

Surrender Your Guilt

group leader's guide

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This four-week discussion guide is ideal for small groups of six to twelve participants. If you are using this guide with a larger group of women, create multiple small groups of six to twelve that can consistently meet together for these discussions.

Each session includes:

- **Pair Up**—A chance for participants to reflect on their week’s experiences with a partner.
- **Tune In**—A brief time of prayer focused on tuning in to God’s presence.
- **Talk Through**—Small group discussion questions that open the week’s themes.
- **Reflect On**—Small group Scripture exploration and discussion.
- **Live By**—A brief time of prayerful corporate Scripture contemplation.
- **Step Out**—A concluding exercise focused on life application.
- **Offer Up**—A closing prayer to wrap up your meeting.
- **Plan On**—Specifics about preparation for next week’s meeting.



GUILT-BURDENED YOU

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 1–8 in *Surrender Your Guilt*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Surrender Your Guilt*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Surrender Your Guilt* days 1–8 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune in

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

TALK THROUGH

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- Our culture seems to constantly connect guilt and religion, such as the notion that religion makes one feel guilty or the idea that people who feel guilty are drawn to religion. Why does this cultural association between guilt and religion exist? Is it correct? Why or why not?
- Based on your life experience (childhood, teen years, various church experiences), is guilt or feeling guilty something you have tended to associate with church, faith, or religion? Why or why not?

REFLECT ON

Invite volunteers to read aloud **Romans 3:23** and **James 3:2**.

- Reflect on the guilt spectrum described in day 2 “Ponder.” Where would you place yourself in regard to your own sense of guilt? Is it a painful burden? A distant concept? Something in between? Explain.
- We all have sin, brokenness, and guilt. Which of guilt and guilt’s gang of comrades tend to show up most often in your life? (Invite participants to share their drawings from day 2 “Create.”)

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Psalm 51:1–12**.

- How does honestly facing sin rather than hiding it produce freedom? When have you experienced this in your own life?
- In what ways do you relate to David’s expressions in this Psalm? Which phrase stands out to you most? (Direct participants to refer to their notes from day 4 “Examine.”)
- Does confessing sin to God scare you? How about confessing sin to others? Why or why not? What factors may often prevent us from experiencing the freedom brought about by confession? (Invite participants to draw upon their written reflections from day 5 “Journal.”)
- How would you explain the difference between true guilt and false guilt in your own words? How can we tell the difference in our own lives? (Direct participants to refer to day 6 “Ponder” and “Journal.”)

Live By

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **Psalm 51:7–13** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

STEP OUT

Pass out index cards and ask participants to write “I need God’s grace for . . .” on their card. Then challenge them to write a specific area of sin, guilt, temptation, or brokenness in their life. Explain that another member of the group will see the card, so they should be as bold and honest as they can while also keeping details confidential if needed.

Collect the cards then redistribute them one at a time (participants should not have their own card). Ask participants to commit to pray throughout the week for the situation represented by the card they received, asking God to give the person courage to rely fully on his grace.

OFFER UP

Close by using the words from day 2 “Pray” to lead a group prayer. First, ask participants to speak words that honestly reflect struggles, difficulties, or hard parts of their faith-life right now. Next, ask them to dream with God, speaking aloud words that represent how they desire their faith to grow and change in the coming weeks.

Optional: Select one or two songs from “Praise God for Grace” in Go Deeper to sing.

Plan On

Remind participants to journey through days 9–15 for next week’s meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Surrender Your Guilt*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



Grace-FULL GOD

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 9–15 in *Surrender Your Guilt*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Surrender Your Guilt*, journal, and Bible to the meeting. Also, encourage women to bring their “grace graffiti” photo with matte from days 1 and 9 “Create.”
Optional: Bring colored thread or yarn for the Step Out challenge below.

Pair UP

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Surrender Your Guilt* days 9–15 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune in

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God’s presence.

Talk Through

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- What first comes to mind for you—such as an image, a particular person, a setting, an experience, a story, a character, and so on—when you hear the word *grace*? Explain.
- How do you think most non-Christians understand the word *grace*? How do Christians define or understand it? (Encourage participants to draw upon their experience from day 9 “Interact.”)

REFLECT ON

Invite volunteers to select and read aloud several of the passages listed in day 9 “Examine” (ideally including at least one for each of the biblical words).

- How do these biblical words and scriptural ideas expand or reframe your understanding of grace? (Prompt participants to draw from their notes from day 9 “Examine.”)
- What is most beautiful to you about grace? Why? (Invite participants to share their grace graffiti pictures.)

Invite volunteers to read aloud **Isaiah 53:4–6** and **Romans 5:1–2, 8–11**.

- What strikes you as critically important from these passages? Why?
- Theologians offer several different theories of atonement (see day 13 “Ponder”). Which idea most closely reflects how you tend to think about atonement? Which was new or different for you? Explain.
- Reflect on your exploration of the parable of the prodigal son (**Luke 15:11–32**). Do you often focus on the grace-full aspect of God’s character? Why or why not? (Prompt participants to draw upon day 11 and day 15 as they discuss this question and the next question.)
- How does the image of God as the welcoming Father challenge or inspire you regarding your relationship with him?

Live By

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **Romans 5:1–2** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

STEP OUT

Challenge women to use the instructions in day 12 “Create” to make a simple bracelet that they can give to a friend or loved one. (If you’re able take time to do this together as a group during your meeting. If not, simply challenge women to do it on their own during the coming week.) Encourage participants to share the grace-filled meaning of the colors with the person who receives the bracelet.

OFFER UP

Close with a creative prayer prompt. Using an art book from the library or a laptop with Internet connection, look together at one of the images suggested in day 15 “Pray.” Encourage participants to look at the picture and silently pray, praising God for his grace in their lives.

Optional: Select one or two songs from “Praise God for Grace” in *Go Deeper* to sing together as you wrap up your meeting.

Plan On

Remind participants to journey through days 16–22 for next week’s meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Surrender Your Guilt*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



DWELL in Grace

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 16–22 in *Surrender Your Guilt*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Surrender Your Guilt*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Surrender Your Guilt* days 16–22 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune in

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

TALK THROUGH

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- Who is someone you know who reveals God's grace through his or her own life or demeanor? How has grace changed or impacted that person's life? Describe the person.
- How has your study of grace been changing you? Share one area you feel God has been working on in your life.

REFLECT ON

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **John 8:1–11**.

- Drawing from this story as well as other biblical accounts you're familiar with, how would you explain the difference between conviction and condemnation? (Invite participants to use the ideas in day 19 to launch their own personal observations.)
- Jesus pointed the woman caught in adultery toward a new way of life. What stands out to you as some key differences between a life burdened by guilt and a life changed by grace? (Direct participants to draw upon day 18 "Journal" as well as day 21 "Journal.")
- What is one negative, graceless trait (see day 18 "Journal" for ideas) that you particular desire to see God help you overcome through his grace?
- How does the idea of "costly grace" (see day 20 "Pray") inspire or energize you? Explain.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Matthew 5:3**.

- From your experience, what does it really mean that "You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope" (Matt. 5:3 MSG)?
- Share an example from your own life. (Guide participants to reflect on day 21 "Internalize" and day 22 "Journal.")

Live By

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **John 8:10–11** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

STEP OUT

Challenge participants to spend ten to twenty minutes during the coming week in a prayer of self-examination (*examen*) using the structure outlined in "Examine Your Life" in Go Deeper. Remind participants that this is meant not to produce a burden of guilt (condemnation), but rather to lead to the freedom we find in God's grace (conviction).

OFFER UP

Close in a group prayer by reciting together the hymn “No, Not Despairingly” found in day 21 “Pray.” (Group members could take turns reading lines or stanzas.)

Optional: Select one or two more songs from “Praise God for Grace” in Go Deeper to sing together as you wrap up your meeting.

Plan On

Remind participants to journey through days 23–30 for next week’s meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Surrender Your Guilt*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



Extend Grace

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 23–30 in *Surrender Your Guilt*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Surrender Your Guilt*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Surrender Your Guilt* days 23–30 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune in

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

TALK THROUGH

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- Without being too specific, think of someone you know who is a real grace miser—who is judgmental, cold, unwelcoming, unkind, etc. Describe that person and the effects of gracelessness in his or her life.
- When has another person shown grace to you—such as forgiveness, a welcome, or a kindness you didn't deserve? Describe your experience.

REFLECT ON

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Matthew 18:21–35**.

- When do you find it most difficult to extend grace to others? Or who is tough for you to view and treat with grace? (Refrain from sharing details that could harm others.)
- What was your experience like with doing the day 24 “Act” suggestion? How did it challenge you? What did it teach you? Explain.
- Do you think it’s harder to extend grace to others or to yourself? (Guide participants to refer to their written responses from day 26 “Journal.”)

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **2 Corinthians 5:11–21**.

- How is your own personal testimony a “grace story”? What could you share from your life that would point others to the grace of God? (Guide participants to draw upon day 27 “Ponder” and “Worship” for their discussion.)
- How, specifically, did you feel challenged to live as an ambassador of reconciliation? How might the Holy Spirit have pointed you toward a particular person, action, or ministry as you studied this past week? (Guide participants to reflect on the experiences from days 28 and 29).

Live By

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **2 Corinthians 5:20** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

STEP OUT

Have participants form pairs to briefly and confidentially share with each other a person they know who is in deep need of God’s grace. Prompt pairs to brainstorm with whom they can share the grace of God through words and actions. Challenge partners to pray for each other’s situations over the coming weeks and to intentionally encourage each other to be ambassadors of grace.

OFFER UP

Close by inviting participants to share their creative writing pieces from day 30 “Create.” If some don’t feel comfortable sharing, that’s fine. Worship God together by singing the hymn “Amazing Grace” (see day 30).

Optional: Select one or two more songs from “Praise God for Grace” in Go Deeper to sing together as you wrap up your meeting.

Plan On

Form some ongoing grace-encouragement teams. See the “Build Your Team” suggestion in Go Deeper for specifics.