

A sense of guilt can be a motivator to put us back on track after being derailed. It moves us out of this state of sinfulness and stirs us to embrace Christ's love with more passion, knowing His arms are open wide to receive us. Yet if we get "stuck" in a stage of guilt and shame for too long, there is a never-ending recording in our minds that turns this helpful tool of conviction into a dark, swamp of condemnation. This can become so toxic that we become stuck in this way of thinking. Toxic shame tells us "we're going to fail to reach our goals in life." It begets more shame, causing paralysis, faltering energy, escapism, withdrawal, people-pleasing, hiding behind a mask, perfectionism, criticism, and rage.

*Name a transgression that you have sought God's forgiveness for and yet you feel there is still a lingering weight of guilt or shame.*

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*Mentally refuse to carry that load any longer (i.e. imagine giving the shame back, as in handing back an unopened box to the person who has shamed you). Journal how that feels.*

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Ongoing guilt and shame is a "soul killer" and is foreign to the nature of God. God's mode of operation is to give the Child of God the tools to thrive, no matter the circumstances.

So, back to our "off the hook" phrase that we started with. This phrase used to be used under a whole different set of circumstances, and took on a totally different meaning depending on context. "That party was off the hook!" meant it had exceeded all expectations. This phrase can be applied to your life, for in Christ we can live a life that is totally off the hook!

*"And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others."*

2 Corinthians 9:8 NLT

Let's break down this verse and make it personal:

*"And God will generously provide all you need."*

*What would your life look like if you truly lived as an abundantly blessed Child of God? Any changes from what it looks like now?*

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*"Then you will always..."*

*What are those challenges that, if allowed, drain the hope you have found in Christ?*

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*"...have everything you need and plenty left over..."*

*What is it you need to live victoriously over the "soul killer" in your life? Do you believe it is available to you?*

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*"... to share with others."*

*God wants us to live abundantly, thriving in our relationship with Him for the sake of others. When you are able, in God's strength, to put this nagging guilt behind you, how would it affect your service to others?*

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<sup>2</sup> Keathley, J. Hampton. "Mark #6: Biblical Conviction." Bible.org, 26 May 2004, bible.org/seriespage/mark-6-biblical-conviction.

## Prayer:

*"Jesus said, 'Your sins are forgiven; rise and walk.'*

*Forgiveness is an unlocked door to walk through into wide—whoopee—open world.*

*Forgiveness is a seed to water with new dreams and wild risks until  
it bears unexpected fruit.*

*Forgiveness is an enemy—friend to be born out of a quietness beneath the clamor.*

*Forgiveness is a flower to smell,*

*a wind at my back,*

*a gull to scream with,*

*a pain to laugh beneath*

*a burden that carries me.*

*It is I becoming We, becoming Yours.*

*Forgiveness is a song to sing.*

*O Lord, unlock the door of my heart." Amen.<sup>3</sup>*

