

# Guilt that won't go away

*How to break free and how to live free*

Dr Rob Waller

Director, Mind and Soul :: Consultant Psychiatrist, NHS Lothian

@robwaller [www.mindandsoul.info/guilt](http://www.mindandsoul.info/guilt)



Premier  
Mind & Soul  
EXPLORING CHRISTIANITY AND MENTAL HEALTH



# The pre-eminence of guilt



# Some guilt quotes

- *Guilt – the gift that keeps on giving!!*
  - [Erma Bombeck]
- *Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways.'*
  - [Attributed to Sigmund Freud]
- *'Godly guilt brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but false guilt brings death.'*
  - [2 Corinthians 7:10]
- *“Sadly, we do a much better job of making people feel guilty than we do of delivering them from the guilt we create. We need to confess this and change our ways.”*
  - [Attributed to Tony Campolo]
- *'It is better to risk saving a guilty person than to condemn an innocent one.'*
  - [Voltaire, Zadig]

# ICD-10 Version:2010

Search  [ Advanced Search ]

ICD-10

Versions - Languages

Info

▼ ICD-10 Version:2010

- ▶ Certain infectious and parasitic diseases
- ▶ Neoplasms
- ▶ Diseases of the blood and blood-forming organs and certain disorders involving the immune mechanism
- ▶ Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases
- ▼ Mental and behavioural disorders
  - ▶ Organic, including symptomatic, mental disorders
  - ▶ Mental and behavioural disorders due to psychoactive substance use
  - ▶ Schizophrenia, schizotypal and delusional disorders
  - ▼ Mood [affective] disorders
    - ▶ Manic episode
    - ▶ Bipolar affective disorder
    - ▼ Depressive episode
      - Mild depressive episode
      - Moderate depressive episode
      - Severe depressive episode without psychotic symptoms
      - Severe depressive episode with psychotic symptoms
      - Other depressive episodes
      - Depressive episode, unspecified
    - ▶ Recurrent depressive disorder
    - ▶ Persistent mood [affective] disorders
    - ▶ Other mood [affective] disorders
      - Unspecified mood [affective] disorder
  - ▶ Neurotic, stress-related and somatoform disorders
  - ▶ Behavioural syndromes associated with physiological disturbances and physical factors
  - ▶ Disorders of adult personality and behaviour
  - ▶ Mental retardation

Bipolar II disorder  
Recurrent manic episodes NOS

**F31.9 Bipolar affective disorder, unspecified**

**F32 Depressive episode**

In typical mild, moderate, or severe depressive episodes, the patient suffers from lowering of mood, reduction of energy, and decrease in activity. Capacity for enjoyment, interest, and concentration is reduced, and marked tiredness after even mild exertion is common. Sleep is disturbed and appetite diminished. Self-esteem and self-confidence are almost always reduced and, even in the mild form, some ideas of guilt or worthlessness are often present. The lowered mood varies little from day to day, is unresponsive to circumstances and may be accompanied by so-called melancholic and pleasurable feelings, waking in the morning several hours before the usual time, depression worst in the morning, marked psychomotor retardation, agitation, loss of appetite, weight loss, and loss of libido. Depending upon the number and severity of the symptoms, a depressive episode may be specified as mild, moderate or severe.

- Incl.:** single episodes of:
- depressive reaction
  - psychogenic depression
  - reactive depression

- Excl.:** adjustment disorder (F43.2)  
recurrent depressive disorder (F33.-)  
when associated with conduct disorders in F91.- (F92.0)

**F32.0 Mild depressive episode**

Two or three of the above symptoms are usually present. The patient is usually distressed by these but will probably be able to continue with most activities.

**F32.1 Moderate depressive episode**

Four or more of the above symptoms are usually present and the patient is likely to have great difficulty in continuing with ordinary activities.

**F32.2 Severe depressive episode without psychotic symptoms**

An episode of depression in which several of the above symptoms are marked and distressing, typically loss of self-esteem and suicidal thoughts and acts are common and a number of "somatic" symptoms are usually present.

- Agitated depression  
Major depression  
Vital depression
- single episode without psychotic symptoms

**F32.3 Severe depressive episode with psychotic symptoms**

An episode of depression as described in F32.2, but with the presence of hallucinations, delusions, psychomotor retardation, or stupor so severe that ordinary social activities are impossible; there may be danger to life from suicide, dehydration, or starvation. The hallucinations and delusions may or may not be mood-congruent.

- Single episodes of:
- major depression with psychotic symptoms
  - psychogenic depressive psychosis
  - psychotic depression
  - reactive depressive psychosis

**F32.8 Other depressive episodes**

- Atypical depression  
Single episodes of "masked" depression NOS

**F32.9 Depressive episode, unspecified**

Depressive episode NOS



# The Guilt Book, coming May 2014 from IVP

*Will van der Hart and Rob Waller, IVP, May 2014*

“I am very grateful for this thoughtful and insightful book. This is a book written by that fertile combination of a pastor and a psychiatrist. Theology and psychology have long been seen as enemies but it is precisely in areas like this that the two subjects can be brought together with enormously beneficial results. With pastoral sensitivity and wisdom the authors offer the reader an opportunity to identify and purge false guilt.”

*J John – from the Foreward*



# The Worry Book

You'd dearly love to get your life back, but worry has you firmly in its grip ... Or has it?

Many Christians are suffering in silence, unsure if psychological solutions are appropriate for them, or if biblical teaching can lead them to freedom.

*The Worry Book* offers a fresh solution: seeing the process of worry as the problem, rather than getting stuck into individual concerns. Good theology and psychology combine to offer new perspectives and real hope.

The authors are directors of Mind & Soul – an organisation exploring Christianity and mental health.

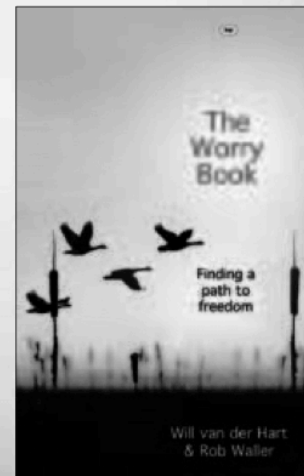
*'One of the hardest verses in the Bible is "Do not worry", and I was therefore intrigued by The Worry Book. Well, I couldn't put it down! It is honest, humorous and holistic. I was re-educated and I am already seeing the benefits.'* **J. John**

*'Jesus didn't say, "There's nothing to worry about" but "Don't worry in spite of everything there is to worry about." Will van der Hart and Rob Waller tackle this key issue in many people's lives.'*

**Nicky Gumbel**

RRP: £7.99 | ISBN: 978-1-84474-543-2

Available now from your local Christian bookshop  
or at [www.ivpbooks.com](http://www.ivpbooks.com)





## Upcoming Events

**ACC Biannual Conference**  
Thursday 27 January - Sunday 30  
January, Hayes Conference Centre,  
Swanwick

**Freedom from Worry**  
10:30am Sunday 20 February,  
Destiny Church, Edinburgh

**Spirituality and CBT**  
9:00am Monday 7 March, Holloway  
Road, London

**Psychologists serving the...**  
Sunday 27 March - Tuesday 29  
March, All Saints Pastoral Centre, St  
Albans

**Head for the Future - The...**  
9:00am Saturday 2 April, Soul  
Survivor, Watford

[View monthly calendar](#)



mindandsoul

# podcast



### Healing and Mental Illness

What is the place of faith healing in mental illness. Can something has hurt so many be encouraged? Can something which has helped so many be ignored?

**More ...**

Rob Waller


**New Year! New You?**




**anorexia anxiety** Book reviews  
**bulimia CBT church**

**depression** download eating  
disorder faith Food friendly friends  
guilt healing help leaders OCD  
perspective PTSD recovery self help  
spirituality stigma **stress** students  
suicide therapy Treatments work

## Podcast

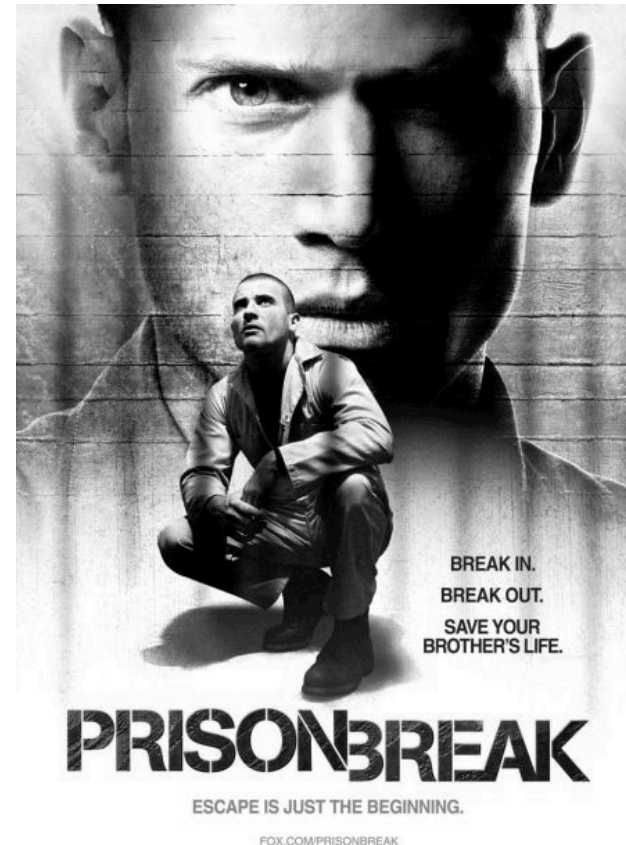
 **The Perils and Pitfalls of  
Christian Counselling in the  
Local Church**  
Steve Motyer, 10/01/2011

 **The Challenge of  
Forgiveness**  
Greta Randle, 01/11/2010



# Is Mike guilty?

- Mike had gone overdrawn. He was trying to get his mum's house redecorated, as she could not afford it herself. To get money, he borrowed from a friend but he did not tell him the whole story, as he was too embarrassed about his family finances. Instead, he said he was a bit short at the end of the month and needed a loan – but then of course he could not pay it back.
- He began a web of lies that destroyed their friendship. He felt guilty about the money, about his mum (even though she said the house was now great) and about the loss of his friend.



# The roots of guilt

- “Guilt is... a religious problem which interests theologians, a social problem which interests sociologists and a psychological problem which interests psychologists.”
- “Guilt cannot be dissected...”



Tournier, P [1962] Guilt and Grace.  
Hodder and Stroughton, London, p213

# Fig leaf anyone?

- Their answer
  - Hide their nakedness
  - Hide themselves
- God's answer...
  - Skins [Gen 3v21]
  - Clothing [Col 3v9]
  - Body [1Cor 15v44]
- **So why do we struggle with guilt?**



## Top 5 Christian assumptions about guilt

- 1. All 'real' Christians feel free from the guilt of the past.**
- 2. Feeling guilty indicates that you are guilty.**
- 3. Feeling guilty about 'confessed sin' is a sin.**
- 4. I am completely responsible for what I feel guilty about.**
- 5. There is only one sort of guilt and one way to deal with it.**

# Two types of guilt

## True Guilt

- This is present when most would acknowledge that you have done something wrong, or were aware of something being wrong and did not respond. It is hence more *objective*.
- The key answer to true guilt is the good news of the Christian Gospel – forgiveness and restoration

## False Guilt

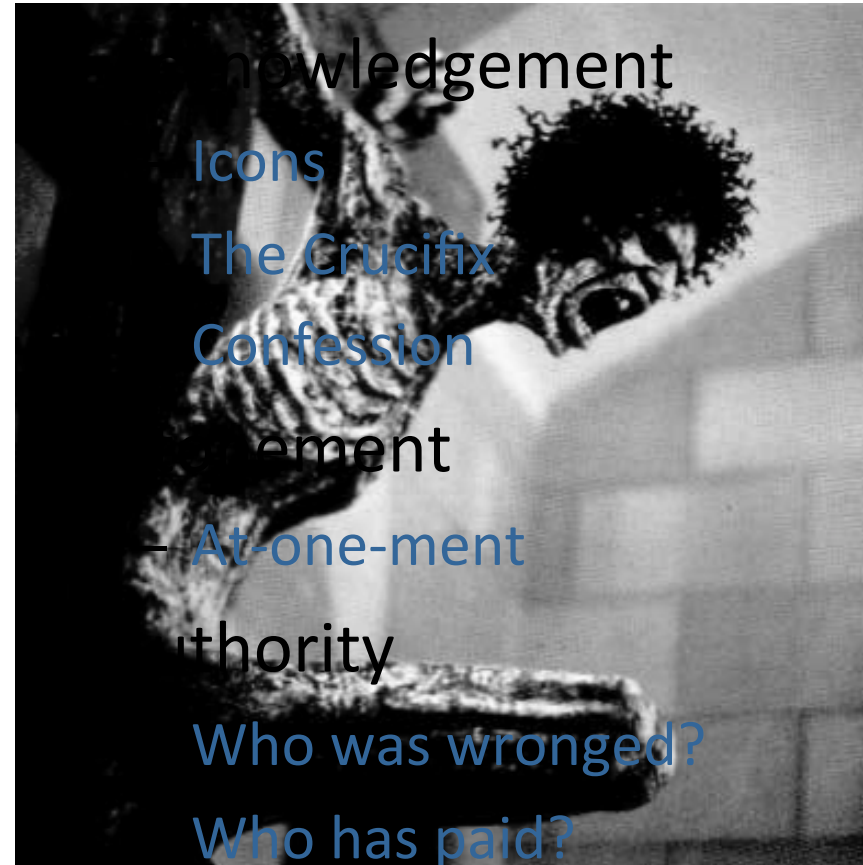
- This is felt when no wrong has been done, but you think otherwise – a psychological ‘misunderstanding’ if you like – albeit one you cannot easily think away. It is hence more *subjective*.
- The key approach here can have spiritual and pastoral aspects, but is mainly about answering the lie that you are truly guilty. It is a psychological approach.



# Distinguishing true and false guilt

True Guilt	False Guilt
Repentance brings forgiveness and peace	Repentance never feels like enough
Identity is gained, we are the forgiven children of God	Identity is lost, we do not feel worthy to be called His children
Lack of repentance is also called denial – we lack moral insight	Lack of repentance is not relevant as there is nothing to repent of
Leads us towards God for forgiveness and salvation	Leads us away from God, believing the barrier to be insurmountable
Focuses on the root issue – our damaged relationship with God	Focuses on the detail – all the various sins we <i>think</i> we have committed
Leads to healthy remorse and then to praise and worship	Leads to unhealthy rumination and worry
Is felt more keenly with spiritual maturity, as we realise how human we are	Is felt most keenly when distant from God, and we believe it keeps us there
<i>Your ideas:</i>	<i>Your ideas:</i>

# How to 'get' the Gospel



Knowledge

Icons

The Crucifix

Confession

Agreement

- At-one-ment

Authority

Who was wronged?

Who has paid?

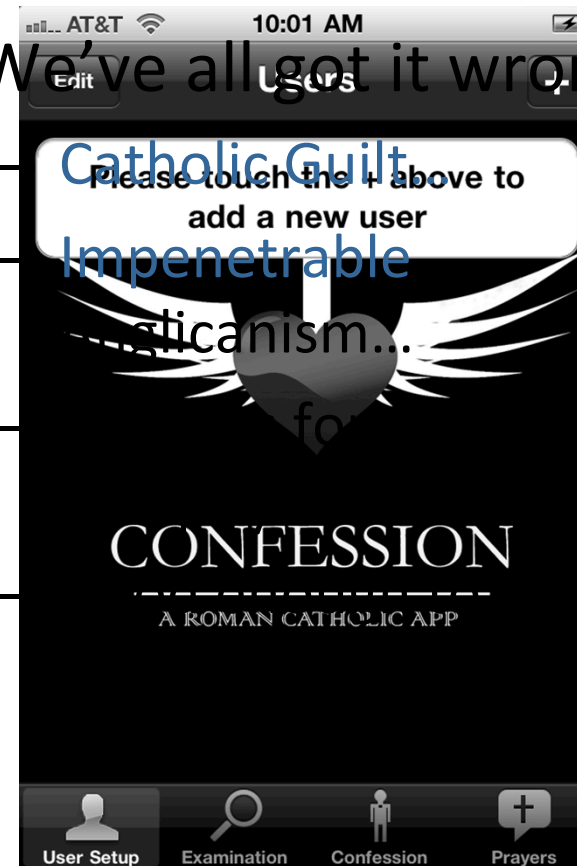
# How to 'get' it wrong

- Religious Confusion
  - Guilt-based control

Biblical Discipleship	Guilt-based Control
Motivated by a desire to please God and fuelled by joy	Motivated by the fear of exclusion and rejection
Propagates honesty and openness	Propagates secrecy and false/true self divisions
Confession is a joy	Confession is terrifying
Does not fear humiliation or exclusion	Humiliation and gossip are common
Anticipates restoration and forgiveness	Anticipates heavy discipline/punishment
Anticipates restoration and forgiveness	Leads to engrained false guilt and apprehension
Sees people move on in faith and grow in ministry	Sees people remain static in faith and responsibility remains centrally held

- Works > Grace
- Legalism

- We've all got it wrong...



# Making God go away?



If only I wasn't an atheist, I could get away with anything. You'd just ask for forgiveness and then you'd be forgiven. It sounds much better than having to live with guilt.

(Keira Knightley)

[izquotes.com](http://izquotes.com)

# Guilty by design

## Why false guilt flourishes...

*“Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways.”*

*[Attributed to Sigmund Freud]*

# Patterns in the Mind

- Psychoanalysis
  - Repression of the Id
- Behaviourism
  - Guilt motivates
- Cognitive Theory
  - Making assumptions
- Clinical Depression
  - Guilt as a symptom

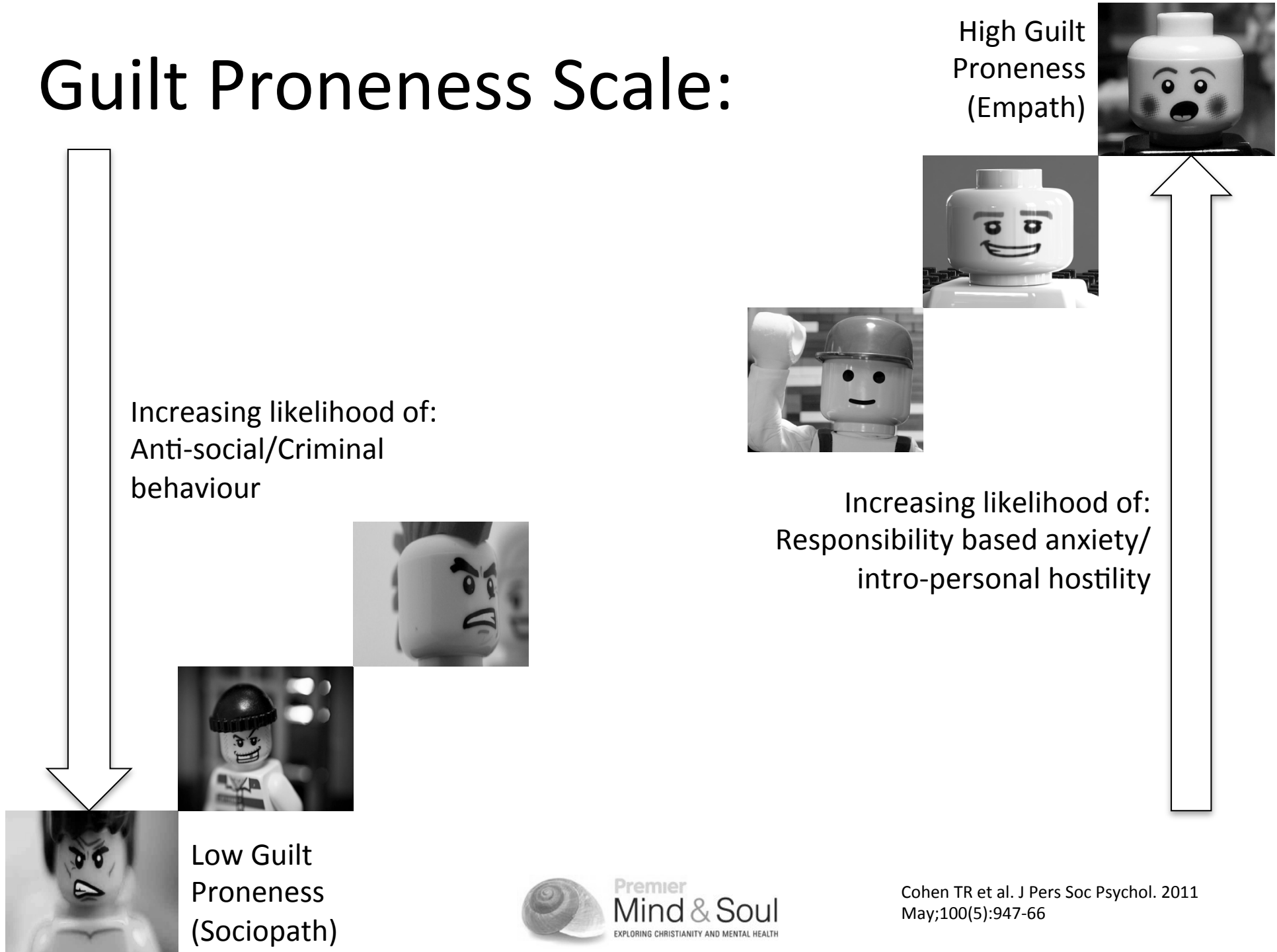


# Psychopath or Empath?





# Guilt Proneness Scale:

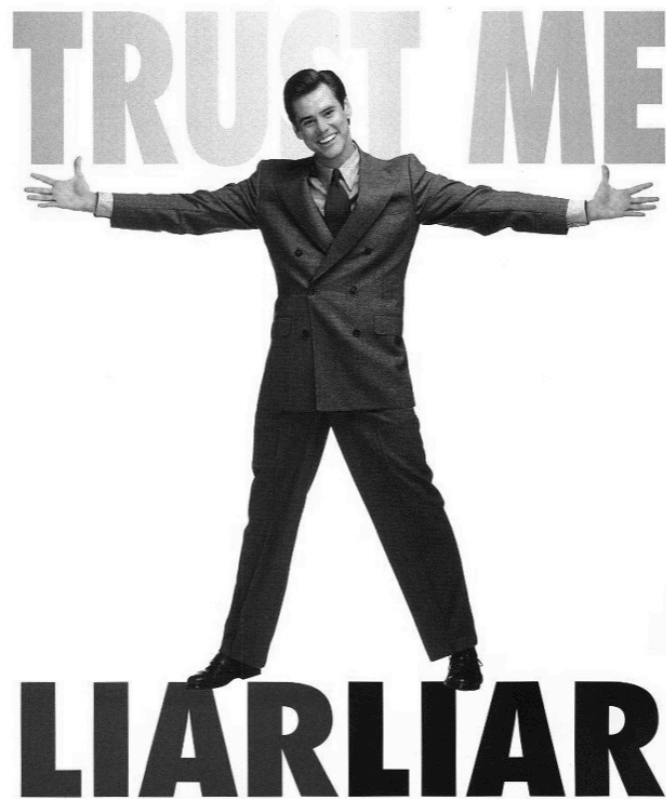




# Diabolical Distortion



The father of lies – John 8v44



The accuser of the brethren – Rev 12v10



# Diabolical Distortion

## The father of lies – John 8v44

- If Jesus is *not* the Son of God and *not* divine, then He is little more than a good bloke and so not really able to help us in our struggle.
- If however, He *is* of God, then He *is* able to help us, *is* able to set us free from sin and the guilt we have.

## The accuser of the brethren – Rev 12v10

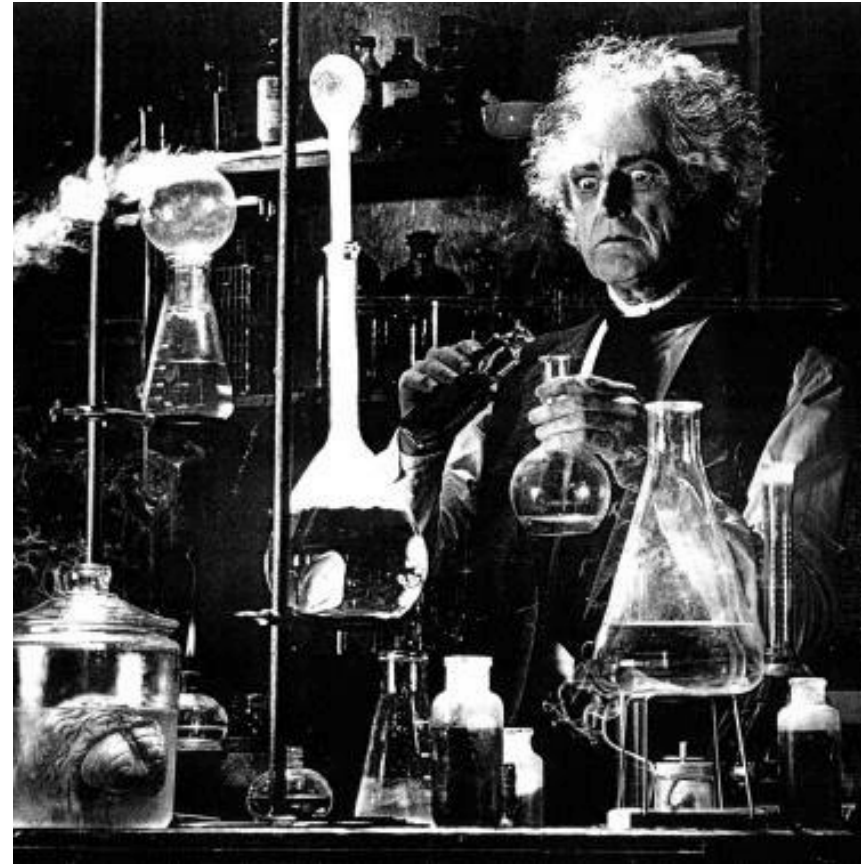
- Guilt is one of the main reasons why people do not volunteer in church.
  - Are we good enough for God?
  - Have we committed some unforgivable sin?
  - Have we missed our calling?
- They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony [v11]
  - Proven victory
  - Tested and found good

If it feels bad, it must be bad...



# The experiment

- Assumption 1
  - Feeling = Fact
- Assumption 2
  - Feeling  $\neq$  Fact



# Doing Experiments



*Rory got on the London train and sat down opposite a small man in a suit. As they left the station, the small man began tearing his newspaper into tiny pieces and throwing it out of the window.*

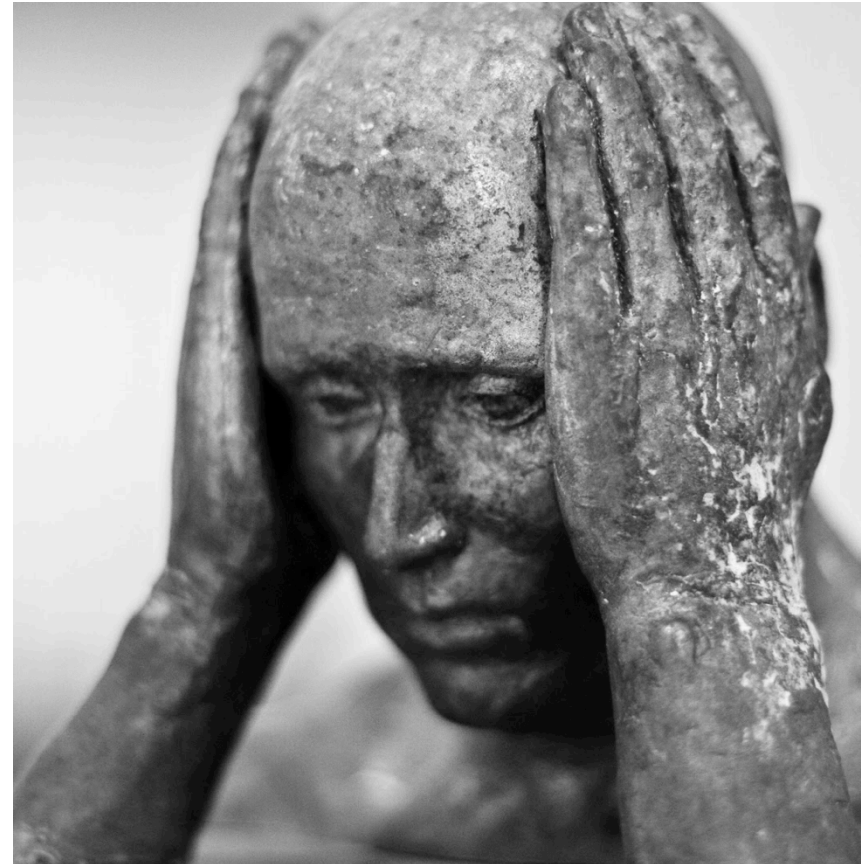
*Rory pretended it wasn't happening but after a while felt compelled to ask, "What on earth are you doing?" The small man replied, "It's very simple. I am keeping elephants off the track." "But there aren't any elephants on the track!" exclaimed Rory.*

*The small man smiled, "It must be working then..."*



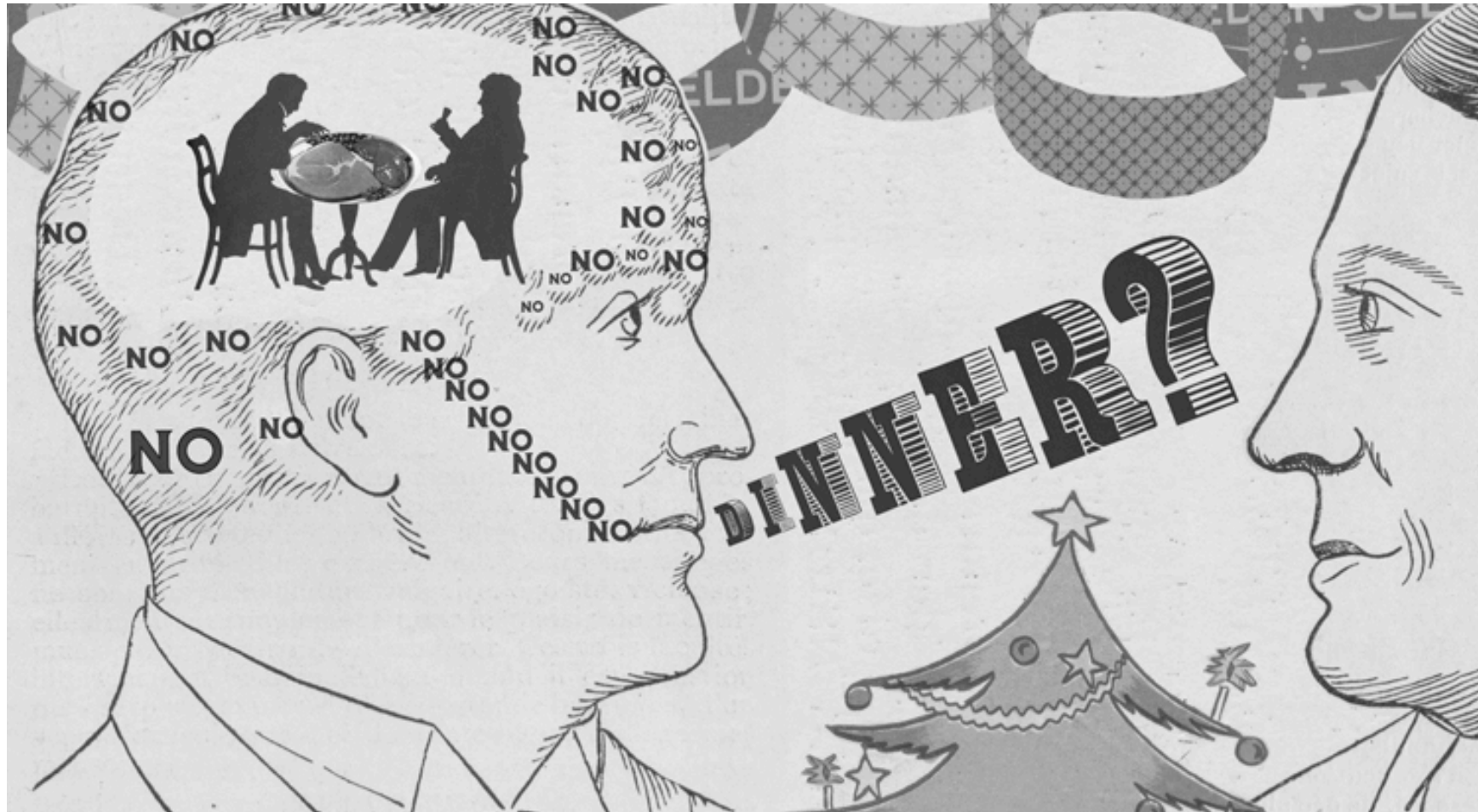
# Spotting false guilt traps

- The search
  - I keep looking until I find the evidence
- Escape and avoidance
  - I have never really let this feeling in
- Compulsive confession
  - Something already confessed
  - Must confess everything
  - Seeking a 'feeling' of forgiveness
- Rumination
  - When there is nothing to find
- Perfectionism
  - For great things are at stake
- Punishment
  - Because I deserve it





# Thought suppression does not work



# A quest for the brave!

- Three dragon slaying techniques
  - Putting on a brave face
    - Look the dragon in the eye
  - Reviewing your dragon types
    - Get specific
  - Whose territory?
    - Not all dragons are my dragons
- Tolerating uncertainty
  - Can I retire?
- The ultimate experiment
  - Pressing into uncertainty!
    - Prediction
    - Experimenting
    - Reviewing





# Accepting Forgiveness



‘The courage to be is the courage to accept oneself, in spite of being unacceptable.’

[Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be ]

**Revisiting the Gospel**



# Jean Valjean

moving from act to identity

**What have I done?**

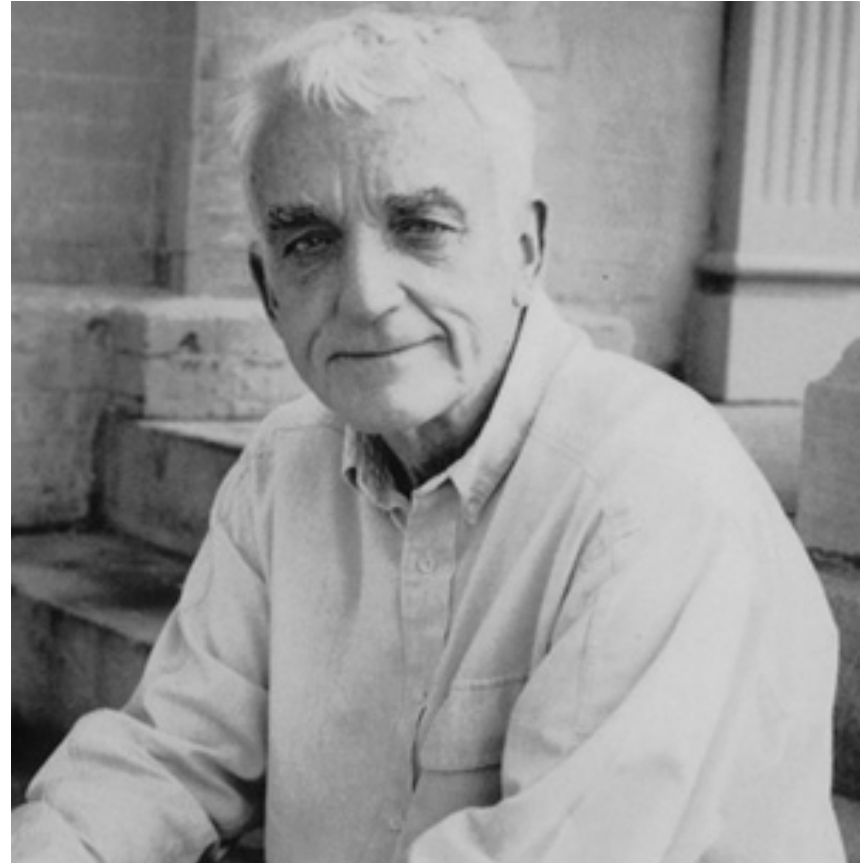


**Who am I?**



# Brendan Manning [1934-2013]

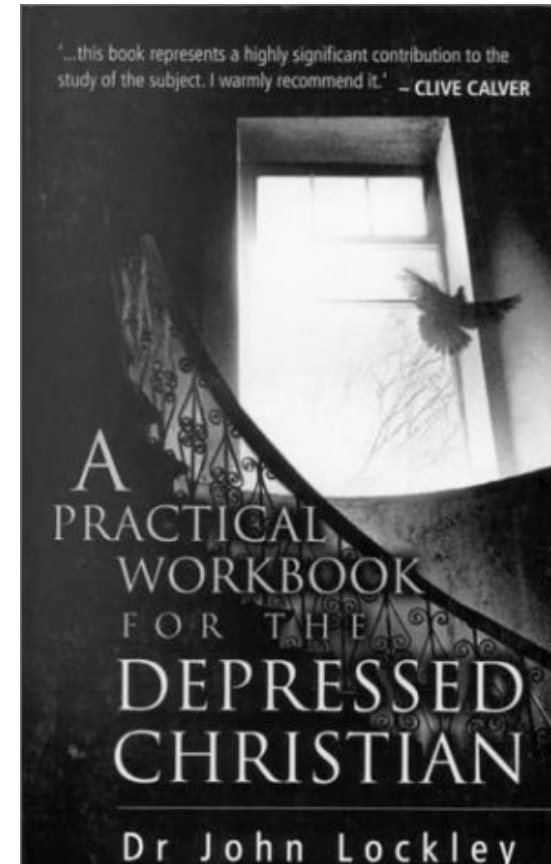
- To live by grace means to acknowledge my whole life story, the light side and the dark.
- In admitting my shadow side I learn who I am and what God's grace means.



Manning B (1990) The Ragamuffin Gospel. Multnomah

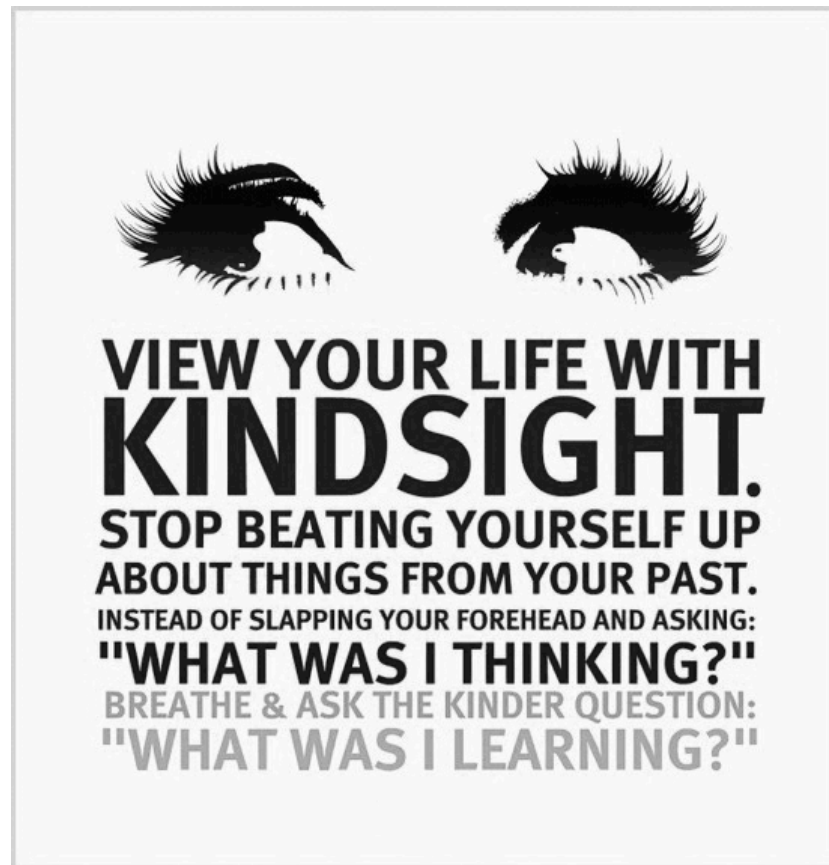
# Dr John Lockley

- *The Bible says that we are to love our neighbours as ourselves – but to many a guilt-ridden Christian the problem is far more cogently stated a, “learn to treat yourself as you would your neighbour”.*
- *This is not easily done...*



Locksley J (1991) *A practical handbook for the depressed Christian*. Authentic Media, Milton Keynes

# Practising Compassion



- **Things I can do to be kind to myself are...**
  - Pray with your eyes open and hands facing up – this is a posture of being accepted and expecting to receive. Can you do this before God?
  - Give yourself a small gift – maybe a trip to the cinema or something nice for the bath/shower. Can you treat yourself for no other reason that it is a treat?
  - Take up a friend on one of their offers to help you out. Maybe they have offered to babysit or do some ironing or give you a lift. Don't offer to repay them – that can come later. Can you accept help and offer nothing back in return?
  - Dress up in some nice clothes and put some make-up on. Go for a short walk – no-one is asking for any more. Can you make yourself look beautiful?

# Walking Free



- Guilt is NOT my friend
  - Even though I am familiar with it
- My Bill of Rights
  - This is my inheritance
- I am not an ‘imposter’
  - Waiting to be found out any moment



# Surrender to Live



*The battle rages on  
As storm and tempest roar  
We cannot win this fight  
Inside our rebel hearts  
Were laying down our weapons now  
We raise our white flags  
We surrender all to you  
All for you  
We raise our white flag  
The war is over  
Love has come  
Your love has won  
Here on this holy ground  
You made a way for peace  
Laying your body down  
You took our rightful place  
This freedom song is marching on*

**Chris Tomlin**

# Surrender for others



- Compulsive carers
  - Genuine carers
- Thinking others better
  - Think the best of others
- Being ashamed
  - I am not ashamed



# The haven of peace

## [the acid test]



- ‘Great thoughts of your sin alone will drive you to despair;
- But great thoughts of Christ will pilot you into the **haven of peace.**’
  - Spurgeon C (1896) *Morning and Evening*, now published by Alban Books Ltd, Edinburgh.
  - Reflection from the evening of March 27<sup>th</sup>.

# Guilt that won't go away

*How to break free and how to live free*

Dr Rob Waller

Director, Mind and Soul :: Consultant Psychiatrist, NHS Lothian

@robwaller [www.mindandsoul.info/guilt](http://www.mindandsoul.info/guilt)



Premier  
Mind & Soul  
EXPLORING CHRISTIANITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

