



A Well-Defined FAITH

[fāth] (noun)

Biblical words used in church...
Discover what they really mean.



Sunday
August 23, 2026

Philippians 2:11; James 5:16

Example Teaching Rhythm

Welcome and Connect: 10 Minutes

This helps people feel connected and more comfortable participating in the study and discussion.

Look Forward: 5-10 Minutes

Share any important church events, service opportunities, or upcoming group plans. Keep this brief but clear.

Look at Scripture: 25-35 Minutes

This is the main focus of Community Groups. Read the selected scripture together and guide the group through discussion questions and observations.

Prayer: 10 Minutes

Invite members to share prayer requests and praises, then pray together as a group. This is a time to support one another.

Explaining the H.E.A.R Method

The acronym **HEAR** stands for **Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond**. Each of these four steps aims to cultivate an atmosphere to hear God speak.

Highlight - After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, read the passage of scripture, and highlight each verse that speaks to you.

Explain - Explain what the text means. Ask questions like:

- Who wrote this, to whom, and why? What does this reveal about God? What do the key words actually mean? What did this call the original audience to, and what does that reveal for me?

By asking questions, with the help of God's Spirit, and by using helpful study resources, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse.

Apply - Application is the heart of the process. Everything you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, work to uncover the significance of these verses and the implications they have. Ask questions like:

- What does this passage reveal about God, yourself, or the world that you need to embrace or sit with? Does this passage challenge an attitude, assumption, or habit that needs to change? Is there something to do? Is there someone to love?

Respond - Your response to the passage may take on many forms. Ask: Is there something to pray? - Let the passage shape your prayer, not just inform it. Use the "Five Daily Prayer Prompts" to guide you in your response.

“Confession”

Agreeing with God as to what is good and bad, right and wrong, true and false

Introduction

Ask most people what confession means and they'll describe a courtroom. Someone did something. Under pressure, or guilt, or the weight of evidence, they admit it. The word carries the flavor of surrender – information finally extracted, whether by conscience or by circumstance.

That picture isn't wrong so much as it's aimed at the wrong target. It assumes confession is primarily about information moving from a hidden place to a known one. But *homologeō*, the word behind both of this week's passages, doesn't mean "to reveal." It means "to say the same word" – *homos*, same, plus *logos*, word. Confession isn't disclosure. It's agreement. Two people looking at the same thing and using the same language for it.

That distinction matters because information can move without agreement ever happening. A person can tell you exactly what they did and still be negotiating, in the telling, over what to call it. "I got carried away" moves information. "I sinned" agrees with a verdict. The first can be said with your arms crossed. The second can't.

Paul and James both use this word, and neither is talking about disclosure. Paul describes a confession that belongs to the whole created order – every tongue confessing Jesus Christ is Lord, whether that confession is offered in worship or forced out in judgment. James describes a confession that belongs to a room – one believer telling another the specific true name of a specific sin, so that prayer can follow it. Different scale, same verb. In both cases, something is already true. Confession is what happens when a person's mouth finally catches up to it.

Before we go further: think of the last time you admitted something. Did your words match God's verdict on it, or did you find a way to tell the truth in a shape that still let you keep some ground?

Discussion Questions + Illustration

Select a question or two below to open up discussion.

- What's a time you told someone exactly what happened, but chose your words so carefully that you never actually agreed it was wrong? What word did you avoid?
- If confession is agreement rather than disclosure, what changes about how you'd know whether you'd actually confessed?
- Philippians 2:11 says this confession is coming for everyone, willingly or not. Does that thought comfort you, or does it unsettle you?
- James pairs confession with prayer and healing, not with punishment. What does that pairing suggest he thinks confession is actually for?
- Is there a category of your own behavior you've quietly reclassified – not a sin anymore, just a "personality thing" or a "stress response" – so that you could stop needing to agree with what it actually is?

In April 1973, as the Watergate cover-up was unraveling, President Nixon addressed the nation about the resignations of his top aides. He used a phrase that later became a case study in political language: "mistakes were made." No subject. No agent. The sentence disclosed that something had gone wrong without a single person – least of all the man speaking – agreeing to have done it.

- That's confession's counterfeit in its purest form: total disclosure, zero agreement. Everyone learned what happened. No one said the same word about it that history would eventually say.

Highlight | Philippians 2:11; James 5:16

Trace *homologeō* through both passages and it's doing the same job at two different scales.

Philippians 2:11 closes a hymn describing Christ emptying Himself, taking a servant's form, obedient to death on a cross – after which God exalts Him with the name above every name. Paul then borrows Isaiah 45:23, where the confessing knee and tongue belong to YHWH alone, and hands it to Jesus without hedging. This isn't devotion. It's a fact being agreed with – so settled that Paul treats universal agreement as foregone, not hoped-for.

James 5:16 takes the same verb, intensified, and shrinks it to a room with real names in it: confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. Not to God privately – to one another, where someone besides God can hear it. And healing is tied to both acts together; confession alone doesn't produce it, nor does prayer alone.

What holds the two together isn't scale. It's the assumption underneath both: truth doesn't wait for agreement to exist. Christ's lordship didn't become true when confessed – confession is speech catching up to it. Sin doesn't become sin when named aloud – confession is just where it stops being managed in silence.

- Philippians frames this confession as inevitable, willed or not. What does that do to the idea that confession is fundamentally private and voluntary?
- Why "one another," rather than leaving confession strictly between a person and God?

Explain | Consider the Context

Philippians was written to believers in a Roman colony where "Caesar is lord" was a civic loyalty oath, recited in the emperor cult that structured public life. Confessing anything else as lord wasn't private preference – it was a visible, costly substitution, one confession displacing another. Paul's readers heard "every tongue confessing Jesus Christ is Lord" against tongues confessing Caesar at that very moment. The hymn is a claim about which confession will still be standing when every other one is forced to stop.

James writes to a scattered community where sin had become something prayed about alone rather than said aloud – private enough to feel handled, never surfaced where someone could respond. His instruction assumes what modern readers resist: a sin named only to God, in the safety of your own head, can still be a sin you haven't fully agreed with. Saying it to another person removes the last place the softer version survives unchallenged.

Both press the same point from opposite angles. Philippians shows what's true regardless of who refuses to say it. James shows what stays managed, not healed, when it's never said to anyone but yourself.

- What would this confession have cost a believer in Philippi, spoken aloud where "Caesar is Lord" was expected? Does your own confession cost you anything comparable?
- Why might a sin confessed only in private prayer stay softer than the same sin said aloud to another person?

Apply | Discuss as a Group

The trouble most people run into isn't refusing to confess. It's confessing something adjacent to the truth and calling it done.

"I've been distant" instead of "I've been unfaithful with my attention." "I have a temper" instead of "I sinned against my family last night." "That's just how I process stress" instead of "I lied to avoid a hard conversation." Every one of these statements is honest. None of them agrees with God's word for the thing. The information is accurate. The verdict is quietly declined.

This isn't usually deliberate deception. It's self-protection dressed as candor – the sense that if you're willing to say something true, you've done the harder work, even if the something you said carefully avoids the one word that would actually cost you standing. A person can sit in a small group and disclose real struggles for years without ever once agreeing that any of them were sin rather than circumstance.

James' insistence on "one another" closes a second exit from this same pattern: the private confession to God that stays private specifically because saying it to a person would make the agreement real in a way that saying it alone doesn't.

- What's a phrase you reach for that lets you admit something happened without agreeing what it was? What's the harder word underneath it?
- Is there something you've confessed to God in private specifically because confessing it to a person would cost you more?
- Where has "that's just who I am" quietly become a way of exempting something from confession rather than a way of being honest about yourself?

Respond | How should I live/pray?

Confession this week isn't a mood to work yourself into. It's a specific sentence, said to a specific person, using the word God already uses.

Start with what you already half-admitted in Apply – the softened version, the circumstantial version, the version that lets you keep some ground. The work isn't to feel worse about it. It's to say the accurate word out loud to someone who can then do what James actually asks for: pray with you, not simply hear you. A confession with no one praying alongside it stops at disclosure. James wanted both, because he wasn't after relief. He was after healing, and he names the two things – confessing, praying – as a pair that does something separately that neither one does alone.

There's also a second, quieter invitation buried underneath the first. Philippians says a confession is coming for every person eventually, whether it's offered freely or forced by the plain facts of how things turned out. The only real variable is timing – and whether it costs you anything. The believer who agrees with God now, before the evidence makes the agreement unavoidable, is practicing in miniature what everyone will eventually do at full scale. The confession is coming either way. The only question is whether you get there early enough for it to still be a gift rather than a verdict.

- What is the accurate word – not the softened one – for something you've been managing instead of confessing? Who is the person you need to say it to this week?
- If agreement with Christ's lordship is coming for everyone regardless of willingness, what would it look like to bring your confession into line with that now, rather than waiting until it's no longer a choice?

Response Tool: Five Daily Prayer Prompts

As you leave today, let these five questions carry the weight of your response into the week ahead – not as a checklist, but as an ongoing conversation with God. Introduce the five daily questions as a simple spiritual practice that can help us intentionally live out our faith in our workplaces, homes, families, and communities.

- God, where do you want me to go?
- God, who do you want me to see?
- God, what do you want me to say?
- God, what do you want me to pray?
- God, how do you want me to serve?

After this time of reflection, transition into a time of prayer requests. Allow time for members to share and, if appropriate, allow others in the class to pray for each other.

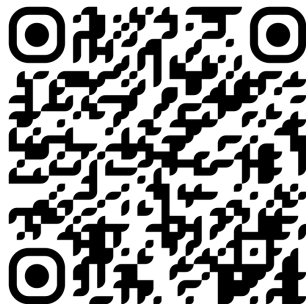
Additional Commentary

- On *homologeō* (ὁμολογέω) – "confess" (Phil 2:11): Built from *homos* (same) and *logos* (word) – to say the identical word as another party. The verb assumes an existing statement being agreed with, not new information being produced. Confession, in this root, is never original speech. It's repetition of a verdict already standing.
- On *exomologeō* (ἐξομολογέω) – "confess" (James 5:16): The intensified form of the same root, used in the Septuagint for public confession of sin at the temple (Leviticus 5:5; Nehemiah 9:2–3). James relocates a temple practice into the gathered church – confession said out loud, in company, rather than managed in the privacy of the worshiper's own head.
- On *kyrios* (κύριος) – "Lord" (Phil 2:11): Quoting Isaiah 45:23, where the bowed knee and confessing tongue belong exclusively to YHWH. Paul transfers this confession to Jesus with no qualifying language. The claim is about identity, not devotion – a fact to be agreed with, not a feeling to be expressed.
- On *pas glōssa* – "every tongue" (Phil 2:11): The universality is total and unqualified. Paul does not distinguish between willing and unwilling confessors here; the verse describes the fact of universal agreement, leaving open elsewhere in Scripture what that agreement will feel like depending on which side of it a person stands.
- On *iaomai* (ἰάομαι) – "healed" (James 5:16): Grammatically dependent on confessing and praying functioning together – the verse does not isolate either act as sufficient alone. The healing in view carries both physical and relational weight throughout James's letter, resisting a narrowly private, spiritual-only reading.
- On the imperial confession context behind Philippians: In Roman colonies like Philippi, "Caesar is Lord" functioned as a loyalty confession tied to the emperor cult, not a private opinion. Paul's readers would have heard the hymn's confession as a direct, costly substitution – one lordship publicly displacing another they were expected to affirm.

Community Group Resource Page

Visit our website to view our **leadership resources**.

From Community Group training and resources to Discipleship Group starter guides, we want to equip you to make disciples.



Additional Study

Watch/Listen

Bible Project - Philippians



See a collection of videos, classes, and articles that dive into [Philippians](#).

Bible Project - James



See a collection of videos, classes, and articles that dive into [James](#).

Overview

Enduring Word - Philippians 2



Text commentary, written materials, and audio/video recordings over [Philippians 2:11](#).

Got Questions - Confession



Biblical Q&A, articles, translations, audios, videos, apps, podcasts and more on [Confession](#).

Expand

Bible Reference - James 5:16



Explore chapter and verse commentaries to deepen your understanding of [James 5:16](#).

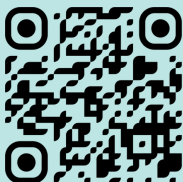
Bible Hub - James 5:16



Parallel translations, language tools, commentaries, and much more on [James 5:16](#).

Deepen

Logos Factbook - Confession



Logos Factbook shares information resources and articles about [Confession](#).

Blue Letter Bible - Philippians



Original texts, Translations, Cross-Refs, Commentaries, Dictionaries + more on [Philippians 2:11](#).

