



Freedom!

From Hurts, Hang-Ups, and Habits

*Notes and quotes in this study are from “Life’s Healing Choices” by John Baker
Leader Notes

Session 4- Purity

“Blessed Are The Pure In Heart...” -Matthew 5:8

*“Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for
Righteousness...” -Matthew 5:6*

I. Clearing Out the Dross

“A pure heart is one that is free and clean of impurities. It is a heart free of all the junk that weighs us down, washed clean of all the hurts, hang-ups, and habits that plague our lives. Those who are truly pure in heart aren’t afraid of their pasts. They don’t spend their todays looking over their shoulders at yesterday.”

What do you find yourself looking “over your shoulder” at? What are the benefits and drawbacks of looking back? _____

“If we are ever to recover from the hurts, hang-ups, and habits in our lives and know the joy of a pure heart, we’ll have to learn how to let go of our guilt and shame and how to gain a clear conscience.”

“What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven. What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record.” -Psalm 32:1-2

II. The Effects of Guilt

1) Guilt Destroys Our Confidence

“Guilt and confidence cannot exist in the same person. Guilt is the fear that I’ll be caught or that people will realize I’m not all that I say I am. Guilt makes us feel insecure because we’re worried that somebody will find out the truth about us.”

2) Guilt Damages Our Relationships

“Guilt sabotages our relationship by causing us to overreact out of impatience or anger, or we explode without reason because of some buried guilt... Guilt can also cause us to indulge people unwisely. Parents often feel guilty over poor choices they have made and overcompensate by indulging their children.”

“Guilt can cause us to avoid commitment. We wonder why we won’t let people get close to us. We allow ourselves to get just so close but no closer... Past relationships push their way into the present and taint the future.”

3) Guilt Keeps Us Stuck In The Past

“Guilt tries to keep us focused on what’s behind us by replaying the past in our minds... all the things we wish we could change... It’s like driving a car by always looking in the rearview mirror. A rearview mirror is helpful, because it gives us perspective. Looking at our past gives us perspective, too, but if we look *only* at our past, we never get to see the present or look forward to the future.”

“Feeling guilty cannot change the past, just like worry cannot change the future. Feeling guilty just makes our today miserable.”

Which “effect of guilt” or quote catches your attention? Why? _____

Some may say, “So what if we don’t have that much confidence? So what if our relationships are not great, but manageable? So what if we live in the past? Maybe I deserve to feel guilty for what I did. Is this such a big deal?”

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”- Matthew 5:8

If you flip the previous passage around, Matthew 5:8 infers that when our souls are muddied with guilt, it becomes difficult for us to see God. Explain how this might be so. Explain why this might be such a “big deal”. _____

III. Moving Past Guilt

1) Take A Personal Closet Inventory

“When you clean out a closet, you uncover things that may have been stuffed in a dark corner for years... That’s how it is with our personal ‘closet’ inventory. We may have all kinds of messes stuffed inside us that we’ve tried to ignore- some that may even be stinking up our lives. However, we’ll also discover some great things about ourselves that we’d forgotten or never even realized.”

Here are specific steps we can take in doing a “personal closet inventory”.

- ❖ **Make** time to begin your inventory.
 - Carve out space and time to be alone without interruptions and rushing.

- ❖ **Open** your heart and your mind.
 - Invite God to reveal to you what you need to see.
 - *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test my thoughts. Point out anything you find in me that makes you sad and lead me along the path of everlasting life.”-Psalm 139:23-24*

- ❖ **Be** ruthlessly honest.
 - “Our healing starts with us being radically honest and saying, ‘I’m the problem.’ We can’t keep saying, ‘If I could just change relationships, jobs, or locations, then everything would be fine.’ The problem with that kind of thinking is wherever you go, there you are!”
 - One African-American pastor said it best, “The issue is-you.”
 - No more rationalizing, blaming others, and deceiving ourselves.

❖ **Write** it down.

- Writing encourages us to be more specific. If we don't write things down, ideas and thoughts can remain vague.
- The following is a worksheet that could help in the inventory process.

THE PERSON	THE CAUSE	THE EFFECT	MY PART
1)			
2)			
3)			
4)			

- *The Person*: List the person or object you resent or fear.
- *The Cause*: List the event or specific actions someone did to hurt you.
- *The Effect*: Write how the specific event or action has effected your life in the past and present.
- *My Part*: Write down honestly what your part was and is in regards to the past event, current resentment, or continued effects.

- **“SPECIAL NOTE: If you have been physically or sexually abused as a child or adult, I want you to know that I am so sorry that you suffered through that abuse. When you get to ‘My Part’ in the inventory, simply put the words ‘NONE’ or ‘NOT GUILTY.’”**

❖ **Remember** God's grace and goodness.

- As we begin to see realistic truths about ourselves, it is critical to remember that God is willing to forgive us for whatever our inventory uncovers.
- Don't forget the good choices and blessings in your past and present.

2) Ask and Receive God's Forgiveness

Although there will be great things that we realize about our past and areas of responsibility that do not belong to us, we will also realize our part in our hurtful past, current resentment, and ongoing effects.

“If we freely admit that we have sinned, we find God utterly reliable and straightforward- he forgives our sin and makes us thoroughly clean from all that is evil.”- 1 John 1:9

“No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow.”- Isaiah 1:18

“Let us, then, feel very sure that we can come before God’s throne where there is grace. There we can receive mercy and grace to help us when we need it.”

–Hebrews 4:16

There’s no magic formula or certain words you have to say. Don’t beg, bargain, or bribe. Simply talk to God and sincerely ask God to forgive you for the specific areas of responsibility that you acknowledge, and know that God forgives you.

4) Forgive Yourself

Many people say they know God forgives them, but they cannot forgive themselves. Sometimes pride gets in the way of us receiving God’s forgiveness. “I can’t believe *I* did that. I can understand *other people* doing it, but not *me*.” Remember, you are just as broken and limited as others.

As you might have already heard, “Who are we to not forgive ourselves when God Himself has forgiven us?” Are we more righteous than God? Do we have higher standards than God?

Remember God is more gracious than we will ever be. Remember, that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for all the wrong we have done and will do. Remember, God forgives you. Forgive yourself.

Which task of “Moving Past Guilt” seems the most challenging for you? _____

Which task seems the most encouraging and helpful? _____

IV. In Pursuit of Purity

Purity is not only about what is absent, but also about what is present. Purity is about the existence of only one thing. Pure gold means there is only gold.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...” -Matthew 5:6

Although many people think of “righteousness” as a following of a set of laws, the biblical definition of righteousness is “faithfulness to a relationship”. We follow certain ways and moral codes, because they are pleasing to God. Righteousness is pleasing God. A pure heart is a heart that seeks only to please God.

What insights, inspiration, or inquiries do you have as you reflect on this definition and understanding of “purity” and “righteousness”? _____

Once we invite God into our lives to take control and transform us, God steps in. However, God does also call us to partner with him in pursuing purity. Here are some areas of focus in pursuing a life that seeks to please God alone.

1) Focus On Changing One Issue At A Time

“Trying to tackle all thirty problems at once is like those little bugs that fly around in all directions, never making any real progress but stirring up a lot of motion. Ask God to help you focus on one defect at a time. Otherwise you’ll feel overwhelmed and discouraged.”

“An intelligent person aims at wise action, but a fool starts off in many directions.” –Proverbs 17:24

2) Focus On Victory One Day At A Time

“It’s like the old saying: ‘How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time... We live in a world of instant everything: mashed potatoes, microwave popcorn, even information. And we want instant spiritual maturity.’”

“Ask God, ‘Lord, just for this day, I want to be patient and not get angry. Just for today, protect me from going to those Internet sites. Just for today, I want to be positive instead of negative.’ Remember, one day at a time. Bite-size pieces. Each night celebrate and thank God for whatever change or victory He has worked in your life, no matter how small.”

“Don’t be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time.” –Matthew 6:34

3) Focus On Good Things

“Did you know that every time you think a thought- positive or negative- it sends an electrical impulse across your brain, and that impulse creates a path? Every time you think the same thought, the path gets deeper and reinforces that brain pattern. Some of us have negative ruts in our minds because we’ve thought the same negative things over and over. But we can also create positive pathways in our minds. Every time we think about a spiritual truth, we reinforce that positive brain pattern.”

The best way to replace the negative ruts is to create new, positive ruts in our minds. Thinking truthfully, positively, and reflecting on God’s Word over and over creates new ruts of life and hope in our minds.

“Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about.” –Phil. 4:8

4) Focus on Doing Good, Not Feeling Good

“It’s always easier to act your way into a feeling than to feel your way into an action... If you wait until you feel like it, you may have a long wait.”

“Anytime you try to change a major part of your life- a character defect, flaw, personality trait, or weakness- it won’t feel good at the start. In fact, it will feel awkward. Even more, it will feel bad for a while... It won’t feel normal. Sometimes we are so used to feeling abnormal that normal doesn’t feel good.”

5) Focus On Progress, Not Perfection

*“I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.”
–Philippians 1:6*

“Don’t fall into the trap of thinking that God will only love you once you reach a certain stage. God loves you at each stage of recovery and growth... Just as a parent thrills at his or her baby’s first steps, your heavenly Father thrills at each and every step of your growth- no matter how small. It’s the direction of your heart that pleases Him.”

What area(s) of focus seem(s) the most challenging for you? _____

What area(s) of focus would be most helpful for you in pursuing purity? Why? _____

What are some practical steps can you do to implement these areas of focus?
What? When? How? Who? _____

V. Application

Write about it.

- What “effects of guilt” have you seen in your life?
- Take time to write down your reflections from your personal closet inventory. It might be helpful to use the chart given in this lesson.
- Is there any barrier keeping you from asking and receiving forgiveness from God or from forgiving yourself?
- How do you feel about pursuing purity after understanding that it is not only about what is absent, but about what is ultimately present?
- Take time to answer the questions that were asked at the end of the “Pursuing Purity” section.

Share about it.

Share your reflections from “Write about it” with someone nonjudgmental, trustworthy, and willing to help you.

“As iron sharpens iron, so people can improve each other.”-Proverbs 27:17

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!.. Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”- Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12

Pray about it

Dear God, You know my past- all the good and bad choices I have made and all the good and bad things that have happened to me. I ask that you give me humility, strength, and courage to do an honest personal closet inventory of my life. Please open my eyes to the truth of my past- the truth of how others have hurt me and how I have hurt others. Please help me reach out to others You have placed along my pathway to healing. Thank You for providing these individuals to help me keep balanced as I do my inventory. As I come clean, I thank You in advance for the forgiveness You have given me.

I also want to submit to any and all changes You want to make in my life. By Your grace, I am ready to face it and deal with my issues one by one. I have issues that have hurt me and issues that have hurt others. I’ve lived with some of these issues for so long that they have become a part of who I am. I have tried by my own power to fight against my issues and have failed over and over. I now ask that by Your power and the power of Your Holy Spirit that You transform my mind, my heart, and my actions.

I need Your help in knowing where to start. I cannot handle all my issues at once. Show me, Lord, where should I begin? Help me as I look over my closet inventory list. Which character issue is the most damaging to my life and others? I am ready to follow Your lead. Amen.