

Session 8: God Guides Us But Sin Blinds Us!

I. Opening Prayer (5 min.)

The passages that will be prayerfully read as part of the opening prayer are the Scriptural foundation for this teaching.

Allow participants to quiet themselves before reading from Scripture:

- “But whoever hates his brother or sister is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” 1 John 2:11
- “Satan, who is the deceiver of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News Jesus Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:4
- “For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes so their eyes cannot see, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to Me and let Me heal them. But blessed are your eyes (those who sincerely follow Christ), because they see; and your ears, because they hear.” Matthew 13:15-16
- “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12
- “For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.” Ephesians 5:8

II. The TEACHING for Session 8: God guides us but sin blinds us! (30 min.)

Read the following teaching aloud or have the participants read the teaching silently.

It is crucial to know that sin, in whatever form, blurs our ability to “see” both in the natural order as well as the spiritual. We inherit the effects of Original Sin, causing our vision of spiritual realities to become darkened, which compromises our ability to perceive with clarity God’s ways and His plan for us.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” Being “pure in heart” means seeing with clarity. The lack of clarity caused by sin leads to selfishness and involves our turning inward, which decreases our openness to see and hear God. We can't "free ourselves" from sin but **Jesus** has obtained this power for us through His death and Resurrection. We receive this grace of freedom initially through Baptism. Jesus spoke with Nicodemus about this Sacrament and its importance for providing the gift of faith, with the corresponding spiritual eyes to see: “Truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” (John 3:3) Faith opens our eyes to God and the spiritual realm, and seeing with new eyes, we recognize His unconditional love for us and His plan that will bring us into His very Presence.



We will always be dealing with some areas of sinfulness until we get to Heaven. That is why Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation, for us to receive the “washing away” of sin and its consequent “blindness” in an ongoing way. The mental picture of taking a shower can be helpful here. Who would say, “I took a shower today and so I don’t need another one for 365 days, or even several months.” The result would be disastrous! This is why we want to frequent the “spiritual cleansing” available through Confession.

The life of Blessed Matt Talbot portrays the spiritual principle that sin blinds. Matt lived in Ireland and had a first-grade education. At 13 he became a messenger for wine merchants and within a year was an alcoholic. Then, working in a timber yard, he would get paid, go to one of the pubs and give it to the owner, spending the money on alcohol until it was exhausted.

The moment of grace came when he was 28. Matt was in one of the pubs with his "friends." His money exhausted, his body craving alcohol, he begged his companions for money but all refused. He went home to his mother and told her he was going to “take the pledge” to not drink. Matt took it for six months, then for a year and then the rest of his life. From that day he never drank again.

It was a bitter struggle for him because he was deeply dependent on alcohol. He began to see, he who had never taken his faith or prayer seriously, that he was too weak to be near pubs, but needed to be where he could gain strength. So, before work each morning he spent time with Jesus in church, and after work, he would return for evening vespers. In those early months, he would kneel and repeatedly pray: "Lord, in Your mercy, give me the gift of prayer." Slowly, prayer became easier and he began to be transformed.

Matt also began to **see** that in order to deny himself alcohol, he could not indulge in other ways. He began a strict regime of simple meals and sleeping on the floor. He became a pleasant and honest worker who would help anyone in need with his simple salary. With only a first-grade education, he began reading the Scriptures and the lives of the Saints. One day, at lunch, a companion saw Matt reading John Henry Newman's "Apologia Pro Vita Sua" and said, "Isn't that difficult?" Matt smiled, "The Lord helps me." This was a man who built his spiritual life on seeking healing and cleansing from the sin that had bound him. This brought him ever greater clarity not only in spiritual understanding and realities, but in natural matters as well, and this eventually made him a saint. Matt Talbot is a great example of how **we** can overcome spiritual blindness through God’s grace of perseverance, resulting in the ability to **see** Him and His good plan for our lives ever more clearly!



Discussion questions for small groups

From this teaching on “God guides us but sin blinds,” respond to the following questions.

Question 1. What stood out for you? or What resonated most with your personal situation currently? Why? Summarize below.

Question 2. Why is it so important to be aware of the reality that sin blinds?

Question 3. Why is it essential to know that the power of God is greater than any sin and that Jesus died on the cross to set us free?

Question 4. Summarize in one or two sentences what your takeaway is from this section.

Question 5. If you were going to relate something from “God will guide us but sin binds us” to your family tonight at the dinner table, what would you tell them? Would you

- 1) share the story with them or
- 2) mention something that was helpful to you from the teaching or
- 3) bring up something that resonated with you in connection with your own life experience?

III. God Guides us but Sin Blinds

(20 min.) Participants are to read the Scripture passage: 2 Samuel 11:2 – 12:15 and then read the summary below.

- 1) King David was the greatest King of Israel. He united the 12 tribes of Israel, and pushed back all the enemies, establishing the Kingdom of Israel.
- 2) More importantly King David “is a man after God’s own heart.” He is a man of great prayer. God ratified the Covenant through him. God says that He will make for David a great “name”, will make him a “house” and establish the “throne of his kingdom forever”. These prophetic words are fulfilled through the Person of Jesus, the Son of God, who came to us through the lineage of David. This is why Jesus is referred to as the “Son of David.”
- 3) Needless to say, sin is always lurking at the door. One day, King David was on the roof of his palace, and he saw Bathsheba, a beautiful, married woman taking a bath. Instead of turning away, and turning to God, he allowed his heart to lust. David had relations with Bathsheba, committing the sin of adultery. Bathsheba informed David that she was with child, which would be a scandal to the Jewish people and the Davidic Kingdom. Instead of repenting of his sin, David continued down the path of sin by attempting to cover it up, moving farther and farther away from God.

- 4) David arranged for Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to come home from battle to be with his wife so that it would appear that she conceived the child after relations with her husband. However, Uriah spent the night at his own home with his wife, but slept at the door of the king's house. Uriah did an honorable thing as he refused to share the comforts of his wife and home while his fellow compatriots remained on the battlefield.
- 5) David continued to make poor decisions. He called for Uriah to come to the palace and David gave him a lot to drink so that he would go home, but still refusing to go down to his house, Uriah slept on a couch with the servants of the king. David's spiritual eyes were being darkened throughout this time as he moved away from God through deceit
- 6) Unsuccessful with a cover-up, David ordered that Uriah should be sent to the front lines so that he would be killed. David had attempted to hide his sins. At this point, with murder on his hands, God's light in David's life was extinguished.
- 7) God sent Nathan the prophet to speak with David, **to help him realize his sin.** Nathan called attention to David's sins by telling him a story. When Nathan told him the story, David became upset and angry with the sin that Nathan described. Then Nathan confronted David and said, "you, David, are that man." God used Nathan and the story he told to show and convict David of his sin. God will use whatever means necessary to **convict** us of our sin – **not condemn us of our sin** - because of His deep love for us, and His desire to set us free.
- 8) David then repented of his sin, and expressed his deep heartfelt sorrow in the words of Psalm 51. God forgave David's sin, but **because sin carries its own consequences**, he still had to suffer the temporal consequences of his actions; the child born of David and Bathsheba died, and there was discord in the family of David through the remaining years of his life. But God never left David, even in this suffering, but drew him into a deeper and deeper relationship with Himself.
- 9) The only unforgivable sin is when we believe that our sin is too big to be forgiven. David had sinned deeply and was in anguish but knew that through his own sense of guilt, that the Holy Spirit was still present with him. This point will become more clear in our study of Psalm 51, the prayer of repentance written by David.

Allow participants to answer the following questions silently and then discuss them:

Question 1. What do you think is the most important point of guidance in this Scripture passage?

God sends the prophet Nathan to David to convict him of his sin, so that he can repent deeply, from his heart, and enter back into relationship with God.

Question 2. What stood out for you? Why?

Question 3. Does this remind you of something or someone in your life?

Question 4. What word or phrase had special meaning for you from this passage?

Question 5. The Bible calls David “a man after God’s own heart.” What do you think this means in practical terms – i.e. how can you too be a man/woman after God’s own heart?

“A man/woman after God’s own heart” means to desire, in spite of everything, to be in relationship with God more than anything else.

Question 6. When we examine our conscience, the Holy Spirit will gently *convict* us of sin by calling to mind our faults and failures, but He will not *condemn* us in the way Satan does when he speaks lies to us that we are unforgivable and will never change, etc.

How was the conviction of sin in David’s life a tremendous guidance from God?

When David recognized his sin, he could then seek God’s forgiveness and enter back into relationship with God, which then opened him again to God’s personal guidance.

How can the conviction of sin in our own life be a tremendous guidance from God?

At any point, when I am open to recognize my sin and seek God’s forgiveness, I can then enter back into full relationship with God and be open again to His personal guidance.

IV. How Do We Respond to Sin?

Prayerfully read through Psalm 51 in the Bible, which was written by King David. This Psalm shows what it means to repent from the heart.

Psalm 51

The 150 Psalms are songs that were written by King David and others.

Psalm 51 is a **prayer of repentance**. Repentance is a feeling of sorrow for wrongdoing and making the decision to not repeat this sinful act.

Based upon the words of Psalm 51 from the **New American Bible**, fill in the missing words and answer the questions.

(**Verse 3**) Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness.

Mercy is a refraining from harming or punishing offenders or enemies. Mercy is kindness over and above what may be expected or demanded by fairness.

David calls on God’s greatness and compassion.

Compassion means to suffer with. (In Latin, com means with; passio means to suffer)

(Verse 8) Behold, You are pleased with or insist upon sincerity of heart.

What is a definition of sincerity of heart?

It is thinking and acting with honesty and genuineness. There is no duplicity in a person who thinks and acts with sincerity heart.

(Verse 12) A clean heart create for me, O God.

What are adjectives that describe a clean heart?

Pure, spotless, unsoiled, free from serious sin, wholesome

Do you think that you can create your own clean heart; or do you think you need to ask God for His grace to create a clean heart?

(Verse 13-14) Cast me not out from Your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me. Give me back the joy of Your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me.

David had sinned deeply and was in anguish but knew that through his own sense of guilt, that the Holy Spirit was still present with him.

Even if you are in pitch black darkness because of sin, the guilt you feel from that sin is a good thing. It is a gift from the Holy Spirit.

(Verse 19) What type of spirit or heart will God not reject or spurn?

A contrite and humbled heart You will not spurn.

A contrite and humbled heart is to acknowledging to God that I have sinned and that I am truly sorry. I admit that I need God's help in order to do better. I receive His help in the form of strength and power through sanctifying grace from the Sacraments. Grace is God's Life within me.

What is the name for serious sin, the sin that destroys my friendship with God?

Mortal sin. Mortal means deadly. A mortal sin destroys the life of God – the life of grace – within us. We are separated from God when we commit a serious – mortal – sin.

Find 4 phrases in Psalm 51 that describe what David is asking God to do for him. (The answers may vary.)

Have mercy: wash me thoroughly from iniquity and cleanse me from my sin!

Teach me wisdom in my secret heart: wash me and fill me with joy and gladness

Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

Open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise.

Note: Psalm 51 is read almost daily at Mass during Lent.

We must never forget that only God can give us clear spiritual vision. When we move away from Him, we gradually lose any clarity and slip farther and farther into spiritual darkness.

Question: Summarize the overall principle for this session.

Sin binds

V. Closing Prayer: The 12th Grade Prayer Card (5 min.)

Pray using the “Seeking God’s Guidance” Prayer Card, at diolc.org/deeper.

Note to Facilitator:

Be sensitive to any person who seems to be troubled about something that surfaced in the teaching or stories, such as feeling challenged to go in a different direction or worrying that they “messed up” in the past, or if there seems to be something left “unfinished”. Please know that it is probably unlikely that this can be resolved in the setting of this group and we don’t want to just leave them “hanging”.

- Show appreciation in some way for their willingness to express what seems to be of concern to them.
- Encourage them to continue to pray about this matter.
- Encourage them to talk with someone outside the group that is a spiritually-competent person.