



E-BOOK

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INTRODUCTION

BY PASTOR JON LUDOVINA

Be gracious to me, God,
 according to Your faithful love;
 according to Your abundant compassion,
 blot out my rebellion.

Wash away my guilt
 and cleanse me from my sin.

For I am conscious of my rebellion,
 and my sin is always before me.

Against You—You alone—I have sinned
 and done this evil in Your sight.
 So You are right when You pass sentence;
 You are blameless when You judge.

Indeed, I was guilty when I was born;
 I was sinful when my mother conceived me.

Surely You desire integrity in the inner self,
 and You teach me wisdom deep within.

Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
 wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness;
 let the bones You have crushed rejoice.

Turn Your face away from my sins
 and blot out all my guilt.

God, create a clean heart for me
 and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not banish me from Your presence
 or take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore the joy of Your salvation to me,
 and give me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach the rebellious Your ways,
 and sinners will return to You.

Save me from the guilt of bloodshed, God,
 the God of my salvation,
 and my tongue will sing of Your righteousness.

Lord, open my lips,
 and my mouth will declare Your praise.

You do not want a sacrifice, or I would give it;
 You are not pleased with a burnt offering.

The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit.
 God, You will not despise a broken and humbled heart.

In Your good pleasure, cause Zion to prosper;
 build the walls of Jerusalem.

Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices,
 whole burnt offerings;
 then bulls will be offered on Your altar.

– Psalm 51 (HCSB)

THE INNER SELF

Surely You desire integrity in the inner self, and You teach me
wisdom deep within.

–Psalm 51:6

Another translation of this verse reads, “God delights when truth reigns in the inward man.” The Scriptures repeatedly emphasize God’s huge concern with our internal nature. He only values the external appearances of our lives when they are an accurate reflection of our internal state.¹ The twenty-third chapter of Matthew records one of Jesus’ sharpest critiques of the Pharisees in which He laments, “[You] outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”²

God delights in reality.

God is not impressed by falsified outward signs of life and health. He delights when truth reigns in the inner self. He is interested in the internal nature of our truest, deepest identities. He is never faked out. Hebrews explains, “everything is laid bare before the eyes of God with whom we must give an account.”³ No matter how hard we try, no matter how much we believe we have faked out the people around us, God never sees anything less or anything more than the exact reality of who we are.

The problem with dealing with our internal realities is they can often be slippery. We find ourselves asking, “Why did I do that?” “Where did that come from?” These questions aren’t always easy to answer. The apostle

Paul can relate as he confesses, “I do not understand my own actions”.⁴ While the external behavior and characteristics tend to be readily visible to ourselves and others, the internal motives of our issues can often be quite elusive.

The backyard of the first house my wife and I owned was overrun with bamboo. Since we didn’t like it, I spent a few hours hacking at it, mowing over it and chopping it down to the ground. The external problem was gone for a few weeks. And then the bamboo came back with a vengeance, except this time it wasn’t just in the spot we originally saw it. New shoots sprang up from out of the middle of our lawn.

Our second effort was much more valiant. We got out the shovels and hoes and we dug deep. We pulled every root we could find. We were shocked to find an interconnected network of roots that ran underneath the majority of our yard. The roots were down there lurking, ready to sprout new bamboo plants in entirely different sections of our yard. There were even some roots that ran out into our neighbors’ property. After hours and hours of painstaking work we believed we had ripped out every last iota of bamboo.

Until a few months later when brand new bamboo sprouts shot back up again.

Waging war on the roots of our sin can feel like an equally frustrating task. A huge part of the reason for this is that many of us choose the same behaviors and are owned by the same soul conditions but for completely different reasons. The four main deep idols – power, control, comfort and approval – can produce surface level behaviors and conditions that appear identical but come from completely different places. But even in the midst of this frustration, Jesus has given us all the gospel tools we need to fight in a fruitful way.⁵

1 Deuteronomy 8:1-2, Psalm 44:20-21, Psalm 28:7, Psalm 51:6 and 10, Psalm 139:23-24, Proverbs 4:23, Isaiah 1:11-17, Isaiah 57:15, Jeremiah 17:9-10, Ezekiel 36:25-26, Matthew 15:17-20, Mark 7:18-23, Luke 6:43-45, John 2:24-25, Romans 7:13-25, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Philippians 4:7, 1 Peter 3:3-4

2 Matthew 23:28

3 Hebrews 4:13

4 Romans 7:14-20

5 2 Peter 1:3-4

AN OBJECTIVE ANCHOR FOR OUR SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.

—Hebrews 6:19

Much of our inner self, our motives, affections and convictions can seem pretty subjective. We have to rely on self-reporting which is often biased. God says through His prophet Jeremiah that our hearts are deceitful. This means we frequently aren't honest with ourselves.⁶ Paul tells us we suppress the truth.⁷ There are realities in our souls that don't want to be found out. There are truths we don't want to acknowledge. Our blind spots are exactly that; things we are blind to and can't see accurately.

All of this subjective slipperiness leads us to agree with Paul when he says, "I do not understand my own actions." I don't know why I do the same thing over and over when I know it leads to pain and agony. I don't know why I can't quit doing certain things no matter how much I don't want to do it.

The subjective, confusing, deceitful nature of dealing with our hearts meets its match in the objective reality of the gospel. The gospel doesn't offer us pithy clichés of "oh sweet honey baby, don't feel that way. Just think happy thoughts."

The gospel is an objective, a sure and steadfast reality that provides an anchor for the soul. The historical reality that God came to earth as a human who eyewitnesses confirm rose from the grave provides new perspective for

⁶ Jeremiah 17:9

⁷ Romans 1:18

our sinful desires and symptoms that seem uncontrollable. The fact that Jesus overcame the grave means there is nothing lingering inside of us – no lust, no greed, no apathy or anxiety – that Jesus doesn't have the power to overcome.

None of this is to say that believing and resting in the gospel makes dealing with these issues easy. But it is to say that the historical and objective reality of what Jesus has done for us provides a unique antidote for what's killing us.

TAKING STOCK OF OUR INNER SELVES

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked,
for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

— Galatians 6:7

Throughout this series as individuals, as LifeGroups and as a church family we are going to take stock of our hearts and learn how to helpfully encourage each other forward. As a church family we will strive to kill what's been killing us and we will press in to God's plan to conform us to the image of Jesus who died for us.⁸

The goal is not to get more in touch with our feelings.

The goal is not fluffy gooey conversation accompanied with no real repentance or change.

The goal is to go hunting and to lay the ax at the root of our sin. The goal is to take a ruthless accounting of what is broken in our souls. What fatal infections are killing us and we don't even know it? And for those of

⁸ Romans 8:29

which we are aware, how do we walk in real freedom? What are the roots that need to be strategically and surgically removed?

A primary tool that we will use in each of the weeks is something we borrowed from Recovery called inventories. An inventory is essentially an open ended questionnaire that provides a framework for you to prayerfully allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the reality of what you're dealing with. At the end of each week, as you take an honest inventory of your soul and allow your community to confirm or revise your findings, there will be three potential next steps for you to take:

*OPTION 1: GRATITUDE, ONGOING
REPENTANCE AND GROWTH IN
MISSIONAL HELPFULNESS.*

While perfect people don't exist, there are people who don't struggle with certain issues as intensely as others do. There may be some weeks that don't reveal anything glaring that needs your immediate attention. In this case, thank Jesus for growing you in this way. Continue to repent in humility and be wary of complacency (just because something isn't an issue for you now doesn't mean it won't be in the future). And thirdly, grow in your understanding because increased awareness of these issues can help you live on mission and minister to others well.

*OPTION 2: FURTHER INVESTIGATION WITH
SOMEONE IN YOUR LIFE GROUP.*

For some of these issues you may become aware or curious as to whether you struggle with this issue more than you previously thought. If this is the case, we recommend you talk to your LifeGroup and ask them to pray and speak into this issue for you. Do they see it as a serious problem that you should

pursue further? Reading one of the recommended books for that issue with someone in your LifeGroup and discussing can be a great way to investigate and discern if you should take a next step of recovery or counseling.

OPTION 3: RECOVERY.

Any of the weeks and topics covered in this series could reveal an issue that you didn't realize was killing you from the inside. If that's the case, the good news is we already have a great next step opportunity in place for you to continue working through and processing this issue as you learn to walk in freedom and repentance: Recovery. For more information, go to midtown-columbia.com/recovery.

LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION

Which of the following sin conditions affect you on a regular basis?

___ guilt ___ anger ___ greed ___ busyness
___ shame ___ envy ___ anxiety ___ lust
___ worry ___ apathy ___ fear of man

Read Romans 8:22-25. Because of the brokenness of the world, everyone has things in the world and things in themselves about which we “inwardly groan” – things we wish we could change.

- What areas of your spiritual growth cause you the most inward groaning?

- What kind of concentrated effort (if any) have you made to deal with these issues?

- How hopeful are you that these issues could actually see real change in your life? Why?

Read Psalm 51. What confessions does David make? What kinds of help does he ask for from God? Which of these confessions and requests do you need to specifically apply to your fight against sin?

TWO:
GUILT & SHAME

The following guilt and shame inventories, diagnostic questions and LifeGroup discussion questions are resources designed to be used in conjunction with the What's Killing Me sermon on Guilt and Shame. To find the sermon, go to midtowncolumbia.com.

GUILT INVENTORY

What happened?	Who was hurt?	How does it impact you?	How does the gospel speak into it?	What's next?
<p>What crimes, sins, and/or harm have you committed? Write specific details of the events and actions.</p>	<p>List the names of those who were affected or hurt by your action.</p>	<p>How does this guilt affect your life? How does it impact your relationship with God and others? What sinful reactions or coping mechanisms do you have related to this guilt?</p>	<p>How does Jesus' completed work through his life, death and resurrection specifically speak into your guilt? (Reflect on Colossians 2:13-15 and Romans 7:21-8:4)</p>	<p>What does repentance and walking forward in the freedom of the gospel look like? Who do you need to ask for forgiveness? What amends do you need to make?</p>

A LITTLE HELP

Because shame tends to be a bit trickier to get a handle on than guilt, here are some further diagnostic questions to help you discern areas of potential shame in your life:

- **Family shame:** Are there any aspects of your family that are uniquely broken or embarrassing? Are there any ways your family encouraged hiding sin and brokenness instead of dealing with it honestly in the light? Are there any ways your parents rejected you or made you to feel like a consistent disappointment or failure? Are there any members of your family who have brought disgrace to your family's reputation?
- **Shame of failure:** What are the biggest failures in your life? Have you experienced any failures or death of a dream that have had a lingering, haunting impact on your confidence?
- **Sexual shame:** Are there any sexual sins you have committed or that have been committed against you that bring a particular sense of shame? Are there any sexual sins that make it hard for you to believe and receive God's forgiveness and cleansing?
- **The shame of long struggle and slow growth:** Are there any sin struggles that have persisted for a long time with relatively slow growth and freedom? When we say things like, "I've been a Christian for _____ years and I shouldn't struggle with _____ anymore," we are in essence saying, "I've been a Christian for a long time so I shouldn't need Jesus anymore." Because these issues can create a lot of doubt, it can be helpful to ask people who know you well if they see evidence that you are fighting to put these struggles to death by confession and repentance. If not, ask them what steps they think you need to take.
- **Victim and abuse shame:** Have you experienced any regular abuse or been a victim of sin or crime? What kind of messages has this abuse caused you to believe about yourself, others and God?

SHAME INVENTORY PT. 1
(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

What happened?	How does it impact you?	How does the gospel apply?	What's next?
<p>What things have you done (or attributes about yourself) make you feel the most ashamed, embarrassed or dirty? What about yourself do you want to hide from God or people? (Consider things you have done, are tempted by, and desires.)</p>	<p>How do these shameful activities or attributes affect your life? How does it impact your relationship with God and others? What sinful reactions or coping mechanisms have you developed in response to your shame?</p>	<p>How does Jesus' washing, covering and acceptance apply to the causes and the effects of your shame? (Consider Colossians 1:21-22 and 1 John 1:5-10.)</p>	<p>What does repentance and walking forward in the freedom of the gospel look like? Who do you need to ask for forgiveness? What secrets do you need to bring to the light?</p>

SHAME INVENTORY PT. 2
ABUSE AND VICTIM SHAME

What happened?	How does it impact you?	How does the gospel apply?	What's next?
<p>What do you feel shame over that has been done to you? (Things you are not responsible for)</p>	<p>How does being the victim of these shameful acts affect you? How does it impact your relationship with God and others? Are you aware of any sinful patterns you've developed to cope?</p>	<p>How does Jesus' washing, covering and acceptance apply to the causes and the effects of your shame? (Consider Colossians 1:21-22 and 1 John 1:5-10.)</p>	<p>What does walking forward in the freedom and confidence of the gospel look like? Who do you need to forgive? What sinful coping mechanisms do you need to put to death?</p>

LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION

What issues stood out in the inventory and diagnostic question as new issues or sources of greater guilt and shame than you realized you were dealing with previously?

What sinful coping mechanisms have you developed in response to your guilt and shame?

Read Psalm 51:7-12. Does your guilt and shame cause you to run away from God or to run towards Him? What does this look like?

Read Isaiah 53:3-6 and Hebrews 12:1-3. What does it mean that Jesus has taken your specific guilt and shame in the cross? How does Jesus relate and respond to us in the midst of our guilt and shame?

How does God offer exactly what you need in the gospel to be free from your guilt and shame?

How do you need to repent, ongoingly believe and walk in the freedom that Jesus has purchased for you?

THREE:
ENVY & GREED

The following envy and greed inventories, diagnostic questions and LifeGroup discussion questions are resources designed to be used in conjunction with the What's Killing Me sermon on Envy and Greed. To find the sermon, go to midtowncolumbia.com.

ENVY INVENTORY

What's the dream?	Who's got it?	What's the root desire?	How does the gospel satisfy it?	What's next?
<p>What status, object, relationship, person, goal or life stage do you believe you need to be satisfied?</p>	<p>What person or group of people have what you want? How does your envy hurt your relationships?</p>	<p>What's the deep desire under your surface desire? What longing do you think this object or relationship would fulfill?</p>	<p>How does Jesus offer you this longing in a truer and fuller way? (Consider Philippians 4:10-20.)</p>	<p>What does repentance and walking forward in the freedom of the gospel look like? Who do you need to ask for forgiveness?</p>

GREED INVENTORY

What do you need more of?	When do you freely spend on items you don't need?	How does the gospel redirect our money?	What's next?
Fill in the blank: "A little more _____ would make my life happier."	What type of unnecessary items are you to quick to spend on for yourself?	How does Jesus' sacrificial generosity shift our perspective on money and our spending habits? (1 Timothy 6:6-10 and 2 Corinthians 8:9-10)	What does repentance and walking forward in sacrificial generosity look like? What are practical steps you can take to guard your heart against the love of money?

LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION

What ideas from the sermon caught your attention? What areas of discontentment and unnecessary spending on yourself stood out in the inventories?

Read Proverbs 14:30 and Ecclesiastes 4:4. Where does subtle, low-grade envy drive your work, effort and lifestyle? Are there any relationships in your life that are currently being affected by overt envy and need to be reconciled? What steps of repentance and peace making do you need to take?

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. Do you spend money on yourself cautiously or freely? Why? What does appropriate concern about our spending look like?

Does the pattern of our lives agree with Paul that we can be content so long as we have food and shelter? Why or why not?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-9. Is there a pattern of sacrificial generosity growing in your life? What factors cause you to give hesitantly? What non-malicious, unintentional spending habits become obstacles that prevent you from being more generous?

FOUR:
ANGER

The following anger and resentment inventories and LifeGroup discussion questions are resources designed to be used in conjunction with the What's Killing Me sermon on Anger. To find the sermon, go to midtowncolumbia.com

ANGER INVENTORY

What are your fuses?	Who pushes your buttons?	What are the roots of your anger?	How does Jesus douse our anger with grace?	What's next?
<p>List any situation and types of interaction that regularly cause you to respond with sinful anger. List the times in your life you have been the most sinfully angry.</p>	<p>In these situations are there any patterns of specific people or types of people who annoy or bother you? Why?</p>	<p>What is the root of offense? Does your anger indicate a love of comfort, control, power or approval?</p>	<p>What happens to your anger when you consider Jesus' incredible patience, grace and forgiveness toward you? (Consider Ephesians 4:25-32.)</p>	<p>How are you going to fight to replace your sinful anger with gospel-motivated patience and forgiveness?</p>

RESENTMENT INVENTORY

Who are you bitter toward?	What happened?	What has been the effect?	How have you responded?	What does gospel reconciliation look like?
<p>List everyone who you feel bitterness, anger, or resentment toward. (What person walks in the room and your throat tightens?)</p>	<p>Explain why you are, or were, angry, and specifically explain the action done to you.</p>	<p>For each resentment listed, describe how it has affected your life and your relationship.</p>	<p>What have your responses been to the resentment? Prayerfully discern if you have any sinful responses that you need to take responsibility for.</p>	<p>How does Jesus motivate and empower forgiveness that seems impossible? Is there anywhere you are resisting forgiveness? What steps of reconciliation do you need to take?</p>

ANGER ASSESSMENT DIAGNOSTIC

<i>How frequent of a present reality is anger in your life:</i>	Never	A few times/year	Once/month	Weekly	Daily
Visible outbursts of anger (yelling, red face, slamming doors, threats, etc.)	—	—	—	—	—
Low-grade passive anger (mean comments/sarcasm, apathy, anger fantasies)	—	—	—	—	—
Violent anger (hitting, fighting, breaking things, etc.)	—	—	—	—	—
Internal anger (self-abuse – physical or verbal)	—	—	—	—	—

Agree or disagree with the following statements:

Agree Disagree

I use abusive language, such as, name-calling, insults, sarcasm or swearing.	_____	_____
I go from calm to angry very quickly. I have a short fuse.	_____	_____
When I think about bad things that have happened in my life, I still get angry.	_____	_____
I frequently use passive punishments like the silent treatment or withholding relationship and affection.	_____	_____
At times, I try to intimidate people with aggressive body language and facial expressions, (such as clenching my fists, staring someone down, etc.)	_____	_____
I frequently have anger or revenge fantasies in response to people who have hurt me or angered me.	_____	_____
I frequently have harshly critical or hateful thoughts about myself or others.	_____	_____
Even when someone has apologized and seems very sorry for having hurt me, I have a very hard time forgiving them.	_____	_____

LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION

What sinful anger issues did the Holy Spirit reveal to you as you worked through the inventory, diagnostic and sermon?

Read James 1:19-20, Romans 2:4 and Titus 2:11-15. What does James mean when he tells us that sinful anger doesn't lead to the righteousness that God desires? Why is it so tempting to believe that anger is a good way to make people (including ourselves) behave the way we want them to?

Read Ephesians 4:25-27 and Hebrews 12:14-15. How does unresolved anger erode the community of God's family? What does it functionally mean to not let the sun go down on your anger?

Who (if anyone) do you have unresolved anger or bitterness towards and you need to forgive them and be reconciled? What (if any) excuses are you using to justify not resolving the conflict and being reconciled to the person? How are these excuses a failure to believe and live in light of the gospel?