

Guilt: If You Only Knew

In 2 Samuel 12 David is confronted by the prophet Nathan about the adultery he committed with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of her husband Uriah. His secret sin is laid bare and there is no hiding. David's response is simple and remorseful, "I have sinned against the LORD." David is guilty of some very big time sins.

Guilt has two sides to it. On the one hand, guilt is completely objective: if you did something wrong you are guilty. On the other hand, guilt is very much subjective: feeling guilty for something, wrong or not. Our focus today is going to center around the latter, guilt feelings.

Guilt feelings can be helpful if they lead us to God in repentance and enjoyment of God's forgiveness. Guilt feelings can also be extremely destructive as they can lead us far away from God and deep into self absorption and depression. It's even possible to feel guilt when we have done nothing wrong. So how do we analyze the guilt we feel and ensure that we are turning to God and not running away from him?

Psalms 51 is David's reaction to his sin. Read Psalm 51 and put yourself in David's sandals. David walks through three major stages of dealing with his guilt. In verses 3-5, David confesses his sin by admitting that he has truly sinned against a holy God. In verses 1-2, 7, 9-12, and 14, David acknowledges His great need for God's forgiveness and restoration. In verses 6, 8, 13 and 15-17, David expresses his repentance and his desire to be faithful. This is a right reaction to realization of our sinfulness. David turns to God instead of running from God.

If we find ourselves confronted with our sin and it has led us away from God we must begin just as David. We confess by simply acknowledging that we have sinned against God. Next we must realize our own need for God's forgiveness and know that Jesus paid the price for our sin on the cross. Then because we have turned to God we must turn away from the sin that has led us away. Satan loves to make us feel guilty even though the punishment for our sin has been taken by Jesus. It renders us ineffective for God. Jesus did not die so we would be in a continual state of guilt and shame about our sin. He died to give us real life, abundant and exciting life, in true relationship with Him.

There are a number of factors that can cause a person to suffer with guilt feelings even when they have not sinned: shame or embarrassment, inferiority complex, low self esteem/self worth, melancholic temperament, or a non-affirmative environment. This false guilt can come from within, from other people and it can even come from the church. The person who finds themselves with guilt feelings that are not the result of their own committed sin most likely needs the help of godly individuals who will love them unconditionally with the love of Christ. A small group is the perfect environment to provide this type of love and acceptance.

Can God Fix This?

First Colony Church of Christ
Small Group Series Discussion Guide
Fall 2011

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Icebreaker:

When you were a child did you ever try to cover up your disobedience or bad behavior? Many of these stories can be quite funny as we look back on them. Share with a group a time from your childhood when you tried to keep from getting caught. Did you get caught anyway? Did you eventually fess up?

Discussion:

1. We all have different personalities. Is your natural disposition one that tends to be more sensitive or more thick-skinned? How do you think this natural leaning affects your way of dealing with guilt?
2. Psalm 51 is David's poetic response to being confronted about his sin of adultery and murder. Read verses 1-5. What attitudes do you see here in David? How does this compare with your attitude when you have been confronted?
3. Read verses 7-12. Each verse is a request from David to God. What makes these requests significant after we have sinned? What other requests should we make of God in this situation?
4. In verses 13-15 David makes some commitments to God. What commitments does he make? How can we make these commitments and what others can/should we make?
5. David's guilt feelings led him to turn to God. Is this always how guilt works in us? Under what circumstance can guilt lead us away from God? How can we ensure that we turn to God after sin and not away from Him?

Prayer:

1. Pray that we would run to God when we have sinned
2. Pray for help and grace to deal with our sin and the sin of others
3. Pray for wisdom in dealing with our own guilt
4. Pray willingness to acknowledge our faults

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1. We all have different personalities. Is your natural disposition one that tends to be more sensitive or more thick-skinned? How do you think this natural leaning affects your way of dealing with guilt?

Often those who are more sensitive are less willing to let go their guilt and those who are thicker skinned are more likely to be able to move on more quickly.

2. Psalm 51 is David's poetic response to being confronted about his sin of adultery and murder. Read verses 1-5. What attitudes do you see here in David? How does this compare with your attitude when you have been confronted?

David is confessing his sin and admitting that he has sinned against God first and foremost.

3. Read verses 7-12. Each verse is a request from David to God. What makes these requests significant after we have sinned? What other requests should we make of God in this situation?

There is a darkness that comes from guilt. David is asking for the joy and light that comes from open fellowship with God.

4. In verses 13-15 David makes some commitments to God. What commitments does he make? How can we make these commitments and what others can/should we make?

David says he will teach sinners God's ways and declare God's praise. Help the group think through how good can result from their bad situation.

5. David's guilt feelings led him to turn to God. Is this always how guilt works in us? Under what circumstance can guilt lead us away from God? How can we ensure that we turn to God after sin and not away from Him?

Accountability and a solid relationship with God are crucial.

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