

Good Grief

For godly grief produced a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death. ~ 2 Corinthians 7:10

Discover the Context

2 Corinthians 7



What does it mean when the Bible speaks about being miserable, mourning, and weeping for our sins (James 4:8-10)? How does your sin affect your relationship with God? With others? With yourself?



“Genuine repentance is not a convenient escape hatch after a life of folly. It means admitting specific wrong, recognizing your offensiveness to God, changing course, turning to Christ, and wishing with all your heart you had never made the mistake you now despise”

~ Kevin DeYoung
The Hole in Our Holiness



Do you know someone who is always saying they're sorry, even when they haven't done anything wrong? Is it possible to tell if sorrow is worldly or godly grief in someone else? What about in your own heart?

“I’m sorry.” Or ☹️. We have lots of different ways of expressing our sorrow when we have done something wrong. Maybe you have had to humble yourself this summer and say you’re sorry to another staff member. May you had to say it to a camper when you responded in anger or didn’t keep a promise. But did you know there are two different kinds of sorrow we can have when we do something wrong?

Worldly grief. Many have mastered the art of apologizing without actually saying the words, “I’m sorry.” Or they diminish the apology by saying, “I’m sorry you were offended or hurt”—essentially placing the problem on the other person. Usually the only time we hear any apology at all is when one has been caught.

Paul says such grief is worldly because it is produced only when one’s sin has been made public. It can be identified by a reluctance to admit guilt or offer amends. It appears shallow or dismissive (I’m only doing this because I have to). It is often performed as an attempt to get out of trouble (If I do this, then it all goes away).

Such grief only leads to death because it doesn’t change the behavior. Worldly grief is man-centered and doesn’t produce the heart change that is needed to bring about true repentance.

Godly grief. This is a sorrow that originates from the Holy Spirit’s convicting. It is a deep regret for the actions that were done because, first and foremost, it offended God and then because of its effect on yourself and others. God produces this sorrow in us so that it leads to repentance which leads to a change of behavior. This is a process that, instead of leading to death, leads to eternal life.

There will always be a need to apologize, but make sure your apologies flow from God’s work in your heart and not from the shame of your sin being exposed. When you see your sin as offensive to a holy God, your grief is truly good. (BHK)