

How to Let Go of the Guilt and Shame

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Do you believe you've done something that God could never forgive? Maybe you realize He's forgiven you, but you still struggle with forgiving yourself.

It took my friend, Jean, about a year to even bring up the subject with me. She had done something years ago that she was still ashamed of. She couldn't forgive herself or believe that God could forgive her, either.

Jean had made a decision, years earlier, to abort her unborn baby. Although her doctor advised that she terminate her pregnancy because of a history of miscarriages, she never questioned the doctor's advice. Today, she wishes more than anything that she had. She could barely talk about it with me, let alone forgive herself.

It's one thing when pain happens to us. It's another thing when something we do -- or fail to do -- results in our pain or someone else's pain. We tend to put that pain in the category of something that God will never heal us of or forgive us for. In my newest book, [When a Woman Overcomes Life's Hurts](#), I offer "Ten Steps to Healing and Wholeness" and one of them is: **Believe that Jesus' death on the cross was enough to heal the very deepest of wounds** -- even the self-inflicted ones.

Whatever it is we struggle with, many times we think if we hold onto it -- and continue to grieve over it -- we are showing God that we really are sorry for our actions and that might somehow make up for our wrongdoing. But the whole reason Jesus had to die for us is because we are incapable of appeasing God on our own efforts...or penitence. If you believe God could never forgive you, or if you are struggling to forgive yourself for something in your past, these steps toward healing and wholeness are for you:

1. Cry out to God from your brokenness - The Scriptures are full of stories of people who blew it and then cried out to God from a broken heart and were healed and restored. Tell God you need His love and forgiveness. [Psalm 34:18](#) says "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

2. Confess to Him all that is on your heart - [First John 1: 9](#) tells us: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Notice the verse says He will purify us of "all" unrighteousness -- even the acts we believe are unforgivable. King David committed some pretty heinous acts, including adultery and murder of a close associate of his. And yet, when he was confronted with his sin, he confessed to God from a broken heart and said "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. (Even David had a hard time letting it go.) Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight..." ([Psalm 51:3-4](#)). In [Psalm 32](#) David also tells us what happened when he tried to keep his guilt and shame locked up inside of him.

"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I

acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord' and you forgave the guilt of my sin" ([verses 3-5](#)).

Then, two verses later, David is able to say to God: "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance" ([verse 7](#)). While David started out hiding from God, because of his sin, he ended up hiding *himself* in God. Once you tell God all that's on your heart, you will find He is a refuge for you -- one to run *to* and not from.

3. Claim His complete healing and forgiveness - Scripture tells us "without [faith](#) it is impossible to please (God)" ([Hebrews 11:6](#)). And therefore, we must, by faith, believe that when Jesus died on the cross, He was wounded for *our* transgressions and bruised for *our* iniquities and by His stripes (wounds) we are *healed* ([Isaiah 53:4-5](#)). I love the fact that those prophetic verses from Isaiah 53 about what Jesus would do for us when He went to the cross centuries later were written in *past tense*, although they were still future at the time the prophecy was written. That tells me that even before it happened, God saw our atonement as *already done*. And now that Jesus has been to the grave and back to pay the penalty for our sins, how much more is it already done? Why hold onto something when, as Jesus said, "it is finished" ([John 19:30](#)).

4. Commit [Psalm 103:12](#) to memory -- We are given this assurance in Scripture: "*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*" I had to write out that Scriptural reference on little pink heart post-it notes and post them all over Jean's home so she would remember that she is forgiven and her slate is clean. Today she can hold her head high knowing that she is, indeed, a "new creation" in Christ Jesus and she no longer has to hold onto something that God has already let go.

Don't buy the lie that you can never be healed, or forgiven or whole again. Your healing has *already* been accomplished through what Christ Jesus has done for you. Accept it, my friend. And move on.