

Theme: False Christian Assumptions

Assumption 7 “Guilt and Shame are good for me”

“Whatever became of guilt?” The sermon title jumped out at Randy and Vicki as they sat in the pew. Shrugging, they listened to the preacher as he began his message. This Sunday, Glenn (the preacher) came right to the point. “Beware of the humanistic approach to guilt,” he preached. “If you feel guilty, you are guilty! Guilt solves the problem of loving ourselves too much,” he said. “Rather than concentrating on how wonderful we are, guilt refocuses us to the darker side. It puts who we are in perspective. The Holy Spirit speaks to us through guilt....” His message continued to the discomfort of the couple. Driving home, Randy said, “Honey, I feel worse after the sermon than I did before.” Vicki nodded. “Same here.”

- A. We are sinful, but...

- B. The internal condemnation of guilt and shame
 - 1. Guilt
 - 2. Shame

- C. Why the preacher’s message was a crazymaker
 - 1. He defied the conscience
 - 2. He confused guilt feelings with godly sorrow
 - 3. He confused conviction with guilt

- D. Is guilt ever good?

- E. What can you do?

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some examples of guilt and shame messages?
2. What is the motive behind guilt and shame messages?
3. Sadly, many of us may not see the guilt trips laid on us. Instead we take responsibility for the guilt we feel. Why doesn't this process solve the guilt problem? Why can we feel guilt without actually being guilty?
4. Guilt has two common meanings: the state of having done wrong and a painful feeling of self-reproach resulting from the belief that we have done a wrong. Why is it important to understand that the Bible always refers to the state of guilt, not to our feelings of guilt?
5. Shame is a painful feeling of having lost the respect of others because of our own improper behavior. Shame is a sense of being bad, a state of internal condemnation. How do you explain the difference between guilt and shame?
6. Explain the difference between godly sorrow (remorse) and worldly sorrow (guilt), and also the emotional responses that characterize each, their goals, the fruit they bear, and their impact on our spiritual and emotional growth as well as on our ability to love.
7. According to John 16:8, what is the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer? How do you determine whether the guilt you feel is in response to God's spirit or to your critical mother/father/first-grade teacher?

Guilt is not good for us because it prevents us from being motivated by love. God's Spirit and His loving people can move us away from guilt and toward love.

For further study/discussion

Read 1 Corinthians 8:7, 1 Timothy 4:1-2 and Hebrews 13:18

The Bible describes three types of consciences: the weak, the seared, and the clear or mature conscience. The weak conscience prohibits, criticizes, and accuses unjustly; the seared conscience has little sense of remorse, can't empathize with others, and is controlling and manipulative; the clear conscience isn't perfect, but it can help a person make better, more biblical decisions.