



Face the Issue:

This week, we focused on what we hope to have versus what we have. Jeremy pointed out two different pictures of Christmas. We all have things that we hope to happen and they don't always work out. When they do not, we end up feeling guilty. Even when it may not be our fault, or anybody's fault, we still feel guilty. Some struggle with guilt, others have learned to live with it. Some even feel guilty for feeling guilty. But what part should guilt play in a Christians life, if any?

What are the sources of our guilt? Which are legitimate?

How do parents use guilt? Do you think God uses of guilt with us in the same way?

How does your background affect your present tendency to feel guilty?

Into the Word:

Read 1 Timothy 1:15–20

Paul is telling Timothy the value of a clear conscience but he also says that we shouldn't forget the reason we needed cleansing.

Paul is not proud of his sinful past nor does he sound guilt-ridden, but he remembers his own sinfulness, calling himself "chief" among sinners. To Paul, it proves God's mercy.

Many believers are weighed down by guilt when things do not go as we have dreamed. This guilt can be a hindrance in doing the good work that Christ called us to do.

Why do you think Paul reminded Timothy that he was "chief among sinners" right before telling him to "fight the battle well, holding on to faith and a good conscience"?

Our remembrance of our sins is only for our testimony, just like Paul's. The over-guilty are rendered powerless by their failings. The appropriately guilty are empowered by God's forgiveness.

To a Christian, guilt does play an important role. It's kind of like a food that you have a bad reaction to. Say that you shouldn't eat peanut products. How important is it to remember that? We are promised that God completely forgives us for our sins at salvation and that they are cast into the sea. If God forgets our sins, why shouldn't we?

Believers in Christ are to walk a fine line. They have a sense of sin and live in full awareness of falling short but do not get discouraged over their faults. How is that possible?

Where are you on this line? In your heart, ask God to reveal where you may be hindered by a guilt that you should not feel or where you have forgotten where you once were before God's mercy pulled you out.

Application

Read 1 John 1:6–9

The invitation to confession is always open. God is waiting to forgive those who confess their sins, and He promises He will forgive. It's His nature.

Confession for the believer serves several purposes: it frees us from the delusion that we are sinless. It draws us closer to God and to fellow believers. And it sets "our hearts at rest in His presence" (1 John 3:19).

Do you know someone who seems burdened by guilt? How does this attitude seem to affect them?

Based on your findings in this study, what would you say to the person who confesses nagging guilt?

Can you recall a time when guilt hindered you from "fighting the good fight?" What will you do about it next time?