

Out of Darkness Into Light

Wholeness Prayer Basic Modules Module 9

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

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Forgiving and Accepting Yourself¹

Biblical Basis – Forgiving and Accepting Yourself

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2).

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1-2).

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Romans 15:7).

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23-24).

“For He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding” (Ephesians 1:4-8).

¹ Adapted with permission from “A Theory and Process for Christian Counseling & Inner Healing” by Alfred Davis, pages 107-122, 164,165

Module 9: Forgiving and Accepting Yourself

A. Forgiving Yourself

Brief Explanation – Forgiving Yourself

If you are a follower of Christ, you have been forgiven by God (Ephesians 4:32).

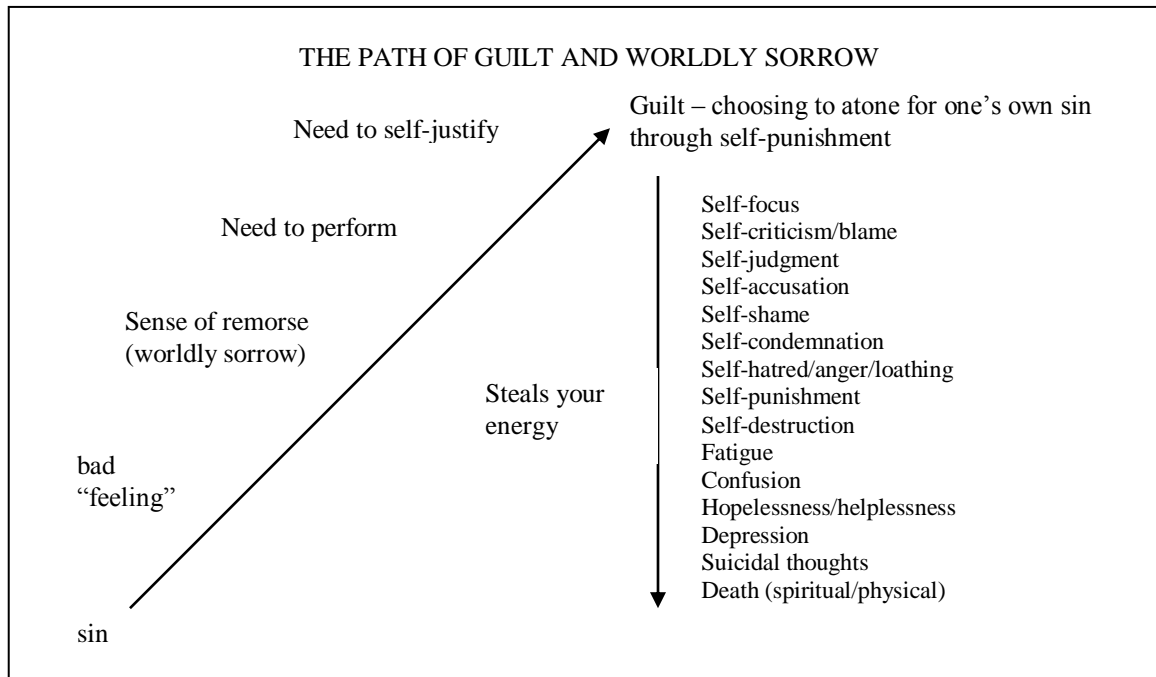
Forgiving yourself is part of imitating God and living a life of love (Ephesians 5:1-2).

If you haven't yet forgiven yourself, you may be experiencing:

- Rigid, legalistic, black-or-white thinking (such as "If I'm not good, then I'm bad.")
- Numbness with self-destructive behavior
- Feelings of self-disgust, self-hatred, and/or low self-esteem.

Central to all of these is unresolved guilt. Unresolved guilt tends to immobilize a person and keep the focus on the pain rather than on the change that is needed. It can make you feel as though there's a debt that must be paid and the only way for it to be paid is to do it yourself. This misses the point of Jesus' death on the cross. When you live with unresolved guilt, you feel unforgiven, even though Christ has already forgiven you.

The path of guilt and worldly sorrow is a path of bondage. (See diagram below.)



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The alternative to living with unresolved guilt is accepting God's grace and forgiveness. Grace is a gift, given freely and unconditionally to you, through Christ. Accepting God's grace and forgiveness frees you to seek productive change.

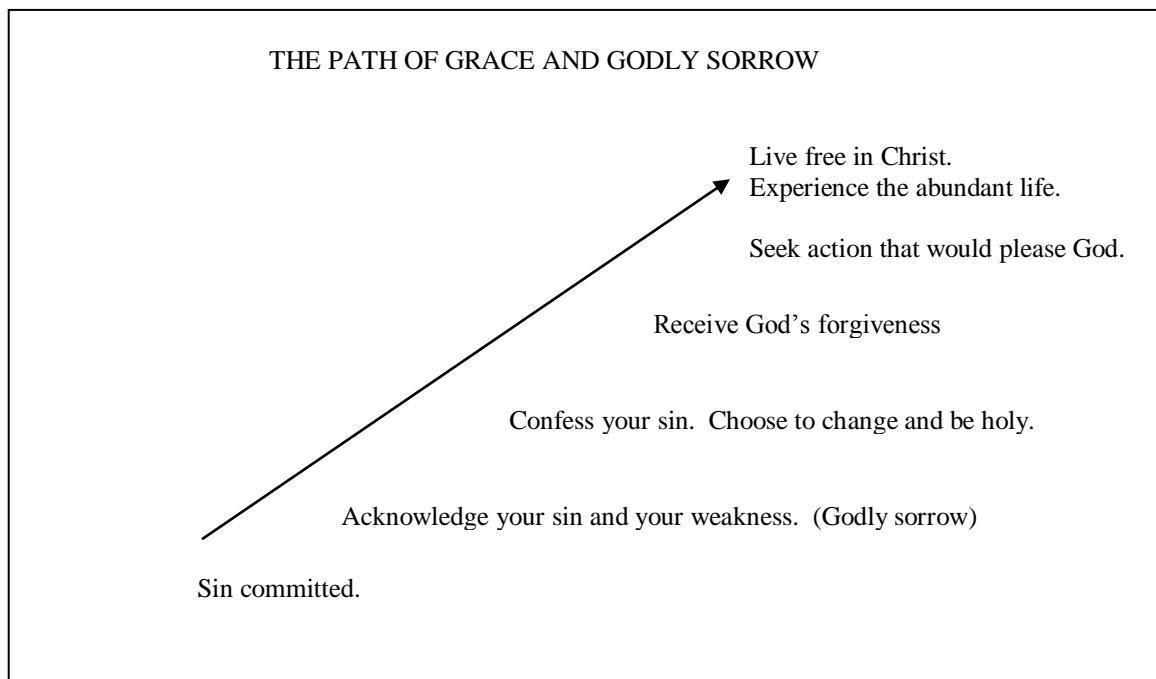
If you think that God's grace and forgiveness are not for you, this could be because:

- You feel that your sins are so terrible that you do not deserve to be forgiven.
- You feel that you need to suffer to pay for your sin.

The truth is: God accepts you on the basis of what He did through Christ, not on the basis of what you try to do. Living in unforgiveness is a self-imposed punishment. It is the opposite of what God wants for you.

When you sin, God desires you to respond by confessing and turning from your sin, not by punishing yourself. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9)."* See also "Module 4: Confessing and Turning from Sin."

Following the path of grace and godly sorrow frees you to experience abundant life in Christ. (See diagram below.)



Another factor that may complicate your ability to forgive yourself is false beliefs that you have about God, yourself, others, or the world in general. These false beliefs may have taken root as you misinterpreted life's experiences, or received misinformation from others. If, for example, your parents or others said things that shamed or cursed you, you may have believed them. *For example, you may have believed the message "You can't*

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do anything right,” even though Scripture teaches the ability of followers of Christ to do all things through Him who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

If it’s hard, or seems impossible for you to forgive yourself, asking God *why* this is hard is a good first step. Then work through the issues He reveals, together with Him. This process may include:

- seeking healing for emotional wounds
- breaking internal strongholds
- forgiving your parents and others
- working through issues addressed in other modules.

Step-by-Step Process² - Forgiving Yourself

Note: See “Module 1: Overview and Introduction” for beginning and ending steps, and information on how to use the modules in various contexts.

1. Recognize the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow.
2. Ask God to show which path you’ve been on – the path of guilt and worldly sorrow, or the path of grace and godly sorrow. If you’ve been on the path of guilt and worldly sorrow:
 - Confess any sin of pride that has separated you from God’s grace
 - Acknowledge the bondage of any self-punishment you’ve been living in
 - Renounce all efforts to atone for your own sin
 - Give up all attempts to justify yourself
 - Repent of everything that has separated you from God, including any unbelief that has contributed to your feelings of guilt.

If any of these steps are hard or seem impossible, ask God to show you *why*. Work through the issues He reveals, together with Him.

- Seek healing for any related emotional wounds. (See “Module 6:Healing from Emotional Wounds.”)
- Work through breaking any related internal strongholds. (See “Module 5: Breaking Internal Strongholds.”)
- Work through forgiving your parents and others as needed. (See “Module 7: Forgiving Others” and “Module 8: Forgiving Your Parents.”)
- Work through any other modules that apply to your situation. (See “Guide to Identifying Which Modules to Use” in Module 1: Overview and Introduction.”)

3. Choose to walk on the path of grace and godly sorrow.
4. Ask God to reveal to you any sin(s) you need to confess.

² “Step-by-Step Process” contains steps that are generally involved when addressing the issue. Modify these as needed to fit the specific situation. Follow God’s leading.

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5. Confess your sin(s). Ask God to forgive you and to help you to change and walk in His ways. See “Module 4: Confessing and Turning from Sin.”
6. Ask God to show you any emotional wounds you have that contributed to your sin(s). Seek healing for those. See “Module 6: Healing from Emotional Wounds.”
7. Ask God to show you whether or not He’s now forgiven you for the sins you’ve confessed. By faith, receive His forgiveness.
8. Choose to forgive yourself. (Ephesians 4:32 & 5:1) See “Sample Prayer – Forgiving Yourself,” (following).
9. Rejoice in the goodness of God. Meditate on verses about who you are in Christ. (Some good ones are found in Ephesians 1.)
10. If any of these steps are hard or seem impossible, ask God to show you *why*. Work through the issues He reveals, together with Him.
11. See also “Module 11: Finding True Security” and “Module 12: Living in the Light.”

Sample Prayer – Forgiving Yourself

I proclaim my faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

I confess that I have not lived in the freedom of the cross of Jesus Christ. Instead, I have allowed my pride to lead me into a belief that I could justify myself and atone for my own sins through works and performance. I also confess that my feelings of guilt have led me into acts of self-criticism, self-hatred and self-punishment. I want to be free from this bondage today.

Lord Jesus, I admit my failure to earn forgiveness through my misdirected efforts. I repent of all my efforts to justify myself. Please forgive me. I choose now to receive your gift of forgiveness.

*Please reveal to me now all the ways I have **not** allowed the forgiveness of Jesus Christ to reach me. I give each of these ways to you now. I no longer want to use any of these ways to try to justify myself. Please help me to live instead in the reality of your grace.*

As your dearly loved child, I now accept your forgiveness and choose to forgive myself. Thank you for forgiving me through Christ. Please take away all the pain related to my previous unforgiveness of myself. Please set me free to love you, myself and others. I pray this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Process Diagram

Module 9 – Forgiving and Accepting Yourself – A. Forgiving Yourself

- *Opening prayer*
- *Recognize the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow.*
- *Ask God to show **which path** you've been on – the path of guilt and worldly sorrow, or the path of grace and godly sorrow. If you've been on the path of **guilt and worldly sorrow**:*
 - ***Confess** any sin of pride that has separated you from God's grace*
 - ***Acknowledge** the bondage of any self-punishment you've been living in*
 - ***Renounce** all efforts to atone for your own sin*
 - ***Give up** all attempts to justify yourself*
 - ***Repent** of everything that has separated you from God, including any unbelief that has contributed to your feelings of guilt.*

(If any of these steps are hard or seem impossible, ask God to show you why. Work through the issues He reveals, together with Him.)
- *Choose to walk on the path of grace and godly sorrow.*
- *Ask God to **reveal** to you any sin(s) you need to confess.*
- ***Confess** your sin(s). Ask God to forgive you and to help you to change and walk in His ways. See "Module 4: Confessing and Turning from Sin."*
- *Ask God to show you any **emotional wounds** you have that contributed to your sin(s). Seek healing for those. See "Module 6: Healing from Emotional Wounds."*
- *Ask God to show you whether or not He's now **forgiven** you for the sins you've confessed. By faith, **receive** His forgiveness.*
- *Choose to forgive yourself. (Ephesians 4:32 & 5:1). **Forgive yourself.***
- ***Rejoice** in the goodness of God. Meditate on verses about who you are in Christ.*
- *If any of these steps are hard or seem impossible, ask God to show you **why**. **Work through** the issues He reveals, together with Him.*
- *See also "Module 11: Finding True Security" and "Module 12: Living in the Light."*
- *Closing prayer*
- *Follow-up: see Module 9.*

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B. Accepting Yourself

Brief Explanation – Accepting Yourself

God chose you before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. He now sees you this way because Jesus has taken away your sin. You have been adopted by God and accepted by Him. (Ephesians 1:4-8) Accepting yourself is part of imitating God and living a life of love (Ephesians 5:1-2).

If it's hard for you to accept yourself, that could be because you've so long believed lies about who you really are. Some of these lies may have come from hurtful things others said *to* or *about* you.

Learning to look at yourself through the eyes of Christ frees you to live more and more in the reality of who you truly are in Him. You'll also be able to see more of the gifts, talents and abilities He's given you. And you'll be able to live more in the glorious new life He's given you. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Step-by-Step Process³ – Accepting Yourself

Note: See “Module 1: Overview and Introduction” for beginning and ending steps, and information on how to use the modules in various contexts.

If it's hard for you to accept yourself:

1. Work through the step-by-step process for forgiving yourself (in this module).
2. Learn more about how God sees you through Christ.
3. Ask Him to help you see yourself the way He does. This is reality!
4. Read silently through “Sample Prayer - Accepting Yourself,” (following). Decide if it's something you'd like to pray. Modify it as you choose. Then pray it out loud.
5. If you're praying with someone else, ask them to pray over you the things Jesus has shown you about who you are in Christ. If you're praying alone, you might want to ask someone to do this for you later.
6. Find Scriptures that relate to the things God has shown you. Meditate on these truths. Enjoy them. Ask God to help your life and your perspective be shaped by them.
7. Rejoice! You are fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:14)
8. If any of these steps are hard or seem impossible, ask God to show you *why*. Work through the issues He reveals, together with Him.

³ “Step-by-Step Process” contains steps that are generally involved when addressing the issue. Modify these as needed to fit the specific situation. Follow God's leading.

Sample Prayer – Accepting Yourself

I proclaim my faith in Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I confess that I have looked at myself through the distorted eyes of my sin, my unforgiveness, and the lies and false messages I have come to believe about myself. I have also been trapped in my incorrect feeling that I need to win acceptance and righteousness.

I renounce these lies. I choose now to see myself through the eyes of Jesus Christ and his salvation.

Please reveal to me now more of how Jesus sees me. Help me to understand who you created me to be. Help me to know who I truly am in Christ. Lord God, I choose to accept myself as [list the things God reveals to you or reminds you of].

Lord Jesus, thank you for offering yourself as a sacrifice, so that I may be free to know who I really am in you. You have forgiven and accepted me. Thank you! Because of this, I choose to accept myself as having been made worthy through Christ. I release myself from self-judgment, and I accept your truth about myself. I pray that I may bring glory to you by living in the reality of who I truly am in you.

Thank you for loving me with an everlasting love; and drawing me to yourself with loving-kindness (Jeremiah 31:3).

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Process Diagram

Module 9 – Forgiving and Accepting Yourself – B. Accepting Yourself

- *Opening prayer*
- **If it's hard for you to accept yourself:**
 - *Work through the step-by-step process for forgiving yourself.*
 - *Learn more about how God sees you through Christ.*
 - *Ask Him to help you see yourself the way He does*
 - *Read silently through "Sample Prayer - Accepting Yourself," Decide if it's something you'd like to pray. Modify it as you choose. Then pray it out loud.*
 - *If you're praying with someone else, ask them to pray over you the things Jesus has shown you about who you are in Christ. If you're praying alone, you might want to ask someone to do this for you later.*
 - *Find Scriptures that relate to the things God has shown you. Meditate on these truths. Enjoy them. Ask God to help your life and your perspective be shaped by them.*
 - *Rejoice! You are fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:14)*
 - *If any of these steps are hard or seem impossible, ask God to show you why. Work through the issues He reveals, together with Him.*
- *Closing prayer*
- *Follow-up: see Module 9.*

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Follow-up – Forgiving and Accepting Yourself

1. Continue to seek healing for any emotional wounds you have. See “Module 6: Healing from Emotional Wounds.”

2. Continue to take your thoughts captive. Get God’s perspective on them.

For more information on replacing false beliefs with truth, see “Module 5: Breaking Internal Strongholds”, “Module 11: Finding True Security”, and “Module 12: Living in the Light”.

3. If you sin, quickly confess and turn from your sin. Follow the path of grace and godly sorrow. Remember to forgive yourself. See also “Module 4: Confessing and Turning from Sin.”

4. Continue to learn more about the reality of who you are in Christ. Tell others what you’re learning.

5. Find verses that talk about who you are in Christ; how He’s forgiven and accepted you; and His grace, mercy and kindness toward you. Also find Scriptures about who God is, how much He loves you, and what He’s done for you. Meditate on these verses. Talk about them. Rejoice over the reality they proclaim. Ask God to help your life and your perspective be shaped by them. (See “Module 12: Living In the Light.”)

6. Find out more about the gifts and abilities God has given you. Continue to develop these. Thank God for who He is and who He’s created you to be.

7. Continue to work through other modules as they apply to your situation. See “Attachment 1: Guide to Which Modules to Use” in “Module 1: Overview and Introduction.”

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