

Surprising Scriptural Encouragement for Parents Saddled With Guilt

Your child is in jail. They have an eating disorder. They cut and slash their flesh, burn themselves and break bones. They're addicted to porn, sex, drugs or alcohol. They're in a relationship with the same sex. They suffer from depression, bipolar, schizophrenia, PTSD or an anxiety disorder. They've attempted suicide. You can't understand how you got here. How could this happen? Where did you go wrong?

I'm a mom who has asked those questions. and I have a message for you. You need to hear this. Please keep reading. I think you'll be glad you did.

You tried so hard: to be a good parent, to do the right things, to give your son or daughter (stepchild or grandchild) everything, to raise a healthy, thriving adult—now this. Your emotional pain defies description. And you feel guilty. So terribly, horribly guilty.

Some may have inferred that your child's troubles are somehow your fault.

"Did you discipline them enough?"

"Were you too harsh?"

"Maybe you should've done_____, then _____ would not have happened."

Their well-meaning words cut like a knife to the heart. Worse yet, you've begun to doubt yourself, *Could it be true? Are they right? Are my child's troubles somehow my fault?*

Please listen closely. I want you to hear something vitally

important.

Unless you encouraged your child's behaviors or pushed them into their current situation with your blessing, *it's not your fault*. Did you hear that?

Do these things instead:

Refuse the guilt. Don't give in to it.

Don't believe the lie that their troubles are the result of something you did or didn't do.

Stop berating yourself.

Don't let the if-only's harass you. Throw a big rock at them and walk away. The Rock I speak of is Jesus. Send Him to the door when guilt comes knocking. Bring His truth to contradict every accusation the enemy screams in your head.

Exchange God's Truth for Satan's Lies

I understand. Like you, I struggled with guilt. I believed Satan's lies until . . .

I met another parent who had walked this journey much longer than I had. He reminded me of something I needed to hear and would need to remember for years to come. His words still have a huge impact. This is the essence of what he said:

Stop feeling guilty about your child because God, the only perfect parent who never made any mistakes, also has children who mess up and do terrible things. Look what happened to Adam and Eve. Was their behavior God's fault? Not at all! Our parenting skills can't begin to compare with God's, so if the all-powerful God of the universe ended up with children who hurt and disappoint Him, who are we to think we deserve any better?

You probably want to think about this for a while. It'll take

time for these words sink into your heart and mind until you can believe they're really true. Where you feel the need, forgive yourself and accept God's forgiveness. But please know that He doesn't blame you for your child's choices. He looks on you with compassion and empathy. As a fellow hurting parent, He understands the heaviness you carry. I'm convinced He doesn't want you to add more to the weight you already bear.

The following Scripture gives me peace when I start to blame myself. Its truth sheds light on what we can all do when we have a guilt attack: "For we have not strength enough to stand before this great army that is coming against us. And we do not know what we should do, but our eyes are on You" (2 Chron. 20:12). Amen!

Prayer: God of abundant understanding, when guilt weighs heavy on our hearts, remind us what is true. Open our ears to Your comforting voice. Help us exchange the lies we've believed with Your truth. That's the best thing we can do. {eoa}

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