

A Spiritual Formula

This simple process has helped thousands of people experience forgiveness.

Let me share a simple process, a spiritual formula, that has helped thousands of people to experience God's love and forgiveness.

1. List Your Sins

It begins by asking the Holy Spirit to reveal every sin in your life. Take a pencil and paper and list every sin He brings to mind. As you write, confess each one of them to God.

I encourage you to humble yourself before God as you do this. Give Him time to reveal everything in your life that is displeasing to Him. This list is just between you and God, so be completely honest. Tell Him everything that's wrong.

Your list may include (to name a few):

- Leaving your first love for God
- Spending little or no time praying or reading and studying God's Word
- Seldom, if ever, witnessing for Christ
- Lacking faith in God
- Having a jealous attitude
- Lusting after material things
- Dealing with others in a spirit of pride
- Acting selfishly
- Being dishonest, lying
- Talking about others behind their back
- Entertaining immoral thoughts
- Committing sexual sins

Whatever your sin, write it down and remember: you have a loving God who forgives you -- who even gave His Son, the Lord Jesus, to die for you.

A young man said to me after an evening meeting, "I didn't believe I needed to make a list. I couldn't think of anything seriously wrong in my life. But when I saw others making their lists, the Spirit of God told me to do the same."

While there were no major areas of disobedience in his life, he said, a lot of little things had dulled the cutting edge of his love and witness for Christ.

He encouraged me, "If you ever speak on this subject again, be sure to insist that everyone, including those who think there are no major sins in their lives, make a list of their sins. If I had not made my list, I would have missed a special blessing from God."

2. Write God's Promise Across the List

After you have written the sins that God reveals to you, write God's promise of forgiveness from 1 John 1:9 across the list:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

3. Destroy the List

When you have completed your time of prayer and confession, accept His forgiveness by faith, then destroy the list as an illustration of the forgiveness God has granted you. You may want to tear it into pieces or burn it to show how completely God has forgiven you.

4. Make Restitution

The final step in the process is to ask God if you need to make restitution to someone. You may need to apologize for having a bad attitude toward someone. You may need to ask someone to forgive you for the way you have treated him or her. You may need to return something you have stolen.

It's important for you to make restitution to others because you cannot maintain a clear conscience before God if you still have a guilty conscience before people. Confession often includes making restitution.

"But I Still Feel Guilty!"

If, after you have fully confessed all of your known sins to God, you still feel a sense of guilt, it may be because you have not been completely honest with God by making a full disclosure. So be sure you are honest with God.

Are you weighed down by heavy burdens of guilt? Do you sometimes wonder if you will ever experience the love and forgiveness of God that other Christians joyfully profess?

Perhaps you feel like the man who was stumbling along the road with a heavy pack on his back. Soon, a wagon stopped, and the driver offered to give him a ride. Joyfully, the weary traveler accepted. But when he climbed onto the wagon, he continued to strain under his heavy load.

"Why don't you take off your pack and rest?" the driver asked.

The discouraged traveler replied, "Oh, I couldn't do that! It would be too much to ask you to carry my load as well as me."

"How foolish," you say. We wouldn't think of responding like that to such an offer, would we? Yet many Christians continue to carry heavy burdens of guilt even after they have entrusted their lives to the Lord Jesus and received His forgiveness.

Frequently we experience hostility or punishment from our friends or family when we fall short of their expectations. If you have truly wronged another person, confessing it and making restitution when necessary will release the guilt. But feelings of guilt will linger if you do not forgive yourself or if you try to live up to the unrealistic expectations of others.

None of us is perfect. But as Christians we do not live in condemnation. As one who has been forgiven, you are righteous before God in Jesus Christ.

When you have completed this simple process, any feelings of guilt that remain are not from God. They are from your enemy Satan. Your sins have been removed as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). They are buried in the deepest sea (Micah 7:19). God has put them behind His back and remembers them against you no more (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

Are you confessing your sins over and over again -- out of a sense of guilt.

All of your sins have been forgiven by God on the basis of Christ's death on the cross and the shedding of His blood for your sins. Whenever Satan accuses you of some act in your past that has grieved or quenched the Holy Spirit, you can say with great joy, "I have confessed that sin and I know God has forgiven me and cleansed me as He promised."

I challenge you to examine your life right now. Are you experiencing the fullness of the Christian life? Are you carrying a load of guilt over past sins in your life? I urge you to begin the process of Spiritual Breathing today. It has helped millions of other Christians, and I know it will also help you.

God's forgiveness is complete. Thank Him for canceling your guilt and cleansing you. Claim victory over those negative feelings and move on in faith to be a fruitful disciple and witness for our Lord.

Now you are free to experience the abundant life that He promised. Now you can encourage and serve your brothers and sisters in Christ. And now you can enter the harvest fields to enjoy bringing other people to the Lord Jesus who has done so much for you.