

Joyce Meyer Shows You How to Press Past Guilt and Shame

How do you feel about yourself? Do you waste time feeling guilty about things in the past that you can't change?

I used to live with a constant, underlying sense of guilt. Because I was sexually abused by my father during my childhood, I grew up feeling that something must be wrong with me for him to want to do the things he did to me. This damage in my soul caused me to become ashamed of myself.

Guilt and shame are dangerous. Because when you live this way, you aren't just ashamed of something you've done or that's been done to you, you're ashamed of yourself. And it poisons everything else in your life.

But Romans 8:1 (AMP) says, "There is now no condemnation [no guilty verdict, no punishment] for those who are in Christ Jesus [who believe in Him as personal Lord and Savior]." This means it is not God's will for us to live with guilt and shame every day of our lives!

Facing the Truth That Led Me to Freedom

Giving up guilt and shame was not easy for me. I had a really hard time believing that God loved me and that He wanted me to love myself. I don't mean that He wanted me to love myself in a selfish, self-centered, prideful way, but I had to accept God's love for me and love myself in a healthy way before I could love others.

I came to realize that most of the problems I had—the personality issues and unhealthy relationships—stemmed from the fact that I was ashamed of myself. The truth is when you don't like yourself, it's very difficult to get along with anyone else.

It was a life-changing revelation when God showed me that it was religion—not relationship with Christ—that makes us believe that it's right or good to feel bad about ourselves ... to beat ourselves up for our mistakes and weaknesses.

God doesn't want us to live under the burden of guilt and condemnation because all this does is make us believe that we need to pay for our sin. And Jesus has already paid for it!

The Path to Move Forward

Second Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" And verse 21 says that "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

When we come to God and confess our sin, asking Him to forgive us, we become new creations in Him because of what Jesus has done. Jesus, who was perfect and never sinned, took the punishment for our sin, so we could be made right with God and have a personal relationship with Him.

So when we refuse to give up guilt and shame by believing in what He's done for us, we're essentially saying, "Jesus, I don't think You did a good enough job, so I need to add my effort to try and make up for the mistakes I've made and get over this guilt." Our way of "paying" is feeling miserable and guilty.

The tragedy is, as long as we live this way, we will never enjoy the freedom we can have in Christ of being forgiven of our sin, and enjoy the good life He came to give us (John 10:10).

The Power to Change

The key to pressing past guilt and shame was discovering the power in God's Word to overcome it. Eventually, as I spent

time in prayer and Bible study, the truth renewed my mind and set me free (Rom. 12:2, John 8:32).

I want to encourage you to read the Scriptures I've shared in this teaching. Pray and ask God to help you agree with what He says more than how you feel or what you think about yourself based on your past. Study verses about His love for you, like John 3:16-17 and 1 John 4:8-16. Confess what God says about you: He loves you; He forgives you; He created you to be a unique, special, one-of-a-kind individual; and He has a wonderful plan for your life! (See Ps. 139:13-14, Jer. 29:11, Eph. 2:8-10.)

If you will embrace who you are as a new creation in Christ and do your best each day to grow in your faith in God by studying His Word and seeking Him in prayer, you will make progress in becoming everything He made you to be. You will be free from guilt and shame ... and have the life Jesus died to give you! {eo}

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