

*The Letting Go
of Guilt and Shame
Workbook*



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By Laurie Glass

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This e-book is not a substitute for professional help. It is not for the diagnosis or treatment of an eating disorder.

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Table of Contents

[Discussion about Guilt and Shame](#)

[Examine Your Beliefs about Guilt](#)

[Change Your Beliefs about Guilt](#)

[Prayer to Let Go of Guilt](#)

[Other Suggestions to Help You Let Go of Guilt](#)

[Examine Your Beliefs about Shame](#)

[Change Your Beliefs about Shame](#)

[Prayer to Let Go of Shame](#)

[Other Suggestions to Help You Let Go of Shame](#)

[Endnotes](#)

[About the Author](#)

Discussion about Guilt and Shame

If you've lived under the weight of guilt and shame, you've likely felt heavy remorse, regret, and self-loathing when you wished you could undo something you'd done. If you couldn't undo it, it may have seemed you were doomed to remain buried under guilt and shame indefinitely.

BUT there is good news. You do NOT have to continue under the weight of guilt and shame. While there are no easy answers to such deep feelings, there ARE things you can do, and beliefs you can change, in order to rise up out of this heaviness.

Before I go any further, I want to mention that guilt and shame aren't quite the same thing, but they're often felt together. Guilt occurs when you feel responsible for an action that you regret. Shame goes deeper in a way: it occurs when you feel disappointed or deeply embarrassed, not only about something you've done, but about something inside of you.

Now I'd like to get into some principles about guilt and shame.

Believe it or not, guilt can be a good thing. It can make you aware of your sin and move you to confess it, and then repent to turn away from it. Then, you can accept God's forgiveness and cleansing. See his promise in 1 John 1:9. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

That sure sounds simple, doesn't it? It is simple. But it is not easy. This can be for a number of reasons, one of them being deeply ingrained false beliefs. Since I like to help people get to the root of things, that's the focus of this workbook.

I encourage you to examine your beliefs about guilt and shame and replace any false ones with the truth. This is a principle from 2 Corinthians 10:5. *"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."*

"Think of it like this. Suppose someone tells you not to think of the color yellow; don't think of sunshine, dandelions, bananas, or anything that's yellow; think of any other color but yellow. Of course, you're going to focus on the color yellow. On the other hand, imagine that someone tells you to think of any color but yellow, to go ahead and concentrate on shades of blue or green, red, purple or orange, or think of pink or lavender. This way, you're more likely to think of a color other than yellow.

"In other words, if you just determine NOT to think something, that isn't enough. It's a start, and it's absolutely a great step, but you'll need to do more. You'll need to replace that distortion. You need to be 'armed' with the truth to combat the lies and negative thoughts."¹

To help you put this into practice, I'll share some examples of common false beliefs about guilt and shame as well as statements you can use to replace those beliefs with the truth.

I deserve to feel bad (indefinitely) for what I've done, and I need to punish myself for it.

Please know that you don't have to hold wrongdoings against yourself or feel guilty until the end of time. Yes, you're going to feel guilty sometimes, but you don't have to remain in that guilt. God doesn't intend that for you. He knows that guilt and shame can limit you in your life and in your effectiveness to serve him.

For example, while you carry guilt and shame, you may think you aren't in a position to help someone else, or that you shouldn't lead a ministry. Also, your concerns about how you feel about yourself may distract you from other things. Guilt and shame can keep your focus on yourself instead of on things like seeing your identity in Christ or listening to God. Of course, the Lord wants better for you than that. He doesn't expect you to feel badly indefinitely or punish yourself repeatedly. So don't expect that of yourself either.

When you think you deserve to feel guilty and punish yourself, you can replace those thoughts with something like this:

I can step out of the way and leave room for God's forgiveness and cleansing. In other words, I can redirect my attention from myself to the One who's bigger than what I've done, who loves me without condition, and who stands ready to free me from debilitating thoughts and emotions. Once I embrace who he is and what he can do, I won't have to berate myself any longer.

I don't believe God can forgive me for this.

Your deep-seated guilt and shame can cause you to lose sight of the truth. Because you feel these feelings so deeply, you focus on what you've done and how you feel about yourself for doing it. When you sense this happening, try to refocus your attention from yourself to the Lord. Concentrate on his attributes. For example, you can bask in his love, meditate on Scriptures about his forgiveness, and focus on his grace.

Your guilt and shame may cause you to lose sight of the truth, but they cannot change the truth. God's forgiveness and cleansing remain the same. He will always be there to love and forgive you no matter how guilty or ashamed you feel. You can go to him at any time to accept his forgiveness. Choose to believe his promises about forgiveness instead of what your personal feelings or false beliefs are telling you. Those thoughts and emotions are like putting God in a box, making him less than who he is. His love and forgiveness are incredibly vast, and they cannot be diminished by anything you've done.

When you think God can't forgive you, you can try to change that thought to something like this:

Even if I FEEL what I've done is unforgivable, that doesn't mean it IS unforgivable. I don't see any Scripture that lists offenses he will and will not forgive. Saying I don't believe he'll forgive

me is doubting His Word is true. It also means I'm limiting his love, grace, and mercy. I can get my eyes off myself and onto the Lord and what he offers. Here are some Scriptures to help me do that.

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

"Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool'" (Isaiah 1:18).

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

I can't forgive myself.

Please read this carefully and let it sink in. "If you're concerned about forgiving yourself, you can breathe a sigh of relief. You don't have to forgive yourself! There's no scriptural support for this. To say that God has forgiven you but that you can't forgive yourself is like saying Christ's work on the cross wasn't enough, that you have to do more in addition to what Christ did in order to be forgiven. This isn't true. So, instead of trying to muster up some forgiveness for yourself, realize it's something you don't need to do. Focus on the cross instead of on your sin, accept the forgiveness that has been yours for the taking all along, and move forward."²

When you get stuck on the thought that you can't forgive yourself, you can try to change that thought to something like this:

God is big enough, loving enough, merciful enough, and so much more, to offer me all the forgiveness I need. Christ's sacrifice on the cross did all that needs to be done. There is no action I can take that will add to that. I don't need to forgive myself. I need only to accept his forgiveness.

I feel shame because of what has happened to me.

Please pay close attention to this and take it to heart: "You might feel shame, not for something you've done, but for something that's been done to you. You may have experienced mistreatment, bullying, or abuse. If this is the case, please know you don't deserve to feel ashamed. That individual decided to do something awful to someone; you did not. It wasn't your fault. You don't have to degrade or condemn yourself because of what happened to you. You don't have to blame yourself for the bad decisions someone else made. What happened to you doesn't make you less of a person, and it doesn't make you bad, dirty, damaged or unlovable. What occurred was a reflection on the other person, not you; it was someone else's choice, not yours. Again, you don't deserve to feel ashamed. Read this paragraph over and over if you need to for its words to change your perspective and touch your emotions."³

When you think you deserve to feel shame for what has happened to you, you can try to change that thought to something like this:

God wants better for me. I can let him reassure me that I didn't deserve what happened, it wasn't my fault, and I don't deserve to feel ashamed. Instead, I can move forward knowing he loves me, doesn't hold what happened against me, and can heal me of this shame. One thing I can do to help myself is to focus on soothing Scriptures as I open my heart to his healing. I can start with these.

"You are my hiding place, you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance" (Psalm 32:7).

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3).

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4a).

Conclusion

I hope you found these examples beneficial. May they help you examine your personal thoughts about guilt and shame and inspire you to replace any false beliefs with the truth. Letting go of guilt and shame may feel daunting, and it's a process to be sure. I hope this workbook will help you address this area.

I created this resource as a workbook because I think it's important to help people get to the root of things and put principles into practice.

Try the exercises and suggestions on the following pages at your own pace. May they help you to further examine and change your beliefs about guilt and shame so you can break free of these painful and sometimes debilitating emotions. Remember, this workbook is not a substitute for one-on-one counsel. If you aren't already, you may want to consider seeing a counselor to help you work through guilt and shame.

Examine Your Beliefs about Guilt

Do I feel I must continually punish myself for my mistakes? If so, why? How can I change this?

Do I believe that regardless of what I've done, God continues to love me? Why or why not?

When I confess to the Lord, will I accept his forgiveness? If I struggle to accept his forgiveness, why is that? How can I change it?⁴

Does it say in God's Word that I'm supposed to live buried in guilt?

Does the Bible say that God will forgive me for only certain offenses and not others?

Change Your Beliefs about Guilt

1. List your beliefs about guilt. For example, I SHOULD feel guilty and stay guilty when I do something wrong, I feel guilty if I don't feel guilty, or I deserve to always feel guilty.
2. Look at each belief and examine it to determine whether it's in line with Scripture.
3. Search for verses and quotes or write other truths to replace beliefs that aren't scriptural.

You may want to use the table on the next page or make something similar to it.

Prayer to Let Go of Guilt

1. You may say the following prayer to help you let go of guilt or read it for inspiration to help you put your concerns into your own words.

Dear Heavenly Father,

I carry a burden of guilt, but I know you want to lift it from me. I know you don't want me to live with unconfessed sin. I, therefore, confess that I have _____, and I ask for your forgiveness. I want to have a clean heart before you. Thank you for your forgiveness, cleansing, and guidance.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.⁵

2. You may prefer to write your own prayer. Certainly, this is to express how you think and feel, so you may say what comes to you. Remember that it's less about what you say and more about what's truly in your heart. But if you have a hard time getting started or want a guideline, here are some things you might want to include:

Confess what you did wrong and why you know it was wrong.

State how you feel about what you did.

Convey your intention not to do it again.

Ask for the Lord's help to resist doing it again.

Recite Scripture about his forgiveness.

Offer the guilt to the Lord.

Accept and thank him for his forgiveness and cleansing.

3. Listen. Record anything you hear from the Lord.

4. Pray as many times as it takes to leave your guilt with him.

Other Suggestions to Help You Let Go of Guilt

1. Make a forgiveness collage, including single words, quotes, and verses about God's forgiveness.
2. Write a poem, story, song, or other creative piece about forgiveness.
3. Think of what you would say to someone else who struggles to accept God's forgiveness. Write a loving letter to that person. Then read the letter yourself. We often offer others more compassion and grace than we do to ourselves.
4. Search for and meditate on verses about God's forgiveness. Here are a couple to start your list.

"Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgression to the Lord.' And you forgave the guilt of my sin" (Psalm 32:5).

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:1-2).

Examine Your Beliefs about Shame

Will I share my shame with the Lord? Why or why not?

Do I genuinely believe that God can heal me of my shame? Why or why not?

What will happen to me if I hold onto the shame I feel?⁴

What purpose would it serve to shame myself over what I've done or what has been done to me?

Do I truly realize that I can break free of the shame over what someone else did to me? Why or why not?

Change Your Beliefs about Shame

1. List your beliefs about shame. For example, I deserve to feel ashamed, I can't imagine ever feeling free of shame, or what happened to me means I'm a bad person.
2. Look at each belief and examine it to determine whether it's in line with Scripture.
3. Search for verses and quotes or write other truths to replace beliefs that aren't scriptural.

You may want to use the table on the next page or make something similar to it.

Belief about Shame	Is it Scriptural?	Truth to Replace False Belief

Prayer to Let Go of Shame

1. You may say the following prayer to help you let go of shame or read it for inspiration to help you put your concerns into your own words.

Dear Heavenly Father,

I feel the weight of shame, and yet I know that you have better things in mind for me. I give this shame to you because I know you don't want me to carry it anymore, and I know you can heal me of its effects. Please help me see the truth and no longer buy into the lie that I should feel ashamed even when I haven't sinned. I confess any shame I feel that is a result of sin.

Specifically, I have _____, and I ask for your forgiveness. Please cleanse my heart and help me to turn to you instead of to this sin again. Thank you for your forgiveness, healing, and direction.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.⁵

2. You may prefer to write your own prayer. Certainly, this is to express how you think and feel, so you may say what comes to you. Remember that it's less about what you say and more about what's truly in your heart. But if you have a hard time getting started or want a guideline, you can follow the suggestions below. Please note that this is for shame you feel, not for something you've done (you can use the guidelines for the prayer to let go of guilt for that), but for what may have been done to you.

Mention what was done to you.

State how you feel about what happened.

Convey why you feel ashamed.

Ask for the Lord's help to see it wasn't your fault.

Recite Scripture about his love and healing.

Offer the shame to the Lord.

Accept and thank him for his love and healing.

3. Listen. Record anything you hear from the Lord.

4. Pray as many times as it takes to leave your shame with him.

Other Suggestions to Help You Let Go of Shame

1. Search for and meditate on Scriptures about God's love. As you become more in tune with his love, you may find that you can trust him more, approach him more easily, and be more open to his healing. Here are a few to start your list.

"May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant" (Psalm 119:76).

"The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with his love. He will rejoice over you with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17).

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

2. Focus on your inner healing.

"Call your pain what it is. Whether you feel hurt, betrayed, neglected, degraded, or whatever term you use to describe what you feel, just be honest about it. You don't have to downplay your feelings. Doing so won't heal you. Instead, be candid, release your feelings, and share them with the Lord to bring you into a healing place.

"Rest in God's presence, and bask in his love. Settle into that place and let him heal you. He stands ready to do so. *'He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds'*" (Psalm 147:3).⁶

"Recognize that God truly doesn't want you to live buried in shame. He knows how debilitating such feelings can be. He desires to help and heal you. Search for Scriptures that remind you of that. Take them to heart and meditate on them. Here are a few to begin."³

"Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me" (Psalm 54:4).

"You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you. Hear my prayer, Lord; listen to my cry for mercy. When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me" (Psalm 86:5-7).

"...The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made. The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down" (Psalm 145:13b-14).

3. Collect quotes that speak about freedom from shame or come up with some of your own. Here are a few to start your list.

"Put your past, regrets, sin, mistakes, and ways you've been violated behind you. Don't let the past tether you to shame.

Ask the Lord to help you see yourself through his eyes instead of the eyes of shame.

The Lord can see right through shame to the real you, the beautiful you underneath that he created. So don't let that shame stand in the way of approaching him."⁷

Endnotes

¹Laurie Glass, [Christian Eating Disorder Recovery Course, Change Your Thoughts](#), 2015.

²Laurie Glass, [Christian Eating Disorder Recovery Course, Let Go of Guilt](#), 2015.

³Laurie Glass, [Christian Eating Disorder Recovery Course, Let Go of Shame](#), 2015.

⁴Laurie Glass, [Journaling in Eating Disorder Recovery](#), 2015.

⁵Laurie Glass, [Inspiration for Eating Disorder Recovery](#), 2015.

⁶Laurie Glass, [Christian Eating Disorder Recovery Course, Experience Inner Healing](#), 2015.

⁷Laurie Glass, [Eating Disorder Recovery Note Cards, Let Go of Guilt and Shame](#), 2015.

About the Author

Laurie Glass has a Master's Degree in Christian Counseling. She recovered from anorexia in 2003 and has counseled and supported others with eating disorders ever since. She understands the ups and downs of the recovery process. Based on what she has learned and experienced, she is passionate about creating resources to help others find freedom from their own eating disorders. These include:

[Christian Eating Disorder Recovery Course](#)
[Eating Disorder Recovery Note Cards](#)
[Journey to Freedom from Eating Disorders](#)
[Bible Verses for Eating Disorder Recovery](#)
[Quotes for Eating Disorder Recovery](#)
[Inspiration for Eating Disorder Recovery](#)
[Journaling in Eating Disorder Recovery](#)
[A Picture of His Grace - My Anorexia Recovery Story](#)

In addition to these writings, she has also had several poems and articles published in both print and online publications. In addition, she was quoted in the April 2012 issue of *Women's Health Magazine* in an article entitled "The Scary Rise of Adult Eating Disorders."

To find out more about Laurie and what she has to offer, visit [Freedom from Eating Disorders](#). There's a lot there, so Laurie encourages people to visit often and find what speaks to them for the day. If you haven't already, be sure to sign up for her [free monthly newsletter](#).

For encouragement and inspiration for your recovery, you can connect with Laurie on [Facebook](#) and follow her on [Pinterest](#). You can also subscribe to her [YouTube](#) or [GodTube](#) channel.