

STUMMIN

SMALL GROUP
LEADER GUIDE

MIDDLE
SCHOOL
FOCUS

MOODS

JANUARY 27, 2021

Week 4 of a 4-week series
about emotions

BOTTOM LINE

Jesus frees us from being
controlled by guilt.

SCRIPTURE

*Above all else, guard your
heart, for everything you
do flows from it.*

- Proverbs 4:23 NIV

*So now there is no
condemnation for those
who belong to Christ
Jesus. And because you
belong to him, the power
of the life-giving Spirit has
freed you from the power
of sin that leads to death.*

- Romans 8:1-2 NLT

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to
recognize that God loves
them no matter what and
because of that, they can
live free from guilt.

>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: Middle schoolers may not feel a lot of guilt about a lot of things. If they do, it's usually about things that seem minimal. Lying to their parents, fighting with a friend, cheating on an exam, being mean to a sibling—these are the things most middle schoolers experience guilt over in this phase. Even though those things may seem like less than a big deal to us, the weight of the guilt they feel over them is very real to them. Do your best to help them move from only focusing on what they did to feel guilty to thinking about how they can better respond to the guilt they feel. Also remember that for some students, guilt isn't a bad thing. Sometimes people need to feel guilty in order to understand that what they've done or said is wrong. The important thing for your group to learn this week is that God doesn't want them to stay there. God has provided a way to move beyond guilt to forgiveness.

>> DURING GROUP

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DISCUSS THIS:

- Scatter the provided emoji cards on the floor in the middle of your group and ask your students to select one card to represent how they're feeling today. Then, go around the group and let everybody explain why they picked the card they did.
- Put the provided "Feelings Wheel" in the center of your group to use as a conversation aid. Lead a discussion about what words can be used to describe "guilt." Then, ask the group to share about times in the past when they've felt guilty. Which word from the Wheel best describes the emotion felt in each circumstance shared?
- What's one reason middle schoolers may feel guilty . . .
 - With their family?
 - With their friends?
 - On social media?
 - At school?
- What's one helpful way a middle schooler can deal with guilt?
- What's one unhelpful way a middle schooler can deal with guilt?
- Does knowing God loves you no matter what change anything for you? Why or why not?

DO THIS:

- Pass out the provided guided prayer sheet and have students use it to pray silently. Tell students that they don't have to write in the blanks today. They can fill them in silently in their minds as they pray quietly to themselves. Then, they can take the prayer sheet home to fill in later or use it as a guide for future prayers.

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>> BEFORE GROUP

THINK ABOUT THIS: Decisions and actions in high school come with higher stakes than ever before. That's why, as adults, it can be tempting to use guilt or shame as a tool to influence students to behave well. And while our intentions may be good, using guilt or shame as a tool can do significant harm, not only for the student we're addressing but also to those watching. This week, if a student acknowledges a mistake, be careful to guard your facial expressions and vocal tone so that you are not demonstrating shock or disappointment. In doing so, you will communicate that your group is a safe place to process the pain of poor choices, and you will earn the right to be trusted in moments when a student is feeling guilty.

>> DURING GROUP

Create meaningful conversations. Adjust the questions as needed and ask thoughtful follow-up questions as the conversation unfolds. Don't feel like you need to answer every question.

DISCUSS THIS:

- Using the Feelings Wheel, ask: Which of these feelings do you rarely or never feel?
- What's the silliest/weirdest thing you've ever felt guilty about or apologized for?
- Looking at the Feelings Wheel, you may have noticed that guilt can show up in a few different places. What is one area where guilt shows up most for you? Why?
- Read Proverbs 4:23. Do you think this is true, that everything you do flows from your heart?
- How do you know when someone is feeling guilty? Do they run? Do they shut down? Do they brush it off? What are you most likely to do when you feel guilty?
- If we were to believe that Jesus takes away our shame and guilt, how would that change how we live?
- Our past can remind us but does not define us. What can make it difficult for us to accept this statement? What could change in your life by accepting this statement?
- How can we, as a group, create a safe place for you to share without feeling guilt or shame for the decisions you have made or will make?

>> AFTER GROUP

This week, reflect back on how your students responded to this message and discussion. Follow up with them and remind them that you are available to help them process any emotions they are dealing with, especially feelings of guilt and shame.