

What Do We Do When We Sin?



As followers of Christ, what do we do when we sin? The Bible directs us to confess and repent. To confess is to acknowledge our sin and agree with God’s perspective on our sin. Confession is first to God: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

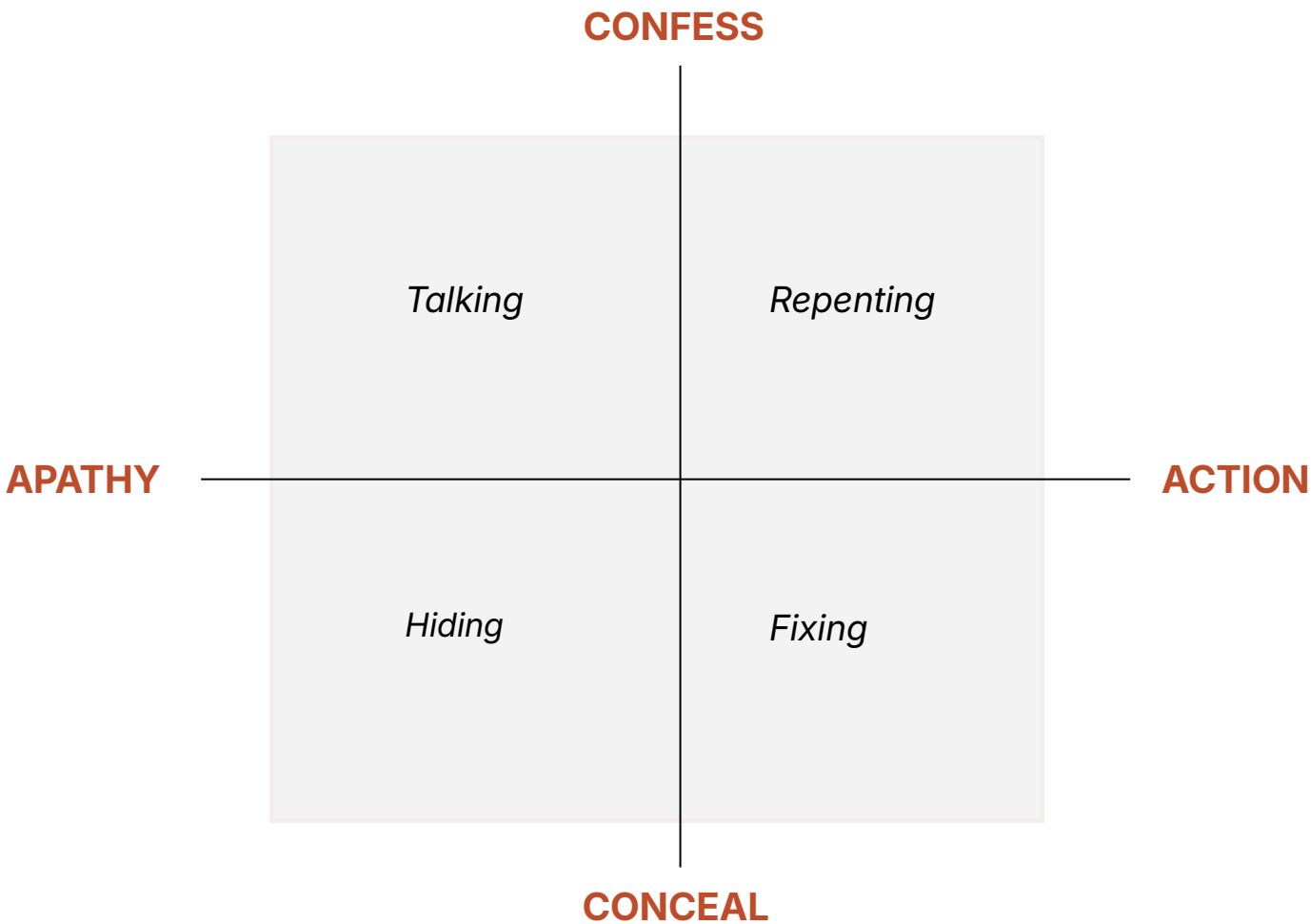
God’s Word also tells us to confess to other believers: **“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.”** James 5:16

Confession is not all we are to do when we sin, however. We must also repent.

When Jesus initiated his public ministry, he proclaimed in Mark 1:15, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” In the Bible, to repent includes both a change of mind and a turning away from sin. Consequently, every time we sin, we have two decisions to make:

- 1. Are we going to confess our sin, or are we going to try to conceal it?
- 2. Are we going to take action against our sin, or are we going to be apathetic toward it?

Here’s what it looks like visually:



CONCEAL + APATHY = hiding

At best, the *hider* is oblivious to their sin. At worst, they are intentionally hiding it. Here's the truth: if we stay in this place, we will never become more like Jesus. We will not change, and we will not grow.

CONCEAL + ACTION = fixing

The *fixer* carries a lot of guilt, but they're terrified of anyone seeing the "real" them. So, they stay in the dark. They try to fix their life and their faith on their own—striving to become a "better Christian" through sheer willpower, without the help and support of others. But here's the reality: secrets keep us sick. While discernment in who you share with is necessary, a helpful rule of thumb remains: you don't have to tell everybody everything, but you must tell somebody something.

CONFESSION + APATHY = talking

The *talker* openly confesses, but they haven't learned how to change. They trade true repentance for the "Christian game," mourning their sin one day and repeating it soon after. Pharaoh and King Saul proved that you can say the right words to God and still have a hardened heart. Confession without action is just a performance. Let's make sure our stories are defined by lives transformed, not just sins admitted.

CONFESSION + ACTION = repenting

Finally, we find the *repenter*. Unlike the talker, repenters don't just confess their sin—they confront it. They don't just talk; they take action. For them, repentance isn't a destination they occasionally visit; it's the house they live in. Daily and weekly, they lay bare their thoughts, attitudes and actions—taking intentional steps to walk closer to Christ their King. Repentance isn't a one-time event like baptism; it's a lifelong rhythm. In Mark 1:15, Jesus uses a verb tense that literally means 'keep on repenting.' In other words, repentance isn't just how we start the Christian life—it is the Christian life."

FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

In 1 and 2 Samuel, we see that the Lord anoints David to be king and abundantly blesses David as he rules over God's people. But then David grievously sins, and the Lord sends the prophet Nathan to confront David about his sin.

Read 2 Samuel 11:1–12:25 and utilize the questions below for reflection and discussion.

1. In 2 Samuel 11, what does David do after he sins? Which quadrant best describes his initial response to his sin?
2. Why is Nathan's interaction with David so crucial?
3. After being confronted by Nathan, how does David change? Which quadrant would you now place David in?
4. Summarize what you learn from this passage about responding to sin.

Guidelines for Confession

Fast: Do not wait months until the event feels like a distant memory. Instead, make confession a daily or weekly habit. Bringing things into the light quickly prevents sin from taking deep root.

Full: Tell the whole story, not just the parts that are easiest to share or that make you look "less bad." True freedom only comes when you stop managing your reputation and start being fully known.

First: Prioritize your "first-string" sins. Start with the things that are heaviest on your heart or the patterns that are most destructive. Don't hide the big things behind a list of small, "respectable" sins.

Faith: Keep it Jesus-focused. Remind yourself of Jesus' finished work on the cross. "I am guilty, but grace covers me. I am a mess, but I am deeply loved by God."

Friend: Choose the right listener. Confession and repentance among faithful friends helps us bear one another's burdens and helps bring consistency and accountability to our Christian walk. Faithful friends have a mutual agreement to this lifestyle and are mature enough to talk about sin seriously.

- **Use Wisdom:** Exercise age-appropriate caution when confessing to a believer much younger than you or in a very different life season.
- **The LARP Method:** A good friend in this process will Listen, Ask questions, Remind you of the Gospel, and Pray for you.