

*The five things you need to know to gain*

# Freedom from *Guilt*



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# Our Guilty Parents

Why do we human beings feel guilt and shame? Where does it come from and why does it ruin our lives? The Bible, the world's best-selling book, gives answers to the origins of guilt and shame. It is a collection of 66 smaller books written by forty different authors who lived over a period of 1600 years.



Even though these authors lived at different times and wrote in different languages, the amazing theme of all the books is the same: "Who are we? What went wrong? How is God fixing it? And what must we do to enjoy the freedom from guilt and shame He has provided for us?"

In the first two chapters of the Bible, in the book called Genesis, we are told that there is a personal God who created everything. He is the author of all forms of life.

He created you and me as the highest form of life—created in His own image and likeness. God created us so that we could live in a relationship of perfect love with Him and with others in this world He created. We were created to live in a community of perfect peace. But something went terribly wrong. Although it was God’s intention for human beings not to experience pain, loneliness, guilt and shame, our first parents, Adam and Eve, chose another path. The book of Genesis tells us what happened and why they chose to disobey God.

## **Genesis 2:15-25**

<sup>15</sup> The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. <sup>16</sup> But the LORD God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— <sup>17</sup> except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” <sup>19</sup> So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. <sup>20</sup> He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of

the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

<sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup> "At last!" the man exclaimed.

"This one is bone from my bone,  
and flesh from my flesh!  
She will be called 'woman,'  
because she was taken from 'man.'"

<sup>24</sup> This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

<sup>25</sup> Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

## **Genesis 3:1-21**

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

<sup>2</sup> “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied.<sup>3</sup> “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

<sup>4</sup> “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. <sup>5</sup> “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup> The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. <sup>7</sup> At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

<sup>8</sup> When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. <sup>9</sup> Then the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

<sup>10</sup> He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”

<sup>11</sup> “Who told you that you were naked?” the LORD God asked. “Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?”

<sup>12</sup> The man replied, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.” <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God asked the woman, “What have you done?” “The serpent deceived me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

<sup>14</sup> Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, you are cursed  
more than all animals, domestic and wild.

You will crawl on your belly,  
groveling in the dust as long as you live.

<sup>15</sup> And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring.

He will strike your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”

<sup>16</sup> Then he said to the woman,

“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy,  
and in pain you will give birth.

And you will desire to control your husband,  
but he will rule over you.”

<sup>17</sup> And to the man he said,

“Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree  
whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed  
because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a

living from it.

<sup>18</sup> It will grow thorns and thistles for you,  
though you will eat of its grains.

<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your brow  
will you have food to eat  
until you return to the ground  
from which you were made.

For you were made from dust,  
and to dust you will return.”

<sup>20</sup> Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live. <sup>21</sup> And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

God had placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The garden was a place of perfect peace where Adam and Eve walked and lived beside the animals in perfect harmony. Even God walked in their midst (3:8) enabling the first couple to enjoy true intimacy with Him their creator and friend without any shame or fear. The only stipulation or law God had imposed upon them was that they were not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had given Adam and Eve free will to choose to obey or disobey His commandment. It was His way of testing their love for Him and their commitment to preserve this intimate



relationship. To break this law meant death and separation from God.

Sadly, Satan who came in the form of a serpent, seized the opportunity to strike against God. He cleverly tempted Adam and Eve to question God's love and commitment to them. When the two ate of the fruit, they did more than break God's law, they rebelled against the reason for the law—to protect their relationship and community with God.

Instantly, their eyes were opened and they felt shame and guilt for the very first time in their lives. They quickly sewed fig leaves together to hide their nakedness from each other. Shame is an awareness of what others think of us, whereas, guilt is our own self-awareness of what we have done and who we have hurt. This is the origin of our own guilt and shame.

As God walks in the garden He calls out to Adam and Eve, but their guilt and shame causes them to hide from God among the bushes in fear of what will happen next. The pair quickly learn that the consequences of their action impacts the entire world and all future generations. The poison of Adam and Eve's rebellion

against God now flows through our veins as we too lash out against God and selfishly abuse, neglect, or destroy relationships with others.

Our guilt and shame cry out to us that relationships are broken—something needs to be done. Like pain in the body indicates that something is physically wrong, guilt sounds the alarm that something is wrong with our relationship with God and with others.

Recently my father was treated for a very infected wound on his foot. Had he not received treatment when he did, he could have lost his entire foot. As it was, he waited too long to seek medical help. For months, his boots rubbed a small section of his foot to the point where his skin became ulcerated, almost to the bone, but he felt no pain at all during this time. Another medical condition caused his feet to be numb so he never felt any pain. Pain would have alerted him much earlier that there was a serious problem that needed medical attention. Guilt and shame are also warnings that need to be heeded.

God tells us in the remaining pages of the Bible that these relationships can be healed and there can be

freedom from guilt and shame. God promised Adam and Eve that from the seed of the woman would come a future savior who would restore that which Satan has ruined (3:15). There is hope. We need only come out of the bushes when God calls.

## Reflection

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1. Adam and Eve sewed clothes to hide their own nakedness and they hid from God behind some bushes. How do we hide or cover-up our guilt and shame from others and from God?
2. At the end of the Genesis 3, God covers-up the naked shame and guilt of Adam and Eve with skins from an animal. Why do you suppose God took the life of an animal to clothe them?

# A Guilty King

All of us are all too familiar with the negative side of guilt. The fear of rejection and judgment from both man and God. There is also the loneliness and the alienation that comes when we feel we've "burned our bridges" behind us and there is no hope for forgiveness or restoration of damaged relationships.

Perhaps the most negative side of guilt from God's perspective is the guilt and shame that we either intentionally or unintentionally cover-up. We hide in the bushes or we try to sew our own clothes to cover up the brokenness as Adam and Eve tried to do. Some people try to suppress their guilt and shame by drinking the pain away. Others will try to make excuses to rationalize their actions and even place the burden of guilt on someone else's shoulders. Still others try to suppress their guilt



and shame deep within their minds, ignoring the warning calls that something needs to be done.

King David was a man after God's own heart. We know him as the shepherd boy who defeated the giant named Goliath and as the most popular king of Israel. But David was also a song-writer. Perhaps you're familiar with his 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want*. . .

But at the height of David's power and popularity as a king, he committed a terrible sin, and then committed another sin to cover it up. David had an affair with a married woman named Bathsheba while her husband was serving David in the army. When David found out that Bathsheba was pregnant, he tried to cover-up his sin by commanding Joab, the general over David's army, to place Bathsheba's husband in harm's way so that he would never return home. David's plan worked, and soon Bathsheba became David's wife. The cover-up was complete and life went cheerfully on for David. Not exactly. Read the following verses from Psalm 32—a psalm David wrote during this time of his life.

## Psalm 32: 1-5

Oh, what joy for those

whose disobedience is forgiven,

whose sin is put out of sight!

<sup>2</sup> Yes, what joy for those

whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt,

whose lives are lived in complete honesty!

<sup>3</sup> When I refused to confess my sin,

my body wasted away,

and I groaned all day long.

<sup>4</sup> Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me.

My strength evaporated like water in the summer  
heat. *Interlude*

<sup>5</sup> 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.

I suspect David tried to rationalize his affair and the murder-cover-up thinking he was the king of Israel. *I deserve to have Bathsheba as my wife after all the hard-fought victories I led as King.* He may have even rationalized the murder of Bathsheba's husband by

thinking that she deserved better—she deserved the love of a king!

He was able to cover-up his sin before the eyes of man, but God knew all about it. No matter how he tried to suppress his guilt, David tells us in Psalm 32 that it wasn't working. In fact, his life was miserable. The more he refused to confess his sins, the more oppressive his guilt and shame became—even wasting away his body.

Guilty memories and feelings are like water in a boiling tea pot. If the steam isn't released or the heat turned off, the pressure of the steam will find a way out through every crack or broken seam. The same is true for repressed and unconfessed guilt. Eventually, the pressure will come out in a variety of ways that can harm others and destroy one's own health like King David.

God didn't want David to ruin his life, or the nation of Israel, by living a lie and by living in a fractured relationship with Him. Nor does God want us to ruin our lives by living with unconfessed guilt and sin. David needed to see his sin from God's perspective instead of through the lens of his own rationalizations and big ego.

So God sends a prophet to David with a message. Read the following passage to see how God finally leads David to confess his sins and guilt.

## **II Samuel 12:1-9,13**

So the LORD sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story: “There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. <sup>2</sup> The rich man owned a great many sheep and cattle. <sup>3</sup> The poor man owned nothing but one little lamb he had bought. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man’s own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter. <sup>4</sup> One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing an animal from his own flock or herd, he took the poor man’s lamb and killed it and prepared it for his guest.”

<sup>5</sup> David was furious. “As surely as the LORD lives,” he vowed, “any man who would do such a thing deserves to die! <sup>6</sup> He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity.”

<sup>7</sup> Then Nathan said to David, “You are that man! The LORD, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. <sup>8</sup> I gave you your master’s house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much,



much more. <sup>9</sup> Why, then, have you despised the word of the LORD and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and stolen his wife.

<sup>13</sup> Then David confessed to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”

## Reflection

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1. Has there ever been a time in your life when you too tried to hide or cover-up your guilt? Could you relate to David's experience?
2. Why do you think David finally confesses his sin to God after he hears God's message?

# The Father of a Guilty Son

As we've seen, guilt has many negative side effects physically, spiritually and socially. Some people dread the day when their past will catch up with them and all will be revealed. But guilt and shame can also develop longings of reconciliation and restoration of broken relationships. Some people eagerly long to turn the clock back and return to the way it was, or even better than it was before.

This desire becomes the third step in finding freedom from guilt. In fact, this desire deepens based upon the level of love, respect, and personal feelings one has for the people he or she has hurt. This even includes our relationship with God.

The challenge, however, is that we do not allow our fear and dread of punishment or further rejection from the ones we love keep us from confessing our sins and guilt to them as we seek reconciliation. For example: *What*

*will my wife say if I come clean? What will happen to my job or career if this gets out? How will the people at church react when they find out what I've done?*

Jesus told a parable about a son who had deeply hurt his own father and squandered the gifts that his father had sacrificed to give to him. This story comes from Luke 15.

“A man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

<sup>13</sup> “A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. <sup>14</sup> About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. <sup>15</sup> He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup> The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> “When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and

you, <sup>19</sup> and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.”

<sup>20</sup> “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’

<sup>22</sup> “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. <sup>23</sup> And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.

In this parable, Jesus weaves together an incredible story of extreme selfishness and extreme forgiveness and acceptance. The father in this parable was not only hurt financially by the son’s demand for his share of all the father owned, but the desire to leave his entire family behind would have been unthinkable in that culture. He’s rejecting his heritage, and disowning his own family—everything his father held dear. Jesus’ original audience would have been left with total contempt for such a son.

As the parable goes on, the son soon squanders everything and is left begging for food, even eating what the pigs had left behind. He soon realizes the terrible thing he did to his father and to God, longing to go home, even if it meant becoming one of his father's servants. He rationalizes that becoming a servant would be the only way to return to his father's household.

The young man is surprised to find, however, that his father had been looking down the road every day since he left—waiting for his return. His confession is met with unconditional acceptance and a



pronounced right to return as a son, as seen by his father giving him the signs of sonship—a robe, ring and sandals. They even threw in a welcome back party.

Jesus' parable had a happy ending. Do you think your situation will be any different? Yes, some people may not greet your confession with an open embrace.

Instead of a ring or a robe, you may have your wedding ring handed back to you or you may be forced to sell your shoes and clothes and many other things to pay back what you owe. And instead of a party, you may even face a prison sentence. Yes, that which your guilty heart longs for may not fully materialize. But don't allow the fear of what could happen, keep you from leaving the pig pen and finding freedom from your guilt and shame. Not everyone will meet you on the road with unconditional acceptance. However, there is One who longs for your return. And He will accept you unconditionally.

## Reflection

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1. What kept the father in Jesus' parable looking down the road waiting for his son's return?
2. If the father in the parable had accepted the son's offer to return home as a servant, would that have removed the son's guilt and shame?
3. Who is Jesus ultimately describing when he tells us about the father in this parable?

# The Guilt “Remover”

The runaway son in Jesus’ parable longed to be back with his father, but there was also an anxious fear that he would never be allowed back unless it was as a slave. Had the roles been reversed, he wouldn’t have accepted himself back as a son.

That’s the way it is with guilt and shame. When we come to grips with what we have done and who we have hurt, the gravity of our actions drives us to self-hatred and self-punishment. We try to ease the pain of guilt and shame by trying to “make it up” to the ones we’ve hurt. But is that realistic? How can you “make it up” to the friend you hurt and who has since passed away? How will you ever “make it up” to your kids for a life time of neglect? Can you turn back the clock and restore that time? How can you “make it up”





to the family whose daughter you crashed into one night driving home from the bar? Can you raise the dead? And how can you “make it up” to God for a life time of sins and offenses? Why would a holy and perfect God forgive you and even accept you as a son or a daughter?

Attempting to atone for what you have done is a never-ending attempt which will leave you with more guilt and send you into a vicious cycle of despair and self-destruction. Is there any hope?

Do you remember in the first section of this booklet how Adam and Eve tried to hide from God? What did God do for them? He atoned (which means to cover) their naked shame and guilt through the death of an animal, providing them clothes to wear. Blood was shed to cover them. An animal lost its life, presumably before their very eyes, so that Adam and Eve understood for the very first time that God doesn't treat sin lightly.

As God chose the nation of Israel to be His own people, He demonstrated in a very visual way how their sins could be atoned so God could accept them and dwell in their presence. Read the following verses from the Old Testament book called Leviticus.

## **Leviticus 16:6-10, 20-22**

<sup>6</sup> “Aaron will present his own bull as a sin offering to purify himself and his family, making them right with the LORD. <sup>7</sup> Then he must take the two male goats and present them to the LORD at the entrance of the Tabernacle. <sup>8</sup> He is to cast sacred lots to determine which goat will be reserved as an offering to the LORD and which will carry the sins of the people to the wilderness of Azazel. <sup>9</sup> Aaron will then present as a sin offering the goat chosen by lot for the LORD. <sup>10</sup> The other goat, the scapegoat chosen by lot to be sent away, will be kept alive, standing before the LORD. When it is sent away to Azazel in the wilderness, the people will be purified and made right with the LORD.

<sup>20</sup> “When Aaron has finished purifying the Most Holy Place and the Tabernacle and the altar, he must present the live goat. <sup>21</sup> He will lay both of his hands on the goat’s head and confess over it all the wickedness, rebellion, and sins of the people of Israel. In this way, he will transfer the people’s sins to the head of the goat. Then a man specially chosen for the task will drive the goat into the wilderness. <sup>22</sup> As the goat goes into the wilderness, it will carry all the people’s sins upon itself into a desolate land.

On the Day of Atonement, the sins of the children of Israel were covered through the blood of animals. In a

very visual way, the priest killed and took the blood of one goat for the sin offering, while placing upon the other goat (the scape goat) the sins of the people. While the people watched the scape goat run away into the desert, they were assured that their sins were removed from them and from God's sight. This "covering over" of their sins took place year after year. But God had a plan which would involve all the nations of the world. The prophet Isaiah is just one of the many Old Testament prophets who sketches out God's plan. Read it for yourself.

## **Isaiah 53:1-6**

Who has believed our message?

To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm?

<sup>2</sup> My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot,

like a root in dry ground.

There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance,

nothing to attract us to him.

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected—

a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.

We turned our backs on him and looked the other way.

He was despised, and we did not care.

<sup>4</sup> Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;  
it was our sorrows that weighed him down.

And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God,  
a punishment for his own sins!

<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our rebellion,  
crushed for our sins.

He was beaten so we could be whole.

He was whipped so we could be healed.

<sup>6</sup> All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.

We have left God's paths to follow our own.

Yet the LORD laid on him

the sins of us all.

Sending His own Son Jesus, was God's plan. For God so loved the world He sent us His only son born of the virgin Mary. Listen to what John the Baptist said of Jesus:

## **John 1:29-34**

<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he

existed long before me.’ <sup>31</sup> I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel.”

<sup>32</sup> Then John testified, “I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. <sup>33</sup> I didn’t know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup> I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God.

God knows that we can’t possibly “make it up” to the people we have hurt. And we certainly can’t make ourselves acceptable in God’s eyes by doing a bunch of good things for Him. That is why Christ willingly came to suffer and die to atone (cover over) all of our sins—the sins we’ve committed against God and others. Listen to Jesus’ own words on the cross from the gospel of John.

### **John 19: 23-30**

<sup>23</sup> When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his clothes among the four of them. They also took his robe, but it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. <sup>24</sup> So they said, “Rather than tearing it apart, let’s throw dice for it.”

This fulfilled the Scripture that says, “They divided my garments among themselves and threw dice for my clothing.” So that is what they did.

<sup>25</sup> Standing near the cross were Jesus’ mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, “Dear woman, here is your son.” <sup>27</sup> And he said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from then on this disciple took her into his home.



<sup>28</sup> Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, “I am thirsty.”<sup>29</sup> A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips. <sup>30</sup> When Jesus had tasted it, he said, “It is finished!” Then he bowed his head and released his spirit.

God gave the world a great gift through His Son. All of our sins can be forgiven and our guilt and shame removed forever. The Heavenly Father, just like the father in the parable Jesus told, is looking down the road for you and me to come home. And when we come

down that road confessing to Him our sins and guilt, He forgives us and accepts us as His children forever. All of our sins, guilt and shame died on the cross with Jesus and God remembers them no more. If we can trust and believe that a holy and righteous God can declare us forgiven and acceptable, why should we struggle forgiving ourselves? That's true freedom!

## Reflection

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1. Why is it impossible to “make it up” to the people we’ve hurt? Have you ever tried doing this?
2. On the cross we see the full extent of God’s gracious love to reach out to the worst of sinners. What keeps people from believing they can be forgiven by God?

# A Forgiven and Restored Murderer

One day a small boy found a hammer and box of nails and started pounding nails into the walls of his families' living room. By the time his mother stopped him, he had over 20 huge nails sticking all over the walls. The boy was proud of himself. He was trying to be like his dad, but as he soon found out, his actions made his mother angry and then he started to cry. *"But mommy, all we need to do is just pull out the nails and it will be okay."* His mother showed him the damage as she pulled out all the nails. *"See son, I've pulled out the nails, but the holes you made still exist."*



We've discovered that guilt and shame can be a positive thing to warn us about broken relationships in our past



and present. We've also uncovered God's plan to deal with our guilt and shame. Our confession of sin and guilt and faith in God's grace through Jesus' sacrifice removes our sins from the very sight of God forever. We are forgiven and accepted in His eyes as His children. Like the nails in the wall, our sins and guilt have been removed from His sight. In God's eyes it's just as if I'd never sinned (justified).

However, just like the nail holes in the wall, the effects and consequences of our sins often remain. We still may find ourselves alienated from the ones we've hurt and who we've asked to forgive us. There are still holes that need to be repaired. Or, there may be legal or financial holes that need to be repaired because of our actions. God removes the nails, but He doesn't always free us from the consequences of our actions.

When that little boy's father came home, he called his son to the living room. There he showed his boy what he was going to do to fix each hole and restore the beauty of the wall. And with a tub of spackle he and his son filled in each hole, sanding down each section and eventually repainting the entire wall. The boy couldn't

repair what he had done—but through his father’s hands the wall was fixed.

God desires to do the same thing with this world which is full of brokenness, pain and death. He also wants to bring healing to each of our broken relationships. He is the God of resurrection and renewal. We clearly see this when He raised Jesus from the dead.

### **Matthew 28:1-10**

Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb.

<sup>2</sup> Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. <sup>4</sup> The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint.

<sup>5</sup> Then the angel spoke to the women. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. <sup>7</sup> And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you.”

<sup>8</sup> The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message.<sup>9</sup> And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.

The original sin of Adam and Eve brought sin and death to this world, but Jesus' death and resurrection give us hope that we too can be forgiven and restored forever. Life goes on even after death.

A man by the name of Saul had been a Jewish zealot who did everything in his power to destroy the young Christian church. He even presided over the stoning-death of a powerful evangelist named Stephen. He was a cold-blooded murderer! But the risen Jesus met him on a road one day. Jesus asked him, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

Saul's life was changed forever that day. He became a Christian and was baptized. In fact, the Lord not only forgave him but made him into a powerful evangelist. We know him today as the Apostle Paul.

You would think that the memories of what he did to the church would haunt him. But Paul writes the following in a letter he wrote to the Corinthian Christians found in the New Testament.

## **II Corinthians 5:17-20**

<sup>17</sup> This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

<sup>18</sup> And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. <sup>19</sup> For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

God called Paul to preach the gospel and add to the church—the church he once tried to extinguish. The Lord will give you help in restoring your broken relationships, and yes, he calls all of us to serve him. You may not feel worthy after what you've done to Him or to others, but in God's eyes you are a new person. The old life is gone and the new life has begun.

One day, Christ who ascended into heaven, will come again and make all things new. This includes the relationships you were unable to restore and the consequences you were unable to fix. The book of Revelation—the last book in the Bible—gives us a future glimpse of what life will be like when Christ returns.

## **Revelation 21:1-5**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

<sup>3</sup> I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” <sup>5</sup> And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!”

## Reflection

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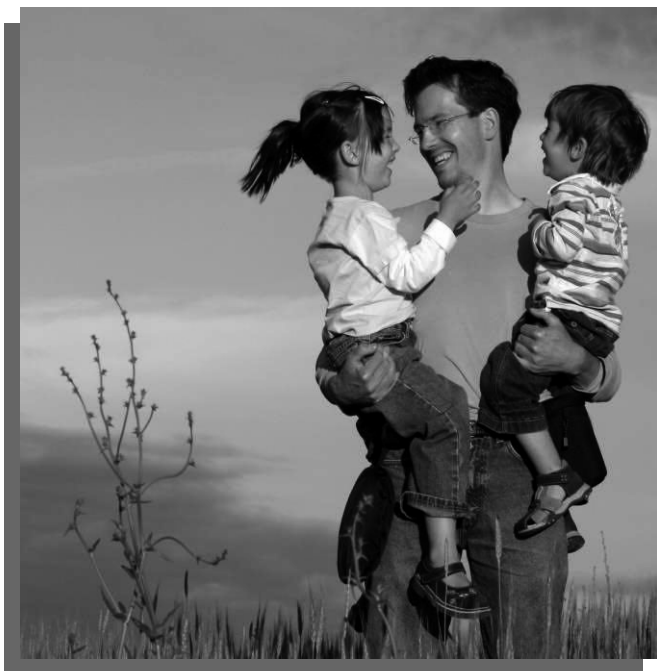
1. What do you think the phrase, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes” means?
2. Would you like to be free from the guilt and shame that has been festering in your life and alienating you from others, including God? Would you like to be restored? The first step is to begin walking home to a waiting and watching Father confessing your sin and guilt to Him with this prayer:

***Father, I have sinned against you and others. I don't understand how you could forgive me of all my sins, let alone, love and accept me as a son or daughter. But I come to you by faith trusting your promise of grace through the shed blood of your Son Jesus on the cross. Restore the brokenness of my life and fill me with the joy of being your little child. Amen***

# Summary

The Bible gives us God's plan on how we can be reconciled to Him and live as though we had never sinned or offended Him. We also learn from the Bible that God restores us even to the point of calling us to be His "ambassadors" of reconciliation in this world. But you have just begun to mine the wonderful gems found in the Bible!

We would like to send you another booklet that takes you through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and will give you a little deeper overview of the Bible and what it means to live without fear and guilt. This little booklet is called ***Guide to Happiness.***



Send for your free copy of **Guide to Happiness**—a twelve lesson overview of the Bible. It's Free! Just fill out the attached card and send it in for your copy.