

NO SHAME ZONE

Exposing the Hidden Bondage of Shame

By

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Introduction



Living in a small town can often be like living in a proverbial fish bowl. The anonymity of city-living is lost in Hometown, USA. This book was born out of an intensely personal situation with family members which instantly became public knowledge. As a result of drug use and violence, one family member ended up in jail and another ended up in the hospital. It was a painful time for our entire family. Our hearts were heavy. We were stunned and hurting. One of the most challenging points was that there was almost instantaneous exposure to the public. The situation was exposed on a local online newspaper and social media within an hour or two. The small-town reaction was immediate.

The shock of the exposure was painful. For a while, I did not even want to go shopping or to the restaurants in our community. It was impossible not to think about what other people were thinking. My initial response may have been to curl into a corner and nurse my emotional wounds for a time. That liberty was not afforded because the exposure had been immediate for all to see.

The devastating family situation turned into a ministry opportunity. My husband and I made the decision to turn a bad situation into a positive position by reaching out to other families who were having the same or similar problems. When I was in college my mother painted a plaque for me which said, “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade!” The response was to take the matter to God’s throne of grace and use it to help others. I would change that sentiment somewhat to say, “When Satan goes after your camp, go after his!” The Scripture that I clung to more than any other during

that time was James 4:7, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Reaching out to help others was how we chose to resist the devil so he would flee from us.

We started a weekly intercessory prayer group for families with similar needs. The ministry that came out of the exposure was an incredible blessing to us and an amazing support for others. The Holy Spirit ministered in those meetings, everyone was encouraged, and there have been astonishing answers to prayer. It was hard to press through the pain to move on, but in the end pressing through the pain was the very thing that eased our pain and shame. It gave us a voice to talk about what the enemy intended for harm, but what the Lord used for good.

Moving forward, it became evident that within our family we saw evidence of the burden of negative emotions which surrounded the event. There were intense feelings of unworthiness and shame. Those emotions manifested in the self-imposed exclusion from family events and activities. The unrecognized feelings of worthlessness and shame were almost overwhelming. The outward signs were obvious, but even so we did not know what we were dealing with.

A few weeks later, the Holy Spirit spoke to me about the matter. In the early morning hours while I was still in a semi-sleep state the Lord simply said, “Shame is operating!” At that time, I had no comprehension of what that meant. I started to study and learn all I could about shame. My search led to a discovery that there are certain characteristics and negative emotions which attach to shameful events or situations that are almost impossible to pinpoint without knowledge, discernment, leading, and direction. I saw a classic shame response operating in my family. Others in the family were at a loss to know how to deal with the hidden issues of shame, which they did not yet recognize. I finally had a name for what I was seeing at work in my own family.

The many eye-opening revelations led to sharing and teaching so that others could be delivered from shame. After teaching on shame, many people came forward and confirmed that they had been dealing with an emotion that they did not recognize. They said, “Now I have a name for what I have been feeling!” This book will expose a hidden bondage. People can readily identify a sin or wrong action, or even

a victimization. They can often even acknowledge guilt or accountability for an actual event for which they are responsible. However, shame is none of those things: *Shame is a negative emotion which attaches to a person as a result of the responsibility or perceived responsibility for an action.* Shame works in the emotions. The reason that shame is devastating is that it can be difficult to identify, and therefore, difficult to eliminate. It is almost impossible to overcome an enemy that one cannot identify. This book fills the need to expose the culprit of shame that is hiding in the shadows so that it can be eliminated!

After I learned to recognize shame, I was amazed that it was readily apparent in many lives. Many people are burdened by the impact of shame, and those who are not personally burdened by shame in themselves know or have loved ones who are dealing with its hidden effects. Shame is visible in people far and wide, from all walks of life. Many people operate under the burden of shame but have no idea of the hidden bondage that has held them in its grips. The effects of shame are also found in many places throughout the pages of Scripture. In fact, the first negative emotion to the first sin was shame! Satan used that vile trick right off the bat with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden! The fact that shame reared its ugly head in the first three chapters of the Bible illustrates the significance of shame to keep people in bondage to the kingdom of darkness.

Before each chapter of this book there are compelling stories of people who have been burdened by shame. Many people have struggled with shame but have overcome to move on to walk in freedom. These life stories reveal the brokenness of shame, but show the power of the restoration of Jesus. These people have used the destruction intended by Satan as a tool to advance the kingdom of God on earth. I pray that these stories will be an encouragement to move beyond shame and turn the lies of Satan into the truth of God's redemption to help other people. Some of the names of the people have been changed.

Also, in conjunction with this book a group or individual study guide was written to help people to overcome those negative emotions. The *No Shame Zone Discussion and Study Guide* will help facilitate healing and exposure of the hidden bondage of shame. It

will provide a means to effectively deal with shame and eliminate it from the emotions. It is meant to stir thoughts and to provoke new ways to consider old problems.

Chastity's Story



Isaiah 61:7 reads, “Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of your disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance, and so you will inherit a double portion in your land and everlasting joy will be yours.”

I pulled into the parking lot at the local grocery, picked out a prime parking spot and ran in. I spoke to the greeter with a smile on my face and saw someone down the first aisle whom I have known all my life. I called out to ask about her children and how her parents were doing. As I traveled down one aisle after the next, I greeted strangers saying, “How are you?” I often joke with my coworkers, and talk about things my children are involved in or how my husband and I plan to go out of town for the weekend. I am buoyantly happy and at peace. However, that has not always been my life.

Have you ever been at a place in your life where you knew, you just knew, that if God did not intervene you were going to die? I have. There was a time in my life when if I met you in the local grocery I would not look at you. I would avoid any contact with you at all cost, even the cost of leaving and coming back later when fewer people were around. I would peruse the parking lot to see if there was a car I recognized just in case someone I knew would be inside, and I might run into them and have to talk to them. I would walk into my workplace with my head down, my hair covering my face, staring at the floor. I would wear overly large clothes almost baggy, trying to just disappear. I would appear busy just so that I would not have to engage in conversation. My emotions were so volatile that it was better if I didn't feel anything. I could cope that way, just don't feel

anything. My heart would pound and my chest would tighten when I would get around people. What if they knew about me? What if they knew what I was thinking? I was withdrawn, isolated, and ashamed. I was only a shell of the person God had created me to be.

I was an educated woman with a well-paying job and I was good at it. I was married to a well-respected man in the community and had two beautiful children. I taught Sunday school class and was deeply involved in local activities. I had the perfect life... on the outside. On the inside, however, I was broken, betrayed, and full of shame. Why was I not pretty enough? Why was I not good enough? Why did my husband repetitively seek shelter in the arms of another? Why? Did I not cook good enough? Did I not clean well enough? Was I not sensitive enough to his needs? Why did he not love me anymore? Why did he not want to spend time with me anymore? Why did he not want to do things as a family anymore? What did I do that caused him to stop loving me? I felt like nothing I did was good enough. I felt like I was not good enough.

This time in my life drove me into the arms of God. I had always had a relationship with Him, but it had never been tried by fire. I had never had to face such adversity before. I had never in my whole life felt so worthless and without value and purpose. I knew that in this moment, there was no one who could help me. My parents could not help me; my friends could not help me; my children could not help me. There was no one that could help me...but God.

I became desperate to truly know the only one that could help me: Jesus Christ. I entered a season of seeking. I was seeking to understand the truth that there was a man who loved me without conditions, a man who died to save me, redeem me, to heal and restore me. A man named Jesus. The Word of God says in Matthew 7:7, "Ask and it will be given to you, Seek and you shall find, knock and it will be opened unto you." I had waltzed through life with rose-colored glasses oblivious to my life falling down around me until it crashed upon me. I began asking questions, not of other people, but of God. I needed answers. I needed to know how to put my life back together.

It was during this season that God was truly on the throne of my life. My life became all about Jesus. I would sit in a big chair by the bedside reading the Bible until my children would fall asleep every

night. I turned my closet into a prayer closet. I would tell them, “If you wake up in the night and can’t find me, you’ll find me in the closet.” I would lay on the hardwood floor in my closet, night after night, hour upon hour, and just cry out to God in desperation. I cried out my pain. I cried out my hopelessness. I cried out my loneliness. I cried out my brokenness and shame. I lost all of my dignity. It no longer mattered what I looked like, or what I sounded like. I was dying, and He was the only one who could give me life. In John 10:10, Jesus says, “The enemy comes but to kill, steal, and destroy, but I have come to give life and life more abundantly.” My life had been stolen. My marriage had been destroyed. Satan tried to take my life, but Jesus came to give me life and not just life, but more abundant life. I yearned from my innermost being for the first time in my life, to be in the perfect will of the Father. I had never really thought a lot about it before.

Over a period of time, it was a journey really, the Lord renewed my identity in Him. He restored my faith in Him. He let me know that He was there for me, and gave me understanding that nothing could ever be against me. He healed my brokenness. One step at a time, He brought me out of the pit I had found myself in—a pit called shame—and has given me a double portion for my adversity. He has given me beauty for ashes. He has traded my mourning for a garment of praise, and I will forever love Him.

Isaiah 61:7 says, “Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of your disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. and so you will inherit a double portion in your land and everlasting joy will be yours.”

Chapter 1

Shame and Blame



Shame

Shame is a vile lie of Satan! It is devastating to people who fall into its hidden and obscure trap. Shame is nothing more than a state of mind in which strong and debilitating negative emotions are associated with acts or events for which a person feels deep regret. Shame is not even the same thing as guilt. Guilt is the actual responsibility for an action or event. Guilt is accountability for behaviors that result in injury, hurt, criminal, or illegal deeds. Shame is merely the negative emotion that attaches to a bad or wrongful action.

A person may have guilt, but no shame, or no guilt, but be burdened by shame. First, a person may be guilty of a heinous or shocking crime but have no shame. There are people who have seared their emotions so that they do not experience any negative emotions attached to actions of which they are guilty. There are murderers on death row, who when interviewed, show no burden or shame over their actions. Second, a person may not be guilty of anything, but may be paralyzed by shame. Many times people who have been the victims of abuse feel great shame, but have not undertaken any action or behavior to justify the negative shameful emotions. The abuse may be emotional, physical, or sexual. Someone may have been told all their lives how awful their family is or how stupid they are which leads to hidden shame. Finally, there are people who have made a

misstep in life by engaging in an action that turned out to be a serious mistake. Shame attached to the person as a result of a wrong action, but the negative emotion has hindered the person from moving on to a productive life. The person may have made amends and repented, but shame lingers as an invisible tether that prevents the person from pressing on beyond a painful incident.

The Lord began to teach how shame operates in the lives of people. Shame is a damaging emotional bondage. In Scripture, shame is the first thing that Satan put on Adam and Eve to hold them in bondage. In God's presence, when there is a healthy relationship with the Lord, there is no shame no matter what past events have colored someone's life. However, in the realm of guilt, shame is quick on the heels to apprehend the mind, will, and emotions of a person who feels unworthy to receive anything good from God.

The Shame of Adam and Eve

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. On the earth he created a man and woman. The only status they ever knew was to be bare. It was not anymore bothersome than it is for modern people to have their face or hands exposed. The heat and the cold could not bother them, they needed no protection from the elements, for they were in the protection of God.

Genesis tells us, "Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Gen. 2:25). In the realm of God's kingdom, they had no needs. They had no negative emotions. They were happy, protected, provided for, loved, and they did not know that they were exposed. First, nakedness obviously means bare, in that they were not clothed. Nakedness can also illustrate that they had nothing to hide before God. The reason that their nakedness was irrelevant to them, was because they were in the same status whether they were exposed or not. There was nothing for a covering to hide, so whether they were covered or not made no difference. Think of a jellyfish that is translucent and the internal organs can be seen by looking through the transparent flesh. Could that be how God envisions humanity? He can see right through people and ascertain sin. In God's eyes all of humanity is transparent, there is nothing that will be hidden from God. When there was no sin present, there was nothing to cover.

Once the black ugliness of sin was present, there was something to try to hide from God!

In the course of events, both Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil against the will of God. When they engaged in the sin that God had forbidden, they were instantly changed. The first thing that happened was that their eyes were opened. It may have been the first time that they could see who and what they were. As a result of the enhanced, unprotected vision, they realized that they were naked. Naked means exposed. Adam and Eve were exposed before the Lord.

The Lord said a curious thing, “Who told you that you were naked?” Their status before the Fall was that they were unashamedly naked because they did not even know that they were uncovered. God’s plan is that people do not know that they are exposed in the presence of God. Genesis says,

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” (Gen. 3:7-11)

Shame is an emotional state of being. It is a state of knowledge. They did not know they were naked so they had no shame. Guilt is responsibility for an action, whereas shame is the emotional response for having engaged in an act or behavior. Shame is the first thing that came on Adam and Eve as a result of the guilt of sin. When there was no sin, they were naked but did not know it. The pain of exposure is only revealed in the light of sin. Since shame was the first negative emotion to be loosed on the earth after the Fall, it is a powerful tool

of Satan. In order to be strategic, first, believers must be aware of it, and second, believers must know how to combat its strangle hold on people bound by its cunning grip.

Hiding: The Classic Response to Shame

Adam answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid” (Gen. 3:10). The classic response to shame is to hide. It is as if the memory or emotional condition is so hurtful that people cannot stand the exposure that they receive. While in regret, people just want to hide from exposure of the sin or victimization. Getting exposed over and over is painful. Sometimes it is easier just to hide than it is to face constant exposure again and again. It is like a scab that keeps getting knocked off; it takes a long time to heal. Shame comes with fear of disgrace and humiliation. Shame is a bondage of the mind because it is based in fear of rejection and dishonor. Some may feel that it is almost better to hide in fear of what may happen, rather than to go out and face it head on.

Shame is a powerful tool of Satan. Why do you think that it was the first response to the guilt of the first sin of Adam and Eve in the garden? Of all the emotions that Adam and Eve could have experienced, shame was the first. The Scripture implies shame, because the Word says they were naked and unashamed. Then they saw their nakedness and hid. It is a powerful tool of bondage used by Satan, and that is why it must be exposed. Ephesians says, “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them!” (Eph. 5:11). Shame occurs between the ears. It is an internal bondage that keeps people detained within the confines of self-imprisonment!

Blame

One day during prayer the Lord just spoke the words, “Shame and blame go together!” I reread the story of Adam and Eve and found that it was true: Adam and Eve’s next emotional response to shame was blame. Blame is failure or inability to take responsibility for one’s actions. The memory is too painful or causes too much intense discomfort, so a person cannot simply say, “I did it ...!” The function of blame is to take the heat off and cast attention onto others.

Blame is the intentional deflection of responsibility from oneself to another for the purpose of emotional peace.

Almost instantaneously, Adam cast blame. He said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (Gen. 3:12). Adam cast blame in two ways. First, Eve gave Adam some fruit. (She held a gun to his head, and threatened to beat him. Not really, but the point is well taken while he is casting blame, it may as well sound good!) Second, Adam also cast blame toward God: “The woman *you put here*” did this. In other words, “Lord, if you had not put her here none of this would have happened!” It was Eve’s fault, and really it was ultimately God’s fault for ever creating Eve in the first place!

Eve took a turn at laying blame to the serpent. Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Gen. 3:13). She could have said, “He did it, the lying cheat tricked me. It is not really my fault, because he was crafty and cunning!” Eve, like Adam, could not take responsibility for her sin.

The Serpent never said a word! There was no one else that the serpent could blame, because he started the whole process. Even so, what shame could the enemy have at disobeying God; more likely he may have had pride that he was able to despoil God’s creation. Genesis says, “So the Lord God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life’” (Gen. 3:14).

Blame is devastating because people who blame others cannot come to repentance because they will not bear responsibility for their actions. Repentance means to acknowledge a sin and then turn away from it. To repent literally means to do a U-turn. It is a lie of Satan if people cannot acknowledge their actions. How can one turn away from something they will not acknowledge? It is a lie of the enemy to make people think they feel better if they are not responsible. The failure to take responsibility is what keeps people in bondage. Blaming someone else keeps people from taking ownership of an action. Owning one’s behavior is the beginning of healing. Only

when a person takes ownership of an action, can they give it to Jesus. A person cannot give to Jesus what they do not have or possess.

Casting blame is like a mirror which reflects light. When the spotlight is on someone, they take a mirror of blame and cast that scrutiny in another direction. I was on location during the filming of a music video. It was being filmed outside, but at the edge of a tunnel. The light was not good for filming. The videographer pulled out a round silver screen and told me to hold it just perfectly to catch the sun light and reflect it on the face of the person being filmed. At first I had to get the hang of it to keep the light on the young man's face. Reflecting the light of the sun is a great image of what it means to cast blame. Guilt or shame may come in a person's direction. That person may capture it before it hits them and deflect it in the direction of another person or situation. That is what it means to cast blame.

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There can be no repentance from something that was not someone's fault to begin with. After all, why should someone repent for something that was put upon them by another person? Did not God love Adam and Eve? What if Adam and Eve had confessed? The answer to those questions are not known, but throughout biblical history God has shown extreme mercy and forgiveness for many things. If they had exhibited true heart-felt remorse, would human history have been different? The truth of the matter is that Adam and Eve did not repent. They immediately cast blame, which solidified their guilt because they could not take responsibility for their actions. They were made in the image of God, yet at that moment they had more of the nature of the serpent than they did of God.

As is often the case with blame, the bondage continued because they could not acknowledge their sin. This also happened between God and Israel. Time and again in biblical history, God just wanted Israel to acknowledge their sin and repent. This was not so that they would have to live with the painful reminder of past sin, but so that

their past sin would lose its painful power over them. Failure of Israel to acknowledge sin kept them in bondage.

Blame is a defense mechanism. It is hard for people who are living in a blame-haze to see their own condition. People who are operating in blame have to see it and recognize that they are in defense mode. As long as people desire to deflect shame by casting blame, they will not be healed.

Conclusion

There is no defense mode in Jesus, just surrender mode. The foot of the cross is the *No Shame Zone*! There is no shame and no blame in Jesus! It is evident what the enemy tried to do to humanity, but in the *No Shame Zone* there is freedom! When there is repentance and confession of those past actions from which there is shame attached, nothing remains that Satan can use to hurt or oppress. It may even be necessary to repent for shame itself, because the Lord's grace is sufficient to cover all our sins, including the sin of believing the shame-lie of Satan. There is no silver screen to deflect shame onto another person, but rather, Jesus takes it. He has already carried our shame to the cross. The price has already been paid and it does not have to be carried anymore. Isaiah said, "Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood" (Isa. 54:4). There is no shame, disgrace, humiliation, or reproach when a believer walks with the Lord because they walk in the "NO SHAME ZONE!"

Leigh's Story



A deep secret from the past that is too embarrassing or painful to reveal may be a sign that pride and shame are operating together. A secret that is safely nestled deep within may need to be confessed to a trusted friend or prayer partner. Recently, my husband and I went on a retreat week together. It was a time for us to get away, spend time together, and seek the Lord. Our first stop was at Prayer Mountain in Moravian Falls, North Carolina. It was named for the Moravians, a band of people from Germany who hosted a continuous prayer meeting twenty-four hours per day for over 100 years. The Lord told me the morning before going to the mountain that it was going to be a day of repentance and confession. I shared that with my husband, and he agreed and understood.

We went to the mountain and were there alone for over six hours even though it was a public place. We took care to confess and repent for everything that we could remember. We read Scriptures, we prayed, and we worshipped the Lord. My husband was ready to move on, but I sensed that we were not finished. I had a nagging thought that came up in my mind over and over again. We had been married for over three decades, but there was something in my past that had been too shameful to tell anyone, even my husband. In the years since my youth, I had an unexposed secret that I had never revealed to another person. It was simply to painful.

I knew the Lord wanted me to reveal it. The Holy Spirit brought it up time and again. I delayed and ignored the promptings by the Holy Spirit as long as I could. After three or four hours on the mountain top, the Lord would not leave me in peace. I knew that I had to

tell him this thing that had been hidden for decades. I had repented long ago, many times even (although once would have been enough). Even though I had repented, the hindering effects of shame were still there. It was one of those things that caused an inward cringe as it would come across my mind from time to time.

I gulped and told him that after all the years of marriage there was one thing that I had not shared with him. I told him how painful and embarrassing it was to reveal, but I forged ahead and shared because I knew that it would be pleasing to the Lord. Telling him my deepest secret allowed me to be free of shame. It would also bring us closer knowing that I could trust him to protect me in all situations. He is my covering and my head in Christ Jesus. His duty as a godly husband was to protect me and keep me safe. Telling him my deepest secret revealed that I had complete trust in him to do just that. I made my confession and he listened patiently. From my perspective, after telling him my secret there was absolutely nothing between us. I had previously shared with him everything else that could be relevant or important.

Much to my surprise, when I had finished talking, my husband took a deep breath and said he had something to tell me. He also had a painful secret that he had never been able to reveal to me. There was also something from his youth that was hidden deep within. It was a shameful event from decades earlier that he had never been able to tell anyone. He said he could not bring himself to share with me before that time.

We had always had a close marriage. The vast majority of our marriage was very smooth over the years. We had always been able to talk about anything – or so we thought. We were both surprised to learn that there were secrets between us which had been hidden by shame and pride for our entire marriage. The joint exposure of those things brought a new level of freedom in the Lord for each one of us. The trust that it took to share with each other also brought a new level of intimacy in our marriage.

Chapter 2

Partners in Crime: Pride and Shame



There are two partners that work in tandem to keep people in bondage. They are pride and shame. They work together as pride exalts and then shame devalues. Pride is the vile sin that was the first to attract Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Eve was enticed to be like God and engaged in behavior that she thought would meet that desire. Shame was the partner that came swiftly on its heels. Pride elevated and then when it was done with its work, shame quickly came to degrade and debase.

Shame and pride are begotten from Satan's fall. Because those two partners were seen at his downfall, he sought that same downfall for humanity. First, he was beautiful and wanted to be exalted to be like God. Then he was cast down to his shame and humiliation and became a spectacle. The root of his fall was that his heart became proud because of his beauty. Ezekiel teaches about the exaltation and corruption of Satan:

Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade, you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the

sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more. (Ezek. 28:17-19)

Satan's wisdom and splendor had become so corrupted that God hurled him to the earth and made a spectacle of him before kings (Ezek. 28:17). Lucifer desecrated the sanctuaries. God made a consuming fire come out of him and reduced Lucifer to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching (Ezek. 28:18). Lucifer sought to exalt himself to be *like* the Most High God! In his attempt to self-promote, he was brought low. Satan wanted to be lifted high, but was shamed in the end. He was further described in Isaiah 14:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! ¹³For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, *I will be like the Most High.*' ¹⁵*Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the pit. (Isa. 14:12-15)*

I have often heard the saying, "The bigger they are, the harder they fall!" This means that the higher someone is elevated or in pride, the greater the disgrace that will result from the fall or shame. An "Average Joe" getting caught with his hand in the cookie jar is not nearly as devastating as an extreme moral failure by a public figure, like the President of the United States. In another example, as Paul gave the qualifications for serving as a bishop, he showed the dangers of being puffed up and in pride. Paul warned saying, "lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil" (1 Tim. 3:6). Paul confirmed that pride goes first, then the fall (shame) is sure to come swiftly on its heels. Proverbs says it well, "When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble *is* wisdom" (Prov. 11:2). Unequivocally, pride will lead to shame. For many that

will happen during this lifetime, but for others it may happen in the judgment. One thing is shown to be certain in Scripture: Unresolved pride will result in shame.

Humility and Truth Lead to Freedom

Shame and pride will cause a downfall, but humility and truth will lead to freedom and life. The authentic example of truth bringing freedom comes from the life of Jesus. In being Christ-like, believers can learn the way to be delivered from the devastating effects of shame and pride. By emulating Jesus, believers can walk in a way that is pleasing to the Lord! Jesus was humiliated on the cross and shamed for our sakes, but was ultimately lifted high. His shame and degradation on the cross led to his honor and exaltation. The shame of humanity was upon him. The book of Hebrews says,

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he *endured the cross, scorning its shame*, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:1-2)

Did Jesus despise the shame of the cross because he knew the bondage that it had brought to humanity? By Jesus' self-denial in humility, honor was the end result. By Satan's self-exaltation, the shame of the Fall was the conclusion. Proverbs says, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). Jesus disdained the disgrace and dishonor of the cross, but he took that humiliation for the sake of humanity.

Jesus' scorn of shame on the cross was not only that he was dying and suffering for sins he had not committed. Jesus hung on the cross naked. All of his clothes were the ante in a game of chance. Jesus was completely exposed on the cross. His mother and the other women

were in his presence seeing his nakedness. The humiliation must have been terrible. The book of John says,

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled that said, "They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment." So this is what the soldiers did. *Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.* When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. (John 9:23-27)

In his status of total exposure, he scorned the shame of the cross. Even though he was naked, there was no sin for him to hide. Jesus was unlike Adam and Eve in the garden, who were naked and hiding from the Father to keep him from seeing their sin. Jesus was naked, but the shame of Jesus was born of the sins of humanity, not his own sin. The soldiers stripped him of his garments, his covering, and the shame of his nakedness came from our sin. He was made sin for humanity so that the shame of humanity could be taken away. Matthew Henry, great commentator of the Bible said, "The shame of nakedness came in with sin. He therefore who was made sin for us bore that shame, to roll away our reproach. He was stripped, that we might be clothed with white raiment (Rev. 3:18), and that when we are unclothed we may not be found naked." ¹

¹ Matthew Henry Commentary, www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/john/19.html Accessed April 24, 2016.

Jesus' shame and humility made way for his honor as he was lifted high and seated at the right hand of God. In honor, he was elevated and lifted up after he took the shame of the world on himself. For humanity to continue to carry shame that had already been paid for on Calvary's cross is to diminish the payment of Jesus. Jesus has no desire that humanity should carry what he died to pay for! Jesus already carried the shame of the world. He carried all shame so that humanity would not have to carry it later on. The work of the cross paid for all shame, past and future. Therefore, any shame that is being carried by any person is based on a lie of Satan. The exposure of that lie will bring freedom from the hidden effects of shame.

The Subtlety of Shame

The Lord Jesus hates shame. That is why Scripture says that he endured the cross and scorned its shame. It is one of the most hidden forms of bondage in the human existence. It may often come on the heels of a personal sin or an action perpetrated on someone by another. The original sin is easy to detect and when the heart is right, relatively easy to deal with through repentance and forgiveness. However, shame usually comes as a subtle secondary attachment to the obvious sin. The sin is the bondage, but shame is the gatekeeper.



Shame usually comes as a subtle secondary attachment to the obvious sin. The sin is the bondage, but shame is the gatekeeper.



Shame often is the thing that prevents people from getting help, deliverance, and freedom. Because people are fearful or humiliated, they often do not want to draw attention to their situation. It may be easier to live with shame than it is to have confrontation with it. Shame is extremely subtle but very devastating to the lives of people who are burdened by it.

Shame can often be so subtle that many people never have revelation that they are dealing with shame and therefore never get beyond it. Some people live under its cloud for an entire lifetime and never walk in freedom. Jesus came to deliver his creation from the effects of the fall, of which pride and shame were the first and most devastating

bondages. Jesus wanted his children to be healed of the demoralizing effects of shame.

The goal of this book is to show the world how to get free of shame. There is a great deal of freedom that comes in the exposure of shameful circumstances. Confession may be very liberating. As will be seen later in this book, often people who have been bound by a shameful past use that as a testimony to glorify God.

Shame is frequently accompanied by the fear of the shameful situation being known. *The fear of people knowing is often worse than people actually knowing.* Not being in bondage allows a person to move forward in life. Christ Jesus took all shame, so the only one to benefit by a person hiding in shame is Satan. There is peace in Jesus. When a person is walking in wholeness and peace, nothing of the past can keep that person in bondage. Revelation of such things shows healing and peace. When a person is born-again, they are a new creature in Christ Jesus. The old matters pass away. Those things are a real part of a person's history, but when a person is truly yielded to the Lord, those situations no longer have the power to hurt or embarrass.

Confessing and using the shameful acts or situations to help others reduce or eliminate the power to hurt. At times, people can be held in fear that someone is going to know or reveal their secret or the point of their shame. Shame is a lie of the enemy. Ephesians 5:11 says, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them." Exposure of the very thing that the enemy would use to keep people in bondage for the good of other people is a kingdom blessing. Bringing the shameful matters to the open also removes the fear of involuntary exposure. Controlled exposure maybe better than involuntary exposure. What that means is that if someone confesses shameful situations to others, they may control the way in which the information is released. If exposure comes in some other way, there is no control over the release of information.

Think about my personal family situation discussed in the introduction. The matter was exposed for the world to see within two hours. My family was suddenly the talk of our small town and the object of much gossip. However, having said that, the drastic exposure was freeing in that it allowed us to use it as a ministry tool. Taking a hard look at the matter, the main reason that I would not

have wanted that exposure probably comes down to pride. It was hurtful and I would rather have not had my dirty laundry aired in public. Once the situation was aired for all to see, I had nothing to lose by making some lemonade out of our lemons. Using our situation to help others in need was by far the greatest blessing. What Satan intended for harm, God turned to good.

Breaking the Stronghold of Pride and Shame

Pride will keep the shame hidden. Shame will protect the stronghold of pride. Pride will keep shame hidden because it seems that exposing an issue of shame will bring too much embarrassment or pain. Pride would rather say, "If I keep this hidden no one will know and I will not have to face it." Pride may say that rejection will come when others hear of those past sins or actions. If I want to be respected, I cannot let this be known. Pride is not merely limited to arrogance; pride is anything that would exalt itself above the Lord. Pride could even say that something in one's past is too great to be overcome by the grace of God. In other words, pride would say, "You have done too much wrong. You cannot be forgiven. The grace of God is not enough for you." That statement of pride makes a mockery of the cross of Jesus. His grace is enough to cover any sin or hurt.

Shame on the other hand will tell a person that revelation will bring embarrassment and condemnation. Shame will say, "What would make you think that the Lord would forgive that act. It is too far over the edge." Shame will tell a person that exposure of the situation will cause one to have to re-live the pain, embarrassment, or anxiety all over again. Shame will devalue a person and make them feel worthless. Shame will say a person is worthy of no good gift, much less the salvation of Jesus Christ. Shame will tell an abused person that he or she is responsible for the abuse suffered at the hands of another person. Shame will say you have done too much wrong. Shame will isolate a person to the point that they are completely alone in the world. Shame will cut a person off from the people who could speak the liberating truth of God so that they may find freedom.

The partnership of pride and shame is a circular argument that creates a stronghold that is hard to identify because of its subtlety.

Pride will keep the shame hidden because people who are bound in pride will not expose a shameful situation. Pride will keep people from seeking freedom. Shame will protect the stronghold of pride because people are so shamed they cannot bring the matter to light for fear of rejection or judgment. In other words, a person in shame will hide and a person in pride will put on a good front. However, the truth is the tool that Jesus uses to break the lies of Satan. The book of John says, “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

There will always be judgmental people, Pharisees if you will, who will look at others and make unholy comparisons. A person cannot stay in bondage to shame simply because others will falsely judge them. Judging is above the pay-grade of everyone I know. Judgment belongs to the Most High God! The Pharisee said, “God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get” (Luke 18:12). However, the book of Luke also shows the contrasts of a sinful man and the ultra-religious Pharisee. The book of John says, “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner’” (Luke 18:13). The Pharisee was battling the pride of self-exaltation. Jesus said of the tax collector who confessed his sinfulness, “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, *went home justified before God*. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Luke 18:14).

There may be others who will cast judgment for past actions, but they are working above their pay grade! The Lord never called his people to judge other people. Believers can discern fruit, but there is no call for condemnation of another person. That means that no matter what a person has done in his or her life, the mercies of God are renewed every morning and the mercies of God’s children should be renewed every morning as well! If a person sinned yesterday, today is a new beginning! The book of Lamentations says, “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lam. 3:22-23).

Exposure Used for God's Glory

Some of the best and most moving testimonies I know are of people who have walked in Satan's grip, but have broken free to tell about it. Satan wants to keep people in his clutches. The best way that he can do that is to fill people with fear that their hidden sin will be exposed and they will be rejected by others. However, when people expose hidden sin, true lovers of Jesus will rejoice because they know that a brother or sister has walked to freedom, no longer held by the lie of bondage to Satan. That is ultimately what the body of believers is looking for: A prisoner set free when the threats and bondage of shame are removed. This is especially true when people are willing to humble themselves and use their past failures or wounds for the greater good of the kingdom of God. Use of the brokenness to help others walk free is a sign of humility, and humility honors God. That is why Scripture says:

God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor? (Jas. 4:6b-12)

The passage above is like medicine to the one who is suffering from shame. The Lord draws near to the one who is humble. When a person uses the thing that Satan would use for brokenness and bondage to glorify the Lord, that is resistance! When a person is able

to say, “That is my past, but let me share with you what Jesus did for me so that he can help you get free, too.” God will draw near! The above passage in James is not saying to confess a sin and then continue to carry that sin. No! In fact, just the opposite is true. Confess, wash, purify, grieve, and repent! But when that happens the Lord will lift up the one who has yielded. The book of James gives some strong words to those who would judge. James says “Do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judge them.... But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?” (Jam. 4:11-12). One who judges another who has cleansed, purified, confessed and repented may be a Pharisee.

shame to the front, not for her humiliation, but for the use of God's kingdom and for her freedom. That event led to her healing from years of bondage to the shame of the past.

Sometime later Laura saw Barbara and she said, "I had never told what had happened to me, but now I tell it where ever I go." She had been in bondage to shame, but the Lord helped her to walk in freedom. She worked with children everyday in her job. The Lord used her healing and new-found freedom from shame and guilt to allow her to reach out to children who may have been sexually abused. Barbara said that the Lord has allowed her to have special understanding when she sees children who are walking where she walked years ago. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." The Lord did not cause this heartache and pain, but he will use it for the greater good of his kingdom.

The Lord did not cause the abuse to happen, but he will use it to his greater glory and for the good of his kingdom if people will give him the shame and allow him to carry it. When past events are tied to the redemptive power of Jesus, shame looses its grip and people are blessed, both the prior carrier of shame, and those they minister to as well. When someone overcomes a devastating situation by the power of the blood of Jesus, they carry an anointing to help others walk in freedom from the same injury or lie of Satan.

Chapter 3

People Could Not Condemn and Jesus Did Not Condemn



It was early in the morning as the sun was rising. The crowd had gathered to hear the words of a great teacher. All of the sudden, there arose a disturbance as a woman was abruptly thrust at his feet. A sudden hush came over the crowd. Can you imagine the distaining looks, the haughty eyes, as the people looked on? She felt isolated, embarrassed, and rejected. Shame may be the cause for deep feelings of rejection. Standing there alone, she had been rejected because not one person stood in her defense. Shame is a root of rejection because people need to feel inclusion with other people. She felt totally alone. In Jesus, no one needs to feel shame! In John 8:4, the Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus saying, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.” This woman was caught in the act of her sin, but Jesus’ reaction to the situation brought peace, love, and comfort to her. In the end, the proud left shamed before the Master, but the woman left restored.

Shame can come from private events or from public disclosure, or both. Such is the case of the woman caught in adultery.



This woman was caught in the act of her sin, but Jesus’ reaction to the situation brings peace, love, and comfort to her. In the end, the proud left shamed before the Master, but the woman left restored.



Jerusalem was full of people who were there for one of the annual feasts: The Festival of Tabernacles (John 7:2). Jesus' unbelieving brothers taunted him to go to Jerusalem for the festival and make himself public. He was the one who had nothing to hide, but he went there incognito (John 7:3-4,10). The backdrop of the story with the adulterous woman was that halfway through the festival, Jesus began to teach and draw a crowd.

There was mixed emotion about him, just like there is in the world. Some said he was the Messiah, others said he was demon-possessed. Jesus told the crowds to "Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly" (John 7:24). Finally, the last day of the feast came, and Jesus offered the people living water. Jesus was creating a stir, some wanted to stone him, some wanted to seize him, and some believed he was the Messiah. Jesus had hidden before, but he was completely exposed in Jerusalem!

Very early the next morning, after the conclusion of the festival but apparently before the people dispersed, Jesus went to the Jewish temple to teach. People had already gathered to hear his wise words. John 8:2 says, "At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where *all the people* gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them." Even from the first morning light, the crowd was waiting with eager anticipation to hear the words of the teacher.

Suddenly there was a great disruption in the midst of the scene while Jesus was teaching the crowd that had already gathered. The Jewish leaders came before Jesus dragging a woman who had been snared in sin. John 8:3 says, "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in the act of adultery. They made her stand before the group." Imagine the scene: Jesus sat in the middle of a throng of people who listened with anticipation to every word that he said. A commotion occurred as the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, probably robed in all their regalia, dragged a scantily clad woman before the people. She was likely disheveled, hair tousled, with eyes down cast. Tears may have silently streamed down her face as she was subjected to humiliation before the crowd of students and the leaders who wanted to trap Jesus. She was made to stand before the whole assembly, the crowd that had gathered and the accusers. She could hardly bear the shame, secretly hoping that the ground

would open up and swallow her up! This was not a private matter any longer; this was a public disgrace played out for all to see.

As if this could not wait until Jesus was finished teaching the crowd, they said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery” (John 8:4). There it was, boldly proclaimed for everyone to hear. Just in case the woman was not humiliated enough, without care for her or the crowd, they blurted out the allegations of her sins. The leaders went on to say, “In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” (John 8:5). Were they hungry for blood? They wanted Jesus’ blood. That is what they were really after. It made no difference whom they had to destroy in the process to get what they wanted. They had given convincing proof of her guilt. After all she had been caught in the act; there was no denying what they had witnessed with their own eyes. They wanted Jesus to condemn her.

They were willing that she should die to ensnare Jesus. They were using the question to trap Jesus. If Jesus showed her compassion, he would be accused of breaking the Law of Moses and loving sin. If Jesus condemned her, and let the letter of the Law come to pass, he would have been seen as double-minded as one who had previously associated with tax collectors and prostitutes. John 3:17-18 says it all, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” The message of the New Covenant that Jesus came to institute was one of grace, not condemnation.

In all his wisdom, Jesus did not answer with a single word. The book of John says, “But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger” (John 8:6). It appears if the religious leaders were not going to be that easily dissuaded! They would not leave “well-enough” alone. The leaders kept pressing in for an answer. They were like a pack of wolves circling for the kill. They could taste blood because they thought that Jesus was finally trapped. Then the book of John says, “When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, ‘Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her’” (John 8:7). Jesus again stooped down

and wrote on the ground. There have been speculations throughout the ages as to what Jesus wrote. Could it have been the individual sins of her accusers and the people present? The doodling of Jesus in the dirt will not be known this side of eternity because it was not memorialized in writing on the pages of Scripture.

Jesus said sinful people cannot condemn. Only those without sin can condemn. This was good news for the woman who was caught in this intensely awkward and painful situation. In fact, it is good news for everyone! There is not one person on the planet who can rightfully condemn another person. People may try to judge, but in so doing they place themselves under judgment. This understanding will help people battling with shame to move beyond shame.

The book of John says, “At this, *those who heard* began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until *only Jesus was left, with the woman* still standing there” (John 8:9). The Pharisees and teachers of the Law, the accusers, left the woman in Jesus’ care. What about the crowd? Does this mean that the crowd of curious onlookers departed too? They were certainly in the category of “those who heard,” because they came for the very purpose of hearing Jesus! The Scripture says that everyone left, leaving *only* Jesus with the woman. Scripture is very clear that the only two left there were Jesus and the woman. There was no one pure enough to accuse her before God! Shame is a lie of the enemy to keep people in chains of regret and embarrassment. The oldest left first, perhaps because they had more sins to name, or perhaps because they had wisdom to see themselves as they really were before the throne of God.

Finally, Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” (John 8:10). First he asked, where are they? Where are those who brought you here in humiliation? Where are those curious onlookers that would gawk at your distress? Maybe they did not come to look at you, but somehow they could not help themselves from being caught in the drama of the situation anyway. Everyone was gone. The woman was there alone with Jesus. Every other person had sin, and in the eyes of Jesus, “Sin is Sin!” Her sin was no better or worse than the sin they were hiding. They were not pure enough to bring death to her lest they face their own death for sin for which there had been no repentance.

She answered his question “No one, sir.” Not one person had condemned her. The truth is that no one is without sin, those who acknowledge their sin, will not hold another in disrepute and shame. Those who will not acknowledge their own sin are living under Satan’s lie. Not one person was sin-free enough to throw the first rock except Jesus, and he refused to do so. Jesus said, “Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11).

What does all of this say about being caught in a situation that could cause one to be gripped in shame. First, every person but Jesus is a sinner who may be saved by grace. Every person has private or public hindrances that may bring on shame (which may be sins or other shameful hurts). One sin is not better than another sin, so no person has the right or opportunity to condemn another person. Second, Jesus had the right to condemn, but he did not. This woman had been caught in the act of sin. Jesus did not say one chastising word to her. He showered her with love. She did not say anything to him other than that no one accused her. She did not confess or repent, she was silent before him for the most part. There was no denying that she was guilty.

Jesus forgave her and did not condemn her even though her few words were neither a confession nor a repentance. Jesus did not retain her sins against her. She was shamed before the whole assembly by those who were in shame themselves. Otherwise they would not have slunk away from the scrutiny of Jesus as he would scrutinize those who would scrutinize others. Jesus did not shame her. Jesus did not condemn her. Jesus taught her, and then he sent her away to go in peace. There was no shame from Jesus in the situation that had the potential for being excruciatingly painful. He affirmed her with instructions about how to live life in the future.

The men wanted to trap Jesus and they exposed the woman’s shameful position by having her sin publically displayed for all to see. One way that shame attaches is with the broadcast of bad situations for public knowledge! The judgmental religious people did not handle this in private. The religious people will not handle shameful matters in private; they will drag them out for everyone to see and judge. Only wise people will not judge. The point is that if Jesus does not bring shame, it is a lie of the enemy to take on shame. To

be in shame when Jesus says there is no shame is the same thing as saying that his grace is not enough. It matters not what people say!

Seeing Jesus in this story lets hurting people know that Jesus is a compassionate God. He will use even the most degrading situations to teach one who will be used by him! Jesus used the situation to teach the crowd about compassion, forgiveness, mercy, inappropriate judgment, and condemnation! The situation of the woman was used for the greater good of the people when Jesus took that which had been exposed about her and used it to teach the people. Jesus can redeem any situation to his greater good. He can take the public shame and disgrace that others would expose and use it to further his kingdom if people allow him to do so. The best way to overcome shame is to find out how Jesus can use it and expose it to teach about Jesus' love, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and redemption. The book of Ephesians 5:11 says, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them." Once those deeds are exposed *for the good of God's kingdom*, they lose all hold and control, including shame!

Karen's Story



Shame seemed to be a close acquaintance of mine most of my life until the past few years when I came into a place of understanding and revelation concerning its grip on me. Several things happened in my childhood and teen years that created shame, fear, and anger within me. It eventually led to resentment and deep-rooted bitterness. I attempted to manage my emotions through strategies learned in graduate school while studying to be a counselor. Over the years, shame would rear its ugly head when I least expected it. I felt paralyzed when it hit me. I remember once standing in line at a restaurant waiting to be seated when a woman made a snide remark about my place in line. When I realized I had misjudged the end of the line, I apologized and promptly moved. A simple mistake that I had corrected resulted in a flood of inappropriate shame lasting the rest of the day and lingering for weeks.

I wanted to get to the root of my shame and felt frustrated that I was not walking in the freedom Christ talked about. My desperation took me on a journey of deliverance, inner healing, and wholeness. I wish I could say it happened instantly. It was more of a process for me, like peeling the layers off an onion. Intellectually I knew I was a person of worth, but deep within I realized I did not believe what my mind was telling me. There were many lies I believed about myself, with the main one being that I was unlovable. I was the second born of my parents five children. As I grew I felt my mother loved my older sister and just tolerated me. My sister was everything my mother had dreamed of in a child and I had come along 14 months later, unplanned, sickly, and painfully shy. My belief was

confirmed in my late twenties when my mother asked my forgiveness for favoring my sister and not giving me the love and affection I so desired.

During the healing process I began to identify painful emotions in childhood. I realized shame entered through negative comments or shaming statements my parents used in their attempts to shape or regulate our behaviors as kids. One instance in particular involved my sister and I looking forward to spending a week with our grandmother, however, she requested we come separately. I was given the choice by my mother of going the first or second week. Being about 7 or 8 years of age, I excitedly stated I wanted to go the first week. My mother responded by verbally lashing out and telling me how selfish I was for my choice. I was stunned, confused and began to cry while feeling intense pain inside and guilt for my “selfishness.” Due to shaming incidents like this I found myself fearful of my parent’s judgment and ended up carrying on the tradition by learning to shame myself. I carried a blanket of shame around with me and saw myself as selfish, powerless, and ugly inside. Shaming created a negative image of myself and was devastating to my self-worth.

I love my parents and know they did the best they could in light of their own upbringing. I was fortunate to have parents that grew into a realization of God’s love and admitted their mistakes, however; this was not enough to heal the wounds that had formed on my soul in childhood. I was like a spiritual orphan in that I did not know God as my Father or Daddy as the Scriptures imply. I struggled to experience His love because I honestly did not think I deserved it. I had constructed a wall of ice around myself that encapsulated the lies of the enemy. The lies were things like, “I’m selfish, I’m worthless, I’m shameful, and I’m unlovable,” to name a few. I realized this wall kept me from truly receiving or giving love. When I was asked to picture God during an inner healing session, I envisioned a giant marble statue of God sitting on a chair sort of like the Lincoln Memorial. I had been a Christian for many years, taught Sunday school, helped with youth and women’s ministry, and had knowledge of the Word of God. Even so, there was a disconnect when it came to having an intimate relationship with Father God and instead I saw him as cold and distant.

As my healing journey continued and this wall of ice began to melt, Papa God's love streamed in and has not stopped. My biggest hurdle was forgiving myself for partnering not only with irrational beliefs but also the behaviors that emerged from feeling so unloved. As these lies were pulled out by the roots, Papa showed me who I really am: His favorite and beloved child. I asked Papa recently what was his name for me. A voice so clear in my head said, "You are 'My Sunshine.'" I began to weep as the memories of this song flooded my mind. This was my favorite song. Even at age three, I would sing it repeatedly and would sense such joy and love in my spirit. I realized Papa was there with me as a young child letting me know how much he loved and adored me. I am his sunshine, his only sunshine, I make him happy. I will never know how much he loves me! Now that I know who I am, "Daddy's girl," and how much he loves me, shame has lost its power. When it tries to rear its ugly head I simply hand over any lies I am believing about myself to Jesus, ask Holy Spirit to heal the places in my soul where that lie was created and still lives, and finally ask Papa what the truth of his Word says about me. Papa's love has transformed me into his Son-shine, loving others and serving him *from his love* instead of *to obtain his love*.

Chapter 4

Shame, Distress, and Restoration



Shame and Distress

The biggest known misstep of any disciple was when Peter denied Jesus three times on the night before he was crucified. Peter was vehement in his denial of Jesus. Peter's denial grew with intensity and greater resolve with each statement. At first, Peter merely denied knowing Jesus. Second, he denied Jesus with an oath, which is a solemn affirmation. Finally, Peter denied him by calling down curses. The King James Version says, "He began to curse and to swear" (Matt. 26:74). To curse, or imprecate, means "to invoke an evil prayer on another or to pray that a curse or calamity may fall on one's self or others as a way of giving credence to the words being said." As he cursed, he even took an oath to bolster his words of denial! The final intensity of Peter's denial was severe. Look at the complete passage in the book of Matthew:

Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said. *But he denied it before them all.* "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." *He denied it again,*

with an oath: “I don’t know the man!” After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.” *Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them,* “I don’t know the man!” Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly. (Matt. 26:69-75)

Jesus said that Peter would disown him. In truth, Peter utterly and completely disavowed himself of any connection with Jesus. The alarm sounded in the crowing of the cock. When the sound came, remembrance came to Peter. Instantaneous remorse flooded Peter as he remembered the words of Jesus. Peter had done the very thing that he denied. Peter declared, ““Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same” (Matt. 26:35). Peter was so sure of his foundation, that smug pride crept in. After all he was Peter, the rock foundation of the coming church.

There can be no doubt that Jesus knew and experienced the anguish of Peter’s denial. The book of Luke tells us when Peter uttered the final oath with curses, Jesus turned and looked at him in that moment. Luke says, “Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. *The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.* Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times’” (Luke 22:60b -61). The Lord was resolutely set to face the cross (Luke 9:51). However, *the Lord turned* to see the loved one who denied him. In the pressure of the moment, Peter denied the Lord to save his own skin.

Jesus looked straight at Peter. It must have been a deep penetrating look that went straight into his soul. The eyes of Jesus peered into Peter’s very being. Jesus was facing the greatest challenge in all of history, albeit the greatest opportunity, but he was facing it alone. Jesus gazed upon Peter with discernment of Peter’s fallible condition as a human being, as one who in weakness would turn away from the very one who was dying to save him. In those few brief statements, Peter committed acts that had the potential to change the rest of his

life. In a twinkling second, Peter was reminded quietly of what Jesus had said. The look of Jesus may have penetrated Peter's soul, but it was a quiet reminder. The Greek word for *remember* in this passage means "to remind quietly or suggest to the memory, to put in mind." In that instance, the reminder of the Lord's word brought Peter to reality of his actions in denying Jesus!

Peter went outside. He took himself away from the place of his shame. He fled to go away to nurse the wounds inflicted by his soulish desire for self-preservation. Often people who are in shame cannot stand the intensity of being known or being seen by others. They often figuratively "go outside". Hiding is a frequently seen response to shame.

Peter wept bitterly. There are two Greek words for "weep." One word is *dakruō* which means "to shed a tear, or have a tear fall on the cheek." This was the word that was used when Jesus was at Lazarus' tomb when he silently shed tears (John 11:35). The other word is *klaio* and it means "to weep bitterly, to sob and wail." The word *klaio* by itself is an expression of deep or intense emotion. It is the word used for the weeping that occurred when Herod killed all the baby boys in an attempt to eliminate Jesus as a child.

This passage of Peter weeping was the word *klaio*, meaning to weep bitterly. Even so, the passage of Peter's failure has another Greek word added to the phrase. The Greek word is *pikrōs*, and means "bitterly or violently." What this passage says in literal interpretation is that Peter "bitterly and violently sobbed bitterly." In other words, Peter was passionately expressing the intense emotion of anguish. The level of his despair overtook him. He was not just weeping bitterly, he was violently, bitterly, sobbing and wailing. This was a superlative situation of grief and shame. It seems that Peter was beyond consolation.

Peter had been declared to be the rock foundation of the church; he was a disciple among disciples. He was the one set out by God to have revelation knowledge that earned him the keys to the kingdom of God, but he had denied Jesus. After Jesus' resurrection Peter's status was changed. An angel appeared to the women at the empty tomb on resurrection Sunday. He said, "But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He is going ahead of you into Galilee.' There you will see him,

just as he told you” (Mark 16:7). Peter was distinguished from the other disciples by his actions of denial of Jesus. In fact, it appeared that his rejection of Jesus had removed Peter from discipleship.

Peter and John ran to the tomb and found it empty. Peter was having a hard time making sense of it all. Luke says, “Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, *wondering to himself what had happened*” (Luke 24:12). Peter, the disciple with the greatest call, was shattered. He was confused, which is what the enemy will bring on humanity as a response to sin. He lost sight of what he was supposed to be doing, and was ineffective for the kingdom of God. Peter was in distress. He had suffered an emotional response to sin and he was distracted from the plan of God for his life.

Later, Peter simply said, “I am going fishing.” The others fell in line behind the leader and said, “We are going with you also” (John 21:3). He was at a loss to know what to do. He thought his Lord was dead and he did not have a plan to carry on even though Jesus had given ample warning this was going to happen. Not only was Peter derailed, but without firm leadership, the others were derailed with him. The act of denial was a sin or turning away from Jesus. But Peter’s response to the shame was to pull away from all that the Lord had for him to do. Often when there is sin and realization leading to shame, that is the natural human response: “I am damaged goods, so I will just go fish.”

Restoration

Peter did not restore himself. Jesus restored Peter, but Peter allowed Jesus to do it! Peter made himself available to the Lord. The disciples had been fishing all night when Jesus appeared to them by the Sea of Galilee. He called out to them,

“Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered. He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to

Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. (John 21:5-7)

Peter did not recognize Jesus. In the status of unresolved sin, there is often confusion. He was not sensing things correctly. John was the one who recognized Jesus, but Peter was the first to react with great excitement and enthusiasm. Jesus prepared a meal for them and they ate and were strengthened. He gave them bread, which represented the Word of the Lord. He gave them fish, which represented the harvest.

Peter rushed to meet Jesus. After they had eaten the meal prepared by Jesus, Peter and Jesus had a restorative conversation. This seems straightforward enough in reading this passage. However, there is more than meets the eye in this passage. Peter had denied the Lord three times. The Lord restored Peter three times. Most people assume that the three-part restoration is connected to the three-part denial. That may be true, however, when looking at the Greek language, there is a deeper meaning to this passage.

Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him and Peter responded. The new revelation comes from understanding that there are multiple words for love in the Greek language. The Greek word which Jesus used was *agapaō*, which means “deep or abiding sacrificial love.” The Greek word which Peter responded with was *phileō*, which means “to have personal affection for, or brotherly love.” At first Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me deeply and sacrificially?” Peter responded that he loved Jesus with a brotherly love. Again, Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me deeply and sacrificially?” Again Peter responded that he loved Jesus with a brotherly love. Finally, Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me with a brotherly love?” Peter responded, “Lord you know I love you with brotherly love.”

The different Greek words for love have been inserted into the passage for greater understanding:

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love (*agapaō*) me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know

that I love (*phileō*) you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love (*agapaō*) me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love (*phileō*) you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love (*phileō*) me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love (*phileō*) you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!” (John 21:15-19, Explanatory notes added.)

Peter responded with hurt because Jesus had asked him this question. He was distressed and sad. It caused him grief, heaviness, and sorrow. Is extremely difficult for people who are burdened with shame and regret to receive or to give love. They are often distressed when others ask them for things that they are not emotionally ready or able to give. The feelings of unworthiness make receiving and expressing love very challenging. Peter could give love at that moment only to the extent of companionship or brotherly love. He was not in an emotional state to be able to give deep abiding love. Jesus was seeking agape love or sacrificial love, but he was willing to meet Peter where he was, that is in brotherly love.

The next thing that Jesus did was awesome! Peter had completely and utterly denied Jesus with oaths and cursing, but Jesus said, “Follow me!” (John 21:19). The first thing Jesus said to Peter at the beginning of his ministry was, “Follow me” (Matt. 4:19). The last thing that Jesus said to Peter



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was, “Follow me!” The failure of Peter in the middle and the ensuing shame that he felt, did not hinder or cancel the call of Jesus for Peter to follow him until the end. The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). A few verses later Jesus again reiterated, “You must follow me!” (John 21:22). Even though Peter could not meet Jesus with the agape love that Jesus was seeking, Jesus understood that Peter was fully restored. Peter’s restoration would need to manifest fully in the times ahead. Jesus accepted Peter for who he was at that moment. If all Peter could give him was brotherly love, Jesus was willing to accept that. It is interesting to note that in the books of First and Second Peter all later discussion of the love of Jesus is in terms of agape, or sacrificial love. 1 Peter 1:7-8a says, “...Though it is tested by fire, (your faith) may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love (agape)” (Explanatory notes added). Peter was later fully restored to his gift and calling. In fact, he gave his life in serving the Jesus and presenting the gospel message.

The failure of sin and the shame that follows do not make a person unusable by Jesus for the kingdom of God. Jesus will use all things to the greater glory of the Father. Roman says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28). Peter later learned the blessing of sacrificial love. Peter talked about the restoration of Jesus. Knowing Peter’s history makes this passage more precious. Peter said,

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.* To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet. 5:7-11)

Can you hear and understand the way Peter wrote this passage with personal discernment? There is a deep knowledge and understanding of the anxiety that he experienced at the denial of Jesus. Peter had intimate experience of the anxiety and uneasiness of mind that came from his personal failure. In this passage, Peter talked about the God of *all grace*, who will himself restore those who have suffered. Peter denied Christ, but he was the first one to actually go into the tomb looking for him. Peter was the first one who rushed to greet Jesus by jumping out of the boat to swim to get to him. If Peter had not sought Jesus, would he have remained in his brokenness and shame for the rest of his life? The fact is when Jesus was near, Peter drew close to him.

In 1 Peter 5:10, Peter has shown the way to freedom from the anxiety of shame: *“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”* God is the divine one of all power, love, and mercy, who possesses all grace. God does not see broken people with partial, grudging grace, but with a total, overwhelming “tidal-wave,” all-consuming grace. He is the God who called each one to his eternal glory. He called all people to the perpetual, everlasting, brightness of his splendor by Christ Jesus as the instrumentality of his grace. Jesus is the Anointed Savior of God. Peter went on to say after a person has suffered a short while the Lord himself will bring freedom. When Jesus restores it is thoroughly complete and all is fully repaired. Jesus makes people strong so that they turn resolutely and are confirmed in him. He brings people to firm strength, and in his spiritual knowledge and power. He makes people able to stand, abide, continue, and establish. He makes people steadfast and settled by laying a firm, deep, under-the-ground foundation in him.

Conclusion

Look at Peter and his distress at denying Jesus. He wept bitterly but Jesus restored him. When Peter saw Jesus by the sea, he was overjoyed at first. He almost forgot himself and his mental state of shame for a few minutes as he jumped overboard. Later however,

Peter could not offer Jesus the love he wanted because people who are in shame have a very difficult time receiving and giving love due to feelings of unworthiness. The only significant thing that had happened to Peter from being called the rock of the church to the place where he could only offer Jesus brotherly friendship was Peter's denial. Peter gave what he could at that moment, but it was a start of restoration in Jesus. Jesus saw him as he was in the Kingdom realm, fully restored and serving God with everything he had. Peter's thinking, however, was still in the natural. He could only go as far as his damaged emotions would allow him to go to at that moment. When people have blown it, and when they have sinned, it may be tempting to think, "It is over. I am done for ... I will just go fishing." What they are really saying is, "I'm going to go hide out on a boat. No one will see me, and no one will know how hurt I am on the inside. No one will talk about what I have done."

The truth is that Jesus came to find Peter and the rest of the disciples who were hiding out by the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had a job for Peter and he could not do it on a fishing boat. Jesus gave Peter the job of feeding his sheep. Peter wanted to fish. Sheep are not found in the sea! Jesus redirected him into service and that was a huge part of the restoration. It is clear from the passage from 1 Peter 5 above, that Peter used his past brokenness in his future ministry to help other people. The only one who wins by keeping people in on-going shame is Satan, the accuser of the brethren. If people who sinned and who are in shame are throw-away people, there would not be many people in God's kingdom. Many people mightily used by God have a shameful past. Shame can lead to repentance or it can lead to life-long brokenness. It is a choice each person has to make: When Jesus is near, will the shamed person jump out of the boat and let Jesus restore? Or will that person set out to sea to go fish in avoidance and isolation? Jesus wants to restore everyone!

Jesus gave Peter a job. Even though Peter was not perfect in that moment, he was still commissioned to carry out the assigned task of feeding the lambs and tending the sheep. Jesus will begin to use people in an imperfect state if they are willing. The lepers were healed "as they went, they were cleansed" (Luke 17:14). Just as the lepers were healed by going and doing what Jesus told them to do,

so too will the Lord change people to bring full restoration as they step out in faith to do the job he has given them. As people step out in ministry, and use what the enemy intended for destruction for the good of the kingdom of God, full and complete restoration will come.

Dwan's Story



I was a Kentucky State Trooper, a member of the top law enforcement agency of my state. I volunteered to be an undercover narcotics agent because I knew that drugs had ruined many lives. The first day I was undercover was the first day I used drugs. I knew that my life depended on convincing a group of drug dealers that I was a user. I used drugs every day at work. Eventually, I started doing drugs on my days off. I managed to keep my life together enough to retire from the State Police after many years. However, by the time I retired I was a full-blown drug addict. I started manufacturing and selling methamphetamine to support my drug habit. I was later convicted and spent nearly nine years in federal prison. The night I was arrested I encountered Jesus in the jail cell! I was blessed because I spent most of my waking hours in prison studying the Bible.

I would define shame as a feeling associated with loss of respect. Even though I was saved and I knew the Bible, I did not know what shame was doing to me. It was easy to know what I had done, but the lie of shame was very hard to nail down. Shame hit me hardest about three months before I was released from prison. I knew that I was going to have to face people who had lost all respect for me. It was like a dark cloud came over me. It hovered and engulfed me, but I did not know what it was.

When I first came home from prison, shame was terrible. I was scared. I felt horrible about what I assumed people were thinking about me. When I was burdened by shame, I would praise God and the burden would lift. When it would return again, I would praise God again. I did not know it was Satan attacking me. When I came

out of prison my wife, who had stood by me through it all, would ask me to go out to restaurants or do other things. I hated it, but actually the people I encountered made my life so much better.

A few months after I was released from federal prison, Laura Harris asked me to come to the church where she served as pastor and share my testimony. Other than in prison, it was the first time that I was able to use the destruction of the enemy in my past life to glorify God! It helped me that Laura asked me to come and share. It allowed me to have confidence that God was not done with me and that I could be used for his glory.

About four years later, Laura called and said the Lord had been talking to her about shame. She said she was going to teach about it and invited me to come. As soon as she mentioned shame, I knew that was the name for the burden I had been carrying. I had dealt with it as best I could without knowing what it was. It was a light-bulb moment for me. I began to understand what I had been dealing with for years but could not call by name.

People who are suffering with shame must follow God's lead. If they trust in him, he will bring the right person into their lives at the right time. Now I go into jails to speak to inmates about my experiences. I can relate to them and understand how they feel. I know how Satan can convince people that they are no longer worthy for anything. Shame destroys confidence, but the acceptance and love of others renews the confidence to speak. I use my past failures to glorify God, and I have peace and freedom. I know that I can be who I am and that people will love me even with my past failures. God is love, he loves each one of us no matter what!

Chapter 5

Wails That Stop Jesus



What's in a Name?

The tale of a blind beggar who sat on the road and wailed for attention is a familiar story. It was important enough to be reported in all three of the synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were traveling on the roadway outside of the city of Jericho. There was a blind man named Bartimaeus who sat by the roadside to beg (Mark 10:46). Jericho was the first city of the Promised Land conquered after the Israelites had been released from bondage in Egypt. The Israelites crossed the Jordan River and came to take what God had promised them. Jericho should have been a place of peace and freedom, but for Bartimaeus it was a place of shame and ostracization.

The man may have been considered insignificant in his day as a blind beggar. He had an obvious handicap and his status was the lowest in society. He was blind and that was considered a curse for sin. His name was not significant enough to be reported in the books of Matthew or Luke. Only Mark considered his name worthy of mention, and it taught a great deal about his life and hardships. Bartimaeus was the son of Timaeus. The crucial indicator of the meaning of his name is found in the second part of the name. *Bar* means “son of” and *Timaeus* means “the unclean or foul in a religious sense.” In other words, the very name Bartimaeus illustrated that his family line

was considered defiled, spiritually polluted, or unclean. The name Bartimaeus literally means the “son of the unclean.” This points to a deeper spiritual meaning because he was spiritually unclean. His blindness in the natural could mean that he was spiritually blind as well. His name could also be indicative of the notion that he was a Gentile or pagan, meaning that he was not an Israelite.

Being declared “clean or unclean” was significant for the Jews. The Levitical law separated people or things that were unclean. Jews would keep themselves clean so that they could participate in religious celebrations. Just imagine the shame of being “son of the unclean” in the land of Israel where cleanliness was the most important status for participating in life’s major events and religious festivals? People who were unclean were sent outside the camp and anything that they touched was also considered unclean. Unclean things had to be washed with water or maybe even burned in fire according to the Jewish customs and traditions. Unclean people in the camp sullied the whole camp. Generally, if a person was “unclean” they were unfit for community involvement and unfit to participate in religious services or offer worship to God. Numbers 5:3-4 says, “‘Send away (unclean) male and female alike; send them outside the camp so they will not defile their camp, where I dwell among them.’ The Israelites did so; they sent them outside the camp. They did just as the Lord had instructed Moses” (Explanatory note added). Being declared unclean meant to be separated from one’s own people indefinitely until the status of being unclean was removed or resolved.

Bartimaeus was begging by the highway out of the city. Two gospels, Matthew and Mark, say Jesus saw Bartimaeus as he departed from Jericho. Luke says the encounter occurred as Jesus arrived in Jericho. This apparent contradiction does not change the fact that it was clear that Bartimaeus was sitting by the highway outside of the city of Jericho, regardless of whether Jesus was coming in or going out. It is more important to understand why he was on the road outside of the city: Bartimaeus was called “son of the unclean” every time someone called his name. Being perpetually unclean, he would have been sent out. His presence in the city would have sullied the whole thing.

This man was rejected every time someone called his name. His name was actually a curse: “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Prov. 18:21). Names in Scripture were so important that many times someone had a new spiritual identity change in the Lord, they got a new name in Scripture. Abram’s name was changed to Abraham, Sarai’s name was changed to Sarah, Jacob’s name was changed to Israel, and Saul’s name was changed to Paul. These are just a few of the people in Scripture who had new identities and new names to illustrate their change of status in the heavenly realm. That is why it is important to understand that even the name *Bartimaeus* was a curse every time someone called it. This man had lived a life of shame. His name was a representation of defilement and his status as an outcast of society.

He was in shame because of a condition that was not his fault. His father’s name was Timeous or unclean. That was not his name but it was attached to him every time someone called him. Shame may come as a result of a person’s bad behavior, but it also comes from the imposition of other people. Shame may be a community thing. A person who lives alone on a deserted island is not as impacted by shame as is someone in a community. Often people in a community are controlled by shame.

Bartimaeus was also a beggar. That meant his life and livelihood were based on the mercy of other people! He did not have a way to support himself and was dependent on the gifts of others. He could not even beg within the city because he was unclean. In other places in Scripture, beggars were seen at the temple in Jerusalem. In fact, there were designated places for people to beg as worshippers were going in and coming out. His reduction to begging out of the city would have made his life even harder. He would have been considered the lowest of the low in society.

Desperation

Even though he was blind, there was obviously nothing wrong with Bartimaeus’ ears or his mouth! The book of Luke says, “When *he heard* the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.’ *He called out*, ‘Jesus,

Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Luke 18:36-38). At first he simply made himself known. The Greek word used for his call in that instance was *boaō* meaning that he was merely calling out. He acknowledged his need for Jesus and his mercy and compassion! He may have been loud but the use of this Greek word did not indicate an impassioned plea, at least at that time. He was simply calling out, perhaps like many others in the crowd.

As Bartimaeus cried out, many people rebuked him and told him to be quiet. The crowd did not want him to speak or draw attention to himself. The book of Luke says the leaders were the ones who admonished and forbade him from speaking. It says, “*Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet*” (Luke 18:39a). In essence, he was invisible in his brokenness or at least with those of the community who were not compassionate. The people knew he was there, but they did not want him to be seen or to draw Jesus’ attention. They wanted him quiet because he was not worthy of speaking or drawing interest.

Those leading the way “shushed him.” My mother used to shush me as a child in church when I made too much noise. I knew *the look!* The crowd did not want Jesus to take notice of him. What could they possibly have gained by telling him to be quiet? To make them and their community look better as Jesus went by, perhaps? Why should they care if he cried out or not? It should have been a personal matter between Jesus and Bartimaeus. They would not have cared if they had been compassionate. Maybe they were prideful. Maybe they did not want Jesus to see the broken ones of the community, which could reflect poorly on them. Bartimaeus was an embarrassment for the proud members of the community. The crowd did not want him healed; they wanted him quiet.

The book of Mark says, “*Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet*” (Mark 10:48). The book of Matthew says, “*The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet*” (Matt. 20:31). The book of Luke specifically says the leaders rebuked him (Luke 18:39). The masses of people were against him, but he was not dissuaded. He was against the world, so to speak. So what did they gain by telling Bartimaeus to be quiet? What did he gain, by crying louder? They may have hoped to look better, but they looked worse in the process. The one

who had been almost invisible in the community was noticed by the only one who really mattered!

Jesus Stopped in His Tracks

Blind Bartimaeus would not be silenced in his desperate attempt to be noticed by Jesus as he walked by on the road. As is seen in Scripture, Jericho was not on Jesus' usual travel path. Did Bartimaeus sense that this could be his only opportunity for a visitation by Jesus? The crowd tried to silence this man, but he refused to be silenced. The crowd's attempt to silence him only encouraged his louder and more boisterous pleas to Jesus. The opposition fanned the flame to his desperation and he cried even more. The beggar was begging for something that would last longer than a few alms.

This time Bartimaeus was screaming. The Greek word was *krazō*, which means "to *scream*, to *call* aloud, *shriek*, *exclaim*, *entreat* or cry out." This was different than the first time when he was simply calling out as reported in Luke. He was shrieking at the top of his lungs. Bartimaeus was desperate, and his desperation was a doorway to faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must *believe that he exists* and that he *rewards those who earnestly seek him*." Earnest seekers demand and crave the things of God. Bartimaeus was an earnest seeker and it pleased Jesus enough to stop for him.

How remarkable that the Son of Man allowed the cries of a poor, unclean, almost invisible man to stop him in his tracks. The crowd tried to silence Bartimaeus. The town-folk begrudged him a place to beg, but desperate faith such as his did not go unrewarded. He was one against many. No one stood with him. It was him against all the rest. He was alone. The loneliness of isolation must have been painful, but Jesus heard him! Did he have the revelation that if he did not seek Jesus to change his situation, it would not change. Jesus stopped for one who wanted change. Jesus stopped for one outcast beggar who was desperate enough to scream and bellow at Jesus to get his attention.

Jesus did not care that he was "unclean." In fact, Jesus encountered and healed many unclean people: the woman with the issue of

blood, the leper, not to mention a few Gentiles along the way. Jesus commanded that Bartimaeus be brought near, “So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called” (Mark 10:49). That command was passive for both Jesus and Bartimaeus. Jesus stopped and stood still. The cries of the beggar stopped Jesus in his tracks. The next question is, “Who brought Bartimaeus?” The shushers? The answer is not known for sure, but Bartimaeus did not bring himself. When he cried out Jesus did not come to him, but Jesus called for others to bring the man near to Jesus!

“Be of good cheer,” they said (Mark 10:49). In other words, be bold and exercise courage. Jesus had called him. Sitting in the dust the first thing he did was throw off his mantle. Mark says, “Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus” (Mark 10:50). The mantle was the disgrace of a poor, blind beggar. He threw off his pauper’s mantle and came to Jesus. He threw off years of brokenness and shame.

Mantles or cloaks show the identity of many people in Scripture. Esther adorned herself in royal robes to indicate her status as queen. Mordecai’s sackcloth was the remnant of mourning, but later his royal robe showed that he was honored by the king (Esther 4:1, 6:8-11). Joseph’s beautiful coat showed he was honored by his father (Gen. 37:3). Later Joseph was stripped of his robe by his master’s wife who left him exposed and subject to false accusations (Gen. 39:12). Finally, Joseph was given a royal robe when he came before the Pharaoh (Gen. 41:41). When Jesus came into Jerusalem, the people laid their cloaks on the ground before him (Matt. 21:7-8). The Roman soldiers put a purple robe on Jesus to indicate that he was royalty (John 19:5).

When the prodigal son came home, he was adorned in a fine robe, showing his sonship (Luke 15:22). Peter had removed his cloak as a prisoner, put on his cloak to walk out of prison as he transitioned from prisoner to freed man (Acts 12:8).



He was willing to be shed of who and what he was so that he could get what he desperately wanted from Jesus.

He was willing to throw off all hindrances and ties to the past to walk away from his beggarly paupers’ place to go to Jesus.



Bartimaeus was getting ready to change his identity. He had a cloak but he wanted healing. He was willing to be shed of who and what he was so that he could get what he desperately wanted from Jesus. He was willing to throw off all hindrances and ties to the past to walk away from his beggarly paupers' place to go to Jesus. The place he had been was a place of brokenness and shame. He was desperate enough to leave it behind in the dust. He had been in that place and that place had nothing to offer him except loneliness, poverty, and cursing with every mention of his name.

Then Jesus asked the blind man, "What do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus simply said, "Rabbi, I want to see" (Mark 10:51). The implications of that simple statement were huge. What Bartimaeus was really saying to Jesus was, "I want you to change my identity." Bartimaeus was a blind beggar. He survived in life because he was disabled and because he sat on the side of the road begging for money. That was how he made a living. With the gift of sight, his identity as a blind beggar would be lost to him. His security of income from others compassion would be gone as well. He threw off his cloak and stepped into the unknown. He dared to imagine that life touched by Jesus would be better.

Shedding the cloak of blindness, shame, loneliness, and poverty was stepping into the unknown for Bartimaeus. Can those who have lived such a life dare to imagine standing before Jesus and saying what Bartimaeus said? May those who have been in bondage have enough courage to scream at the top of their lungs to get Jesus' attention and when he stops say to him, "I want to see!" In essence can the one who has been in bondage to shame, brokenness, pain and loneliness speak to Jesus? They may say, "I want to be free. I want a new identity and I am willing to throw off the old identity that has covered me for too long." Can the one who has been laboring under wrapped-up and tied-up identity dare to imagine a new life? One seeking a new identity may say, "I dare to expect something new and I am willing to make changes in my life for that to happen. If I have to step out of what has become comfortable to get it, I am willing. I want to become what only you can make me as I throw off my cloak and come to you. I really do not care that others have been uncompassionate."

Leave the cloak in the dust and recognize that it is a hindrance to all that Jesus has for the bold one who will step out. Because Bartimaeus had the vision to cry out and not take “No!” for an answer, he was healed. His identity as “son of the unclean” was for ever changed. He was a new man because he dared not to care what people thought about him and to cry out to Jesus and go to Jesus when he called.

Conclusion

I am not sure why people persist in calling this man “Blind Bartimaeus.” That was not his final status at all. He was changed by Jesus because he would not stop with anything less than Jesus fully restoring him. The leaders and other community people only wanted to keep him in bondage. The crowd cannot keep a person in bondage who is truly willing and desperate enough to cry out to Jesus for freedom. The community leaders did not care if he was free or not, they just wanted him to be quiet for their own prideful reasons. Jesus did not stop for them; he stopped for the one who was broken and desperate. Jesus gave the (formerly) blind one a new identity.

The way to freedom is to call out to Jesus no matter what the village voices may be saying or doing to keep a person from crying out! Jesus will take all shame and burden and give healing in exchange. Jesus called Bartimaeus to come near because of his desperation for Jesus. Desperation for Jesus will bring notice in the heavenly realm. Hunger and desperation will cause one to be drawn near to the King!

Gill's Story



I gave my heart to the Lord when I was ten years old. An evangelist came to my town for an old fashioned tent revival. I felt the power of God pulling me and I went forward to receive the Lord as my Savior. I felt peace, knowing that if I were to die, I would go to heaven and not hell. I went to church with the neighbors and did pretty well for a while. My parents were not Christians but they allowed us kids to go to church. Over the years I was able to encourage my parents to go to church, where they eventually came to know Christ as well. I was baptized as a teenager. I felt like the Lord was calling me into ministry of some kind.

Later, I started watching pornography on the internet. I got married and thought that I had given up the lust of pornography. I even started serving a church. A few years into our marriage, I started dabbling with porn again, thinking that I would just look once. The problem was it was not just once, but over and over again. My wife began to suspect that something was going on. I lied to cover up what I was doing and to keep my reputation in tact. After all, how could I serve the Lord and be addicted to pornography?

I was a pastor and pastors do not struggle with lust or porn, or so I thought. It was a very lonely and very isolating position. I could not tell my wife and best friend, but there was a huge elephant in our marriage that I tried to keep covered, hoping that she would not notice. Every time I lied to her I was more ashamed at my lack of self-control and at the double life I was living. I would prepare for sermons on Sunday morning knowing what I was doing, I hated myself. I was riddled with guilt each time after I viewed porn. I had

the shame of feeling like a liar and a fake every time I stood in front of the congregation.

The truth is, I was not alone but I felt alone. I had friends I could have talked to, but my fear of rejection kept me quiet. The enemy lies to us to keep us in fear. What I know now is that many people, even many pastors, struggle with this. The fact that we do not talk about it keeps the enemy in control. We feel we cannot talk about it in our families or in our churches. We think avoiding it will make it go away. It will not go away in silence! I was so filled with shame that I did not know where to turn. I knew that I had to do something because this problem was destroying me inside. I told myself that confession would expose more than I could handle. It seemed as if hiding in the shame of it would be less painful than showing the loss of control to my wife, my parents, and even my church congregation. The shame of it wanted to tell me that my credibility would never be rebuilt.

Hiding sin never provides us with the power to overcome it. Tolerating sin only allows it to grow more powerful in our lives. I came to realize that the freedom I wanted could only be found in confession. Freedom costs something up front, but not as much as bondage costs over time. The Lord wanted me free and he wants others free as well. Jesus died and conquered sin and death so people can have victory in every area of life.

How did I overcome the thing that gripped my heart and kept me living in shame and guilt? I had to find a person that I could trust to confide in. I needed someone with more wisdom than I had to help me overcome this struggle in my life. I needed someone to hold me accountable. The problem with porn and other hidden sin is that there is no accountability. The first thing I did was to tell my wife. I gave her permission to hold me accountable. I knew that it was going to take some time to rebuild the faith and trust that had been lost by this ugly sin.

There is one thing I believe has power to bring freedom. It is not easy, but it is worth it. Healing comes through confession and prayer. I relied often on a scripture that gave me strength and peace: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (Jas. 5:16). There is a healing that comes to our heart

as we confess our sins with one another. It is easy to confess some sins like jealousy, materialism, anger, or gluttony. Those things are pretty safe to talk about. There are some sins that carry stigma and are hard to confess. Even so, confession is the way to break free.

In confession, temptation loses power, sin loses its ability to keep us bound, and addictions lose their control. Confession is a tool to set people free, but Satan wants to keep people in fear of exposure. Pride and shame work together to keep people bound up. People are afraid to tell their deepest secrets, and are burdened by shame to keep them hidden. The sin you keep secret only keeps its power as it remains hidden. The Lord cannot heal the parts of our lives that we withhold from him.

Some time has passed since I confessed these deep secrets of my life. My wife and I have rebuilt trust in our marriage. It has not always been easy, but it is better than it has been in years. She has been incredible and supportive. Our marriage is now just the three of us: Me, my wife, and the Lord! I am ministering to other men, and even a couple of pastors, who have found freedom because the Lord has used my testimony for them to take the steps to walk in freedom too. The Lord will use what the enemy intended for destruction to bring healing to others when we give him control.

Chapter 6

Shame Followed by Repentance: No Barrier to Finding God's Heart



David was a man after the heart of God but he was also a man who was sinful during times and seasons in his life. His biggest and most noteworthy failure was when he had an adulterous affair with a married woman, impregnating her. That was not the worst part however. David arranged for the death of her husband to cover up the infidelity. David did not get away with the plan; he was confronted by the prophet Nathan.

The relationship that Nathan had with David was formed upon mutual trust and respect. The relationship between David and Nathan emerged in Scripture even before the incident with the married woman. In 2 Samuel 7, David rashly determined to build a temple to the Lord. King David was upset because he was living in a palace, but the Ark of God was housed in a tent. Nathan was equally as rash in his reply by responding to the king without inquiring of the Lord. He said, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you" (2 Sam. 7:3). That night, however, the Lord spoke to Nathan and told him that David would not build a house for the Ark of the Covenant but rather that the duty would fall to one of David's sons. The Lord told Nathan to tell David everything that the Lord had said. Nathan was faithful to the prophetic word of the Lord and told David all that the Lord had told him. David received the word well and worshiped the Lord.

Fast forward a few chapters in the book of 2 Samuel, and the cause of David's shame emerges. David was found sitting on his roof overlooking the city as his troops were sleeping on the hard ground while out of the city for battle. David's place was with his troops but instead he found himself in an untenable position: idle and filled with boredom. As David looked out from his roof, and he saw a beautiful woman bathing. He inquired as to the identity of the woman, which was his first mistake. He did not take captive the imaginations of his mind, but rather acted on them by inquiring about her. David's servant came to tell him, "She is Bathsheba, the *daughter* of Eliam and the *wife* of Uriah the Hittite" (2 Sam. 11:3). David sent for her and slept with her. She was the object of his lust, but David chose to overlook the fact that she had been identified as a cherished daughter and wife. Bathsheba became pregnant from that encounter.

If that was not enough, when David found out that she was pregnant, he sent for Bathsheba's husband, a loyal fighting warrior named Uriah. David wanted to send Uriah home to be with his wife to cover up David's deed. David was hoping that he would sleep with his wife, but Uriah was too honorable. Uriah would not go into the house with his wife while his soldiers were sleeping on the cold, hard battleground. Even more so, the next night David tried to get Uriah drunk so that he would go back home and sleep with his wife, but Uriah would not go in. When David's plan to cover up the fact that Bathsheba was carrying his child did not work, he arranged for the death of Uriah. This reminds me of the old poetry by Sir Walter Scott, "Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive." The entire plot took more unholy twists and turns as time went on. The entire story is found in 2 Samuel 11.

David must not have been as clever as he thought, because his deeds were found out. The prophet Nathan reemerged onto the scene as a confidant and adviser to the king. Nathan came to David and told him about a man who had an entire herd of sheep but there was one man who had one little lamb. The rich man took the poor man's lamb for himself. Of course Nathan was talking in a parable to the king. David was incensed that someone should take advantage in that way. He called for judgment on the guilty man not knowing that he

was the guilty man. Nathan boldly said to David, “You are that man” (2 Sam. 12:7).

Did the Lord speak about it to Nathan? It is not known, but it is known that Nathan could hear from God from their earlier encounter. In fact the Word says, “The Lord sent Nathan to David” (2. Sam. 12:1). The Lord and David had a long history. The Lord will send “Nathans,” God-fearing and accurate prophetic voices to speak correction and cleansing into the lives of his children. Nathan was bold in speaking everything that the Lord told him. King David had the power to take his very life. Nathan spoke with pinpoint accuracy into the life of David and did not hold back because he was on God’s mission. Second Samuel tells us,

David burned with anger against the man (who had stolen the others sheep) and said to Nathan, “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.” Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. *And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.* Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. *You killed him* with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’ “This is what the Lord says: ‘*Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you.* Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. *You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.*’” Then David said

to Nathan, “*I have sinned against the Lord.*” Nathan replied, “The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the Lord, the son born to you will die.” (2 Sam. 12:5-14, Explanatory note added.)

David thought his actions were done in private. However, the Lord always knows what is done in private as if it had been done in the public square. Nathan knew about David’s sin with Bathsheba. In ministry settings, sometimes people feel awkward about confessing their sins before God. However, God already knows! Nothing done in private is a surprise to him. That awkward refusal to bring something to the Lord is a lie of Satan, who does not want people to confess and be free of the effects of their sins. Usually what is done in private will eventually be known in public. There is no ranking of sins in God’s eyes because one sin is the same as another to him. A white lie is the same as murder: Satan has done both and put God’s people in bondage using either wile. God hates all sins. From the human perspective, people like to rank sins and say that some are worse than others, but that is not true. God hates sin because all sin acts to separate God from his people.

The first thing Nathan said to David was that he was going to experience calamity in his household because God’s judgment had come upon him. However, the first words out of David’s mouth after he realized that Nathan was talking about his actions were words of repentance. David instantly acknowledged his actions by saying, “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Sam. 12:13a). David acknowledged his sin before Nathan and before the Lord. Because David instantaneously repented there was instantaneous mercy. Nathan replied, “The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die” (2 Sam. 12:13b). The fact that David immediately repented showed his heart for the things of God. David was not like Adam and Eve, who when in shame started casting blame on others. He was saved because he took ownership of his actions and threw himself on the mercy of God. Repentance is extremely important for moving beyond shame and guilt.

David penned Psalm 51 after he had been confronted by Nathan. It was written in response to the exposure and repentance of sin. Repentance and exposure removed the bondage associated with shame and sin. Psalm 51 says, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. *For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me*" (Ps. 51:1-3). David sounds like a man in deep repentance for sin. Often people who are in shame have their past actions living before them. The sin is always close to the front of the mind. People in shame are very well aware of what they have done. There is a constant reminder of the past, the things that seem impossible to forget. That constant painful reminder of sin or shame is the plot of the enemy to keep people in bondage. In a state of forgiveness and peace the sin is not always first in a person's mind, but rather the grace of God is!

David went on to say in Psalm 51 that he had sinned only against the Lord and that his judgments were right, "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place" (Ps. 51:4-6). It is interesting to note that David said that he sinned only against God! Even though a man lost his life, the sin was against God. That means that neither Uriah (had he survived) nor Bathsheba, had a cause of action against David. If they needed to have recompense, the appeal would have been to God. To God belongs the right of vengeance. To God belongs the blessing of forgiveness.

To often people misplace vengeance and unforgiveness, meaning



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they hold on to a past wrong by someone else and they find it very difficult to move on. David begged the Lord to cleanse him and make him whiter than snow, but he also was willing to take judgment for his actions. He said,

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. (Ps. 51:7-11)

As David continued to plead for forgiveness, he was even beginning to envision restoration. Look what David said next: “Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. *Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you*” (Ps. 51:12-13). After restoration, David turned his shame into something useful for the kingdom of God. He said he would teach transgressors the ways of the Lord so that sinners would turn back to the Lord. In the Lord’s plan that which the enemy planned for destruction will be turned to good for the kingdom of God. Frequently, those who have been on a path of destruction or shame are useful to God when they have been forgiven and restored. They often use the thing that the enemy would use for ruin as the very tool to bring people to freedom and salvation. Hear this well: People who have been turned back to the Lord from a sinful path can be helpful for teaching others the ways of restoration and forgiveness of God! The broken position is not the end of the road for people who give themselves fully to the Lord. What part of your past may be helpful for turning sinners back to God?

Restoration: From Death to Favor

David was transformed from a man who was judged by the Lord and sentenced to death for his sins to a man who was highly favored by God. Even God testified about David. Nathan came to

David bringing the tidings of the Lord that he would die for his sins. David's instant and remorseful response saved his life. In writing Psalm 51 above, it was clear that David had a heart of repentance. He was deeply sorry for his actions and literally pleaded with the Lord to forgive his sins. His contrition was genuine and intense.

David had one of the most pleasing testimonies in all of Scripture. Even after David's sinful failure of an illicit affair with a married woman and then the murder of her husband, he was still declared to be a man after God's own heart. How could it be that God himself could testify about such a sinful man? In Acts 13:22 the Apostle Paul said of David, "After removing Saul, he made David their king. *God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'*" The question emerges: How can this sinful and shameful man be the only person in Scripture who has the designation of being a man after God's own heart?

It may seem that this man had much of which to be ashamed. David was a man who loved God greatly but he also sinned greatly. David had a tremendous call of God on his life and his total derailment by Satan would have been a great coop by the evil one. *The same is true with many who have sinned or who struggled to walk free of the plots and traps of the enemy.* Yet even so, David was a man who had the single distinction in all of Scripture to be called a man after the heart of God.

What does it really mean that God himself testified about David? God perceived David's heart motive and found it to be pure in love and obedience to God. Scripture says that obedience is better than sacrifice! (1 Sam. 15:22b). The Lord raised David up to be the man he called him to be from the beginning with the prophet Samuel. The Lord called him, Samuel ordained him, and David said, "Yes!" David was moved from the obscurity and inactivity of the shepherd field, trained as a warrior, to later be elevated to the position of king.

David's line became the carrier of the seed of Jesus even though he sinned with Bathsheba! Why is that important? Jesus came through the line of the person in Scripture that showed his love for the Lord through is obedience like no other. Even his sinful failures did not change David's destiny. Likewise, the shameful and sinful behaviors

of many people will not change their destiny to be used by God if they repent and get into the proper relationship with the Lord and act in obedience even after a terrible failure. The enemy will only win when a person is kept in bondage of shame to past actions that would keep them from following their destiny of God's plan.

Obedience was even important for Jesus. He was headed to the cross from before creation of the world. Even Jesus had to demonstrate unyielding obedience to the Father. Even in the garden the night before his crucifixion, Jesus illustrated his struggle: "Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39).

David was a man who was able to connect with the thoughts and feelings of God. The Lord is the revealer of mysteries. David searched the heart of God even in the midst of sin. The Lord loved him and used him and he will use all of those who repent and come to him. David worked to immediately bring forth all that God wanted him to do. He had the determination and inclination to serve God with radical obedience. His desire was to serve the will of God.

Because he wanted to serve and be obedient to the will of God, even though he was a man who had a great moral failure, he will forever be remembered as the man of whom God testified regarding his obedience. His designation as a man after God's own heart says it all! God will forgive anything but one sin. If a person has a desire to know God, but fears that he or she has crossed over the line of committing the unpardonable sin, that is probably not the case. John 6:44 says, "No one can come to me (Jesus) unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day" (Explanatory note added). If a person feels the drawing of the Lord, they have not so injured and blasphemed the Holy Spirit that they are beyond redemption. The Lord would not draw one who has sinned in the unpardonable sin. This discussion of David should give observers the peace and assurance that God will forgive. If a person is willing, the past failures and hardships may be used for the glory of God!

A Modern Day Woman-at-the-Well's Story



When I was a teenager, I lived for the Lord. I even preached a few times. As I grew older, my life looked good on the outside, but something was missing on the inside. Eventually, my relationship with the Lord became less important to me. I found validation in my work, so it became the focal point of my life. In time, my husband chose not to compete with my work and we were divorced. After our divorce my life took a series of wrong turns and I was on a collision course with self-destruction.

About a year later, the guilt of a failed marriage began to consume my thoughts. I placed blame on other people for my divorce. The growing blame began to show in every area of my life. My normal happy-go-lucky personality became rude, hateful, and just plain mean. After having too much to drink one night, I allowed myself to verbalize this blame to the people around me. They were the people that I worked with in my job. Once I started, it was like a fireworks show. The fuse was lit and there was nothing that could stop it.

A week later I had to face one of the people in the wake of my destruction and there was an intense black cloud that hung over me. I was so ashamed that I left work in tears. I started thinking that life was not worth living. I said to myself, "I am too bad for anyone to love; no one could ever want a loser like me." I picked up a small pocket knife and thought to myself, "You should look as bad on the outside as you feel on the inside." I began cutting my left arm. I cut my arm twenty-two times while driving home. During the next few

months I cut myself four or five other times, but I became smarter about hiding it. I also became so despondent that I often locked myself in my house and shut the curtains to keep the world out. Cutting was only the beginning of a downward spiral. It seemed as if I were drowning in a multitude of bad decisions.

The next several years were filled with different forms of self-defeating actions and shame. There were many days that I simply felt like the woman with a big scarlet letter “A” on my shirt, except my word was “whore” or “slut,” instead of “adulterer.” I was divorced and traveled for my work. While I was busy with my work assignments away from home, I found myself in need of a stress reliever. I began to be sexually active. Sexual promiscuity was my worst decision. I had numerous sexual partners across the country.

I eventually became emotionally and spiritually dull. Random sex was just something to do. At times, I made up my mind that I was going to do better. Then I would talk to a guy which would lead to sex. After a while I began to think, “What does it matter. No one is going to want me anyway. I will never have a real relationship, so I may as well enjoy myself.” I knew it was a lie and that I was going down the wrong path, but I never admitted that to anyone. I was so jaded and hard that I was not bothered by it anymore.

Later, I resolved to resist and not make as many mistakes by taking a job that would allow me to stay at home. I could feel that I was coming out of the destructive path. I started to go to a prayer meeting to break free of the spiritual connections to the past. I knew that there were soul ties with every person that I had every had sex with. I thought, “If I get in the presence of the Lord, I will change. His ways are not my ways.”

Satan did not want me to be free. Even while I was at the prayer meeting one night, I received a call to go back out on the road for a week. Once again I found myself alone and bored, so I started looking to connect with someone to have sex with. Instead of doing what I knew to do, I went on-line and started looking. I fell again. However, after it was over, it was different than before. I felt so dirty. I showered for two hours. That transformation was actually a sign that I was coming out of the spiritual stupor that I had been in. My reaction meant that God was doing a work of transformation on me.

Even before I left that city, the guy texted me again to meet, but I said, “No.”

When I came back home after that trip, I knew that I had to get back before the Lord and repent. I went to a revival meeting and the Lord showed up in power. The whole meeting was leading me to repent and be baptized. I felt that I was coming out of the baptismal water cleansed by the Lord! I was able to share my testimony to help other people. When I got home from being baptized, the Lord led me to some Bible verses about being cleansed. He showed me that he had forgiven my hidden sins by showing me this Scripture:

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer. (Ps. 19:12-14)

I know that God will use my story as a tool to help other people. These verses will be a road map to stay away from hidden and willful sins. It is a process to be transformed, but I know that the Lord is walking with me, cleansing me, and helping me to stay free of presumptuous or willful sins.

Chapter 7

Hiding in Broad Daylight



Shame is one of the heaviest burdens that a person can carry. Just thinking about the things that have brought shame can send a person into hiding. One encounter with Jesus transformed a nameless woman's life. She had been living in bondage to a shameful past that made her feel like an outcast in her hometown. Her identity is unknown, but the woman from Samaria became a compelling witness to the goodness of Jesus after she experienced the power of Jesus' love. Many call her the first evangelist.

Sometimes people in shame would rather hide from the crowd than to face condemnation. There was such a situation when Jesus encountered the woman at the well in John 4. Jesus went through the region of Samaria. The Samaritans were considered to be half-breed dogs by the Israelites. Most Israelites would rather walk around the region of Samaria than go through it, even though it was a more direct route. Jesus, on the other hand, was compelled to travel through that region. The book of John says, "He *needed* to go through Samaria" (John 4:4). The Bible does not tell why Jesus needed to travel that path, but the outcome was evident. Did Jesus go there at that time just to set one person free of a shameful past?

Jesus encounter with the shamed woman at the well is very familiar. Jesus was tired so he rested by the well while the disciples went in search for food. As he was waiting by the well, a Samaritan woman came in the heat of the day. John is very descriptive with

detailed information that she came at noon, or the six hour of the day (John 4:6). None of the other women came during the heat of the day. Custom indicates that the women or servants would draw water from the well during the cool of the morning or the evening. The fact that this woman came in the heat of the day illustrates that she was in “avoidance mode”.

Was it a divine plan that she encountered Jesus as he sat alone by the well? If the crowd of disciples had been there, would she have turned back before she even arrived at the well? If she was hiding from her own people, she may not have ventured that far if there was a group of people hovering around the well.

The Samaritans as a people group were shamed by the Israelites. The entire race was looked down upon. They were rejected and avoided by all of Israel. This woman was even considered to be an outcast among the outcasts, the worst of the worst so to speak. Not only was the entire society rejected, but she was rejected among the despised Samaritan people. The first thing the woman said to Jesus illustrated the shame of the entire people-group of Samaritans. The book of John says, “The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’ (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)” (John 4:9). She acknowledged the breakdown between Jews and Samaritans. Jews did not associate with Samaritans. The whole region was considered unclean. John did not say Samaritans do not associate with Jews. The full measure of the distain came from the Jews toward the Samaritans. Understanding the social ranking of the day makes Jesus compulsion to go there even more important.

Jesus struck up a conversation with the woman and in so doing he prophesied into her life. Jesus talked to her first about living water. Then he asked her to go get her husband and come back knowing full well that she did not have a husband (John 4:16-17). Why would Jesus tell her to go get her husband knowing that she did not have a husband? Was he trying to shame her more? Was he trying to embarrass her? Or was he merely trying to bring the point of her shame into plain view? Often the thing that breaks shame is exposure. Often people fear the exposure of shame and avoidance of exposure is enough to keep people in hiding. When Jesus exposed her, he

accepted her as she was. He did not condemn her. He merely said something like, “I know who you are, so you do not have to hide the truth anymore.”

Jesus did not gossip about her, or say anything that was not true. He merely exposed the truth and that exposure seemed to ultimately bring freedom to her. In fact, the more exposure that the truth has in the light of Jesus’ love, the less power it has to hurt someone. She never felt condemned by Jesus. He was exposing the truth and not letting her hide in shame anymore. This woman was hiding in broad daylight. She was avoiding confrontation with others by going to the well when no one else would be there. One reason that people go into avoidance mode when in shame is because they do not want to have the point of their shame exposed. Jesus began telling her everything that she had ever done. He confronted her about a promiscuous lifestyle of multiple husbands and living with a man to whom she was not married (John 4:19).

Shame is often associated with fear of the reactions of others. The *fear of exposure or rejection* is enough to keep people in hiding. The fear is often more controlling than the actual exposure or rejection would be. Even consider Adam and Eve, they were in shame and they hid from God. The Father exposed their sin too. When the Lord asked where Adam was, “He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and *I was afraid* because I was naked; *so I hid*’” (Gen 3:10). The embarrassment and concern of what people *might* do or say is bondage in itself.

When Jesus exposed the woman at the well she did not know what to think at first. The woman said that she believed Jesus was a prophet but she instantly changed the subject: She started talking about her ancestors and places of worship. The heat of having her personal life exposed to the scrutiny of this man, Jesus, was more than she thought she could tolerate in that moment. She was trying to deflect the attention from her life to a safer topic. As one covered with shame, it was more comfortable for her to avoid the conversation of her past failures rather than to face them head on.

When the woman tried to change the subject, Jesus turned the attention to the Father. He exposed her past actions but there was not a long, drawn-out conversation or condemnation of her past. Jesus

just moved on to the thing that was more important to him in that moment than her sins and failures. He wanted to talk about the worship of the Father. Jesus glorified the Father and she started talking about the Messiah. Jesus acknowledged to this Samaritan woman of no reputation that he was the Messiah: “Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he” (John 4:26). He did not acknowledge that he was the Messiah to the Jewish leaders in other places in Scripture, but he told this broken and shameful woman that he was the Messiah, the anointed of God.

When Jesus’ disciples return they were surprised to find him talking with a Samaritan woman (John 4:27). Their surprise could have been expected because Jesus’ mission and ministry at that time was only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 15:24). When Jesus sent out the disciples, he gave them specific instructions, “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matt. 10:5-6). Even though they may have been shocked, they did not dare ask the meaning of the meeting with her.

A very curious thing happened next: The woman, who had come to the well in the heat of the day to avoid other people, went back to town to speak to those same people about Jesus. John said, “Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people...” (John 4:28). She left her water jar laying in the dirt, foregoing drawing the water from the well to go tell people about the living water. This connotes some urgency. She said, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” (John 4:29). First, she said, “Come!” an imperative statement uttered with insistence! Second, she said, “See a man.” The word *see* in this context means “to know or to be aware of or perceive.” She was calling them not to merely meet Jesus by the well, but to *know* him and make discernments about him! Finally, she testified about the word of knowledge he gave as he, “told me everything I ever did.” He supernaturally knew things about her that let her know that he was the Messiah. He was walking in supernatural discernment at that moment and that supernatural act gave witness to the fact that he was the Messiah.

Evangelism was and is often accompanied by signs and wonders: “Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord

worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16:20). To make sure that people understood that the Gospel was not like any other message but a message from heaven, God confirmed it through miracles. Hebrews 2:3-4 says: “This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.” The Lord used miracles to facilitate the message of salvation. Even words of prophecy were often tools for evangelism.

This woman had been so filled with shame that she avoided the people of her community. After an encounter with Jesus, she became a powerful witness for him. She said, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” (John 4:29). She testified about his prophetic words and then left it for the people to draw their own conclusions. Considering Jesus prophetic statements of the events of her life, if he told her everything she ever did it would have been a powerful witness to the people of the town. The very thing that kept her in bondage—the reaction of others to her past actions that left her in shame—was the very tool that she used to share about Jesus. The tool of the enemy became the instrument of God’s kingdom. Her past mistakes became the vehicle to convince people of the goodness of Jesus and that the Messiah had come! Instead of hiding from her past, she put her past in the center of the discussion about Jesus being the Messiah! That which the enemy meant for harm, God used for his good!



The very thing that kept the woman in bondage - the reaction of others to her past actions that left her in shame - was the very tool that she used to share about Jesus. The tool of the enemy became the instrument of God's kingdom. Her past mistakes became the vehicle to convince people of the goodness of Jesus and that the Messiah had come!



Do you think they could see the transformation in her life? Instead of hiding in shame, she ran to town to seek them out. Based on the testimony of this woman who had labored under shame, the town’s

people came out to find Jesus. The book of John says, “They came out of the town and made their way toward him” (John 4:30). This shrinking-violet led many to the Lord. They believed because of her testimony about her past misdeeds: “Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I ever did’” (John 4:39). Jesus could have shown her many other miracles, but instead, he took the thing that Satan was using to keep her in bondage and used it as a tool for righteousness and salvation. She opened the door for them to learn of and believe in Jesus!

Many times the people who have had the hardest time in life make the best witnesses for Jesus. Many powerful evangelists who serve the Lord have come from sullied and blemished pasts. Countless men and women of God have seen and experienced the restoration of Jesus and have overcome past failures to serve the Lord in ways that make them formidable contenders for the Gospel of Jesus. Jesus did not pick his disciples to be the first evangelist, he used a damaged and tarnished woman. The disciples were still in training and had not been released to go evangelize. The measure of her restoration was visible by her immediate passion to tell of the goodness of Jesus. Jesus also did not pick a “seminary graduate” or other highly qualified person to be his first evangelist. The one who first carried the evangelistic message of Jesus as the Messiah was a woman who had learned in the school of hard knocks. Because she came from the depths, she was immediately willing and excited to soar. A person who is forgiven much, loves much (See John 7:36-50). The woman was very compelling because the people implored Jesus to stay with them. John tells us, “So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers” (John 4:40-41).

There was a great awakening in the Samaritan region. One woman had the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah. She convinced others to believe and come to Jesus. When Jesus came many more believed. The village was transformed! The final status was that the town’s people accepted her word and talked to the formerly-ostracized woman. The book of John says, “They said *to the woman*, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard

for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world” (John 4:42). At first they believed because of her persuasive testimony. Later, they had the witness of Jesus himself. The end result was that because of the love and healing of Jesus, this woman was again part of the community that had formerly ostracized her or from which she had ostracized herself.

Jesus was compelled to come to the well. The well was the place of salvation for the woman, a place where living water was found. She came to the well to seek water that would satisfy her physical body. What she found was living water that would satisfy her supernatural thirst. Did he send the disciples away so that he could encounter this woman as she was trying to hide? Jesus found her anyway. He was waiting for her as she came to the well. In her attempt to avoid other people, she encountered the savior. A shamed person may hide, but Jesus will find and bring restoration. People who suffer shame would rather hide than face people. They often hide from the public eye because the scrutiny is too painful. They do not feel worthy to receive anything.

The final status of knowing Jesus gave her the strength to face the public. Knowing Jesus made her a strong witness to him. As she operated in evangelism, she used the sin that had been in her life to further the kingdom of God. Coming into relationship with Jesus allowed her to use her past hurts to advance God’s kingdom. As she became a witness to Jesus, the shame of the past was washed away by the living water. Her inability to face the public was also washed away. She was no longer a prisoner of her own shame avoiding people at all costs. She went to them to tell them everything that Jesus had said.

Conclusion

The woman’s plan of handling her embarrassing situation was to retreat from the public. Only Jesus could take the burden of shame away. Shame did not mean guilt, but rather the pain that came from the burden of carrying the negative emotions associated with past actions. One of the best ways to be relieved of shame in life is to find Jesus, talk to him, let him speak the truth into a situation, and walk in freedom. This woman was carrying shame on two levels. First,

she was a Samaritan, and second, she had been an unfaithful and promiscuous woman. Neither of those things mattered to Jesus then, and the cause of the shame that people carry does not matter to him now. The woman at the well was the first person in the Gospels to carry the message of the saving grace of Jesus. She was an unlikely mouthpiece of the Gospel message by human standards. As a woman in the first century she would have been considered lower than a man carrying the same message. She was also a Samaritan, a people-group hated by the Jews of Jesus' day. Furthermore, she was considered an immoral woman looked down upon by society for a lack of moral character. Even so, she was the first person selected by Jesus to carry his message. Every person can be a great evangelist no matter what their past holds. The only criteria to be a messenger of Jesus is a genuine desire to tell others the truth about his living water, love, and mercy!

Andrew's Story



I grew up Amish. Shame was a tool to keep me under control and in order. *Shem Dich!* meant, “Shame on you!” in Pennsylvania Dutch. That phrase was spoken over me a lot as I was growing up. It became a part of my identity. It became a part of who I was and then became a part of what I did. It was like a self-fulfilling prophecy that plagued my life. It locked me in a negative mindset which said, “You are disqualified. You are never enough. You are hopeless.”

Shame was the tool the enemy used to keep me in the past. The past continually clouded the present, instead of allowing the present to fuel and launch me into my future. Shame was “the stuck place of life.” I realized the enemy was not worried about my past; he just liked to bring it up to prevent me from stepping into my future. The enemy was worried about my future. Since I found freedom from shame, both of my parents have had a revelation of God’s goodness and have been completely transformed. They have greater understanding of the love of God. It is a story of redemption.

Breaking free of shame was both a process and a revelation. It was a process of vulnerability and authenticity. It was revelation of Jesus in me. My biggest breakthrough came as I was vulnerable and authentic in a small group at Bethel Church in Redding, California. It takes risk, also known as faith, to open up your heart after it is



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wounded. Without faith no person can please God. Instead of receiving rejection and more shame after being authentic and vulnerable, I was shown unconditional love by the people at Bethel. They loved me with the kind of love that says, "You can't scare me with your past. You can't scare me with your failures or shortcomings." They showed me the kind of love that says, "I know everything about you but I still see you as God sees you." They agreed with me to call out the dreams and the destiny that God has for me. They showed me the kind of love that says, "Your past doesn't determine your future."

That breakthrough was a start to finding my identity in Christ. I had the true revelation that the work of the Glory of Christ was finished in me. I realized that Jesus paid for the shame that I had been carrying. Shame is a violation of the way God created me. It is a violation because he does not have those thoughts of shame about me. He knows more about me than I do myself and he still loves me. He says, "This is my Son!" which is unconditional love. His love is not based on my performance or the idealisms of success in the world. I do not find my identity in these things. In other words, my identity is not according to success and performance. My identity is in him and he is in me. He knows the thoughts he has for me. Success, as the world sees it, will come and go through different seasons, but circumstances do not determine identity if it is hidden in Christ.

I pray you will have encounters from the Lord that break the yoke of shame and instill inside of you the identity of a son or a daughter of the King. I pray that the revelation of God in you, and the thoughts that He has for you, would release the power to break shame off of your life.

Chapter 8

Love is the Answer



In many ways shame sums up what is wrong with the walk of a Christian. Shame keeps Christians in bondage and limits many people from walking out the walk of faith that the Lord has for them. Shame is a big dog collar of bondage that prevents people from going beyond the end of the tether. It is silent and hard to detect and therefore very limiting to the walk of faith.

The nature of God is all about love, acceptance, and adoption into his family, regardless of the bondages and shames of the past. “God is Love” are the precious words of 1 John 4:8. That means that the very nature and character of God is to love. God loves everyone no matter what they have done or how bad they have behaved. Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world. The book of John says, “For *God so loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16-17). The Lord Jesus died to take away the shame and reproach of the world. It is time to move on from where each one has been to where God wants each one to be. People are called to walk out of the darkness of shame into the light of adoption. Sons and daughters are loved, and even with past failures they are accepted into the family of God. Love paves the way for people to move on and move up to the place of sons and daughters of the King!

Shame was one of the first tools that Satan used to hold Adam and Eve captive. It is one of the last things to be exposed as a huge hindrance for humanity to walk in freedom. As a purely academic discussion: What would have happened if Adam and Eve had not hidden in shame and engaged in denial? What would have happened if they had run to God as he walked in the garden in the evening, threw themselves at his feet, cried for his mercy, and sought his forgiveness? It is pure speculation because that did not happen. However, the nature of God as has been revealed in Scripture is a nature of love, grace, and compassion. The Word says, "I the Lord do not change" (Mal. 3:6a). If God is compassionate and loving now, he was compassionate and loving then. However, Adam and Eve hid in shame and engaged in blame according to the sin they had committed.



The strength to throw off shame comes from the love and acceptance of Jesus Christ who takes all comers just as they are. People do not have to clean up to come to Jesus, they are accepted just as they are. Jesus will do the clean up!



People must ask the questions: What would happen now (after the resurrection of Jesus Christ) if ashamed sinners refuse to listen to the lies of Satan by hiding in shame or engaging in denial? What would happen if they choose to run to God, throwing themselves on his mercy, and seeking his forgiveness?

The Lord has exposed shame for the lie that it is. It was the first response to the sin by the first people on earth. Often in Scripture, exposure of personal shame is the very thing that brings freedom to a person. People carry embarrassment and hide for many reasons, possibly even reasons that they do not even recognize in themselves. Once the cause of shame is exposed and is brought into knowledge, people will recognize how shame works to keep them or others in bondage. People will learn to throw off shame and will walk in freedom. The strength to throw off shame comes from the love and acceptance of Jesus Christ who takes all comers just as they are. People do not have to clean up to come to Jesus, they are accepted just as they are. Jesus will do the clean up!

Honor and Shame Cultures

Shame is debilitating but Christ crushed shame on the cross. Satan is a liar, and although defeated, he will use his primary tool of lies to keep people from being in obedience to God's plan. He will lie to people so that they will not know that shame was defeated at Calvary. The highest percentages and concentrations of unsaved people in the world live in honor and shame cultures. Those are cultures that keep their people in line by social standards of control via community opinion.

In honor and shame cultures there are rigid standards of what is acceptable and what is not. In those cultures, people are shamed for not fulfilling group expectations. Honor is fundamentally the public recognition of one's social standing. Honor may be ascribed from family or circumstance, or honor may be acquired by the deeds of the person. *Acquired* honor is based on a person's accomplishments, whereas *ascribed* honor is by luck of family lineage and position. Honor largely depends on recognition from significant people in one's society.

Shame occurs when a person breaks the unwritten code of conduct, and therefore is ostracized by community and peers. Once in shame in those cultures, it is very difficult to break out of the *worldly* distinction of shame. Honor on the other hand is exaltation because of good behavior, successes, and worldly acclamation. Honor is public acknowledgment of value in the eyes of other people. Shame is condemnation based on social standards. Honor is bound in the pride of success and good thoughts by others. Fear of shame is used to maintain worth and reputation. Honor and shame keep people in line based on worldly standards.

In God's kingdom the worldly distinctions of honor and shame do not apply. The principles of God are based on the paradoxes of Scripture: To be exalted one must go lower, and to be honored, one must be of no reputation. The scriptural understanding is that worldly exaltation is to be diminished. A person who has been elevated by the world is not necessarily elevated in the eyes of God. A humble person who appears to be without honor in the world will be blessed and valued in the spiritual realm.

It is easy to see how a person who is fueled by the honor of other people may not be useful to God because of the fear of man. The opinions of others will be the determining factor in whether one will be obedient to God. Look at the prophets and servants of God in the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament: They did not fear the condemnation of people. They were filled with desire to serve God no matter what others thought. Their past mistakes did not keep them from forging ahead to do what God desired and to express the love of the Lord and the Lord's people by being fully obedient to him. Their love of the Lord was the only motivation for doing what they did. The opinions of others did not keep them from being in obedience to God. They were not largely honored by the society systems of their days. In fact, most of them would have been shamed by those in their cultural context.

The system of honor and shame is based on Satan's worldly system of humanity saying who is honored and who is shamed, who is lifted up and who is brought low. It is a system of looking to humanity for validation, rather than looking to God. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight" (John 16:15). What man lifts up, will be detestable to God. The only validation that matters in the end is righteousness before God! It will not matter how humanity judges, good or bad. Only the Lord and a person truly know the status of his or her heart. People are often not good judges of character, looking to popularity and not looking to humility before God.

When people take their eyes off of self, they see God. Who and what they were is no longer of any significance or consequence. The humanistic engagement of "self" pales in comparison to the greatness of God. This book is to the point where it can be stated that shame is based on self-centeredness or "me-centeredness." At its root, shame is focused on "me, Me, ... ME!" Shame can only look at its own



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hurt, pain, and anguish. Shame is much more fixated on self than it is focused on God. Shame says, “*I am* so bound up in *my* failures, *my* sins, *my* hurts, *my* embarrassments, and even *my* victimizations that *I* cannot even envision that God’s grace is enough for *me*.” Shame is the loss of honor, but even more so, it is grounded in pride.

Honor and shame are external controls outside of a person because the primary controlling factors are the opinion of self, other human beings, or the lies of the enemy, more than the grace of God! In people bound by honor and shame, deceptions and lies are the primary strategies for cultural survival. Satan lies to people to tell them how great they are and there is exultation in pride (honor), or he lies to people to tell them how low they are to keep them bound in disgrace (shame). Those honored or shamed often join in the lying process on their own: Those honored cannot allow the exposure of the truth for fear of losing their worldly positions and maintaining reputation. The opinions of others are all that really matter. Those in shame will sometimes lie to make themselves look better or different than they really are. They will sometimes cast blame on others rather than take personal responsibility for past actions or failures. They will hide so no one will know the truth.

Ouch! That may have hurt, but it is the truth. Anything that exalts itself above God and God’s will is pride. This is true even of self-loathing that says that God’s grace is not enough! The love of God will always put God first. Moses was so burdened by his inability to speak that he begged God to send another to do the job that Moses had been selected for (Exod. 4:10). In the end, Moses put down his fear, pride, self-absorption, and did the job that God called him to do. Jeremiah also complained, “Then said I: ‘Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth’” (Jer. 1:6). The Lord challenged him not to let fear and intimidation keep him from doing what God had asked of him: “But the Lord said to me: “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, For I am with you to deliver you,” says the Lord” (Jer. 1:7-8). The fear of facing other people would not stop Jeremiah from doing what God had called him to do.

Shame cultures bind people to past mistakes much more than the promise of hope and a future in God. People who continue to be bound in the past are locked in chains of the bygone days. The chains of past actions, sins, and victimizations, can only be broken when people take their eyes off of self and cast their vision on to God! The Apostle Paul said,

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind *let each esteem others better than himself*. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, *but made Himself of no reputation*, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. (Phil. 2:3-7)

People can only be who the Lord has called them to be if they take their eyes off of self and seek God and love others. The Word says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Phil. 2:3–4). The greater valuation of everyone else on the planet more than self and putting others first demands that the “me-ism” of shame must go. The consciousness of self must yield to the love of others. This requires valuing others more than self in personal humility. The Word says that anything less is selfish and vain—and falls short of the standard of Christ. Those are hard words, but they are truth. The Word of God says, “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32).

To sum this up, a person who loves God and others more than they love themselves will not be hindered by shame. In other words, shame will not cause one who loves God to hide. Rather the love of God will be manifest in witness, evangelism, helping others walk in freedom, or other forms of ministry. That is why the people who have overcome the most make the best servants of God! The overcomers have crushed the flesh that would exalt itself in shame, but have

chosen to exalt God instead. Those of no reputation have nothing left to lose! Those who have already given up all pride and honor are not worried about falling into disgrace because it does not matter to them any longer! They have given it all up to serve God. A person has truly overcome when they have a past failure or embarrassment but can say, "I will honor the redemption of God and the restoration of his grace more than I honor my reputation." As is true in the paradoxical kingdom of God, those who make themselves of no reputation are, in fact, often honored in the long run. They are placed in positions of honor by God, but not by men! To be honored in God's kingdom, a person must first be of no reputation.

The Medicine of the Word

The people of God are of great value! After the words at the beginning of this chapter, it is important to make that point. The pendulum of self-worth should not be allowed to swing too far in the other direction! In fact, God's people are to love others *as they love themselves*, which means that self-love in its right place is of God. Self-love, not for exaltation above God or in pride, is proper in the understanding that each person is created in the image of God! People should love everything that God loves, and He loves each one individually! Luke says, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, '*Love your neighbor as yourself*'" (Luke 10:27).

Giving up shame to serve God, actually means that a person can love himself again. That love is not in vain conceit, but rather as one who knows that the grace of God is enough. The true view is that humanity is made in the image of God. Humanity is loved by God regardless of sin. Only in God's love, can each person love others. It is all a matter of focus. It is about taking focus off of self. The goal is to place our focus on God, and what God loves, which is ourselves and others! In taking the focus off of self, then we are truly able to love ourselves in the way God intended. It is yet another paradox of Scripture.

The question then becomes how does a person recast focus from "me" to God and others? The answers are in Holy Scripture. The

Word of God separates the truth from a lie, and the flesh from the spirit. The heart cannot lie to itself when it encounters the truth of the Word of God. The answers are in the Word of God:

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, *it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.* Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. *Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* (Heb. 4:12-16)

The Word of God is medicine for whatever ails. Proverbs says, “My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; *for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body*” (Prov. 4:20-22). No matter what the affliction, time in the Word will make a person stronger and equipped for the battle. Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. It shares throughout the entire 176 verses the power and beauty of the precepts of God. The Word is a guide to the path, “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (Ps. 119:105).

Healing Balm of Love

God is love! Jesus is the Word, and the Word came and dwelled among humanity. The book of John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was

with God in the beginning. . . .The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-2,14). Freedom from shame is borne of the love of Jesus for all humanity. There is no shame too great that the Lord cannot heal and set one free. Love conquers all and it will conquer shame that debilitates or merely hinders. Love is the medicine that heals all things that hinder the body of Christ.

People who are in deep shame and hiding from the world need love and acceptance more than any other thing. The faith that it takes to reveal shame of past sins or actions perpetrated by others should be met with overwhelming love and acceptance. When a person steps out in faith to reveal shames of the past, love is the answer. Those testimonies carry a huge sledge hammer that can help break others free. I think that the hardest testimony to give is the first one. After that, when God is glorified, and people are blessed by his merciful grace that has set someone free, and there is acceptance, all is well. When people love others more than they love nurturing shame or pride, Satan is defeated in the lives of people held in bondage. The book of Revelation tells us the importance of the testimony in overcoming the accuser of the brethren, Satan:

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the *accuser of our brethren*, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And *they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony*, and they did not love their lives to the death. (Rev. 12:10-11)

Every person Jesus encountered that had been burdened by shame was met with love, healing, and acceptance. Even the Father met Adam and Eve with compassion by covering their sin and shame with his covering. He did not allow them to leave the garden covered with their own inadequate covering of leaves. The Lord God

made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. If the Father had not been compassionate, he could have sent them out naked.

Love covers shame and loosens the lock. Love is the key that opens the door of bondage. Love sent Christ to the cross. Jesus scorned the shame of the cross, but he endured it out of love for all humanity. Love people who are filled with shame. Shame-filled people may tend to reject out of self-preservation or feelings of unworthiness to receive love. Love them anyway! Do not give rejection for rejection. Respond with love when met with rejection and the key will be inserted into the lock and freedom will come. Love is to be given freely. Love is to be received freely. If someone cannot give love, that is no excuse for not giving love anyway. If someone cannot receive love, that is no excuse for not giving love anyway. Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. First John says,

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:7-10)

The compassion of God is that he sent his Son to bear our sin and shame so that people could live and walk in perfect peace. The call to love God is also a call to love others. It is a call to get out of self-condemnation and remove our eyes from ourselves to love God and those God loves. First John also says,

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. ... And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. (1 John 4:11-12, 16)

Shame would tell us that love is not enough, that God's grace is not enough, but those are lies of the enemy. Love is made complete in followers who believe the Word of God. The Word says,

This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.* The one who fears is not made perfect in love. *We love because he first loved us.* Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. (1 John 4:17-21)

Shame keeps us bound in fear of exposure, that is why people hide in shame. God's Word says there is no fear in love. In fact, *perfect love drives out fear!* To drive out means to deliberately hurl, connoting intentional action with force. God is love and he expels fear in love! Because of God's love, people can walk in freedom!

Pastor J's Story



There was a vicious cycle that attached itself to my thoughts. The thoughts even invaded my dreams and eventually turned into nightmares. I recall being a young girl who had suffered rejection, abandonment, and molestation. I turned to a life of abusing myself. I fell into all sorts of dangerous situations that led me to a life of prostitution as a young teenager.

I felt great pain after losing both of my parents at an early age, which made life very difficult for me. All I had known was my family and the ways of my family. After I lost my parents those who were supposed to protect me turned out to be the ones who hurt me and took advantage of me. They stole my innocence. My life was so filled with pain that I turned to the arms of anyone who would give me two minutes of attention, whether it was good or bad. I recall times when all I wanted was someone to tell me, “Things will get better. There is another way to find what you think you need.” However, no one came forth with those words. I kept giving myself just so the pain and loneliness would go away. Time waits for no one; when it all started I was twelve years old.

By the time I was fifteen years old things got even worse. I became pregnant and wondered to myself, “Who will love someone like me.” I had made a mistake that I felt would cost me everything. I had to worry about how I was going to take care of a baby. To be honest, I was a baby myself, stuck in a great big world and I had no idea how to adjust. I tried to figure out what was next for me. When I heard the news that I was pregnant all I could think was, “What will I do with a baby?” I even thought about having an abortion or giving

the baby up for adoption, but my nerves would not allow me to do either. So at fifteen, I brought a life into a world that had not been kind to me. The only thing I could think about was how would I survive with a baby. Of course the young man that I had gotten pregnant with went on with his plans in life. I was stuck with no direction. Life was spinning out of control. Then it was not just about being loved and needing attention. Then all I could think about was surviving for two people.

After giving birth to my first child, we needed food, clothing, and a place to stay. I had nothing but my way of living. I had to look past the young guys and deal with men fifteen, twenty, and even forty years older than I was. They had what I needed: Money! Because of the lack of self-worth, I became pregnant again with my second child. I was in even worse shape than I was before. My way out was to have my first abortion. I thought I would die listening to the sound of horror in my mind, as well as my heart.



*"I often tell people,
'The only secret
that will ever hurt
you is the one you
never tell.' Now
I am a Pastor.
My worst hurt
has become my
strongest strength!"*



After that I kept on sleeping around. I was chasing after a place within myself that only God could deal with. I kept making the same mistakes, man after man. Months later, I found myself pregnant again. It seemed to be the right thing to do, so I had another abortion. I thought I would lose my mind but somehow I made it past the emotional roller coaster. I managed to stay in a relationship for a couple of months. However, when I learned I was only a "booty-call without pay" that relationship soon came to an end. Once again someone I trusted to love me only hurt me. Then I was angry on top of all the other rejection and abandonment issues, with a load of abuse attached to it as well. I felt that there was no reason to look for or give love. It was all about the game of money and what I could gain.

By the age of eighteen, I had had four abortions. I felt nothing but numbness. I was in and out of men's beds until I finally hit a place where my heart was dead and my emotions seemed to have been wounded beyond repair. I started doing drugs and drinking out of

control. By the time I turned nineteen, I had abused my own body. I was up to five abortions and four weeks after the previous one I got pregnant again. How sad! I felt that I was out of my mind and on my way to an early grave if I did not stop. I made the decision to have the baby. I could not take the sounds and the grief that came along with the aftermath of abortion, even though I did all I could to ignore the pain my heart was feeling from killing so many babies.

Right after the birth of that baby I went right back to what I knew: laying on my back and making money. It never seemed to be enough to make it anyway. With a bleeding heart, I got pregnant six weeks after I had given birth. That baby landed me right back on the cold abortion table. That time I had to have a two-day abortion, which brought more pain and self-inflicted wounds. I had a total of nine abortions.

No one could ever imagine and think of the shame I had experienced. Although not many people knew about what I was doing to myself, I was aware that what I had been doing was dead wrong. The question came, "When is this vicious cycle going to end?" All at once, I knew how to stop the pain, fear, rejection, abandonment, and abuse that was running so rapidly in my heart, mind, and emotions. I was overwhelmed as I embraced my next move. I had the answer: "This is too much. KILL YOURSELF and your BABIES."

I tried to do it, but God would not allow it to be so. Instead on that very day, after being exhausted with the efforts to stop my heart from beating, God took me and put me into a deep sleep. He began to speak life into my dead places. He called out my name and told me how much he loved me. He told me how he would restore me. He asked me if I really knew why Jesus came to die. I looked at him with such a blank face and he said, "Because of the love I have for you. I sent Him because of you!" I cried so hard as he told me more about His love for me. He told me that my life was not over and there would be better days ahead if I did not give up. He said, "Things will get better!" which were the words that I had longed to hear for so long. He instructed me to get up and wash my face, get my children cleaned and dressed. He said to take a walk looking at life through his lens, and not through the lenses of the others who had hurt me. He asked me to give him a chance to love me. He wanted to lift my

grief from the abuse and self-pity and all of the things I had endured as a child. He wanted to take away everything that caused me to walk in so much pain. That pain had turned into my destruction, but the Lord was there to heal me and restore me. I had to allow his love to fill the dark places that had killed the life in my heart.

When I finally woke up my face was wet from the tears I had shed in the presence of my King, my Savior, my Lord, my friend, and my Deliverer: Jesus Christ! I remember feeling an over-abundance of love and trust that I could believe every word that had been written in my heart by him. I knew in my heart that my life would never be the same. For the first time I was excited about life and being a mother. I had hope and it felt great! I finally had the love of someone that I did not have to lay on my back to receive. He loved me, flaws and all. There was no shame from my past mistakes. He embraced me and gave me my life back with a peace about who I was and all that I had been through.

I often tell people, “The only secret that will ever hurt you is the one you never tell.” Now I am a Pastor. My worst hurt has become my strongest strength! I use my past pains as a tool for the Lord Jesus to break bondages off those that feel the grief of being who I once was. I am not only a Pastor, but also a mentor, wife, grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend. The grace of God kept me long enough for him to reach me right where I was. I live in full freedom and liberty to live, laugh, and love just as I am: Not perfect, but serving a perfect God!

Chapter 9

Abortion: There is No Shame Too Great for Jesus



As I was nearing completion of this book. The Lord spoke to me one Saturday morning and said, “Today we are going to write a chapter for the *shame book* (as I had called it).” I dutifully opened my computer to a new blank document and tried to write something. I was coming up blank. I prayed, “Lord, I am a blank slate, you are going to have to help me today.” He merely said one word, “Abortion!” I sat in my kitchen thinking, “Wow! I wish I had thought of that!” What that single word told me was that the Lord wanted to see people healed from the devastating aftermath of abortion and to begin living in freedom from bondage and shame.

I had been gathering testimonies to help show the face of people who had walked in shame, but who had been able to overcome with the love of Christ. I thought to myself, Lord where will I ever find someone who will be willing to share about having had an abortion. I prayed for the Lord to send me someone. A few days later, I was talking to a man I had just met. He was busy and his phone rang, and he handed me his phone and said the woman on the other end was his spiritual mentor from another state. He merely said, “Talk to her” and walked into another room. He had no idea I was even writing a book much less that I needed a testimony. Pastor J and I introduced ourselves over the phone and I said, “Tell me your story.” She laughed and said, “No one ever asked me that before. I have had nine

abortions.” I could hardly believe my ears. I was so excited that the Lord sent the testimony so that people could see the love and redemptive power of Jesus Christ. That is how much the Lord wanted this story told and how much he wanted his precious sons and daughters to walk in freedom from the bondage of abortion.

Restoration from tricks and lies of the enemy is a great blessing of the Lord. The Lord is the defender of the weak and he comforts those in need. He lifts those in need of lifting. He lifts those who have been oppressed and beaten-down by opposition to be used for the purpose of God. The issue with shame is that most people do not even know that they are laboring under this hidden and subtle affliction. In Christ there is no need to run away or hide, or to seek refuge (or what may appear to be refuge but is actually bondage) in a hidden place.

Shame is a tool and stronghold that is largely unknown because of the conspiracy of silence among those who are in shame. This may be due to the deaf and dumb spirit that prevents people from talking and finding freedom through the words of their mouth. In deliverance ministry, often people have trouble repeating simple words like, “Jesus” or “I plead the blood of Jesus over my life.” They have trouble saying those things because of spiritual opposition that would keep them silent and in bondage. Unfortunately, this is not the place to delve into a long discussion of healing and deliverance, other than to illustrate that the enemy keeps people in bondage by keeping them silent.

Often those who can talk are delivered from the bondage of the conspiracy of silence. Ephesians 5:11 says, “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.” In the Greek language, the word for “expose them” is *elegchō*, which means to be convincing or to tell a fault. Exposure brings freedom. Exposure should be undertaken after seeking God as to how to expose such things. He knows where a person will find love in exposing the deepest wounds or where they may run into a pharisaic spirit that would judge and bring condemnation. Jesus was a talker. Through his spoken words he created, healed, restored, and loved. There is power in the spoken word and that is why Satan does not want people to tell what has happened to them and does not want the truth exposed.

Abortion is a huge lie of Satan. A whole generation of women, and even men, carry the burden of acts that may have put them in bondage for years or even decades. A *generation* in Scripture is about 40 years. The book of Numbers says, “The Lord’s anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until *the whole generation* of those who had done evil in his sight was gone” (Num. 32:13). Abortion has been legal since the 1973 landmark decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Roe vs. Wade*. This decision means that abortion has been legal for more than a generation in the United States.

The Lord never intended for the sacrifice of innocent babies, and there are many Scriptures that address the sacrifice of children. The enemy is glorified by the shedding of innocent blood. Abortion is a terrible blight on our society. Millions and millions of babies are brutally killed every year. There are many women and men who do not realize the spiritual bondage that comes with abortion and see it as a quick way out of a challenging situation.

There are many mothers, just like Pastor J. above, who have told their stories to help others walk in freedom. This chapter is to help break the conspiracy of silence and to help people walk in freedom. The book of Romans says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). The Bible says, “The wages of sin is death, but *the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Rom. 6:23). Undoubtedly, the most well known verse in Scripture is found in John, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved*” (John 3:16-17). Jesus did not come to condemn us, but to save us. He offers pardon from sin and many people who have had an abortion or participated in any way have already found forgiveness.

Revelation and confession are very important: “He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy” (Prov. 28:13). Also 1 John says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Confession leading to forgiveness is a huge part of walking in freedom. The Lord is faithful and

forgiveness is promised for all who confess, but forgiveness is a gift that must be received to take effect. Jesus Christ died for everyone (1 John 2:2). Salvation is a gift offered to everyone: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8–9). The gift of salvation cannot be earned, but is given solely on Christ’s generosity and sacrifice on our behalf.

To discuss forgiveness for involvement in abortion, the beginning is a good place to start. An unborn child is a person in the eyes of God. The Bible is clear that God formed each person in the mother’s womb, and he knew everyone even before conception. Genesis 25:23 says, “And the Lord said unto her, two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” The Word said that there were two persons living in this woman’s womb, and each of them would bring forth a nation. The plan and purpose of God for each twin was established before they were even born. Jeremiah 1:5 says, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.” There are many other scriptures that talk about fetuses having understanding. For example, John the Baptist leapt in his mother’s womb at the presence of Jesus and was filled with the Holy Spirit from before birth (Luke 1:39-41).

Many people have entered into abortion perhaps not knowing the full spiritual, emotional, or physical consequences of their actions. There are thousands and thousands of moms and dads, even grandparents who compelled abortion, who need to be delivered from the burden of shame that they have carried because of ending pregnancy by abortion. The chains of bondage are heavy and hard to carry, but the yoke of Jesus is easy and his burden is light. Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30). The yoke of Jesus is light.

For those who have carried the heavy burden of the thick chains of Satan, it is time to let them go and take up the yoke of the Savior.

The Lord is bringing revelation so that the false yokes of the enemy will fall away. Look what Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). First, Jesus is calling for the weary and burdened, the tired and shattered among the people, and is offering to give them rest. To be *weary* means to be diminished by constant toil and labor that cuts one’s strength. To be *burdened* means to carry a heavy load or to be over-taxed. The one burdened is like a freight ship that is riding low in the water by the heaviness of the cargo in the hold.

The next thing that Jesus said was, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:29). Isaiah 10:27 also says, “And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.” The yoke of Satan is destroyed by the anointing of Christ.

Jesus is gentle and humble and he will receive people as they are. He is not heavy-handed with those who are burdened and weary. He knows that those who have been beaten down can not take any more abuse. They need the love of a mild and humble servant; one who has a lowly-heart that is ready, willing, and able to receive people who have carried weightier burdens than they were ever called to carry. Jesus also said, “You will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:29). Rest is refreshing and peace.

The human being is made up of three parts: spirit, soul, and body. The Apostle Paul said, “May God himself, *the God of peace*, sanctify you through and through. May your whole *spirit, soul and body* be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thes. 5:23). The sanctification of the total being of a person comes through the God of Peace! The body is the physical part of humanity, our physical flesh. The body is the lowest form of our being and it is subject to both the soul and the spirit. The spirit of mankind is the part that responds to the Spirit of God. The soul is the place of the mind, will, and emotions. The soul – mind, will, and emotions—are supposed to be subject to the Spirit of God, operating in the spirit of man.

Often woundedness lands in the soul and sometimes people never know that they are wounded. They never know why they feel the way

justify their actions, for there is no justification other than a saving relationship with Jesus through faith. However, this also shows that God does not wash his hands of people in Scripture who have taken the life of another. God often used people who had many moral failures, including taking a life. When those people of Scripture had been forgiven, the Lord washed them. Psalm 51 is the heart cry of David after the murder of Uriah. The rending of David's heart moved the heart of God. David cried:

Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, you will not despise. (Ps. 51:14-17)

The point is that Moses, David, and Paul were three of the most pivotal and important men in Scripture other than Jesus Christ. The Lord forgave them and then used them to advance his kingdom message. The Lord is not a respecter of persons. What he did for them, he will do for any truthful seeker. They all were stained by innocent blood. In fact, are not all people stained by the innocent blood of Jesus? The book of Romans says,

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. *And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.* (Rom. 5:1-5)

Scriptures shows that God is moved by true and heart-felt repentance. He is a God of forgiveness and the biggest key to seeking forgiveness is the ability to speak out that which which shame would keep buried and use it to benefit others. Psalm 51 says,

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. *Then I will teach transgressors Your ways*, and sinners shall be converted to You. (Ps. 51:10-13)

Psalm 51, the Psalm of David's repentance also says that those restored will teach transgressors the ways of God. The blessing of confessing and repenting, is that it makes the testimony available to the Lord to use for the good of his kingdom.

Tina's Story



The story of my life began in the pain of being a victim of abuse, but ends with a tale of victory! When I was a young child, I was repeatedly molested by a family member. I was put into bondage to fear. The man told me over and over again that if I told anyone that he would kill me. I feared for my life. The years of sexual abuse created a brokenness in me. Later when I began to date boys my own age, I would have sex with them because I thought it showed me “love,” which was the way I referred to sex and lust. I had sex with many men because I had fear of losing them. I really wanted to be in a relationship. I had been victimized, but then I also took on the persona of a victim. I did not see myself as a precious daughter of the King of kings. I did not see men as nurturers and protectors, but users and abusers. Every time I had sex with a man, I felt shame and embarrassment. I wanted to be different, but felt that I was so damaged that there was no need to stop.

To cover the pain of my life, I began smoking pot which led to harder drugs. Eventually, the troubles of life and the shames of my past, crashed in on me. I began struggling emotionally, physically, and spiritually. I became severely depressed and thought about ending my life many times. In time, my drug use got out of control. I felt that I had disappointed myself and others, especially God. I began to be burdened under the depth of shame. I did not know how I could go on like I had been living. I did not have anywhere else to turn.

One day I was crying out, and I simply prayed, “Jesus, help me!” The Lord heard that simple and heart-felt cry for help. I suddenly felt

the calming presence of the peace of God flood the room. Jesus came to bring me peace and love that I had sought from men, but never found. I had been looking for love in all the wrong places. When I looked for love with Jesus, I finally found what I was looking for. I knew that the Lord had heard my prayers and that I was his precious daughter.

After that prayer, I began to renew my relationship with God. I turned over a new leaf. I got into counseling for the abuse that I had experienced as a child. I began to find healing from the pain that I had carried for years. The counseling also helped me overcome the drug habit that I had used to self-medicate my hurting emotions. The more I talked about my past, the more my shame diminished. There were still times when shame and pain would try to rise up again, but I reminded myself that I was a daughter of the king. I was able to use my testimony to help other people.

I know that I am not responsible for being raped, or for the other problems in my family. I know that I was a victim, but I also have to take responsibility for how I responded to the hurt and brokenness in my life. I was a victim, but staying in “victim-hood” was a place of defeat and justification for not moving into the fullness of God’s grace and mercy. The Lord did not call me to get into my own form of self-destruction. I had years when I was trying to fill up the holes in my soul with men and drugs. I was trying to self-medicate my hurt without turning to Jesus to heal my pain and brokenness. My life has been changed. I know that I am forgiven. My sins are covered by the blood of Jesus.

Today I share God’s love, forgiveness, and plan of salvation whenever I can. I use my past to give testimony to the truth and goodness of God’s love. I use the destruction of the enemy in the past as a way to help others out of the same hole that I was in. It is a way to give others a hand so that the lies of Satan can be revealed and eliminated.

Chapter 10

Satan's Lie: The Shame of the Victim



The conquests of David in killing Goliath with a well placed stone and saving his people are often celebrated. However, the later troubles of King David and his children are not as well known. Second Samuel 13 contains one of the most tragic stories of Scripture. David's son Amnon lusted after his beautiful sister, Tamar, which led to her rape. It was sexual molestation within David's family. Amnon, Tamar's half brother, claimed to be desperately in love with her, but it was really a vile obsession manipulated by the enemy Satan. This set of events not only released shame on Tamar, but also Amnon, David, and the rest of the family. The far reaching implications of this event brought destruction and heart-ache for many years and spanned across many generations.

Amnon was David's first born and would have assumed the throne of his father after David's death. Amnon's name means "faithful and true, or right hand," which also means support. There is no question that Amnon had to be responsible for his own actions. Nothing contained here is intended to let him off the hook, so to speak. However, understanding the motivations for Amnon's actions brings understanding. Amnon had encouragement from Jonadab, a Satan-like character, to take the course of action that he took in this story. He also let the lust of his flesh get out of control so that he was vexed,

or obsessed. The obsession took over, and Amnon lost control of his emotions and actions.

Amnon had a very crafty “friend,” his cousin Jonadab the son of David’s brother Shimea. Jonadab encouraged Amnon, “What’s the trouble? Why should the son of a king look so dejected morning after morning?” (2 Sam. 13:4). The voice of Satan says to a perpetrator, “Go ahead, just do it! You are the son of the king, the crown prince. . . . You deserve it.” In other words, you are privileged! Why should you not have anything that your heart desires. Amnon confided to Jonadab, “I am in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister” (2 Sam. 13:4). Jonadab’s name comes from the root meaning to “impel, or to force, urge, drive, coerce, oblige, require, induce, or propel”. In other words, his voice was like the voice of Satan in this story urging Amnon to do that which was forbidden. This shrewd man encouraged a plan to give fulfillment to the actions that had already been hatched in Amnon’s mind. He was the mouthpiece of Satan to get Amnon to act on his mind’s obsession. Jonadab encouraged Amnon’s pride of position, “Why do you the king’s son look forlorn?”

Amnon already had the impulse. Jonadab gave him a scheme to act on that impulse and said, “I’ll tell you what to do. Go back to bed and pretend you are ill. When your father comes to see you, ask him to let Tamar come and prepare some food for you. Tell him you’ll feel better if she prepares it as you watch and feeds you with her own hands” (2 Sam. 13:5). The tangled web of deceit and lies and brokenness grew larger. Amnon and Jonadab conspired but then even David was an unwitting party to the plot. The enemy will cast the net wide to bring as much destruction as possible. Amnon took Jonadab’s advice to lay down and pretend to be sick. And when the king came to see him, Amnon asked him, “Please let my sister Tamar come and cook my favorite dish as I watch. Then I can eat it from her own hands” (2 Sam. 13:6). David agreed and sent the beautiful virgin girl into the lair of the predator.

When Tamar set the serving tray before him, he refused to eat. “Everyone get out of here,” Amnon told his servants. They all left (2 Sam. 13:9). The servants were also unwilling parties to the brokenness that was unfolding in the process. Amnon said to Tamar, “Now bring the food into my bedroom and feed it to me here.” As she was

feeding him, he grabbed her and demanded, "Come to bed with me, my darling sister" (2 Sam. 13:10-11).

At first he made a demand for her to participate in the plan. Tamar cried, "No, my brother! Don't be foolish! Don't do this to me! Such wicked things are not done in Israel" (2 Sam. 13:12). She was the lone voice of reason in the exploding situation, but he would not listen. She gave him reasons not to do the thing that his tormented mind had hatched. She called him "brother," bringing to mind the unlawful and unnatural nature of a relationship between them. She begged him not to force her. She called the plan folly and wickedness. She reminded him they are of set apart as the people of Israel, God's people called for his purposes.

Finally, she appealed for him to remember the shame that would be unleashed upon her. She asked, "*Where could I go in my shame?* And you would be called one of the greatest fools in Israel. Please, just speak to the king about it, and he will let you marry me" (2 Sam. 13:13). He had recourse in that he could have asked his father to give her as a wife, which was common in that era. She reminded him in advance of the shame of it, indicating what is already known about shame. People who are in shame want to hide. They say just as Tamar said, "Where shall I go?" Or "Where can I hide, for shame will cause me to hide my face in humiliation from this act done to me against my will. I do not want to participate in it. I am trying to stop it, but if it happens, the enemy will work to put shame on me!" She even tried to remind him of his standing as the first born son of the King. She reminded him that he was the heir-apparent, how foolish to throw it all away for momentary satisfaction of the lust of the flesh. Amnon would not listen to her. He was stronger than she was, so he forcibly raped her.

The Scripture said that suddenly Amnon's love turned to hate. The hatred that he had for her was exceedingly great and intense. "Get out of here!" he snarled at her (2 Sam. 13:15). It was not love at all, it was lust driven by anger and hatred. Rape is a crime of anger! Sending her away in that way was worse than what he had already done to her. She begged him not to send her away in shame, but Amnon would not listen to her. He shouted for his servant and demanded, "Throw *this woman* out, and lock the door behind her!" (2

Sam. 13:17). The servant put Tamar out and locked the door behind her. It seems that Amnon was so filled with self-hatred and contempt at his own lack of control, that he reacted toward her in that very way. If he had loved her, he would not have sent her away in anger after spitefully using her.

He turned her out by force and locked her out to face the shame alone. She was innocent and injured. Having the servants throw her out and lock the door was an added injury and very disgraceful. He made a public spectacle of her in front of the servants. It was as if his contempt for himself was played out in her. She entered adorned as a princess wearing a long, beautiful robe, as was the custom in those days for the king's household. Tamar tore her robe and put ashes on her head in a sign of mourning. She went away crying with her face in her hands as a sign of her shame and disgrace.

Her brother Absalom saw her and asked, “‘Is it true that Amnon has been with you? Well, my sister, keep quiet for now, since he’s your brother. Don’t you worry about it.’ So Tamar lived as a desolate woman in her brother Absalom’s house” (2 Sam. 13:20). The word for *desolate* means that she was “stunned and numb.” The actions of Amnon devastated her life. Her life was destitute and laid waste. She was cloistered away in the home of her brother, Absalom.

When King David heard what had happened, he was vehemently and exceedingly angry. However, the Scripture never says that David did anything to rectify the matter or to take any corrective action. As the father he should have disciplined his son, even if he was an adult, because David was king and had the power to do so. If David had brought recompense to Tamar and discipline to his son at that moment it may have saved his entire family from much greater hardship later on.

There is another thing that may have made David fail to take corrective action in this matter. This story comes on the heels of David’s sin and correction with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12). The first words of this passage of the story of Amnon and Tamar say, “After this...” referring to what had just passed with David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 13:1). David had engaged in sexual sin that was an improper relationship with another man’s wife and then caused her husband’s murder. David had just entered into a relationship with Bathsheba that was

forbidden under the Law. The Word clarifies, “And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to (Tamar)” (2 Sam. 13:2, Explanatory note added). Was it difficult for David to correct his son when he did not have clean hands himself? Sexual sin was an area where David had not been sanctified. It is hard to bring correction when there is an area of uncleanness in one’s own life. David may have found himself unable to correct his son because of his own failures. Scripture says,

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. (Matt. 7:3-5)

David’s failure or inability to deal with Amnon’s sin created a much greater problem later on. Absalom never spoke to Amnon about the matter with Tamar. Absalom hated Amnon deeply because of what he had done to his sister. Hatred grew in Absalom for two years. It was like a festering wound. After two years, David’s son Absalom took revenge on Amnon in the presence of all of the brothers and sisters. He ordered his servants to murder Amnon for what he did to Tamar. After the murder, all of David’s children fled, weeping and sobbing, and the king and all his servants wept bitterly (2 Sam. 13:23-29).

This thing that hatched as uncontrolled lust and anger blossomed and destroyed so many lives over the course of many years. Jonadab, the Satan-voice that got it all started, may have watched in glee as this family imploded upon itself. The victims were many. Tamar is the obvious victim, and her life was forever changed. She was an obedient, pure, young woman doing what she was told to do by the king. There was no justice for her and she was overpowered by a stronger opponent. However, there were many other victims that were also without recourse.

Absalom felt compelled to bring justice when the king would not do so. He was left to pick up the pieces of Tamar's life. He took her in and cared for her, but he was consumed by the destruction of the situation in the end. He murdered his brother and ran away, and also lost his family in the process. All of the other brothers and sisters were traumatized by violence of family on family incest and murder. David's emotions were also described as intense anger, weeping and sobbing, and bitterness. He sent Tamar into the lion's den unprotected, which means he may have had his own guilt and shame in the matter. He refused to bring discipline and correction to his son, which allowed the wound to fester over time. Amnon eventually lost his life for his inability to control his flesh. He was the perpetrator who was listening to a voice that would lead to his own demise and destruction. Ultimately, he had to bear responsibility for his own actions. There were many helpless family members who were left to overcome the aftermath of the abuse.

The entire family was hurt and damaged, even the household servants were wounded by these things. The unchecked plan injured many members of the house of David, the first-born son Amnon, Tamar, and his son Absalom. The rest of the children were traumatized, knowing what had happened and what may have been swept under the proverbial rug. The servants knew what happened to Tamar, David knew, Amnon knew, Jonadab knew, and Absalom knew. This was a very poorly kept secret. Everyone knew but no one did anything about it until the boiling pot erupted! David lost many of his children because of unchecked flesh, anger, and lust!

This story had a tragic end. If this matter had been washed in the love and forgiveness of God, how could the outcome have been different from the brokenness that is evidenced in this chapter? Eventually Absalom also died and Tamar was never heard from again in Scripture. She was lost in shame and disgrace and the entire situation was full of brokenness, regret, and heart-ache.

Freedom from the Bondage of Victimization

The ripple effect of a single act of victimization moved out in ever widening circles like the ripples from a pebble thrown into a

The Devil is the destroyer of the lives of humanity, which is evident enough in the story of David's children. Left unchecked, that enemy will destroy the lives of many people. Jesus came to save the people, not destroy them. Jesus can even deliver those like Amnon, who have given in to the foul pursuits of his flesh. It may be pure speculation, but allow a brief imagination: What would have happened if Amnon had repented, and asked for forgiveness? What would have happened if Tamar had forgiven Amnon? What if Absalom had forgiven him? This is in no way condoning Amnon's actions, which were evil. Could Tamar's life have been salvaged and put back on track where she did not live out her life hidden in shame in Absalom's house? Would Amnon have lived? Would David have been spared the grief, injury, and destruction that came to so many of his children? Would David's other children have been spared the trauma of seeing the guilty brother slain before their eyes by another brother?

If someone wants to experience God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, loving those who use and mistreat is a must. It may not be easy, but where one has a desire to walk in freedom, there is grace to see it through. Tamar was in control of her own freedom. The action was done to her against her will, but how she responded to it was purely in her court. In other words, often those who forgive walk in freedom, but those who do not forgive walk in bondage. Believers are called to love their enemies, even if the enemy is a father or brother, mother or aunt, who has hurt, cursed, or mistreated. Jesus said:

But to you who are listening I say: *Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.* If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to

those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. *But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.* Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. *Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.* (Luke 6:27-36)

Out of the very words of Jesus, there is no place for the victim mentality, including the shame that comes with it. If a person is injured, Jesus was injured more. If someone needs forgiveness, there are others who need forgiveness more! Jesus demonstrated in his example that there is no place for victimization in his kingdom. Jesus was surely victimized, but he did not take on the role of a victim. As he hung on the cross looking at the ones who had nailed him there, Jesus said, “‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ He watched as they divided up his clothes by casting lots” (Luke 23:34). He gave forgiveness and he did not harbor hurt or resentment. The overcomers not only walk in freedom, but also should expect great reward coming at a future time.

Laura's Story



One day after my mother passed away, my father and I went to our local boat dock for a walk. As we were walking down the ramp to get to the dock, I saw a man who had molested me as a six-year-old child. He was sitting on a picnic table to the left of the ramp. My father had no idea anything like that had ever happened to me. When we got to the bottom of the ramp, I turned right not wanting to even come into close proximity to the man. My Dad turned left and almost insisted we go that direction. The Lord asked me a very simple question, “What are you going to do now?”

Let me back up a bit. That day before leaving the house, I had been angry with my children and fussed over some things that were irrelevant and unimportant. As I left my house to drive twenty minutes to visit with my father, I prayed and asked for forgiveness. I remember praying for most of the drive, asking for forgiveness, thanking the Lord for forgiving me for being ugly, and then rejoicing that I had peace in my forgiveness. I knew that I was forgiven and was actually filled with joy by the time that I picked up my Dad. I was enjoying the presence of the Lord. When I saw him sitting there, I wanted the man to go throw himself into the lake. I had not let those events that happened to me as a young child define my life, but even so I did not want to come face to face with the man. The Lord caused me to come face to face with my past and I had a choice. As we approached the man, the Lord simply asked, “What are you going to do now?”

There was a momentary battle inside, but then I knew there was only one answer, “Lord I am going to forgive him, because you have just forgiven me.” I prayed inside, “Lord, I forgive him!” As we

approached the man, I noticed how haggard he looked. He looked like his life had been rough. He had the look of someone who drank everyday just to be able to get through the day. I was filled with compassion for him. I actually had pity for him. My Dad spoke to the man and we walked on. I wondered as I walked off if he even remembered what had happened or if he had blocked it from his mind. Was he filled with dread that I would somehow blow the whistle after all those years? As we continued on the walk, I was filled with joy again. I knew that when I came back by the place where he had been sitting I was going to tell him, "I forgive you." When I came back, he was gone. I wonder if he went into hiding because of shame he experienced?

Chapter 11

Forgiveness is the Key



Getting angry with children and fussing may not seem to be on the same level of sin as sexual molestation of a small girl. On the one hand that is true, but looking at it from a perspective of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, one sin is the same as another with the Father. All sin is deplorable with him because sin separates his children from him. When I chose to forgive the man for something terrible he did to me, it is the same as people asking the Lord for forgiveness for all of the terrible things that people have done to dishonor him. He is faithful to forgive when he is asked: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). He is faithful to forgive just as people must be faithful to forgive others.

Mike, my husband says another very important point about forgiveness: "Forgive it or forget it." In other words, if people do not forgive, they will not be forgiven! He says if a person does not forgive they can forget the idea that they will be with the Lord for eternity. That is why he says, "Forgive it or forget it!" It is a harsh reality of Scripture that is not preached often because it may seem to put more burden on the victim and give the perpetrator a free ride. That is not true because vengeance belongs to the Lord. A person's guilt or innocence is between that person and God. However, if a victim cannot forgive, they will carry the eternal burden of that unforgiveness. In Matthew 6:14-15 Jesus says, "For if you forgive other people when

they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. *But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*” Luke follows suit by quoting Jesus saying, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. *Forgive, and you will be forgiven*” (Luke 6:37). Mark also shows the words of Jesus by saying, “And when you stand praying, *if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them*, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (Mark 11:25).

I never told anyone ... I mean anyone ... about this story until long after I reached adulthood. I shared it at first because I wanted to help jail inmates to forgive the people who had done hurtful and damaging things to them. It was a small example of not keeping quiet in shame so that the greater good of the kingdom of God might be served. This is not saying what that man did was right, but it was a choice to release him to God and let God carry the aftermath of his actions from the decades before. God can deal with him according to his heart. I pray that he has been delivered from the brokenness in his own life that would cause him to do such an action.

The book of John says, “If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven” (John 20:23). Another version says, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (NKJV). When a person has been raped as Tamar was, the sins retained (or what a person may have taken in) could be hate, rage, anger, fear, rejection, shame, embarrassment, unforgiveness, resentment, bitterness, self-pity, selfishness, worthless feelings, and guilt, just to name a few. These are the “sins” that may be retained from that abuse.

A victimized individual may have sinful hurts and emotions to deal with. If those hurts and emotions are left uncared for they may cause ongoing brokenness and prevent the goodness and blessing of God from manifesting in a person’s life. Holding on to any of these things is a sin of its own. “Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2). When a person moves beyond vengeance and victimization to forgiveness freedom will come. The

grace of the Lord is sufficient to cover all of the hurts and burdens a person may carry. Isaiah 53 says, “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, *He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him*, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:4-5).

The Lord himself will repay according to his kingdom standards, “But You have seen, for You observe trouble and grief, to repay *it* by Your hand. The helpless commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless” (Ps. 10:14). He alone knows if a person is repentant in their heart. It is a matter of the heart. God is the discerner of hearts. A person cannot discern the heart of another person. I like to say, “That is above my pay-grade.”

He provided a way for us to be forgiven, and that way is through Jesus Christ. Jesus confirmed in no uncertain terms when he said, “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*” (John 14:6). God’s plan of salvation was to send Jesus, his only Son, into the world as a sacrifice for our sins. As believers, our relationship with God is restored, but what about our relationship with our fellow human beings? The Bible states that people are under an obligation of God to forgive that person. Jesus is very clear on that point. I have engaged in a healing ministry from time to time. Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and then waiting for someone else’s guts to rot out. That may be graphic, but the point is well stated that unforgiveness will hurt the one who refuses to forgive much more than the one who has not been forgiven.



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Forgiveness is a Choice.

Is forgiveness a conscious choice, or is it a feeling, an emotional state of being? Feelings may be raw and a person may not emotionally wish to forgive another person. However, forgiveness is not an emotion; it is a choice. People may not *feel* like forgiving, but may choose to do so anyway because it honors God and because God offers forgiveness to people. Forgiveness may be challenging. Sometimes a person may say with clinched teeth, “I forgive that person.” There might be no desire whatsoever to forgive, but the person may say the words because the choice is there to follow the Lord. Even choosing to say the words day after day may pave the way for the emotions to eventually catch up with the choice of will. Forgiveness is a choice made through a decision of personal will, motivated by obedience to God and his command to forgive. The Bible instructs us to forgive as the Lord forgave us: “*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you*” (Col. 3:13).

I have a dear friend who often gives a testimony about forgiving someone who stole from him in a business deal. One day he found himself driving by the person’s house. He looked down and realized that he was traveling well above the speed limit, his hands were gripping the steering wheel, and he was in a rage. He realized that unforgiveness was harming him more than the other person. He decided to honor the Lord and forgive the man. He growled in a harsh voice, “OK, Lord, I forgive him.” He made himself say those words everyday. Over time, he realized that his anger and resentment were lessening. The words of forgiveness came easier as time went on. Eventually, he found himself in a position where his emotions of forgiveness caught up with his choice to forgive. He found that after time he could say, “Lord, I forgive him,” and really mean it in his heart. Because he was obedient to make the choice to forgive the man, he was delivered from anger, rage, bitterness, and resentment. People have a choice to make. Forgiveness may cost a person’s pride, but that is a price that people must be willing to pay to walk in freedom that Jesus wants us to have. Pride is not worth keeping anyway.

God honors the commitment to obey Him and the desire to please him when people choose to forgive. He completes the work in his time. The job of humanity is to forgive by faith until the Lord's work of forgiveness is evident in the hearts and lives of people who have forgiven. Philippians says, "And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns" (Phil. 1:6). It has been said, "Forgiveness is easy when we need to receive forgiveness, but hard when we need to give forgiveness." However, when a person remembers the debt of gratitude of forgiveness received, forgiveness is easier to give.

I remember seeing a television interview with two parents whose daughter had been murdered. The man who had committed the crime had been convicted and sent to prison. The parents chose to forgive the man. They went to the prison to visit him and to convey their forgiveness. They formed a lasting relationship with the man who had brutally murdered their precious daughter. The man's heart was broken at the love that he received from the people that he had victimized the most. As the parents extended love and forgiveness, the kingdom of God was advanced. The convicted prisoner eventually received Jesus as his Lord and Savior, led in salvation by the parents of the girl. Even though he was forgiven by the parents and he was forgiven by the Lord, he still had to serve his time according to the laws of the land. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean that there will be no consequences for the actions.

The choice to forgive their daughter's murderer may not have been easy but in actuality that course of action was dictated by Scripture. All too often even Christians have a vengeance-mentality rather than an attitude of forgiveness. The Word of God says that vengeance belongs to the Lord, and only to the Lord! People who have been hurt or injured must understand that each person's relationship is directly between that person and the Lord. People forgive *by faith*, out of obedience. Since forgiveness often does not come naturally, a person must forgive by faith, whether he or she feels like it or not. A person must trust God. It often is a statement of godly character when a person is able to choose to forgive when he or she does not

want to forgive. It is necessary to trust God to do the work that needs to be done so that forgiveness will be complete.

Vengeance Belongs to God, Not to Humanity

The story of King David and his murder of Uriah, husband of Bathsheba, has been discussed at length in this book. Even King David said in Psalm 51 when talking about the seduction of Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, “For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin *is* always before me (That is Shame!). *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight*—That You may be found just when You speak, *and* blameless when You judge” (Ps. 51:3-4, Explanatory note added). Even though a man had lost his life as a result of David’s sin, David said that his sin was against God alone. One person never has the biblical right to hold the sins of another person against them. Vengeance belongs to the Lord. “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head’” (Rom. 12:19-20).

Forgiveness May Be a Process

Forgiveness is complete when a person experiences the freedom that comes as a result of trusting God to handle the matter. The most suffering occurs when a person chooses not to forgive. When a person forgives, the Lord sets hearts free from the anger, bitterness, resentment and hurt that previously imprisoned them. Sometimes, however, forgiveness may be a process more than an event. “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive *my brother when he sins against me?* Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times” (Matt. 18:21-22). This passage has often been viewed as fostering a general character of forgiveness in any situation. However, when read closely that is not really what Peter is asking. Peter seemed to be asking about forgiveness for one person who sins over and over and over again. The term *brother* in this passage is singular. Peter is not asking about a

generic attitude of forgiveness, he is asking about a constant, nagging sore that has the scab knocked off time and again.

A generic attitude of forgiveness as a lifestyle may be easier to achieve than forgiving one person who makes life a misery over and over again! The answer by Jesus makes it clear that forgiveness is not always easy. It may not be a one-time choice to automatically live in a state of forgiveness. Authentic forgiving may require a lifestyle of forgiveness, but it is important to the Lord. It may require continued forgiveness until the matter is settled in the heart.

Prayer as a Means of Forgiveness

Prayer is one of the best ways to break down the wall of unforgiveness in the hearts. Prayer for a person who has committed sins opens the door to forgiveness. God gives new eyes to see and a new heart to care for that person. Prayer opens the eyes to see the person as God sees them, and to realize that he or she is precious to the Lord, regardless of their actions. Prayer also allows people to see themselves in a new way as well: that being guilty of sin and thus not having the ability to cast the first stone. Remember Jesus said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first" (John 8:7). He did not say, "He whose sin is lesser may cast the first stone." The implication is clear, only the sinless may throw stones of judgment. There is no person who is not in need of forgiveness. God does not withhold his forgiveness from people when they ask. That is why people should not withhold forgiveness from another.

There was a woman who was after my husband when we were in law school together. My husband went to law school a year before I did. I was finishing up my undergraduate degree at another university. The first weekend I visited him, I saw her ploy right away. She flirted, put herself in his path, and sat by him when ever she could. It was a non-subtle invitation that she was interested in him. It started when he began law school a year before I did and continued until after we graduated a few years later. Even after we graduated from law school, I remember talking to my mother in tears about the matter. She said, "Laura, you must pray for her." Rest assured, praying for her was the last thing that I wanted to do. This also brings to mind Peter's

statement about forgiving someone who continually sins against you. A few weeks later, I called my mother back to talk again. She asked, “Laura, have you prayed for her?” I still was not interested in praying and had very uncharitable or even hateful thoughts about her.

One day I was alone in my house still fretting about the matter. I really did not have anywhere else to turn. I was walking in a very shallow relationship with the Lord at the time. It was a little foreign for me to pray for a person, but I did. I was at the end and did not know what else to do. I bowed my head, and prayed a sincere prayer for her. I really asked the Lord to bless her and for her to find the mate that God intended for her. I really meant that I wanted God to bless her. I instantly felt something lift off of me – it was deliverance. I had peace in my heart for the first time in a long time. She became a non-factor in our marriage and in my thoughts after that.

A few years later, my husband and I had moved back to our hometown to begin a small town law practice. We had three children in three years. After our children were old enough to enjoy and participate, we took them to the state fair. While there, I saw the woman at a distance walking alone in the carnival. I felt compassion for her. My heart went out to her. I have thought of her many times since then. I have thought about the brokenness in her own life that has left her lonely and alone. She often drank heavily. In the prayers sincerely offered for her, my angst for her turned to compassion. I genuinely felt sorry for the condition of her own bondage and perhaps shame, too.

There is another reason to pray for the person who needs forgiveness. God may deal with the injustices of a person’s actions. God is the judge of the person’s life and heart. It is not unusual for people to feel anger toward sin and injustice. However, judging belongs to the Lord. Luke says, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven” (Luke 6:37).

Unforgiveness is a Barrier

Unforgiveness is a huge barrier to many things that the Lord wants to do for us and with us. Unforgiveness is a huge barrier to all

healing: spiritual, mental and physical. It is also a strong road block to God using people according to the call and plans that he has for them. There was a woman with debilitating arthritis. Her hands were so crippled and drawn that they did not function. She was a seminary student, so she obviously knew the Lord and was seeking his plan for her life. She had been to many healing meetings to have prayer to be healed from the crippling arthritis but she was never healed. Much later, she went to a teaching seminar on forgiveness. She realized that she had never forgiven her mother for the things that she had done, or that the woman perceived she had done, over the years of her childhood and youth. The woman came to the altar for ministry and to pray to forgive her mother. She left a lot of hurt and pain at the altar. She did not ask for nor receive prayer for healing the arthritis.

The minister who was teaching the lesson on forgiveness saw the woman a month later. Her hands were completely healed! He could hardly believe it. He asked her what happened, acknowledging there had been no prayer for the healing of her hands. She testified that when she forgave her mother, that gradually her hands began to have more mobility and less pain, until over that brief time they were completely healed. She attributed her healing to the fact that she forgave her mother from her heart! Unforgiveness is a giant barrier to receiving all the Lord wants his people to have.

In closing, people forgive out of obedience to the Lord. It is a choice, a decision that people make. However, in the process of forgiving, it is discovered that the command is in place for the good of the one giving forgiveness as much as it is toward the one receiving forgiveness. The reward of forgiveness is freedom. The ultimate reward of forgiveness is eternal life! The ultimate debt of unforgiveness is eternal separation from God. It is a debt that can never be paid off! Jesus said these words in Matthew talking about a servant the master forgave but who in turn refused to forgive a servant who owed him:

Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. *Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had*

*pity on you?’ and his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. “So My heavenly *Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.*” (Matt. 18:32-35)*

Forgiveness is a matter of the heart. Unforgiveness is a debt that can never be repaid and is not worth the cost! What may feel like the momentary pleasure of vengeance, may result in an eternity of torment.

Conclusion



In the glory of God shame cannot exist because shame and God's glory are inconsistent and are mutually exclusive. The glory, love, and acceptance of God are without measure and there is no shame or rejection in the glory of God. All those demonic spirits which cause people to feel unworthy and unloved will not stand in the presence of God. That is why shame will keep people away from the glory of God. Shame will attempt to keep the wounded from coming to the fount of all healing. The lie of Satan to keep people in shame must be exposed. The truth of God's presence and his glory is that in his presence the chains and lies of the enemy fall off.

Isaiah was in shame in the presence of the Lord. However, in the presence of the Lord he was healed by the fire from the altar of God. Then he was commissioned for service. He acknowledged his uncleanness but once cleansed he was sent out for service. He came in shame but he departed commissioned and ready to be used in a mighty way. His first response to being in the presence of God was, "Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty" (Isa. 6:5). His final status was completely changed and he was ready for service. The book of Isaiah says, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me'" (Isa. 6:8). After being cleansed and restored by the Lord, he was ready to report for duty!

That is what happens when God's people come into his glory and receive his healing and commissioning! Shame's attention is on the past; God's plan is in the future! It is time to put shame in the past,

walk in freedom, and get ready for service to the Most High God! It is time to let the healing fire from God's altar cleanse and heal you to get ready for the commissioning of God. The Lord has a call and a plan for each person. Walking free of the bondage of the past is necessary to embrace that call. The will of God for a person's life will never include carrying shame because that is inconsistent with Scripture! Jesus scorned the shame of the cross but endured it so that humanity would not have to live under its burden. This book is about walking into the future! Satan wants us in the past, but God wants us in the future! Those who embrace the message of healing will fully experience the future in Christ Jesus because the foot of the cross is the NO SHAME ZONE!

A Message from the Author

Laura Henry Harris



I was an attorney for twenty years before leaving the practice of law to be in full time service to the Lord. That service has looked like many different things in the last several years. I attended Asbury Theological Seminary and United Theological Seminary, obtaining a Masters of Divinity and a Doctor of Ministry degree. I served as a pastor of a United Methodist Church for four years. I have traveled to many countries around the world for missions and ministry. Perhaps the greatest joy of my service to the Lord is to seek to hear his voice and to teach revelation of scripture that the Lord has revealed to me. I am always interested in opportunities to teach and equip the body of believers, especially ministry leaders.

I intersect with believers from around the world through written works and social media, as well as travel. Our ministry is called “Where He Leads Me, Inc.” Free teaching videos are available on the Web address. Other books are available on the web page or at on-lines sources in either print or electronic forms. Check out Amazon, Kindle, iBook, and Nook.

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Other Works by Laura Henry Harris



Who is the Bride? A Mandate for the Church for Such a Time as This!

Did you ever wonder why the Church struggles to walk in the blessing of the Lord that is promised in Scripture? Have you questioned why the Church grapples for relevance in the culture where evil is running amok?

The Lord promised that those who bless Israel will be blessed and those who curse Israel will be cursed. The Church must understand the biblical mandate to appeal to the King of kings for the salvation of the Jews. The inclusion of the Jews as a part of the bride of Christ will loose blessing and favor of the Lord on the Church.

After Esther appealed to King Xerxes for the Jews, the heart of the king changed! He gratuitously approached Esther to give her any petition that she wanted even before he knew if she had a request! This will be the status of the Church when the Church appeals to the King of kings for Israel to be loosed from the vile attack of Satan that would seek to destroy her.

Jews do not have to be Christians to be saved. They only have to believe and accept Yeshua as their Messiah. The Apostle Paul shows that the Jews do not have to stop being Jewish to follow Jesus. This revelation is transformative for both Israel and the Church. This book will change the future of the Church!

***Salvation is Free, Discipleship is Not!
Weighing the Cost of NOT Serving God!***

Salvation is Free, Discipleship is Not! Weighing the Cost of NOT Serving God! is a cry to the Church of Jesus Christ to experience a wake up call. Time is short! The Church is called to wake up and be in a state of preparation and readiness for the return of the Lord. Jesus Christ is returning for a Bride who has made herself ready to meet her Groom. The body of Christ is drowsy or may have already fallen asleep. Sadly, some who think they are ready to meet Jesus will be mistaken. There will be many who hear those terrifying words, “Truly I tell you, I don’t know you” (Matt. 25:12). The Lord is not willing that any should perish. Scripture is very plain, however, that there are those who have confessed Christ with their mouths, but who have not known him in their hearts. They will be sent away into eternal damnation.

If you are uncomfortable with these words, this may be just the book for you. Please take the warning of the Lord to heart. There are many who have heard the Word of the Lord, but it has not been transformative in their lives.

In *Salvation is Free, Discipleship is Not!* the Lord speaks through a prophetic voice to call the Church to repent, to be wholeheartedly devoted, to avoid deception, to be radically obedient, to live in purity of life, to consume the Word of God, and to harvest souls of the lost. This book is a call for a transformation of the body of Christ. Salvation truly is free, but careful reading of scripture confirms that discipleship should cost the believer a precious price.

Kingdom Citizenship Now!
Experience God's Kingdom on Earth as it is in Heaven!

When God's presence and power come on earth, miracles happen. Learn why miracles happen. Investigate what hinders the kingdom of God from fully manifesting on earth. Understand what believers can do to invite the unending power of God on earth as it is in heaven.

- First, *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* explores the authority of Jesus, the authority of the believer, and the power of the enemy, Satan. Jesus has all authority to rule and reign, and that leaves no authority for Satan! The enemy has lied to believers for far too long. *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* will give believers the tools and understanding needed to walk in God's kingdom realm everyday.
- Second, *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* explores the who, what, and why of the miracles found in the Bible. Everything that happened in the Bible when Jesus and the disciples walked the earth can happen now! Believers can invite and experience miraculous provision, multiplication, healing, overcoming the laws of nature, and other miracles of God.
- Third, *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* explores practical ways that believers can walk in kingdom citizenship on earth as it is in heaven. Believers who want to walk in the miracle power of God through the Holy Spirit will learn how to make their lives a conduit for the power of God. *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* shows believers how to live in a way that invites the presence of God in power.

Kingdom Citizenship Now! is full of new revelations and scriptural understanding. This book has over 900 biblical references. *Kingdom Citizenship Now!* is a vessel of God for new understanding into the meaning of even well-known passages. Experience God's Kingdom on earth, NOW!

