

Living Guilt-Free



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Led by Mary Lowman

Differences in our Brains

Scientists have discovered that the left and right sides of our brains have unique functions. The left side is the analytical, reasoning, problem-solving side; the right side is the emotional, creative, impulsive side. Typically, each individual tends to have a dominant side, to be either right-brained or left-brained, meaning we approach life either from the left side—analytical and rational—or from the right side—creative and emotional. And most men are far more left-brained than right-brained.

Men can isolate their feelings and emotions in order to get a job done or solve a problem. Women are more likely to get to that rational stage after going through the emotional stage first. It's not difficult to see why women struggle more with guilt than men do.

I often envision us women carrying our guilt backpack with us all the time, collecting guilt as we go. And it can become really heavy, stealing our joy and peace, and many times we don't even realize it.



Let's look at a few examples of the predominantly false guilt to which we are susceptible.

Girlish Guilt

These are the little nagging guilts that are peculiar to women; most men would never be bothered with these guilts. Our sensitive nature makes us very vulnerable to seeing things that are not there, reading between lines incorrectly, interpreting body language and facial expressions inaccurately.

These are not major issues of guilt, but just an attitude that women often carry which says, "If I'm accused, I must be guilty." "If someone is not happy with me, I must be guilty."

Mother Guilt

I am convinced that children are born with an instinct for manipulating their moms through guilt. They learn how to do it before they learn to walk or talk.

Let's admit that we moms tend to cater to our children. But we have a responsibility to teach them to accept responsibility for their own actions or inactions.

Authority Guilt

Whether it is an employer, a pastor or group leader, a teacher or principal, we have a natural tendency to be easily intimidated by an authority figure. Even people who assume authority that is not rightly theirs can make us feel guilty before we know it!

Family Guilt

It seems that guilt spreads very easily in family relationships. Everything begins at the top, and family guilt most often is because the parents either allowed it, didn't understand what it was and how to deal with it, lived in denial, or indulged in it themselves, no doubt re-playing the kind of guilt trips that were part of their family life as children.

The Jesus Way

It's really important as Christ-followers to understand why people seem to shift blame, refuse to accept responsibility and generally dump guilt on everyone except themselves. So, if you want to respond the way Jesus would, you need to see them the way Jesus sees them.

We have power through the Holy Spirit to see beyond behavior and get a glimpse of the causes of behavior. If you ask him, God will give you a heart of understanding, and before you realize it, you will become more concerned about the other person than about what they are doing to you. That's the Jesus Way.

Philippians 2:3 – 8

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Paul makes it clear: **“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”** He put others and their welfare ahead of his own. This Jesus-attitude is upside-down truth, but it is truth that sets you free

John 8:32: *You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*

Here are four passages from the Bible that teach important principles of relationships, and they still work very effectively today!

Colossians 3:13: *Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

Romans 12:10: *Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

Proverbs 15:1: *A gentle (soft) answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

Proverbs 19:11 (ESV): *Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.*

Additional Tips

Before you assume guilt which is not yours, recognize guilt trips for what they are. Or as my friend, Jan Silvius, puts it, we need to see ourselves in a castle with a moat all around it, and when someone is heading our way to dump their guilt on us, we pull up the drawbridge so that they can't get to us!

John 10: 7 – 10 (ESV): *So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

The abundant life that Jesus came to give us does not include lugging guilt around.

Keep a Tender Heart

In learning appropriate ways to deal with our guilts, we don't want to lose the advantages we have as women. We don't have to lose our tender hearts, our compassionate tendencies, our sympathetic ears in order to get rid of these guilts. We are women, and while we don't need to roar, we do need to treasure the special attributes that God gave us and use them wisely.