

# PRESSING ON...

"I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:14



A Publication of Chicago Christian Counseling Center

Jan | Feb 2020

## Marriage\*

■ by Laura Goossens, MSW, LCSW

**\*after kids**



**M**arriage can be so hard, and when you add kids into the mix even harder. Being married with kids means you have to find a way to intentionally love on our spouse in the midst of all the middle of the night wake ups, soccer practices, and all the never-ending energy needed to keep all the tiny humans alive. Nevertheless, in marriage we are called to love and self-sacrifice for one another in the times that are better and worse, in the times that are full, and the times of stress where our cup feels empty.

The last 6 months of my life has been the most chaotic, as my husband and I are in the trenches of taking care of twin babies, and a 4.5 year old. In the midst of this hard season I have compiled a list of practical ways we have tried our best to continue to invest in our marriage when it feels like there is no time or energy left to do so.

### Small romantic gestures

You may be in a season of life where you can't go away on a romantic getaway, or have a date night at a fancy restaurant, but you can always find subtle ways to show your spouse you are thinking of them. In our season of life this has been little things like stepping up to change both twins diapers instead of leaving one for the other partner, being the first to wash all the bottles, or leaving the comfortable chair for the other spouse to sit in while we are both putting a twin to bed. It might sound stupid or trivial, but in the midst of sleep deprivation and chaos these little gestures do not go unnoticed.

### An out of the house date night at least once a month

Your marriage is your most important investment. The happier you are in your marriage, the happier your kids will be. I know some people argue for spending time together at home, but I honestly believe there is nothing like getting away from all the distractions and temptations to do laundry and connect one on one away from it all.

Sometimes this means you have to get creative and have a friend come over when the kids are in bed if finances are tight and you can't afford a sitter, but my encouragement is to get creative and do whatever you can to make this work for your family.

### Remind yourself your way of doing things is not the only way to do them

I know the type A personality types are cringing when I say this, yet this is so important. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in believing our way of doing things is best, and act out on our spouse when they have a different way of doing things. I remember one time I came home and my husband took it upon himself to fold all the towels and put them away in the closet. In my opinion the closet was a hot mess of disordered towel chaos, but I had to stop myself and remind myself of the selfless gesture he made, and the truth that there is no wrong way to fold towels.

### When you keep score, everyone loses

This is a phrase I have tried to always keep in mind. It's easy to get wrapped up in looking at how many diapers you have changed, kids you have gotten ready for school, lunches you have packed in comparison to your spouse. When it becomes a competition both parties become at war. When you stop and realize that both of you are doing your best in a really hard season of life and give each other grace you both win.

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# Release the Burden of



# Regret

■ by Kathy Krentkowski, MA, LCPC, LMHC

**W**ebster's dictionary defines regret as a feeling of sadness, repentance or disappointment over something that has happened or been done.

We all have something to regret - unkind words spoken, bad habits continued, resolutions unfulfilled.

What matters is what we do with our regret, or maybe a better way to say it is what our regret does with us.

## Regrets reflect a tender heart

If we are honest, we have all made mistakes, and perhaps said or done something we wish we could take back. This is regret. A tender heart knows regret. And like healthy nerve endings that alert us to pain and makes us recoil from a flame, regret tells us there is something to grieve and heal from. The pain that comes from regret can produce change.

## Godly sorrow

Regret can draw us to salvation. Paul tells us that "Godly sorrow brings repentance

that leads to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10) and that it is God's kindness that brings us to repentance (Romans 2:4). Looking back at failures or missed opportunities should make us feel a sense of loss. We confront our humanity when we do this. To flippantly brush off the past, spouting a mantra of "I have no regrets in this life!" may be denying a part of your heart that God wants to take hold of, soften and change.

## Releasing the burden

Ultimately, regret is a gift from God when it draws us to repentance, and that repentance draws us to the Savior. Releasing the burden of our regret to Jesus allows us to receive the gift of his salvation; this salvation is healing, wholeness, and deliverance. Paul continues his statement on godly sorrow by saying it "leaves no regret" (2 Corinthians 7:10, NIV).

Regret that goes on and on, is likely from the world or a weapon Satan is using against you. Satan doesn't want us to enjoy the forgiveness and salvation we

can have from God when we allow our regrets to bring us to him. Releasing our past into God's hands makes renewal, rebirth, and beauty possible. It is a sort of exchange, where we take past mistakes or painful events and trade them in for forgiveness and salvation. When we do this "our faces shall never be ashamed" (Psalm 34:5). A life paralyzed by regret robs us of the greater sense of grace, gratitude, and joy that is in store for those who know Jesus has forgiven.

## Our standing with God

Facing regret may leave us with the desire to remedy things we have done by making amends – making things right with others we have harmed. But if we never have an opportunity to do this, or if others will not accept our amends, we need not think our standing with God is harmed. God accepts us and can give us his peace and when he does this, he considers all you have and have not done. He accepts you where you are. In his hands, all things, the good and bad, are used to bring goodness and beauty (Romans 8:28). He

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## Take time to check in

When the kids are in bed, or when you are on a date night, check in with each other. Purposely ask how your partner is doing, what needs they feel they have, and how you can work together to help them fill them. Ecclesiastes 4:12 "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." When you are a team you have to look out for your teammates. The stronger you both are individually, the stronger you both will be together.

In closing, children are a gift, truly one of my favorite parts of life. Yet it's so easy to make your focus completely on them, and forget

to focus on the relationship that is their foundation. We are all human and selfish by nature, but when we enter into a covenant of marriage we are agreeing to lay down our own needs and focus on our spouses instead in the easy seasons and the hard. The more we love on each other well the better foundation we will have for our family, and the better example of a Godly marriage we will represent for our children to follow one day. ■



*Laura Goossens is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and sees clients in our Orland Park and Tinley Park, IL locations.*

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# What should I do when **SHAME & GUILT** consume me?

■ by Katie DeYoung, MA, LCPC, LMHC

***Have you ever been ashamed or felt guilty because of something you did?***



**T**hese moments can be brutal and likely result in a plethora of other negative emotions and outcomes as well. I am definitely a supporter of people being able to experience the beautiful and expansive range of emotions available to them or having “all the feels” as I like to say. Let’s be honest though, some of our emotional reactions are far more pleasant than others. Oftentimes, we like to focus on all things happy and try our hardest to simply avoid any unpleasant or uncomfortable emotion that may come up. This approach creates an unbalanced view of how to properly manage one’s emotional well-being. God created emotions as a way for us to express ourselves and more intimately experience life. Having emotions is OK, but it is what we do with our emotions that often needs to be addressed and possibly altered.

As a Christian therapist, I have seen first-hand how shame and guilt can become all-consuming. I am concerned that we don’t know how to properly handle these emotions when they come up, so let’s discuss shame and guilt from a biblical perspective as we learn about their purpose and use in our lives.

## Shame vs Guilt

Let’s start by noting that shame and guilt both have similar undertones. These terms are often used interchangeably; however, each has their own unique definition. Shame is a painful emotion that comes from humiliation or embarrassment when a person knows that they have done something wrong. Whereas, feeling guilty is a logical response to understanding one’s wrong-doing, a feeling of deserved blame for an offense. Guilt is more of a statement of fact; if you do something wrong then you are guilty. Shame is more of an emotional response to doing wrong. Take a moment and think about your own experiences of feeling shame or guilt and see if you can tell how these emotions have felt differently to you.

## God’s purpose for shame and guilt

When recalling those times, think about what the purpose of having those feelings was at that moment. God created emotions to serve a purpose in our lives. They can influence upcoming decisions or help us to better understand ourselves. For example, feeling anxiety or fear informs us to be on our guard as something ahead may be dangerous. So, what could the purpose of shame and guilt be?

Is shame supposed to lower our self-worth? This may be accompanied by thoughts such as: “I can’t believe I did that”, “I don’t want anybody to know what I have done”, and “I can’t do anything right”. Do you think the purpose of guilt is to be a constant reminder of our mistakes resulting in a long-term weight to carry on our shoulders? This may come with thoughts like: “I don’t deserve to be happy or loved by you” and “I deserve to be punished”. These thoughts are worsened by repeated offenses on our part of sinning over and over again.



## A Christian’s response to shame and guilt

Albeit natural and somewhat common, these are incorrect ways of handling shame and guilt, especially for Christians. When Christians experience shame and guilt, the purpose of these emotions is to bring about a sense of conviction for the wrongdoing that occurred. This conviction, if used appropriately, should bring people to the foot of the cross in recognition of what Jesus accomplished for us in salvation and the forgiveness of sins.

Rather than leaving our sins and wrongdoings at the foot of the cross, we carry them with us for weeks, months, and even years. Maybe this sounds familiar. Appropriately so, many people are ashamed of a wrongdoing that they have done and are convicted that they should feel this way. After all, wouldn’t it be inappropriate for them to be joyful if they did something wrong? Our immediate emotional response is not necessarily in question; rather it’s what we do with it that makes all the difference. Hanging on to our guilt is not healthy and can lead to other mental and emotional issues such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Is this what God intended when He allowed us to experience these emotions? Are we glorifying God in how we handle moments of shame and guilt? Could it be that we misuse these feelings and their purpose in our lives?

## Seek Biblical Context

In Genesis 2 we learn that Adam and Eve felt no shame in their nakedness, but after the fall they covered up their bodies. In a perfect world, God created us to be unashamed of who we, however the presence of sin changes things and brings guilt into what once was an unblemished relationship between man and God. We are all sinners and therefore are all guilty. Praise God for His forgiveness towards us and cleansing us of our guilt and

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**Phone: 708.845.5500**

Email: [info@chicagochristiancounseling.org](mailto:info@chicagochristiancounseling.org)

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## Our Mission Statement

Promoting health and wholeness through professional counseling, consultation and education from a Christian perspective.

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doesn't waste one single thing. Your regret can be a catalyst for change.

#### **Ask God to use your regrets**

As you consider the ending of 2019 and the start of this New Year – 2020 – take some time to consider what, if any, regrets you have. Allow yourself to get honest and list your regrets. Feel the feelings associated with the regret. Take each regret, like a stone, and place it before God, asking for his forgiveness for any part you have played. Tell God he can take this stone and use it if he would like, in any way he would like. Allow him to use your past for good. As you give him your regrets, ask him if he has anything for you in return. Write it down, and let that be your anchor as you approach this New Year. Leave what is behind you in God's hands, and press on to your future that is ahead (Philippians 3:13-14). ■



*Kathy Krentkowski is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and sees clients in our Schererville, IN location.*

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shame by sending his Son to die on the cross as an offering. As sinners we are guilty, period. Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit a light is shown on our sin and with his help we are able to move past our guilt and experience hope by walking in the light (1 John 1:7, NIV).

So, the next time that you feel ashamed or are guilty of doing something wrong, ask yourself:

**Where is this emotion coming from?**

**Is God trying to convict me of something?**

**How can I glorify God in this moment?**

**What do I do with these unpleasant emotions? Where do I go from here?**

I'll let you answer the first three questions on your own. But as for the last one, I'll meet you at the cross my friend - the only object that is able to carry the weight of all our sins so that we don't have to and where thankfulness abounds for all that Jesus has done. ■



*Katie DeYoung is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and sees clients in our Evergreen Park and Orland Park, IL locations.*