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Ladies for Jesus ministry desires to inspire and equip all Christian women to deepen our walk with Christ; to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to Him; and to delight in our intimate relationship with Him.

Section I

Leaving Guilt Behind: Introduction

In many of our minds, guilt is such an ugly word. This may be because it is not unusual for Christians to feel guilty of sin in their lives and to have problems dealing with that guilt. However, guilt does serve a purpose. For Christians it brings about the conviction from the Holy Spirit. Starting with our salvation when we realized we needed Jesus Christ as our Saviour because of the guilt of sin. But many times we take guilt to a whole new level. We begin by doing the biblically correct thing of going to God for forgiveness and in this way we grab hold of the aspect of forgiveness that salvation brings. However, we don't grab hold of the peace that our salvation brings. Instead we ask for forgiveness and feel we must hold on to the guilt of the sin. This brings us momentary gratification and we think we are doing the right thing in God's eyes. However, in truth we are making sacrifices over and over again for a sin that God sent Jesus to die for once and for all.

Satan will use guilt to stifle us from fulfilling God's purpose in our lives. After discovering such a stifling in my own life, I realized the need for a personal study to focus on releasing the guilt that has kept me from God's plan. This study was developed from a collection of my findings through searching God's Word and through research. My hopes are that through this study you will be able to do as I did and strengthen yourself in Christ so you can overcome the guilt and shame you may be feeling after confessing your sin to God. Overall, we will be reaching for the ultimate goal to glorify God by allowing Him to remove this barrier of guilt that is keeping us from fulfilling His purpose in our lives.

So let's begin . . .

How often do you commit a sin and then fail to find a way to move past the regret and shame you feel? Most people wrestle with guilt from time to time. Some wrestle with it all the time. Through this study we will learn how to reach for our salvation to its fullest by releasing that guilt as God intended. To do so, we will look at this study in seven different sections. They will be titled as follows:

1. Leaving Guilt Behind: Introduction
2. Condemnation versus Conviction
3. The Power of Thoughts
4. Strongholds
5. Reaching to God
6. Conclusion: Working on Applying

Let's begin with a basic definition of guilt . . .

Guilt is defined as a feeling of responsibility or remorse for some offense, failure, mistake, crime, or wrong, whether real or imagined. It is associated with negative feelings such as shame, remorse, anguish, torment, self-condemnation, self-unforgiveness, self-judgment and in extreme cases, severe depression.

There are two types of guilt: **genuine guilt** and **false or imaginary guilt**.

Genuine guilt arises after a real violation of one's moral beliefs. In our case as Christians it arises after a real violation of God's biblical principles.

Imaginary guilt on the other hand, arises from imaginary or illusory violations of one's moral beliefs. The individual actually feels guilty without committing any violation. For example, parents experience this guilt frequently in regards to decisions their children make that are a violation of the parent's moral beliefs. The parent has not committed the violation themselves. However, they feel guilty that they may have contributed somehow parentally in their child's decision. From our Christian perspective, imaginary guilt points to a wounded spirit.

Sometimes genuine guilt and imaginary guilt can be intertwined in a situation. I was wrapped up in the middle of imaginary guilt when I found myself in the enemy's trap. The Lord began to reveal to me that I had dealt well with the genuine guilt that surrounded my situation, but the imaginary guilt was what stifled me. I was not listening to His voice in regards to this and ultimately I was cutting off the full capacity of communication with Him. After my discovery of how guilt was stifling me, God began my lessons of healing by pointing me to Psalm 116. Through this Psalm, He showed me how to open up the fullness of communicating and discovery with Him. Open up your Bible with me to Psalm 116 and let's look at it together.

We can know that God hears our voice because Psalm 116:1-2 (NIV) tells us:

*"I love the LORD, for He heard my voice; He heard my cry for mercy.
Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live."*

Through this passage we see that the Lord is eager to hear us when we call on Him. We should be just as eager to listen to His response when we call. When we do not listen our communication with Him has become uncertain. Guilt will produce this flaw in communication that leads to uncertainty.

I like the NLT version for Psalm 116:2 because it says, "*Because He bends down to listen I will pray as long as I have breath.*" I envision God stretching His head down from His throne in an eagerness to hear my cry. It makes me think – am I as eager to pray to Him as He is to hear my prayer? Sadly, I have to say that I am not. And what is even worse is that there are many who will have to say the same. However, our response to God's eagerness to hear should be as the psalmist. It should be a great desire to do so as long as we have breath. With this in mind let's look further into Psalm 116 and answer the following:

1. Why did the psalmist say he loved the Lord? (verse 1-2)
2. What state was the psalmist in? (verse 3)
3. What does the psalmist claim was the only thing he saw in this state? (verse 3)

