



How Can We Overcome Crushing Guilt?

Psalm 32:5: (NASB) *I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.*

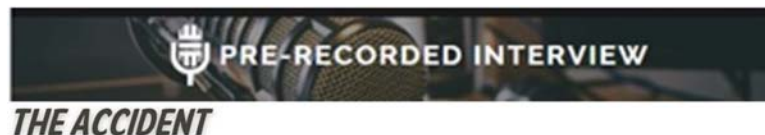


What are we supposed to do? What do we do when we have done something, be it purposefully or by accident that causes someone excessive harm, loss or even tragedy? How do we go on? How do we face our family or those we have hurt? How do we live with ourselves? Crushing guilt can bring us into a place of dark and misery-ridden hopelessness. It can make our life feel joyless and pointless. The good news? As Christians, we have access to God through Jesus. While they will not miraculously lift us out of the mire of crushing guilt, they will, if we let them, give us direction,

strength and hope. We just need to be willing to do the necessary work of faith. How do we get there from here? We will start with the story of someone who has been here and is now walking this difficult road to acceptance.

Jennifer Eikenhorst is the host of *Accidental Hope* podcast. She has been married to her high school sweetheart for 20 years and has four children ages 9 through 18. Jennifer is a middle school math intervention teacher working with struggling students. After being involved with a fatal accident in 2016, Jennifer started her podcast to help share hope and healing found in Jesus for others involved with similar traumas. For our listeners who want to learn more, go to www.accidentalthope.com.

Rick was a guest on Jennifer's podcast last year for a two-part series and learned about her struggle. She has been working through this tragedy for a long time and we have a deep appreciation for how far she has come.



Rick: I am here with Jennifer Eikenhorst from *Accidental Hope*, her own podcast that is now in its third season. Our podcast today is the question, how can we overcome crushing guilt? Jennifer, what is your life experience that brought you face-to-face with crushing guilt?

Jennifer: You know, we all have little experiences as we're growing, things we feel guilty about and that we would give to the Lord and we would work through and ask for forgiveness, but the moment or experience that I would say changed everything - it was when I had an accident in 2016. It was just a normal day, and I did everything to the best of my ability in following the law, but on a Tuesday on October 4th, I had an accident with a motorcyclist, and I pulled out in front of him. He didn't have enough time to react or respond, and he hit the backside of my car. That accident ultimately resulted in his death, so my crushing guilt is that I was involved in an accident that caused a fatality to a father, a veteran, and an innocent person.



I didn't really know how to function or survive or process that type of guilt, and unfortunately there just weren't a lot of resources for me. There wasn't anyone that was willing to have a sermon about this. There wasn't a book about this.

Even though she has told this story many times for almost five years, it is difficult for her to look back and recount the story of the death she caused.

The Old and New Testament words for "guilt" are very focused on legal applications and not feelings:

Guilt (Old Testament): Strongs #816 *'ashem*; to be guilty; by implication to be punished or perish

Guilt (New Testament): Strongs #1777 *enochos*; liable to (a condition, penalty or imputation)

When we talk about "feeling guilty" we are also talking about feelings of shame.

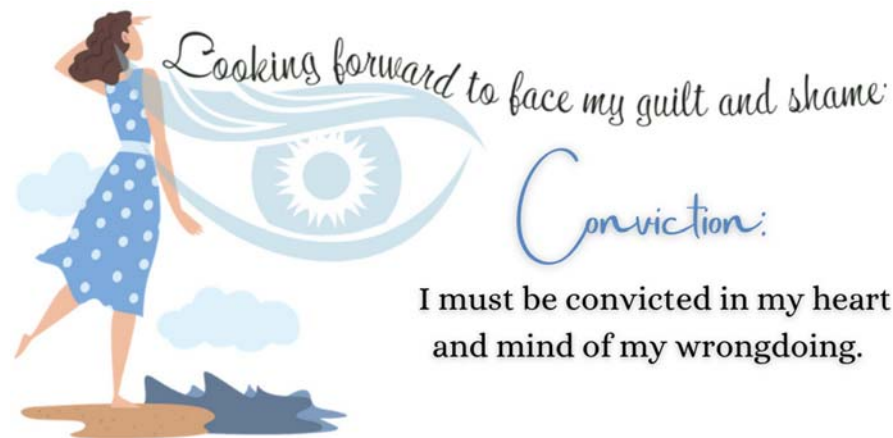
Shame (Old Testament): Strongs #7036 *qalon*; disgrace

Shame (New Testament): Strongs #152 *aischune*; shame or disgrace (abstractly or concretely)

Both need to be addressed and put into a context of growth and not destruction.

The path to understanding guilt and shame and making sure they serve a godly purpose pass through many developmental phases. Each phase is meant to help us look forward as we struggle.

Sometimes we have guilt from an accident like Jennifer's experience and sometimes we have guilt because of what we did purposefully. A good example of that, unfortunately, is King David and some of his awful decisions.



After King David confronted his sin with Bathsheba, he began to look forward:

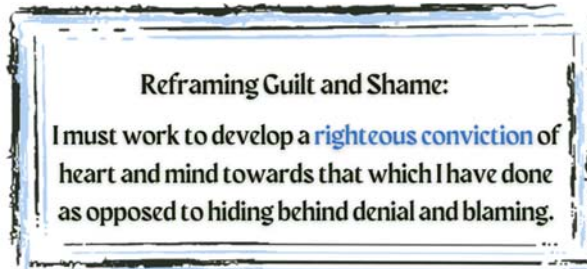
Psalms 51:1-3: (NASB) ¹Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.



Psalm 51 was written by David as a reflection of the horror of what he had done so he could learn to deal with it. It is a heartfelt expression of what he was going through. He starts out just asking for grace, *be gracious to me, O God, because Your loving-kindness is so great.*

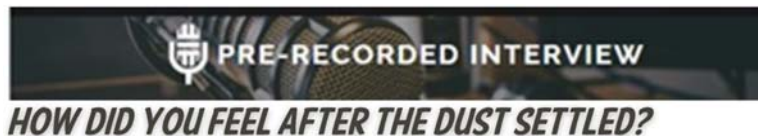


Each time we talk about guilt and shame we need to reframe it so we can see it in a good perspective.



Why are denial and blaming the first reactions we go to? It only compounds our shame. Why not be honest about our sins and take steps to change and seek forgiveness?

We might try to rationalize our guilt with an excuse - we make up a more acceptable reason for why we are doing something because our flesh hates feeling guilty. We must be honest about our real motives. This can be difficult.



Jennifer: There is absolute psychological shock. If you've ever experienced a traumatic event that causes your nervous system just to shake, that's the type of situation we're talking about here. I'm going to reference that it is kind of like a contraction in labor. It comes in waves. Just accepting this new reality, I was deeply grieved for a stranger, so therefore, I became a stranger in my own home. When you have an accident where it involves a family member - and that is certainly a whole other dynamic of accidental death when the person that dies is also a family member - there are layers of other grief, as I've heard from other people who have caused the death of their own child or spouse.



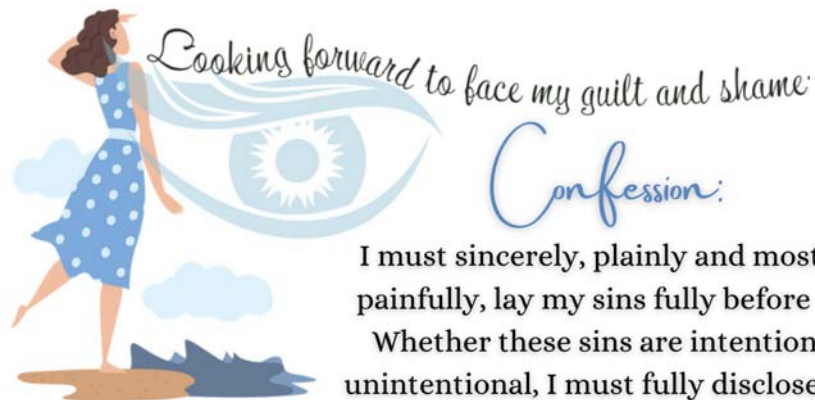
In my situation, I was deeply grieved like I lost a spouse or a child, and I didn't understand that part either, and so therefore my children and my husband were trying to understand me. I was crying all the time. I didn't understand the will to live, didn't know how to go on. It was confusing realizing, oh, I just woke up, but he didn't wake up. And then it would come in like, my children still need me, but his children don't have the choice. And then you have the legal side of it where even though I was not distracted that night, there has to be an investigation just to uphold the law. And I still did not have the right-of-way, so I take responsibility. There are just so many things happening at one time, and so the dust settled in phases.

But I will tell you that when I would see an answer to prayer, despite my brokenness and despite we're in this mess, I would be like, "Oh wow, wait a minute. God just answered that prayer, and we're still in the middle of all this," and it would give me hope. That would give me that next day to fight for the next day.



When we talk about crushed to dust, my mental, emotional, spiritual, and even physical and financial, everything was crushed. I didn't know how to be a wife for a while. I didn't know how to be a mother for a while or a daughter. Really, the only thing I continued to do, oddly enough, was teach my classes. It kind of shut out the world where I could return to something that happened before the accident, and I would teach my middle-schoolers and put on a brave face and pretend like I was still just that middle-school math teacher that had a perfectly clean driving record and never hurt anyone.

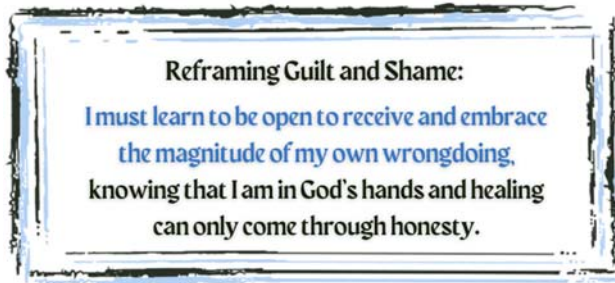
So much worked around pretending everything was okay when inside she was broken up and forgot how to function because something she did destroyed the life of someone else. That is crushing guilt. We can learn how to look forward.



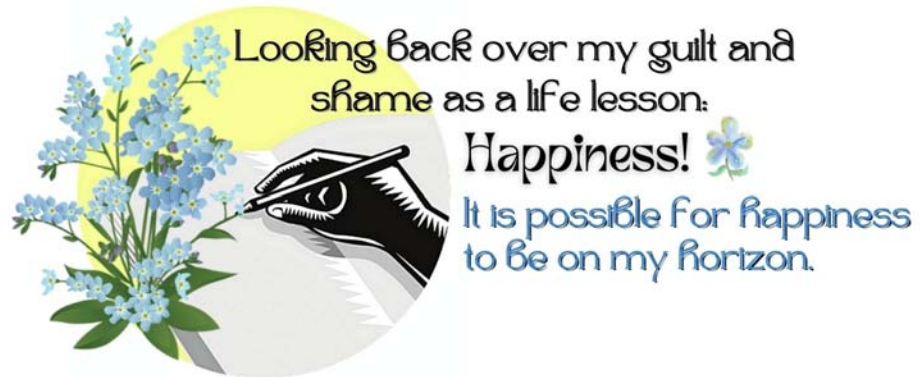
Psalms 51:4-5: (NASB) ⁴*Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.* ⁵*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.*

David realized he hurt people, but it was really against God that he had sinned.

God spoke to David through Nathan the prophet. *Thou art the man!* (2 Samuel 12:7) David had to look forward.

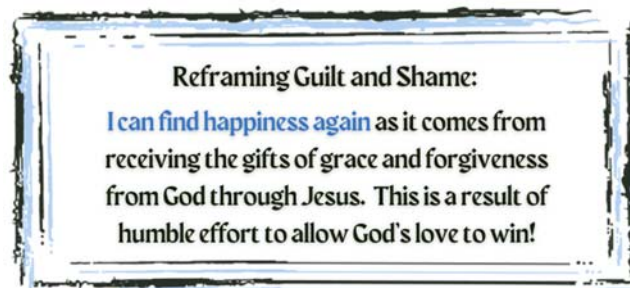


Looking forward through the fog and emotion of coping with crushing guilt is a hard and draining task. To help with this we want to also focus on the victory that comes from arriving at a point of acceptance and peace. As we use [Psalm 51](#) to look forward, we will also use [Psalm 32](#) to look back over the journey. [Psalm 32](#) was written about the same sinful period of David's life. It is a look back at David's sin, after he had faced it and fully given it to God. This teaches us the growth value that guilt and shame can have once they are managed. It is all now a memory of a valued learning experience!



[Psalms 32:1-2](#): (NASB) *¹How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! ²How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!*

By God's grace, there can be happiness.



This is hard but it can be done!

It is so important to have the assurance that we can find relief and peace after being crushed by guilt.



What happens when I ask for forgiveness, but I do not feel forgiven? Do I keep asking or just give up?

Do not just give up. With wrongdoing - intentional or not - that leads to crushing guilt, we need to grasp the fact that time is a necessary companion to healing. The shock of our experiences and the fallout of the results are only eased by the slow and steady process of intentional faith, trust and effort towards God.

This idea of asking but not feeling forgiven does not mean we stop. It takes time, especially when we are dealing with difficult circumstances.



DID YOU GIVE UP ON GOD?

Jennifer: I didn't, I didn't. I wrestled. I mean, I was angry with the Lord. When the man that was in my accident, his name was David, I prayed without ceasing for 48 hours straight where I denied food, tried to deny water, and I did nothing but pray continuously for this man for a supernatural healing while he was in the hospital. I knew. I stood on, God's going to do this miracle! I just know it! I just know it, and he'll eventually forgive me for pulling out in front of him and it will be just this beautiful story. And I was just in my sadness, but there was a part of me that knew, I think, that it was going to turn out the way that it did. So, I wrestled with God and when it was final, I was angry. But I was still talking to God.

How many times have we wanted to jump in our time machines to go back in time to just redo a few seconds that would make everything right again? For Jennifer, it was a split second. She needed to wrestle and work through the pain as part of the healing process.



Psalms 51:6-8: (NASB) ⁶*Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.* ⁷*Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* ⁸*Make me to hear joy and gladness, let the bones which You have broken rejoice.*

Truth in the innermost being - this inward truth concept appears only here and in **Job 38:36**. David realized he lacked a purity of heart, a purity of motive, and prayed for help. This takes humility.

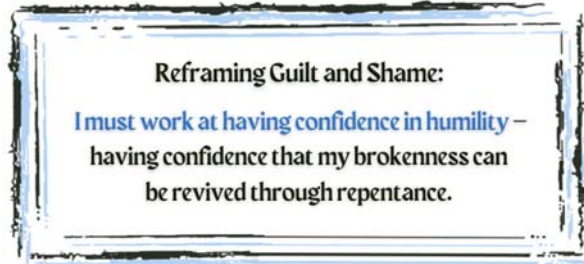


David asked God to purify him with hyssop. In the Law, hyssop was used in cleansing from leprosy. The contrite heart focuses on whatever it takes to be made whole again. It is more than just feeling bad, it is wanting to be made clean again.

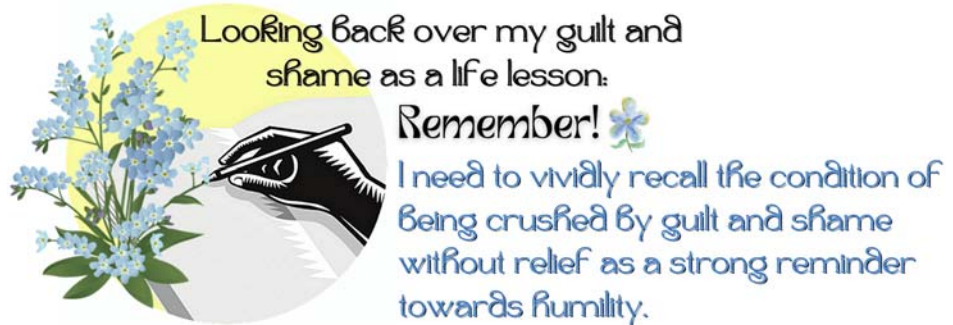
Jesus is our source of true healing, especially healing of a broken and contrite heart:

Luke 4:18: (KJV) *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.*

Our hearts can break for many reasons including causing someone great harm. Jesus came to heal such things, but we must let him.



We say we have confidence that God will provide. We have confidence in God's overrulings. We have confidence in God's promises. So then, why do we lack confidence in God's forgiveness of us? Why is that the thing that we are always questioning, always wondering about, always going back to? If we have confidence in humility, we can have confidence in forgiveness.



Use the struggle to move forward.

Psalms 32:3-4: (NASB) *³When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.*

We talked about making excuses, but another way we might act when guilty is to continue doing what is wrong. We know it is wrong, but we cannot help ourselves to stop. The pleasure or comfort we gain is greater than our determination to stop. This might be addictive sins like alcohol, improper sexual desires or overeating. We might hate ourselves for it; it is a frustrating way to live. Do not ignore your conscience. Conviction, confession and a contrite heart is where we need to start.

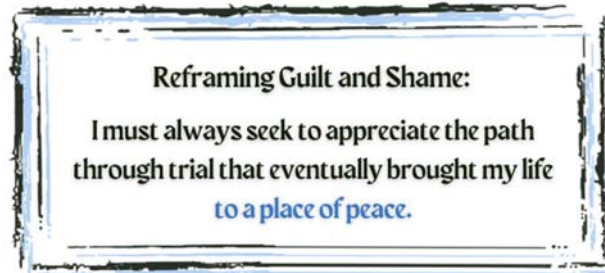


When it comes to guilt and shame, a big problem within Christianity is pornography. Here are just a few statistics from research studies:

(Source: The Barna Group and Covenant Eyes)

- 68 percent of church-going men and over 50 percent of pastors view porn on a regular basis.
- Of young Christian adults 18-24 years old, 76 percent actively search for porn.
- 57 percent of pastors say porn addiction is the most damaging issue in their congregation.

If we stay in the guilt and shame, we will waste away. We want to be revived.



HOW DID YOU ACCEPT APPROPRIATE RESPONSIBILITY?

Jennifer: Well, I don't know in the exact moment where it changed. I think it slowly changed, but I went through a rabbit hole, I really did go down to what I would consider rock bottom where I wasn't sure I wanted to live. I couldn't imagine this much pain. I was getting help. I was seeing a licensed Christian counselor, talking to my doctors, and pretty much keeping it a secret from my immediate family as much as possible, although I think they suspected everything. I didn't want to cause them more pain. I'm going to say I took on too much responsibility to an unhealthy level almost immediately. As soon as he passed away, I felt immediate hate, whether it was imagined or real. There were real attacks, persecutions from people who knew the victim, and that's okay. I want to just say, they were processing their own grief. There is no judgment on that.

But with that, I took on something that was unhealthy. I wanted them to hate me. I took on that almost like self-punishment. I felt my own self-hate, and I wanted everyone to hate me and blame me and I even said to God, "I would rather them hate me than hate You." Even though I was angry with the Lord, I didn't want to be the person that caused them to turn away from God in this situation. No person can take that; we aren't built to carry that kind of burden. He has shoulders big enough to handle that. I'm not built for that kind of weight, but I thought that was right for a little while. And that was the enemy's lie. I allowed myself to be crushed for a while.

Working with my counselor and therapist, I realized I don't have that much control, Rick. I'm one person. There were a million little moments...my choices, his choices, all these little things that had to happen to come to that one moment in time. And so, then I had to process, I really don't have that



much power, but God was still in control that night. He could have supernaturally moved that split-second decision; He could have landed him in the grass instead of the road. I had to kind of go, at the end of the day, do I trust the Lord or not?

Punishing ourselves for our wrongdoing is not the right thinking. God can bring the appropriate amount of chastisement if we leave ourselves in His hands. If anyone had a reason to inflict punishment on himself, it was the Apostle Paul, but even he said in 1 Corinthians 4:3, *I judge not mine own self*. He left the judgment to God.

(Source: *Listening to Shame*, Brene Brown, TED Talk) Shame drives two big tapes - "never good enough" and "who do you think you are." Guilt is a focus on behavior and shame is a focus on self. Guilt is "I did something bad." Shame is "I am bad." "Sorry I made a mistake" is guilt; "Sorry, I am a mistake" is shame. Shame is highly correlated with addiction, depression, violence, etc., and guilt is inversely correlated.

Guilt is more of the legalistic perspective and shame is how we feel. Shame can help us if we do not let it get out of hand.

We might feel like David in Psalms 40:12: (KJV): *...mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore, my heart faileth me.* This is when it is so bad that we cannot even bring ourselves to look up to God. Instead, we cannot wait until we FEEL worthy to pray.



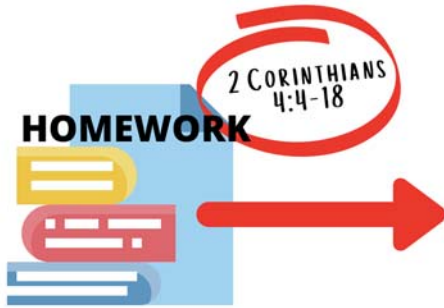
Psalms 51:9-12: (NASB) ⁹*Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.* ¹⁰*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.* ¹¹*Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your holy spirit from me.* ¹²*Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit.*

David is begging God to not cast him away, but to instead bring him back into His presence.

Such sincere praying and searching for God's mercy will NOT fall on deaf ears:

Psalms 103:8-11: (NASB) ⁸*The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.* ⁹*He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever.* ¹⁰*He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* ¹¹*For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.*

Reframing Guilt and Shame:
 I must realize the power of God's mercy is
 based upon HIS view
 of MY life with ETERNITY in mind.



2 Corinthians 4:8-18 is worth reading - it is how our afflictions are but for a moment compared to the more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Do we believe that?



When we remember our past mistakes, it gives us the ability to soften our judgment of others.

Psalm 32:5: (NASB) *I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.*

David is continuing to remember. He said, *I acknowledged my sin* - he saw it. *My iniquity I did not hide* - he showed his sin to God. He confessed his transgressions to God. This was the pathway to find peace with such horrible sin.

Reframing Guilt and Shame:
 I must work to keep the process and power of
 God's forgiveness real as I know I am susceptible
 to sinking back into my crushing guilt.

Overcoming crushing guilt is not easy. It requires a steady approach and continuous reminders of God's grace.



Once I get the “being forgivable” part in order, what comes next in overcoming my crushing guilt?

As we move through this process, we need to remember that the steps we continue to take should bring us further from our guilt but NOT further from the vitality of our forgiveness. Daily thankfulness for forgiveness is a strong foundation for the arduous and focused process of repairing and rebuilding.

We suggest not going back in time and reliving the experience again; rather, daily thanking God for His forgiveness, grace and mercy in our lives.



TURNING THE CORNER TO MOVE FORWARD

Jennifer: The weight, the responsibility, I owned full responsibility, I will always deeply regret that I did not treat that intersection like a busy highway. It was a quiet country road on the top of the hill. My daughter was in the car with me. We were just catching up on her day. She was with friends, and I wanted to know about her volleyball game. The enemy was lurking. The enemy was waiting for this one moment where I put my guard down because I am a very defensive driver. I’ve never been in an accident before. That night I did not inch past the stop sign. I’ll never understand why I didn’t. I was just like, oh, it’s a quiet country road. There’s no one here. I think that’s where the enemy’s lurking, for those little moments. I always will deeply regret becoming complacent in that moment, but I can’t take it back. And I have to now just trust God with the situation and say instead of why, say, what now? What can I do now to be the best version of myself as a wife, mother, community member and even to pay it forward?

The interesting perspective here is learning to stop asking the “why” question and replacing it with, “What do I do now?” We appreciate Jennifer’s ability to take complete responsibility. There is no sense of an excuse. She did it and deeply regrets it but cannot change it. So, what does she need to do now?



Psalms 51:13-16: (NASB) ¹³Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You. ¹⁴Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness. ¹⁵O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise. ¹⁶For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering.



Sometimes when we are crushed by guilt, rather than dealing with the actual problem we might try to offset our guilt by doing good works. Here David is talking about how making sacrifices to atone for his sin was not what God wanted. We try to do this to make ourselves feel more worthy, to bypass the hard work of being honest with ourselves and God, trying to make it up somewhere else. We need to remember that there is no sin that cannot be forgiven if we are truly repentant of heart, no matter how bad and ugly our inner core gets. The key is repentance. It is not just saying, *I'm sorry*. Repentance is living *I'm sorry for what I did and I am trying to make things right*.



The idea here is to try to put the pieces we broke back together, somehow or other. Sometimes fixing what we broke is impossible. In such cases, search for a way to "pay it forward."

The Apostle Paul was a great example of this. He could not fix the lives he destroyed when he was Saul of Tarsus, hunting down Christians. He could not undo what he had done, but he could do something to pay it forward by taking what was given to him in terms of privilege and grace, and spreading it as far as his energy could carry him.

He did two things to accomplish this:

1

First, Paul accepted responsibility for his actions:

Galatians 1:13: (NASB) *For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;*

Paul recounts a conversation he had with Jesus in a vision:

Acts 22:19-20: (NASB) ¹⁹*And I said, Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in you. ²⁰And when the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.*

Paul has learned to embrace his past as a springboard for his future. He knows there is damage that cannot be fixed, but he knows God's grace is bigger than the damage. This is always the case when there is a repentant heart - God's grace is bigger, but we have to go find it. We have to approach it. We have to plough through all of the mess to get there. A big part of that is accepting responsibility like Paul. It requires a lot of hard work and a lot of incredible heartache.

2

Second, he answered the call from Jesus to preach the gospel with his whole being. Here is Paul in front of King Agrippa:

Acts 26:19-20: (NASB) ¹⁹*So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.*



I did not prove disobedient to the vision - Jesus told Paul once and that was all he had to say. Paul ran forward for the rest of his life to honor and praise God through Christ. Paul replaced shame and guilt with appropriate powerful and motivating regret. In our physical body, pain alerts us that something is wrong. It tells us to take action to preserve our well-being. Guilt of conscience does the same for our moral qualities. It is a red flag waving, warning us that what we are doing, or about to do, will bring injury to our spiritual life. Guilt is lifted from us through Christ, but regret should never go away because appropriate regret is a springboard to positive behavior.



<p>HELLO my name is</p> <p><i>Regret</i></p>	 <p>Episodes 912 and 914: Will My Regrets Ever Leave Me Alone? (Parts I and II)</p>
<p>Motivating regret</p>	

Reframing Guilt and Shame:
 I must work at living forgiven.
 This means applying myself to my God given opportunities so HIS name can be praised as a result of my brokenness.

We must work to make our brokenness, our mistakes and our sins valuable moving forward. We can do this by testifying to our sins. We all make mistakes, so make them valuable learning opportunities. Are we going to follow Satan and let those things drag us down, or are we going to learn from our mistakes so that they can build up our faith? A good way to do this is to confide in someone to help us be strong. Talking to a trusted friend is so important for moving forward.



HOW DID ACCIDENTAL HOPE BEGIN?

Jennifer: After the grand jury decision to “no-bill” me, which meant I wasn’t criminally responsible for the accident, I did have to go through due process. There were 12 jurors who had to decide that, and I surrendered to the fact that I love the Lord whether I served Him in prison or at home. And then we had that jury decision, and it was done, and I wasn’t just immediately better. It wasn’t immediate relief. I still had a “prison” that I lived in - they were just invisible bars. I was at a point where I was not willing to hurt myself, but I thought for sure my heart would give out and I would die of a broken heart early. As I sat on my counselor’s couch one day saying, I am technically not criminally responsible, and everyone tells me this is just an accident, yet I am still not who I was before. I don’t know how to be this new person, and there is just no one telling me how I should be.



And my therapist says, "So, what I hear you saying is that you're frustrated there are no resources." And I'm like, "Yeah, yeah - why do I not have a website, a book I can read, anything, there's nothing, especially not from a Christian perspective." And he looked at me and said, "Well, it looks like you have an opportunity here. If you don't like that there's no resources, why not become one?" I was just like, "Well, okay!"

And I told the Lord that day, I said, I'll give it to You, Lord. I don't know what that means. And then He said, "Well, before you can give it to Me, you have to give Me the mess. You have to be able to talk about this without falling apart." And then I was like, okay, so that's my first step - just learning to tell one person in a calm way and say, "Hey, this is what I'm experiencing; this is what I've gone through. But this is what God's done for me in the meantime. He's still answered my prayer, and in fact, can I pray with you?"

Eventually I found a website - the only one in the world devoted to this - which is accidentalimpacts.org and getting in touch with her, Dr. Maryann Gray, Ph.D., and just taking one little step at a time, and eventually it led to this podcast where I wanted to present my story and hear from other people who share my faith because I can't imagine doing it without my faith.

And if I'm being really honest, I feel like it has 100 percent been the reason why I am where I am today mentally, physically, spiritually. Just talking to the Lord and allowing the holy spirit to work in me and to show me, and to trust Him and say, "You know, God, if this was an accident or cancer or a heart attack, we have to trust You with this pain. And you can make beauty from ashes, and if I don't really believe that, then I have nothing at all.

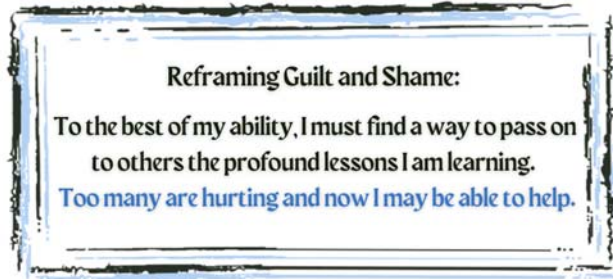
One day I found a podcast, I found this platform, and it took me six months before I would record, but over and over God kept telling me, and then I finally did it and it's been one of the best yeses of my whole adult life. Just to meet people and to hear their stories - that they've trusted me with their story, whether in a recording or just an email.



Psalms 32:6-8: (NASB) ⁶Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him. ⁷You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah. ⁸I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.



Jennifer looked back and developed conviction. She found the ability to become a resource for others, dedicating her life to helping others who have done something they deeply regret. She helps them one person at a time, building them up. She prays with them to give them hope that there is something to look forward to.



This is why looking back is so important. In looking back, we may get the encouragement to find the strength and maturity to help someone else so they can go through their trial with a little more grace, strength and hope.

As we move through the process of countering crushing guilt, we can see how hope is beginning to reappear.

**Repairing what is broken and paying it forward!
What is left to finish off crushing our crushing guilt?**

Every small step we take in this journey represents priceless progress in our maturing as disciples of Christ. Just as an athlete does not forget the pain and discipline of their training when they win gold, we must remember and realize our experiences are eternally MORE valuable than competition and medals.

Guilt is always hungry; don't let it consume you. — Terri Guillemets



WHAT ABOUT FORGIVENESS?

Jennifer: In my particular situation - I failed as a human. I'm not perfect, and that was something engrained in me, like I know that I am not perfect. Only God is perfect, and He supernaturally knew that there was a motorcyclist coming up that hill and was in a blind spot behind a big oak tree. I didn't. I can't see those things. Knowing God's forgiveness, I never questioned that because I just knew He is so sovereign, and He made me, and that accident was not a surprise to Him.

It was forgiving myself. And I remember thinking about this, if I accept grace, I need to give grace and that applies to ourselves, and so I had a real understanding that God forgave me. I wasn't sure if David would forgive me, the man who was in the accident. I wasn't sure if his children would forgive me. I wasn't certain that my children would be able to forgive the absence of me while I was recovering and healing through this process. So, there were layers of guilt and layers of people who I needed forgiveness from. I didn't know how to forgive myself. That was probably the last part of this.



You can't have happiness if you're holding unforgiveness. You can't have the true fullness of joy because any minute the enemy can swoop in and change anything if you're holding that seed of unforgiveness.

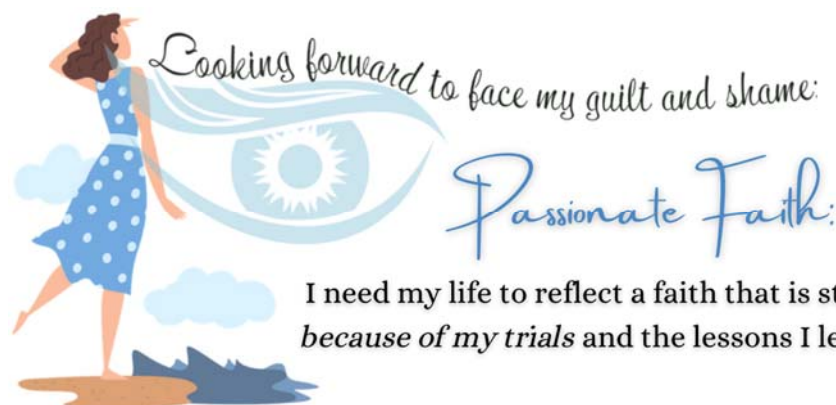
Okay, so then what's next? I needed to talk to my children and say, "I'm sorry Mommy cried and stayed in bed for so many weeks. I'm sorry I didn't read to you and pray with you and watch those movies with you." I had to say, "Honey, I'm sorry that I couldn't take care of the house like I always would," and "I'm sorry I haven't been available to you." I had to ask for forgiveness to those near me, and of course I was embraced with, they were just happy they could see little pieces of me coming back. It wasn't like even a question. On hard days, I have to still say, "Hey, I'm having a hard day today." That means I might not be able to do all the things that I normally would do in a day, and I give myself grace. If I keep hating myself, I'm really poisoning my own body. I had to eventually say, okay, to forgive this situation, and that was really scary to say. Who in the world gives me the authority? And then I had to be like, that's the voice of the enemy - God gives me the authority because God says you must forgive to be forgiven, and that includes yourself, your human limitations, and to say hey, the Lord forgives you; it's time for you to forgive yourself. The only really way to do that is that you make the change. You make that conscious decision to move forward as the best version of yourself, submitting to the Lord, growing in Him, taking on the identify of Christ, even when that means persecution.

Rick: I'm really glad you shared that entire picture because it just gives us a sense of how difficult this is. Everything is a process. We can say, yes, God forgives me, but what do I do with *me*? Am I able to look at myself through His eyes and not mine?

Jennifer reminds us of the following:

Luke 6:45: (NASB): *The good person out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil person out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.*

This could have ended in a lot of different ways, but she had *good treasure* in her heart to end up in this place - a strong foundation. She needed to put the work in and the ongoing humility to keep putting the work in. Even now, she says she still has bad days. The memory does not go away, but it does help to pay it forward.



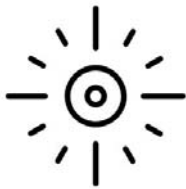


The hardships we endure must further focus us - they are proof of God's providence. Our lives must show forgiveness. We see this in David's words: Psalm 51:17-19: (NASB) *¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. ¹⁸By Your favor, do good to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem. ¹⁹Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, in burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.*

Our heart needs to be in the right place. God is not interested in the outward things we do; He is interested in *what comes from within* manifesting in the outward things that we do. God loves the broken heart that seeks for Him. Once David came back to God with a clean and contrite heart, he could now begin to praise God with acceptable sacrifices. Think of the relief David would have had in being able to praise God again. He was an emotional man, and the relief at being able to let out his praise from his thankful heart came from his understanding of God's forgiveness.

Our passionate faith can flourish because of the deeply personal price that was paid for us:

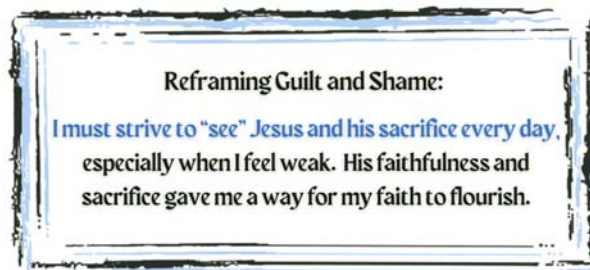
Isaiah 53:4-6: (NASB) *⁴Surely our griefs he himself bore, and our sorrows he carried; yet we ourselves esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced through for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon him, and by his scourging we are healed. ⁶All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him.*



David's passionate faith was centered on doing God's will and fulfilling the requirements of the Law.



Our passionate faith has to be **centered on Christ**. This is where our forgiveness originates, develops, blossoms and matures.



Here is where we get our strength and faith. We learn to stand and put guilt and shame in the appropriate place over time. This does not happen quickly or easily; it happens over time with small steps.



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED, HOW HAVE YOU CHANGED?

Jennifer: My relationship with the Lord is so intimate; I would never replace it. We went through brain surgery twice, and I used to say this, the first time my oldest daughter had brain surgery, I told people I would walk the same road because I just saw how good God is, and how faithful He is, and to just be in



the place where I loved Him so much and relied so much fully on Him and trusted Him with the life of my daughter. I would walk this road again.

Well, I eat those words because then I had a second daughter and she has the same genetic disorder, and God said, "Well, you said...!" And then we walked it a second time, and then in my marriage I had this joke with my husband, well, if we could survive brain surgery twice with both daughters, we can survive anything!

Then we had the accident. I could have gone to prison. My husband stood - this is the only thing that is going to make me cry - just seeing my husband stand so firm that he was by my side no matter what, and that is so rare in this day and age. I wish it weren't true, but going through the suffering and going through the persecution, and going through the trials - it can bring out the most beautiful things if we choose to walk it in a holy way. Because if this had happened and he said, "Oh, I'm taking the kids and you go live with your parents. We'll keep in touch, but I'm going to get them therapy, and I'm going to move on with our lives. I don't want them to be associated with that; I want to try and protect them," and I was shut out, well, God can't get the glory from that.



But working it out and saying, "You know what? We made some vows that said 'for better or for worse.' I am here with you if that means we spend every dime we have, we sell everything we have to pay for your legal fees. I would rather live in a cardboard box than be separated from you." That's what my husband told me. So, unconditional love, that lesson came through this. Compassion for other people, even those who make choices that lead to their consequences.

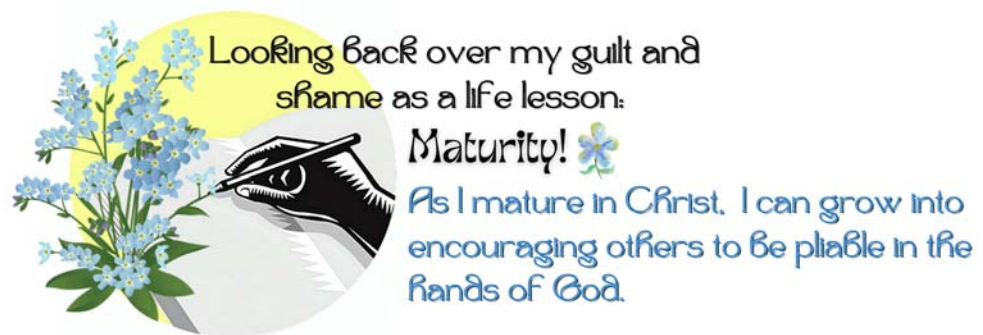
I used to pray for meekness. Be careful what you pray for. Your relationship with the Lord matters most, so when everything else falls to pieces, to dust, changes because everyone has a choice, your relationship with Him can remain. It's okay to feel what you feel and that God is not just a book of rules. He's really about just love and relationship, and the more you love Him, the more you want to do the things that will not harm you.

If you want to reach out to me, you can go to accidentalhope.com and you can find the stories of other people who've experienced something similar, and I actually share it from both sides. So, if you're listening to this and maybe it kind of rubbed you the wrong way because you had an experience where you have to forgive someone like me, I also present the story of the family members who have lost a loved one. So, I share both sides because this is big, and it's only fair to share how someone works through their forgiveness of a situation like that from the other side.



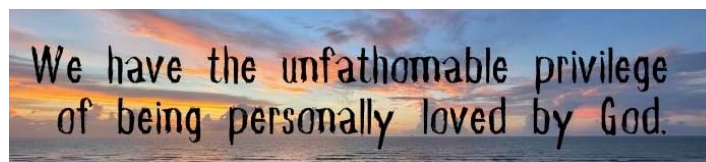
Jennifer will always know that she took the life of someone else, even if by accident. To the tenderhearted, this is an excruciating trial. Regardless of what we are shameful for, we need to follow what the Scriptures tell us to do to get back into harmony with God and then “live forgiven.” Some of us continue to punish ourselves for past sins that happened a long time ago. We repented of the sins and were forgiven, but we cannot accept that forgiveness. Unwarranted self-accusation is not healthy, and we become so discouraged that our spiritual lives are paralyzed. We can imagine how Satan enjoys getting us to this state of mind!

We have to be careful. We have to be diligent. We have to be fervent, disciplined and focused. This is hard, but it is so worth it to live knowing we are forgiven. God’s grace is bigger than any mess, if we are repentant.



Psalms 32:9-11: (NASB) ⁹Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise, they will not come near to you. ¹⁰Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him. ¹¹Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.

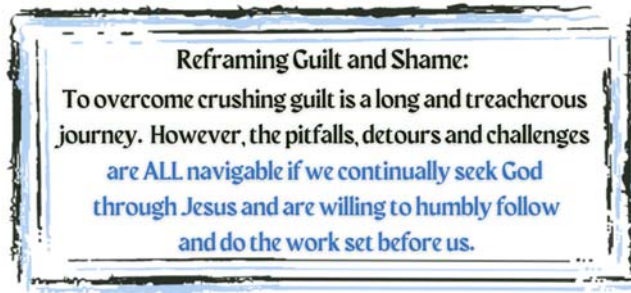
Do not be stubborn like a mule; be willing to come near to the Lord without needing a bridle for control and continue to praise God. We can get stubborn because we do not want to have to face everything. However, we *can* be called *righteous ones* because Jesus paid the price to buy us from sin! *We can be forgiven!*



Let that sink in. But in order to take advantage of this privilege, we have to approach Him and seek Him, being humble and repentant.

Psalms 103:12-14: (NASB) ¹²As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. ¹³Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. ¹⁴For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.

God knows our frame, weaknesses and frailties. We need to let Him know our struggles, letting Him guide us. We cannot hang onto the guilt.



This is a huge journey, and we thank Jennifer Eikenhorst for sharing her experience. We thank her for sharing the pathway, pain, sorrow, suffering, guilt and shame. We thank her for sharing how she found God's grace and His forgiveness over time. One of the wonderful things she gets to do now is to help others to go through that same process of forgiveness.

Thank God for the process of forgiveness, appropriate guilt, and for putting regret in its place. Crushing, debilitating guilt can be overcome, but it takes time and work. Do not shy away from the work, as the blessing is beyond comprehension!

*So, how can we overcome crushing guilt?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

There are two kinds of guilt: the kind that drowns you until you're useless, and the kind that fires your soul to purpose. — Sabaa Tahir

Repentant tears wash out the stain of guilt. — Saint Augustine



Join us next week for our podcast on July 26, 2021
Ep. 1188: Do We Have the Purpose of
the Holy Spirit Backwards?

Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1187: How Can We Overcome Crushing Guilt

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1187-guilt/>

See:



1. What is the difference between *guilt* and *shame*? There are two sides to guilt - compare the guilt of Jennifer (from the "Accidental Hope" podcast) and that of King David's sin with Bathsheba. How are they the same, how are they different? (See Strong's definitions, 1 Samuel 11:1-27)
2. What must we be convicted of to start moving forward in dealing productively with guilt? How did David show this in Psalm 51:1-3? How do we usually react to guilt, initially? Why do we do this? When is a time in your life where you have experienced guilt and how did you react?
3. What is essential to lay before the Lord? Is this true of unintentional sins as well as intentional? Compare Psalm 51 where David looked forward in confession and horror over what he had done; and Psalm 32, where David looked backward after facing his sin. What do these two Psalms show? How can we find relief and peace after being crushed by guilt?
4. What is a "contrite heart"? What does it focus on? Can our brokenness be healed? By whom? What is necessary for this forgiveness and healing? (See Psalm 51:17, Luke 4:18)
5. How can we combat addictive sins, when our guilt and self-hatred is not as great as the pleasure or comfort we gain? (See Psalms 32:3-4)
6. Is it important to punish ourselves for wrongdoing? How did the Apostle Paul feel about this? How did David feel? What should we do? (See 1 Corinthians 4:3, Psalms 40:12, 51:9-12, 103:8-11)
7. How does God's view of our lives differ from ours? What did Paul say about the afflictions of this time? (See 2 Corinthians 4:8-18)
8. Remembering our past mistakes should give us the ability to do what? What is the danger in going back into those guilty memories? What aspect of our past experiences should we revisit daily? What are the three steps David took in Psalm 32:5 to achieve forgiveness with God?
9. With what should we replace the "Why me?" question? What do we do if the situation cannot be fixed by us? How did Paul do this? (See Psalms 51:13-16, Galatians 1:13, Acts 22:19-20, 26:19-20)
10. Where should our faith be centered? How do we "live forgiven"? (See Isaiah 53:4-6, Psalms 32:9-11, Psalms 103:12-14) Are *you* living forgiven? What can you do to live the forgiveness you have been given?