



+ **YOU**

Sermon Series: How to Avoid Life's Pitfalls
To be used with Session 6: The Pitfall of Guilt and Grudges

Sermon Title Possibilities: Freed from False Guilt

Scripture: Genesis 50:15-21

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study "*How to Avoid Life's Pitfalls: The Pitfall of Guilt*," use this sermon outline. When we've sinned, the guilty feelings that are often associated with it are useful when they lead us to repent and seek forgiveness. However, once we are forgiven, and continue to live with the guilt of our transgressions, that is false guilt. This false guilt sentences us to a life of fear that constantly begs for forgiveness and enslaves us to past transgressions. This sermon explains that when we embrace forgiveness, it sets us free from fear, false guilt, and the failures of our past.

Introduction: After giving his sons his final blessings and instructions, Jacob died and was buried in the land of Canaan (Gen. 49). Despite Joseph's attitude and actions of forgiveness towards his brothers (Gen. 45:10-11,14; 47:11-12), they believed that Joseph feigned forgiveness for their father's sake. Now that their father was dead, the brothers feared that Joseph would take revenge for what they did to him in the past (Gen. 50:15). Their mindset demonstrated that they were always suspicious of Joseph's motives and never really embraced his expressions of forgiveness. How do we free ourselves of guilty feelings and accept when someone has truly forgiven us?

1. Embrace what is, not what if. (vv. 15)

We often fail to embrace people's forgiveness because we can't forgive ourselves. We believe that our past transgressions are so vile, that not only can't we forgive ourselves, but we believe that no one could truly forgive us, especially the person we've so terribly wronged.

But when the person(s) we've wronged consistently demonstrates an attitude and actions of forgiveness, our failure to accept their forgiveness is not based on evidence, but on emotions. That's false guilt. False guilt is the evidence of being forgiven, but still feeling guilty and living like we're guilty. The "what if" was their feelings. The "what is" is that Joseph had forgiven them.

We have to live in the facts of being forgiven, not in the emotions of feeling guilty.

2. Express your feelings. (vv. 16-19)

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When we express feelings of guilt to the person we've previously sinned against, if that person has truly forgiven us, we can experience his or her reassurance that we've been forgiven, which helps us to overcome false guilt.

Even if the people we've sinned against fail to forgive us, when we acknowledge our sin before God, we have the assurance that God's forgives our guilt.

David said, "When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer's heat. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin" (Psalm 32:3-5).

We no longer have to live with false guilt because God has forgiven us.

3. Enjoy your freedom. (vv. 21)

Joseph let his brothers know that he did not hold a grudge against them because he understood that everything that happened to him was allowed by God.

First John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment." Joseph not only didn't hold a grudge; but expressed his love for his brothers by imploring them: 1) not to be afraid; 2) by promising to take care of their children; and 3) by comforting them and speaking kindly to them.

Joseph is not in the place of God (v. 19). But he certainly expresses the forgiveness of God. When we truly embrace forgiveness, it sets us free from fear and false guilt, and allows us to enjoy the promises of care, comfort, and kindness.

"For freedom, Christ set us free. Stand firm, then, and don't submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1).

We no longer have to be enslaved to the false guilt of past transgressions.

Conclusion: Jesus said, "Know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). When we embrace the forgiveness of those we've wronged, it is a wonderful feeling of freedom. But even if others fail to forgive us, and as a result, we have lingering feelings of guilt, when we understand that we have been truly forgiven by God, it sets us free from those feelings and allows us to enjoy the promises, care, comfort, and kindness of God. If God has forgiven you, even if others haven't, you need to forgive yourself and enjoy your freedom in God. "Whom the Son sets free is free indeed" (John 8:36)!

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