



## Stepping from Feelings of Unworthiness to Forgiveness Leader's Guide

### Big Idea

This week's Life Concept explores the issue of God's love and forgiveness. You want the new believer to move from the struggle of feeling unworthy in a new relationship with God to an experience of forgiveness.

### Comparing Our Stories

Share your struggle with sin and failure in your early Christian life. Focus on the feelings of unworthiness the failure produced. Don't share all the unnecessary details about your sin or about how the struggles were resolved. You want the new believer to identify with what you have experienced and the feelings of guilt that resulted. Share your story in two minutes or less.

*Since receiving Christ, to what degree have you been aware of similar struggles?*

A good follow-up question to ask is: "Have you had any sense of falling short of what God desires for your life?" If your friend has been aware of this, affirm that this feeling is natural. If your friend hasn't yet experienced this, assure that this will probably happen with time.

### Considering Our Struggles

*How do we feel when we know we have failed another person who is very important to us?*  
Guilty, unworthy, like a failure.

*How do these feelings affect our actions and responses in the relationship?* We can withdraw and feel uncomfortable in the other person's presence.

*How does it impact us if we aren't aware the other person has forgiven us?* We worry about it, which creates anxiety.

*What if we do know we have been forgiven?* We feel free.

*Could sin have a similar impact in our relationship with Christ? How?* Yes. Sin can cause us to withdraw in shame and lose the experience of intimacy in our relationship.

Time permitting, read through the "Think about it" notepad with your friend.

### Exploring the Solution

Together read the whole passage aloud.



*What does it mean that God is light?* In the Bible, the term light can be used figuratively for both truth and righteousness. Likewise, darkness can mean falsehood and unrighteousness. John is writing about what it means to live in relationship with God who is both righteous and true.

*What does light do in everyday life?* It makes things visible, removes darkness and the inability to perceive, and exposes things.

*How would God's character do a similar thing?* For those who have established a relationship with God, His righteousness makes all things visible and exposes the truth about all things, including our sin.

### **1. False Claim**

Today, this claim might sound more like, "My sin doesn't matter. Because I've been forgiven, I can live however I want and still experience a good relationship with God." Notice what John says about this claim? It's a lie; it isn't possible. Why? Because God is light—that is, righteous and true. He will expose our sin.

*As we live in a right relationship with God, what is happening to our sin?* It is cleansed because of the blood of Christ. This does not mean we have no sin, just that our sin is cleansed.

### **2. False Claim**

We could put this claim in our own words as, "There is nothing wrong with me." As a believer, we cannot claim to be without sin. We know better.

*What are we to do about our sins?* Confess them.

*What does confess mean?* To admit that you did it. The basic idea is to openly agree with God about your sin. Call it sin; call it forgiven; and call on God to change you.

*What does God do as we confess our sins?* He forgives and purifies us.

**Special Insight:** "Confessions of sin are of various classes: (1) To God alone. Wherever there is true repentance for sin, the penitent freely confesses his guilt to Him against who he has sinned. This is described in Psalm 32:3-6; cf. 1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13. Such confession may be made either silently or, as in Daniel 9:19, orally; it may be general, as in Psalm 51, or particular, as when some special sin is recognized; it may even extend to that which has not been discovered, but is believed to exist because of recognized inner depravity (Psalm 19:12), and thus include the state as well as the acts of sin (Romans 7:18)." [H. E. Jacobs, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), vol. 1, p. 759.]

### **3. False Claim**

We could summarize this claim by saying, "I've done nothing wrong!"

*What should we try to do about sin?* Seek to avoid it.

*What is the ultimate solution to our sin?* When we do sin, we should realize it has already been paid for by Christ's death.



Briefly review the summary section before moving on.

### **Examining the Sketch**

Illustrate these concepts with the following sketch and apply it to your life.

#### **The Issue: How do I respond to sin?**

*A. When I first came to Christ, how many areas of my life were perfect?* None. Circle 0% perfect. If you examined my life in college, you would have found that none of the areas of my life were really perfect or problem free. I struggled with things like studies, dating, my attitude at my job, relationships with family and friends, and my responses to difficulties.

*How many of my sins were forgiven when I came to Christ?* 100%. Circle 100% forgiven.

*According to 1 John 1:7, how does God deal with the sins and shortcomings of which I'm not aware?* Refer back to the verse on the opposite page. He cleanses them by the blood of Christ. Circle 1 John 1:7 in the sketch.

*B. According to 1 John 1:9, what should I do when I deliberately disobey God and my life passes outside the lines?* I should confess my sin to God; call it sin, call it forgiven and call on Him to help me change. Circle 1 John 1:9.

Read the three-part explanation of confession.

*C. The longer I walk with God, what will happen to my awareness of sin? Why?* I will become more and more sensitive to what sin is; my lines of conviction will narrow. As I live in light of who God is, I will become more and more like Him.

*According to 1 John 2:1-2, what should my attitude be toward sin? Why?* I should try to avoid it. It's not simply a matter of doing what is right and wrong. Christians don't live by a list of rules. We do it because of our love relationship with a holy God, who is light.

After reading the summary, make sure the person understands the meaning of the sketch and how to apply its principles in real life.

### **Taking Steps**

There are three appropriate responses to this study, three things you should encourage the person to begin to do today or tomorrow.

1. *Claim Christ's cleansing.*

2. *Confess specific sins.*

3. *Choose to avoid sin.*

### **Next Concept**

As believers, we genuinely desire to do what is right. But it seems no matter how hard we try, we lack the power to do so. The next concept is critical because we will learn how to experience the power we need to live the Christian life.



## Notes and Questions

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