

**What Should I Do with My Life?
Coping with Guilt and Loneliness
Genesis 2:22-3:16; 1 John 1:5-2:2, 4:17-19
Sermon Outline**

Introduction: Guilt and loneliness are like a fever that we carry with us wherever we go. They sap our strength in whatever it is we are trying to do with our lives. We will discuss two questions: (i) Why and how does guilt tend to isolate us; (ii) What can we do about the problem.

I) Guilt and isolation: Why and how guilt makes us lonely

Played out in the Adam and Eve debacle

A) The initial picture

- Joyful companionship
- Deep respect
- Safe intimacy

B) The breach with God and its social consequences

1) Hiding

Gen 3.7: They knew they were naked and sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths.

2) Blame-shifting

Gen 3.12: The woman you gave me...

3) Manipulation and oppression

Gen 3.16b: Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you

The heart of the dynamic of guilt and loneliness

II) What can we do about the problem?

By walking in the light (1 John 4.7)

A) Let God's light expose you

1 John 1.8,10

Honesty

Train your mouth to speak the truth

Ask God to search you deeply, especially in those places where there is a breach with someone

B) Let God's light save you

1 John 2.1-2

...children...Advocate...Father...the righteous...propitiation

The gospel sets us free to love

1 John 4.19: We love because he first loved us.

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Jesus says that the whole law of God is summarized in the command to love—to love God and to love neighbor. This means that, of all the imperatives coming at us as we ask, “What should I do with my life?” the one that should always be at the top of our ‘to do’ list should be to love. This is both good news and bad news. Why is it both?
- 2) Our difficulties with love tend to make us both guilty and isolated. How, according to the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:22 – 3:16, does guilt lead to isolation? Try to illustrate from your own experience.
- 3) Reflect on the following: “Being fundamentally unsafe with God, the Person who holds all the power, sends us on a mad scramble to find safety by our own efforts—by building walls around ourselves (hiding), by proving we are innocent by blaming others our problems on other people, and by using people to fill our lives with whatever makes us happy and secure.”
- 4) Look at 1 John 4:7. What, according to that verse, are the results of “walking in the light”?
- 5) Part of what it means to “walk in the light” is to let God’s light expose you. We see this in 1 John 1:8, 10. Where do you see evidence of your reluctance to admit to your wrong-doings? Why is it hard for you to admit to your guilt? What steps could you take to be more open to his searching look?
- 6) Another part of what it means to “walk in the light” is to “walk in the light of what God has done for you in Jesus.” Read Isaiah 60:1, where we see God’s light rising like the dawn, not so much to expose as to save. Spend a moment thanking God for what he says in Isaiah 60:1.
- 7) Read 1 John 2:1-2. Note each of the following words and reflect on what they tell us about what God has done for us: “Little children”, “an Advocate”, “Jesus Christ the righteous”, “propitiation.”
- 8) How do the truths in 1 John 2:1-2 and 1 John 4:17-19 set us free to build honest, loving community rather than to run away from it? What steps can you take to love with greater freedom?