

Exploring the Hidden Power of Shame

Shame is a complex emotion that lies beneath many of our other feelings and thought patterns and contributes to depression, anxiety, perfectionism and many relationship problems. We are often unaware of it and have a hard time naming it. It is important to distinguish between shame and guilt because the remedy is different for each. We will look at the psychology and theology of shame and at the profound remedy that is given to us through Scripture.

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Creation

- ♦ Naked and no shame (Gen 2:25)
- ♦ No fear of rejection
- ♦ Complete acceptance

Fall (Gen 3:7-10)

- ♦ Eyes opened
- ♦ Awareness of nakedness
- ♦ Hiding

Loss of Face

Shame

- ♦ Traumatic exposure of sin, nakedness, folly, weakness, deficiency, inferiority, powerlessness, and unworthiness
- ♦ Flawed and unworthy of acceptance
- ♦ "To suffer shame is to feel that the true self with all its defects is exposed, naked and vulnerable to the damning judgment and criticism of others" Teyber
- ♦ Anticipation of disapproval or rejection
- ♦ Affects the way we think, feel and act... but often out of touch!

Examples:

- ♦ Comparing ourselves to how we think we ought to be in order to be accepted
- ♦ I give the right to someone other than God to take away my security, identity, and peace of mind
- ♦ "...empowering of another to determine our desirability and worth." D. Allender
- ♦ Idolatry

Emotions

- ♦ Tendency to diminish the value of emotions - “High level information system”
- ♦ Listen and follow shame

Shame and Guilt

- ♦ Guilt in relation to morals (what I do)
 - ♦ Guilt v. innocence
- ♦ Shame in relation to models (who I am)
 - ♦ Shame v. honor/glory
 - ♦ “The wise inherit honor, but fools he holds up to shame.” Prov 3:35
 - ♦ “They exchanged their glory for something disgraceful.” Hosea 4:6-7

Honor, Glory and Shame

- ♦ “You come of the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve, that is both honor enough to lift up the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth.” (C.S.Lewis. Prince Caspian)
- ♦ What is man... crowned him with glory and honor... ruler over the works of your hands. Psalm 8
- ♦ I have given them the glory you gave me. John 17:22
- ♦ We, who...reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory.... 2 Cor 3:18

Job 10:14-15 – guilt and shame

- ♦ If I sinned you would be watching me and would not let my offence go unpunished. If I am guilty – woe to me!
- ♦ Even if I am innocent I cannot lift my head, for I am full of shame and drowned in my affliction.

Shame and Guilt

- ♦ True and false guilt & True and false shame
- ♦ True shame and guilt should lead to sorrow and repentance over sin
- ♦ Silencing true shame. Jer 3:3, Zeph 3:5, Eph 4:19
- ♦ False shame and guilt lead to layers of cover up and escape

Distortions of Shame

- ♦ Ashamed of doing well in school
- ♦ Ashamed of not being brave enough to lie, steal, cheat, take drugs, have sex, kill..
- ♦ Ashamed of knowing Christ.

Roots of False Shame – corrosive shame

- ♦ Parents – Critical, abusive or distant
- ♦ Bad teaching about sex
- ♦ Sexual abuse
- ♦ Churches - legalistic, performance and appearance based
- ♦ Culture - models and heroes

Differences between men and women

Differences between cultures

Shame based cultures

Shame-prone sense of self

- ♦ Core Beliefs
 - ♦ I am bad, defective, unlovable, inferior...
 - ♦ I am stupid, untalented and a failure...
 - ♦ I should not show my weaker emotions...
- ♦ Shame – anger
 - ♦ Arrogance and contempt
 - ♦ Intimidating, controlling, critical, inducing shame in others
 - ♦ Self critical and withdrawn

Contempt

- ♦ “The shamed person can turn his eyes away from the penetrating gaze and focus on the element in his own being that is the cause of the shame. Or he can attack his “enemy’s” eyes directly with the poison of his hatred, blinding those eyes so their power is nullified.”
Dan Allender
- ♦ Self-contempt and other-centered contempt

Shame-prone sense of self

- ♦ Shame – anxiety
 - ♦ Perfectionism
 - ♦ Eating disorders
 - ♦ Addictions
 - ♦ Social withdrawal
 - ♦ Depression

Exposing Idols

- ♦ Shame exposes what is most important to us
- ♦ Many live as enemies of the cross... their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. (Phil 3:18-19)
- ♦ All who worship images are put to shame... who boast in idols. (Ps 97:7, Is 42:17)

From Shame to Sorrow and Grief

- Sinned against
- Sinner

Redemption and Guilt

- ♦ Guilt dealt with by punishment or confession, repentance and forgiveness
- ♦ “Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven... sins are covered.” Ps 32:1
- ♦ “Your guilt is taken away, your sin is covered.” Is 6:7
- ♦ Or “works” to absolve guilt
- ♦ Obsessive compulsive disorder or paranoia

Redemption and Shame

- ♦ Acceptance with all our deficiencies, faults, folly, and weakness.
- ♦ Grace in relationship
- ♦ Prodigal son. Luke 15:11-32, Peter restored John 21:15-19, Hosea 1-3
- ♦ Ultimate shame of non-believers and no shame (glory) for believers. Ps 25:2

God’s delight

- ♦ “He will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. I will gather those who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach. Behold at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and **I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.**” Zeph 3:17-19

The Big Picture enables us to endure and despise some shame

- ♦ Let us fix our eyes on Jesus... who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame... Heb 12:2
- ♦ So Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us then go to him... bearing the disgrace he bore. Heb 13:12-13
- ♦ God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 1 Cor 1:27

Until that day

- ♦ “We, who...reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory....” 2 Cor 3:18
- ♦ “For this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison...” 2 Cor 4:17
- ♦ No more shame!

Jesus not ashamed of us

- ♦ Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers." Hebrews 2:11-13

References: *Perfecting Ourselves to Death: The Pursuit of Excellence and the Perils of Perfectionism*, IVP. Richard Winter