

Guilt & Shame



Precious Promises

Devotional Guide

Day 1

Promise #126

Bible Story (Luke 15:11-24)

Jesus told a story about a father with two sons. One day, the younger son made a selfish choice. He asked for his share of the money and left home, thinking life would be better far away. At first, he enjoyed himself, but soon the money was gone, and so were his friends.

Hungry and alone, he took a job feeding pigs. As he sat in the mud, he felt ashamed. He remembered how kind his father had always been. "Maybe I can go back," he thought, "but I don't deserve to be called his son."

When he finally started home, his father saw him coming and ran to him. Instead of scolding him, the father hugged him tightly. He gave him clean clothes, a ring, and a feast to celebrate. The father's joy was greater than the son's shame. His love was bigger than the son's mistakes. The son's guilt and shame melted away in his father's mercy. This is how God treats us: He forgives our sins, removes them far away, and welcomes us back as His children. His compassion reaches us even when we feel unworthy, and His mercy is stronger than our failures.

Today's Promise (#126)

Psalm 103:8, 10–14 (KJV)

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy....He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

Apply the Promise!

The Lord is kind and full of mercy. He does not punish us as we deserve but forgives our sins and loves us like a father loves his children.

Real-Life Example:

Owen was really worried about his spelling test. When he didn't know how to spell a long word, he quickly peeked at his neighbor's paper and wrote it down. He got an "A," but as he walked home, a heavy, sinking feeling started to grow in his stomach.

Even though his grade looked perfect, he couldn't enjoy it because he knew he hadn't earned it honestly. He tried to hide the test paper under his bed to forget about it, but the secret felt like a heavy weight he was carrying everywhere. Every time his mom said she was proud of him, his heart felt more and more uncomfortable.

Finally, Owen realized that hiding his mistake was making his shame grow. He pulled the paper out from under the bed and told his mom the whole truth. He felt the heavy weight lift instantly as she hugged him and told him they would talk to the teacher together. Owen learned that God's mercy is like a fresh start that washes away our shame when we stop hiding and tell the truth.

Discussion Questions:

- In the Bible story about the Prodigal Son, what job did the son take when he ran out of money and felt ashamed?
- Owen tried to hide his test paper under his bed. Why do we sometimes try to hide our mistakes instead of telling the truth?

Activity:

Stand together facing "east" and "west" (pick two opposite directions in the room). Have everyone stretch their arms wide. Talk about how far apart east and west are, and how that shows God removes our sins completely.



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Day 2

Promise #127

Bible Story (Zechariah 3:1-5)

The prophet Zechariah saw a vision of Joshua the high priest standing before the Lord. Joshua's clothes were filthy, stained with sin, and Satan stood beside him, pointing and accusing. Joshua must have felt the weight of guilt, unable to defend himself.

But God did not let Satan win. The Lord commanded, "Take away the filthy garments from him." At once, Joshua's dirty clothes were removed, and he was given clean, beautiful robes to wear. A pure turban was placed on his head, showing he belonged to God.

Joshua was no longer covered in shame. His sins had been taken away, and he stood clean and forgiven before the Lord. God had turned his scarlet stains into pure white, just as He promises to do for us when we repent.

It's the same for us today. When we feel guilty or ashamed, we can remember that God offers to wash us clean. No matter how dark our sins seem, He promises to make them white as snow.

Today's Promise (#127)

Isaiah 1:16–20 (KJV)

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Apply the Promise!

Even if your sins feel big and dark, God promises to wash them away. He makes you clean and pure, as white as snow, when you turn to Him.

Real-Life Example:

Natalie crept into the kitchen after supper. Mom had said no more cookies, but they looked so good. She quickly grabbed one and ate it before anyone saw. Later, when her mom asked if she had listened, Natalie shook her head and said, "Yes." Right away, her heart sank. She had lied.

All evening, Natalie felt miserable. The cookie didn't taste sweet anymore—it only reminded her of her sin. Finally, she went to her mom with tears in her eyes. "I'm sorry," she whispered, "I took a cookie and then I lied." She was sure her mom would be angry.

Instead, her mom knelt down, hugged her, and said, "I forgive you. And God forgives you too." She reminded Natalie of God's promise in Isaiah: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Natalie's guilt melted away, and she felt clean inside again. She was thankful that God can wash away even little sins and give a fresh start.

Discussion Questions:

- In the Bible story, what did the Lord take away from Joshua to show he was forgiven?
- Have you ever been afraid to admit something you did wrong? What happened when you told the truth?

Activity:

Cut out simple paper snowflakes. On them, write words like "forgiven," "clean," and "new." Talk about how snow is white and pure, just like God makes our hearts when He forgives us.



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Day 3

Promise #128

Bible Story (Jonah 1-4)

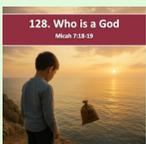
God gave Jonah a very important job: he was to go to the city of Nineveh and preach against their wickedness. Instead of obeying, Jonah tried to run away from God by boarding a ship headed in the opposite direction to Tarshish. When a great storm threatened the ship, Jonah realized his disobedience had put everyone in danger, and he was swallowed by a giant fish after being cast into the sea. As he sat in the dark, Jonah felt the crushing weight of his guilt, realizing that you can never truly run away from the Lord's presence. He finally realized that even in the deepest parts of the ocean, God was still watching over him with love. Jonah prayed a prayer of repentance, promising to do what God asked if he was given another chance.

After three days, the fish spit Jonah onto dry land. God gave him a second chance, and this time, Jonah went to Nineveh and delivered God's warning. To Jonah's surprise, the people listened, turned from their sins, and prayed for forgiveness. Even though Jonah struggled to understand why God would show mercy to such people, God showed him that He delights in compassion. He wants everyone to find a way back to Him. God proved that no matter how far we wander, His mercy is always big enough to bring us home and start over. Just as God cast the Ninevites' sins into the depths of the sea, He promises to do the same for us today.

Today's Promise (#128)

Micah 7:18-19 (KJV)

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.



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Apply the Promise!

God delights in forgiving. He doesn't stay angry but removes your sins completely, like dropping them deep into the ocean where they can never be found again.

Real-Life Example:

James was playing ball in the house even though he knew the rules. With one bad throw, he knocked his dad's favorite bowling trophy off the shelf, and it snapped in two. Panicked, James quickly shoved the broken pieces behind some books and walked away, pretending nothing had happened. At dinner, James wasn't hungry; his stomach felt tight and heavy, like he had swallowed a giant rock.

That night, James couldn't sleep because the secret felt like a heavy weight pressing him down. He finally went to his dad and confessed everything through his tears. His dad didn't yell; he hugged James and said, "I'm so glad you told me. We can fix the trophy, but I'm just happy your heart is clear again."

James felt the "ocean" of his dad's mercy wash away all that heavy guilt instantly. James realized that God's forgiveness works the same way; once we bring our mistakes into the light, He drops them into the depths of the sea where they can never weigh us down again.

Discussion Questions:

- Where was Jonah trying to go when he boarded the ship to run away from God?
- James felt like he had a "giant rock" in his stomach after he broke the trophy. Why do you think hiding a mistake makes us feel so heavy and uncomfortable?

Activity:

Give the child a heavy stone to hold, representing the "weight" of James's secret. Have them drop it into a jar of water and watch it sink to the bottom. Explain that when we confess, God drops our sins into His "ocean of mercy". Those mistakes are gone for good, and God never "fishes" them back up to remind us of them again.



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Day 4

Promise #129

Bible Story (John 8:1-11)

Jesus was teaching in the temple when a group of leaders dragged a woman before Him. They told Jesus she had broken a serious law and demanded she be punished, hoping to trap Jesus into saying something they could use against Him. The woman stood trembling, surrounded by people who were ready to judge her, and she felt the heavy weight of her guilt and shame.

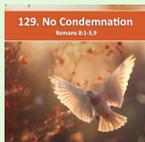
Instead of joining the crowd, Jesus bent down and wrote in the dirt. When the leaders kept asking Him for an answer, He looked up and said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." One by one, the accusers realized they had made mistakes too, and they all walked away until only Jesus and the woman were left.

Jesus looked at her and asked, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" She whispered, "No man, Lord." Jesus then gave her a beautiful fresh start by saying, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." He didn't say her sin was okay, but He offered her forgiveness and the power to live a new life. This promise reminds us that when we turn to Jesus, He removes our shame and gives us a brand-new beginning.

Today's Promise (#129)

Romans 8:1-3, 9 (KJV)

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh...But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."



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Apply the Promise!

When you repent and come to Jesus, He does not condemn you. Instead, He forgives your sins and gives you power through His Spirit to live in a new way.

Real-Life Example:

Amelia took great pride in being the child who always followed directions and kept her things in order. However, one afternoon she accidentally broke her mom's favorite vase and glued it back together so poorly that it looked crooked. Instead of just hiding it, Amelia spent the whole week being "extra good"—doing everyone's chores and never complaining—hoping her "goodness" would cover up her secret mistake. She thought that if she was helpful enough, nobody would notice the broken vase or the guilt she was carrying in her heart. She even started avoiding her favorite games because she felt like she didn't deserve to have fun until she had "earned" her way back into being good. She soon realized that the harder she worked to be perfect, the more lonely and tired she felt.

When her mom finally noticed the crooked vase, she didn't scold Amelia; she just asked why she hadn't come to her sooner. Amelia realized that her "extra good" behavior was just a different way of hiding from the truth. Her mom reminded her that she was loved because she was her daughter, not because she was a perfect child who never messed up.

Discussion Questions:

- What did Jesus say to the people who wanted to punish the woman?
- Does forgiveness mean we can keep making the same mistakes?

Activity:

Act out the story of Jesus and the woman. Have one person play the woman, others the crowd, and one as Jesus. When Jesus says, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more," talk about what it means to receive forgiveness and start again.



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Day 5

Promise #130

Bible Story (2 Samuel 24; 1 Chron. 21)

Near the end of his reign, David made a serious mistake. He ordered Joab, the commander of his army, to count all the fighting men of Israel. God had blessed and protected His people many times, but David began to trust in numbers and human strength instead of God's power.

Joab tried to warn him, but David insisted. The census was carried out, and when it was finished, David's heart smote him. He realized he had sinned against the Lord by relying on his own pride and strength. Filled with guilt, David confessed, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. O Lord, take away the iniquity of your servant."

God sent the prophet Gad to David with a message of judgment. Because of his sin, Israel suffered a terrible plague. David grieved as he saw the suffering of his people and cried out, "I have sinned and done wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand be against me."

Then God showed mercy. David built an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah and offered sacrifices. When he prayed, God heard and stopped the plague. Instead of holding David's sin against him forever, God forgave him.

Later the book of Hebrews would declare God's promise: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." David's guilt was taken away, and God's mercy brought peace to his heart—just as He promises to forgive us too.

Today's Promise (#130)

Hebrews 8:12 (KJV)

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.



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Apply the Promise!

God says He will forgive your sins and not remember them anymore. Once He forgives, they are gone for good.

Real-Life Example:

For months, Tyler had been "borrowing" small things from his brother's room without asking. At first, he felt nervous, but the more he did it, the less he cared. Eventually, he felt no guilt at all; he told himself that since his brother wasn't using the toys, it didn't matter. His heart became so used to the "little" theft that he stopped hearing the "heart alarm" that usually told him he was doing wrong.

Everything changed on Tyler's birthday when his brother gave him a special card and a gift he had saved up for. Seeing his brother's genuine kindness made all those months of sneaking around feel incredibly heavy. The guilt he hadn't felt for a long time rushed in all at once, and Tyler realized how much he had ignored the truth.

Tyler finally confessed everything to his family. He was afraid, but as soon as he spoke the truth, that "numb" feeling was replaced by peace. His parents reminded him that God promises to "remember sins no more." Tyler learned that God's love can wake us up and help us start over with a clean heart.

Discussion Questions:

- In the Bible story, why did David's "heart smite him" after he counted the men?
- Tyler didn't feel bad for a long time. Why do you think it's dangerous when we "stop feeling" guilty about a sin we keep doing?

Activity:

Give everyone a small stone to represent guilt. Let them hold it tightly while thinking about something they've done wrong. Then walk outside and throw the stones far away. Remind them that God doesn't hold sins against us once He forgives—they're gone for good.



126. Psalm 103:8,10-14

⁸The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

¹⁰He hath not dealt with us
after our sins; nor rewarded us
according to our iniquities.

¹¹For as the heaven is high
above the earth,
so great is his mercy
toward them that fear Him.

¹²As far as the east is from the west,
so far hath He removed
our transgressions from us.

¹³Like as a father pitieth his children...
the Lord pitieth
them that fear Him.

¹⁴He knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we are dust.



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127. Isaiah 1:16-20

¹⁸Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

¹⁶Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

¹⁷Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

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¹⁹If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

²⁰But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.



128. Micah 7:18-19

¹⁸Who is a God
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that pardoneth iniquity,
and passeth by
the transgression of
the remnant of His heritage?
He [retains] not His anger for ever,
because He [delights] in mercy.

¹⁹He will turn again,
He will have compassion [on] us;
He will subdue our iniquities;
and...cast all their sins
into the depths of the sea.



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129. Romans 8:1-3,9

¹There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in [Jesus] Christ... who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

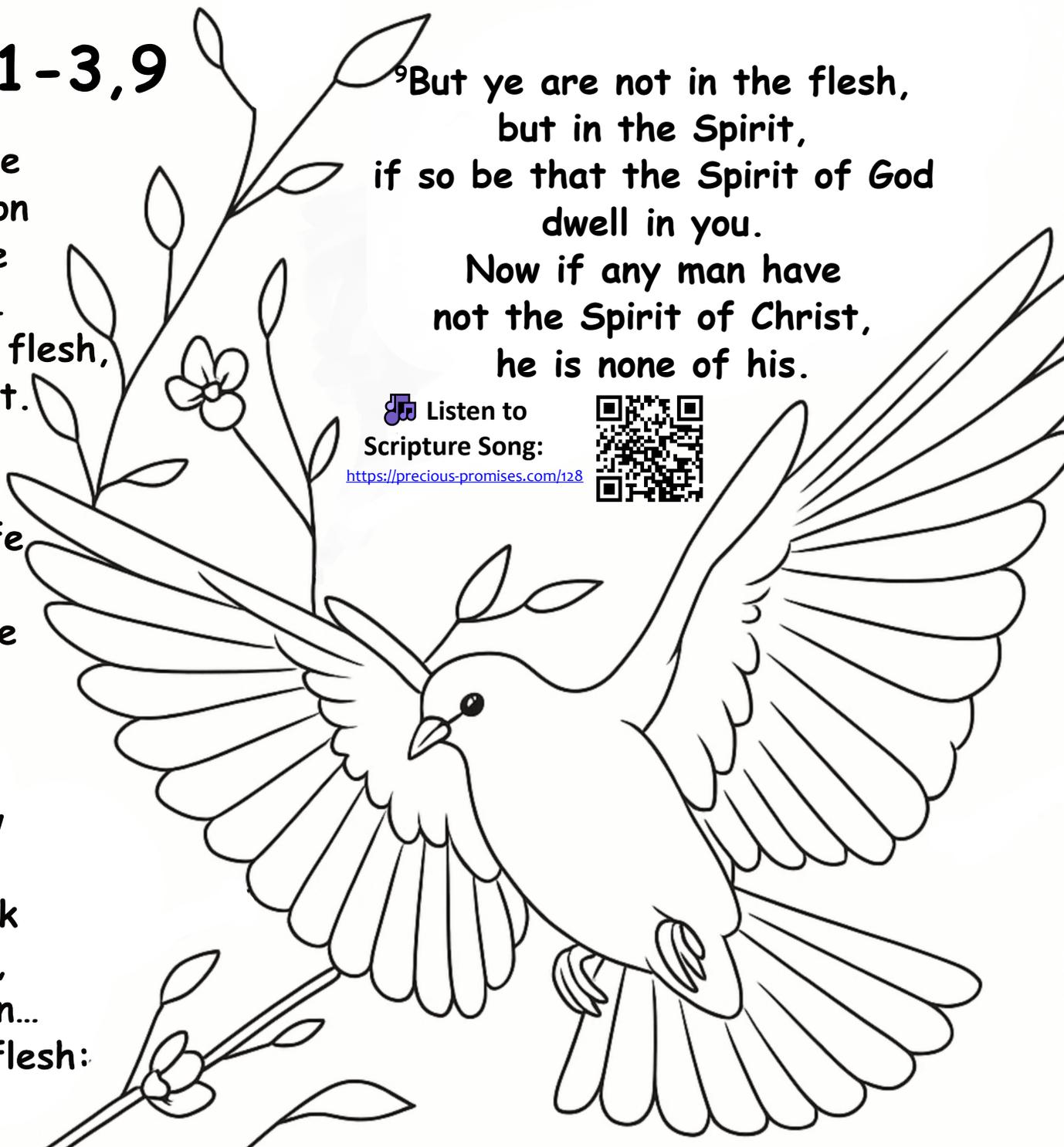
³For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his...Son... condemned sin in the flesh:

⁹But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

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130. Hebrews 8:12

**¹²For I will be merciful
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and their sins
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