



Taming The Giants - Guarding Against Guilt

Sin → Guilt → Depression → More Guilt. Been there? Most of us have. How do we stop it? How do we get out from under it? Is staying in guilt God's intention for us? Is it the price we have to pay for our sins and failures? Or does He have another plan? - A better plan? When Jesus set us free, did He just set us free from the punishment of sin or did He also set us free from the guilty feelings that follow our sin? May you discover His answers as you study.

DAY ONE:

1. The word *guilt* or *guilty* is rarely used in the Bible. Jesus died on the cross to not only forgive us but to set us free from *guilt*. Yet, *guilt* plagues many. How would you describe the difference between the words *guilt* and *guilty*?
2. There are many instances of people who sinned in the Bible. Look up two of the following (or as many as you have time to do) and record the sin that was committed. **Challenge:** Do them all. ☺
 - a. **Cain & Abel - Genesis 4:1-15**
 - b. **Joseph's brothers - Genesis 37:1-36**
 - c. **Judah & Tamar - Genesis 38:1-30**
 - d. **Israel's response to the spies sent to the Promised Land - Numbers 13:17-14:10**
 - e. **King Saul - 1 Samuel 15:1-35**
 - f. **David & Bathsheba - 2 Samuel 11:1-27**
 - g. **Amnon & Tamar - 2 Samuel 13:1-22**
 - h. **Peter - Mark: 14:30, 31, 66-72**
 - i. **Matthew & Zacchaeus - Luke 5:27 & Luke 19:2** (Note: tax collectors were known for cheating the people)
 - j. **Saul (Paul) - Acts 7:59-8:3**
3. Murder, sex, jealousy, rebellion, incest, thievery.... Just to name a few sins of both people who did know God and people who did not. Some felt bad about what they did. Some did not. Some repented. Some did not. Some experienced guilt. Some did not. What do you think made the difference?

4. God responded to each sinner. Let's look at Jesus' response to the New Testament examples in question #2.
 - a. **Matthew - Luke 5:27**
 - b. **Peter - Luke 22:60; John 21:15-19**
 - c. **Saul - Acts 9:4-16**
 - 1.) Although the actual words were different, what was similar about these responses?
 - a.) What does this say to you about:

The kind of people God uses:

The belief that God can't use a person who has done bad things:
 - b.) Each of these men could have held on to their *guilt*. How do you think doing so would have affected Jesus' call on their lives?

DAY TWO:

1. Guilt is not only a feeling, but it is expressed by actions. What are some feelings that accompany guilt?
 - a. What are some actions that follow those guilty feelings?
2. List some of the factors that tend to provoke guilty thoughts and feelings?
3. The actual Greek word that would be translated *guilt* is not used in the New Testament. However the word *guilty* is used six times. Two times it is used in accusing Jesus. One time it refers to making oaths, another to taking communion in an unworthy manner. The other two can be found in Romans 3:19 and James 2:10. Who are the *guilty* in these verses?
 - a. *And the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as the person who has broken all of God's laws* (James 2:10 NLT). *As the Scriptures say, "No one is good – not even one. All have turned away from God; all have gone wrong. No one does good, not even one."* (Romans 3:10, 11 NLT) Since each one of us is *guilty*, what is wrong with hanging on to feelings of *guilt*?
 - 1.) How are we affected by hanging on to feelings of guilt?

DAY THREE:

Ezra 9 and 10 reveal the story of the people of Israel disobeying God by marrying people from other lands. God had warned them against this, knowing the pagan practices of the other people would be adopted by the Israelites. The leaders of Israel came to Ezra, the priest and reported the sin of the people to him. Ezra's prayer from Ezra 9:5-15 is recorded for you below.

At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God. ⁶And I said: "O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens. ⁷Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as it is this day. ⁸And now for a little while grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. ⁹For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. ¹⁰And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments, ¹¹which You commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land, with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with their impurity. ¹²Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it as an inheritance to your children forever.' ¹³And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, since You our God have punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and have given us such deliverance as this, ¹⁴should we again break Your commandments, and join in marriage with the people committing these abominations? Would You not be angry with us until You had consumed us, so that there would be no remnant or survivor? ¹⁵O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!"

1. What was Ezra's physical response? Verse 5

2. Summarize the contents of Ezra's prayer.

3. Underline or highlight each time the word *guilt* or *guilty* is used.
 - a. It was good for Ezra to confess the *guilt* of the people. When is it healthy to feel *guilty* and when is it not?

DAY FOUR:

Ezra's prayer of confession was followed by a response from the people (Ezra 10:1-12 below).

Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly. ²And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. ³Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. ⁴Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it."

⁵Then Ezra arose, and made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear an oath that they would do according to this word. So they swore an oath. ⁶Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and when he came there, he ate no bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from the captivity. ⁷And they issued a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the descendants of the captivity, that they must gather at Jerusalem, ⁸and that whoever would not come within three days, according to the instructions of the leaders and elders, all his property would be confiscated, and he himself would be separated from the assembly of those from the captivity.

⁹So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the people sat in the open square of the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of heavy rain. ¹⁰Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel. ¹¹Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives." ¹²Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, "Yes! As you have said, so we must do."

1. What was the effect of Ezra's prayer of confession on those who were observing? Verse 1
2. What did the people who had sinned agree to do as a result of Ezra's confession in their behalf? Verses 2-4
3. How do you know that Ezra's prayer was not purely ceremonial, that he was genuinely grieved over the sin of his people? Verse 6
4. When Ezra gathered all the people together to set matters straight with God, what did he tell them they needed to do? Verses 10-11 Note: This command is for this particular situation. It is not to be misconstrued as an instruction or permission to believers to leave their unbelieving mates. Paul makes this very clear in 1 Corinthians 7:12-13.
5. Why do confession and repentance (correcting a sinful behavior) go hand in hand?
6. This incident was a national sin; it had been committed by many. What concepts from Ezra's prayer and the people's reaction can be applied to an individual sin?

DAY FIVE:

1. Thoughtfully print the words from Ezra 9:15.

2. Record the psalmist's cry in Psalm 130:3.
 - a. Such is the cry of every man and woman who comes to the realization of how guilty he/she really is. But, praise God, He has provided an answer. Record from Psalm 130:4 the psalmist's response to his question in the previous verse.

3. Look up one or more of the following verses and describe God's wonderful *forgiveness*.
Psalm 32:1-2

Psalm 51:12

Psalm 103:12

Isaiah 43:25

John 8:36

Romans 8:2

1 John 3:20
 - a. How would you personally describe this *forgiveness*?

4. Record the words of Jesus from John 19:30 as He experienced His last moments on the cross.
 - a. What should this say to us about Christ's payment for our sins and the resulting guilt?

DAY SIX: Review

1. What did you learn from Day One about God's response to people who have committed great sin?
2. Day Two reminds us that all are guilty and no one sin is greater than another as far as establishing us as guilty before God. The introductory paragraph of this lesson began with Sin → Guilt → Depression → More Guilt. What is God's intention for us? (Use as many arrows as you want to) Sin →
3. Share one thing that impacted you about Ezra's prayer and the people's response from Ezra 9 and 10.
4. Forgiveness. What thoughts come to your mind when you read that word?
5. If a Christian came to you and told you they were struggling with guilt, what would you say to them?

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free,
and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

- Galatians 5:1