Hi Community Group Leader!

**Quick Updates:**
- You should be receiving a weekly automated email from Church Teams reminding you to complete a meeting report. (Please contact us if you are not receiving it!) The email includes a link for you to go directly to the report – very convenient. Please take the time to complete your report each week (about 1 minute).

**GENERAL GROUP LEADERSHIP TIPS**
- Nametags are still available in the Grand Foyer. New people are still joining groups!
- Consider using an Orange resource even with adults.
- Ask anyone who would like to host a meeting or help provide snacks in the future to speak with you.
- Sometime during this week’s meeting, please discuss some mission/outreach ideas with your group.

Have a great week in your groups. Keep on loving the people God has put in your ‘world’!
Pastor Dwayne

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**WEEK#3 BULLETIN INSERT**

SATAN usually sounds like a ROOSTER

CONVICTION (true guilt) vs. CONDEMNATION (false guilt):

Am I holding the STRINGS of guilt over someone?

Sin – Grace = GUILT

Sin + Grace = GRATITUDE

3 steps out of the cage of guilt:
1. REPENT
2. CONFESS – No More Secrets
3. BELIEVE
MATERIALS NEEDED:
- Pens/Pencils available
- Blank bulletin inserts from Sunday (available at Grand Foyer or office)
- Name tags for each participant (if new people arrive)
- Jar/container with the sealed “cages” that people identified during Week #1
- See Orange page for additional supplies

Remember that you are always welcome to rearrange the meeting elements (i.e. adults may wait until the end of the night for snacks and fellowship, etc.) Do what is going to work best for YOUR group.

WELCOME/SNACKS 20 minutes

OPEN (Ice Breakers) 15 minutes

*WEEK 3 TIP:* Remember that you set the pace for the ice breaker. If you take 2 minutes to answer and so do the other 12 people in your group, you’ve consumed nearly a third of your group time.

Choose one (1) from:

1. What is one smell, sound, song, etc. that evokes a strong, positive memory for you? Briefly describe that memory.
2. What very common occurrence really ticks you off (e.g. telemarketing calls at home; trash bag rips open; etc.)? Why do you think it has that effect on you?
3. Would you rather be able to read minds or be invisible? Why?

ADULT INTERACTION OVER SUNDAY’S TOPIC/MESSAGE 30-40 minutes

*WEEK 3 TIP:* You can always begin by reviewing the fill-in-the-blanks from Sunday’s message, to make certain everyone has that as a starting point. Sometimes that will actually spark the conversation that will carry the night. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit as you lead.

Choose From the following questions/activities. Consider what will work best in your group:

1. READ: “When we sin, guilt is a healthy and holy reflex.” _Mark Batterson, Wild Goose Chase._
   
   Do you agree that guilt could be healthy and even holy? Why / why not?
   
   (The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, and drives us towards the Cross and repentance. The Cross opens the cage of guilt. We are no longer guilty of sin that we confess. Christ doesn’t condemn us and invites us to leave the cage.)

2. How would you explain the difference between “true guilt” (conviction) and “false guilt”? How is each likely to make a person feel?

   The enemy will try to keep us in bondage through “false guilt” (unjustified feelings of guilt) that can immobilize us emotionally, relationally, and spiritually.

   "True guilt" is rooted in the conviction of the Holy Spirit. "False Guilt", rooted in condemnation, is very harmful to us.

   **Conviction (true guilt) vs. Condemnation (false guilt):**
   - Conviction is about a specific sin. Condemnation is about who you are.
   - Conviction brings with it hope and change - "repent so that times of refreshing may come".
   - Condemnation brings no hope and leaves you feeling helpless.
   - Conviction ends when sin is confessed. Condemnation persists even after repentance.

3. On Sunday, we learned how the Apostle Peter probably equated the ordinary crowing of a rooster with his great failure – denying three times that he knew Jesus. (See Luke 22:54-62)

   What is the “rooster’s crow” that sets off guilty feelings inside you?

   (A circumstance, sound, voice – anything really – can remind us of past failure and result in feelings of guilt.)
4. For many people, there are two or three experiences that imprison people in their past. What are those two or three experiences for you?

**WEEK 3 TIP:** Be prepared for the room to be silent for a moment or two. Don’t rush in to “rescue” the moment. Allow people to have time to respond to what the Holy Spirit is revealing in their own lives. Remind the group of the CONFIDENTIALITY of anything that is shared.

5. Acting like a Christian is fairly simple for many followers of Christ. REACTING like a Christian is often much more challenging, because we react in ways that reveal who we truly are.

Is there someone in your life who brings out the worst in you? (Give time for responses.)

We must train our responses to be holy and healthy. What are some ways that we can recondition our responses so that they are righteous, regardless of our circumstances?

(Prayer. Nothing reconditions our spiritual reflexes like prayer. Praying for the difficult people in your life will change the way you feel about them, and the way you react toward them. Jesus was probably able to forgive Peter in the moment of Peter’s betrayal because Jesus had already prayed for Peter – see Luke 22:32.)

**GROUP RESPONSE AND PRAYER 10-15 minutes**

**WEEK 3 TIP:** Remind the group that everything shared is confidential! You might also want to consider breaking the group into same-sex subgroups for this response time and prayer together.

1. Consider reading aloud the poignant story: Mr. Barwick’s Leg

2. Think back to those two or three imprisoning experiences in your own life. Who do you need to forgive? Who do you need to ask to forgive you?

   “If you want to impact someone’s life, love them when they least expect it and least deserve it.” __Mark Batterson, Wild Goose Chase

3. Jesus’ work on the Cross provides the key for opening the cage of guilt and allowing us to go free.

   Our part is to:
   - **Repent** (Turn from our actual sin, and also from holding the strings of guilt over others),
   - **Confess** (Getting our secrets into the open – no more secrets!),
   - **Believe** (in the power of Jesus’ work on the Cross to forgive and to restore purpose to your life – He is not finished with you!)

   In this safe environment, is there anyone willing to step out of your cage, to confess your need for freedom, and allow the group to pray with you and to minister to you?

   (Confessing sin enables the others who hear it to know that they aren’t the only ones. You may encourage them to remove their “cage” from the jar/container from Week #1, if applicable.)

**MISSION MOMENT 5 minutes**

**WEEK 3 TIP** Discuss how the group could work together to serve others outside of the group.

**Before the group scatters, eats, etc., please distribute and discuss the group mission/outreach ideas with your group.**

- Distribute copies of the sample mission ideas included in this material. (Copies are also available online under Resources > Community Group Leaders and at the Community Groups table in the Grand Foyer.)
- Elicit ideas about ways the group could work together to serve someone else, meet a family’s need, etc.
- Remind them that serving together is a great way to get to know one another, create some wonderful shared memories, and bless someone else in the process.
Week #3 – Additional Resources for Adults & Parents

“Mr. Barwick’s Leg”

Amputees often experience some sensation of a phantom limb. Somewhere, locked in their brains, a memory lingers of the nonexistent hand or leg. Invisible toes curl, imaginary hands grasp things, a "leg" feels so sturdy a patient may try to stand on it. For a few, the experience includes pain. Doctors watch helplessly, for the part of the body screaming for attention does not exist. One such patient was my medical school administrator, Mr. Barwick, who had a serious and painful circulation problem in his leg but refused to allow the recommended amputation. As the pain grew worse, Barwick grew bitter. "I hate it!" he would mutter about the leg. At last he relented and told the doctor, "I can't stand it anymore. I’m through with that leg. Take it off."

Surgery was scheduled immediately. Before the operation, however, Barwick, asked the doctor. "What do you do with legs after they're removed?" "We may take a biopsy or explore them a bit, but afterwards we incinerate them," the doctor replied. Barwick proceeded with a bizarre request: "I would like you to preserve my leg in a pickling jar. I will install it on my mantle shelf. Then, as I sit in my armchair, I will taunt that leg, 'Hah! You can't hurt me anymore!' "Ultimately, he got his wish. But the despised leg had the last laugh. Barwick suffered phantom limb pain of the worst degree. The wound healed, but he could feel the torturous pressure of the swelling as the muscles cramped, and he had no prospect of relief. He had hated the leg with such intensity that the pain had unaccountably lodged permanently in his brain.

To me, phantom limb pain provides wonderful insight into the phenomenon of false guilt. Christians can be obsessed by the memory of some sin committed years ago. It never leaves them, crippling their ministry, their devotional life, their relationships with others. They live in fear that someone will discover their past. They work overtime trying to prove to God they're repentant. They erect barriers against the enveloping, loving grace of God. Unless they experience the truth in I John 3:19-20 that "God is greater than our conscience," they become as pitiful as poor Mr. Barwick, shaking his fist in fury at the pickled leg on the mantle.

___Dr. Paul Brand.

ASK:
- Does this poignant, if not grotesque, story resonate with anyone, tonight?
- Who has some “pickled” past failure stuck over the mantelpiece of your mind that you’d like to be free from today? Jesus is here to set you free!
GUILT...A CONSISTENT EMOTION! The more you study children of divorce, and the more you talk to them one-on-one, the more you will find out that there is one emotion which virtually every child of divorce deals with at some point or another in processing their parents’ divorce. That emotion is guilt! Almost without fail, children of divorce will tell you that, “I felt responsible for my parents divorce.” Some children blame one parent or both. Some kids blame their circumstances. Some kids will even blame their brothers or sisters. Eventually though, most children of divorce blame themselves. It can be as simple as “If I hadn’t fought with my brother,” or as complex as, “I don’t feel like I did enough to stop it,” but these kids wrestle not only with the divorce itself but with an ingrained feeling that they were somehow responsible for it in the first place.

GUILT: a feeling of responsibility or remorse for some offense, crime, wrong, etc., whether real or imagined. (dictionary.com)

Scripture References About Guilt
- Ps 46:1
- Ps 51:10
- Ps 103:12
- Is 43:25
- Jon 2:2
- Rom 5:11
- Rom 8:1
- 2 Cor 5:17
- 2 Cor 5:21
- Phil 3:13-14
- Col 3:13
- Heb 4:16
- Heb 8:12-13
- Heb 9:14

HELPING A CHILD WITH FEELINGS OF GUILT
- Talk to them.
- Pray with them.
- Give them an opportunity to express what they are feeling.
- Encourage them to be specific about what they think they did.
- Repeatedly assure them that they are not to blame for their parents’ divorce.
- Find out what they think about the divorce.
- Help them to make sense of the divorce.
- Don’t shut a child down when they are searching for answers.
- Don’t tell them not to feel guilty – it doesn’t help and may lead to even deeper feelings of guilt.

Why Children Think It’s Their Fault
Younger children are very self-centered. The average preschooler believes that the world revolves around them and everything that happens in the world is the result of something they do. It is part of their maturing process. Accordingly, when their parents get divorced, they naturally conclude that it must have been the result of something they have done.

We condition our kids to assume to assume that things are their fault. As they grow, we teach them by pointing out their mistakes and the consequences of those mistakes. Children learn by being told “no,” and so when something bad happens, they have been trained to know that it is their fault.

Finally, many kids find it hard to blame their parents because their parents are “always right.” Instead, they turn the blame on themselves and feel guilty.

INSIDE THE MIND OF A CHILD OF DIVORCE
- “If only I hadn’t fought so much with my brother…”
- “If only I had kept my room clean…”
- “If only I hadn’t made Mom mad that one time…”
- “If only I had been quiet when Dad was having a bad day…”
- “If only I had gotten better grades in school…”
- “If only I had behaved better…”
- “If only I had never been born…”

Divorce Ministry 4 KIDS
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http://DivorceMinistry4Kids.com

This resource is provided for any parent who wishes to understand or to help children who may be dealing with feelings of false guilt over divorce, an extremely common occurrence.
Week #3 – ORANGE Resources for Group Leaders and Parents

“Guilt vs. Freedom Word Search”

Materials Needed:
• Copy of this page for each participant.
• Pencil/pen

Instructions: Give 5 minutes to see who can find all 16 words associated with guilt and freedom.
• Words may appear in any order and in any direction.

GUILT vs. FREEDOM

S S E N E V I G R O F Y H E J
Y I H B U S Z P L B H I C D O
A V N U H X H K Q T D A Q E Y
T R A P P E D D R D R C N T P
H O P E P L S O E G O E E B N
Y Z K I H X W N G N C D C I L
C H L X U N C M D V O U A S F
F L T B U D D E O O N T E M U
X R V L X Y M I G V F I P T J
Y O E R A N S R D Q E T S H W
J F Z E A E J C P K S A P J G
I P H T D Y H D V V S R U H N
N I I Z O O H N V J D G R U Q
F O C W P W M Q U T E R C E S
N Y N A W K Y K Y U F R B N T

FREEDOM words
CONFESS
FREEDOM
GRATITUDE
FORGIVENESS
JOY
GRACE
HOPE
PEACE

GUILT Words
SECRET
TRAPPED
HEAVY
UNWORTHY
CONDEMNATION
SIN
UNHEALTHY
HIDDEN
“Slingshot Story”

**Materials Needed:**
- This page (The Story)
- Crayons & copies of the picture on the reverse (if desired)

**Directions:**
- Consider reading the story aloud or inviting several children who are particularly good readers to help you.
- The children may wish to draw/color while listening (page 2).

**THE STORY**

This is a story from Richard Hoefler’s book, *Will Daylight Come?*, that illustrates how sin enslaves and how forgiveness frees. It also shows us how guilt can control our lives.

A little boy visiting his grandparents was given his first slingshot. He practiced in the woods, but he could never hit his target. He went back to Grandma’s back yard, where he spied her pet duck. On an impulse he took aim and let fly. The stone hit, and the duck fell dead. The boy panicked. Desperately he hid the dead duck in the woodpile, only to look up and see his sister watching. Sally had seen it all, but she said nothing.

After lunch that day, Grandma said, “Sally, let’s wash the dishes.” But Sally said, “Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen today. Didn’t you, Johnny?” And she whispered to him, “Remember the duck!” So Johnny did the dishes.

Later Grandpa asked if the children wanted to go fishing. Grandma said, “I’m sorry, but I need Sally to help make supper.” Sally smiled and said, “That’s all taken care of. Johnny wants to do it.” Again she whispered, “Remember the duck.” Johnny stayed while Sally went fishing.

After several days of Johnny doing both his chores and Sally’s, finally he couldn’t stand it. He confessed to Grandma that he’d killed the duck. “I know, Johnny,” she said, giving him a hug. “I was standing at the window and saw the whole thing. Because I love you, I forgave you. I wondered how long you would let Sally make a slave of you.

**Ask the following:**
1. Is feeling guilty ever a good thing? *(Yes, when we wrong someone, especially God (sin), we should feel guilty.)*
2. What is the best way out of feeling guilty? *(Pray and sincerely ask God to forgive us for our sin. Then, confess our wrong (sin) to the person we hurt/wronged. Ask them to forgive us, too.)*
3. What happens to our feeling of guilt when we are honest about what we’ve done? *(We may still feel bad, but we no longer have to carry around the weight of trying to hide what we’ve done. We are free to make things right! Soon, our feelings of guilt dissolve.)*
4. How was the way that Sally treated Johnny similar to the that way the devil treats us? *(The devil uses guilt from our failures in the past to control us. He will even use forgiven sins to beat us up, if we let him.)*
5. If we confess our sin, might we still have to pay a penalty for it (even though it’s forgiven)? *(Possibly - like fixing the window you broke, doing extra chores, etc. But it is always better to suffer the consequences for what we did that was wrong, than it is to suffer even more consequences for hiding it!)*
"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"
Rom. 8:1