

# Guilt: A Blessing and a Curse

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Reading Time: 3 minutes

It's both a blessing and a curse. An instrument used by Satan to cause us to sink into a great pit of despair and a wonderful tool which allows us the opportunity to take serious inventory of our lives and our behaviors.

To what am I referring? Guilt.

Defined by Merriam-Webster as (1) *responsibility for a crime or for doing something bad or wrong* or (2) *a bad feeling caused by knowing or thinking that you have done something bad or wrong*, it is easy to see why this subject can be complex. Why do we experience guilt? Is guilt a blessing, or a curse? How should we respond when we feel guilt? .

## Why We Experience Guilt:

### 1. We've Violated A Standard

Every human, regardless of their stances (politically, morally, religiously), have standards we believe and live by. For some, those standards may be very humanistic, allowing one's

own personal standards to be the bar. For others, there may be an objective standard such as God and His Word. No matter which one of these you may fall in to (and chances are, at times, many fall into both of them), all humans have a standard. If you think about it, every society has laws by which we must comply. Schools have standards, jobs require a certain level of conduct, and families may have specific standards unique to them. In all, there is a serious web of standards, and “guiltiness” is at times achieved upon the breaking of said standards.

## **2. We Think We Have Done Wrong**

Have you ever heard the saying “perception is reality”? I have. However, simply hearing it doesn’t make it true in every case. Sometimes, what one perceives is based upon a very small portion of the overall picture. A man feels he’s done wrong at work and let his boss down, only to find out that one of his co-workers set him up for failure, making it impossible to succeed. A woman feels she is failing as a wife and mother because she “can’t keep up;” however, when considering the bigger picture, she has created a home where her family is well cared for and loved, and God is central. In both cases, the guilt is a result of a perceived wrong, not necessarily an actual wrong. Their feelings are overriding the reality of the situation.

At times, this guilt is placed upon us by others as a way to gain a response which is favorable to them. In other words, they place a “guilt-trip” on you. It’s still perceived as reality, and unless a standard has truly been violated, this form of guilt-placing is intended to manipulate and control.

## **What Response Should We Have:**

### **1. Ask for Forgiveness and Change**

If you’ve truly violated a standard, you must either change the standard or change the behavior. The reality is, for those people who live based on their own morality and desires, it may be easy to change the standard; however, for those who live and use God and His word as their standard, we don’t have the option to change the standard. Repentance must take place and forgiveness must be sought. The same should be said for a violation committed against another commitment we’ve made (job, school, spouse, family, etc.). Seek forgiveness and change. Once this is done, you must accept the fact that God can and does forgive, you can forgive yourself, and those whom you’ve hurt are also capable of forgiveness. Accept forgiveness.

### **2. Don’t Assume Unmerited Guilt**

Be it either a guilt-trip or an inaccurate assessment of a situation, I strongly encourage you to not assume guilt. Satan is good at making us feel inadequate. Thoughts such as “I’m not a good-enough father” or “I’m a failure as a mother” are damaging and often cause us to view every relationship and situation we encounter through these clouded lenses. God gave you the ability to feel guilt; however, Satan will hijack this blessing and use it for his purposes. Unfortunately, others will try and use guilt to manipulate you into doing or responding the way they would like. Whether or not you go along with them is not the issue. However, if you see that their desires for you aren’t the best, there should be no guilt assumed as long as you do not violate the will of God.

It has been said that guilt is like the red light that comes on the dashboard when there’s a problem with the vehicle. You can either pull over and deal with it or break the light. When guilt approaches you, first stop and consider why you are feeling this way. If it’s because the guilt is merited, you must repent, asking for forgiveness—and you must accept the forgiveness God and others give. However, if,—after evaluating the reason of the guilt—you find the guilt to be false, don’t allow the guilt to set in. Don’t let Satan and others have this control over you.