

startingpoint[®]



Session 5

THE DEBT

TO FORGIVE IS TO SET A PRISONER FREE AND
DISCOVER THAT PRISONER WAS YOU.

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PREPARATION

SESSION 5

I've heard many people say that if they could go back and live their life differently, they wouldn't change a thing. It usually comes from a feeling that they wouldn't be the person they are today if they hadn't learned lessons through difficult times. This is a feeling most people would describe as healthy.

If we could go back, there is one thing most of would want to change: guilt. We benefit from the lesson, but we certainly gain no advantage from the feelings of remorse for the harm that we've caused.

So what do you do? We know how to act, what to say, or maybe who to avoid in order to not cause harm in the future. But what should we do about the things that we've already done. Our mistakes can be fixed in the future, but our sins must be dealt with in the past. So how do we fix the cloud of guilt that hangs over so many of us?

Within this context most people take one of two paths:

The first path is when we tell ourselves to "get over it." We tell ourselves it's not a big deal, nobody's perfect, life goes on. While all of these are true, the "get over it" approach is a sure path to numbing ourselves to the problems of the world. When we take something we feel deeply and tell ourselves to "get over it" we're conditioning ourselves to become disconnected from our humanity.

The second path is when we attempt to "do good." We tell ourselves we may have done something bad, but as long as we are able to do good from it that it will all work out in the long run. This path measures our good deeds and bad deeds against each other and as long as the good comes out stronger then we tell ourselves that we're all right.

But we're not, and we know it. Even the best deeds don't erase the guilt that we feel.

So what do you about your guilt? We often ignore the question because we assume it's a lost cause. But while addressing guilt may be uncomfortable, it can also be liberating. Addressing lingering guilt can lead to an experience that ignites personal faith in a way you may not believe was possible. And often, personal forgiveness is *the* starting point for faith.

- 1 What do you wish you could do over?
- 2 Do you resonate with the idea that you need to forgive yourself?
- 3 Which of the two paths are you more likely to take? When have you taken each one?

MESSAGE

SCRIPTURE

John 1:26-29

Luke 22:19-20

Colossians 2:13-14



Accepting the reality of our
sinfulness means accepting our
authentic self.

Brennan Manning

NOTES

GROUPS

BOTTOM LINE: SESSION 5

1

Mistakes are fixed in the future, but sins must be fixed in the past.

2

In all of history, only Jesus offered himself as the answer to the question of "what do I do about my sins?"

3

You don't have to forgive yourself because you have already been forgiven.

NOTES
