



Come as you are, but don't stay that **WAY!**

GROWTH GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Fall Quarter - Lesson 7 - Week of October 20, 2024

Lesson: OVERCOMING GUILT AND REGRET

Bible Verses: Ezra 9:1-15; Romans 7; Romans 8:1; Philippians 3:13-14;
Revelation 12:10-11; James 1:15; 2 Samuel 12:11-14; Psalm 32:1-5; I John 1:8-10

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. What three words would you use to describe yourself?
2. Does your family have any big traditions?

DISCUSSION

"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." - Ezra 9:6 (NKJV)

Reflection: Think of a time when you experienced relief from the burden of guilt and regret. What was the situation? What changed in your life as a result of the experience?

Situation: Read Ezra 9:1-15. As Ezra prepares to lead the Jewish exiles back to Judah, he is soon made aware of another problem: "The people of Israel . . . have not kept themselves separate from neighboring peoples with their detestable practices (Ezra 9:1)." Many of the Jewish people had also taken foreign spouses. These sinful practices led the nation into captivity in the first place. Ezra was stunned by the news, and in response, he gathered the people together to address the situation.

1. Why did the Jewish leaders feel compelled to bring their problem to Ezra?
2. Why do you think Ezra reacted so strongly to the news?
3. Who shared in Ezra's remorse for the people's unfaithfulness to God?
4. What was Ezra's initial response to the people's sin?
5. Why did Ezra include himself in this prayer of repentance even though he (and many others) had remained faithful to God?
6. Why was it difficult for the Israelites to remember God's mercy and justice?

Inspiration: Satan numbs our awareness and short-circuits our self-control. We know what we are doing; yet we cannot believe what we are doing. In the fog of weakness, we want to stop but don't have the will to do so. We want to turn around, but our feet won't move. We want to run and, pitifully, we want to stay. Confusion, guilt, rationalization, and despair! It all hits. It hits hard. We numbly pick ourselves up and stagger back into our world. "Oh, God, what have I done?" Should I tell someone?" "I will never do it again." "My God, can you forgive me?"

No one is free from the treachery of sudden sin. No one is immune to this trick of perdition. The demon of hell can scale the highest monastery wall, penetrate the deepest faith, and desecrate the purest home.

Sometimes when we stumble and sin overtakes us, we feel guilty and regret our actions. God wants us to depend on Him as we strive to overcome our sins. While not all of us wrestle with guilt and regret, we should be ready to identify and help those struggling in this area. Romans 7 is the Emancipation Proclamation for those who tend to stumble. Look at verse 15: *"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do. But what I hate, I do."* Thank God there is no condemnation for those in Christ.

Reaction:

1. What causes some people to believe God's "well of mercy" will run dry?
2. How do Paul's words in Romans 7:24-25 and Romans 8:1 assure you that God does not condemn those who seek forgiveness and turn from their sins?
3. What are some ways that you handle guilt and regret?
4. What does the example of Ezra and Paul's words in Romans reveal about the correct way to handle your guilt?
5. Why is it often tempting to ignore a guilty conscience?

Steps to Overcoming Guilt and Regret:

1. Silence the accuser by remembering Christ saved us by His blood (Revelation 12:10-11).
2. Remind yourself there is no condemnation in Christ (Romans 8:1).
3. Forget what lies behind and keep pressing toward the prize (Philippians 3:13-14).
4. Thank God that He causes all things, even our failures, to work together for good (Romans 8:28).

Life Lessons: Sin leads to only one result: death. Paul wrote in Romans 6:23: "The wages of sin is death." James added in James 1:15, "After desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." Sin is not to be taken lightly.

The Bible is clear that Jesus frees us from the penalty of sin and liberates us from its power. We should be honest about our failings, repent, and believe God has blotted out the record (Isaiah 43:25).

Devotion: Father, we pray that you would help us to be sensitive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Help us repent of sin quickly and never let it take root in our lives. Teach us to release our guilt to you and to forgive ourselves so we may not live in bondage to our failures. May we always be thankful for your mercy and grace.

Journaling: What are some ways you can change the way you respond to guilt?

Prayer Focus: God, help me to move past any guilt and regrets that I may have.