

FORGIVEN EPISODE 1 "Where Are You?"

God's merciful call to us, just as He called out to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden: **"Where are you?"** (Genesis 3:9). God seeks us out to offer us His Love and Mercy. God is walking in the garden of our lives, calling to each one of us: "Where are you?" Will you allow him to find you and heal you?

Can you share an experience that was a "wake-up" call in your life?

Session Overview

- Understand that God uses our feelings of guilt to get our attention and to show us that something needs to change.
- Recognize the various ways that we tend to react to an experience of guilt.
- Understand that God is a loving Father who seeks us out when fail to Love.

Video:

Luke 15: 15-22 – Prodigal Son Introduction

I. Wake-up Call

Have you ever received a "wake-up call" that inspired you to make a change in your life? God often sends us a wake-up call to draw us back. But God doesn't ask us to do it on our own. He not only calls us home, but He also walks with us every step of the way.

A. Guilt can be God's way of getting our attention

B. Signals that something needs to change

C. How do we handle guilt?

1. Find distractions
2. Rationalize our behavior
3. Blame others
4. Admit *we 're wrong*

"In the life of the body a man is sometimes sick, and unless he takes medicine, he will die. Even so in the spiritual life a man is sick on account of sin. For that reason, he needs medicine so that he may be restored to health; and this grace is bestowed in the Sacrament of Penance." —St. Thomas Aquinas

II. Sin

A. About breaking a relationship, not just breaking a rule

B. Leads us to hide from God, like Adam and Eve

C. All Adam had to do was to turn back to God and say I am sorry – forgive me.

III. God's Perspective

A. Above all else, God is Love

B. God is “Father” (Dad) – He cares for Us.

C. "Where are you?"

1. *When we sin, God seeks us out.*
2. *The only sin God can't forgive is the one for which we won't ask forgiveness.*

“Confession is an act of honesty and courage—an act of entrusting ourselves, beyond sin, to the mercy of a loving and forgiving God. It is an act of the prodigal son, who returns to his Father and is welcomed by Him with the kiss of peace.” —

Pope St. John Paul II (from a homily in San Antonio on September 13, 1987)

Questions to Ponder:

Adam and Eve's first impulse after their sin is to hide themselves from God.

1. What if Adam had said that He was Sorry and Asked to be forgiven?
2. They feel that same guilt we experience when we know we've done something wrong, and it causes us to be separated from him.
 - Do you ever feel a desire to hide yourself from God? Why or why not?
3. “God doesn’t just want more from us, he wants more for us!” What do you think this quote means?
4. God doesn't wait for us to come back to him after we have sinned—he comes looking for us, just as he looked for Adam and Eve. In his merciful love he searches for us to bring us home. He is calling to each one of us:
 - "Where are you?" What is your answer? What are some areas of your life that you need to surrender to God's merciful love?

Wrap-Up

Here are the key points to take away from this session:

1. Guilt isn't a bad thing—something we should ignore or justify—but rather awake-up call and a step toward reconciliation with God.
2. The many ways we deal with guilt, including distraction and changing our thought process to justify it, can keep us from acknowledging our sins and recognizing our need for God's forgiveness.
3. And above all else, God is a loving and merciful Father who seeks us out. when we have sinned to call us back into relationship with Him.
4. He embraces us and loves us despite our broken condition.

For Further Study:

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1422-1429
- Pope St. John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (Reconciliation and Penance), Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (1984)
- Parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11-32
- Return of the Prodigal Son, by Henri J. M. Nouwen