

MAGNOLIA MINDS: Reining in regrets

*By Jon Daniels
Correspondent*



Daniels

A few years ago, a popular candy bar released a television commercial that featured a big, tough-looking guy sitting in a tattoo artist's chair. As the young female ink artist finished up the tattoo, the burly biker looked down and discovered much to his dismay the words, "NO REGERTS," permanently imprinted on his arm, misspelled word and all.

The tattoo artist's nonchalant reply: "Sorry. I was eating a Milky Way." Her attitude seemed to say, "What's the big deal?"

Regrets *are* a big deal. We all have them. We hate them. We try to shake them. We attempt to ignore them. They are there like a misspelled tattoo that we desperately wish was not forever marked on our body.

Regrets can cripple us and weigh us down in unhealthy ways. The Welsh minister and physician Martyn Lloyd Jones (1899-1981) said, "To dwell on the past simply causes failure in the present. While you are sitting down and bemoaning the past and regretting all the things that you have not done, you are crippling yourself and preventing yourself from working in the present. Is that Christianity? Of course, it is not."

So, what do we do with our regrets? How do we deal with our regrets? What can we learn from our regrets? Here are some points to ponder.

Own it. While we don't need to bemoan the past for an unnecessarily long time, we do have to take a hard look at the cause of the regret and own it.

If the regret is the result of a sin that you committed, then confess and repent as the Bible instructs us to do (1 John 1:9).

If the regret is the result of a broken relationship, then do all you can do to seek reconciliation, if possible.

If the regret is the result of an honest mistake or bad decision you made, then do everything possible to rectify the situation as best as you can.

Although these are not easy things to do, they are absolutely necessary if we are going to gain the upper hand over our regrets.

Pray. While I know this may seem obvious, even a bit simplistic, the importance of praying about our regrets cannot be overstated or overemphasized. Since our regrets usually cause worry to rear its ugly head in our minds, the Apostle Paul's instructions in Philippians 4:6-7 can sure help a lot: *Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (CSB).*

See the good. When I was in high school, I was goofing around with some friends after church one Sunday night, slipped down on some wet grass, and broke the knuckle at the base of my middle finger on my right hand when I tried to catch myself as I fell. As a result, I had to have surgery to place two pins in my knuckle to help it heal correctly.

Now, forty years later, as I type this article on my computer and look down at that hand, there is a scar there that will never go away. The injury is completely healed and the finger is completely functional, but there will always be a scar reminding me of that fall.

Our regrets are like scars. The sin has been forgiven, the injury has been healed, the wrongs have been made right, but there's still a scar there and lingering regret. We may wish it would go away, but God allows it to stay there to remind us that we don't want to go back there and to reassure us that His grace that will always sustain us.

My favorite Bible verse, Romans 8:28, is a powerful reminder that, *We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose (NASB)*. You can be sure that when the Spirit of God inspired Paul to write those words, He included your regrets and my regrets in "all things."

God is using regrets for our good, even if we can't see that good just yet. Because of the truth of that verse, we can even be thankful for our regrets.

Regrets are a part of all our lives but if we will honestly deal with them, fervently pray about them, and intentionally seek out the good that can come from them, God will help us because He loves us. So go grab your favorite candy bar and rejoice in that truth today.

Daniels is senior pastor of First Church, Flora, and past president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. Opinions expressed on this website are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, The Baptist Record, nor the publication's Advisory Committee. The author may be contacted at jdaniels@fbcflora.org.