

Shame, Youth Culture, and the Gospel

Do you know what young people are watching these days? The Norwegian hit teen drama *Skam* (2015) has captured the attention of many teens and got a lot of recognition internationally, not the least due to the innovative use of new media platforms. The expectations are high regarding the upcoming fourth season this spring. An English-language version to be known as *Shame*, is also in the pipeline for 2017.

The drama explores the lives of a group of ordinary 16-year-olds, tackling subjects such as relationships, loneliness, eating disorders, love, heartbreak, religion, meaning of life, personal identity, as well as sexual identity. But what really makes it ground-breaking is that the episodes are broadcast in smaller units online throughout the week, while a weekly catch-up show on NRK's linear network recaps the events. The script builds on several in-depth-interviews, and Norwegian teens find *Skam* to be honest and realistic.

This influential Norwegian drama gives valuable insight into key aspects of current youth culture, including the central place of social media. Whether you are already familiar with the show or not, exploring the series from a Christian perspective is therefore highly relevant in order to engage the emerging generation with the Gospel.

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I. Introduction

A. Youth Culture, Popular Culture and Youth Ministry

1. *“Get to know the media, and you get to know them.”*
(Walt Mueller)
2. *“No story exists neutrally, as raw entertainment without reference to cultural beliefs and values.”*
(Brian Godawa)
3. *“Media is a more frequent arena than family and church for contact with religious ideas and values.”*
(Mia Lövheim)

II. What is *Shame* all about?

A. A short introduction

1. Innovative use of new media platforms
2. Authentic 16-year-olds

B. Key popular trends in the series

1. No grown-ups – Friends as family
2. “If you feel like it – do it!” – No objective moral standard

3. “What do you believe in?” – Open discussions about worldviews

III. What is shame all about?

- A. Guilt vs shame – what is the difference? (Cf. narcissism)
- B. Guilt vs shame – why guilt is often covered up as shame

IV. *Shame* and the shameful youth

- A. What are the characters shameful about?
 - 1. Loneliness
 - 2. Marks
 - 3. Image
 - 4. Sexual inexperience
 - 5. Sexual identity

V. *Shame*, the shameful youth and youth ministry

- A. Points of contact and points of tension
- B. Guilt vs shame – in the Bible
 - 1. Grace, atonement and forgiveness
 - 2. Liberated by grace to live and to serve

VI. Q & A / Discussion

Suggested Readings:

- Harrison, Glynn. *The Big Ego Trip: Finding true significance in a culture of self-esteem* (InterVarsity Press, 2013)
- Harrison, Glynn. *A Better Story: God, Sex and Human Flourishing* (InterVarsity Press, 2017)
- Keyes, Dick. “The Meaning of Shame and Guilt”. *L’Abri Papers* DK04.
http://www.labri.org/england/resources/08042008/DK04_Shame-and-Guilt.pdf
- Muller, Walt. *Engaging the Soul of Youth Culture: Bridging Teen Worldviews and Christian Truth* (InterVarsity Press, 2006)
- Takacs, Stacy. *Interrogating Popular Culture: Key Questions* (Routledge, 2015)
- Turnau, Ted. *Popologetics: Popular Culture in Christian Perspective* (P & R Publishing, 2012)
- Winter, Richard. “Shame: Its Hidden Power and Remedy”. *FOCL Talk 2013*.
<http://foclonline.org/talk/shame-its-hidden-power-and-remedy/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VaqOl0DWvvg>