Session 13: Guilt Says I Did Bad. Shame Says I Am Bad.

PHASE 2 — HEALING: MIND, HEART, AND PAST (WEEKS 2–4) · WEEK 3 — SHAME, GUILT, AND GRACE

Date: _____ My craving today (0–10): _____ One word for my week: _____

Handout for this session: the Session 13 handout (Translating Shame into Guilt) — in the Handouts Packet.

What we're learning

Guilt and shame feel alike, but they work in opposite directions. Guilt is about a behavior: "I did something bad." Its healthy job is repair — it points to something specific that can be confessed, owned, and made right where we can. Shame is about identity: "I am bad." Shame does not lead to repair. It leads to hiding, and hiding leads back to use. This session teaches us to translate "I am ..." sentences into true, specific, workable ones.

- Specific is workable, global is not 'I missed Tuesday's visit' can be repaired. 'I'm a terrible father' can only be hidden from or numbed. We translate global verdicts into specific behaviors wherever they appear.
- Shame needs secrecy; honesty needs light Whatever stays hidden keeps its power. Paced honesty with safe people (Week 1) is shame's direct antidote.
- Specific beats global A specific, present-tense observation about a behavior — with a path back — can guide change. A global verdict about who you are offers no path at all. Learning to tell them apart is a survival skill.
- Worth is settled, growth is ongoing Participants are not on probation for their personhood here. Behavior has consequences and repair is real work — and none of it is the price of belonging.

Goals for this session

☐ I can distinguish guilt (about behavior, can lead to repair) from shame (about identity, leads to hiding and use)

☐ I can trace my personal shame cycle — trigger, hiding, use, more shame

☐ I can describe how separating behavior from identity answers shame without excusing behavior

Check-in

When you have done something you regret, which voice comes first: 'I did a bad thing' — or 'I am a bad person'?

Discussion — write your answers

Write what you would say out loud — and more, if it comes. There is no right-length answer; there is only an honest one.

1. Where did you first learn shame as the response to failure — home, school, the street?

2. What does shame make you do in the first hour after it hits?

3. Is there a specific guilt you are carrying that is actually pointing at a repair you could make? (Sessions in Week 5 will prepare it — no rushing today.)

4. What would change about how you talk to yourself after a bad day if you judged the behavior, not your identity?

Session 13 — Skill Practice

In pairs, participants take one global shame sentence ('I am _____') and translate it together into guilt's specific, workable form ('I did _____; the impact was _____; a repair step could be _____') — or, if no behavior of theirs is involved (shame absorbed from others' actions), into its true form ('That was done to me; it describes an event, not my worth'). Share translations, not the original stories, with the group.

My "I am …" shame sentence:

Translated — "I did …; the impact was …; a repair step could be …" — or, if it was done to me: "That was done to me; it describes an event, not who I am."

My takeaway

The one thing from this session I most need to remember — in my own words:

Homework — this week's application

☐ This week, run the translation every time you catch a global verdict: write the 'I am' sentence, then the specific or corrected sentence beside it. Bring your best translation to Session 14.

Space to do the homework and note how it went:

An optional Scripture handout for this session is available from your facilitator on request.