

# ReAL GUiLT?

Ask group members to sit in a circle. Discuss:

- Define *guilt*.
- What does guilt feel like?
- How do you know when you feel guilty?
- How do you know when a friend feels guilty?
- What is real or true guilt?
- When is feeling guilty appropriate?
- What should real or true guilt lead us to do?
- In what ways can guilt work in your life for the good?
- What do you think God wants us to do about true guilt?
- What is false guilt?
- At what times is feeling guilty inappropriate? harmful?
- In what ways do people use guilt to get what they want? to communicate without being up-front and honest?
- What do you think God wants us to do about false guilt?

# Guilty AS ACCuSED?

Distribute an **index card** and **pencil** to each group member and say:

- Write down something about which you feel guilty. (*Pause.*)
- Write down three reasons why you feel guilty about the thing you listed. (*Pause.*)
- Now write down three reasons why you *should not* feel guilty about the thing you listed. (*Pause.*)

Invite group members to evaluate their guilt feelings in the following discussion:

- What is *guilt*? What does it feel like?
- When are guilty feelings appropriate? inappropriate?
- When do guilt feelings help us? harm us?
- Describe the difference between *true* guilt (a healthy sense of responsibility to God, self and others) and *false* guilt (a feeling that society, friends or family think we have done something bad).
  - How can we tell false guilt from true guilt?
  - If our guilt is true guilt, what can we do about it?
  - If our guilt is false guilt, what can we do to free ourselves of guilty feelings?

# CoNFESSION

Invite group members to sit quietly with their eyes closed. Lead them through this simple, silent meditation on confession and forgiveness:

- Quiet your heart. Quiet your mind. Realize that God is with you, right now, closer than a friend, more loving than a parent, patient, caring, tender... (*Pause.*)
- God says, "Share your guilt with me. What are you sorry for right now?" In the quiet of your own mind and heart, talk to God. (*Pause.*)
- In the Bible we read "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all wrongdoing" (1 Jn. 1:8-9). Listen to God as God forgives you now. (*Pause.*)
- What do you want to say to God? Say that now. (*Pause.*)

# GuILT LiST

Invite group members to brainstorm a list of things about which teenagers often feel guilty, either rightly or wrongly. List members' suggestions on **chalkboard, newsprint or poster board**

When the group has compiled a comprehensive list, discuss:

- For which of these do the feelings of guilt legitimately come from within us?
- For which of these do the feelings of guilt artificially come from outside of us?
- For which of these do the feelings of guilt come from God?
- For which of these do we not need to feel guilty at all?
- To alleviate the feelings of guilt for these, when do we need to confess our guilt to God? to others? to ourselves?