting. James says that the prayer of faith will **save**, not heal, the sick. Also the next line says “**if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven**”. As such, verse 15 is not a blanket promise that anyone who requests prayer from the elders will be physically healed, as there is a strong spiritual overtone; **if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven**. I will now attempt to show that the emphasis here is salvation (forgiveness), though physical healing is also included.

It’s so important to use scripture to interpret scripture. There are many who use this verse to justify the belief that everyone who has faith will be healed. I would encourage those people to look at the rest of the scriptures and see that physical healing is a matter of God’s will, and not just of faith. Paul himself is a good example. He had great faith, and he prayed earnestly three times for God to heal or deliver him from his infirmity — but God said no. Paul then accepted God’s will and put up with his infirmity or sickness for the rest of his life. Paul said that the reason for God not healing him

was to keep him humble and depending on God (2 Corinthians 12:7). This is a very good reason not to be healed. I would guess that a good number of the trials that we go through are for the purposes of keeping us humble and depending on God.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 NLT

<sup>7</sup> Even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.

<sup>8</sup> Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. <sup>9</sup> Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses [infirmities or sicknesses], so that the power of Christ can work through me. <sup>10</sup> That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses [infirmities or sicknesses], and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I love Paul’s attitude of submission to God here. Notice how Paul not only accepts but also embraces God’s will for his life when he says, “So now **I am glad to boast about my weaknesses** so that the power of Christ can work through me. <sup>10</sup> That’s why **I take pleasure in my weaknesses**, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

v 15 **And the prayer of faith will save (sozo) the sick:** The Greek word *sozo* translated “save” here means: to save, keep from harm, safe, preserve, rescue, save from death, bring out safely, save/free from disease, heal, deliver, to keep alive, keep, thrive, prosper, get on well, save/preserve from eternal death, bring salvation, and bring to salvation. Here are three examples of where this Greek word *sozo* is used in the New Testament which demonstrate its regular meaning is to deliver from something, usually sin. There are many more like them:

Matthew 1:21 NKJV

And [Mary] will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will **save (sozo)** His people from their sins.”

Matthew 14:30 NKJV

But when [Peter] saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, “Lord, **save (sozo)** me!”

Mark 8:35 NKJV

For whoever desires to **save (sozo)** his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will **save (sozo)** it.

So while the word *save* (Greek: *sozo*) is used in James 5:15 includes both physical deliverance (healing) and spiritual healing (forgiveness of sins), its main usage in the New Testament is to describe deliverance or rescue from sin or other predicaments. Therefore, James is clearly communicating that prayer will bring both physical and/or spiritual healing.

If James had wanted to communicate that physical healing would always result when the elders prayed for people, he could have used a different Greek word. For example, the Greek word “**therapeuo**”, which specifically refers to physical healing. Here is just one of many similar examples of how the Greek word **therapeuo** is used:

Matthew 8:7 NKJV

And Jesus said to him, “I will come and **heal [or cure, Greek: therapeuo]** him.”

It's important that we have a correct understanding of James 5:15 so we don't have false expectations and therefore false hope when it comes to physical healing.

So, if we aren't guaranteed physical healing, then how should we pray? We simply pray that God's will be done. "God, if it is Your will for Bill to be healed of his cancer, please heal him. But if not, please give Bill the grace and strength he needs to persevere through the trial.

## **The Importance of Confessing our Sins to Each Other**

v 16 **Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed:** This is an important principle or practice for a healthy body or church. Notice the wisdom of James here:

— we don't just confess to one another, but we also pray for one another. The two go hand in hand. Obviously, if we are confessing a sin to a brother or sister, then we need to grow in that area and will often need encouragement and accountability.

— the result of confession and prayer is spiritual, emotional, and physical healing. "Confession can free us from the heavy burdens (physically and spiritually) of unresolved sin, and removes hindrances to the work of the Holy Spirit." (David Guzik)

v 16 **to one another:** There are three important things to notice here.

### **Firstly, why do we need to confess our sins to one another and not just to God?**

Because ***confession of sins to one another breaks the power of secret sin***. How? Sin causes us to isolate ourselves from each other because we become ashamed of ourselves. This shame causes us to withdraw from others and close up. We have effectively removed ourselves from fellowship because we are no longer real or genuine with our brothers and sisters. We become like the coal that has been removed from the fireplace and is placed by itself on the hearth, away from the heat of the fire. What happens to that isolated coal? It grows cold. It stops glowing red.

Here is another way of describing this. One of Satan's greatest strategies to defeat even the strongest and most faithful of believers is his divide and conquer method; the person sins, Satan condemns them, they listen to and believe Satan's lies and condemnation, and they give up. They believe that they are no longer good enough, that they have gone too far, that God can't use them anymore, that they are worthless, that God won't forgive them or God is angry with them.

Remember the difference between God convicting us because we have sinned and Satan condemning us because we have sinned; the Holy Spirit's conviction draws us back to God, but Satan's condemnation pushes us away from God. The conviction of the Holy Spirit is painful, but His goal is to cause us to want to come back to God. Satan's goal when condemning us is to keep us from God. Always remember:

Hebrews 4:14-16 NLT

So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. <sup>15</sup> This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. <sup>16</sup> So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.



There is no shame before the throne of God, only mercy, forgiveness, compassion, and acceptance. Do you remember how the Father ran to meet the prodigal son and then showered him with gifts and a party? The prodigal son just needed to be willing to confess.

Luke 15:17-24 NLT

“When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will go home to my father and say [**confess**], “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, <sup>19</sup> and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.” ’

<sup>20</sup> “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’

<sup>22</sup> “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. <sup>23</sup> And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.

### **Secondly, we don’t need to confess our sins to a priest to be forgiven**

There are many who believe that they must, in order to be forgiven of their sins, confess their sins to a priest. But this is not true. 1 Timothy 2:5 makes this clear:

1 Timothy 2:5 NLT

There is one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity—the man Christ Jesus.

To receive forgiveness, we simply pray to God and confess our sins to Him. Jesus is our mediator, not any human priest. That’s why we have this wonderful and comforting promise in:

1 John 1:9 NKJV

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Who is faithful and just to forgive us our sins? Only God is, because only God can. The pharisees were correct when they thought to themselves that “only God can forgive sins.”

Mark 2:5-12 NLT

Seeing their faith, **Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “My child, your sins are forgiven.”**

<sup>6</sup> But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, <sup>7</sup> “What is he saying? **This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!**”

<sup>8</sup> Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you question this in your hearts? <sup>9</sup> Is it easier to say to the paralysed man ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk’? <sup>10</sup> **So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.**” Then Jesus turned to the paralysed man and said, <sup>11</sup> “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!”

<sup>12</sup> And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, "We've never seen anything like this before!"

So why do we need to confess our sins to each other if the Bible says in 1 John 1:9 that we only need to confess our sins to God to be forgiven and cleansed? The confession to one another is not to receive forgiveness, but rather receive healing from the effects of sin and the restoration of relationships damaged because of the sin. Read verse 16 again carefully, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be **healed**." Confession of sin to one another is all about the restoration of fellowship and healing from the spiritual, emotional, and physical consequences of sin.

Jesus also taught confession to one another. Notice that the goal is *reconciliation*.

Matthew 5:23-24 NKJV

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be **reconciled** to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Confessing our sins to one another all about making things right with each other, and also getting the extra help that we often need in our battle against sin — it has nothing to do with obtaining forgiveness from God.

Example: I lie to my brother. He gets hurt. The relationship is broken. I first confess my sin to God and am forgiven — my relationship with God is restored. However, my relationship with my brother is still broken. Even though God has forgiven me, I still need to confess my sin of lying to my brother so he will forgive me and the human relationship can be restored.

### **Thirdly, We Must Be Careful as to Who We Confess our Sins to**

David Guzik writes: "Confession is good, but must be made with discretion. An unwise confession of sin can be the cause of more sin." This can be true for a number of reasons.

Firstly, we can cause someone else to stumble — they may not be mature enough in their faith to handle what we will tell them, or they may be currently weighed down with a huge trial and not be able to handle your confession at that time.

Secondly, a person may be prone to gossip. Therefore harm, not healing, will result from your confession.

Thirdly, generally speaking, we only need to confess our sins to those who have been hurt by our sins. If it is a secret or hidden sin, then find someone who you can trust.

Fourthly, be careful with becoming vulnerable around the opposite sex, it can lead to unhealthy and inappropriate relationships.

## **Application**

Ask God to reveal anything that may be hindering your relationship with Him, or with another person. If there is anything against another person, then go to that person and confess. If there is a secret sin, then find someone you can trust and confide in them and pray with them. Restore the sweet fellowship and unity that Jesus died to give us.