

## **PROGRAM 56 TEASER**

These two things can be your worst enemies—or your helpful allies. I’m talking about guilt and loneliness. “What?”, you say. “How can guilt and loneliness be anything but two silent killers?” Let’s find out today. First we will expose them—then we will see how God can use guilt and loneliness to make you a better person rather than a bitter one. OK! Let’s go! “Guilt and loneliness: Exposing two silent killers”—today on More Than Talk.

## **GUILT AND LONELINESS: EXPOSING TWO SILENT KILLERS**

### **Page 1 Dealing With Guilt**

Everyone battles guilt. We experience guilt because of something we think, say or do that we know to be wrong and against the rules of conscience.

Thank God for the ability to feel guilty. It means we still have a conscience. Some people damage that delicate mechanism so badly that they never feel guilty about anything. They have a clear conscience simply because they have a poor memory. However, many sensitive people are being devastated by guilt. With some it's so bad that they have trouble sleeping, eating or interacting with people. If we don't learn how to face up to—and handle—guilt, we will not know the intimacy of Jesus as Lord and love of our lives. This message may be brief in content, but it's long on meaning.

### **Three Kinds Of Guilt**

There are at least three kinds of guilt: (1) Unconfessed sin before God; (2) Unconfessed sin to another person; (3) The unwillingness to forgive ourselves.

David, in his adultery with Bathsheba, illustrates the terrible guilt experienced because of unconfessed sin before God. When he did confess (Psalm 51), he was freely forgiven.

The prodigal son illustrates unconfessed sin to another. Until he made restitution to his father (" ... no longer worthy to be called your son," Luke 15: 19) for his selfish, licentious living, he was still a conscience-stricken man. Rejoicing followed his confessing, because guilt was gone.

Simon Peter could represent the need to forgive ourselves. Peter was taken with guilt over denying His Messiah. He probably thought he was past saving. I believe he had to learn to forgive himself. That was made possible by the special loving word from the angel at the empty tomb, "... go, tell His disciples—and Peter... " (Mark 16:7). When Peter knew Jesus still loved and forgave him, he could forgive himself.

## **What Causes Guilt?**

A whole lot of things. Some people never get over the guilt of a broken marriage. Others feel guilty because of the way their kids turn out. Sometimes guilt is caused from resentments and jealousies that are kept hidden. Or from hypocrisy in acting spiritual while living carnal. Or from something we have thought, said or done either to God, another, or ourselves that we knew to be wrong.

If we're willing to get honest, it's generally not difficult to isolate the guilt feelings. What is it that keeps bugging you, and no matter how many times you try to push it down, it keeps popping up like a jack-in-the-box? What is it that keeps nagging at you with those guilt pangs, no matter how hard you try to analyze and justify it?

## **What Are The Options?**

Psychologists tell us that we should deal with guilt by talking about it. Some eastern religions tell us to meditate on guilt and it will go away. Some voices in American society tell us to forget it: "You don't have anything to feel guilty about. If it felt good, it was all right!"

God says none of these options will ever work. Perhaps that's why David was called a man after God's own heart. There were greater warriors, wiser statesmen and more effective administrators than David. I believe God's special love for this man was because of the way David would face his sin and guilt in total honesty and receive forgiveness. He simply couldn't live without God.

Since God made us, He knows we're prone to sin. That's why He made provision to not only forgive us for our sin according to 1 John 1:9, but also for Jesus Christ to act as Advocate—our Attorney—in presenting our case before the Father ( 1John 2: 1).

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#### **Page 2 Isolate The Cause**

Why do you feel guilty? How long has this guilt feeling been on you? Does it have to do with only you and God? Or is another person involved? Get alone with the Lord and tell Him your feelings out loud. This will help you get specific, as well as give you a sense of the nearness and warmth of Jesus Christ.

#### **Beware Of The Guilt-Trip**

Don't put yourself on a guilt trip concerning things that aren't really your fault. Sue was a precious Christian lady who gave her son the best any mother could. When he chose to live in sin, she punished herself with undeserved guilt, believing she was a failure. When she saw how tenderly God loved her, and that she had done her best to "Train up a child in the way he should go,"(Proverbs 22:6), she committed her son into the Lord's hands, continued to love him and pray for him, and faced the world with a clear conscience.

#### **Never Excuse Sin**

If you have sinned, don't justify it. Many Christians confess and reconfess the same sins because they try to justify them with the result that guilt hangs on. The Holy Spirit does not honor pride, but He does honor humility. In Psalm 38, David spoke of God's arrows of conviction piercing him (verse 2), and no inner rest (verse 3) because of his sins that he knew were a stench in the nostrils of God (verses 4 & 5). The key to David's confession and freedom from guilt is found in verse 18, "For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin." The same pattern of a straight-forward, open confession is found in the fifty-first Psalm after his tragic sin with Bathsheba.

## **Make A Good Confession**

Once you've identified that the reason for your guilt is some specific sin, confess it with 1 John 1:9 as a backdrop, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If your guilt is because of something you've done to hurt another, the Holy Spirit will not give you peace if you confess it only to God but not the person harmed. Take the first opportunity to make restitution, which simply means to apologize for what you've done. This takes humility, but having perfect peace with God is worth it.

## **Ignore Post-Confession Guilt Feelings**

Once you've confessed your sin, don't let guilt feelings molest you. That's all they are now—feelings and not sins—and they usually try to cling to a sensitive person. The positive aspect of sensitivity is that we will tend to feel great pain because of our sin and be filled with great desire and determination not to repeat it.

The negative aspect is that Satan will attempt to condemn us, "How could you, a good Christian, have done such a thing? Maybe you're not a Christian after all!" Don't try to resist such guilt feelings, because the more you try not to think about them, the more your concentration will be directed back to your sin. Instead, boldly declare that you have confessed, and are forgiven—and direct your thoughts to God and others. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4: 16)

## **God Deals In Specifics**

If you have only a general sense of guilt with nothing specific, you are probably facing an attack of Satan or being affected by an oversensitive conscience. God convicts in specifics—Satan accuses in generalities. If we blow it, the Holy Spirit has promised to bring it to our remembrance. "Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you." (Philippians 3: 15).

Take frequent inventory before the Lord. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, and

lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23, 24) As you grow in God’s Word, you’ll find your walk in the Holy Spirit becoming so close that when you sin in thought, word or deed you sense His reproof immediately.

If you are still battling guilt after trying what I’ve told you, share your heart with your pastor or a mature Christian friend. Jesus promised you, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed,” (John 8:36). He meant free from the power of sin and guilt. There is no need for guilt feelings to be a destructive scourge in the life of any Christian when we have such a loving heavenly Father who knows no office hours, requires no appointments, and provides total answers and tender follow-up therapy without charge.

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### **Page 3 Loneliness—A Blessing In Disguise**

It was a picture that broke my heart. An elderly woman had committed suicide by hanging. The body had not yet been cut down and the stark, horrible reality was paralyzing. Still another person used a gun to take his life. Laying nearby was a note saying, “I feel so all alone.”

Loneliness is an international disease. And it has always been around. Millions of Americans—including committed Christians—have contracted the disease of loneliness in an extreme, even malignant form. All of us have battled loneliness at one time or another.

But for many people, loneliness lingers and spreads. So many things can leave terrifying loneliness. The death of a mate or other loved one. The heartache of divorce. Learning one has an incurable disease.

### **No One Is Immune**

Senior citizens often feel alone—and forgotten. Some parents become very lonely when their children grow up and the home echoes with emptiness. Teens experience great loneliness and some tragically resort to suicide. It's possible to be surrounded by people in a home, on a job, or in a city and still feel terribly alone.

God is not the author of loneliness—so why does He allow it? I'm convinced that loneliness can result in some of the greatest spiritual growth in our lives—if we know how to handle it. Those pangs of loneliness often help us realize that people, places and events all change and will ultimately disappear. The greatest relationship is only transient. Unless, of course, that relationship is with God. He wants to be our dearest, most precious companion—but He seldom is. Life is often such a whirl of activity that, at best, we know a friendship with the Lord but seldom an intimate spiritual relationship where He is truly the love of our lives.

Yet, isn't that what He wants and tried to tell us at the very beginning when He would take those wonderful walks with Adam and Eve in a lovely garden in the cool of the evening? The Lord cries out for us to love Him with all our hearts,

souls, minds and strength but, if we're honest, we seldom do. That is why God uses our greatest loneliness to help us realize we have only one enduring relationship that can know no end—our walk with God.

### **Putting Loneliness In Perspective**

Study in detail the life of Jesus. He understands our battles with loneliness. He was the most misunderstood person that ever lived. How difficult it was for people to comprehend this One who walked the earth healing sick bodies, driving out demons, calming elements, raising the dead, forgiving sins, and speaking of an unseen but eternal kingdom. His disciples slept while He sobbed in His garden of agony, ran away when He was arrested, deserted Him as He died alone on the cross, and hid in terror after His burial.

He knew what it was to be the loneliest person on earth. No one will ever know the aloneness Jesus experienced when He became the sin of the world and knew, momentarily, even the turning away of His loving Father (Matthew 27:46).

ALONE! And every drop of blood and sweat that issued from His battered body and broken heart was saying to you and to me, "I love you, I love you, I love you!"

That's why His perpetual presence becomes a cure for my pangs of loneliness. One of my most consoling scriptures is Hebrews 4: 15, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." He felt everything you and I have felt, feel or will yet experience. That's why God is the God who is always there. You simply cannot get out from under His loving gaze or constant care.



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#### **Page 4 A Lesson From The First Americans**

English author Selwyn Hughes tells a story of how the American Indians used to train their children in gaining courage by making them spend the night in the forest with the wild animals. Hughes writes, "This was an ordeal that few children looked forward to experiencing, and they would enter the forest with great apprehension and trepidation. Through the long hours of the night they would wait, longing for the moment when dawn would break. But when the dawn came, the son would see his father behind a nearby tree with drawn bow. Without the child's knowledge, the father had been there all night making sure that no harm would come to his son.

That's exactly the way it is with God. He is just beyond visible sight—yet able to be seen with the eye of faith—watching, loving, caring. And He tells each of us, "I never want you to walk alone. I want you to have me as your Lord, your love and your loyal friend—every moment of every day."

One dear elderly man knew the secret of turning what could have been a dungeon of loneliness into a palace of hope. A visitor told him, "I'm sorry to see you living in this old people's home." The older man stretched himself to his fullest height and, with a voice of dignity, said, "My friend, I don't live in this old people's home; I live in God!"

#### **The Choice We Make**

You and I have known loneliness, dear friend. We will know more, of that we can be sure. We have a choice in life's tough moments and tribulations. "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). We can either let our loneliness drive us to the despair of self-pity, drugs, alcohol, foolish relationships, etc., or we can ask Jesus to light up the dungeon of loneliness with His love. God understands us because He made us. I'm discovering that when the inside of me feels loneliness, it's the real me crying out for more of Him. It's a heart homesick for God.

Are you going through terrible loneliness or deep loss? Has your dream suddenly vanished? Have you lost a loved one and asked a million "Whys" with no answer? Has your health been so ravaged that you live in constant pain—and feel the loneliness that comes from knowing that no one really knows what you're going through? Have you gone through a divorce that has left you thinking that maybe suicide isn't all that bad?

Or perhaps your circumstances aren't that tragic but inside you feel a hollow loneliness. Perhaps you're a successful businessman on the outside but feel terribly alone on the inside. Or a housewife who feels loneliness because your husband doesn't seem to understand. Or a young person battling unexplainable loneliness while putting on a brave front before your friends.

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**Page 5 Making Loneliness Work For You**

There is an answer. Loneliness can be the signal for you to develop the most loving and lasting relationship you ever thought possible—with the Lord. Consider the invitation, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... "(Matthew 11:28). Consider the promise, "I am with you all the days—perpetually, uniformly and on every occasion—to the very close and consummation of the age" (Matthew 28:20, Amplified Bible). And then:

- Reach out and begin to love the Lord. Learn to talk to Him about everything—EVERYTHING—in prayer.
- Sing songs that remind you of His reality—even old timers like "How can I be lonely, when I've Jesus only, as my one companion and unfailing guide... "
- Take verses of Scripture as His audible voice to you and practice what He tells you.
- Study the loneliness of others in the Bible and how they used those times to experience more of God's reality (like David in the Psalms). Read books that tell of the battles others have faced and fought successfully.
- Reach out to other aching hearts and comfort them just as God comforts you. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:5). You'll always find others who are hurting as much or more than you, and it's in alleviating their pain and befriending them that your loneliness will vanish or subside greatly.
- Develop one or more special friendships with loyal friends where you can just open up your heart and tell them what you feel. If you don't have such a friend, ask God for one.

- Let the best of your best friends be Jesus and, when things really get rough, take one of those special walks with Him or just fall into His welcoming arms and open up your heart in worshipping and adoring the One who will never let go of your hand.

Remember, loneliness can be the heart's way of reminding us that we are really lonely for more of the Lord. When you realize that, you'll see why loneliness can be a blessing in disguise.