

THE MEANS OF GRACE

REVIEW OF THE MEANS OF GRACE

STORY

St. Augustine, one of the most brilliant men of the Early Christian Church, wrote many documents that have influenced Christians for centuries.

But he struggled with an inner war over his conflicting desire for earthly pleasures and his longing for God's peace in Christ. "I was afraid that You, God, would take me at my word and deliver me, and I wasn't ready to let go of a lot of things," he wrote.

Confessions, his most popular book, is a diary of his soul's journey from sinful living—when he fathered a child outside of marriage—to God's grace and redemption, which led him to follow the Spirit and be drawn to Christ.

On Easter Sunday AD 387, St. Augustine was baptized by St. Ambrose. The ceremony was attended by his mother, Monica, who had prayed faithfully for his conversion. He was thirty-two. He later dedicated himself to the ministry, serving thirty-five years as a bishop in North Africa. His prayer sums up his life in Christ: "For Thyself Thou has made us, and restless our hearts until in Thee they find their ease."

Discuss one-on-one or in small groups the following questions.

1. If you were to write some of your own confessions, what would you say? *Answers will vary, so affirm responses from the class.*
2. How does confession help us? *We need to see our sin and admit it before we can truly see our need for a Savior.*
3. Augustine questioned whether God could forgive and forget all his sins. What is God's answer in Psalm 103:12? *God in Christ forgives all sin.*