

Spiritual Exercises for Confession (from *the Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun)

1. Imagine you are in a safe place, surrounded by the love of God. Ask God to help you see yourself as he sees you. Remember he sees you absolutely and with love. Using the Ten Commandments as a guide, journal your sins. When you have finished, go through each commandment one at a time, asking God to forgive you and help you to change. Then burn your list in a symbolic act of what it means to have God remove your sins from you.
2. Set aside some time for confession and self-examination. In the presence of God ask for light to pierce your defenses. Then ask yourself, *Who have I injured recently through thoughtlessness, neglect, anger and so on?* As the Holy Spirit brings people to mind, confess your feelings about these people to God. Ask God to forgive you and if need be to give you grace to forgive them. Write an apology, make a phone call or confess out loud in an attempt to put the relationship back on track.
3. Make a life confession - alone or to a trusted friend or confessor. Dividing your life into seven-year segments, reflect on the sins particular to each segment. Confess your sins aloud. Receive the freedom that comes in knowing you stand completely in the clear before a holy God.
4. Ask some of your family and close friends to help you see your blind spots. Ask questions like, What do I do that hurts you? How could I better love you? What is it like to be with me? Do I show interest in others or talk mostly about myself? Let their answers guide you in a time of confession.
5. Enter into a covenant group or an accountability relationship where you cannot hide. Tell the truth about who you are and ask your parents to pray for you and help you change.
6. Imagine the kind of person you would like to become in your old age. Then look at your life and assess whether or not the way you live now is preparing you to become that person. Confess where you need to change. Ask God and the community of faith for help.
7. Turn to Psalm 32 or Psalm 51. Use the psalm as a way of bringing your own sins before God. How does God meet you in these confessions of David?

8. How in touch do you feel with your own sin? If you feel out of touch with your sin, honestly consider where some of the following sins show up in your life: envy, lust, greed, gluttony, deceit, lying, exaggerating, envy, anger, pretense, avoidance of responsibility. What do you see about yourself? How do you want to talk to God about these things? Confess where you have fallen short of God's expectations and receive his forgiveness.
9. Begin to notice your strong emotions. When do you feel yourself getting hot, defensive, angry, withdrawn? What is motivating your emotion? What behavior stems from your emotion? As you attend to this internal world, ask God to make you alert to what triggers strong emotional reactions. Confess any sin relating to these reactions. Practice noticing your internal world, and begin to develop a habit of immediate confession.
10. If you are interested in identifying your besetting sin or compulsion, read a book on the Enneagram such as *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective* by Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert.