

HOW TO GET RID OF BAD GUILT

Maybe you've heard about the burglar who broke into a home one night. As he was packing up the big screen TV, he heard a voice saying, "Jesus is watching you!"

The burglar froze in his tracks, he shined the flashlight around the room and saw a parrot in the corner. He asked, "Did you say that?" The parrot said, "Yes! I'm just warning you!"

The Burglar said, "Warn me? What are you talking about? Who are you?" The parrot said, "My name is Moses." The Burglar laughed and said, "What kind of crazy people would name a parrot Moses?" *The parrot said, "The same kind of people that would name a 160 pound rottweiler 'Jesus.'"*

Ever do something you regretted later? That burglar ended up with regrets. Today's scripture is an excellent example of dealing with regrets! Turn to **John 8:1-11** and today we will hear one of the most amazing stories of transformation in the bible!

¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

*² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ **They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.***

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ "No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Many of you are somewhat familiar with this story of the woman caught in adultery. How many times have we heard it and have you ever gotten angry as you read about these self-righteous religious leaders degrading this woman, **not so much because** they wanted to punish her for her sin, but because they wanted to use her and find something to use against Jesus! **Think about it!**

- If Jesus said, “Let the woman go,” He would be ignoring the law and almost approve or encourage her sin of adultery.
- If Jesus said, “Stone her,” He’d give the Pharisees a reason to report him to the Romans, because only they could legally condemn a person to death. And... He’d ruin His reputation of being a friend of sinners.

How did Jesus answer these conniving hypocrites? It seems like an impossible situation, but He deals with it in an amazing way.

Notice Jesus never gets confused or stressed about how to handle a situation? Here, he just quietly bends down and writes in the sand, **almost** as if He isn’t even listening to these accusers. It’s fun watching Jesus making them push for an answer... then Jesus very calmly shows a wisdom that comes only from God.

But first... Imagine what happened before they pushed the woman into the temple? Maybe they dragged her through the city yelling out their accusations for everyone to hear.... or spit on her or hit her.

But whatever happened... whatever she went through that morning, she was completely disgraced, embarrassed and exposed in front of everyone - she was caught in the act and then used as a pawn in the Pharisee’s scheme to nail Jesus.

In today’s scripture, this woman **had committed an awful sin according to the Law.** She was an adulteress, a woman who ruins marriages and leaves innocent children injured. She was a home-wrecker... but Jesus gave her forgiveness and she had the opportunity to walk away without condemnation.

But what about us? Maybe we haven’t done anything like ruining marriages and leaving children in a broken home. *But what have we done that left us living with regret, shame and guilt from the bad choices? What mistakes we have made?*

Today, let's talk about experiencing the transformed life Jesus offers, the transformation you experience when you learn to start forgiving yourself and getting rid of resentment and regrets.

Too often I meet people who beat themselves up for something they did in their past by playing the "If only game." **You might know what I mean:**

- If only, I knew what I know today... or if only, I could erase the past.
- If only, I could forget or if only I could start over.
- If only I could forgive myself.

Everybody has regrets because nobody's perfect; we say foolish things, make bad decisions and hurt other people and ourselves.

When you do something against your conscious, you have regrets. ***But God never meant for you to live that way.*** In the Psalms (32:1) God told us, "*Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven whose sins are covered;*" or you could say, "**Happy is the person who doesn't have any regrets.**"

Let's do three things today – let's talk about:

Regrets and what we *usually* do with them.

Regrets, what we *should* do with them.

And regrets, what ***God wants*** to do with them.

1. REGRETS, WHAT DO WE NORMALLY DO WITH THEM

A. We try to bury them.

You know the phrase, "You've got to bury the past." Well... that doesn't work. Like a B-horror movie where the Stalker is killed, but keeps returning to life. **The problem with regrets - - you can bury them, but they always resurrect themselves and usually at the most inopportune time.** You can't bury the past, you can only neutralize the sting.

We all have blind spots, secret regrets and it's not easy to deny or bury them.

- **How do we *try* to bury our regrets?**

We try to minimize them by saying, "No big deal; it's OK."

But if it was, then why do we remember it and it bothers you so much?

We rationalize them by saying, "Everybody else is doing it." But that doesn't do doesn't matter to our conscious.

We compare ourselves to someone who we think is less perfect than us, but that doesn't get rid of the regrets. When we do that; *it's just a smoke screen.*

We compromise. You do something you know is wrong & you feel guilty, so what do you do? You just say it's not wrong.

Once I read a fortune cookie that read, "*Commit a sin twice and it will not seem a sin to you.*" That's deep! The 5th time is always easier than the first. *If you do something enough your conscious gets hardened.*

B. We beat ourselves up.

We cry, "Why did I do that!" It's part of our sinful nature to try to pay for our regrets. Psalm 38:4-8 David said "*I'm drowning in the flood of my sin and they're a burden too heavy to bear. Because I've been foolish, I'm utterly worn out and crushed. My heart is troubled.*" David had just committed adultery & murder & then he tried to pay for it by beating himself up saying -I'm no good. We instinctively try to pay for our own guilt.

We beat ourselves us in a lot of different ways:

- You know you did something wrong, you make yourself **sick** by dwelling on it until your sick to your stomach.
- There's **Depression**, I did wrong and focus on the regret until I'm depressed.
- We set ourselves up for **failure** too. You say, "I don't deserve to succeed?" That's saying, "I'm guilty, therefore I'll fail."
- Then there's the ultimate form of self-punishment - **suicide**.
- Why? All because people feel condemned.

That's the problem with beating yourself us! You never know when to quit and spend the rest of your life trying pay of the regret. *Your conscious doesn't know when you've done enough. But there's a better way to handle regret.*

2. REGRETS: WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

The Bible makes it very clear and specific as to how to get off the guilt trip. God never meant for us to live under a load of guilt, so what do you do?

A. Admit your guilt.

David says in Psalm 51:3 "*I recognize my faults. I'm conscious of my sin.*" And then in Psalm 32:5 "*I decided to confess them to You and You forgave all my sins.*" This is the most painful step in getting rid of our regrets.

We don't like to accept responsibility and say, "I was wrong."

But when you admit it, you never shock or surprise God.

God already knows it happened, He just wants you to admit it.

Unfortunately, when we confess, we like to bargain with God and say, "God, if You'll just forgive me, I'll never do it again. I promise! I'll go to church every Sunday, tithed 50% of my income & read the Bible every day." *You don't have to bargain with God, just admit and confess it. Say, "God, I'm wrong, those things I did, that I regret, they were wrong."*

B. Accept God's forgiveness.

So many people confess - but never get to step two. **Accept God's forgiveness.** They're continually confessing their sins and still don't feel forgiven – all because they didn't accept God's forgiveness. That's why God told us in Romans 8:1 "*There is no condemnation for those who live in Christ Jesus.*"

Would you like to live without condemnation? Guilt free? Without regrets? Well, according to God, when you commit yourself to Christ, and you say "God, take all my life, the good, the bad, the ugly, take it all, God wipes the slate clean.

One of the most important words in the Bible is "justified." The Bible says Jesus Christ died for us so we can be justified. **This simply means "just as if I'd never sinned." God starts all over. He cleans the slate.**

So how does God forgive?

God forgives instantly. You have it the moment you ask. That's the exact opposite of the way we tend to forgive, we like to make people suffer awhile. Admit it! We want people to grovel and beg. **But that's not how God forgives.** God forgives instantly & is more ready to forgive than we are to ask for forgiveness. **All we have to do is admit our guilt & accept God's forgiveness.**

C. Forgive yourself and move on.

For many, the hardest step is to forgive themselves and focus on the future. In Isaiah 43:18-19 God tells us, *"The Lord says, 'Don't cling to the events of the past or dwell on what happened long ago. Watch for the new thing I'm going to do.'"*

In other words, don't focus on everything that happened in the past; let it go & focus on the future. Watch how God is going to bless you!" It's never too late to start over. **Failure is never final unless you let it be.** The Bible says *"Though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again."*

God loves to give 2nd, 3rd, 50th chances. That's God's nature – THAT'S GRACE. **Your past is past, it's finished. So forget it.** We've looked at what we usually do with our regrets and what we ought to do with our regrets.

SO WHAT DOES GOD WANT TO DO WITH OUR REGRETS? 2 things:

1. God wants to clean our conscious.

Isaiah 1:18 *"Let's talk it over, says the Lord. 'No matter how deep the stain of your sin, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow.'"*

Nothing can make that claim - but God! God wants to clean your conscious and your memory, set you free from regrets so you can live.

The problem is, we don't believe we're really forgiven!

For Christians – there's no condemnation. God says in Jeremiah 31:34 *"I will remember your sins no more."* God chooses to forget your sin when you confess it to Him. That's good news! Because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for all your sins on the cross!

2. Next, God wants to change your character.

God loves you just the way you are, but loves you too much to let you stay that way. God wants to help you grow and become the person you can be. 2 Corinthians 5:17 *"When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same anymore. A new life has begun."* (Living Bible). That's a great verse.

Closing prayer.