# WALKING WITH CSUSSION





"Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

It had been a long time since I'd read anything by Christian author Max Lucado. Then a few weeks ago I happened across an article called "Coming Clean," written by Lucado for the Summer 2012 issue of Leadership Journal.

"I like beer," opened Lucado. "I always have. Ever since my high school buddy and I drank ourselves sick with a case of quarts, I have liked beer. I like the way it washes down a piece of pizza and mutes the spice of enchiladas. It goes great with peanuts at the baseball game and seems an appropriate way to crown eighteen holes of golf. . . . I like it. Too much. Alcoholism haunts my family ancestry. . . . So at the age of 21, I swore off it"

Yeah, I thought. That's about what I expected—a high-profile pastor's safe confession of youthful indiscretion. What I didn't expect was the next few paragraphs.

"A few years back," he wrote, "something resurrected my cravings. . . . At some point I reached for a can of brew instead of a can of soda, and as quick as you can pop the top, I was a beer fan again. A once-in-awhile . . . then once-a-week . . . then once-a-day beer fan."

"I kept my preference to myself. No beer at home, lest my daughters think less of me. No beer in public. Who knows who might see me? None at home, none in public, which left only one option: conveniencestore parking lots. For about a week I was that guy in the car, drinking out of the brown paper bag."

Lucado told of buying beer on the way to speak at a men's retreat and realising that he had become what he hated: a hypocrite. "It wasn't the beer but the cover-up that nauseated me," he wrote.

Throwing the beer can in the trash, Lucado resolved to make things right-confessing his sin to his church elders. "I didn't embellish or downplay my actions; I just confessed to them. And they, in turn, pronounced forgiveness over me. Jim Potts, a dear, silver-haired saint, reached across the table and put his hand on my shoulder and said something like this: 'What you did was wrong. But what you are doing tonight is right.'

"After talking to the elders, I spoke to the church. At our midweek gathering I once again told the story. I apologised for my duplicity and requested the prayers of the congregation. What followed was a refreshing hour of confession in which other people did the same. The church was strengthened, not weakened, by our honesty." (Andy Nash, "Max Lucado's confession," Adventist Review, 2012)

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." (James 5:16)

# **EXPERIENCING MERCY**

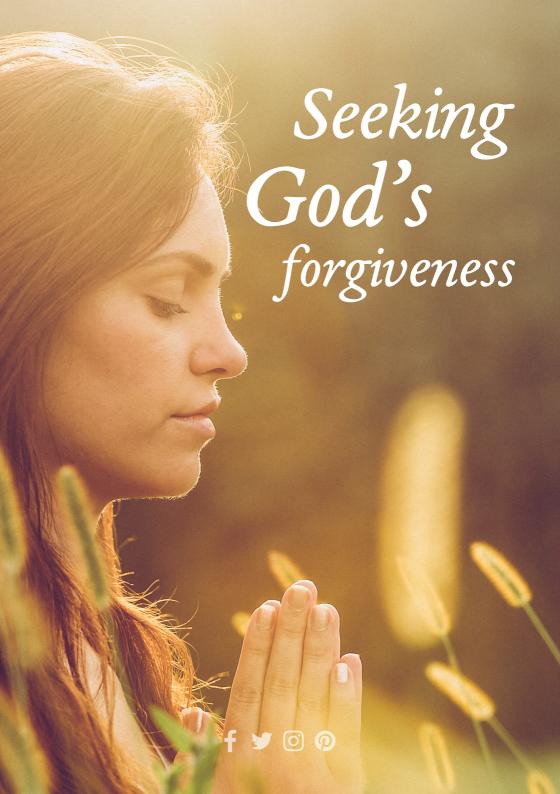
God offers everyone the opportunity to be forgiven. All we need to do is ask and claim His promise. We don't need to go through an ordeal to prove ourselves, conquer some impossible challenge, or be punished. Confess your sin and God, who is rich in mercy will give you new life in Christ.

Q1	What do we need to do in order to be forgiven?
A	□ Proverbs 28:13
	□ 2 Chronicles 7:14 □ Luke 15:18−24 □ Jeremiah 3:12, 13

It's important to recognise that our sins hurt God as well as other people. If your words or actions have hurt a friend, family member or colleague, it's important to acknowledge this hurt, admit you were wrong, and ask them for their forgiveness.

Q2	To whom should we confess our sins?
A	□ James 5:16
	□ Psalm 38:18; 41:4 □ Matthew 5:24 □ Proverbs 28:13 □ 1 John 1:8–10 □ Romans 10:10 □ James 4:10

Once you have apologised for the hurt you have caused, confess your sin to God and ask Him for forgiveness.



Those who have not humbled their heart before God in acknowledging their guilt, have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance. If we have not truly repented . . . we have never truly sought for the forgiveness of sin and never found peace with God." (Ellen G. White)

Jesus, who is with God in Heaven, will intercede on our behalf. Hebrews 4:15 reminds us that Jesus was tempted during His time on Earth, so He understands our struggle. Yet despite being tempted, He withstood every temptation and lived a sinless life. Because of His sinless life and his death on Calvary, He is able to forgive and cleanse us from our sins.

# A HUMBLE HEART

 Q3
 Who has God promised He will be especially close to?

 ▶
 □ Psalm 34:18

 □ Psalm 51:17; 69:32; 10:17; 147:3 □ Isaiah 61:1; 66:2; 57:15 □ Ezekiel 36:26, 31

True repentance involves admitting guilt, experiencing genuine remorse, and confessing your sins with a humble heart.

"The humble heart is quick to acknowledge the need for God, eager to confess sin, willing to kneel before heaven's mighty hand. God has a special place for the humble heart." (Max Lucado)

Once you have been through this process, you will experience the peace that God is waiting to offer you.

Q4	How do we confess our sin?
	□ Leviticus 5:5
	□ Leviticus 26:40; 6:4−7 □ Numbers 5:7 □ Joshua 7:19 □ 1 Corinthians 11:28

It is right to apologise to the individual you have wronged. In other cases, you may have committed a sin that has caused hurt to a group of people. In this case, seeking forgiveness may require something more public in order to right the wrong.

Confession should be freely made; it is your choice to confess.

Confession is not something that is to be forced or taken lightly. By confessing your sins, you demonstrate that you are aware of the gravity and weight of our actions.

Your confession should also be specific. This can be difficult. It isn't intended to be a blanket apology for all of your sins. Each sin has particular challenges and struggles. Part of acknowledging your sins and repenting is identifying that you know how you have sinned and are aware of exactly what wrong has been done. Be clear about the nature of the particular sin you are confessing.

"Love the sinner, hate the sin? How about: Love the sinner, hate your own sin! I don't have time to hate your sin. There are too many of you! Hating my sin is a full time hobby. How about you hate your sin and I will hate my sin and let's just love each other!" *Mark Lowry* 

The Israelites, a group of people God had chosen as His people, often turned away from Him. Although God had led the Israelites out of slavery by many miracles, they frequently doubted and lost faith in Him. Dissatisfied, they looked to the example of the other nations and asked for a king to lead them. In so doing, they rejected God as their leader. The Israelites turned their back on the all-powerful God of the universe and asked to be governed like the nations around them.

God gave the Israelites a king, but many troubles followed. Before they could find peace with God, they admitted to Samuel exactly what they had done.



By genuine confession, you are expressing to God your desire to change and asking for His help to turn away from doing wrong.

In Isaiah 1:16, 17, God tells us:

"Wash and make yourselves clean.

Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong.

Learn to do right; seek justice.

Defend the oppressed.

Take up the cause of the fatherless;

plead the case of the widow."

There is a work we plainly need to do: wash ourselves clean, put away evil and learn to do what is right, relieve the oppressed and make restitution for the wrongs we have committed. These actions truly demonstrate we are sorry for our sin and seeking forgiveness for the wrongs we have committed.

### **BLAME**

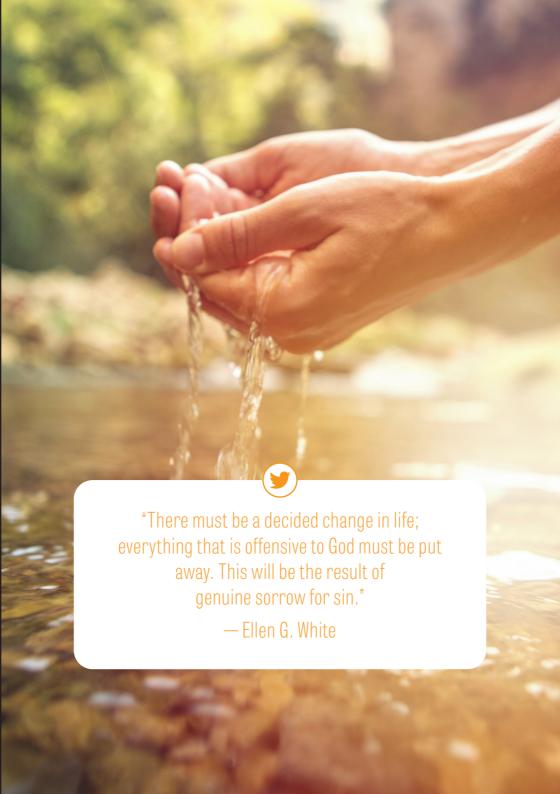
Deflecting blame or making excuses for our behaviour is not the way to confess our sin. When Adam and Eve experienced sin for the first time, they quickly learned to blame others for their sin and guilt, refusing to accept the consequences of their actions and genuinely confess their sin.

Who did Adam and Eve blame for their actions?

Genesis 3:12, 13

James 1:13 © Exodus 32:21-24 © 1 Samuel 15:20-22
Proverbs 28:13

After Adam and Eve had sinned, they experienced shame and guilt which separated them from God. They had broken the only rule that God had given to them: Do not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Their first reaction was to find an excuse in order to avoid the consequences of their action. In fact, they didn't want to even face God, so they hid from Him. When God questioned them about what they had done, instead of expressing regret or remorse, they quickly pointed the finger at someone else, blaming that person for their actions rather than recognising that they were accountable for their choices.





Similarly, the selfishness in our hearts leads us to sin and our pride can prevent us from humbly acknowledging our wrong, blinding us to our character faults.

Unless we are open with Jesus and ask the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sin, we will be unable to see them clearly. Even when we admit our sins, often we seek to avoid responsibility for them excusing ourselves or offer an explanation to justify our actions.

"The examples in God's Word of genuine repentance and humiliation reveal a spirit of confession in which there is no excuse for sin or attempt at self-justification." Ellen G. White

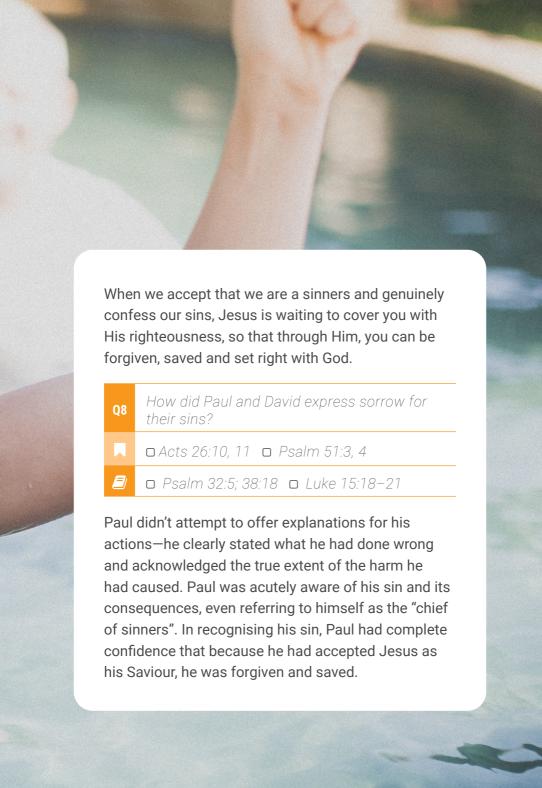
Real repentance recognises that excuses don't matter or change the simple truth that we are sinners. We have sinned, and these sins have consequences.

<b>Q7</b>	Why is it important that we acknowledge that we are sinners?
N	□ Luke 18:13
	□ Luke 5:8 □ Ezra 9:6 □ Psalm 40:12 □ Isaiah 6:5 □ Ezekiel 16:63

God sees us as we are; no amount of excuses can hide our true natures from Him. All that happens when we try that is we end up blinding ourselves to the truth.

True confession admits we have sinned, acknowledges our guilt, and makes no effort to hide from it. It asks us to recognise the truth: that we are sinners in need of a Saviour





Q9	What does God promise will happen when we confess our sins?
N	□ 1 John 1:9
	□ Proverbs 28:13 □ Acts 3:19 □ Hebrews 7:25 □ Jeremiah 33:8 □ Nehemiah 9:17 □ 2 Chronicles 7:14 □ Isaiah 43:25, 26: 1:18

Jesus paid an incredible price when He died on the cross for our sins so that we had the opportunity to be saved. Jesus doesn't want us to be in pain or to suffer. When we open our hearts to God and humble ourselves, letting go of our selfishness and pride to freely accept His incredible love and freedom, we experience what it is like to walk with Jesus.



"A humble person, broken-hearted by true repentance, will know the love of God. He will understand the cost of Calvary. The sinner who is really sorry will confess. He will come to God as freely as a son comes to a loving father."

— Reference?



# REFLECTION

Thank you, God, for giving me the gift of repentance. I want to confess my sins and live my life in a way that honours you.

YES UNDECIDED

I will confess my sins to God, and where possible, to the person or people I have hurt.

YES UNDECIDED

I recognise how far I fall short of leading a perfect life, and I ask for God's help to make things right and do better in the future.

YES UNDECIDED

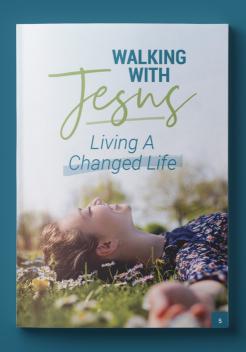
I believe that because of Jesus' perfect and sinless life and His sacrifice on the cross, if I accept His gift of salvation I can be cleansed of my sins.

YES UNDECIDED

I believe that when I repent and confess my sins, God will forgive me. I want to remain close to God, and I ask Him to guide my life as I follow His will for me.

YES UNDECIDED





# CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY IN PART 5:

# LIVING A CHANGED LIFE

Sin has separated us from God, but because of Jesus' gift of salvation, our connection with God is restored. The freewill God has given to each of us means that it is your choice to accept the forgiveness found in Jesus, and decide to live your life in a way that honours God.



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