



## Feelings of Guilt

Caregivers may from time to time be visited by an uncomfortable visitor -- GUILT. The visitor can come from any direction. It may be a relative that thinks we are not doing things right. Or general social culture that feels we should do this or that; like there is only one accepted way to provide care. It may be the one we are caring for is never satisfied with how often we visit or how we do their meals or laundry. Guilt may come from our own heart. You second guess whether you are doing things right or doing the right things. The big one is feeling guilty before God. Did you do something wrong to cause this to happen? Is this in any way a punishment?

Where does your feeling of guilt come from? Are there questions surrounding your feelings of guilt?

What does scripture say we should do with our feelings of guilt? Even with the most horrible SIN, scripture gives us a clear and forthright instruction. We are to confess our feelings of guilt. That does not mean that what we are feeling is a true moral guilt. It means that we need to get our thoughts and feelings surrounding guilt out into the open in some way. I John 1:8-10 says, *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives."*

My mom felt she was getting too old. She would repeat the phrase, *"The good die young"* Her saying that didn't make me feel better. I would remind her that what she was saying is not in the Bible and then remind her of the commandment with a promise. I told her she must have been very good to her mom and dad to have lived so long. As I learn more about the agenda of older people and the unspoken internals they try to work out, I wonder now what must have been in her sub-conscience. Was she struggling with some guilt? She was moving beyond the ability to talk about resolving issues of the past in a lucid way. Even so, internally we are still reviewing our memories and processing something in our life's agenda.

At the same time our loved one exhibits behaviors and processing their life, we are processing our feelings and actions. If we are dealing with feelings of guilt, it is important to confess it. There is another option. We can become resentful, bitter or angry. That option just breeds more guilt or self-centeredness. So I suggest confession. Confession is central to restoring right relationships, even with ourselves.

Do you have a confessor to share deep things with? Since we are all caregivers who have experienced some form of guilt, can you share your feelings of guilt with the group?

Psalm 51 is a good model for confession. David was really, really, guilty. He had committed adultery, covered it up with a murder, dismissed his feelings because he was a man of power and had to be confronted by the prophet Nathan with what everyone in the country already knew. Humiliating! Read Psalm 51.

Peter had disowned Jesus, even after he was warned. He betrayed Jesus in a most public way. Jesus had to ask him three times if Peter really loved him in the presence of all the other disciples. Humiliating! Read John 21:19-23.

You will not be humiliated in this group. We all have thoughts, actions and attitudes we might feel guilty about. No one has cornered the market on perfection -- except Jesus. And in his perfection he laid down his life so we can confess, be forgiven and renewed.

<b>Where does your feeling of guilt come from?</b>	<b>Can you share (confess) your feelings with the group?</b>	<b>Will you accept God's forgiveness and forgive yourself?</b>

As a general rule, caregivers do the best they can do with the information they have at the time. I would be a better caregiver for my mom if I had to do it all over. Then again I might have been a better parent or spouse if I could go back and start all over. But that is not the case. We are where we are in life. Our way forward is to follow the way of Jesus. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Early Christian were known as People of the Way. The way of Jesus is faith and trust in him, confession and forgiveness, and suffering in serving others. God bless you in your journey.

"The richness of God's Word ought to determine our prayer, not the poverty of our heart." Dietrich Bonhoeffer