

“The Guilt-Less Family”
May 8, 2016
Lynn Haven United Methodist Church

Introduction

Have you ever had a time when you wished you hadn't done or said something and then felt guilty about it? The dictionary defines guilt as “the remorseful awareness of having done something wrong.” The sense of failure we call “guilt” causes us a great deal of mental, emotional, and spiritual pain which, in turn, results in fear, anxiety, and even shame. These feelings of guilt are especially prevalent with our family relationships. Since we are imperfect people, we can't remove guilt altogether, but we can learn how to deal with it from a biblical perspective instead of a worldly perspective.

Digging Deeper

1. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul contrasts “godly sorrow” with “worldly sorrow.” Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-10. What does Paul say about “godly sorrow” and “worldly sorrow”?
2. One of the ways the world teaches us to deal with guilt is to repress our memories. Why is it impossible to forget something you feel never really dealt with and still feel guilty about?
3. Another way the world teaches us to deal with guilt is to avoid responsibility for our behavior. Why does this method not work in dealing with guilt?
4. “Everybody makes mistakes...nobody's perfect.” Describe a time when you tried to relativize your actions. How did you downplay what happened?
5. Probably the most common way of dealing with feelings of guilt, especially for Christians, is to make reparation (pay the price) for our wrong choices. What is the problem with this way of dealing with guilt?
6. Why are we so reluctant to involve God in matters where guilt is present?
7. Godly guilt causes us to repent (to make a 180 degree turn) and to seek His help through confession (acknowledging our wrongdoing). Why is it so important to repent and confess our sinful behavior?
8. True repentance also makes us change our behavior because guilt is a powerful motivator. Why is it mandatory to change the behavior not just be sorry for the behavior?

Conclusion

In dealing with feelings of guilt, we have two choices: we can pursue the world's way which is to take matters into our own hands. That approach is ineffective and “brings death” and enormous regret. Or, we can do it God's way and repent. We need to ask the Lord to forgive us for past wrongs we've committed and then pledge to do it His way in the future. That approach “leads to salvation,” real life, and “guilt-less” relationships.