

DEALING WITH FEELINGS OF GUILT

A while ago I was feeling very guilty about how I had treated someone. And even though I had told this person how badly I felt about it and asked for forgiveness, the feeling of guilt would not go away. I was comforted when I read David's words in Psalm 51:17:

*My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.*

Yes, I thought to myself, my heart is broken and contrite (meaning humbly and thoroughly penitent). But I interpreted "contrite" to mean feeling guilty. So that must mean that God is pleased. If God approved of my feelings of guilt, why on earth would I feel so bad?

I discussed it with my pastor. He said:

"God works through our brokenness - and we can be broken in spirit over many things, some of which are not necessarily our doing but what we see around us. Guilt on the other hand tends to paralyze us. Which is why we need to check the source of our guilt. Sometimes our guilt is the result of the accusations of the evil one.

"In God's eyes we are clear and clean if we confess our sins and receive his forgiveness. God is okay with our brokenness but not necessarily with our living with guilt."

- Have you ever felt broken and contrite about something you had done wrong?
- Guilty?
- What did you do about it?

From what I've discovered in my studies, feelings of guilt are common for everyone, but amongst people who live with depression, anxiety or bipolar disorders perhaps more so. It's all part of the negative thinking we so often experience.

Joyce Meyer said, *"...It's good to have a healthy grief about my mistakes but instead of just feeling bad about it, I come to God, admit what I did was wrong, receive His forgiveness, and then move on."*

- Are you able to do that? If not, what stands in your way?

Don't live by your feelings if they don't line up with what God's word has to say. We can trust God to forgive us.

*Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.* Psalm 51:12