

# PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

OUR WILL UNDER GOD'S GRACE

**HOT**  
  
**SHOTS**

Personal Responsibility: Our Will Under God's Grace  
Written by Jim Binney and Jeff Diedrich

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Blameshifting—it’s been around about as long as sin itself. When God confronted Adam in the garden, asking him if he had eaten the forbidden fruit, the very first man tried to excuse the very first sin by pointing to his wife. “It was the woman you gave me,” Adam told his Creator. “She gave me the fruit, and I ate it.” Likewise, when God asked Eve to explain her actions, she pointed to the snake that had lied to her. Both she and Adam blamed God’s creation for the sin, ultimately accusing God Himself of placing them in an inescapable situation.

Our culture is no different today. We live in a society filled with people who shrug off personal responsibility for their actions. We find scapegoats, stuff we can blame for all our failures—usually in the form of our environment, our family, our friends, our genetics, or our Freudian subconscious. Apart from a few changes in terminology over the years, there’s nothing new about blameshifting.

But just as God refused to accept blameshifting in the garden, He refuses to accept our attempts to shirk responsibility today. He created us to be free moral agents, subject to His sovereignty and accountable for our actions. We are subject both to the earthly authorities that He has set above us and to the example of His holiness. We can never be truly holy as He is, but He commands us to be, nonetheless. And anything that keeps us from being like Him is our fault, no one else’s.

This might seem like a dire outlook, but it’s really just the introduction to a fantastic view of God’s mercy and grace. He knows that we are completely to blame for our sin, yet He lifts us up, cleansing us from our filth and wrapping us in His love. In the process of repentance and redemption, there’s no need for excuses or blameshifting.

Adam and Eve shouldn’t have bothered to try blaming someone else for their failure, because God already had a path toward salvation in mind. It wasn’t through their attempts to cover their sin, nor the death of the animal that gave them their first clothing, nor even the countless sacrifices that followed—but through the blood of Jesus Christ. By accepting personal responsibility for our actions, we can gain a better understanding of God’s grace and maintain a closer walk with Him.

## **Lesson Format**

Hot Shots are written with a firm belief that the Word of God is the primary life-changing element that the Holy Spirit uses to do His work. You can be assured that we will not depend upon psychology, values clarification, touchy-feely questions, or humanistic methods. Instead, we will allow Scripture to reveal God’s character to the teens, thereby exposing them to His life-changing power. We stand unashamedly upon the Word of God, which is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.

While the writing staff at Positive Action For Christ understands that all our lessons must be centered in the Bible, we also see the need for help-

ing the teacher by including creative teaching ideas. These creative ideas are simply sermon illustrations taken one step further. Instead of talking about opening a window in an illustration, we ask you to open it. Instead of imagining how destructive the tongue can be, you should present an object lesson to show them. These ideas can enhance your lesson and help teens grasp the truth of God's Word.

Our belief is that through object lessons and illustrations we are better able to imitate the teaching of Jesus Christ. He depended wholly upon the Scriptures for the content of His lessons, but He also used coins, trees, water, and more to illustrate His teaching.

Each Hotshot follows the same lesson format throughout the study.



The Warm Up opens the door of the student's mind to the main lesson. This may include handouts, object lessons, or stimulating questions.



The Bridge transitions the teen from the warm-up into the main text of Scripture that you will be teaching.



The Content is the main body of the lesson, focusing on Bible exposition and application.



The Closing summarizes the lesson and calls for a commitment to the truth.



In this Hot Shot you will find Scripture memory verses that complement the lessons. We believe that Scripture memorization is an excellent tool which the Holy Spirit uses to sanctify and guide Christians today.

### **Before you start the study...**

Read the Introduction, Course Objectives and Overview. It is important that you understand the scope of this study before you teach it.

### **Before each lesson...**

1. Read through the lesson and take note of the Lesson Aim, Objectives, and the materials needed for creative teaching segments.
2. Plan ahead to modify the lesson if necessary. Your facilities or equipment may limit you. Substitute your own ideas if necessary.
3. Each lesson can be taught in 20–30 minutes, but preparation can let you shorten or lengthen the lesson as needed.
4. Use excitement when you teach! An excited teacher produces students who are excited about learning. If you don't feel that one of our teaching ideas or warm ups will excite your teens, spend some time and develop one that will work.

## Course Objectives

By the end of this course students will:

- understand the root of blameshifting
- see the results of blameshifting
- recognize their tendency to blame others
- know how to deal with blameshifting
- be willing to accept responsibility for their actions

## Overview

### Lesson 1: Some Very Sour Grapes: Blameshifting 101

- **Lesson Aim:** To show the destructive reality of blameshifting
- **Text:** Ezekiel 18

### Lesson 2: A Lousy Aftertaste: The Consequences of Blameshifting

- **Lesson Aim:** To show the effects of irresponsibility
- **Text:** Ezekiel 18:1–5; Proverbs 22:6

### Lesson 3: How Did These Get So Sour?: The Causes of Blameshifting

- **Lesson Aim:** To illustrate man's inclination to blame others
- **Text:** Ezekiel 18

### Lesson 4: Spitting It Out: The Blameshifting Cure—Part 1

- **Lesson Aim:** To think biblically about personal responsibility
- **Text:** Ezekiel 18

### Lesson 5: Fresh Grapes: The Blameshifting Cure—Part 2

- **Lesson Aim:** To think biblically about personal responsibility
- **Texts:** Ezekiel 18

# Background Information

The book of Ezekiel was written by the prophet of the same name sometime between 593 and 570 B.C. Ezekiel began his ministry around the age of thirty, and he was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Daniel. He wrote his book during the Babylonian captivity and the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, but unlike Daniel, whose writings focused on the political restoration of Israel, Ezekiel emphasized the religious restoration of God's people. He first speaks of the coming judgment on the nation of Israel because of their sin, but after the fall of Jerusalem, he points to the restoration of Judah to power.

Chapter 18 deals specifically with the individual responsibility of each Israelite to deal with their own personal sins. It would be too easy to lump everyone's sin into one national heap and say a collective prayer for the whole nation. Instead, each person needed to face the sin in his own life. The Israelites failed to recognize this as a personal issue, and they expressed their attitude in a popular proverb.

*The fathers have eaten sour grapes,  
And the children's teeth are set on edge.*

Literally: the fathers ate sour grapes, but the children are the ones who must grit their teeth from the taste.

This proverb must have been quite prevalent, since it's also quoted in Jeremiah 31:29–30. Its main point was that the people of Israel were suffering in exile because of the sins of previous generations. The people were blaming God for being unjust and punishing them for somebody else's sins. This notion spread throughout the nation of Israel.

Ezekiel rebutted the proverb, saying that every man was personally responsible for his own actions. The fathers had certainly sinned, but the children had also allowed sin to interfere in their relationship with God. No man can blame another for the lot that he has brought on himself. The soul—the individual person—that sins will die (Ezek. 18:4).



## LESSON 1

# Some Very Sour Grapes

## Blameshifting 101

*“Ninety-nine percent of all failures come from people who have a habit of making excuses.”*

—George Washington Carver



**To show the destructive reality of blameshifting**



**Students will:**

- see the seriousness of blameshifting
- understand the philosophy that denies personal responsibility
- appreciate the biblical response to unfortunate circumstances



**Ezekiel 18**

## The Lesson



Play the game “Hot Potato.” Form a circle of chairs and have the students seated while you give a potato to one of them. Play some music on a media player while the students pass the potato around the circle. Stop the music at random. Whoever is stuck with the spud must remove himself and his chair from the circle. No throwing the potato—it must be passed to the

## What You Need

A potato,  
media player with music

person on the left. Keep the game moving by playing the music for only short intervals.



Life can be a lot like this game. Nobody wants to be caught holding the blame for something, so they constantly pass the potato to someone else and point the finger at them. This lesson will teach the reality of this sin in all of our lives.

## The Condition We Face

### Israel's History of Shifting Blame—Ezekiel 18:1–5

**T**he nation of Israel had a long history of blaming their parents for their present woes. This may have been caused by a misapplication of Exodus 20:5 and Deuteronomy 5:9. They justified their behavior and rationalized away their personal responsibility by using the proverb, “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” In other words, “Our fathers have acted. We merely react to what they did. They ate the sour grapes. Our teeth were set on edge by no fault of our own. It was their sin that made us the way we are. We can’t help sinning because of their influence! It’s not our fault!”

**Discussion:** There were a number of famous Bible characters that practiced “sour grapes.” Read the following statements and see if the students can guess who shifted the blame.

- “It wasn’t my fault. I was just minding my own business when she came along and offered the fruit to me. She should have been more careful about who she talks to.” (Adam speaking of Eve) Ask, “Who did Eve blame?”—the serpent
- “Everyone knew these people were trouble. As our leader was on the mountain, I was forced to baby-sit these people. Then they demanded a god to worship, and somehow this idol appeared out of some gold we melted.”—Aaron
- “He was the crooked one. We knew he was going to betray Christ—it was just a matter of time. We are in a position of authority and accept no responsibility for the 30 pieces of silver.”—the chief priests
- “The mob was enraged and the whole scene had a sense of destiny about it. I was caught in a bad situation, and any man would have done the same—He was going to be crucified anyway. Washing my hands made me feel clean.”—Pilate

### Modern Sour Grapes

An ongoing debate rages over who is ultimately responsible for the actions of young people. The church is divided into two camps. One loudly affirms that, according to Proverbs 22:6, leaders are responsible for how children turn out. The other camp refers to Romans 14:12, demanding that everyone give an account of himself to God.

At the center of the controversy is a philosophy called determinism—the belief that we are irreversibly predetermined to be a certain way by factors beyond our control. By this reasoning, those uncontrollable factors—be they parents, youth pastors, teachers, or circumstances—bear the ultimate responsibility for our behavior.

**Discussion:** Share a bad habit that you may have picked up from your parents or someone that had a big influence on you. Describe how you identified that habit and began to improve. Ask the students if it was your fault for acting the way you did. After all, like parent, like child, right? Ask the students for examples of sin that they could pick up easily from family or friends. Who ultimately bears responsibility?

## The Comparison We Need

Whenever we must make a judgment of right vs. wrong, we have only two possible sources of truth—man or God. The Bible refers to this as the “wisdom of men” and the “wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1). The sources for the wisdom of men are as numerous as the men themselves. But the source of the wisdom of God is found in only one place—the Word of God.

Any test of the rightness or wrongness of a belief will arise from a comparison of these two sources. Does it stem from man’s wisdom or God’s Word?

### The Wisdom of Men—1 Corinthians 1:18–31

**Handout:** Give the students a few minutes to read over the handout and write their thoughts. Each case is based on a true story that shows how some people refuse to accept personal responsibility for their actions. Man’s wisdom will often say that a person cannot be blamed for his or her actions if their circumstances are unfair or unfortunate.

The wisdom of men is often nonsense! It excuses unacceptable behavior and justifies sin. It encourages a permissive, apathetic attitude that ultimately leads to the self-destruction of those who refuse to learn self-control. Worldly wisdom is embodied in the proverb, “the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” In other words, “It’s my parents’ fault!”

Man’s wisdom is not geared toward improving his relationship with God. It is designed to protect him from the painful truth that he is depraved and in need of redemption. Man naturally refuses to accept that he can do nothing about his condition except through God’s grace.

### The Wisdom of God—1 Corinthians 1:18–31

What then is the answer to our misguided dependence upon the wisdom of men? How do we ever get past all the lies we have told ourselves to

## What You Need

Copies of “You Be the Judge”

Pens or pencils

obscure the awful reality of our sin? The answer is simple but painful: we need biblical surgery, with the Spirit as our surgeon and the Sword as His scalpel (Heb. 4:12).

**Illustration:** I recall as a corpsman in the Navy that a mother brought her toddler son into the emergency room because he was complaining of a nose pain. I was the senior corpsman on duty, and fearing the wrath of the doctor if I awakened him, I decided to demonstrate my impressive diagnostic skills. But after exhausting them, I could find nothing wrong. Then it was suggested that he be sent to the X-ray department. There on the film was the problem. He had pushed a small steel ball bearing into his nose. It was so deep that my examination could not find it.

We bring our sin-produced ailments to the emergency room of man's wisdom, and we find nothing but flawed opinions. It is not until we subject our thinking to God's word—our spiritual X-ray machine—that we will ever know the truth. The Bible discerns our heart's thoughts and intents. We must subject our thinking, our biases to the Word's scrutiny, for it is the only source of true wisdom.

## The Convictions We Lack

A careful study of Ezekiel 18 will reveal that God's desire for the Hebrews was to rethink and reshape their convictions. In verse three, God tells His people that they are no longer to use this "sour grapes" proverb. His reason is clear: the son will not bear the consequences of his father's iniquity, nor the father bear his son's (vv. 19–20).

Any lasting solution to this problem must include a drastic change our beliefs and attitude. This includes a transformation in at least two areas of thinking.

### Convictions About Personal Ability

The philosophy of determinism—also known as blameshifting—denies our ability to use our free will to live rightly. If it is reasonable to blame our parents for our problems, is it not fair to grant them the same right in blaming their parents for their problems? And if our grandparents are responsible for raising our parents wrong, how can we blame our mom and dad for their poor parenting? Do you see where this is taking us? All the way back to the Garden of Eden where Adam said, "It's not my fault, God. It's the woman you gave me." And Eve said, "It's not my fault. It's the snake's." And he didn't have a leg to stand on. Neither do we!

God has given us a free will that allows us to choose right from wrong. By His grace we have the ability to pursue a right relationship with Him. No one else is to blame for our state.

## Convictions About Personal Responsibility

Many people who refuse to accept personal responsibility do so because they are too concerned with protecting their own rights. Their self-serving sense of justice rears its haughty head whenever they think that others have done them wrong. They reject any suggestion that their own actions contributed to their state, and they place the blame on someone else. They cope with their unfortunate situation by convincing themselves they can do nothing about it.

As followers of Christ, we are crucified with Him (Gal. 2:20). We have given up all our desires, needs, and rights to Him. We are a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1), and sacrifices do not complain when they suffer wrong. Just as Paul used his Roman citizenship on occasion to further the gospel, so we can use our earthly rights and associations to do God's work, but we should not be surprised to find ourselves in a world that cares little about fairness or equality.

God calls us to forget our rights and pursue our duty, accepting personal responsibility for our actions and striving to know and please Him. If there is to be revival in our hearts, we must first face our responsibilities.

### Personal Confession—1 John 1:9; Psalm 51

If you are not responsible for your actions, deeds, and choices, then you would never need to seek God's forgiveness by confessing your sin. The very fact that God tells you to confess your sins means that He considers you—not your parents, environment, or circumstances—to be responsible for them. Those who have influenced you toward evil will be held accountable, but ultimately you are to blame for your own sin.

### Personal Accountability—Romans 14:12

When you stand before the judgment seat of Christ, nobody else will be with you. Your parents will not be there. Your friends will not be there. It will be just you, your soul bare before God. If God thought others were responsible for your actions, why does He say you must give an account of yourself?

### Personal Sanctification—Romans 8:29

It is clear in Scripture that each Christian has the responsibility to be conformed to the image of Christ. That is a spiritual journey that each believer must pursue passionately, and no one else can be blamed if he fails.



Blaming others will get you nowhere in life—certainly no closer to God and His will for you. We can move forward only by accepting responsibility for our actions, by taking ownership of our own problems, and looking to God for the solution. Just as His grace was sufficient to raise us up out of our sin, so it can lift us above our circumstances and set us in the right direction. We must acknowledge our fault and trust in His power.

# YOU BE THE JUDGE

You're the judge of a highly respected appeals court, and you've been given the chance to review a few old cases. You must decide whether each lawsuit is legitimate, and then justify your opinion. Read each case and write your thoughts below.

A boy was banned from an online video game service for repeatedly screaming vulgar insults and racial epithets at other players. When he found that his game console would no longer connect to the internet, he had his parents hire a lawyer and sue the machine's manufacturer for violating his right to free speech. The lawyer argued that because the boy had numerous phobias and could not venture outside, the online ban had effectively cut off all possible means of socialization, leaving him friendless and lonely. The boy sought over \$50,000 in damages.

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While using a table saw to cut strips of oak flooring, a man accidentally mutilated two of his fingers. He decided to sue the tool manufacturer for negligence, saying that if the company had installed a "flesh-detecting" device on the saw, his injuries would have been far less severe. Such safety technology exists, but it can be expensive. The man claimed that even though he purchased saw knowing that it had no such safety feature, it was not his fault that his fingers were near the blade. He asked for \$1.5 million in damages.

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A man tried to sue himself for violating his own civil rights and religious beliefs. One night he had allowed himself to drink heavily, becoming intoxicated and committing a number of crimes which led to a 23-year prison sentence. This crime against himself was worth \$5 million dollars in emotional damages and psychological distress. Of course, since the man was in prison when he filed the lawsuit, he could not pay anywhere near that amount. He therefore demanded that his state government give him the damages in full.

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LESSON 2

# A Lousy Aftertaste

## The Consequences of Blameshifting

*“It is easy to dodge our responsibilities, but we cannot dodge the consequences of dodging our responsibilities.”*

—Josiah Charles Stamp



**To show the effects of irresponsibility**



**Students will:**

- appreciate the role of their parents in shaping their future
- understand the power of personal choice
- see hope for the future



**Ezekiel 18:1–5; Proverbs 22:6**

## The Lesson



The goal of this warm-up is to question the probable consequences of people’s actions. Assign two girls the first script, and two guys the second. Ask them to perform their respec-

## What You Need

Copies of “Skit 1” and “Skit 2”

tive skits in turn, then present the rest of the students with the possible outcomes below. Have everyone vote for which consequence seems most likely, and discuss how we can make better decisions by taking responsibility for our actions.

**Skit 1:** Which of these consequences is most likely for Gracie?

- Ashley and Gracie both laugh at Megan over the phone. The two quickly establish themselves as the coolest and most fashion-savvy girls at school.
- Megan laughs it off, invites Gracie to her birthday party, and becomes her best friend. They keep in touch for the rest of their lives, with Megan often reminiscing how wonderful their high school years were together.
- Neither Megan nor Ashley really want to talk to Gracie ever again.

**Skit 2:** Which of these consequences is most likely for Tim?

- He safely dirtbikes around the construction site, impressing Keisha with his mad skills.
- He pulls off an impossible trick with his dirtbike and a concrete ramp, which his friends video and post online, thereby rocketing him to superstar status in the world of extreme sports. He makes millions before ever reaching the professional circuit, where he becomes the greatest dirtbike legend of all time.
- He crashes his bike, lands on some rebar, and earns himself a hospital stay and several hundred hours of community service.



Every action we take has some kind of consequence. Even if not all of our mistakes are as disastrous as the ones Gracie and Tim made, we must still expect to reap what we sow. Those who will not take responsibility for their actions will deal with two main consequences.

## Truth Twisting

### The Truth of God Is Twisted—Ezekiel 18:1–5

**T** By using the time-worn excuse of “sour grapes,” the children of Israel embraced at least three serious doctrinal distortions:

- The consequences of our sin are hereditary
- Our sins are merely reactions to our circumstances
- God is arbitrary

The implications of this last belief are severe. If God is arbitrary, then His will for us is imperfect, unjust, and cruel. If He gave us our parents at random, if He placed us where we are without thought, if He threw us

into the dark for no reason, then He is not the God He claims to be. He is not loving (1 John 4:16), He is not righteous (Ps. 116:5), and He is not just (Ps. 7:11). If God is to blame for the trouble in our lives, He must be either powerless or cruel.

The children of Israel challenged the goodness of God, twisting His sovereignty into a fatalistic justification of their contempt for His commands. They claimed that the Lord's way—His work, His judgment, His blessing—was not righteous, just, or equal (Ezek. 18:25). Simply put, they said He wasn't being fair.

## The Truth of Parenting Is Twisted—Proverbs 22:6

Few verses on parenting have been so misunderstood and misused as Proverbs 22:6. The text seems to say that if parents raise their children perfectly, then they will grow up without falling into serious sin. Many people would not disagree with this interpretation, but the danger is in its implication—namely, that parents are wholly responsible for their children's actions.

In their zeal to encourage parents to take charge of their children, many Bible teachers quote Proverbs 22:6 and imply that teens are not to blame for their own sin. If only they had been trained right, they would have acted right. But this thinking can promote the kind of blameshifting seen in Ezekiel's day. Teens may hear teachers encourage parental responsibility and get the idea that they can shirk their own.

**Discussion:** Write a few phrases on the board or overhead.

- We are a product of our environment.
- Teens can't be trusted today.
- The vast majority of your personality and learned behavior is established before you turn 6.
- Kids from broken homes can't understand real love.

Ask the students to point out which statements they've seen or heard before. Note that every statement rejects the idea that teens can or should take personal responsibility for their actions. Ask them why they think that people in the media, pop culture, government, and education disregard personal responsibility. Does this have anything to do with common expectations for today's teens?

We can dispel this view by an accurate understanding of the verse. Proverbs 22:6 is an observation that children who are loved, nurtured, and taught in a biblical way will generally live their lives in a manner pleasing to God. This is not without exception—many who are taught well by their parents can make mistakes or reject God's Word. And on the flip side, many who come from horrible family environments can grow greatly in God's grace. Not all proverbs in the Bible are absolute statements. Just like Proverbs 22:16 doesn't guarantee that all criminals and tyrants will die penniless, so Proverbs 22:6 doesn't place all the responsibility for a child's behavior on the parent.

## What You Need

Whiteboard or chalkboard

Parents are responsible for whether their parenting influences their children for the good or the bad—whether they point their children to Christ or something else. What the children do with the gifts they’ve been given—good or bad—is their own responsibility.

### **The Truth of Personal Choice Is Twisted—Joshua 24:15**

Few things in the Bible are so challenged today as the truth of personal choice. Post-modern thought—and post-post-modern thought—is built around the assumption that we have little to no say in how we act. Of course, by calling personal choice an illusion, we conveniently discard the notion of personal responsibility. No choice means no responsibility, and no responsibility means no consequences.

The Bible liberates us from this fatalistic viewpoint by telling us we have a choice—to follow God or follow self. In Joshua 24:14–15, God told His people to choose who they would serve. In Matthew 12:30, Christ told His followers that those who were not with Him were against Him. In Romans 6:11–13, Paul tells his fellow believers to yield themselves to God as slaves that have been freed from sin.

## **Conviction Confusion**

Another consequence of blameshifting is the confusion of convictions. When our view of truth itself is twisted, it’s only a matter of time before what we believe is clouded. This confusion can be found in three areas.

### **Convictions About Personal Guilt**

There are two types of guilt.

- **True guilt**—Certainly much of what we know as guilt is a legitimate realization that we have done wrong. Even those who don’t know much about God or the Bible have a basic understanding of His law (Rom. 2:14–15), so it’s only natural when our conscience pangs over sin. This is the kind of guilt Adam and Eve felt after they ate the forbidden fruit in the garden. For Christians, guilt can also come from the Holy Spirit, who convicts us of sin. Guilt is the pointed, hurtful feeling that God can use to get our attention.
- **False guilt**—But we can also experience false guilt—the kind that comes from a flawed view of our situation. Often we cripple ourselves with guilt over something beyond our control. We blame ourselves for the death of a loved one or the separation of our parents. We believe the lie that some besetting sin will never allow us to be used by God again. All of this false, misdirected guilt serves only one purpose—to focus us on our sin and helplessness, not the God who can lift us above it.

How then can we know the difference between true and false guilt? By doing three things:

- **Praying**—None of us can overcome sin, bitterness, or guilt on our own—but Christ can for us. The first step to dealing with guilt is a talk with God, where we ask Him for wisdom to see anything in our lives that might be keeping us from a closer walk with Him. If we ask for His wisdom, He will give it (James 1:5).
- **Subjecting our feelings to the Word**—Our conscience can be misled, misdirected, or even completely turned around. We must strengthen it with a knowledge of God and His written law. There we can find what true sin and repentance really are.
- **Examining the direction of our guilt**—Where is your guilt pointing you? Paul told the Corinthians that he hoped their sorrow would drive them to repentance (2 Cor. 7:8–9), not that it would trap them in a pointless spiral of shame and self-deprecation. If your guilt keeps you from focusing on God or serving Him, it’s a false guilt that has no place in your life. If you’ve sinned, repent and ask for forgiveness. After that point, guilt is only a symptom of distrust in God. Know that He has forgiven you (1 John 1:9), and have faith that He will continue to use you.

## Convictions About Personal Sin

Sin and responsibility are two concepts that our culture refuses to acknowledge. Once we try to avoid accountability for our sin, it’s only a matter of time before we deny the existence of right and wrong at all. To do so, we’ve created an entire vocabulary of thinly-veiled euphemisms that obscure our true motivations. Here are a few examples:

Euphemism	Excuse	True Name	Motivation
Mistake, Struggle	Instinct, Weakness	Sin	Selfishness
Abortion, Euthanasia	Responsibility, Health	Murder	Irresponsibility, Convenience
Self-esteem	Strength, Well-being	Pride	Self-centeredness
Adult Entertainment	Fun	Exploitation	Lust
Disinformation, Fib	Concern	Lie	Convenience, Malice
Sexual misconduct	Dysfunction	Rape	Lust
Homosexuality	Love	Abomination	Lust
Off color	Humor	Obscenity	Carnality
Affair, Fling	Love, Fun	Adultery, Infidelity	Lust, Dissatisfaction
Risque, Edgy	Fun, Attraction	Immodesty	Lust, Self-glorification

## Convictions About Personal Hope

People who hold to a blameshifting, deterministic philosophy have very little hope. Sure, they can try to convince themselves that they aren't to blame for their sins, but that's where the benefits end. Blameshifting might make them look a little better, but it won't allow them to grow or overcome their problems. The outlook is bleak—but hey, at least it's not their fault.

Thankfully, our hope lies in Someone more powerful than ourselves, a God that transcends time and space—including our circumstances—and has a purpose for every trial and difficulty in our lives. The God that forgave our sins will not abandon us (Phil. 1:6), and His grace can overwhelm any weakness, fault, or struggle.

It's truly amazing how much we beat ourselves down, how far we throw away our hope, just to avoid admitting fault.

### What You Need

Chalkboard or whiteboard



Belief precedes behavior, and attitude precedes action. If you practice blameshifting, it will eventually impact your view of God, your personal convictions, and ultimately, your life choices. Write the following on the board. Determinism works like this:

no choice = no sin = no conviction = no repentance = no forgiveness = no salvation = no hope

If people today seem lost, unfulfilled, and aimless, it is because they refuse to acknowledge their need for God's help. Blameshifting can doom an unsaved sinner to hell, and it can curse a Christian to a life of fruitlessness.

# Skit 1

*Gracie walks up to Ashley, who is holding a cell phone.*

Gracie: Hey, Ashley! You will not believe what I just heard.

Ashley: Um, can it wait? I'm talking to—

Gracie: No, seriously, you have to hear this. Somebody just saw Megan slip on the cafeteria floor and crash headfirst into Nicholas, that guy she likes in chemistry class. His food tray, like, exploded, and she got spaghetti and green beans all over her clothes—oh, and her hair!

Ashley: I know, Gracie, which is why I'm talking to—

Gracie: And she starting crying there on the floor.

Ashley: Gracie, I'm on the phone with—

Gracie: I didn't see it, but I'm guessing it was hilarious. Anyway, don't tell her I said that. I still want to go to her birthday party. Her parents have, like, a ton of money, so it should be pretty sweet. Hope we don't have to bring gifts or anything, though.

Ashley: Gracie, Megan's on speaker.

Gracie: Oh.

# Skit 2

Jim: Hey, Tim!

Tim: Hey, Jim!

Jim: Wanna go dirtbiking?

Tim: Sure, name the time! I'm there.

Jim: Midnight, tonight! It's way more fun in the dark!

Tim: Wow. Where are we going?

Jim: My dad's new construction site. It's like this huge three story office building.

Tim: But aren't they still laying the foundation? It's got all those rebar and metal spikes sticking out of the concrete.

Jim: Yeah, but no pain, no gain!

Tim: What's the gain, exactly?

Jim: The privilege of hanging with my friends, is what!

Tim: The ones that nearly killed the shop teacher when they decided to shoot each other with nail guns?

Jim: Yeah!

Tim: The ones that set fire to that gas station to see if it would blow up?

Jim: Yeah!

Tim: The ones that just got released from juvenile on parole?

Jim: Yeah! Why do you think we're celebrating with a dirtbike tour-ney? You gotta join us.

Tim: Why on earth would I ever want to do something as dumb as that?

Jim: Because Keisha will be there, and she thinks dirtbiking is awesome.

Tim: Oh, okay. See you there!