



## Community Group Discussion Questions | Week of January 8– January 14

### Rivers, Deserts and Swamps (Getting Over and Through the Trials of Life)

#### The River of Guilt

This past Sunday, Michael began a new series, “Rivers, Deserts, and Swamps.” There is a lot of information that could be shared this week in your community group. Do not get bogged down or rush too much trying to “get it all in.” Be careful to discern the discussion in the group and make sure that one point does not monopolize the whole time. **You will not be able to cover all of this material more than likely, so please prepare with your group in mind. Thank you to each of you for serving as a host.**

**Ask**, What if I told you could live a guilt free life? Would you do it? (allow time for answers)

**Ask**, What do you think a guilt free life would look like for you?

**Say**, Michael shared this Martyn Lloyd-Jones knew this when he said, “To dwell on the past simply causes failure in the present. While you are sitting down and bemoaning the past and regretting all the things you have not done, you are crippling yourself and preventing yourself from working in the present. Is that Christianity? Of course it is NOT.”

**Say**, The first point is **What is guilt?**

**Ask**, What are some other names for Guilt. (You might call it embarrassment, shame, regret, sorrow, or even disgrace. Any of those things can feel like guilt.)

**Say**, The feeling of guilt can come from lots of different places.

**Ask**, What are some things you feel guilty about? (You can feel guilty for doing something wrong, for hurting someone, or just for letting someone down. You can feel guilty for missing out on something big you wish you could have been a part of, or you can feel guilty for sinning. Your past sins, bad choices, failures, embarrassments, and regrets can all make you feel guilty. There are so many things you can feel guilty for, it’s no wonder that so many of us deal with guilt.)

**Say**, Not all guilt is created equal. Let’s take a closer look at the different kinds of guilt you might feel and what God has to say about it all.

**Say**, Let’s look at Good guilt versus bad guilt.

**Ask**, What are the differences between good and bad guilt? (Make sure the concepts of the next paragraph are covered in people’s answers.)

(Good guilt is when you do something wrong (i.e., sinful) and you feel responsible for it, and that feeling makes you want to come clean and stop doing what you’re doing. Good guilt leads you to God and to his forgiveness that’s already bought and paid for by Jesus, plain and simple. And that’s what makes it good. It stops a bad thing and starts up a good thing. It stops the sin and it starts the worship.

But bad guilt is the complete opposite. Bad guilt happens in two situations: (1) when you do something you feel bad about even though it wasn’t wrong (i.e., you didn’t sin), and (2) when you do something wrong and it leads you not to God but away from him. Bad guilt can make you feel condemned when you are not, and it always leads you away from God. In other words, we’re talking about the guilt that leads you to sin, not away from it.)

**Say**, So, here is some Good guilt. Good guilt is also known as conviction. It’s the feeling you get when what you do doesn’t agree with what you know you should be doing—when you sin and you are aware of your wrongdoing. It’s a normal part of life, because that feeling is meant for our good, to drive us to fix things and to get back on the right track. It also reminds us who we are and whose we are. Paul talks about his feelings of good guilt in Romans 7.

**Remind people that Guilt is not punishment.**

**Read** Romans 7:15–19

*For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.*

**Say**, Guilt, without understanding God’s purpose for it, can eat you up. To be clear, conviction isn’t there to condemn you.

**Read** Romans 7:24–8:1

*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

**Read** 2 Corinthians 7:10

*For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.*

**Say**, Your feelings of guilt are good when they bring you to repentance and leave you with no regret. (Guilt was meant to be your guide, the warning sign on the road of life, the flashing red light telling you that the bridge is out and to look out for the huge cliff ahead. John Calvin explains it by saying that only those “who have learned well to be earnestly dissatisfied with themselves, and to be confounded with shame at their wretchedness” truly understand the gospel. This kind of shame or guilt is the shame that transforms a life. And it is good guilt.)

**Say**, Jesus promises that He will send the Holy Spirit and the Spirit will convict us of our sin. John 16:7-8

**Read** John 16:7–8

*Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:*

“Repentant tears wash out the stain of guilt.” - Augustine

**Share** these Good reasons to feel good guilt:

These are things that SHOULD cause us to feel good guilt-

- Disobeying authority
- Wanting to conceal your sin
- Complaining about discipline
- Blaming God - imprecatory Psalms (anguish and complaint leading to surrender)
- Not listening - wisdom vs. defensiveness
- Lying/Gossip
- Pride

**Say**, Another point of the sermon focused on Bad guilt

Bad guilt is when you feel guilty for doing something even though you didn’t sin. Bad guilt makes you feel condemned when you are not and leads you away from God.

**Say**, Michael mentioned two different kinds of bad guilt.

**Ask**, Does anyone remember those two bad kinds of guilt?

**(Summarize after they have shared.** The first one is the feeling you get when what you feel guilty about doing wasn’t sinful at all. It’s when you judge something in your past or your actions as bad even though God doesn’t judge it that way. When you feel guilty for that, you are essentially letting society or

emotions be your judge instead of God. And if God doesn't consider what you did a sin, why do you? This kind of guilt makes humans more important than God and the Bible has something to say about that in Galatians 1:10.)

**Read** Galatians 1:10

*For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

**Say**, The second feeling of bad guilt is the feeling that you hold on to when you actually have sinned but then confessed and repented—and yet still refuse God's gift of forgiveness.

**Summarize** these Bad reasons to feel bad guilt

- Guilt for not doing what your friends are doing
- Guilt for saying no or being faithful
- Guilt for sharing your faith
- Guilt for loving Jesus more than anything/anyone else
- Guilt for failure or weakness
- Guilt over a confessed and repented sin
- Guilt over making a mistake (diff. than sin)

**Say**, The final point relates to Getting over the river of guilt. There are two ways to get on with the life God would have you live when you come to the river of guilt:

**Say**, the first is to Discern if the guilt is bad guilt (not a sin).

**Ask**, what is a logical step if you discern this? (Like a drowning man in a puddle of water, stand up and move on towards a life lived with the aim of pleasing God, not man.)

**Say**, the second way to discern is to Recognize good guilt, confess your sin and repent, then accept God's gracious gift of freedom from the punishment for that sin. (This is no puddle, but a raging river that will sweep you off and carry you under. Accept the lifeline. Take it, and take it often. And thank your Father for giving you His Word and the Holy Spirit to show you how to live.)

**Say**, many of us can relate to this - in regards to others, if you have properly processed good guilt, confessed, and repented, but your sin affected another, realize that even though God has removed the eternal penalty of your sin, it's perfectly understandable that other sinners may not be ready to forgive or trust you, that there could be some temporary penalties for your sin. Don't be bitter towards them, but instead understand that your sin against God is a greater debt than any sin against man, and yet you are still forgiven. So instead of attempting to lead a guilt-free life here on Earth, as long as you and I are still sinners, let's celebrate good guilt as a clear sign that God loves us and wants to save us from not only our sin but the waters of our regret as well.

Pray with your group. Be sensitive that many in your group may find themselves in varying stages of dealing with guilt (both good and bad). Lovingly encourage them to continue to seek Scripture and pray for their own walk and the walk of those in their life.