

## GUILT & PUNISHMENT

When you feel guilt, an important characteristic of this feeling is that you should be punished. You should be punished because of the things you have done, or the wrong person you believe you are. Once you believe guilt is real, then you believe that you will soon be punished for the guilt, or the act you believe you are guilty of. Guilt always demands punishment, and since you fear punishment, this is the origin of fear.

Despite the seeming cause of fear in the world, the ultimate cause of fear is the punishment that guilt demands. As you operate with the mistaken belief that you are separate from spirit, your mind creates the obstacles to inner peace, which are the emotions of anger, fear and rage. Your mind begins the cycle that progresses from sin, to guilt, to fear, to the projection of anger and then to the justification of that anger. It turns out that the ultimate object of our fear is our creator. The fear of the creator is the final obstacle to peace. There is nothing more terrifying in the ego's thought system, than the belief that God himself will strike you dead for your transgressions towards God, whether or not you believe God exists.

As Voltaire once said, "God created man in his own image and then man returned the compliment." The image you hold of God is a mirror image projection of your own inner experience of guilt. Inadvertently you have transformed this loving god into a vengeful, hateful, wrathful god, and a god that will punish you for your sinfulness.

Remember as a child, those stories told about a wrathful god. They were often stories about an angry god that would destroy you for your transgressions. These stories have nothing to do with the unconditionally loving spirit that created everything. However, these stories do have everything to do with the wrathful god that mankind has projected outward, onto the world, from within.

Once this unholy trinity of sin, guilt and fear has been set into motion, it keeps cycling over and over, and there seems no way out of the cycle. However, the ego is always looking for a means of redemption. The ego looks for a way to protect us from the terrifying burden of coming into contact with our own self-hatred, our inner conflicts, or the terrifying belief that God is going to strike us dead.

In the ego's system based on separation, God has been turned into the enemy. So in the ego's system it is not God you can turn to for help with relief of the anxiety, fear and the feelings of self-hatred that you have. The only resource you have must be the ego itself.

Of course the ego is not a fool, the ego more than anything else wants to sustain its own existence. When you turn to the ego for help, the ego seems to have the answers. And one way to keep the ego in business is to get you to believe in it, to believe that it really does have all the answers. Since the ego can be defined as the belief in some form of

separation from spirit, all the ego has to do is get you to believe that the separation is real, that the separation from spirit has actually occurred. As the ego hooks you into the belief in the reality of sin, or the reality of sin as the justification of guilt, the cycle is engaged and the ego is in business.

The attraction of guilt is the most important element in the ego's thought system and a key element when working with this material. As long as you identify with the ego's thought system, you must also identify with the ego's need to keep you guilty. When you go to the ego for help, it says, yes, yes, I can help you. What the ego is secretly saying is that the help that I am going to give you is secretly going to perpetuate the very guilt you want to be free of. The ego does this in the following manner. When you have terrifying feelings and go to the ego for help, the ego says, "what you do with those feelings is push them down into the unconscious, you make believe that they do not exist." This is known as repression or denial. The mechanism of denial is very simple. It says, that if you do not see the problem, then it does not exist.

Just like an Ostrich, that sticks its head in the sand, if it doesn't see the problem, then the problem magically does not exist. If you don't feel like cleaning the house, then you can sweep the dirt under the carpet. Unfortunately, this doesn't work for long, as the carpet gets lumpy and sooner or later you trip over the lump. A similar thing happens with repressed guilt, repression doesn't work for long, because on some level the problem remains and builds up over time, ultimately getting your attention in one way or another.

The ego offers one other step that really takes care of the guilt. This step is the most important of all the psychological defenses, this step is projection. Projection is the dynamic that takes the guilt from inside you and projects it outside onto someone or something else. Almost literally hurling the guilt away from you onto someone or something in the outside world.

The ego tells you that this is the perfect way of getting rid of your guilt, because the guilt no longer exists in me it is in you. Internally, at that point, you say it is you who is responsible for all the misery, pain and suffering that I have in my life, it is not me. You are guilty and not me. You are the one who should be punished and not myself. Were it not for what you have done to me, then I would feel good about myself. This is what projection is. It is to shift the responsibility for all the problems you have, problems which originate internally from the belief in separation, and then to transfer that problem outside and to make someone or something outside of us responsible for our problems. It is you who is responsible for it, not me.

The means you use to keep distance between yourself and the guilt once you have placed the guilt on someone else, is to get angry. Anger, is defined as a strong feeling of displeasure. Anger defined from the ego's perspective as an attempt to justify the projection of guilt. As a projection placed on someone else, anger is never justified. The reason why anger or attack are never justified, is that it has no meaning, except that it seeks to justify both to the other person, to yourself, and to the world that someone else is to blame, someone else is the guilty person.

The meaning then, of all anger, is the attempt to shift the responsibility for the internal separation from God, seeing the separation not in me, but in someone else, they are denying their relationship with God, not I. From the ego's point of view, it doesn't make any difference who or what the object of projection is. It could be a person, a group of people, a country, it could be an idea, it could even be God. All that the ego cares about is that someone or something be found to take the blame.

This explains the tremendous personal investment you, as well as others throughout history have in finding somebody they can make into a scapegoat to blame for all their problems. This also explains the root cause of all prejudice, the attempt to find someone who can be judged not as good as, so you can get yourself off the hook. Keep in mind that this is the advice that the ego gives you to keep you free from guilt. Now what the ego doesn't tell you, is that the act of projection, is the best way of holding onto the guilt and being trapped by it in a never ending cycle.

The truth is, there is no way that anyone can get angry with anybody, whether it is expressed or keep as thought, without at the same time feeling guilty about it. Internally, you know the real reason that you are angry with someone else is that you are trying to escape from taking responsibility for yourself. If you felt perfectly at peace, you would never be angry. All anger is an attempt to say, "It is because of you, that I do not have the peace of spirit in my life."

Gossiping is an indication to childish behavior, an affirmation of being bound to a search for perfection, this search for right and wrong is another aspect of projection. Children do not take responsibility for their actions and in this respect their actions are dangerous. Lose lips sink ships, and more companies are destroyed by this behavior than any other. Adults know to set gossip aside. They know people make mistakes and have no problem communicating their feelings with another, rather than gossip about them. Adults take responsibility for their actions and know that other adults do the same, and that gossip is a form of withholding information that others need to make adjustments and corrections. Gossip is an attack, a form of competition.

Those who gossip are trying to win! It is self-betrayal of another flavor. Passing data through to someone else, or participating in listening to someone else gossip about another person or event, is the ego projecting feelings of guilt and separation out onto others or events, this act justifies the gossip and makes it real. Gossiping is an affirmation of separation, is a form of denial, and perpetuates guilt. What appears as an attack towards others, is really an attack directed towards self.

If you are gossiping, you use everything outside of self to justify your suffering. You are a leaky container, bound to jealousy, another aspect of separation, sabotaging your process and trying to inhibit others growth, out of jealousy. You take others down with you. It is the story that if I can't win, I'll kill everyone else or destroy the game so no one else can win either. Stop the gossiping, it is akin to complaining! Those who complain and gossip are crap magnets. If you have something to say, say it in the group. If your afraid to say it in the group, then it probably isn't useful or true.

