



Sermon Discussion Guide

The Word Of Forgiveness The Seven Greatest Words Of Love – Part 1

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“(From the cross) Jesus said, “Father, forgive them for they don’t know what they are doing.” Luke 23:34 (NLT)

Guilt isn’t fun. It’s a terrible feeling that is damaging in many ways. But God doesn’t want us to feel guilty, and instead of hiding our guilt Jesus wants us to admit it and believe he will forgive us completely. The cross is more important than just Jesus dying for our sins. Jesus’ first words at his death in Luke 23 above were words of love: “Father, forgive them ...” In this discussion we’ll look at what we usually do with our guilt, what Jesus wants us to do with it, and what we need to believe about how Jesus will handle our guilt.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

“You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins.” Proverbs 28:13 (NLT)

1. Of the different ways to bury guilt – rationalizing, minimizing, and lowering our standards – discuss which can be the most damaging personally.

“When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable ... My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. ... All my guilt is gone.” Psalm 32:3-5 (NLT)

2. Our past shame and guilt will not remain buried without forgiveness from Jesus. Discuss why.

“The Lord gave us a mind and a conscience. We cannot hide from ourselves.” Proverbs 20:27 (GN)

3. Even though we can deceive other people, we cannot hide from ourselves or from God. Why do you think it’s hard for us to admit our guilt?

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” 1 John 1:8 (NIV)

4. If people claim to be blameless all the time, what things might happen in their relationships with other people? How might it prevent them from overcoming problems?

“He has forgiven all your sins. He has utterly wiped out the evidence of broken commandments which always hung over our heads, and completely annulled it by nailing it to the cross.” Colossians 2:13-14 (Phillips)

5. Based on this verse, explain in your own words what Jesus has done for us.
6. What kinds of freedoms can we experience in our lives by believing these Colossians 2 truths?

Diving Deeper (optional)

“Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” James 5:16 (TLB)

1. To be forgiven, we need to confess our sin only to God. What benefit do you think God has in mind for us by asking us to admit our faults to at least one other loving friend?
2. What could be wrong with begging God to forgive us, or with proposing a bargain to God for forgiving us?
3. God forgives us instantly, completely, repeatedly, and freely. Why do you think God wants to do this?
“My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.” Psalm 34:4 (NIV)
4. What are some side effects of dealing with a heavy burden of guilt?

REVIEW ANY ASSIGNMENTS OR COMMITMENTS MADE DURING YOUR PREVIOUS MEETING.

Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- Name things people might do to get rid of guilt temporarily, but not necessarily get rid of the guilt for good.
- Help group members understand how damaging guilt can be in many ways and encourage them to explore how people hide guilt. Help members understand how Jesus wants us to admit our guilt and challenge them to truly believe he will forgive us completely as an act of love.
- Pray: Lord, you know the many ways we try to hide our guilt, yet you long to freely forgive us – your first act of love when you died on the cross for us. Holy Spirit, open our eyes to see exactly how we deceive ourselves, so we can stop defeating ourselves. Jesus, make us confident in your love for us so we can admit our sins, accept responsibility, and humbly ask for your forgiveness. Thank you for always cleansing us from all our sins, guilt, and shame. Father, we boldly come before you because of your great love for us, and we receive your forgiveness now completely.

Preparing to Lead Your Group

- ✓ **PRAY** for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God’s wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher and that you will be God’s instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.
- ✓ **PLAN** where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God’s five purposes for the church: Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission and Worship, and make a plan to encourage your group members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.
- ✓ **PONDER YOUR PROGRESS** after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn’t. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment. How are you doing with leading the discussion: is it stimulating, challenging, and meaningful? Are you able to keep the group on track? Do you need to make some changes?

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

- Talk It Over is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We’ve designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is most important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.
- Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group. If your group is mature and wants to dig deeper, consider using the Diving Deeper section or add additional Scripture and ask suitable questions. Remember that this is only a guide.
- The questions relating to Bible study methods are helpful to develop Bible literacy and spiritual maturity in our lives. You can help your group be aware of their needs in these areas by using these questions as a regular part of each discussion.
- Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals such as “I need to spend more time in prayer.” It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, “How are you going to begin?” An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.