



Freedom from Condemnation—Part 2

This article is from David Ferguson of the Intimacy Therapy Network.

The Pharisees once brought a woman to Jesus who had been caught in the act of adultery. They were condemning her and undoubtedly had hoped that Jesus would sanction their assault. Jesus addressed her sin but did not condemn her, *“Neither do I condemn you, go now and leave your life of sin”* (John 8:3–11).



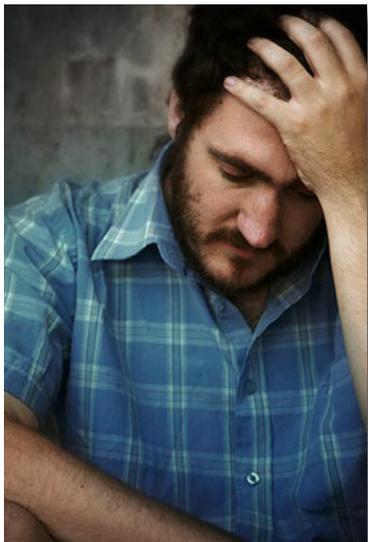
RELATIVE TO THE NATURE OF CONDEMNATION

Condemnation is general in nature. Guilt and conviction are always specific.

Condemnation communicates a general, somewhat illusive attack, *“You’re a liar, a worthless person, a terrible Christian.”*

Whereas, guilt is always specific. *“What you said at lunch today was a lie.”*

Condemnation leaves us frustrated. (How do we deal with *“you’re a liar, you’re a worthless person”*?) Guilt is specific enough that we can properly deal with it. (*“Father, forgive me for telling a lie at lunch today.”*)



RELATIVE TO THE POINT OF ATTACK

Condemnation attacks who we are—our identity. Guilt/conviction addresses specific acts that we did. Condemnation attempts to tear down our worth as human beings and our value as believers, *“You’re worthless. You’ll never amount to anything. You’ll never change.”* True guilt addresses specific acts, things we did or didn’t do, *“You were insensitive to your spouse.” “You neglected your son.”*





Through the provision God has made for us in Christ, He separates “who we are” from “what we do.” God says to the believer, *“I love you and accept you regardless of what you do or don’t do. I can love you and hate your sin at the same time. What I think about your sin will not affect My love toward you.”* That’s the basis upon which Paul declares, *“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8).

RELATIVE TO HOPE

Condemnation ultimately steals hope for the future. Guilt/conviction can ultimately produce hope.

Condemnation produces hopelessness, despair, discouragement, despondency, and gloom. If I am a worthless Christian, I have no hope.

True guilt, though it initially hinders fellowship with God and produces somber feelings of godly sorrow, can ultimately produce feelings of hope, expectation, and confidence. Knowing that God loves me, regardless of my sin, gives me confidence that the essence of our relationship will not be affected by what I do. Realizing that God has provided a way for me to properly deal with my sins (*through my confession and His forgiveness*) gives me hope.

Our proper response to condemnation and guilt/conviction:

A sense of condemnation is always based on lies (*from the father of lies*). We must identify the lies, reject them, and gratefully receive the truth, particularly focusing on God’s truth concerning our identity in Christ. Sometimes this process can be even more fully experienced as we share our thoughts and struggles with a journey mate because we can benefit from the loving, empathic care of a loved one to help dispel the lie and to affirm to us the truth. *“Every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses”* (Matthew 18:16). The proper response to guilt and conviction is to experience godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10), confess to all offended parties (1 John 1:9; James 5:16), and to gratefully receive God’s forgiveness (Ephesians 4:31-32).

