

Admitting the Exact Nature of My Wrongs

STEP 5 – We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

All of us struggle with our conscience, trying to make peace within our own heart. We may deny what we have done, find excuses or try to squirm out from beneath the full weight of our conduct. We may work hard to be “good,” trying to counteract our wrongs. In order to truly put the past to rest, we must simply stop rationalizing our past behaviours, admit the error of our ways, acknowledge the hurt we’ve caused, and turn around to a new way of life – the life of right believing and right behaviours that God shows us. God’s word says: **“in their hearts they know right from wrong. They demonstrate that God’s law is written within them, for their own consciences either accuse them or tell them they are doing what is right” (Romans 2:14, 15).**

The confessing part of Step Five is our admission that wrong is wrong. It’s time to agree with God and our own conscience about the exact nature of our wrongs. We’re like people who have been accused of crimes which they actually committed. We may have spent years constructing alibis, coming up with excuses, and trying to plea bargain. It’s time to come clean and admit what we know deep down inside to be true: “I’m guilty as charged.” There is no real freedom without confession and repentance.

It is human nature to want to cover our shameful deeds and to hide from God, but we can’t. God sees the damage of sinful choices and hates the destructive impact on people He deeply loves. When we finally face the reality of our sinning, it is helpful to recall God’s kind and merciful nature. No sin is too great to be forgiven. Jesus has paid the price for our forgiveness with his death on the cross. We do not have to earn forgiveness but we do have to acknowledge our need for it and receive it. The Bible tells us that **“if we confess our sins to Him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from every wrong” (1 John 1:9).**

What a relief it is to finally give up the weight of our lies and excuses. When we do repent by choosing to live in truth, we will find the internal peace that we lost so long ago. God longs to flood us with forgiveness. He says: **“I – yes, I alone – am the one who blots out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again” (Isaiah 43:25).** We may feel that we have done such horrible things or hurt people so badly that there is no way our sins could be blotted out entirely. The Bible assures us that God **“does not deal with us as we deserve” (Psalm 103:19).** God promises us: **“No matter how deep the stain**

of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you as white as wool” (Isaiah 1:8). Part of the recovery process is accepting complete forgiveness from God. We may keep track of all our failures but in God’s eyes we are clean as we admit the error of our ways, acknowledge our need of saving and forgiving, and surrender our lives to the healing work of Jesus.

The purpose of confessing the exact nature of our wrongs is neither to condemn us nor in any way to tone down the ugliness. Confessing admits how awful our actions were. Only in that ugly truth do we realize the deep love of God for us that required the horror of Jesus’ death on the cross. If we don’t come out of a Step 5 experience with overwhelming gratitude for God’s forgiveness and a deep desire to turn towards the new way of life God is showing, then we’ve missed something. We either haven’t believed how bad our actions really were or how deep God’s love truly is. We continue living in the deadly arrogance that we know better than God. We still don’t realize “the exact nature of our wrongs.”

Step 5, done with integrity, always gives us a new desire and commitment to know and walk with God, whatever the cost to our thinking and our behaving. We will begin living with grateful appreciation rather than bitter entitlement. Anything else, and our Step 5 has been more about moaning or bragging than about confessing the exact nature of our wrongs. ***This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: “Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength. But you would have none of it. (Isaiah 30:15)*** Without sincere effort to live according to God’s plan, rooted in love for His great kindness, our actions say we don’t really want change. We only want a new kind of pain killer. ***“I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. (Ezekiel 18:30-31)***

Life – God is offering it to us today. Do we want it? Will we confess the exact nature of our wrongs? Will we repent by turning away from our own understandings and behaving and enter into the fullness of life we’ve been looking for that comes from Jesus who says, **“I am the way, the truth and the life.”**

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Are we just confessing, or are we repenting and entering into the amazing life with God in recovery that He is offering?