



## Sarah Nixon

*Bachelor of Arts, Youth Ministry, 2009, Columbia International University*  
*Master of Arts, Bible Teaching, 2010, Columbia International University*  
*Middle School Bible Teacher, Calvary Christian School*  
*Columbus, GA*

**Today I was handed an opportunity I didn't deserve.** The high school science teacher, who led chapel at our school, talked about honesty and secret sins and had five of the cheerleaders share some of their struggles.

**And then, as God would have it, the DVD I was going to show my eighth graders wouldn't load and I was getting frustrated.**

What happened next was only an act of His grace.

I prayed and then asked all the students to think of that sin they had thought of during chapel. Being a big sinner myself, I know what conviction feels like. So I talked to them about the fear of being found out, what it feels like to know you **can't conquer that one sin. I talked about how sin still brings death, sin still ruins things,** and sin ultimately is rebellion against God.

Then they read 1 John 1:5-10. After they read it once, I told them to read it again and again. After a few minutes, I read it out loud.

I then wrote some of my cherished sins on the board.

Pride  
Self-hatred  
Lack of integrity  
Self-righteousness

**"I could fill up this board," I said, "and not with big letters either – little tiny ones."**

I then challenged them to be honest about their sin – to step into the light like they had been asked to do in chapel. I opened the board to them, and told them that if they felt led, they could come write theirs.

I spoke the words of Hebrews – **"Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart."**

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And I leaned on my desk and looked at my Bible as student after student, many with tears streaming down their faces, came up and wrote their sins.

Lying  
 Cheating  
 I am afraid that no one will love me  
 Hypocrisy  
 Cutting  
 Self-Image  
 Disrespect

**I pretend things are alright when I know they're not**

Gossip  
 Hatred  
 I feel ugly  
 Suicidal  
 I say mean things  
 I hurt others

And one by one their sins filled the board – as my eyes filled with tears. I cried with them, and they all sat in silence. *I watched as one of the sweetest girls got up, her whole body shaking. It was clear she was fighting for this – fighting to be honest – fighting to finally face her sin.*

*She came to the board, and standing all alone in front of 20 other eighth graders, she wrote one word on the board with a slight sob.*

Lust

*And then she turned around, went back to her seat, and buried her head in her arms, crying.*

**I looked at them and asked them all to look at the board, to see their sins. I told them that even if they hadn't written their sins, they probably were up there.**

Then I read.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

As I read, I erased. I then wrote in big bold letters Colossians 3:12 – holy and dearly loved. I quoted Micah 7:18-19:

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Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

And I looked these students in their eyes and I told them that in spite of their sin, because He had taken it all away, Christ was not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

As I cried and cried and cried, I looked through my tears and said this beautiful truth – You are not your sin. And they, some of them for the first time, heard grace. They wept for their sin and wept because of mercy.

As I told them, the great beauty of Christianity is not that you have to have your act together – **but that it's OK that you don't.** That seeing our sin causes us to see Jesus all the more clearly, and that His love is tremendous.

Oh, how my heart longs for this truth to stick with them – that even as the emotions fade, the enormity of the gospel would begin to be planted in their hearts.

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