Contemporary Comments on the Adult Sabbath School Lesson

[Title] Guilt
[Text] Genesis 3:8-13; 1 John 1:9; Psalm 32; 1 Timothy 4:1,2; Matthew 26:75; Romans 8:1

Most of us have experienced feelings of guilt in our lifetime. It is a predictable part of the human experience.

According to Seattle, Washington's Daily Weekly, after an hour of deliberation January 21, 2011, a Bernalillo County, New Mexico jury found Phil Mocek not guilty after refusing to show his ID and for using a video recorder at a TSA checkpoint in 2009.¹

When accused of a crime you didn’t commit, the words “Not Guilty” are essential to being able to move forward in life.

Guilt, however, is not always connected to a crime. In fact guilt can be both justified and unfounded. The emotional sense of feeling guilty may be associated with or caused by shame, fear, sorrow, anger, distress about something for which we are not remotely responsible.

This past weekend, the question, “What makes you feel guilty?” was posed to a few friends on Facebook. No respondents reported that they had committed a crime or even a sin.

Several respondents indicated that family was a source of guilty feelings. Mothers recounted feeling guilty about not being a good enough mother to their children. One Mom felt that she had to lie that she was happy having a second son when she felt the “perfect family” consisted of a girl child as well as a boy child. Another felt guilty for having to set boundaries with a family member that another member in the family thought unreasonable.

Use of one’s time was another guilty factor: not using one’s time wisely or resting when there was still energy to keep working.

One friend asked if the feelings he still had from an experience that occurred to him while in college was guilt or shame—a flashback every time he passed a certain building. Another admitted to being overly sensitive and ashamed that she keeps ruminating on past events when something someone said or did “hurt” her.

Our Bible Study this week reminds us that we can suffer from guilt for the wrong reasons. It is a tool of the Devil who loves to keep our negative emotions stirred up! We are not held responsible for the behavior of others or for unforeseeable events.

On the other hand guilt can motivate us to make wrongs right and experience the freeing forgiveness of the One who bore our guilt so that we can live life free from this potentially paralyzing emotion.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

~ck

¹ Seattle Weekly