

NO HARD FEELINGS



Touching Lives
with James Merritt

NO HARD FEELINGS

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Series Summary

Emotions in America are running from sky-high, to barrel low, and feelings affect all of us. If I were to ask you what you were feeling right now, and you were honest, it would be interesting to see if you would say things like “angry, lonely, bitter, depressed, fearful and worried.” That is why we are going to enter into a series that we are calling “No Hard Feelings.” It is amazing how much God’s Word has to say about our feelings and how we can control our feelings rather than have our feelings control us. Learning how to handle our emotions is crucial, not just our emotional health, but our physical health. So that’s exactly what we’re going to learn how to do over the next several weeks of this series.

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Worry Free

No Hard Feelings | Week 1 | Matthew 6:25-34

INTRODUCTION

If I asked you, "What are you worried about right now?" you could tell me something very quickly. We're all worried about something. Worry never seems to go away. Fortunately, Jesus had a lot to say about worry. A big portion of the greatest sermon ever preached in the history of the world was geared toward worry. So as we look at that sermon, Jesus is going to tell us how to conquer our worries by making sure we take care of just three days in our lives – yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

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KEY POINTS

1. Put Yesterday's Worry In Its Proper Place

As of right now whatever you are worried about in the past you survived. You may be bruised, beaten and battered, but you are still here, still breathing, still talking, and still living. There is only one reason for that, because God got you here. If God has gotten you through yesterday, don't you think God can take care of you today?

If you are worried about something right now, if you feel like you have an Egyptian Army behind you and a Red Sea before you and you are worried, the first thing I would say is, "Put yesterday's worry in its proper place." God has been faithful in the past and realize that, because He never changes, He will be faithful in the present and in the future.

2. Put Today's Worry In Its Proper Position

When Jesus talks about worry, He obviously is not talking about yesterday, because yesterday is gone. He is talking about today, because worry is always primarily about today. Now you can obviously worry about tomorrow, but you can't worry tomorrow; you can only worry today. So the question is, "Why should I not worry today?"

Jesus knew that just saying "Don't worry" won't stop you from worrying. He gives us just two simple illustrations to prove that you can depend on God to take care of today. He says, "Just look outside your window." He talks about the birds and the flowers and how they've never worried for a single day and God has taken care of them. And if God takes care of them, how much more will He take care of you, His children? That's a comfort we can rest in today, rather than letting worry overtake us in the present.

Worry Free

No Hard Feelings | Week 1 | Matthew 6:25-34

3. Put Tomorrow's Worry In Its Proper Perspective

The word "worry" comes from the Old English word "Wyrgran," and it literally means "strangle." That is a good word for it, because worry doesn't take the sorrow out of tomorrow; it just chokes the joy out of today. You can't change the past, but you can ruin a perfectly good present by worrying about the future. Mark Twain once said, "I have been through some terrible things in my life which never happened." Isn't that true for all of us?

There are two days you should never worry about – yesterday and tomorrow. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow may never get here. Today is in your imagination and tomorrow is in your dreams. God has never promised He will give you strength for today or tomorrow; He gives you strength just for today, because it has enough trouble of its own.

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Lined area for taking notes, consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

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Worry Free

No Hard Feelings | Week 1 | Matthew 6:25-34

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are you worried about right now?
2. Do you find yourself worrying more about the past, the present, or the future?
3. What practical step can you take this week to hand your worries over to Jesus instead of letting them strangle you?

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Thank You Very Much

No Hard Feelings | Week 2 | 1 Thessalonians 5:18

INTRODUCTION

Being thankful is so important to God that He actually commands us to be thankful. A man in the New Testament by the name of Paul went through a tremendous amount of suffering and heartache that would cause anybody to be bitter and ungrateful and maybe even mad at God. He wrote these words, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18) You may not feel very thankful right now because of where you are in your life. Even though you may not feel thankful you can be thankful. This great man tells us how to be thankful and why to be thankful.

KEY POINTS

1. I Should Be Habitually Thankful

Since we are talking about feelings let me give you a word of caution. Nowhere will you find in scripture where we are commanded to “feel” thankful. Feelings come and feelings go. Feelings can be affected by the weather, by the temperature, by the functioning of your liver, by how much rest you got the night before, or by how the stock market is doing. Giving thanks has nothing to do with feelings. You can be thankful even if you don’t feel thankful. We are not commanded to “feel grateful.” It doesn’t matter whether things are good or whether things are bad. We are to give thanks

Giving thanks is a big deal to God. Paul says we are to give thanks “in all circumstances” not necessarily for all circumstances. We may not be thankful for trouble, but we are to be thankful in the midst of trouble.

2. I Should Be Happily Thankful

I’ve learned that anything that God commands me to do is always for my best and for my benefit. A grateful person will be a happier person. A grateful person will be a holier person. A grateful person will be a healthier person.

You may not always feel thankful, but you should work harder to think about saying “Thank you.” It is better to say, “Thank you” and not really mean it, than to mean it and not really say it. Being grateful will have a positive effect on you, because happiness and joy follow gratitude. So we need to be happily thankful.

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Thank You Very Much

No Hard Feelings | Week 2 | 1 Thessalonians 5:18

3. I Should Be Humbly Thankful

I don't know what you are going through right now or what burdens you may be bearing or what trouble you might be in. If you are completely ungrateful and there is not an ounce of gratitude in your heart even in the midst of your circumstances, you are out of the will of God. Now be encouraged. When Paul says this is the will of God, he is not only saying this is what God desires for you to do, but it is what God enables you to do. God never commands us to do anything He does not give us the power to do. I know I can give thanks in all things, because it is God's will and what God wants me to do and wills me to do, He enables me to do.

Remember, God's will for you is always what is best for you. An attitude of gratitude will change your life. It will shield you from cynicism. It will keep you from criticism. It will protect you from pessimism. It will draw you close to God and will draw God close to you. If you have a heart for God, you will have grateful heart. It will change the way you see things. In fact, one of the greatest ways to change how you feel about things is to change the way you see things.

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Thank You Very Much

No Hard Feelings | Week 2 | 1 Thessalonians 5:18

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is something you're thankful for that you have yet to thank God for
2. How would you describe the difference between feeling thankful and giving thanks?
3. When was a time that joy followed gratitude when you chose to be thankful for something even if you didn't feel grateful at the time?

Stress For Success

No Hard Feelings | Week 3 | Isaiah 40:26-31

INTRODUCTION

Stress is the gap between what we face and what we think we can face. It is the difference in what we believe we must do versus what we believe we can do. You can call it the “stress factor.” It is the canyon between the “ought to” and the belief we “can’t do.” Basically, a medical doctor put it simply, “A person’s stress level has to do with what a person believes.” There is ancient advice that was given almost three millennia ago by a prophet named Isaiah who was facing along with his nation an unbelievable time of stress. Isaiah gives us a divine prescription for stress that comes from the heart of God. So when life becomes unbearable, the storm gets too strong, your rope of hope has been cut in half and you feel like throwing in the towel, here is how to have stress success.

KEY POINTS

1. Look Up At The Unequaled God

This may sound simplistic but the first thing you need to do when you are stressed out is wait until dark, go outside, and just look up. That is exactly what Isaiah told the Nation of Israel to do, “Get out of your fetal position, quit walking the floor, go outside and look into the sky.” Here is what you will find. “To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?’ says the Holy One.” (Isaiah 40:25)

This God, Isaiah’s God, the Bible’s God is an unequaled God. You can put every other so called “god” together and it would not equal God’s little toenail. The proof is not in the pudding; it is in the stars. “Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.” (Isaiah 40:26) When Isaiah wrote those words and the ancient Israelites read those words they had no idea what an incredible statement that was.

2. Listen To The Unlimited God

We fall into the trap of thinking we can put God on our clock and that God has to work according to our timetable. We try to put God in a box. We think God has to do what we want Him to do, at the time we want Him to do it, and in the way we want Him to do it.

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Stress For Success

No Hard Feelings | Week 3 | Isaiah 40:26-31

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are you stressed about right now?
2. What is keeping you from handing over to God whatever it is that you're stressed about?
3. What is one way you can linger with the Lord this week and wait on Him instead of trying to make things happen in your own way and in your own time?

Bridge Over Troubled Waters

No Hard Feelings | Week 4 | 1 Kings 19:1-18

INTRODUCTION

God’s word has a lot to say about our feelings and our emotions. One of the things I love about Scripture is that when God paints the portraits of his men and women, they are not photoshopped. You see warts and wrinkles. You see flaws and faults. Today, we are going to look at one of the most famous men in the Bible – a prophet named Elijah. If God had a Hall of Fame, Elijah would easily be elected on the first ballot. He had so much of the power and presence of God in his life. He is the first person in the Bible to raise a person from the dead. But Elijah also had some troubles in life. As we are about to see, he was so depressed that he was suicidal. But in today’s message, we are going to look at how Elijah managed to get out of that valley and with God’s help so can you. Elijah found in God a bridge over the troubled waters of depression that is still available to us today.

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KEY POINTS

1. Admit The Reality Of Your Depression

If you’re dealing with depression, the most important thing you can do first of all is admit it to somebody. Don’t hold it in! That is what Elijah did. “...while he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” (1 Kings 19:4)

Elijah would have been a terrible poker player, because he at least was honest enough to let the Lord know and anyone within earshot he was depressed. There is no shame in admitting it. Good people, godly people, and great people get depressed. Kings, prophets, prime ministers, CEOs and yes, pastors get depressed. There are people in the Bible from Moses to Paul that got depressed. So if you’re struggling with depression, you have to start with admitting to that struggle.

2. Access The Reason For Your Depression

It is not always possible to pinpoint one thing or another that may be depressing you, but sometimes there are obvious reasons why you are depressed. You need to stop and consider your situation. Depression can be caused by something physical, something emotional, or something spiritual.

Bridge Over Troubled Waters

No Hard Feelings | Week 4 | 1 Kings 19:1-18

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Have you ever dealt with depression? If so, is that something you're dealing with right now?
2. If you had to identify the cause of your depression, what would you say the cause was?
3. How can you practice at least one of the three steps we talked about in point #3 to apply the remedy to your depression?

Calm The Nerves

No Hard Feelings | Week 5 | Philippians 4:4-7

It is meant to drive you into the hands of an all-powerful God that already knows the answer to your question and the solution to your problem and can handle everything you are facing. There are four words you ought to learn to say to yourself every time you are walking the floor worried sick and your stomach is in a knot and the ghost of anxiety is haunting every part of your house, “The Lord is near.”

It should bring tremendous comfort to you to remember that you can never get away from God and God will never go away from you. You see, it is hard to believe but you would be far better off having the presence of God and the presence of problems than having the absence of God and the absence of problems and facing that fire alone. You are not fighting that battle by yourself. You won’t be the last man standing. No matter how hot the fire you are in, no matter how deep the pit you are in, the Lord is with you. You can’t escape the presence of the Lord.

3. Liberate The Power Of The Lord

Honestly, overcoming anxiety takes more than just an effort to quit worrying. With that, you probably wouldn’t suffer from anxiety anyway. The key is being proactive to deal with it and know where to take your anxiety and this is his advice, “...but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” (Philippians 4: 6)

Be anxious about nothing and pray about everything. You know what we tend to do? We get anxious about everything and pray about nothing. Do you know what happens when you just pray? You literally liberate the power of God. You get God involved. It literally ignites the engine that allows the rocket of God’s power to blast off into your anxiety.

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Calm The Nerves

No Hard Feelings | Week 5 | Philippians 4:4-7

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are you feeling anxious about right now?
2. Does the fact that the Lord is near to you bring you comfort in the midst of your anxiety? Why or why not?
3. Have you prayed about what's making you anxious? If not, spend some time in prayer today offering up your worry and anxiety to the Lord.

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Good And Angry

No Hard Feelings | Week 6 | Ephesians 4:26-27

INTRODUCTION

Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of the greatest writers and poets in American history said, “Every minute you remain angry, you give up sixty-seconds of peace of mind.” Not only do I agree with that statement, but I will candidly admit I have given up a lot of time of peace of mind. I can get angry, and I know I am not the only one. Thankfully, God’s Word has a lot to say about anger. In the book of Ephesians, Paul gives a prescription for those of us who are temper challenged to practice divine anger management. For many of us, by the grace of God, it can be done, it should be done, and it will be done if we will take three steps.

KEY POINTS

1. Express Sinless Anger

Now the first two words of today’s key verses may actually shock you; they do me. He simply says, “Be angry.” It may surprise you to know that is an imperative verb. It is not a request. It is a command. There are things that should make us angry and there are times that we should be angry, so let it be said immediately that sin and anger are not necessarily the same thing. It is not always a sin to be angry. In fact, if it is always a sin to be angry, then Jesus was a sinner, because Jesus (as we know) on several occasions got angry. God is a god of love, but He is also a god of anger. Sometimes, one of the godliest things you can do is to be angry.

The truth of the matter you are going to see is this – either you will control your temper, or your temper will control you. When your temper gets the best of you, it will always reveal the worse of you. So, make sure when you get angry you are expressing sinless anger.

2. Exclude Sinful Anger

In addition to Paul, James, the brother of Jesus, gives us some great advice about handling our anger. He reminds us to be slow to anger and to let go of our anger quickly. He gives us this counsel because he’s wise enough to know the consequences of anger if you don’t deal with it.

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When you allow anger to fester and you hold on to it overnight, it is like leaving milk out of the refrigerator. It will sour and the milk of anger will curdle into a froth of bitterness. To put it another way, anger is like a benign tumor. If you take it out at night you will heal, but if you don't it will become a malignant tumor that will metastasize throughout your entire body, and it will consume you and ultimately spiritually and emotionally can kill you.

That is when anger truly becomes not just sinful, but it becomes systemic. It will consume you, control you, and it will condemn you before the Lord. So, you should express sinless anger, but you must exclude sinful anger.

3. Expel Stubborn Anger

If you allow anger to fester, to build a nest in your heart, to take root in the soil of your soul, if you allow the stream of anger to become a raging river that overflows the banks of your mind, you will have fallen right into the hands of an invisible enemy that wants to absolutely control your life.

You see, when you allow the spark of anger to turn into a fire of bitterness, the devil will throw wood on that fire and he will throw kerosene on that flame. He will make sure that fire keeps going 24/7 in your heart, your soul, and your mind. That is when sinless anger can metastasize into sinful anger that becomes stubborn anger. And that's the kind of anger you need to expel from your life so that it doesn't get a hold on you.

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Good And Angry

No Hard Feelings | Week 6 | Ephesians 4:26-27

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Would you say that you struggle with anger and/or a temper?
2. How have you seen your anger affect your life in negative ways?
3. When was a time you experienced healthy anger but also exercised self-control? What did you learn from that experience?

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

From Bitter To Better

No Hard Feelings | Week 7 | Hebrews 12:14-15

INTRODUCTION

Bitterness is harbored hurt hidden in the heart. Of all the emotions I will cover, I believe this one may be the most dangerous. I fear bitterness in my life more than anything else. Do you know why? Because bitterness is an acid that destroys its own container. In a New Testament book called Hebrews 12 there is some strong warning about the danger of bitterness, but also some great wisdom on how to deal with bitterness. If you are bitter now, you will be better later.

KEY POINTS

1. Uncover The Root Of Bitterness

It really is interesting that the author describes bitterness as a root. A root is something that is beneath the surface. You can see the trunk of a tree, the branches of a tree, the leaves of a tree and the fruit of the tree, but you can't see the roots. A root is invisible to the eye, but it is just as real as the tree it supports. A root even though it is not very far from the surface, stretches deep into the soil. Bitterness is just like that. It is never far from the surface of your lips or your life, but it reaches deep into the soil of your heart.

What is so interesting about bitterness is it is a root you can't see, but it always bears fruit you will see. Bitterness will find its root in your heart, but it will bear its fruit in your life. That is why so many people deal with issues like hair-trigger tempers, impatience, depression, _____ spirit and even a physical ailment. They go to doctors and therapists, but they never ever solve the problem because they are dealing with the symptoms and not the problems. The problem is you've got to literally get to the root of the problem. You've got to go the heart of your bitterness, because bitterness is always the problem of the heart.

2. Understand The Result Of Bitterness

A bitter root always bears bitter fruit. Bitterness will affect every part of you. It will affect you on the inside and the outside. It will affect your relationship with God, with others, and even yourself.

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No Hard Feelings | Week 7 | Hebrews 12:14-15

Bitterness will affect you mentally. As the root of bitterness grows, it takes up more and more of the soil of your heart. It is like spiritual kudzu. It will take over your mind. When you are bitter towards someone you will carry a mental picture of that person around with you everywhere you go. You will think about them constantly. You will dream about how you can hurt them or how you wish they could be hurt. You will spend waking moments thinking of how you can get even with them.

Bitterness never hurts just one person. I've seen marriages destroyed by bitterness, friendships ruined by bitterness, lives wasted by bitterness. If you are going to defeat this monster that destroys everything in its path, you not only must uncover the root of it; you've got to understand the result of it.

3. Undertake The Removal Of Bitterness

I heard someone describe bitterness as a prison. They pointed out that when you put somebody in the jail cell of your bitterness you are stuck guarding the door. What you need to understand is this. The only way to get free of bitterness is to free the person that you are bitter toward and then you will be free yourself.

If you refuse to open the jail door of your bitterness and let your prisoner out, you are the one that will suffer. Do you know who is paying for your bitterness? You are. You are the one losing sleep. You are the one who has developed ulcers. You are the one who can't enjoy life, because you live under the searing heat of bitterness every day. You are the one who is miserable.

So if you want to avoid this state of misery and remove your bitterness, the first thing you need to do is forget it. You have to take whatever bitterness is planted and uproot it and bury it. Then from there, you need to forgive it. Forgiveness is the best cure for bitterness, and it's your best bet if you want to rid yourself of a bitter heart.

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From Bitter To Better

No Hard Feelings | Week 7 | Hebrews 12:14-15

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is something you're bitter about right now?
2. Have you identified the root of that bitterness, or have you just been trying to treat the symptoms of your bitterness?
3. What have been some results of you harboring your bitterness? What can you do to get different results if you don't like the results you're currently getting?

Slaying The Green-Eyed Monster

No Hard Feelings | Week 8 | Proverbs 27:4

INTRODUCTION

It is very, very difficult to stand up straight against the blast of jealousy. We all have read how the Pharisees made sure Jesus was crucified, but do you know what the primary motive was? Matthew 27:18 says, “For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.” That word there for “envy” is the word that literally means “jealousy.” What drove the nails through the body of Jesus was the hammer of jealousy. Jealousy does kill. It kills marriages, friendships, and families. It is said that jealousy is the ace up Satan’s sleeve. This green-eyed monster is a giant, but God specializes in slaying giants. So let’s take a look at how we can slay this green-eyed monster.

KEY POINTS

1. Consider How The Problem Of Jealousy Starts

There is a common spark that always lights the fire of jealousy, and it is comparison. Jealousy happens so often that we begin to compare ourselves with others. We compare our house to their house, our car to their car, our paycheck to their paycheck, our spouse to their spouse. When that happens, you begin to get in trouble, and you begin to think of yourself as less than you really are.

Psychologists say that people engage in three types of comparing. The first type is what is known as downward comparison. We compare ourselves to those who are worse off than we are and that leads to arrogance. The second type is what is called lateral comparison. That is when we compare ourselves to people who are on the same level we are and that leads to competition. The third type is what is called upward comparison. That is when we compare ourselves to those who are better off than we are and that always leads to jealousy.

2. Consider How The Presence Of Jealousy Steals

The Bible tells us we ought to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep, but when you are consumed with jealousy it does just the opposite. It makes you rejoice when other people weep and weep when other people rejoice.

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Slaying The Green-Eyed Monster

No Hard Feelings | Week 8 | Proverbs 27:4

Theodore Roosevelt said, “Comparison is the thief of joy.” What do you call jealousy? It is the emotional kudzu of the soul. It will grow over every single part of you. It will consume you. It will control you. It will contaminate you and eventually it will condemn you. We need to lock the doors to the house of our heart and never let the thief of jealousy come in, because he will take everything you have that is valuable and good.

3. Consider How The Power Of Jealousy Stops

I believe there is only one key to overcoming the green-eyed monster of jealousy and it is found in another verse of scripture in the New Testament. It was written by a man who frankly had a lot of reasons to be jealous and envious of others. His name was Paul, but he said this, “...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.” (Philippians 4:11).

If you believe you are where God wants you to be, if you believe you are who God want you to be, and if you believe you have what God wants you to have, then you have no reason to ever be jealous of what someone else has, or who someone else is, or where someone else is.

You have a choice. Either jealousy will kill your contentment, or your contentment will kill your jealousy. When you come to realize that the God that created you, put you here, and loved you so much that he sent his son to die for you, so that you could be forgiven and have eternal life and spend eternity with him, you realize nobody could ever be more blessed than you are. You will have no reason to be jealous of anyone and you will have slain the green-eyed monster.

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Slaying The Green-Eyed Monster

No Hard Feelings | Week 8 | Proverbs 27:4

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Is there something or someone you're jealous of right now?
2. What have been the results of that jealousy and comparison you've been dealing with?
3. Have you ever had the thought that God is being unfair or playing favorites? Do you believe that to be true for you right now? Why or why not?

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Never Alone

No Hard Feelings | Week 9 | Psalm 102:6-7

INTRODUCTION

The crisis of loneliness is as grave a threat to public health as obesity or substance abuse. Research tells us that lonely people are more likely to become ill, experience cognitive decline, and died early. Feeling lonely results in a sixty-percent increased risk of functional decline and a forty-five percent greater risk of death. If you battle loneliness, you are in company with the man who wrote these words in a book in the Bible called "Psalms." Imagine you are a counselor, and you hear him say this, "I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins. I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a roof" (Psalm 102:6-7). What is his problem? Loneliness. He felt like an isolated owl wondering out loud, "Who gives a hoot?" Hearing those words, you might be saying, "That is exactly how I feel." If it is, I have good news. There is a way up, and there is a way out of your loneliness. Let's find it together.

KEY POINTS

1. Let's See The Problem Of Loneliness

We need to understand there is a big difference between being alone and being lonely. You can be alone without being lonely. A good example is my wife. Teresa tends to be a loner. She likes to be alone. She does not feel lonely when she is alone. There are times when we all need to be alone. You cannot have a real intimate walk with God without being alone with God.

You can also be lonely without being alone. You can be in a crowd of thousands of people and still feel very lonely. Henry David Thoreau once said, "A city is a place where hundreds of people are lonely together."

But regardless of where you are or what your circumstances look like, loneliness is a problem. It affects our mental health, our emotional health, our spiritual health, and even our physical health. It is a wide-spread problem, one that is worth addressing.

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Never Alone

No Hard Feelings | Week 9 | Psalm 102:6-7

2. Let's State The Presence Of Loneliness

I personally believe that one of the greatest causes of loneliness is a lack of a true, real, intimate relationship with God. Have you ever considered that the first human emotion Adam felt in the Garden of Eden was loneliness? He knew that his fellowship with God had been cut off. There was now a wedge between him and Eve. There is no greater loneliness than when you feel not only cut off from people, but also from the God who is above you. So take stock right now if you are battling loneliness and ask yourself why you are lonely. Are there certain things that are causing you to be lonely that you can correct, that you can change, that you can deal with and manage?

3. Let's Stop The Power Of Loneliness

Even though you may be lonely you are not alone. God the Father will not turn his back on you. God the Son will not turn his back on you. God the Holy Spirit will not turn His back on you. We can always talk to Jesus. You can always enjoy the presence of Jesus. You can always share with Him your loneliness, because He knows what it is to be alone and He knows what it is to be lonely.

My first piece of advice to you would be to reach up to the Lord. Then, I would say reach out. Reach out to someone else who is hurting worse than you are. Who may be lonelier than you are. Befriend them and be a blessing to them. Consider the fact that when you go and minister to someone else who is lonely, there are now two people who have their loneliness cured – you and that person.

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Never Alone

No Hard Feelings | Week 9 | Psalm 102:6-7

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In your own words, how would you define the difference between being alone and being lonely?
2. Do you feel lonely right now? If so, why?
3. What is one step you can take this week to stop the power of loneliness in your life?

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Clean Slate

No Hard Feelings | Week 10 | Psalm 51:1-10

INTRODUCTION

You may be living with guilt today, but you don't have to live with guilt tomorrow. Let me say upfront there is no human cure for the problem of guilt, because the cause of all guilt is sin and only God can deal with sin. Sin is the wound. Guilt is the infection. There is only one cure for guilt and the best doctors, surgeons, psychiatrists, counselors, psychologists and advisors and medicines in the entire world cannot cure this illness. There is only one cure for guilt and that is forgiveness. There is only one source of true forgiveness and that is God. We are going to learn more about that truth as we study Psalm 51 in this message and learn how we can say goodbye to guilt and have a clean slate.

KEY POINTS

1. Admit Your Guilt

The first step to getting a clean slate is you have to quit running from your guilt and you've got to run to your guilt. You've got to uncover what you have covered and fess up to your mess up. The moment we do something wrong and feel guilty about it, our first instinct is to run and to hide and to get away from the shame of it. How often do you see somebody arrested and they will attempt to hide their face or turn away from the camera, because they don't want anybody to see who they are and know what they have done? The problem with guilt is when you run away from it, you not only carry it with you, but the burden gets heavier and the pain gets greater.

On the other hand, understand that one of God's gifts to us is the ability to feel guilty. Simply put, good guilt is good. Good guilt has been called the nerve ending of the heart. Guilt is God's way of telling us that we are driving a car out of line, singing a song out of tune, playing an instrument off key and it is his way of getting us back on track.

2. Acknowledge Your Grief

For a year, David had been miserable living in the filth of his sin and the misery of his guilt. When he was in public, he put on the face of the king. He won an Academy Award for Best Actor every day of his life, but it was just an act. He put on the face of gladness with the heart of sadness. The good news is it did prove he was one of God's children. It did prove he truly did have a love for God.

NOTES

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Clean Slate

No Hard Feelings | Week 10 | Psalm 51:1-10

I believe the saddest, most miserable people I have ever met in my life are not atheists, playboys, people who frankly enjoy a life of sin, doing their own thing, being their own boss. The most miserable people I've ever met are people who love God, who know God, but they live in unconfessed, unforgiven, unforsaken sin and they are eaten up with the cancer of guilt.

Understand, you can be remorseful, but not repentant, but you cannot be repentant if you are not also remorseful. When you break God's heart, God will not rest or stop until he breaks your heart so that you admit your grief.

3. Accept God's Grace

You will not be able to accept God's grace until you admit your guilt and acknowledge your grief. The best-known hymn both inside and outside the church is "Amazing Grace." You will never realize how amazing grace is until you realize how terrible your guilt is. As long as you think "I'm not that bad," grace will never seem all that good.

So, you may be saying "I feel guilty because I am guilty. I've abused drugs and alcohol. I've had an abortion. I've cheated on my spouse, or I am cheating on my spouse. I've ruined my marriage. I blew it with my kids. I have a prison record. I want to ask for forgiveness. That is where the cross comes in. Jesus came to this earth, lived a perfect life, died on a cross and came back from the grave to pay for your sins and to give you the forgiveness you desperately need. He didn't come to reject you; He came to release you, renew you, revive you, and restore you. The sin God cannot forgive is the sin of refusing to ask for His forgiveness.

No matter how deep the stain of your guilt is one drop of God's amazing grace can give you a clean slate for the asking and the taking.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Are you struggling with guilt in your life right now? If so, what for?
2. In your own words, how you would explain the difference between being remorseful and being repentant?
3. Have you asked for God's forgiveness and accepted His gift of grace that He offers to His children? If not, what is keeping you from doing so?
