



# LIVE GUILT FREE

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## IS SOMEONE ELSE DETERMINING YOUR HAPPINESS?

By Tanya Curren

Basing your happiness upon someone else's reaction, opinion or attitude is dangerous. It is dangerous because it changes who God wants you to be in this world. It's poisonous to your soul because it causes you to put more value on their opinion than God's will. It is something that will most definitely bring you feelings of guilt, weigh you down and cause you a lot of frustration in life. And ultimately, it will cloud your purpose. I don't want this for you, and neither does God!

Freedom comes when you come to the realization that no other person on Earth should have control over you to the point of shaping your outlook of life or affecting your happiness. This is where you have to know who YOU are in Christ and who He created you to be. This can sound easy, right? But the reality is that for many it is so very difficult because they have been listening to so many opinions and following the feedback of the world that they don't know how to block that out and live their life – shape their destiny – based upon the ONE opinion that matters.

I'm no stranger to this and I've had to learn this the hard way. (Sometimes I wish I wasn't so hardheaded!) Let me give you a couple examples from my life of how God has shaped me, molded me and trained me to learn this concept.

### **BE COMMITTED, SOLD OUT, ALL-IN AND LIVE PASSIONATELY AS YOU FOLLOW GOD'S GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION**

I was a Kindergarten teacher when I got pregnant. We knew that I was going to stay home and raise our child, but had committed to finishing the year. During that year my teaching style and classroom got much attention from the district and I was interviewed and on television because the children were accelerating so well. This caught the eye of a principal from another district who called me in for a meeting. As he was praising my work, he told me that he wanted to hire me – straight up, right then. I told him that I was very thankful and flattered, but my husband and I had made a decision for me to stay home once I completed the school year. He completely ignored what I was saying and took a piece of paper and a pen and pushed it across the desk. He looked me in the eye and told me to write down a figure...any figure I wanted! He said he would hire me no matter what I wrote down. Wow. Ok...again, I was shocked and really flattered. Let's be honest, I knew I couldn't write down a dramatic ONE MILLION DOLLARS!!! (Oh, but that would have been fun – just to see his reaction!)

But, to have the temptation right in front of me really was overwhelming. I told him that I would go home and talk with my husband and pray about it. As excited as I was about having that surreal experience just happen, I knew in my gut that this is not what the Lord wanted for me. Just to be sure, Rick and I did pray

about it, but I knew. My peace just wasn't there. It didn't feel right and I knew that I had to follow what God put on our hearts for protecting my time with my baby.

I called the principal back the next day and told him my decision. He couldn't believe it and kept trying to talk me into taking the position. It was a little awkward and uncomfortable trying to defend my decision, but I stuck to my guns! I told him that I had to follow my PEACE and God's will for my life and our family. In the end, he was disappointed but respected my decision and commitment for my family and our beliefs. This is one of the many ways God reveals Himself to others through us! We have to be so committed, sold out, all-in, passionate Christians that we follow His guidance and direction NO MATTER WHAT! It doesn't matter if someone agrees with you. It doesn't matter if they understand WHY. And, it doesn't matter if they try to put pressure on you to persuade you to do it THEIR way. IT DOESN'T MATTER, my friend! What DOES matter is that you are aligning your every step with the Word of God and what God wants you to do with your life. This is where you will find freedom, peace and happiness in your purpose.

## **ENJOY YOUR MOMENTS AND YOUR EXPERIENCES, REGARDLESS OF HOW OTHERS REACT**

If you have children, you will relate to my next story. Have you ever had an experience with your children where you built up a scenario in your mind of how perfectly a moment would play out – only to have it crash and burn? I've had quite a few of these, which is one of the many reasons I don't believe in scenario building anymore. Too often we build up situations and scenarios where we think things have to happen in just a certain way. Then, when they don't we are crushed or devastated to the point of not being able to enjoy the outcome for what it is.

I no longer throw around the word "devastated" for outcomes in life. Yes, there are times to use this word when very serious things happen. But, I had to get a grip and stop saying that everything was so DEVASTATING just because things didn't work out the way I desired!

Our son, Pierce, has loved Legos since he was very little. In fact, some days I feel like we have the world's largest personal collection at our house because they are everywhere! (Have you ever had a bad day and just took the vacuum over and sucked some up because they were totally getting on your nerves after stepping on them all day?! Those suckers really hurt when you're barefoot! Maybe it's just me.) About three years ago, Pierce told us that he really wanted to go to Legoland in California. He even got the Lego magazine that sends one free ticket every year that we kept saving and putting in a special drawer.

I put his request on my "Pierce's childhood bucket list" and knew it would take a while to save before this could happen. We saved for three years for that trip! I worked and worked to use AMEX points for our tickets and hotel. I saved a little money at a time in an envelope to make sure we had enough to cover our expenses. Bottom line: it took a long time and a lot of sacrifices to make sure this child had a trip he had been dreaming of and longing for.

So, you can imagine my excitement when the day came to tell him what we had planned! I sat down on my chair and had him stand in front of me. (Insert drum roll and fast beating heart here.) Rick was on the couch next to us. (My family circle dream moment is complete.) I held both of his hands in mine and looked up into his handsome, big brown eyes. (In my mind I see fog coming out from the living room as I am building up this glorious experience.)

I'm busting with excitement as I say, "Pierce, what is the one place you have wanted to go for YEARS???" (I hold my breath...here it comes...he is going to start jumping and screaming for joy as we give him the trip of his DREAMS! Cue the angel music now!) His eyes grow wide and he breaks out into a huge smile and says, "KOREA!!!" Um...no. Do you know that sound television shows make when something goes terribly wrong – the "wha-wha-wha-wha" sound? That's what happened in my mind.

"KOREA???" I yelled out! "How about LEGOLAND?!" He looked at me and said, "Oh yeah – cool. Thanks." I looked over at Rick and thought I was going to lose it. (The fog evaporated, the music came to a screeching halt and my "perfect" moment had ended.) Fortunately Rick took it from there and started telling him all of the awesome things we had planned so he could get excited. I think I sat in that chair for a good 5 minutes with this dumbfounded look of disappointment on my face just repeating in my mind...KOREA???

Here's my point: I had to learn right then and there that I cannot base my happiness on another person's reaction – even my child's. I had to stay excited and happy about what we had planned and saved for, even if he didn't understand all of the effort and hard work that went into it. And, I had to remind myself again of the dangers of scenario building. If I had just been excited and gone with the moment, I wouldn't have been so shocked and disappointed. (Ok, to be honest I still think I'd be shocked, but definitely not as disappointed. I mean, this is my dramatic child who is a lot like me! We teach him to live large and make BIG plans with God, so I guess I shouldn't have been shocked when he went for it and tried to get a trip on the other side of the world out of us! Now that I think about it, it does sound like something I would do! I mean, why go for California when you can go International, baby?)

Do you see what I'm saying? Don't let your spouse's reaction, your child's emotions, your friend's opinions or your co-workers words determine what you are going to do or what your circumstances will be. Enjoy your moments and your experiences, regardless of how others react! This was one of the things that I took away from that day with Pierce. And of course, we had a fantastic time and made lasting memories. It did turn out wonderfully because I enjoyed being present and in the moment with my precious family that I love with all of my heart. I accomplished one more thing on my list of things to do with my son before he grew up, and it was fabulous! This is how we move ourselves into the "Can Change/Important" box in life. I couldn't change Pierce's reaction, but I sure could change mine. It was important to have this trip, and I could change how I dealt with his reaction. This is such an empowering way to live!

## **DON'T BE DRIVEN BY YOUR FEELINGS**

Let me share one more example of another time I have had to steadily keep my eyes on God and not focus on feedback from others. Last year we released a great audio CD, Embracing Conflict and Change. Of course, I believe passionately in every resource we create, and this one was no different. Rick took a lot of time to edit my live talk, add music, create the cover and the entire CD...everything. Then, we recorded a little video clip to tell about the product. The day we sent it out I was really excited. I knew the content was spot-on solid, and I knew that it was something God had guided us to do.

Do you know what? We released the CD and video and got back...NOTHING. Seriously....nothing! It was like total crickets over here in South Carolina! And I mean cric...kets! (In fact, we have had the "cricket" experience several times to the point that Pierce has mastered the little chirping sound and starts "chirping" when we talk about it! Great.) Was I discouraged? Yes. Of course, I am human and it hurts when we don't get feedback that we desire or deserve. Did I cry? Yes. I had been so excited and we had worked so hard that it stung to have zero emails, zero "likes," zero phone calls and zero donations.

But did I get over it? YES. I took my hurt feelings and my tears and talked about it with God. I told Him things like, “God, what is up with this? You know I don’t have any pride left, so is this just another lesson to teach me humility? Didn’t YOU want us to release this into the world? Why would you guide us to do something that would flop???” Seriously? Are you just going to use my life to show others how hard it is to do something meaningful in this world?” Believe me, I went there with God.

After I let it all out and gave Him my tears, frustrations and every emotion surrounding the experience, I shut up. I think this is HUGE in our prayer time with God. Let it out, tell Him everything and then be quiet and listen. Receive His healing and wisdom. So often we ask and ask for it, but won’t be quiet long enough to hear what He has to say!

I sat on my bed and got quiet. I asked Him to reveal the meanings behind what He was doing with this experience and my life in general. These are some of the things I felt Him flood over me as I quieted my mind, “I love you. You are MINE. I will never guide you to humiliation. People are looking at you to see ME. Your life is not your own, you have given it to ME. Allow ME to use you to show others MY faithfulness. You are being obedient to ME and that is what matters. Do not make decisions based upon feedback of others. You do it because I told you to. If you didn’t sell one CD, would you still do it for ME? Would you do it because I directed you to?” “Yes, Lord,” I said – all alone in my room. “Then MY will was done. I will NEVER leave you or forsake you. DO IT FOR ME.”

Amen and enough said! That’s how I got over myself and my feelings. Let me encourage you today to not be driven by your feelings. I have seen much destruction come into the lives of those who lived their lives by what they were feeling in the moment. If I was a feelings-driven person, I would not be in ministry today. I have had my feelings hurt SO many times in the last 3 years that it is ridiculous. But do you know what? That has toughened me up quickly. It has made me ever stronger than I was before (which I thought was pretty tough), and has made me even surer of who I am in Christ!

This is what God will do for you in YOUR life when you stop listening to every little feeling and every little voice that surrounds you. We can’t let anyone else’s reaction determine what we do. We may not get the most compliments, the “atta- boy” on the job, the promotion we deserve, the recognition or the feedback we truly deserve. But we must not get discouraged by this! We must keep our eyes on God and know that we do it for HIM! This brings such freedom and is such a great way to live a guilt free, empowered life!

Psalm 121:2 says, “My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.” This is where our strength and help comes from; not from feedback from another person, but from God Almighty! Another great reminder is Psalm 17:5, “My steps have held to Your paths; my feet have not slipped.” My friend, you WILL NOT slip, flop or pop when you hold fast to God’s will and His plan for your life! Amen! You can quote God on that! Your life might not turn out life YOU planned, but it will be far better! This is exactly what has happened and is continuing to happen in my life. I’ve been through pain, disappointments and trials. We are still in a huge faith walk financially and don’t know exactly how things will turn out.

But, OUR FEET WILL NOT SLIP! Our strength comes directly from God! I absolutely LOVE this Scripture from Isaiah 43:1-3, “FEAR NOT, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by NAME; you are MINE. When you pass through the waters, I WILL BE WITH YOU! And when you pass through the rivers, they WILL NOT sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you WILL NOT be burned! The flames WILL NOT set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, Your God!” This always gives me chills of excitement and strength! Keep your eyes on what God has called you to do. Follow your PEACE. It will NEVER fail you, I promise.

Be confident in who you are, regardless if one other person compliments you or gives you positive feedback. When you do it for Christ, your motives are pure. This is where God uses you in the most powerful and effective ways!

In Him,

*Tanya*



Tanya Curren is the co-founder of Boundless Limits International, a ministry of encouragement and empowerment. In 2004 Tanya Curren was in a life threatening coma for 8 days as a deadly infection ravaged her body. Given two hours to live, she survived only to face the ordeal of a painful three year recovery. She is the author of Broken Places, The Proverbs Devotion Guide, Embracing Change & Conflict, and several other CD's. In her conferences and seminars, Tanya shares with others the life-lessons she learned through her journey to restoration. Tanya travels and speaks at local, regional and international venues, and is passionate about guiding others to have a personal, real relationship with Jesus Christ.