

## WARM UP

1. Have you ever felt like God was mad at you? When? Why?
2. In what situations do you feel most insecure?
3. What's your favourite family memory?

## WORD

*“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” - John 3:17-18*

Condemnation is a universal feeling of guilt, unworthiness, divine rejection, and spiritual insecurity. Feeling condemned is so common that many Christians accept it as normal and often confuse it with conviction. (See chart for difference between conviction and condemnation.) In order to conquer condemnation, it is good to understand the following facts.

CONVICTION	CONDEMNATION
Holy Spirit	Satan, Self, people
Specific sin	General guilt, overall unworthiness
Run to God and repent.	Run from God and hide.
Get up and try again.	Give up.
You failed this test.	You are a total failure.
Deal with this and you can make it.	Because of this you will never make it.
God is still working on you.	God has rejected you.

### 1: Believers are not under condemnation. Unbelievers are already condemned.

*“Whoever believes in him [Jesus] is not condemned.” - John 3:18*

*“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus... who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.” - Romans 8: 1,4*

If there is no condemnation for those in Christ, why do so many Christians struggle with condemnation? What does it mean to live according to the sinful nature? How does one live according to the Spirit? [Note to leader: pause to discuss, maybe choose one OR ask rhetorically]

*“... whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” - John 3:18*

*“For what the law was powerless to do... God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man.” - Romans 8:3 (NIV)*

*“...God sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.” - Rom 8:3 NLT portion*

What does it mean to not believe? What does it mean to believe in the name of God’s one and only Son? [Note to leader: if asked of the Group, this may help you gauge their understanding of salvation, and help further disciple them, or engage them if not a Christian yet.]

## 2: Condemnation is not from God. Jesus came to save not condemn.

*Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God interceding for us. – Rom 8:33-34 NIV*

*Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? \_\_\_ for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? \_\_\_ for Christ Jesus dies for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honour at God's right hand, pleading for us. – Rom 8:33,34 NLT*

Paul asked, who is the condemner? What is your answer to Paul's question? Why?

[Note to leader: The Blanks in the NLT are "No one"]

*"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." - John 3:17*

John made it clear that Jesus did not come into the world to condemn us, but to save us. If we are sure of our salvation, then we can throw off condemnation, and not succumb to its threats. How can a person be sure of his salvation? [Note to leader: Romans 10:9 is an optional answer]

## 3: Salvation Benefits: Adoption and Intimacy

When Jesus was on the cross, Matthew records this as happening at the moment of His death:

*"Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit. At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom." - Mat 27: 50-51a*

That curtain was a hand-breadth thick, and separated humans from the Most Holy Place where God's presence sat upon the ark of the covenant according to the first covenant—covenant just means a standard for a relationship. People who are married, enter into a Covenant with each other and they have a special frame work for their relationship.

Here at the point of Jesus's death. God changed the nature of the covenant, the relationship, he had with Humans – Jews and non-Jews. Before only one person, once a year, from a specific family and lineage could enter into God's presence, to make amends (or atone) for the people's sins and procure forgiveness through God's prescribed means of the blood of an innocent and pure animal. Now, at the curtain being torn, God was declaring all can have access to Him and forgiveness is available to whomever repents and believes. The letter of Hebrews tells us:

*"With his [Jesus's] own blood... he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever..."*

[Note to Leader: Redemption is a word picture. It captures when someone purchases back from slavery that which he already owned. By the Blood of Jesus, God purchases humanity (whom he created) back from slavery to sin.]

*... Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant [a new defined relationship] between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant [first defined relationship]." - Heb 9:12,14-15*

What is that new type of relationship? We become part of God's family. We are not visitors, but family.

*“Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to **adopt us into his own family** by bringing us to himself **through Jesus Christ**. This is what he wanted to do, and **it gave him great pleasure.**” – Ephesians 1:4-5*

It gives God great pleasure to adopt us into his family because of Jesus's death and resurrection. With the curtain torn and Jesus's blood shed for us, we can have an intimate (a close) relationship with the Creator of the Universe! And not an Aunt, Uncle, or cousin relationship. What family placement does God grant?

*“And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”  
– 2 Corinthians 6:18 (quoting 2 Sam 7:14)*

While the earthly father figure can vary between each person's personal experience with or without their father, we have the Word of God that has been protected and preserved with diligent care, passed down through the centuries, telling us of the deep love and covenantal relationship God desires to have with humanity—His children. A relationship not based on our performance, but completely reliant on Himself, His character, and His sacrifice on the Cross. God adopts us into His family by the blood of Christ; we can grow ever closer (intimacy) to God because He first loved us.

## APPLICATION

1. Are you carrying guilt from sins of the past that you have already confessed and repented of? If so, that is a form of condemnation. What did we learn today that can help you not give in to feelings of condemnation?
2. How does it make you feel that two of the powers of Jesus's blood is you can 1) be forgiven of all sins upon confessing then and 2) granted a place in God's family?
3. How do we live in response to what we've learned today? What is one thing you sense God inviting you to in hopes of growing closer with Him?

## Prayer

- *Thank you Father that “there is now no condemnation for those who are **in Christ Jesus**” (Rom 8:1). Teach us daily what it means to be “in Christ Jesus.” Help us feel and understand the difference between conviction and condemnation. Awaken us to recognise when we are running away from you, instead of running to you when we realise we've done something wrong.*
- *Thank you for the blood of Jesus. Without such a sacrifice we could not even call you Father, nor be forgiven. When we feel guilty Lord, turn that into godly sorrow, so we can turn away from what is not good and turn towards You. You are able to make us clean.*
- *Thank you for adoption into the family of God. Holy Spirit, our guide and comforter, teach us how to be close with You. Open our minds and hearts to the scripture to learn more about who God is and who God says His children are. Shape our thinking by our heavenly family's standard. Thank you for our earthly families, yes; thank you so much more for our adoption into the family of God.*