

A stone staircase with metal railings leading up through a dense forest. The path is flanked by lush green foliage and trees, creating a sense of a journey through nature. The lighting is soft and dappled, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

The Way of Life

Vital Practices for Your Spiritual Journey



Repentance is the daily and hourly duty of a man who believes in Christ; and as we walk by faith from the narrow gate to the celestial city, so our right-hand companion all the journey through must be repentance.

—Charles Spurgeon

Psalm 38

**¹ Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your wrath.**

**² Your arrows have pierced me,
and your hand has come down on me.**

**³ Because of your wrath there is no health in my body;
there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin.**

**⁴ My guilt has overwhelmed me
like a burden too heavy to bear.**

Psalm 38

**⁵ My wounds fester and are loathsome
because of my sinful folly.**

**⁶ I am bowed down and brought very low;
all day long I go about mourning.**

**⁷ My back is filled with searing pain;
there is no health in my body.**

**⁸ I am feeble and utterly crushed;
I groan in anguish of heart.**

Psalm 38

**⁹ All my longings lie open before you, Lord;
my sighing is not hidden from you.**

**¹⁰ My heart pounds, my strength fails me;
even the light has gone from my eyes.**

**¹¹ My friends and companions avoid me because of my wounds;
my neighbors stay far away.**

**¹² Those who want to kill me set their traps,
those who would harm me talk of my ruin;
all day long they scheme and lie.**

Psalm 38

**¹³ I am like the deaf, who cannot hear,
like the mute, who cannot speak;**

**¹⁴ I have become like one who does not hear,
whose mouth can offer no reply.**

**¹⁵ Lord, I wait for you;
you will answer, Lord my God.**

**¹⁶ For I said, “Do not let them gloat
or exalt themselves over me when my feet slip.”**

Psalm 38

**¹⁷ For I am about to fall,
and my pain is ever with me.**

**¹⁸ I confess my iniquity;
I am troubled by my sin.**

**¹⁹ Many have become my enemies without cause;
those who hate me without reason are numerous.**

**²⁰ Those who repay my good with evil
lodge accusations against me,
though I seek only to do what is good.**

Psalm 38

**²¹ Lord, do not forsake me;
do not be far from me, my God.**

**²² Come quickly to help me,
my Lord and my Savior.**

Outline

- 1. The problem of sin**
- 2. The practice of confession**
- 3. The promise of restoration**



1. The problem of sin

Psalm 38:1-12

1. The problem of sin

The complexity of sin

- **Sin is presented in Scripture as a complex problem that affects all aspects of our humanity.**

1. The problem of sin

The complexity of sin

- **Sin is presented in Scripture as a complex problem that affects all aspects of our humanity.**
- **There are many layers to sin: actions, words, thoughts, desires, habits, vices, idolatries, the “false self” and more.**

1. The problem of sin

The symptoms of sin

- **The symptoms of sin are varied, including spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions.**



Symptoms

Thoughts: all-or-nothing thinking, confusion, delusions, inattentiveness, indecision, judgment of self or others, memory problems, obsessiveness, self-contempt, self-doubt, suicidal ideation, trouble concentrating or orienting in time

Emotions: anger, desperation, distrust, emptiness, fear, guilt, hopelessness, irritation, listlessness, loneliness, numbness, overwhelm, panic, rage, resentment, shame, sadness

Relational energy: angry outbursts, avoiding particular places, avoiding people to preserve energy, constant checking up on others, constant scanning, relying on others to meet your needs

Body: aches, blurred vision, chronic pain, disconnection, exhaustion, headaches, heartburn, hypervigilance, irritable bowel syndrome, nausea, out-of-body feelings, racing heart, sleeplessness

Behavior: addictive behaviors, busyness without boundaries, job losses, lack of self-care, not getting out of bed, overeating or overdrinking, self-harm

Adapted from Chuck DeGroat,
Healing What's Within, p. 57

1. The problem of sin

The heart of sin

- **The deepest and worst feature of sin is how it offends God and disrupts our relationship with him.**

Psalm 51:4

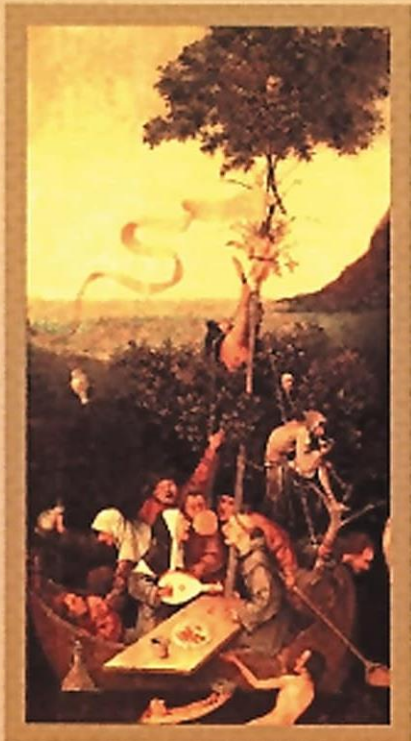
**Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.**

CORNELIUS PLANTINGA, JR.

NOT

the Way
It's
Supposed
to Be

A Breviary of Sin



All sin has first and finally a Godward force... Sin is any act - any thought, desire, emotion, word, or deed - or its particular absence, that displeases God and deserves blame. Let us add that the disposition to commit sins also displeases God and deserves blame, and let us therefore use the word sin to refer to such instances of both act and disposition. Sin is a culpable and personal affront to a personal God.

—Cornelius Plantinga

1. The problem of sin

The consequence of sin

¹ Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your wrath.

² Your arrows have pierced me,
and your hand has come down on me.

³ Because of your wrath there is no health in my body;
there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin.

—Psalm 38:1-3

A photograph of a stone staircase with metal railings, leading up through a dense forest. The stairs are made of large, rectangular stones and are flanked by dark metal railings. The forest is lush with green foliage, and the path leads towards a bright opening in the trees at the top of the stairs.

2. The practice of confession

Psalm 38:13-18

2. The practice of confession

A definition of confession:

Confession is the verbal acknowledgement to God and oneself (and possibly others) of one's personal sins and sinfulness.

—Eric Johnson, *God and Soul Care*

2. The practice of confession

The ingredients of confession:

- **Confrontation**

M. ROBERT
MULHOLLAND JR.

Author of The Deeper Journey



INVITATION
TO A JOURNEY

*A Road Map for
Spiritual Formation*

EXPANDED BY

RUTH HALEY BARTON

If indeed the work of God's formation in us is the process of forming us in the image of Christ, obviously it's going to take place at the points where we are not yet formed in that image. This means that one of the first dynamics of holistic spiritual formation will be confrontation. Through some channel—the Scripture, worship, a word of proclamation, the agency of a brother or sister in Christ, even the agency of an unbeliever—the Spirit of God may probe some area in which we are not formed in the image of Christ.

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That probing will probably always be confrontational, and it will always be a challenge and a call to us in our brokenness to come out of the brokenness into wholeness in Christ. But it will also be a costly call, because that brokenness is who we are.

—M. Robert Mulholland Jr.

THE AUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY

The Man Called
CASH

THE LIFE, LOVE, AND FAITH OF AN AMERICAN LEGEND

STEVE TURNER

FOREWORD BY KRIS KRISTOFFERSON

2. The practice of confession

The ingredients of confession:

- **Confrontation**
- **Evaluation**

Psalm 38:5, 13-14

⁵ My wounds fester and are loathsome
because of my sinful folly...

¹³ I am like the deaf, who cannot hear,
like the mute, who cannot speak;

¹⁴ I have become like one who does not hear,
whose mouth can offer no reply.

2. The practice of confession

The ingredients of confession:

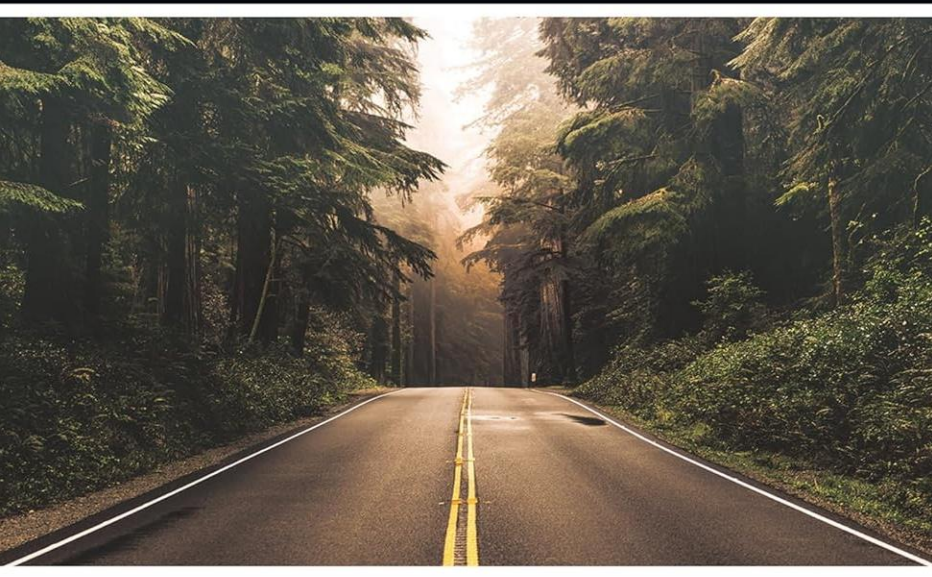
- **Confrontation**
- **Evaluation**
- **Acknowledgment**

Psalm 38:18

**¹⁸ I confess my iniquity;
I am troubled by my sin.**

ERIC L. JOHNSON

Author of *Foundations for Soul Care*



God & Soul Care

THE THERAPEUTIC RESOURCES

— of —

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Christian confession is a “free, soul-opening acknowledgement” of one’s sin in the light of the gospel of Christ and typically includes taking responsibility for one’s sinful action or character, without qualification or excuse, so that the “heart is made free.” Confession also undermines hiding, defensiveness, and dissociation, and someday research on the confession of sin will document its therapeutic benefits.

—Eric Johnson

(quotations from John Owen).

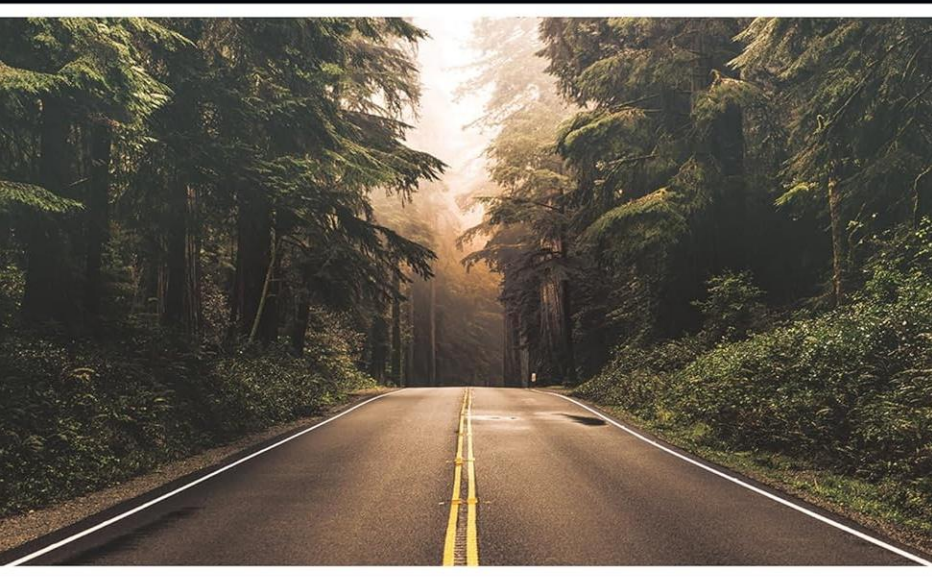
2. The practice of confession

The ingredients of confession:

- **Confrontation**
- **Evaluation**
- **Acknowledgment**
- **Repentance**

ERIC L. JOHNSON

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God & Soul Care

THE THERAPEUTIC RESOURCES

— of —

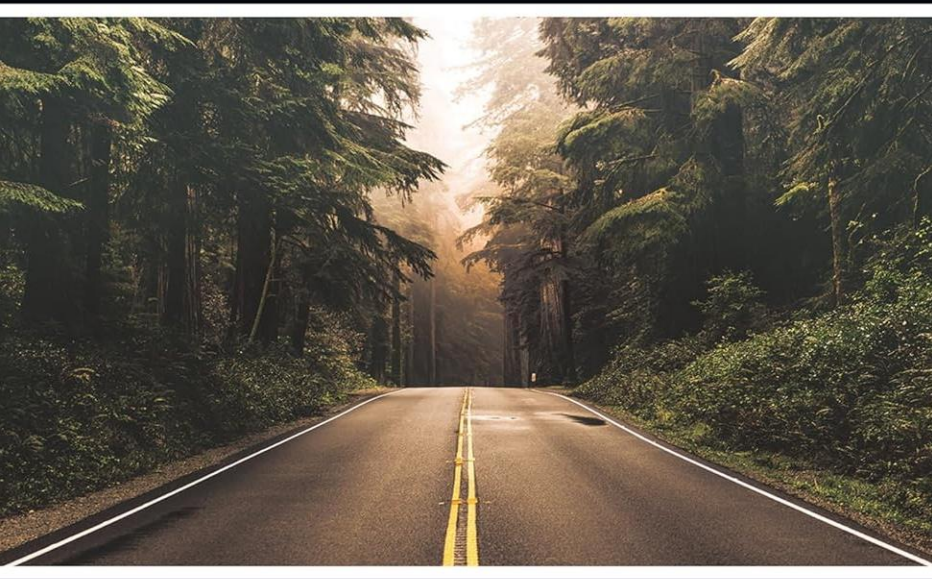
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Johnson on two levels of repentance:

- (1) **Primary (direct) repentance = active, aggressive disavowal of sin → like fleeing from the dragon**
- (2) **Secondary (indirect) repentance = flows from a deeper appropriation of God's love → like entering the dragon's lair with Christ in order to slay it**

ERIC L. JOHNSON

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God & Soul Care

THE THERAPEUTIC RESOURCES

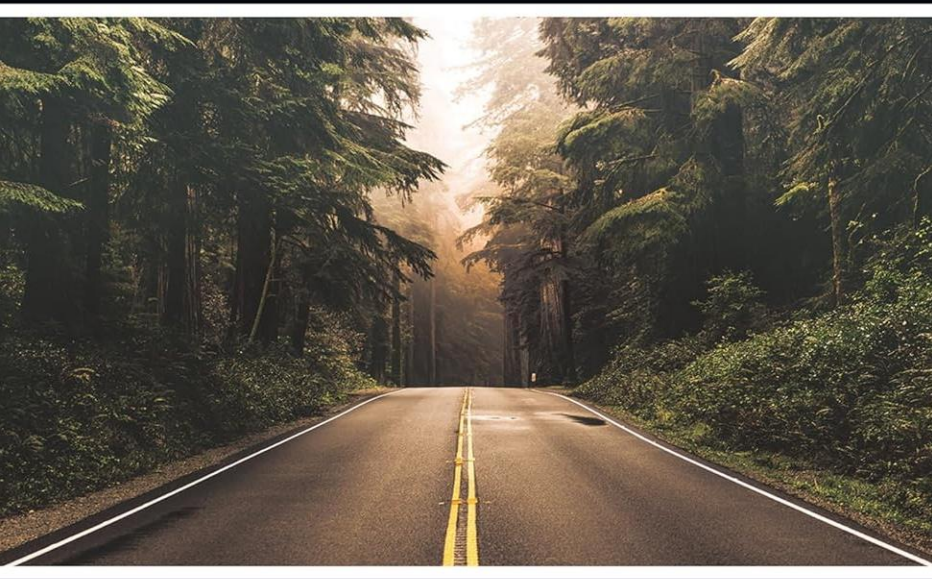
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THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Secondary repentance “utilizes a more subtle and indirect class of repentance activities - active receptivity, detachment, relinquishment, resignation, surrender, yielding - entailing more advanced inwardness skills, usually learned in meditative prayer, and in the experiential knowledge that God in Christ is for me, no matter what (Rom 8:31). But in order to actually kill the dragon one has to get very close to it!

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Author of *Foundations for Soul Care*



God & Soul Care

THE THERAPEUTIC RESOURCES

— of —

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

So secondary repentance does not just cut off or repress the sinful emotion or desire but goes after it and aims to do it harm, using Scripture meditation, guided imagery (e.g. to actually nail it experientially to the cross), or contemplation on God's love or the harm [sin] has caused. The key to secondary repentance is that one feel the death of sin by the change in one's emotion state."

—Eric L. Johnson

2. The practice of confession

The ingredients of confession:

- **Confrontation**
- **Evaluation**
- **Acknowledgement**
- **Repentance**
- **Renewal**

A stone staircase with metal railings leading up through a dense forest. The path is flanked by lush green trees and foliage, creating a sense of a journey or ascent. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the texture of the stone steps and the vibrant green of the surrounding vegetation.

3. The promise of restoration

Psalm 38:15, 21-22

Psalm 38:15, 21-22

**¹⁵ Lord, I wait for you;
you will answer, Lord my God . . .**

**²¹ Lord, do not forsake me;
do not be far from me, my God.**

**²² Come quickly to help me,
my Lord and my Savior.**

3. The promise of restoration

Wait on the God of promise

¹⁵ Lord, I wait for you;
you will answer, Lord my God.

3. The promise of restoration

Trust in the promises of God

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness . . . ^{2:1} My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

—1 John 1:9, 2:1-2



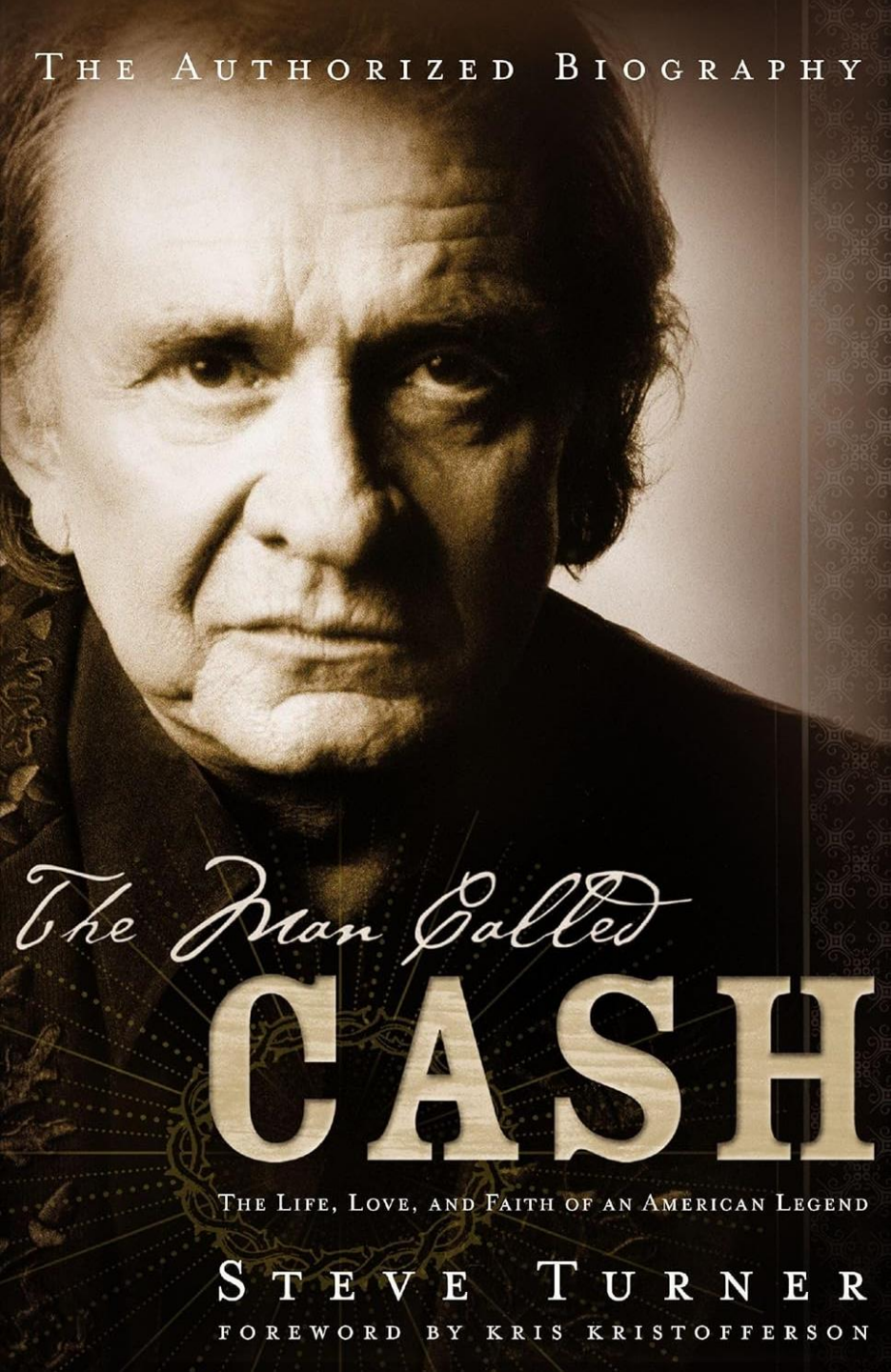
I tell you, sinner, any repentance that keeps you from believing in Christ is a repentant that needs to be repented of; any repentance that makes you think Christ will not save you, goes beyond and against the truth, and the sooner you are rid of it the better.



This is how true Christians live: they repent as bitterly for sin as if they knew they should be damned for it; but they rejoice as much in Christ as if sin were nothing at all. Oh how blessed it is to know where these two lines meet, the stripping of repentance and the clothing of faith!”

—Charles Spurgeon

THE AUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY



The Man Called
CASH

THE LIFE, LOVE, AND FAITH OF AN AMERICAN LEGEND

STEVE TURNER

FOREWORD BY KRIS KRISTOFFERSON

*From the hands it came down
From the side it came down
From the feet it came down
And ran to the ground
Between heaven and hell
A teardrop fell In the deep crimson dew
The tree of life grew*

*And the blood gave life
To the branches of the tree
And the blood was the price
That set the captives free
And the numbers that came
Through the fire and the flood
Clung to the tree
And were redeemed by the blood*

A stone staircase with metal railings leading up through a dense forest. The path is flanked by lush green foliage and trees, creating a sense of a journey through nature. The lighting is soft and dappled, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

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