

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

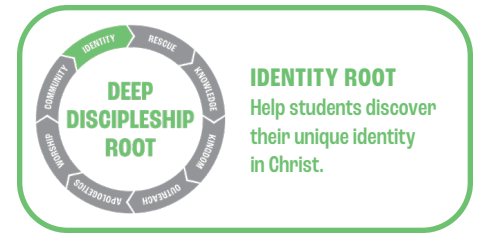
Disciples of Christ aren't controlled by guilt and shame because there is no condemnation in Jesus.

SCRIPTURE

ROMANS 8:1–11

OVERVIEW

Today we are looking at the third lesson in our When Life is Hard series and focusing on the Identity Root. We all sin, which can easily lead to feelings of guilt and shame. But the reality is that *disciples of Christ aren't controlled by guilt and shame because there is no condemnation in Jesus.*



FACILITATOR NOTE: We've given you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.

OPENING

PRAYER

1–2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

OPENING QUESTIONS

3–5 minutes

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- When was the last time you let your emotions and feelings impact your actions?
- What are some past mistakes that instantly brought feelings of deep guilt and shame



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3–5 minutes

- Disciples of Christ aren't controlled by guilt and shame because there is no condemnation in Jesus.
- We all sin and mess up. When we do, we often feel guilt and shame, which are powerful emotions that can threaten to control us. However, as Christ-followers, we don't have to be ruled by those feelings because there is no condemnation in Christ.

Read Romans 8:1–4 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- How does having no condemnation change how we respond to our sin?
- In what ways do you think guilt and shame try to control us?
- How would embracing the freedom you have in Christ impact or change your feelings of guilt and shame?



Say something like: One of the incredible blessings that comes from being in Christ (meaning we have placed our faith in him and have a relationship with him) is having no condemnation. That means when we sin, and we will undoubtedly continue to sin, we don't have to worry about eternal punishment for that sin because Christ paid that price for us. Therefore, when feelings of guilt and shame come, we don't have to be controlled by them. Christ has removed our condemnation. We are loved and accepted in Christ.

Read Romans 8:5–11 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- How does the Spirit change our mindset?
- What encouragement do you find knowing that the Holy Spirit lives in you?
- What can you do to practice relying on the Holy Spirit more than your feelings?



ASK INTENTIONAL QUESTIONS

Say something like: This passage talks a lot about the Spirit, God himself working in us. As strong as feelings of guilt and shame may be, the Spirit is stronger. As Christ-followers, we choose to live by the Spirit, not our feelings. Our faith should include feelings but not be governed by them. Feelings come and go, but faith in Christ can be steadfast. The Spirit has the authority to set us free from our feelings of guilt and shame.

CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5–7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story of a time you felt condemned or beyond repair and how you turned to God and found freedom in Christ.



SHARE PERSONAL STORIES

Example: If a house becomes abandoned and starts to deteriorate, it risks being condemned. This means the location authorities come in and label the home as unfit for anyone to live in. The building is past the point of repair. Once a house is marked condemned, there is not much more someone can do. In many cases, it will be demolished and forgotten. As Christ-followers, we can feel like a building beyond repair at times. We may start feeling overcome with guilt and shame. Honestly, we feel condemned, as if we are beyond repair or unfit for God. But the Bible says there is no condemnation for us. Yes, we will sin, but we don't have to let the guilt and shame of that sin make us feel condemned. In Christ, there is no condemnation. Because of Jesus, we are never unfit for God or beyond his repair.

- How does a condemned house illustrate the feelings of guilt and shame we sometimes have when we sin?
- When have you ever felt like you were unfit for God or beyond his repair?

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2–3 minutes

Disciples of Christ aren't controlled by guilt and shame because there is no condemnation in Jesus. *Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.*



APPLY IT

5–10 minutes

Make a list of things causing you to feel guilt and shame. It might be things you have heard said about you, things you believe about yourself, or things you have done. After you finish your list, do something to visibly “throw it away.” You could ball it up and toss it in the trash, burn it, or rip it to shreds—something that demonstrates there is no condemnation for you. Doing this with other believers might be a powerful experience.



Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



FACILITATOR NOTE: Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.

CLOSING

PRAYER

2–3 minutes

Take time to let your students pray for each other’s applications in the upcoming weeks. *Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.*

MEMORY VERSE

Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
Romans 8:1 (ESV)

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