

What God Wants You to Do With Your Regrets

How often do you play the “If only” game?

- If only I could do it over again.
- If only I had listened sooner.
- If only I could erase the past.
- If only I could forgive myself.

The thing to remember is that no one is perfect. We all have regrets. We’ve all made bad choices and said foolish things. We’ve all wasted time and hurt ourselves and others. So how do you release your regrets? In my experience as a pastor, I’ve seen several strategies we tend to use that simply do not work:

- **You try to bury your past.** Burying the past will never help you get past your regrets. You can try to minimize (“It wasn’t a big deal”), rationalize (“Everyone does it”) and compromise (lower your standards), but your regrets are still there, and if unresolved, they’ll keep coming back to haunt you like a creature in a horror movie.
- **We blame others.** This tactic is as old as Adam and Eve. When Adam sinned, he took it like a man: he blamed his wife. We use blame to balance our guilt.
- **We beat ourselves up.** We try to pay for our guilt unconsciously through illness, depression, setting ourselves up for failure and other forms of self-punishment. But the problem with beating yourself up is that your conscience never knows when to stop. Some people spend their entire lives in self-condemnation.

What does God want you to do with your regrets instead?

- **Admit your guilt.** Own up to it. Don’t make excuses. “A

man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance” (Prov. 28:13 TLB).

- **Accept Christ’s forgiveness.** He’s waiting to clean your slate. Ask him to clear your conscience. Romans 8:1a says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- **Forgive yourself and focus on the future.** “Do not remember the former things nor consider the things of old. See, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not be aware of it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert” (Is. 43:18-19).

Talk It Over

- Do you tend to minimize, rationalize or compromise your regrets?
- Is it possible to focus on the future without releasing your regrets? Why or why not?
- Why would a refusal to admit your mistakes keep you from being successful (Prov. 28:13)?

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