



LifeNIGHT
 Whole People In A Broken World
 An Interactive Bible Study Series for Summer 2002

R	Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor. (Matthew 5:3, GN)
	Principle #1: Realize I'm not God. I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and my life is unmanageable.
E	Happy are those who mourn. (Matthew 5:4, GN)
	Principle #2: Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to Him, and that He has the power to help me recover.
C	Happy are those who are humble. (Matthew 5:5, GN)
	Principle #3: Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control.
O	Happy are the pure in heart. (Matthew 5:8, GN)
	Principle #4: Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust.

- **Psalm 32:1 (LB)** 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.
- In this Bible Study series, we've been looking at RECOVERY; that is, how we handle the hurts, habits and hang-ups that mess up our lives (even after we become Christians!). Each week we're looking at a different letter in the word RECOVERY, representing the eight steps Jesus presents in the Beatitudes to help us RECOVER ALL!
- R – Realize that I'm not God and that I can't control my own life.
(THE REALITY STEP)
- E – Earnestly believe that God exists and has power to help me.
(THE HOPE STEP)
- C – Consciously choose to commit my life to Christ's control.
(THE COMMITMENT STEP)
- O – Openly examine and confess my faults to myself and to God.
(THE HOUSECLEANING STEP)

- This step has to do with cleaning up the past, letting go of guilt, gaining a clear conscience and learning to live guilt free in the future.
- Why is this a part of the recovery process? Because guilt keeps us stuck in the past, keeps us from growing and keeps us from becoming all God wants us to be. **IF YOU'RE GOING TO LEARN HOW TO REALLY ENJOY LIFE, YOU HAVE TO LEARN HOW TO LET GO OF GUILT.**
- None of us is faultless. We've all sinned and made mistakes, so we all have regrets and remorse. We all sometimes wish we could turn back the clock and do things differently. So we feel guilty about it and carry it around with us – sometimes consciously, but most of the time unconsciously.
- There are a lot of ways you react in life that are caused by unconscious guilt, things you feel bad about that you may not even be aware of. You may deny or repress the guilt. You may excuse or rationalize the guilt. You may even blame other people for your guilt. But you still feel the effects of it.
- If you're really going to recover from the hurts, habits and hang-ups in your life, you've got to learn how to let go of guilt and live with a clear conscience. Psychologists tell us that we can't get rid of our guilt, that we just have to learn to live with it. So people try to rationalize their guilt. **WHEN I RATIONALIZE MY MISTAKES AND SINS, MY MIND SAYS IT'S OKAY WHILE MY HEART SAYS IT'S WRONG.** (But my heart always wins, because it will not keep quiet!)
- The good news is that the Bible tells us how to do what psychology tells us we can't do! And when we take this step, we will reap the benefits of it in our mind and heart ...
- **Matthew 5:8 (MES)** You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.
- **Psalm 32:1 (LB)** 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.
- Before we look at HOW we take this step, let's look at WHY we take it, because when we understand the WHY, the HOW is easier.

WHAT GUILT DOES TO ME

1. GUILT DESTROYS MY CONFIDENCE.

- You cannot be a confident person if you have guilt in your life. It makes you feel insecure because you're always worried, "What if somebody finds out the truth about me? Then they may not like me or they may reject me." As a result, we become afraid of other people and it destroys our confidence.
- Many years ago Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, writer of the Sherlock Holmes novels, played a prank on five of the most prominent men in England. He sent an anonymous note to each of them which simply said: "All is found out, flee at once." Within twenty-four hours all five men had left the country!
- Guilt robs you of confidence. It's like a cloud hanging over your head and you're thinking, "I just can't get on with my life because I'm afraid somebody is going to find that skeleton in my closet, that deep dark secret that no one else knows about." Guilt carries a heavy weight – and it robs you of confidence.

2. GUILT DAMAGES MY RELATIONSHIPS.

- Guilt causes me to respond to people in wrong ways.
 - Guilt can cause me to be impatient with other people.
 - Guilt can cause me to overreact in anger ("explosion").
 - Guilt can cause me to indulge people ("buy for them").
 - Guilt can cause me to avoid commitment in relationship ("this close but no closer").
- One of the major reasons I won't let people get close to me is GUILT. It makes me respond to people in ways that sometimes even I don't understand. A lot of marriage problems today are caused by things that happened prior to the marriage that a spouse still feels guilty about. Guilt is damaging!

3. GUILT KEEPS ME STUCK IN THE PAST.

- Living in the past is like always looking in the rearview mirror. You're going to end up crashing if you do that. Guilt tends to replay in your mind over and over the things you wish you could change but you're never going to change.

- **Guilt cannot change the past just like worry cannot change the future; it just makes today miserable.**
- On top of that, guilt can make you sick. According to one report, psychiatrists say that seventy percent of the people in the hospital could leave today if they just knew how to resolve their guilt. When I swallow my guilt my stomach keeps score, and if I don't talk it out with God, I will take it out on myself or on others.
- **Proverbs 28:13 (TEV)** You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins. Confess them and give them up; then God will show mercy to you.

HOW DO I COME CLEAN?

1. Take a personal moral inventory.

- How do I do that? Get alone by yourself with a pen and notepad and ask yourself, "What have I felt guilty or remorseful about? What are the faults in my life that I know need changing?" Ask God to bring even subconscious hurts or hang-ups to your mind.
- **Lamentations 3:40 (NIV)** Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord.
- **Psalms 139:23-24 (NIV)** Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.
- When you take this personal moral inventory, take your time. And by the way, it doesn't work unless you are brutally honest with yourself. This is a good regular discipline that can keep you growing and in tune with God's purpose in your life.
- Why in writing? Because it forces you to be specific. **Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and the fingertips.** If I can't say it or put it in writing, it's still pretty vague.
 - **The Person:** Who is the object of my resentment or fear?
 - **The Cause:** What specific action did they take that hurt me?
 - **The Effect:** What effect did that action have on my life?
 - **The Damage:** What damage did that action do to my instincts?
 - **My Part:** What part of the resentment am I responsible for?

2. Accept responsibility for my faults.

- **Proverbs 20:27 (TEV)** The Lord gave us mind and conscience; we cannot hide from ourselves.
- The greatest holdup to the healing of your hang-ups is YOU! It all starts with being radically honest and saying, "I'm the problem." We say, "If I just change relationships, jobs, or locations, then everything will be fine." The only problem is wherever I go, there I am! And I keep messing things up."
- Don't rationalize it, don't minimize it, and don't blame others. It may have been mostly their fault but what about your part? That's what God holds you responsible to deal with.
- **1 John 1:8 (PHI)** If we refuse to admit that we are sinners, then we live in a world of illusion and truth becomes a stranger to us.
- **If I really want to stop defeating myself, then I've got to stop deceiving myself.** Accept responsibility for your faults!

3. Ask God for forgiveness.

- **1 John 1:9 (PHI)** But if we freely admit that we have sinned, we find him reliable and just – he forgives our sins and makes us thoroughly clean from all that is evil.
- **HOW TO GET FORGIVENESS FROM GOD:**
 1. Don't beg
 2. Don't bargain ("I promise I won't do ...")
 3. Don't bribe ("I promise I will do ...")
 4. Just believe!
- The word "admit" (KJV: "confess") is a compound Greek word, HOMOLOGEO, from HOMO (meaning "same") and LOGEO (meaning "word"). To admit or confess means to speak the same thing about your sin as God says about it. Just give up and agree with God – He's always right anyway!
- The basis for forgiveness is that God is utterly reliable, because it's His nature! "But it doesn't seem fair – somebody has to pay for my sin." SOMEBODY DID! That's why Jesus Christ died.

- **Isaiah 1:18 (KJV)** Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

4. Admit my faults to another person.

- **James 5:16 (MES)** Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed. The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with.
- God says that this step is absolutely essential to your recovery: ADMIT YOUR FAULTS TO ONE ANOTHER. Why can't I just admit it to God? Why do I have to drag another person into this? BECAUSE THE ROOT CAUSE OF OUR PROBLEM IS RELATIONAL. We lie to each other and wear masks; we deny our true feelings and play games. As a result, we become isolated and insecure ("If they really knew the truth about me, they would reject me.")
- I AM ONLY AS SICK AS MY SECRETS. Revealing your feelings is the beginning of healing. When you risk honesty, suddenly a feeling of freedom comes into your life. You realize that everybody has problems, and often they have the same ones you do. You don't need more than one, but you do need at least one person in life you can be totally honest with. Why? There is something therapeutic about it. It's God's way of freeing us.
- Do I just go out and broadcast my sins to everybody? No! Telling the wrong person could get you in trouble. So who do you tell?
 - Someone who can trust to keep a confidence.
 - Someone who understands the value of what you're doing.
 - Someone who is mature enough to not be shocked.
 - Someone who knows the Lord well enough that they can reflect His forgiveness to you.
- YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL EVERYBODY, JUST SOMEBODY!
- THE DEVIL WORKS THROUGH ISOLATION! The moment you share the secret that's been making you sick, you will experience freedom like you've never felt before.
- The secret you want to CONCEAL the most is the one you need to REVEAL the most because it will HEAL you the most!

5. Accept God's forgiveness and forgive myself.

- **Romans 3:23-24 (NLT)** For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins.
- People come up to pastors all the time and say, "That message was just for me – you've been reading my mail." No, I haven't; I've been reading MY mail. We're all in the same boat, and not one of us is perfect. The sin problem is universal; only the details are different.
- **HOW DOES GOD FORGIVE?**
 - He forgives INSTANTLY. (Humans like to make us suffer for awhile, but God doesn't do that)
 - He forgives FREELY. (We don't deserve forgiveness and we can't earn it, but God gives it to us)
 - He forgives COMPLETELY. (God totally wipes out our failures and mistakes when we ask Him – keep short accounts with God!)
- **Romans 8:1 (KJV)** There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
- THE ISSUE IS NOT WHETHER GOD WILL FORGIVE ME; THE ISSUE IS WILL I FORGIVE MYSELF?
- **1 John 3:19-20 (NLT)** It is by our actions that we know we are living in the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before the Lord, even if our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.
- **1 John 3:19-20 (MES)** This is the only way we'll know we're living truly, living in God's reality. It's also the way to shut down debilitating self-criticism, even when there is something to it. For God is greater than our worried hearts and knows more about us than we do ourselves.
- When you live in the past it is hard. I am not there; my name is not "I WAS." When you live in the future it is hard. I am not there; my name is not "I WILL BE." When you live in the present it is easy. I am there; my name is "I AM."