



## Carrying Guilt?

Guilt—it's a heavy burden to carry. Frequently it is buried behind a pleasant face or a seemingly successful life. Sometimes it continues to collect until it is unbearable.

1. List some of the ways people try to deal with guilt and the effect it has on their lives.

[Watch scene: The Denial. Watch how Peter's courage and commitment crumble.]

- *What struck home most as you watched?*
  - *What questions emerge for you (to be considered later)?*
2. Recall Peter's former boasts, "*I will never disown you ... I will die for you.*" Compare it with his cursing and swearing that he doesn't even know this Jesus. What happened? Why was there such a change? What would you have done?

## Facing the Root Cause

Peter prepared himself for a battle, only to discover that it was a battle in the spiritual realm...a battle that showed up inside of him. Do you see it in yourself too? "*The spirit is willing*" ... until temptation or fear strikes ... then "*the flesh is weak.*" Even the great King David, a deeply spiritual and respected leader, fell morally. He committed adultery which led to a murder and other attempts to cover up his sin (2 Samuel 11-12). Sin separates us ... poisons our relationship with each other ... and with God. Yet we are quick to minimize our sin by blaming others. We try to blame past or present situations in our lives or the culture around us. Yet the Scriptures reveal the underlying problem this lies deeper than that. Jeremiah says, "*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure*" (Jeremiah 17:9). Jesus says, "*out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery ...*" (Matthew 15:19). There lies the real curse. Even with well-established laws or standards of morality; no society or organization has eliminated deep-seated evil lurking in the heart.

3. Identify where this shows to be true in our world ... in you.

Peter recognized the potential consequences of his actions the night when he denied even knowing Jesus. He was just thinking of himself and surviving the dangers. He betrayed his trust...broke his bold promises. He couldn't take it back. Was it too late to show Jesus he loved him? Jesus was dragged away without his protection, accused without his defense, put to death without his comfort.


4. Think of examples of sins people can't take back which have ripple effects on their lives or others.


## Fearing the God of Justice


God does not tolerate sin. Early in his relationship with Jesus, there were times Peter felt the rush of inadequacy. Once Peter was so overwhelmed with the thought that he was a sinner in the presence of holiness that he said to Jesus, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” (Luke 5:8). The Israelites felt it when God wanted to talk to them at Mt. Sinai (Hebrews 12:18-21). Isaiah had similar reactions when he came face to face with the Almighty God (Isaiah 6:1-8). Do you fear the Creator and Ruler of the universe?

5. List what should be of great concern for us in as we face God.

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 **Ephesians 2:1-3** *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air ... gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.*

 **Hebrews 4:12-13** *For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. <sup>13</sup>Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

 **Matthew 25:31-33, 41-46** *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup>He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.... <sup>41</sup>“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.... <sup>46</sup>“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

The  
Judgment  
Day  
Matthew 24-25

- How do you think lives would change today if everyone took these passages seriously?
- When do we demand justice or penalty for those who transgress the standards that have been set... in citizenship, business, sports, etc.
- Why, then, do people struggle with justice when it comes to God?

Judas couldn't handle the heavy burden of guilt because he had sold Jesus into the hands of the enemy. The chief priests downplayed his pleas for help. He felt hopeless and alone. His solution was to end the emotional pain by hanging himself (Matthew 27:1-10). That still didn't keep him from facing God.

On the other hand, the chief priests and elders saw no need to repent, no guilt. Jesus said to them, *“Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup>For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him”* (Matthew 21:31).

People are valuable to God and he longs for them to return to him. Peter eventually grew to appreciate this and wrote, *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9).


## The Nature of Repentance

As John the Baptist and Jesus began teaching, one of the common messages people heard was, “*The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!*” (Mark 1:15).

Repentance is not a natural response of our sinful nature which is always with us but is a change of heart worked by God himself. When King David kept his sin to himself, trying to hide it, he said it was like his bones were melting, feeling old ... until the prophet Nathan confronted him about his sin face to face (2 Samuel 12:1-14).

6. Read **Psalm 51**—King David’s prayer of repentance. What does he express?

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 *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. <sup>2</sup>Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. <sup>3</sup>For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. <sup>6</sup>Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place. <sup>7</sup>Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. <sup>8</sup>Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. <sup>9</sup>Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. <sup>10</sup>Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. <sup>11</sup>Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. <sup>12</sup>Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. <sup>13</sup>Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you. <sup>14</sup>Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. <sup>15</sup>Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. <sup>16</sup>You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. <sup>17</sup>My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. Psalm 51:1-17*

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**Repentance**  
is  
a God-given  
change of heart  
and mindset  
about sin and a  
turning to God for  
the forgiveness he  
promises in his  
Son Jesus.

- Evaluate what David’s words reveal about how he views his sin.
  
- List what he seeks from God and why that is important to him.

Sometimes we have it upside down—thinking we have to prove ourselves worthy before we can approach God; that we have to do something first to make up for our wrong before we can face God. Yet David prays, “*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise*” (Psalm 51:17). Jesus said, “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*” (Matthew 11:28-29). Repentance is a change of mindset—recognizing the horrendous nature and effects of sin, wanting nothing more to do with it; longing for God’s forgiveness and a restored relationship with him. No denial, no excuse, no trying to justify actions or blame. Peter despaired of his own ability and recognized he couldn’t do this without God—depending solely on his mercy and love. Godly repentance grasps how much our sins cost Jesus and his saving love that washes us clean.

**Part of Denying Self**  
is  
Coming empty  
handed before  
God and totally  
depending on his  
mercy and love.

Notice the differences between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow.

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**2 Corinthians 7:9-10** *Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it ... because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. <sup>10</sup>Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*

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- Determine how this might help you address sinful attitudes, actions, or lifestyles in a child, a friend, or a fellow Christian.

## Fleeing to the God of Hope

Alienation from God caused by our sinful nature cannot be solved by looking within ourselves. That is where the problem started in the first place. How can we be saved? With man it is impossible (Matthew 19:16-30). But all things are possible with God. He lifts the burden of guilt by what he has done for us.

7. Identify the hope, comfort, and confidence that draws us to God rather than avoiding him.

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**1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

**1 Peter 1: 18-20** *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, <sup>19</sup>but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. <sup>20</sup>He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. <sup>21</sup>Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.*

**1 Timothy 1:15-16** *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. <sup>16</sup>But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.*

**Ephesians 2:4-9** *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup>And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast.*

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Saved by  
GRACE  
alone  
through  
FAITH  
alone

## Put it into Practice

- Memorize phrases from Psalm 51 that you can incorporate into your prayer life.
- Determine who needs words of hope and pick out phrases you can share with them.

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