

The Past

Objectives

To identify how your past is affecting your current behavior and discuss ways to let go of the past.

References

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Scriptural Verses

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

Lesson Guidelines

Do you wake up every morning with the guilt of your past hanging over you? Are you bitter because you’ve been wronged, or abused in the past? Are you angry with God because He allowed you to go through difficult times?

It is impossible to feel that way very long without affecting every aspect of your life: your health, attitudes, emotions, relationships, and spiritual growth.

1. Dealing with guilt

There are two types of guilt – genuine guilt as a result of committing sins, and false guilt due to misconceptions without violating God’s commandments.

a) False guilt

False guilt may result from another person’s immoral actions such as physical, sexual, or mental abuse in the past. It can also result from inability to meet parents’ expectations, faulty teachings, assuming responsibility for parents’ divorce, or ridicule by others.

Another common type of guilt is over a sin that you have already confessed. One of Satan’s most effective strategies is to convince you that God’s forgiveness is not enough or that God has not actually forgiven you, so you remain overwhelmed by guilt.

False guilt is Satan’s way of holding you back from achieving God’s plan in your life. Identify this guilt, is the first step to healing.

b) Genuine guilt

God uses genuine guilt to stir up your conscience when you violate your moral beliefs and choose to follow your desires and committing sin. Each sin carries the **same condemnation** and also carries the **same forgiveness** by God.

Genuine repentance is essential for forgiveness. It affects the heart and renews the mind. There is a change of attitude that enables you to act differently and totally rearrange your mindset and lifestyle.

c) Overcoming the guilt feelings

Counteracting the feelings of guilt begins with trust in God. God's words tell you that you are:

- **Special** – Christ gave His life for you.
- **Loved** – God loves you despite your sins (Romans 5:8).
- **Forgiven** – God forgives you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). In the first epistle to the Corinthians 6:11, St. Paul explains the process of forgiveness – “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God”.
 - **Washing** – It is only through the blood of Christ that your sins can be washed, hence the importance of confession and the Eucharist.
 - **Sanctification** – After regeneration, God has set you apart as one of His children, whereby He may be glorified in your life.
 - **Justification** – God declares that you are no longer guilty which does not mean that you were found “not guilty”, but that God issued a pardon for your transgression.

2. Overcoming an unforgiving spirit

Have you suffered such a deep hurt that you are unable to forgive?

An unforgiving spirit leads to bitterness, anger, resentment and hostility which also affect your health, and relationships. In addition, you cannot be forgiven of your sins until you forgive others.

It is difficult to forgive those who hurt you. The following steps can help achieve emotional liberation and spiritual freedom.

- Compare the hurtful actions of that person with your own faults that God forgave you.
- Stop talking about that subject and get rid of anything that reminds you of that pain.
- Ask God to give you the ability to forgive those who might have hurt you and to forgive you for your unforgiving heart.
- Ask God to help you view this hurt as a tool in the hand of God.
- Help others in order to take your mind away from yourself.
- Count your blessings.
- Confess your lack of forgiveness as sin to your Father of Confession.

When you are hurt, there is a time for sorrow and mourning, but don't convert a season of sorrow to a lifetime of sorrow.

Until you forgive every person who hurts you, you will remain imprisoned in your negative emotions. If you cannot let go of the old, God cannot bring the new.

3. Overcoming anger with God

Are you angry that God isn't fair for allowing bad things to happen to you? Most people who think that way have experienced a personal loss in their lives such as the loss of a loved one, a job, or are experiencing a serious illness.

There are several ways people use to deal with such difficult times in their lives:

- **Disconnecting** – Some people let their anger drive them away from God.
- **Covering up** – Convinced that complete trust in God is the only way to approach the difficult situation, some people bury their feelings of hurt. This approach does not allow for the healing process.
- **Wrestling with God** – Confessing your true feelings and sharing your anger with God can help you move through it and heal. Allow your anger to draw you towards God, not away from Him. King David cried out to the Lord, Moses expressed his disappointment, and even the Lord cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27: 46)
- **Trusting God** – Some people have such high faith in God that, when adversity strikes, they fall on their knees and cry out to God and allow Him to lead them through the healing process. Their attitude prevents mounting anger which would prolong recovery.

It is only through a personal relationship with God that you can deal with any adversity that comes your way. A complete trust in God gives you a great sense of peace no matter the circumstances.

Conclusion

Our experiences in life shape our daily attitudes. Feelings of guilt over past sins, bitterness towards other's hurtful actions, and anger with God contribute to a negative outlook we may have on life. This is not how God intended for us to live our lives, therefore we must make an effort to identify these issues and deal with them so that we may heal and experience true joy in Christ.

Activities/Discussion Points

1. Can you identify sources of false guilt in your life?
2. How can we counteract feelings of false guilt?
3. Can you identify someone in your life that you feel you could never forgive? What ways can you think of to forgive this person?
4. Identify situations in life where you were angry with God. Is God responsible for the mishaps that happen to us? How much of it is our doing?
5. List examples from the Bible of people who went through hardships without being angry with God.