

Moving Beyond What Holds You Back

Moving Beyond Guilt

Part 2

Intro: Today we are going to talk about how we move beyond guilt. As a pastor, I have talked to countless people who struggle with guilt. Guilt is part of the human condition. Guilt is a common struggle.

- Years ago during my youth pastor days, there was a HS girl in our youth group who became pregnant. We discussed her options but she went through with an abortion anyway. I met with her after that experience – share story.
- Another woman I was counseling came from a very tough background – living with multiple guys over the years – drug use – just a lot of brokenness. Once after meeting in my office she got up and said, “I bet after I leave you disinfect the chair I sit in.” Her guilt made her feel dirty – less than – I assured her that wasn’t the case.

Guilt is powerful and controlling in our lives. Guilt is a barrier many people need to move beyond. It hinders our relationships – keeps us from giving and receiving love – It even negatively effects our health.

Excessive and ongoing feelings of guilt releases stress hormones. "Guilt also contributes to cardiovascular disease and gastrointestinal disorders. It can even have a negative impact on the immune system. Guilt can be a very real and damaging barrier to move beyond.

God doesn’t want His followers controlled by guilt. He wants you to move beyond it. The question is HOW?

1. Recognize some guilt is good

- Guilt happens when we violate our conscience
 - God created us with a conscience. A moral code is hard-wired into our very DNA. People across every continent throughout world history have all instinctively understood basic issues of right and wrong. (Rom 1 describes this truth)
 - The Bible talks about our conscience and how important it is to listen to it.

I Timothy 1:19 “Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked.” (NLT = New Living Translation)

I Timothy 4:2 “These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead.” (NLT)

- Feels like our world today. People have violated their conscience so many times they no longer hear its voice of right and wrong.
 - When we lie – steal – devalue or violate others – we are supposed to feel guilt. Feelings of guilt are the instinctive deterrents to evil hard-wired into humanity. Without a conscience we are sociopaths.
 - Guilt is the emotional pain we feel when we do something wrong just like physical pain is a deterrent. If you touch a hot stove, you get burned and feel physical pain. Then your brain concludes you shouldn't do that again.
 - Good guilt can work like this. Violating your conscience should emotionally hurt so we learn not to do that again.
 - The problem is people ignore that emotional pain and use things like work – substances – pleasure – busyness – to drown out that voice.
 - Guilt is like that “check engine” light that comes on with our vehicles. It is warning us something is wrong and you need to check under the hood. Guilt is saying time to check your heart.
- Guilt comes from the Holy Spirit

*John 16:8 “And when he comes (Holy Spirit), he will **convict** the world of its sin...” (NLT)*

- The Holy Spirit works with the conscience God created us with to bring conviction of sin. For the follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is in us to lead – guide – empower – but also correct us. To do that He must bring a conviction of wrong. Guilt.
- He convicts humanity of sin so they see their need for a Savior. If there is no guilt over sin, why do I need to be forgiven? The Holy Spirit plays a major role in bringing people to Jesus.
- Please do not see the Holy Spirit's role as a negative one. Sin damages our lives. The wages of sin is death the bible says. The reason the Holy Spirit brings conviction over sin is to bring us back to the path of life.

- The guilt that comes from the Holy Spirit results in life – transformation – increased intimacy with God – blessing – joy.

Some of may be thinking, “I don’t feel like my guilt is producing this in my life.”

2. Unresolved guilt is destructive

*Psalm 38:4 “My **guilt** overwhelms me— it is a burden too heavy to bear.” (NLT)*

Psalm 32:3 “When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long.” (NLT)

David was living in his guilt – besides the emotional weight, guilt even had physical effects on him. Why did David have guilt? (Explain – Adultery – Murder – Lied to cover it up) He was a miserable man.

- Living in our guilt is destructive
 - Even though guilt can be good and God uses it in our lives, if we stay in guilt not processing out if it, guilt is very destructive. Remember I said guilt is like the check engine light? If you keep driving you will damage your vehicle. If we keep living with unresolved guilt, we damage ourselves as well.
 - Let me contrast the difference between resolved and unresolved guilt by looking at two men - **Peter and Judas**. Here are two men who both failed miserably yet had two very different outcomes. Share both stories –
 - These stories may feel extreme, but many people are allowing guilt to steal life from them every day. There is a dynamic we need to understand.
- Our ongoing struggle with sin can be destructive
 - The Apostle Paul described this struggle in his own life. Notice the emotions – the anguish he is feeling internally.

Romans 7:21-15 “I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²² I love God’s law with all my heart. ²³ But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. ²⁴ Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? (NLT)

I don't want to live like this! I want to be free from this internal torment...this war with my mind! Can you relate? This struggle causes humanity to do one of three things.

- **First – We try to live in denial of the struggle.** We have a society that is doing this right now. There is no right and wrong – Morality is decided by the individual – Everything is relative. I'm going to deal with my guilt by denying there is anything to feel guilty about. BUT..., the problem is people still feel guilty.
 - Mental health crisis – rising suicide rates - people crippled by anxiety and fear – political chaos – and we are even more racially divided than ever.
- **Secondly – We blame the struggle on someone else.** We're miserable inside because it's the fault of others. We see this culturally today – We blame religion for making us feel guilty. We blame a skin color – We blame our history – we blame the oppression of capitalism and our country – We blame a political party – we blame the police – We will blame anyone and anything as long as we don't have to blame ourselves. AND...the misery continues.
- **Thirdly – We live with the struggle.** We live Romans 7. We just get stuck in this guilt cycle never experiencing freedom. Even as followers of Jesus, we can live oppressed lives rather than lives of freedom. We live with the constant war in our minds agreeing with God's word yet still feeling like a prisoner.

Isn't there a fourth option? Praise God there is.

²⁵ *Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.*” (NLT) If the answer to this is in Jesus, how do we experience it?

3. Follow God's path beyond your guilt

- Jesus created the pathway beyond our guilt

Colossians 2:13-14 “You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. ¹⁴ He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.” (NLT)

Romans 8:1 “So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.” (NLT)

- We cannot successfully move beyond our guilt without Jesus and His work on the cross. Ongoing guilt is a spirit of condemnation that Jesus says you no longer have to live with. His work on the cross removes it.

- This is in essence what every world religion is trying to do without Jesus. It is an attempt to deal with our sin and guilt in a human way. Every system is simply a way humanity can work their way out of sin and guilt and make themselves good enough for God. Christianity is unique in how it deals with sin and guilt.
- Your pathway beyond your guilt starts with a relationship with Jesus. Some of you have yet to receive Jesus as the only One who can pay the penalty for your sin and remove your guilt.
- How do we follow Jesus beyond our guilt?
 - **Receive Him**
We cannot move beyond our guilt without the person who has the power to remove it. That person is not you it is Jesus alone. Moving beyond our guilt is a relational experience. Therefore, have you received Jesus?
 - HOW? Tell Him. “Lord Jesus I receive you and what you did for me on the cross.” Once you’ve done this, you now have the person who can help you move beyond guilt.

Many of you have already entered into a relationship with Jesus yet you still struggle with guilt.

- **Develop the habit of confession**

I John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (ESV = English Standard Version)

*Psalms 51:2 “Wash me clean from my **guilt**. Purify me from my sin.” (NLT)*

- Confession was not given to us to make us feel guilty. It was given to us to remove guilt. It is a positive thing not a negative thing.
- When we confess our sin, we never have to wonder about forgiveness. It’s guaranteed. The answer is always yes.
- Practice confession daily because the struggle with sin is daily. The more we expose our hearts to Jesus the more they are transformed – Don’t hide. Whatever we hide from Jesus remains unchanged. Whatever we expose to His light, He transforms.

Some of you are thinking, “I do confess my sin but I still feel guilty.” We need one more step.

- **Receive His forgiveness** – His unfailing love for you daily
Often, this is the missing piece in moving beyond our guilt. If we can receive God’s forgiveness – His acceptance – His love, then these scriptures we can experience.

*Psalm 32:2 “Yes, **what joy** for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!” (NLT)*

*Psalm 32:5 “Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.” And you forgave me! **All my guilt is gone.**” (NLT)*

We can feel so unworthy of such forgiveness and love that we create barriers from receiving it. Our guilt is still the barrier.

- The truth is we are unworthy of such a blessing BUT His forgiveness and love is not based on you or your behavior. It is completely based upon God. Guilt keeps the focus on you and that’s why you can’t receive His forgiveness.
- Receiving forgiveness is changing the focus off you and on God who says...

Romans 8:38 “And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love.” (NLT)

The power of God’s love is stronger than the power of guilt. Guilt cannot change your life for the better, only the power of God’s love can. Only His love and forgiveness can.

- Some of you have asked God to forgive you 1000 times for the same thing yet you still feel guilty. Stop asking for forgiveness. He already said yes. Today, let the love and forgiveness of God wash over you and be free! It’s time to tell Him, “Lord I receive your love and forgiveness.” Make this a practice every time you confess your sin. Don’t stop at confessing. Confessing should lead to receiving!
- Today can be the day to move beyond your guilt.

Prayer time: Today we’re going to do something a bit different as we finish. For those struggling with receiving God’s love and forgiveness, as we sing this last song, I want to invite you up here so we can pray for you. I feel this issue is so common, I’ve asked more people to help. – Explain – Yes, you can do this where you sit, but sometimes we just need others to help us forward.

