

5 Ways to Avoid Guilt and Condemnation

On Aug. 22, 1949, *Time* magazine reported on the rising popularity of a beautiful 17-year-old actress whose career to that date had involved her playing roles of youthful innocence.

The interview revealed her inner world as far different from the screen images she had portrayed. "She pretends to no more learning than she needs," wrote *Time*, "reads little besides movie magazines, hates school, loves ice cream sodas, convertibles, swimming pools and admires big strong men."

Asked about her future in movies, she gasped excitedly, "What I'd really like to play is a monster—a hellion."

As her life evolved, she went from one big strong man to another and had opportunity to play the hellion role she coveted as a teen. Her name? Elizabeth Taylor.

Life sometimes does give you what you ask for.

In Psalm 101, David sets forth wonderful ideals by which he purposed to live.

The psalm forces this question upon us personally: "*Am I living in the humdrum of the day-to-day without good aspirations for my conduct or with a clean heart filled with noble goals?*"

Absence of Guilt

When you live rightly, you have inner freedom. God puts a song in your heart. When you act outside God's will, you substitute self-fulfillment for true love, and justify wrong conduct by saying, "I'm the exception." But, when you walk in the

sunlight of God's will, you can sing unhindered praise to the God of love and justice (v. 1).

When Isaiah focused upon God in His holy temple, the Lord immediately drew Isaiah's attention to his own personal standard of conduct (Is. 6). The same movement occurs in this psalm—serving a moral God forces us to consider our own code of behavior: “I will be careful to lead a blameless life” (v. 2).

Self-Inventory for a Blameless Life

David's desire to live nobly includes specific pinpoint applications to the everyday. We do poorly if we relegate our spiritual life to broad generalizations rather than focusing on exact instances of attitude and conduct.

1. “In my [own] house.” Let's start by asking, “What kind of person will I be in my own house?” David answers: “I will walk in my house with blameless heart” (v. 2).

Your real identity is found not in public, but in your own home. Who are you there? Are you considerate, cheerful, faithful, seeking to serve rather than being served, loving rather than waiting to be loved?

2. “Before my eyes.” David purposes to set no “vile thing” before his eyes (v. 3). How about you? What magazines, books, movies, Internet material or live events do you permit into your field of vision? Choose carefully what you look at lest your walk with God becomes diluted. If you let the eye-gate fall into disrepair, the enemy will storm your life and wreak havoc on the inside.

3. “Deeds of faithless men I hate.” As Christians we are uncomfortable with the word “hate.” After all, Jesus taught us to love. However, this psalm calls us not to hate people—just “the deeds of faithless men” (v. 3).

Who are faithless people? I saw this sign recently on a restaurant board: "He was as good as his word, and his word wasn't any good." How about you?

4. "Far from me." David not only disavows the deeds of the faithless, he pledges to keep far away from people with a perverse heart. And who are they? Those whose thinking is so twisted they call evil good and good evil. They say, "The end justifies the means." You'll stay a thousand miles away from such attitudes if you make decisions from this question: What would Jesus do?

5. "Slanders ... put to silence." What kind of speech do you permit in your presence? David acted to protect the character of others by not allowing gossip or smears to be spoken when he was in the room. He vowed not to get caught up in the same attitudes as the proud (v. 5). Rather he purposed to keep as his closest associates those whose lives were worthy of imitation (v. 6).

You are known by the company you keep—don't develop a tolerance for liars (v. 7).

Making Resolute Choices

Verse 8 strikes a modern audience as intolerant behavior. David, however, had the responsibility of governing: punishing evildoers and rewarding those who do good (see Rom. 13:1–7). You may not run the government, but God lets you make decisions affecting yourself and others.

Whom have you allowed into your life today? Have you kept a sensitive heart so you can recognize what or who is wicked? Are you willing to make difficult choices to remove yourself from situations or persons that bring harm to your walk with God?

In this psalm David stated the best of intentions. With Bathsheba and Uriah, he failed catastrophically. But he did

not permit that failure to finish him. He repented and made a fresh start in pursuing noble ideals. Indeed, as someone has said, if you reach for the stars you may not get there; but at least you won't end up with a handful of mud.

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