

HOW TO OVERCOME GUILT

TWO ASPECTS TO GUILT

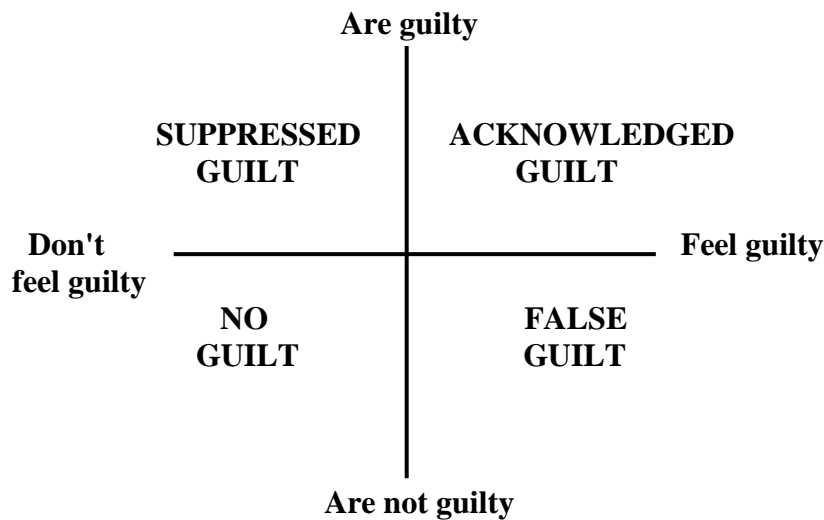
1. The state of guilt, that is, to be guilty

- **Accountable for breaking a law - intentionally or not (Leviticus 4:27)**
 - A social law (Numbers 5:6)
 - A statutory law (Romans 13:2)
 - A moral law (1 John 3:4)
- **Indebted to someone because of an offence**
 - Another person (I "owe you an apology")
 - A governing authority (Criminals "owe a debt to society")
 - God Himself (Our sin is "against God") Matthew 6:12

2. The experience of guilt, that is, to feel guilty

- **Accused by our conscience (eg. Psalm 51:3)**
 - When we blame ourselves (eg. Psalm 51:4)
 - When we experience a sense of condemnation (eg. Psalm 38:4)

FOUR POSSIBLE CONDITIONS



DEALING WITH SUPPRESSED GUILT

1. It stems from rationalising the offence

- **Excusing it as human weakness**
 - "We are all sinners"
- **Blaming it on others**
 - "If it wasn't for so-and-so" eg. Genesis 3:12-13
- **Justifying it as normal**
 - "Everybody does it" cf. Exodus 23:2

2. Suppression can't remove the guilt

- Unacknowledged guilt cannot be settled (Proverbs 28:13)
 - What is there to forgive?
- It saps our emotional and physical energy (Psalm 32:3-4)
 - It will continue to haunt us all our days (Proverbs 28:17)
- It eventually destroys the conscience (1 Timothy 4:2)
 - It ends up in depravity and wickedness (Romans 1:18,28)
- That is why secular psychology has no real answer
 - It only seeks to relieve the symptoms of guilt - and not deal with the actual guilt

3. The only answer is confession

- To acknowledge the guilt and deal with it (Psalm 32:5)

SETTLING ACKNOWLEDGED GUILT

1. The debt must be paid to clear the guilt

- Social debt: restitution and/or apology
 - A "public" offence requires a "public" payment (Acts 16:37)
- Statutory debt: a fine or a prison sentence
 - God's role for the State is to punish lawbreakers (Romans 13:4b)
- Moral debt: eternal death and separation from God (Romans 6:23)
 - A debt that Christ was willing to pay on our behalf (1 Peter 2:24)
 - NB: It is the *only* debt He paid - we have to pay the other debts ourselves (Leviticus 6:5-6)

2. Repentance must accompany the payment (Proverbs 28:13)

- Repeated social offences render the apology invalid
- Repeated crimes leads to permanent punishment
- Wilful sinning nullifies Christ's sacrifice (Hebrews 10:26)

3. Payment removes the state of guilt

- Acceptance removes the feeling of guilt

4. The offender must accept the settlement

- Social forgiveness cannot be enforced (Romans 12:18)
 - It is the offended party's choice to forgive or not to forgive
- Ex-convicts need no longer feel ashamed
 - Even though our society does not always forgive them
- We have to accept Christ's payment on our behalf (John 1:12)
 - If we reject His offer, we pay the debt ourselves (John 8:24)
- The purpose of confession is to accept His forgiveness, not obtain it
 - If we don't accept that the debt has been settled (and that requires a step of faith) we burden ourselves with false guilt

OVERCOMING FALSE GUILT

1. False guilt is a sense of condemnation without being guilty

- It eventually leads to :
 - Depression ("I'm such a failure")
 - Penance ("I will try harder next time")

2. Where does false guilt stem from?

- From a legalistic theology
 - Focusing on the do's and don'ts of the christian life
- From the wisdom of hindsight
 - Blaming ourselves unreasonably ("I should have.....")
- From Satan himself
 - He loves to accuse the believers – to attack our character (Revelation 12:10)
 - The Lord points out misbehaviour that leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10)

3. Why are some people more prone to false guilt than others?

- Over-critical parents
 - Constantly highlighting the children's imperfections
- An unwillingness to forgive ourselves
 - Inverted pride ("How could I have done that!")
- Not accepting the settlement of the debt (2 Corinthians 6:1)
 - They continue with efforts to appease the offended party (eg. Genesis 50:15-18)

4. Conquering the guilt feelings

- Determine whether a law was violated
 - If yes, acknowledge it, pay the debt AND accept the settlement
 - If no, analyse where the guilt feelings come from - write it down
- Did you break a man-made "law"?
 - Thank the Lord that you have been set free from rules (Galatians 5:1)
- Was it due to emotional manipulation by someone else?
 - Thank the Lord that only He can judge us (1 Corinthians 4:3-4)
- Was it due to your imperfection ?
 - Thank the Lord that you are still "under construction" (Philippians 1:6)
- Was it an accusation from Satan ?
 - Resist him and he will flee from you (James 4:7)

REFUSE TO BURDEN YOURSELF WITH FALSE GUILT !

RELISH YOUR GUILT-FREE CONDITION

- 1. Nobody can rightfully accuse/condemn a believer (Romans 8:1,33)**
- 2. We can approach God with confidence at any time (Hebrews 10:22)**
- 3. But we must maintain a godly lifestyle (Colossians 1:22-23)**
- 4. We must therefore keep short accounts with God (1 John 1:9)**

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