

# Living Without Regret

By Rita Langeland

**Regret:** Sorrow or disappointment with self for something you did or did not do; or over a circumstance you cannot repair.

Regret can operate like an insidious cancer that slowly grows and invades healthy tissue if it is not removed. Allowing your mind to dwell on thoughts of regret can deepen the hold that regret has on your life. Regret has been a human struggle since the Fall of Adam and Eve. We can find many scriptural examples of people struggling with regret. It is a condition that is familiar to mankind across cultures and generations.

Regret over a mistake in judgment is a common one. In the book of Daniel, we find that the Babylonian King Darius regretted signing a law that resulted in Daniel being cast into the lion's den. *And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.* (Daniel 6:14 NKJV) The King regretted a circumstance that he caused, yet could not repair. Many people have had regrets over a mistake in judgment that they made that resulted in hurt to another person.

The apostle Peter struggled with regret over something he did in a moment of weakness and fear. Peter denied knowing the Lord after the arrest of Christ by the Jewish religious leaders. *And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, "Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.* (Matthew 26:75 NASB) Many people have experienced similar regrets for something they did in a moment of fear.

A tremendously common regret is the regret people experience after giving in to a temptation to sin. One of Jesus' own disciples, Judas, betrayed Jesus in exchange for money. But when he regretted what he had done, he could not "undo" the damage. *Then Judas, who had betrayed him, regretted what had happened when he saw that Jesus was condemned. He brought the 30 pieces of silver back to the high priests and elders...(Matthew 2:3 ISV)*

One regret that torments many people around the world, is the regret that is experienced after someone dies. People often regret what they did not do for that person, or what was left unsaid or unreconciled in the relationship. King David had regrets after the death of his son Absalom wishing he had died in his place. *The king was deeply moved and went up to the gate chamber and wept. As he walked, he cried, "My son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you, Absalom, my son, my son!"* (2 Samuel 18:33 HCS Bible)

Note the key words "If only..." in this scripture. This a clue that can help reveal any regrets you may be holding in your heart. Have you found yourself saying and thinking, "If only...?"

With the reality facing us that regrets are so common in life, how can we have any hope of living free from them? The truth is that there is no relief for the sorrow, griefs and regrets in life without God's help. In fact, without God, regrets, griefs and sorrows can overwhelm a person with a sense of despair and hopelessness and that can have a deadly result!

We find this truth stated plainly in 2 Corinthians 7:10b Amplified Bible: *...But worldly grief (the hopeless sorrow that is characteristic of the pagan world) is deadly [breeding and ending in death].*

But with God's help, all regret can be vanquished from your life. When we come to God with our failings that have led to the regrets in our lives, through repentance, God forgives us and cleanses us from them. ***For having sorrow in a godly way results in repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regrets.*** (2 Corinthians 7:10a ISV) This is GOOD NEWS!

Here are some vital KEYS to living free from regret:

## I. Keys to Living Free From Regret

- a) When someone hurts you, make it your habit to forgive them instantly. Don't hold a grudge against them or withhold love from them (even briefly) so that you will not have any regret in the event of their sudden death. Keep communication and your heart OPEN with family members to the best of YOUR ability.
- b) Ask God's Forgiveness for any sin (of commission or omission) that has led to any regrets you have struggled with. Then choose to believe God's Word that you are forgiven and cleansed of it according to the promise found in 1 John 1:9 (NASB) ***If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***
- c) LAY DOWN THE SWORD AGAINST YOURSELF! Forgive yourself and stop beating yourself over that failing from the past. This is a choice you must make. Paul the Apostle was personally responsible for the imprisonment of many Christians and the death of at least one (Stephen in Acts 7). But after he accepted Christ and His forgiveness, Paul had to make a choice so that those memories of his failures and sins would not torment him for the rest of his life. He wrote these words in Philippians 3:13 – ***but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead...*** This is what you must be committed to do also.
- d) Allow God to direct your future without constantly looking back and mourning over the past mistakes, failures and omissions of your life! Embrace what God wants to do with your future! The Lord is speaking these words to you personally: ***Behold, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs forth; do you not perceive and know it and will you not give heed to it? I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*** Isaiah 43:19 (Amplified)
- e) Remember His promise: 2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV) ***Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.***