

Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement For The Real World

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I Am a Guilt Addict

By Janet Treadway

Some guilt comes from doing something that is really wrong. But too often we fall into the trap of feeling guilty for everything! Especially saying no...



AS I WALK UP TO THE PODIUM to tell my story, I look around the room at the many different faces. Mothers with worried looks on their faces, doctors, lawyers, used-car salesmen and even pastors are a part of this group that I am about to speak to. I notice people looking at their watches and pacing back and forth. What is missing from their faces is peace and calm.

The people in this group are people who are trying to live a good Christian life. People who go out and work very hard, and give much of their extra time to family, church and community. Besides having those things in common, we all share another thing that plagues us and robs us of peace of mind. We are guilt addicts.

Many of us are plagued by this from the time we realize that we have a conscience. So here I am, ready to give my confessions of guilt, naming all of the things that I feel guilty about (or most of them) from the time I get up in the morning to the time I close my eyes at night.

As I reach the podium, I immediately feel guilty when I look over the crowd and notice a man I had forgotten to reach out and say hello to. "Stop it, Janet," I remind myself. "This is why you are here. Janet, you are here to learn to regain more peace, to relax, to not beat up on yourself over everything. To overcome being a guilt addict!"

A testimony to guilt

As I regain control over my guilt, I begin to tell my story. It started when I was a little girl and was yelled at a lot about everything. I was called horrible names, placed into dark closets for not eating my oatmeal. Smacked in the face over anything that upset my dad. I was pounced on for everything I did. I can't remember when anyone told me I was a good girl or how special I was. So I worked harder to get people to love me.

Shortly after my fourth birthday I was placed in foster homes, and the cruel cycle continued infecting my young mind with guilt. Often I would hear, "If you don't behave, we will send you away," and they did. I was just a normal kid with



normal behavior problems. But I did not realize that at the time. I thought it was my fault. I did not belong to the foster families, so it was easy to send me packing when they no longer wanted to deal with me. It made me try harder, but there was always something that sent me packing.

Then I went home to my real parents when I was 14. My real father could be very loving, but most of the time he was very demanding and violent, as he had been when I was a little girl. I lived in fear every day when I was home with my parents. I tried once again to be very good and to please my parents, but it was not enough to stop the violence that was inflicted upon me.

I moved on into my adulthood bringing with me the habit of trying to please people so they would love me. I became very guilt-ridden. I wanted people to just love me; to not leave me or throw me away as I had experienced many times in my childhood. I just wanted to feel special. So I became a workaholic in the Church. I could not say no. If I did, I felt like a bad person. I was taught to serve, and that if I did not serve, I would not grow spiritually. So I signed every list to serve.



I even came up with ideas to serve more in the Church. I had many projects going at one time: the church bulletin, managing editor of a teen newsletter, social committee, information table, organizing potlucks--all on top of a job and family. I was working myself to death, but I still could not say no. If I did, I felt guilty.

Sound familiar? Yes, we should serve and be givers, but there is a balance. I did not have balance because of feeling guilty if I said no. It also made me feel loved and important when I was pleasing people. It seemed the only time I felt like a good girl was if I was working night and day in service to the Church and people.

If there were conflicts (and there are with any project that you are involved with), most of the time I would feel guilty--feel that it was my fault. Maybe I could have handled it differently. Probably I was the one who did something wrong. There are always people more than willing to help you along in feeling that guilt. It took away some of their guilt and responsibility if I blamed myself and felt guilty.

Guilty, guilty, guilty--that's how I felt most of the time.

I would feel guilty for skimping on my prayer life and contact with God. Guilty that I did not spend enough time with my kids. Guilty that my house was not as clean as it should have been. Guilty because I had to work and leave my kids with a sitter. I felt guilty for overeating and getting fat. Guilty that I said or did something that would upset someone. Guilty, guilty, guilty--that's how I felt most of the time.

Where's the peace? There was none because my life was filled with guilt over everything!

Can you relate to any of these things? Because you are the group of people in the room that I am addressing my story to. The guilt addicts are you, the reader, and I. You are the mothers, the salesmen, the church pastors, the doctors and lawyers, the people from all walks of life to whom I am pouring out my soul. You and I are the Christians who are filled with guilt all day long about something.

What is guilt?

Guilt is a key player in Satan's master plan of deception. As he weaves his web of guilt into our lives, we are often overcome by feelings of punishment, rejection and isolation. It is then that we are tempted to doubt the sincerity of God's forgiveness and grace. Many people do not know how to handle feelings of guilt. They become confused, frustrated and eventually give up. But God has a solution for handling guilt, and it is found within His Word.

There are two forms of guilt: a true one that brings us to repentance and a false one that comes from Satan.

False guilt is Satan's way of holding us back from becoming all that God has planned for us to become. His attack includes an arsenal of weapons-guilt over not meeting a parent's expectations, assuming responsibility for your parents' divorce, not pleasing your friends or not feeling accepted because you did not perform to others' standards.



People who are dealing with false guilt face a never-ending barrage of messages that shout, "You've failed!" "You haven't lived up to their expectations." "You've disappointed the people around you."

Guilt can invoke in us the deepest, most terrible feelings of loss, horror, anger, depression, low self-esteem and helplessness. Why did I do what I did? Why couldn't I have done more? Did I not do enough? Did I do too much? Did I say something to hurt their feelings? Did I wait too long?

In 1 John 4:18-19 it says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us."

The fact is many of us judge ourselves much too harshly over things that aren't sins. We feel overloaded with guilt for things that were simply mistakes (the classic "spilled milk") or that weren't even our fault. This false guilt does nothing to help us, but only hurts us.

True guilt is when we have sinned and broken God's laws, and God can use this to bring us to repentance and renewal with God (2 Corinthians 7:10-11).

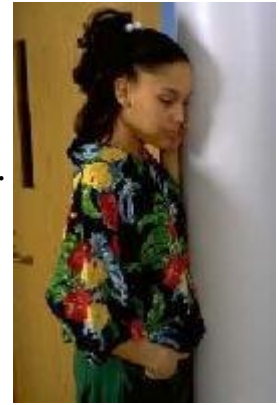
Why are we guilt addicts?

We fear the loss of relationships. So we end up treating the relationship as fragile and dependent on our constant compliance. We, like so many people, may feel guilty about saying no since we have been taught to go out of our way to avoid hurting people's feelings. So we end up feeling responsible for the other person's feelings as if his or her happiness depends on our agreeing. But really people are responsible for their own feelings.

We want approval. Many of us carry this over from our childhood. We did not receive the love, approval and nurturing from our parents that we should have received as a child. We feel we are a bad person if we have to say no to someone--we feel selfish and self-centered. We have been taught the virtue of self-sacrifice and self-denial, but haven't learned how to

balance that with health and family needs. We can end up being more concerned about what people think instead of God. We simply want to be loved and feel special.

It makes us feel good to be needed! We may feel flattered to be asked. It makes us feel important, but afraid that if we say no this time, we will never be asked again. I was once taught that when a door opens, if you don't go through it, it may never open again. But what if there are 100 open doors? You have to close something. These are examples of emotional hooks that can interfere with our freedom of action.



Taking control of our lives!

So how do we take back control of our lives without feeling guilty? How do we achieve a balance? We love helping people, but doing everything for everyone is wearing us out. What can we do to start getting some quality time back for ourselves? How do we tell family and friends that we can't do everything for them all the time? We hate saying no.

Here are some steps that I hope will help you.

Seek God first and His approval. God wants to forgive us. He knows your life from beginning to end and is willing to forgive it all and wipe away the true guilt that He uses to lead us to repentance.

Freedom from guilt begins with repentance, forgiveness and trust. If you repent and trust Jesus Christ as your Savior, then you stand before Him forgiven. The all-sufficient, sacrificial death of Christ on the cross paid your sin debt in full.

God is not harsh and demanding, and He does not expect us to be the savior of the world. Ask God to show you His will in your life and where you can best serve and help without being spread too thin. Remember people will let you down, but God will always be there to encourage and lift you up at the right time. Seeking Him first and His approval will help stamp out fear of what people think of you and give you balance in life.

God will always be there to encourage and lift you up at the right time.

James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift [including approval] is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

Jesus Christ tells us in Matthew 6:33 to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all the things we need and desire will be ours as well.

Bring each item that you feel guilty about (real or false) to God in prayer. Ask God to help you separate false guilt from the real guilt. Imagine yourself laying each sin and each feeling of guilt down at the Lord's feet. Confess any sins connected with the events. Repent and claim His sacrificial death as full payment for your sins.

Realize it's OK to say no. When you are overcommitted and feeling guilty, you have to realize that saying no is not such a terrible thing to do. It's not that you don't want to help

people or be there for them, but you need some control over your time. We have to realize we can't be there for everyone at all times and do everything that everyone wants us to do. This is when we have to start practicing how to say the word "no."

Realize the word "no" doesn't mean you are rejecting someone else. The word "no" is used to express rejection. That's why it is so hard for some of us to say no—we don't want to reject anyone. We have to look at it as if we are not rejecting, but expressing that we can't do it right at that moment. When we are known for always being there and able to do everything for everybody, it becomes a habit for everyone to reach out to us.

Let go of guilt. If it is not convenient for you to be or do something, say no. Let go of the guilt of feeling like you have to do everything for everyone else. This is what is making you say yes, when some of the time you should be saying no. Saying no to people can be handled in a very nice, but firm, way.

Lighten up on yourself and realize you are human and focus more on the positives in you.

Think it out clearly. Think it through when you are approached to do something. Is this something you want to do? Do you have the time to do it? If you know the answer to those questions is no, don't be afraid to say no to the people who are asking. Don't let anyone force you into doing something that you really don't want to do. By saying no, you are not forcing yourself to be in a situation you really don't want to be in. After people begin to realize that you won't always be available to do everything for everyone, you will be surprised at how people won't automatically ask you to do things for them all the time.

Getting in the habit of saying no can be hard. But once you learn how and when to say no, you will start making your life less stressful. Then you will have more time and energy to really help with the greatest needs, perhaps with the widows and those who are sick. Asking God for balance will help when facing an overwhelming number of needs to be cared for.

Learn more about the subject. Here are some great books to read:

When I Say No I Feel Guilty by Manuel J. Smith.

Don't Say Yes When You Want to Say No by Herbert Fensterheim.

Your Perfect Right by Robert E. Alberti and Michael J. Emmons.

Putting God first in our lives and asking for balance will give us the peace of mind we need. Understanding how marvelous and gentle our Heavenly Father is will take away guilt and give us total trust in Him. He will not throw us away. God is very long-suffering with us even when people are not. He will give us the balance to know when to say yes and when to say no.

So let's relax and stop feeling guilty over everything!

Enhance Your Prayer Life With Meditation

By Lawrence Keener

Prayer is something we do daily. Is there a way to enhance our prayers with silence?



P RAYER IS THE PRELUDE TO PEACE, the prologue to power, the preface to purpose and the pathway to perfection. Prayer is the most powerful thing we humans can do.

Prayer unites us with God, so that God's power can work through us. Prayer is so easy that we can do it with our eyes shut!

As significant as prayer is, however, there is another tool that can enhance our prayers and thus our spiritual vitality. That tool is meditation. The Bible, which is a book about turning the ordinary person into an extraordinary one, says that taking time to quiet ourselves before God in meditation can be beneficial.

We are familiar with references to meditation in the Bible such as Psalm 4:4, "Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still" and Psalm 119:15, "I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways."

Another powerful scripture on meditation is found in Joshua 1:8, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Even though David pours out his heart to God in the Psalms and encourages us to do the same in Psalm 62:8, he also says in verses 1 and 5, "Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation . . . My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him." The suggestion here is to take time to still our minds and consider what God is saying.

Taking time to quiet ourselves before God in meditation can be beneficial. While looking at Psalm 62, we also notice that verses 4 and 8 end with the word *Selah*. This Hebrew word is found 71 times in the book of Psalms and three times in the book of Habakkuk. *Selah* can indicate a pause or rest. Therefore, it

follows that it can be meaningful to include a *selah*, or an occasional pause, in our own prayers for quiet reflection.

Other scriptures also indicate that after praying, there is a time to simply wait in quiet expectation for help from God: "Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart" (Psalm 27:14). "It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD" (Lamentations 3:26). And in Isaiah 30:15: "For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.'"

The value of persistent prayer and meditation is not that God will hear us, but that we will hear Him. Remember in 1 Samuel 3:10, young Samuel said to the Lord, "Speak, for your servant hears." Samuel didn't say, "Listen, Lord, Your servant speaks." We know that God is aware of what we need before we ask, that He will supply all of the requirements for living, and that His eye is on even the sparrow.

Meditation supports our conscious "attunement" or at-one-ment with God so that we can be aware of His active presence and power in our lives. Scripture says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You . . ." (Isaiah 26:3). In the silence we are seeking God. His still small voice is always available, telling us the His perfect way to go.

Let's also be receptive to the indwelling Holy Spirit, which is always at work in and through us and in all circumstances and conditions to make things right. God will neither leave us nor forsake us, and is the strength to see us through. Remember that wherever we are, God is there too. God is real and with us at all times. A cell phone is not required to keep in contact with God! We may or may not receive instant answers, but we are honoring God when we surrender to Him in prayer and in silence.

Kneeling in our thoughts and hearts to the will of God is a key to conversion. We do have a part in having a spiritual consciousness. Paul says in Philipians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things." *A cell phone is not required to keep in contact with God!*

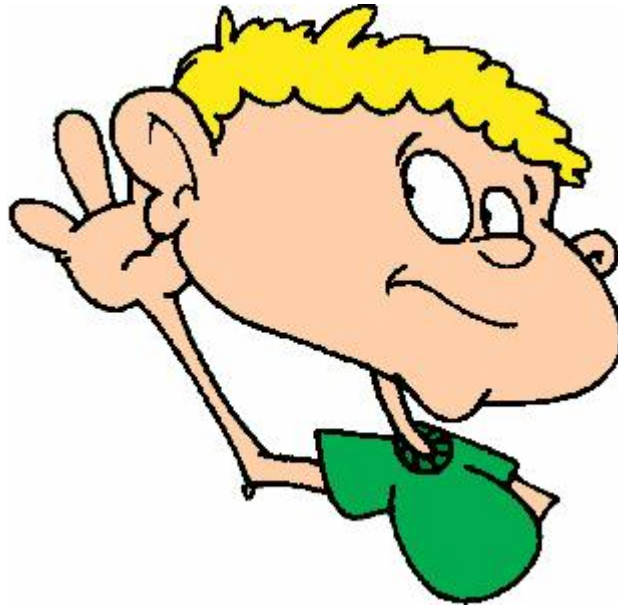
God can light up our lives with a new awareness of His presence and power. Allow Him to take us by the hand and lead us in the way and the truth and the life. Let's nurture our relationship with our Heavenly Father, maintaining the vision of our spiritual heritage and our glorious future in God's Kingdom. Allow the solutions, answers and even the ideas to come from God!

In conclusion, taking time to be silent can be helpful in receiving God's guidance and help. Meditation is a tool for spiritual health. God can speak to us, guide us, lead us, and reveal Himself to us as we pray and meditate.

They Are Listening...Are You?

By Lorelei Nettles

Are we really aware of what children overhear during our conversations, what could they possibly be learning from us?



MY BABY, MY SON. There he is, sitting among what seems like hundreds of Hot Wheels cars. He's made a makeshift ramp out of stray magazines and is making sputtering, growling car noises with his mouth. He's oblivious to what is happening around him...or is he? Without realizing it, he may hear more than I know. Often he seems totally absorbed in an activity, not hearing what I may say on the phone or to someone at church, when, in actuality, he's absorbing every word into his unbelievably exact memory.

As a good parent, I want what all parents want. I wish all good be known to my son, all truths, all knowledge; but I often feel that maybe I'm falling short. I also try to shelter him from the terrible evils of the world, which has become increasingly difficult in these days of violence and chaos. I worry he will be overburdened, or not grasp the meaning intended at his fragile age of six. He increasingly amazes me, though, with his sense of understanding. He possesses a dual understanding of the real world while holding fast to his own internal thoughts and rules. While the simple things in life like forgetting leftovers at a restaurant or a misplaced toy can ruin his day, he seems to have a sort of grip on the serious world. He keeps about him a simple reasoning of how things should be outside of his realm. The things I think would be most upsetting to him are not, and things I don't see as a problem come back to haunt us as tremendous fears for him.

Our children hear and understand more than we know.

He also makes a point of asking questions. Lots of questions! Once, while taking a bath, he called to me to ask, "Does God have a head?" It seemed silly, but it was a serious question my then five-year-old was asking. As time passed, he inquired more and more. "Is God a man or a woman?" Another occasion, upon hearing that a talk radio host was on

vacation (not one we even listen to), he said in a relieved tone, "Oh good! Now we won't have to listen about aliens or how people come back as bugs or something!" Though he was correct about that particular speaker who covers those subjects, I can only imagine that he heard an ad or something promoting the show. The point is our children hear and understand more than we know is clearly established.

At every turn I see that God's truths are getting through to him, not only from us, his parents; but also from those around him and from what he hears and learns at church. I sometimes overhear him during a service, commenting on what is being said, with a "That's right!" or a "huh?" as he looks towards me with a questioning look on his face.

He has been known to verbally attack family members who don't eat according to God's health laws. He has also corrected others when they speak of going to heaven when they die, (as he knows that the dead know nothing until resurrection.) While I'm not always pleased with his delivery of these messages, I do get the opportunity to see that he had been listening and learning all the while.

The most difficult time of year for him has finally passed. Since we don't observe Christmas, the month of December through the first week of January are difficult. He experiences a constant barrage of well-meaning adults who ask if he is excited about Santa and/or Christmas. He always answers, "We don't keep Christmas." But as we know, others don't always easily accept that belief. I found it interesting during the week following Christmas, when asked if he had received many gifts, he responded with the usual, "We don't keep Christmas." but then added, "We don't really see the point of..." I was waiting to hear him finish this sentence, but he was abruptly cut off by the person asking the question, and couldn't remember later when asked. He is continually annoyed by these confrontations, and I see that it often weighs heavy on him emotionally. The world seems to be constantly tugging at him. He wondered aloud this year what harm there would be in just sharing presents at Christmas.

A child has an unblemished view of things and holds no real grudges.

I think it is most important to watch for those moments when our children are overtaken with confusing or conflicting information. We must be there to listen and discuss the misinformation with them, to allow them to open up and not feel like they are doing or saying anything wrong, and then calmly go over things with them. I did this with my son on the issue of sharing gifts and he soon saw the harm and understood better the blessings he already has in his life.

God tells us in Proverbs 22:6 to lead our children in the way they should go. I don't necessarily believe that means pounding the law in to them, but more so in being the examples we are expected to be, and being there, to answer the easy and often very tough questions.

One of the best insights I have into my son's way of thinking is hearing his nightly prayers. While I am sometimes in awe of his caring heart, he is also often a reminder to my husband and me of how we ourselves should be thinking. In recent prayers he has expressed worry for all who are without enough food, he's asked for God to heal the sick, that America be done with bombing Afghanistan and that Bin Laden be caught so terrorism would



come to an end. He prays for peace, he prays for people to love one another, he prays for the major, but also the very minor things in life. Oh...and he prays for snow, even in August. He loves snow.

What have I learned? To trust that he sees, hears and understands more than I will ever know. I've also been reminded of the things I often overlook. Things I should be thinking or praying about myself. Sometimes it's the little things that make a difference. I understand God's plan a little clearer sometimes when I see it through my child's eyes. A child has an unblemished view of things and holds no real grudges. He continually amazes me with the knowledge he holds in subjects I had no idea he was even aware of. I have also learned that there is a lot of truth to the old

saying, "little pictures have big ears." Children are listening when we are unaware of it. Children understand more than we give them credit for, but they also can be led astray, oh, so easily. Listening and watching my own words and deeds are the most important things I can do for both my child and other children around me.

So, I guess I will always worry for him, want for him and try to protect him. In the long run, though, he will come away with more than I can give him with my words. He will watch and listen to everyone and everything around him as all children do. All I can hope for is that what he sees and hears is mostly good, and that what isn't good, will show itself as such to him.

So remember, they are LISTENING. Are you?

Absolutely No Absolutes!

By Robert Berendt

Are there absolutely no absolutes, or does our faith in God show us that there absolutely are?



ONE OF MY FAVORITE SUBJECTS in university years ago was philosophy, although it amazes me that people can get so adamant about things that have no substance or that are ill defined. Philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge. That is a noble endeavor, but in the hands (or minds) of men, it can become dangerous.

I recall a discussion that I had with a very good student who became very emotional. He contended that there were no absolutes. Our professor allowed the debate to go on, and this fellow became quite heated. Finally, he stood up and pounded his desktop and shouted, "Can't you see that there are no absolutes?" All the other students had stopped the discussion long before this point. I quietly asked him: "Are you absolutely sure that there are no absolutes?" He saw the point right away and the discussion ended. Here was an absolute that he himself had defined. The clear conclusion must be that there are absolutes.

Looking for stability

Although we humans have become accustomed to a state of flux, we would like something concrete in our lives, to stabilize and steady us. Confidence can easily be shattered by uncertainties. We need to be bold and confident in order to be strong when we face life's many tests and trials. Confidence grows from small successes until we are more and more certain about our steps.

I recall my first few days in high school in a new town. Our small busload of students arrived, and I was one of three students from our town in grade ten. We were the new kids on the block, and we were not

sure we were going to like it here. As we met some active and nice students and got involved in hockey, table tennis and anything else that was happening, we began to feel more accepted. The doubts began to fly away and be replaced with confidence. Almost all of us go through this pattern as we mature. Later in life we will learn to control our doubts and fears. However, even adults are sometimes driven to an unsteady state by events that life brings. A grave illness, sudden loss of a friend or family member or job loss can cause great upheavals. We need an anchor.



We need to be bold and confident in order to be strong when we face life's many tests and trials.

Jesus' disciples had doubts and uncertainties until they saw the resurrected Christ. It took some effort and time until their doubts vanished and they became confident and bold. They all fled from Gethsemane. Peter denied Jesus three times. Luke 24:4-5 and 11-12 are verses that show the uncertainty in those who loved Jesus: "And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead?' ...And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened."

It is not a sin to feel uneasy and confused. God tells us to ask and to seek--He wants to give confidence to His children. In Philippians 4:13 Paul boldly states: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Paul had every reason to think that Christ would not accept him. He had persecuted the Church. In 1 Corinthians 15:9 Paul refers to himself as the least of the apostles because of his conduct before conversion. But he became convinced--absolutely sure--that God had forgiven him and was using him to serve the very Church he had plagued.

The anchor of hope

God does not leave His people without an anchor. Hope is our anchor. Hebrews 6:17-19 informs us that God wanted to show the absolute immutability of His counsel, "Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil." He wants us to know that we know the truth. That hope is sure and steadfast and it was confirmed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Over 500 people witnessed the events of Christ's return to life (1 Corinthians 15:1-11). Paul said that Christ had appeared to him as well--though almost a decade after His death. Nobody could convince Paul that there were no absolutes. This hope is not based on flimsy or non-existent evidence. There can be no doubt for a mind open to reason and evidence.

Are you absolutely sure that there are no absolutes?

Our minds are physical and we cannot grasp spiritual truths of and by ourselves (1 Corinthians 2:11-14). God supplies His Holy Spirit to enable our minds to become spiritually oriented. That in itself is a miracle. The Holy Spirit guides and leads us into the truth. Humans are spiritually

blind without that direct help from God. That is one of the reasons that we use subjects like

philosophy to try to prove there are no absolutes, because if that were true, then there would be no God. Satan would like us to believe that. We cannot search God out with human reasoning. We have to wait until He calls us (John 6:44).

Scripture tells us that God calls many: "So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen" (Matthew 20:16). Few are chosen because few fully respond to God's call. Some excuses parallel what we read in Luke 14:16-24. It seems many of the great and successful of this world have little time to heed God's call. Often it is the poor and needy who are ready to listen and to respond.

When we think of absolutes--we can be absolutely sure there are some. God's existence is an absolute. Our death is an absolute. Eternity that lies ahead is an absolute. Since God is an absolute, all of His laws, values and actions are absolute. We can see the snowball building. It starts with a belief that God exists. Without that, we have no starting point, and we cannot please Him nor reach Him. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Philosophers prefer having no absolutes, because then they believe they have an excuse to be free thinkers.

Romans 1:19 tells us that God has shown mankind a lot of proof about His existence, "because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them." There is evidence everywhere for those who wish to see. It is our problem, as humans, that we refuse to see. We develop ideas and theories of our own and even though they are totally wrong, we will bet our lives on those ideas--and lose. A famous American once said, "Give me liberty or give me death." Brave words, just as long as our definition of liberty is right. God knows our minds, and in His wisdom, He has prevented humans from having access to a deeper understanding. God has allowed a veil of blindness to come upon people on this earth.



The most important question you can ask is, "Does God exist--and if so, what does He think of me?" He says He is not far from each one of us (Acts 17:27) and if we seek we will find and if we knock He will open to us (Luke 11:9). A broken and contrite heart will not be despised (Psalm 51:17).

Request our free booklet titled [Does God Exist?](#) It will give you much to think about. When you do, ask for a subscription to [The Good News](#) magazine (also free). It's sure to stimulate your thought process and affect your philosophies of life.

Virtual Christian Magazine Editorial

Don't Let Praise for Others Pass You By!

By Lynn Marshall

A personal experience taught me the power of encouragement.



A YEAR AGO I WORKED WITH A DOZEN other ladies in a busy office. Looking back over the course of that year at work I know I cheated some of my fellow workers. I'm sure if you were to personally ask them about it, they wouldn't agree. But in my heart I know I did. Noted American poet of the early 1900s, Edgar Guest, penned it well in his poem *The Cheat*. He wrote this about what is on my mind.

*I cheated a good friend yesterday,
Kept what was his and went on my way
WRONGED him by my SILENCE--for in haste
I let a glad thought go to waste.*

*The praise was his by right to hear
To him belonged my word of cheer
In silence, though, from him I turned
And cheated him of what he'd EARNED.*

More familiar to us perhaps is King Solomon, who wrote similarly: "Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it is within your power to act" (Proverbs 3:27).

So I ask occasionally, why do we withhold encouragement when we know it puts strength into others? I know for me that I often think of doing it, but, as the poem says, "in haste" find I've moved onto something else. Other times it may be not being sure whether our words will be appreciated.

Such was brought home to me some 12 years ago while organizing a three-day equestrian coaches exam. There was one lady who was an excellent rider, in fact she was already a coach and had even been a reserve for the Olympic team. But there are many aspects to these coach exams and, though she was a superb rider, she failed.

She was bitterly disappointed and somewhat angry with the coaching system. I knew where her trouble lay and how she could easily pass if she tried again. So I bought her the most beautiful card I could find, but hesitated to send it as I knew she was angry and upset with everyone who was part of her exam, which included me at the time. I did, however, send the card, but was certain it would not be well received. I said something like, "Don't give up now, we'll help you, I know you can do it."

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As the weeks went by with no reply, I was now certain it hadn't been well received. I imagined her tearing it up into little pieces and stomping on them in her long black riding boots.

About two months later a complete stranger came up to me at a horse show and asked if she could buy me a coffee. Over a cup this person explained how she knew I had sent a card to her best friend. She wanted to tell me how much it had helped her. She explained that though her friend was not at all a sentimental type, she had in fact carried that card around with her for weeks. She did later come back into the coaching system, took the exam the following year and passed. In some small way I had contributed to her success, yet at the time almost never sent the card at all.

One of my favorite scriptures from Hebrews fits into all this too. It says we should be "encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25, NRSV).

So I try harder these days to not let a good thought of praise for someone pass me by. I've found when in doubt whether someone needs it, take the action the Nike motto suggests: "just do it." You won't regret it. And the other person may be greatly encouraged by your words.