



There are a lot of "free" people who are imprisoned within a prison. They are imprisoned by their past wrongdoing. Their own hearts have condemned them causing them to be further isolated in the solitary confinement of their own guilt. But, the human heart is not made to bear the burden of perpetual guilt.



Assuming all is working as it should be, the conscience is designed to be a moral compass. It sends an alarm when we are about to do something that is not right. If we ignore the alarm and do the wrongful act anyway, what usually follows is a sense of guilt or remorse.

Guilt is a God-given emotion, and it has a specific purpose. It was never intended to be the end result, but a critical tool that is designed to motivate us towards freedom. Ironically, guilt, when misunderstood or misused, does the opposite of what it is intended to do, and instead of being a motivational tool that leads us to freedom, it becomes a binding impediment that keeps us locked up in the darkness of secrecy and shame. The ultimate purpose of godly guilt (or remorse or sorrow) is to motivate us to unlock the door that leads to forgiveness and repentance. Guilt, as God intended, is a key.

There are five critical steps in the use of a key: 1) identification; 2) examination; 3) comprehension; 4) admission; and 5) rotation. If we want to unlock a door, the key is first identified, then examined; assuming we understand what the key is for, we insert it into the lock and turn it. The guilt key is to be used in much the same way.

The guilt key is identified when we become aware of our wrongdoing (conviction). Once we identify the guilt key, we must take a closer look at what we did that caused us to feel guilty and why we did it (self-examination). This is the point where guilty feelings can be the most intense. This is also the point where a lot of people get stuck. When we're bound by guilt, it is because we are holding onto the key but we don't yet understand how to use it. We must understand that guilt is a *motivator*. Grasping the understanding that guilt is a motivator is like an inserted key grasping a lock. Guilt is motivating you to admit your wrongdoing and turn away from it.



When you admit your wrongdoing to God (confession), God has *promised* to forgive you and He will not hold your wrongdoing against you. Accept God's forgiveness. If God is no longer holding your wrongdoing against you, neither should you. Why stay imprisoned when you have been pardoned? Forgive yourself, but don't stop there. There's one more step: *turn the key*. When you turn the key, you turn away from the behavior that locked you up in the first place and determine not to do it again (repentance). *Click!* The guilt key has served its purpose. There is no need to hold on to it any longer. The door is unlocked.



Even after you have used the guilt key the way it should be used, there may be times when you are tempted to pick it up and hold it again. Don't. There is no need to: *the door is already unlocked*. When your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart (1 John 3:20) and He has empowered you to use the key He has given you to make you free and keep you free. If you find yourself back in the solitary confinement of your guilt, and you have gone through the five steps of using the guilt key, realize that what you are experiencing is *false* guilt not godly guilt. Remind yourself that the door has already been unlocked and walk in the freedom of forgiveness and repentance.



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