



Quick Backdrop

Guilt, shame, and regret are pretty common among teens. It's easy to know in our heads that God forgives, but in our hearts—in our guts—we don't really believe we've been forgiven. At least, we don't live our lives convinced that God has truly forgiven us.

The Enemy, Satan, wants to use guilt and shame to hold us as prisoners. He wants to keep us down and keep us ashamed. But God wants us to be free, no longer in the pit of shame.

1 Digging In (God, Show Me!)

Take a look at the passage below and note how the words paint a picture of the despair caused by guilt and shame. Notice the difference between turning to God turning away from God. In fact, to really notice the detail, print this passage out. Then circle the things that result from turning *toward* God and underline those things that result from *pulling away* from God.

2 Corinthians 7:9-13 (MSG)

Now I'm glad—not that you were upset, but that you were jarred into turning things around. You let the distress bring you to God, not drive you from him. The result was all gain, no loss. Distress that drives us to God does that. It turns us around. It gets us back in the way of salvation. We never regret that kind of pain. But those who let distress drive them away from God are full of regrets, end up on a deathbed of regrets. And now, isn't it wonderful all the ways in which this distress has goaded you closer to God? You're more alive, more concerned, more sensitive, more reverent, more human, more passionate, more responsible. Looked at from any angle, you've come out of this with purity of heart.

2 Taking It Inward (God, Teach Me!)

Your first question might be, "What does 'goaded' mean?" We'll let you look it up. It's a great word. Okay, back to the devo: Make a chart of two columns (you may want to use a sheet of paper or an e-doc.). In the left-hand column, list all the personal benefits from turning toward God. In the right-hand column list the consequences of turning away from God.

Between these two lists, which do you experience more of in your life?

Did you notice the phrase "deathbed of regrets"? Wow. What a description! The hard thing is that regrets can show up in subtle ways. We can unknowingly carry them around.

As a personal check up, see if you can identify with any of these four signs that you need to forgive yourself and trust God's grace.

1. You constantly think about a particular sin or mistake.

If you feel like you are trapped in the past, you probably haven't forgiven yourself. Regret keeps you paralyzed and keeps you from moving forward. Lock in on that phrase you just read in 2 Corinthians 7, *But those who let distress drive them away from God are full of regrets, end up on a deathbed of regrets.*

2. You avoid other people or act differently around them.

If you are ashamed or regret something that involves another person, pay attention to how you act around them. If that person has completely forgiven you for what you did, but you still act nervous or shy or guilty around them, you probably haven't forgiven yourself.

3. You are trying to prove yourself to God.

God accepts you the way you are. Of course, he works in your life to conquer one sin at a time and make you more like Jesus. It's a process; God doesn't want you to trust your power; he wants you to trust Him. God is seeking a broken and contrite heart.

4. You believe that God has shunned you.

God does not shun you. He might discipline you and correct you, but He does not abandon you. If you feel like He has shunned you, you are accepting a lie from Satan. Regret is creeping into your mind and knocking you off course. Remember the words of Romans 8:1, *Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Whew!

3 Seal the Deal (God, Change Me!)

Did one of the above signs ring a bell? If so, picture in your mind that thing that you haven't forgiven yourself for. Then, cup your hands in front of you and imagine as if you are holding onto that thing. When you're ready, turn it over to God by turning your hands over symbolically dumping that guilt or shame or fear into Jesus' lap.

Fold or Cut