

Is your guilt indicator light on?

Wow! This year is going by so quickly. Maybe it is because I just celebrated one of those milestone birthdays. They are such a reminder that each and every day is a gift or should I say a “present.”

Sadly for some, there are mindsets which threaten to steal “presents.” Guilt or regret, low self-worth, worry, fear, and exhaustion are the main culprits. For today, let’s focus on the thief known as “guilt or regret.”

Woulda, coulda, shoulda’s are a waste of time unless they serve as a marker to re-evaluate and make plans for the future. It is common for me to counsel with clients who are greatly hampered by guilt. Some live with “false guilt” of sorts while others suffer believing that their lives are beyond redemption. Either extreme sets its victims up for great pain and emotional turmoil.

Some of the women I counsel almost intuitively “apologize for living.” They are burdened by piles of regret and often unrealistic expectations. They have accepted the belief that if something is wrong then it must surely be their fault since they are supposed to after all be “Superwomen!”

In the other category I find individuals who have truly made some serious mistakes and carry the guilt of secret sins. Some have succumbed to the world of drug, alcohol, and gambling addictions. Many have found themselves in abusive unhealthy relationships. Others have made poor financial and educational decisions and some have even committed crimes.

Sadly these individuals falsely believe that there is no way the Lord can forgive them so they are forever doomed. They also believe that others cannot forgive them so they surely must not forgive themselves.

In counseling I remind them that God does make a way to be forgiven.¹ John 1:9 New Living Translation (NLT) 9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

Many times I explain to my clients that we are hard wired to acknowledge guilt for a wrong doing just as an engine light acknowledges engine problems. We certainly don’t want that light to keep coming on after the problem is fixed though. Just like in our cars, there is no good purpose for a guilt indicator light in our hearts once we have dealt with the issue.

Frequently 12 step programs offer great tools for dealing with guilt. Sites such as www.12step.org offer excellent resources.

In these precious spring days ahead I hope you’ll lay down the guilt and walk in the freshness of spring. A life cleansed of guilt and regret is not simply a religious exercise. It is God’s design for true emotional healing.

It is time to throw the guilt and regret away so that you may begin to enjoy the rest of your journey. You are allowed to have fun!

Speaking of fun.....I hope I get to see you this weekend at the Mommy and Me Fair on Saturday, May 11th at Wheeling Jesuit University from 10-2 p.m. This will be a wonderful time to enjoy some pampering, learn new ideas, and find some great resources all while supporting the Gabriel Project fundraiser.