

BETTER LIVING FOR TODAY

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For the Book Worm

Blue Genes

takes a fresh look at breaking free from the chemical imbalances that affect your moods, your mind, and your life. This book offers practical help, filled with case studies and the latest information. Readers will find encouragement and easy-to-understand clinical insights into a wide range of emotional, psychological, and mental health disorders including ADHD, depression, stress, panic attacks, low self-esteem, hormonal imbalances, and more. Written by Paul Meier, MD, Todd Clements, MD, Jean-Luc Bertrand, DMD, David Mandt, Sr., MA. A Focus on the Family Resource published by Tyndale House, 2005.

Overcoming the "Victim Mentality"

God tells us that when someone we love suffers a loss and is weeping, we should "weep with those who weep." So it is quite obvious that there is absolutely nothing wrong with our friend feeling sad about his loss, and even feeling so sorry for himself in that situation that he weeps. In fact, not only is it fine, we are encouraged to weep with him. Jesus felt very sorry for himself right before He died on the cross, sweating drops of blood from the anxiety of it all, and asking the Father if there was any way out of it. Then He accepted His Father's will and went ahead and died for us. Was it a sin for Jesus to feel sorry for Himself for the physical and emotional pain He was about to bear? Of course not. The key is finding a mature, godly balance in our self-pity—a balance we have no right to decide for anyone else. Each Christian has to prayerfully seek insight into the intensity and extent of grieving they need to do to keep everything in perspective.

Christians make mistakes on both sides of this debate over self-pity. Some are real "macho," thinking we should stuff our feelings, pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps, tough it out, and consider any self-pity whatsoever as a sin. But if they were right, Jesus would have been sinning by feeling sorry for Himself for being the victim of an upcoming crucifixion and the temporary separation from His Father. And if Jesus sinned, then we are not forgiven for our sins, because it took a perfect sacrifice to pay for all our sins. There are many passages of scripture in Ecclesiastes and many other places in the Bible that tell us there is a time for weeping and grieving and even getting angry at those who have victimized us (Ephesians 4:26, Leviticus 19:17-19).

We all can expect waves of sorrow and self-pity due to losses and difficult circumstances throughout our lives. When a wave comes, go ahead and cry, pray, and share your sad feelings with a friend who will cry with you. That's the godly way to deal with tough losses in this life.

But let's take a look at the other end of the self-pity spectrum. Some people are so narcissistic that they feel God owes it to them to be able to go through life without rejection and other losses. They even think they deserve to go through life



Paul Meier, M.D.

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disease-free. They think God owes them financial success. They think God owes them total protection from all the criminals and tyrants in this world. And when they have a dispute with someone, they assume that they are totally right and the other person is totally wrong. They assume the victim role, even if they are being selfish in that dispute and, in reality, the other person is being victimized by them.

It's fine to grieve over being victimized when we really are, but it is sinful and foolish to wallow in self-pity for being a victim when we truly are not. Narcissists (selfish people) do that. Paranoid people do that too. Paranoid people are overly sensitive, overly controlling, arrogant, angry, and self-righteous—they think it is always them and God against others and Satan. In reality, it is their own sinfulness and spiritual warfare that is driving them into this false victim role.

And even really nice people who are legitimate victims of theft, rejection, abuse, or manipulation can grieve too much. Let's say you were 21 years old, engaged, and your partner deceives you and is running around on you, so you break off the relationship. Were you a victim? Yes, of course you were. Should you feel sorry for yourself for the loss you just suffered? Of course you should, with considerable weeping. Would you feel sorry for your best friend if that happened to her? You wouldn't be very godly or compassionate if you didn't. Right? If so, then shouldn't you treat yourself with the same dignity and compassion you would give to your best friend? Of course you should. But if you spent the next ten years crying every day and wallowing in self pity, thinking erroneously that your life has been totally ruined, then you have crossed the line from being a legitimate victim with legitimate grief into playing the victim role, refusing to recover and move on with the help of God and friends, or even a

professional counselor if needed.

Most of my clients who find themselves locked in a victim role gladly make the break from that trap and take responsibility for developing a fun and meaningful life, so they recover from their "stuck" states of depression. Most of the time, these victim roles were well entrenched from their families of origin, often in the first six years of their lives. Gaining insights into the various ways they learned to believe the lie of externalization sets them free. Externalization is the incorrect belief that your happiness or lack thereof depends on people and circumstances outside yourself. It pushes you into the victim role over and over again.

Having meditated on scripture daily for the past fifty plus years, I believe a more biblical view is that we often are the victims of tragedies in this fallen world, but we can learn and grow from every loss after we have properly grieved that loss. It is still our responsibility to protect ourselves from external abuse, to forgive past abusers (turning vengeance over to God—Romans 12), to love and be loved by friends who know all our secrets and love us anyway, to be useful and productive for God, and to develop the attitude the Apostle Paul had. Paul rejoiced that he had the **opportunity** to suffer for Christ and learned to be content with **whatever** state he was in at the time.



Dr. Paul Meier is co-founder of Meier Clinics and has an active practice in the Richardson, Texas, clinic. He received his masters degree in Cardiovascular Physiology from Michigan State University and his medical degree from the University of Arkansas College of Medicine. He completed his psychiatry residency at Duke University Medical Center, and received a degree from Dallas Theological Seminary.

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"For I know the plans I have for you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

Editor & Designer: Sandy Newport

Asst. Editor: Nancy Meier Brown

Proofing: Christine Zielinski

Contributing Writers: Dr. Paul Meier, Dr. Kristen McKnight

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Comments, suggestions, and subscription:

Write: Meier Clinics, Attn: Sandy Newport, 2100 Manchester Road, Suite 1510, Wheaton, IL 60187-4561
E-Mail: snewport@meierclinics.com
Call: 800-848-8872, x338

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Why Guilt?

by Kristen McKnight, Psy.D.

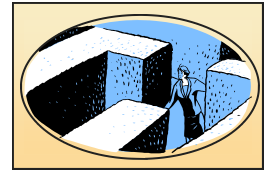
We all experience the inner turmoil of guilt from time to time in our lives, and for some of us it can be excruciatingly difficult to muddle through these feelings of guilt. At times, feelings of guilt become confusing and we may question, "Is this guilt coming from God?" Let's take a closer look at trying to sort out these guilty feelings.

Guilt can be broadly categorized into two types: true guilt and false guilt.

True Guilt

True guilt comes from God as the Holy Spirit convicts a person of sin (John 16:8-11). True guilt is healthy for us because it helps us identify and address the guilt properly (the confession of sin found in Luke 15:21). Feelings of true guilt enable a person to make appropriate moral decisions. What are some characteristics of true guilt?

1. It is from God. The Holy Spirit convicts us that we did something wrong and we need to acknowledge it and deal with the sin honestly.
2. It is specific. We can identify and name the specific sinful behavior or thought.
3. It results in feelings of alienation or separation from God (Romans 5:10; Eph. 2:11-13).
4. It is positive because it can lead to repentance (I John 1:9).
5. It results in God's forgiveness and grace (Philippians 3:4-11).
6. It brings freedom and restoration in our relationship to God (Galatians 5:1).



It results in healing and Christian growth and maturity.

False Guilt

Those of us who struggle with false guilt tend to

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Mission Statement

Meier Clinics is committed to providing excellent mental health care services that address the whole person—physically, emotionally & spiritually.

PICTURE THIS. . .you suddenly find yourself single after years of marriage and are not only coping with the demands of being a single parent but making it on less than half the income you had before. . .you have tried to deal with your depression but it isn't getting any better and you don't have the resources you need to pay for the necessities of life and get the medical care you need. . .your child is depressed and acting out but you can't afford the cost of ongoing counseling care for them. What do you do? It's a tough spot to be in but countless people are facing these situations and worse daily. Meier Clinics has been able to provide charitable mental health care to many through the years because of people who care about others. Please consider partnering with us and help bring hope and healing to those who could not otherwise afford the care they need and deserve. Your tax-exempt donation can make the difference in someone's life today!

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feel overly responsible for other people, have poor personal and interpersonal boundaries, and tend to be quite hard on ourselves. We may have unrealistically high or perfectionistic standards for ourselves and others, and we do not freely receive God's grace and forgiveness into our lives. People laden down with false guilt can blame themselves for nearly every problem or conflict. These people may have histories that include critical and harsh parents, and may have grown up feeling loved on the basis of performance rather than for "just" being a child made in the image of God. What are some characteristics of false guilt?

1. It is general. False guilt is NOT the result of an identifiable sin.
2. It does not come from God.
3. It never gets resolved. It only gets worse because there is no resolution to false guilt. A person will only try harder and harder to please or be perfect, but of course that doesn't work (because we can never be perfect).
4. The person believes "who I am is bad" instead of "what I did was wrong."
5. It contributes to and reflects low self-esteem.
6. People with false guilt are overly sensitive to hurting others and have difficulties in setting limits and boundaries in relationships.

People with false guilt tend to be people-pleasers.

When we experience feelings of guilt, we need to take some time to differentiate between true guilt and false guilt so that we can respond to these feelings appropriately. If we are experiencing true guilt, then we need to confess, repent, and accept God's grace and forgiveness into my life. If the

guilty feelings are the result of false guilt, then we can identify the guilt as such and learn to "let go" of the false guilt. Once we have identified the feelings as false guilt, we can choose not to obsess and ruminate over these false messages. We can learn to develop healthy boundaries both personally and in relationships. We also need to develop healthy self-worth, value and identity in our relationship to God as his beloved children – rather than through failed attempts at perfectionism and people-pleasing. These are steps that can set a person free from false guilt.

(Author's note: There have been many books written on the topic of guilt, and I have found once such book particularly helpful: *Christ's Touch Changes Us* by K. Watson-Jarvis and R. Bishop.)



Kristen McKnight, Psy.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist in the Wheaton and Deerfield offices of Meier Clinics. Married for 32 years to Scot (a Bible professor and author), Kristen has two adult married children. She has worked at the Meier Clinics of Illinois since 1991.

The best angle from which to approach any problem is the try-angle.



CORPORATE OFFICE
2100 Manchester Road, Suite 1510
Wheaton, IL 60187-4561