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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, March 14, 2017 - The Struggle with Guilt

MARCH 14TH 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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1 John 1:5-9

For some of us, guilt is a steady companion. We live under the weight of past mistakes and the fear of future wrongdoing. Even if we try to move forward, self-reproach tags along.

Not all guilty emotions are based in fact, but those that result from breaking biblical or civil law are legitimate: When we transgress, the Holy Spirit points out what is wrong and how to correct it. Then, in response to our confession, God offers us forgiveness and cleansing from guilt every single time (Ps. 32:5).

Where does false guilt originate? There are several answers. For one thing, Satan uses it to harass believers. Through lies and accusations, the enemy seeks to replace inner peace with turmoil, and joy with discouragement.

Another source of guilt is legalism, the judging of conduct according to a precise standard. God's Word establishes the way we are to live, but some Christians and churches impose additional rules. And failure to follow man-made regulations can produce shame. Childhood experiences can also bring out the negative emotion of guilt. Whether this stems from the aftermath of traumatic events or the feeling that we didn't meet parental expectations, a memory can prompt us to judge ourselves harshly as adults. Living under severe criticism can have this effect, too, as can perfectionistic

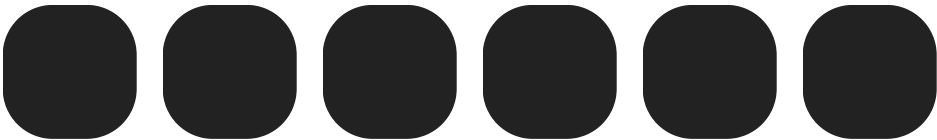
tendencies—which tell us we can always “do more” and “do better.”

Legalism, painful childhood experiences, perfectionism, and hurtful comments are fertile soil for guilt. If you struggle with self-condemnation, be sure to check the legitimacy of the source.

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