

Living Guilt-Free



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Self-Imposed Guilt

False guilt can be defined as:

- what we feel when we keep remembering what God has forgiven and forgotten!
- what we feel when someone appears to be disappointed in us.
- what we feel when we have to say "no."
- what we feel when we try to please people and fail.
- what we feel when we live with unrealistic expectations of ourselves.
- what we feel when we allow others to dictate what and who we should be.
- what we feel when we compare ourselves to others and feel we don't measure up.

Notice that each one begins with "what we feel." It's a feeling, not grounded in truth, but nonetheless strong and real.

Signs of False Guilt

One of the first signs that you are dealing with false guilt is that usually you just can't pinpoint exactly why you feel guilty. When you cannot pinpoint a specific reason for your guilt, it is highly likely you're dealing with false guilt.

Here are some illustrations of both true and false guilt. Indicate which classification you think each of these should have, true or false:

- **My daughter said to me, "But all the other mothers will be there. Why can't you be there?" I feel guilty because I can't be at her scout meeting.**
- **My boss said, "You don't have that report finished yet?" I feel guilty, but I haven't had time to breath. My boss keeps interrupting me with other priorities and then doesn't understand why everything doesn't get done on time!**
- **A good friend asked me if I would meet her for prayer. She's very worried about her marriage. I had made plans to go shopping, so I told her I couldn't meet her tonight. I feel guilty.**
- **The Committee Chairperson at church called me at work to talk about an upcoming meeting. I told her I couldn't talk with her at that moment and would call her later in the evening. She sounded irritated. I feel guilty.**

Just because someone is not happy with you, doesn't mean you are guilty!

- **Before I became a Christian and was forgiven of my sins, I had an abortion, which I now deeply regret. Many nights I lie sleepless in bed, feeling so guilty about the baby I destroyed.**
- **My father died before becoming a believer. I think of the times I might have talked to him and didn't. Maybe it's my fault he never accepted Christ. I feel very guilty about it.**

Your lack of witnessing did not determine anyone's eternal destination.

- **My sister just accused me of not spending enough time with her. She feels we should get together every weekend, but I just don't have time. I feel guilty.**
- **I keep letting my quiet time with the Lord slip, one excuse after another. I feel guilty about it.**
- **I feel I should be doing some exercise to keep my body in good shape, but I hate to exercise. I feel guilty.**
- **I was very abrupt and unkind to my mate this morning. I said something sarcastic and unnecessary. I feel guilty.**

Managing False Guilt

The first and most important step in learning to manage false guilt is to recognize it.

The second step is to replace wrong thinking with right thinking. This is done by faith and in obedience to Scripture.

Philippians 4:8: *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

You push wrong thoughts out with true and lovely ones. One way to do this is through praising the Lord. Begin thanking God for the good things in your life.

There Is No Condemnation!

Romans 8:33-34, Phillips's The New Testament in Modern English:

Who would dare to accuse us, whom God has chosen? The judge himself has declared us free from sin. Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us!

Do you have a right to condemn yourself if Jesus doesn't condemn you? To allow yourself to wallow in false guilt is to live in condemnation.

Romans 8:1: *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Isaiah 43:25: *"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."*

Galatians 5:1: *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

Closing

Every time a false guilt starts to bombard your mind, stand right up to it, and refuse to accept it.

Find Scripture to quote to the enemy when he tries to keep you mired in false guilt.

1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Hebrews 10:20 – 22

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.