

the gospel

breaking the power of

shame

by ralph ennis, dennis stokes, and christine weddle

The Navigators National Training and Staff Development Team Resource

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As you join us in the journey through this study, we invite you to not only pull out your pen, but grab a highlighter, too! Circle, underline, doodle, whatever it takes to make the learning process you own!

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION:

Please use the questions that have been marked with **X**

"Still nauseated, Chris shuffled down a path through land as patched as he was. He observed, though, that the light was getting noticeably brighter. He stripped off his running jacket and then his T-shirt, but the stench came almost as strongly from his own body. Late in the morning he arrived at an impregnable black wall only accessed by the Narrow Gate. He trudged up to the gate and knocked, looking down at his greasy skin and pants saturated with putrid slime. Why would anyone let you in anywhere? he had to wonder. But he couldn't imagine what he would do if he were turned away. Slowly the gate opened onto a path that headed up a fairly steep hill."

Pilgrim's Progress Today, NavPress, pg. 37

prologue

shame defies simple explanation.

But consider this.

*Shame is an emotional state [combining feelings and belief]
In which a person feels fundamentally flawed—flawed at the core.*

Guilt says, “I’ve done something wrong.”

Shame says,

I am bad.

I am worthless.

I deserve to be punished.

I do not deserve to be loved.

The problem is not what I’ve done. The problem is rooted in *who I am*.

...**the experience of shame is universal.** We all feel shame in varying degrees and in certain situations, and go out of our way to avoid it. We might be amazed to discover how much of our own behavior stems from the need to *avoid shame, cover shame, deny shame*. Shame is deep and primal and as old as the fig leaves of Adam and Eve.

adam’s diary – one week after the fall...

Oh, my God, what have we done? It all happened so fast. One minute Father was gazing straight through our eyes into our very hearts and minds. And I like to think that He saw His own glorious reflection peeking right back at Him. Back then I thought paradise would last forever.

But now, all of our innocence is history. If only that snake hadn’t slithered onto the scene with his deceptive line of sly questions. If only we hadn’t wanted to be God...If only we could go back and do it right...But now our perfect relationship with Father is over. Look where it’s gotten us: wearing clothes and ashamed, full of guilt and self-condemnation, blaming and fearing each other, running for cover. Oh, my God, what have we done?

What’s going to happen to us? There is no way on earth that Eve and I can reverse the damage we’ve done. I only hope Father has a solution, because if we’re ever to enjoy Him again, He’ll have to be the One to re-introduce us to trust.

My God, my God, what have we done?

*In tears,
Adam¹*

¹ Excerpted from *My Identity In Jesus: Living Out of Who God Says I Am, Jesus’ Good News, Module 201, pg. 46. Published by The Navigators National Training and Staff Development.*

“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.’”

Genesis 3:8-10 (NIV)

part 1: the emotions related to sin

...the primary emotions accompanying the fall of man are guilt and shame. They remain as two far-reaching emotions of human experience. Guilt and shame are so potent that we simply cannot deal with them without the miraculous grace and mercy of God. Numerous consequences flow from guilt and shame.

The emotion of guilt plays itself out through an awareness of a law, a standard that originates from outside or from within the person. The breaking of the law brings punishment. Guilt is what [a person] feels when they sense that they have fallen short of the standard.

READ THROUGH Genesis Chapter 3, and describe how Adam and Eve experienced the emotion of guilt.

¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 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.

⁸Then 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?"

¹⁰He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

¹¹And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹²The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it."

¹³Then the Lord said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

"Cursed are you above all the livestock
and all the wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.

¹⁵And I will put enmity
between you and the woman
and between your offspring and hers;

he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶To the woman he said,

"I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing;
with pain you will give birth to children.

Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you.

¹⁷To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,'

*"Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat of it
all the days of your life.*

¹⁸*It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.*

¹⁹*By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return."*

²⁰Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

²¹The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And The Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Genesis 3 (NIV)

X **WHY** is a sense of moral right and wrong important (i.e. laws, rules, moral standards)? *Explain.*

PAUSE for a moment and consider **John 16:8-11**.

*When he comes he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:
in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me;
in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer;
and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

John 16: 8-11 (NIV)

X **WHAT** is the positive value of guilt?

X **WHAT** is the destructive power of guilt?

REMEMBER TIMES when you have felt guilt for what you had done. *Describe one or more of those times.*

X **HOW** has guilt been harmful in your spiritual growth?

X **HOW** has guilt been helpful to you in your spiritual growth?

WITHOUT THE FOUNDATION of right and wrong and its carefully circumscribed paths, guilt loses its edge. It lacks a context for meaning. This does not mean that a person is not guilty; it means only that he has no internal standard for assessing his guiltiness. An adequate sense of moral and spiritual laws is necessary for a genuine awareness of guilt.

In his book, "Strength In Weakness" (pg.33), Andrew Comiskey writes,

"God called Adam and Eve to care for the garden together. The one condition of their reign was that they not partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17). Their freedom depended upon their living without the fruit of that tree. But disobedience enslaved their freedom to love.

"The pair's refusal to obey God became the basis for the broken image, the tendency fallen humanity possesses to act unnaturally. Sin wars against our native desire and capacity to uprightly love God and others.

"...While obedience frees people to be good gifts to God and others, sin demands concealment."

Enter shame.

a note to God

What would you like to say to God about the issue of guilt, and the role it has had in your life up until now?

part 2: the emotion of shame

The emotion of shame plays itself out through a deep fear of being known and the subsequent need to find some sort of façade... The person directs his/her energy toward preventing exposure of their real self to others.

"Washing and pressing my hair was a childhood trauma I still shiver over. I learned to hate it when the white kids at school would sniff the air and try to trace the source of the smoky smell while their own hair wafted in the breeze. I didn't hate them. I hated the part of us that was so deficient as to require the application of fire. I finally came to fake washing my hair. I'd just dip my two or three braids in water, maybe lather them up a little with soapsuds, then let Mama press my filthy, soap-scummy hair. But my hair, our hair, was only one of the many things to be ashamed of."

Debra J. Dickerson, An American Story, pg. 35

"Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

"When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.'"

Luke 7:36-39 (NIV)

stop for a moment. Take a deep breath, and then describe a time when you have felt ashamed. What specifically triggered this emotion?

X FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE, do you think a person can feel shame without some sense of perfection and imperfection? *Explain.*

SOMETHING about the experience of shame attacks one's sense of identity, especially in the eyes of another. A shamed person thinks, "It's not just that I am flawed. My deepest fear is that I will be exposed as a worthless person. Someone might 'see' me." Shame also is intimately connected to embarrassment; it threatens to reveal its prey as contemptible and unlovable. That's why Nietzsche labeled man as "the animal with the red cheeks."

X TAKE A MOMENT and briefly summarize the difference you see between the emotions of guilt and shame.

X WHICH BIBLICAL CONCEPT—guilt or shame—have you been most familiar with up to this point in time?

WHY do you think that is true?

CULTURAL NOTE: While all have some experience of both guilt and shame, the balance seems to have shifted in the U.S. culture. Countries like Japan, China, and Russia have long had a deep awareness of shame. The scale of guilt and shame has generally shifted over the past generation. So, while our older generations relate more to a guilt sense, the younger generations have been influenced more by shame.

IF YOU ARE over say, 35 (plus or minus about five), your sense of and experience of shame could be limited. You may not have been touched as greatly by influences that lead toward shame. Thus, this study may be more helpful for you in understanding or ministering to those younger than you in your family or sphere of influence.

a note to God

What would you like to say to God about the issue of shame, and the role it has had in your life up till now?

part 3: the effect of shame

"Shame is the raincoat of the soul, repelling the living water that would otherwise establish us as the beloved of God. It prevents us from receiving grace and truth where we need them most. Many factors contribute to shame, but ultimately the problem is that we resist the reality of the Father's love. We believe, falsely, that our sin and weakness disqualify us for receiving his love."

Andrew Comiskey, *Strength In Weakness*, pg. 69

THE SHAME EXPERIENCE is always a tri-fold experience with God, ourselves, and others. The effect, or power, of a shame experience is that it causes a "soul conclusion." One that sometimes is not conscious but has the potential to blind and overwhelm us depending on where that conclusion leads us. (See "Shame References" at the end of this study for 192 biblical references on shame.)

As stated earlier, *shame defies simple definition*, but let us assume there are two types of shame — one good and one bad.

LET'S TAKE SOME TIME to examine them both. First, *bad shame*.

"Bad shame...forms a 'shame coat,' causing us to conclude that we are unworthy of love and honor. The emotion of inferiority, bad shame expresses itself as 'an inner torment, a sickness of the soul' that divides us from self, others and God. Bad shame invites the soul to turn on itself rather than to welcome mercy. Bad shame bars us from life."

Andrew Comiskey, *Strength In Weakness*, pg. 70

the allegory of jerusalem — ezekiel 16

Ezekiel 16:1-23a is a powerful and significant passage. We suggest you read it through a couple of times before moving on.

¹*The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices and say, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says to Jerusalem: your ancestry and birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised.*

⁶*"Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, "Live!" I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew up and developed and became the most beautiful of jewels. Your breasts were formed and your hair grew, you were naked and bare.*

⁸*"Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign Lord, and you became mine.*

⁹*"I bathed you with water and washed the blood from you and put ointments on you. I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put leather sandals on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments. I adorned you with jewelry: I put bracelets on arms and a necklace around your neck, and I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. So you were adorned with gold and silver; your clothes were of fine linen and costly fabric and*

embroidered cloth. Your food was fine flour, honey and olive oil. You became very beautiful and rose to become a queen. And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign Lord.

¹⁵*“But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his. You took some of your garments to make gaudy high places, where you carried on your prostitution. Such things should not happen, nor should they ever occur. You also took the fine jewelry I gave you, the jewelry made from fine gold and silver, and you made for yourself male idols and engaged in prostitution with them. And you took your embroidered clothes to put on them, and you offered my oil and incense before them. Also the food I provided for you—the fine flour, olive oil and honey I gave you to eat—you offered as a fragrant incense before them. That is what happened, declares the Sovereign Lord.*

²⁰*“And you took your sons and daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough? You slaughtered my children and sacrificed them to the idols. In all your detestable practices and your prostitution you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, kicking about in your blood.*

²³*“Woe! Woe to you, declares the Sovereign Lord.”*

Ezekiel 16: 1-23a

X **WHAT** emotions are evident in this passage?

X **HOW** is shame portrayed in this passage?

X **IN VERSE 22** the passage indicates a key concept for spiritual journeys. **WHAT** is that concept and why is it important?

²²*In all your detestable practices and your prostitution you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, kicking about in your blood.*

Ezekiel 16:22

"For some, the roots of bad shame go deep. They reach back to early abuse and abandonment, to long-standing tendencies like addiction and homosexuality, even back to centuries-old expressions of cultural and ethnic shame. For such people, bad shame rests like a thick smog upon their souls, obscuring the light of healing that Christ shines upon them."

Andrew Comiskey, Strength In Weakness, pg. 70

"Fina looked up and saw the pain that Ross was in. Even though he tried to hide it, he wore it openly. She felt bad for whatever he was experiencing, but she really didn't know how to respond. Despite growing up in a house full of men, Fina had never truly seen their pain. Her brothers had either been cracking jokes or profiling; they were too cool to show any real emotions. Her father had wept when her brother died, and then again at her mother's funeral, but his was a silent sadness. He never really allowed her to feel his pain either."

Bertice Berry, Redemption Song, pg. 128

SHAME IS SOMETIMES LINKED with powerlessness in Scripture. That is, "Something is flawed with me and I'm powerless to change it." Have you ever experienced a sense of powerlessness amidst shame?

a note to God

What would you like to say to God about any bad shame that may be eating at your soul?

part 4: good shame

NOW let's consider the concept of **GOOD SHAME**, first, by looking at Adam and Eve in Genesis.

²⁵*The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*

³ ¹*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"*

²*The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"*

⁴*"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

⁶*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 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.*

⁸*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?"*

¹⁰*He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."*

Genesis 2:25-3:10 (NIV)

X AFTER EATING THE FRUIT of the tree of knowledge, Adam and Eve hid. How did Adam and Eve experience shame? What had changed and why was it necessary to make coverings of leaves to hide themselves?

X WHY do you think God made animal clothes to cover them? What is the symbolical significance?

NOTE: An animal had to be killed. This gives us a hint of blood redemption and God's grace. God knew Adam and Eve must cover their shame and provided this covering, although it was not His intention before.

X **IMAGINE** what would have happened to Adam and Eve if they were not given the capacity for feeling guilt and shame. Would they or the rest of the human race be better off without these emotions? Would we seek God apart from the awareness of separation from Himself and others that shame brings?

HAVE you felt ashamed in the last few days or weeks? If so, when and for what reason(s)?

WHAT "SOUL CONCLUSION" did this experience bring you to?

a note to God

What would you like to say to God about the "soul conclusion" you currently believe?

part 5: an encounter with Jesus

NOW let's look at three different women who encountered Jesus.

The Jewish woman caught in adultery,
The Samaritan woman at the well, and
The Syrophenician woman

READ THE FOLLOWING and put yourself into their stories.

NOTE: There were cultural differences between each of these three women. Remember, some cultures seem to feel guilt more than shame. Others feel shame more than guilt.

the jewish woman caught in adultery

¹But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷When they kept questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹At 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. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

¹¹"No one, sir," she said.

John 8: 1-11 (NIV)

the samaritan woman at the well

⁴Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹The 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.)

¹⁰Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

¹¹"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our Father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and his herds?"

¹³Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of living water welling up to eternal life."

¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

¹⁷"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

¹⁹"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

²¹Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth."

²⁵The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes he will explain everything to us."

²⁶Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

John 4: 4-26 (NIV)

the syrophenician woman

²⁴Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

²⁷"First let the children eat all that they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

²⁸"Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

²⁹Then He told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."

³⁰She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Mark 7:24-30 (NIV)

NOTE: *Dog* refers to little dogs or house pets, not outdoor scavengers. Jesus was saying that his first priority was to provide food for the children (teach his disciples), not to allow pets to interrupt the family meal.

X HOW did each of these women feel?

X **WHAT** did Jesus see in each individual and call her attention to?

X **WHY** did Jesus do this?

X **WHAT** was each woman's response?

X **WHAT** is the general orientation toward shame and guilt from your cultural heritage? *Explain.*

X **HOW** do you think the words of Jesus relate to shame and guilt in your culture?

LOOK UP "shame" in one or more Bible dictionaries. How does the Bible's use of the word compare with your culture's use of the word?

X SHAME IS NEVER PLEASANT by its very nature. But has God given us this strong emotion with a hidden blessing? Does shame have the possibility of drawing us to God for a permanent solution to its existence? *Explain.*

a note to God

WHAT would you like to say to God about the issue of shame and how it affects your cultural upbringing and/or peers?

part 6: breaking the power of shame

SOMETIMES we experience true guilt; sometimes we can experience false guilt feelings through accusations by others and by our own self-talk. In like fashion, we can experience shame that is often heaped on by others as well as ourselves. God does not want us to sear our consciences and feel no guilt or enter a state of shamelessness. He has given us both guilt and shame to draw us to Himself.

READ 2 Samuel 9:1-13. David purposes to show Mephibosheth the “Kindness of God.”

¹David asked, “Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul whom I can show kindness for Jonathan’s sake?”

²Now there was a servant of Saul’s household named Ziba. They called him to appear before David, and the king said to him, “Are you Ziba?”

“Your servant,” he replied.

³The king asked, “Is there no one still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show God’s kindness?”

Ziba answered the king, “There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet.”

⁴“Where is he?” the king asked.

Ziba answered, “He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar.”

⁵So King David had him brought from Lo Debar, from the house of Makir son of Ammiel.

⁶When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor.

David said, “Mephibosheth!”

“Your servant,” he replied.

⁷“Don’t be afraid,” David said to him, “for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.”

⁸Mephibosheth bowed down and said, “What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?”

⁹Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said to him, “I have given your master’s grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family. You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops, so that your master’s grandson may be provided for. And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table.” (Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.)

¹¹Then Ziba said to the king, “Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do.” So Mephibosheth ate at David’s table like one of the king’s sons.

¹²Mephibosheth had a young son named Mica, and all the members of Ziba’s household were servants of Mephibosheth. And Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king’s table, and he was crippled in both feet.

II Samuel 9: 1-13 (NIV)

X **HOW** do you think the kindness of God differs from the kindness of humans?

X DOES KINDNESS have an emotional element to it? *Explain.*

X WHAT emotions do you think Mephibosheth was feeling when he referred to himself a “dead dog” in verse 8?

X HOW does the kindness of God address Mephibosheth's emotional state?

“Trusting someone with who you are means that you truly open your life to someone, depending on that person's love to guide you, protect you or meet other needs you have. You will not be able to experience the love, guidance and protection of others until you are able to open your heart to receive that love, no matter how much love they have for you.

“...The process of revealing yourself can be difficult and painful, so it takes intention and humility. How you view yourself can have a powerful impact on how much you will trust others with the truth about yourself. The more insecure or negative you feel about yourself, the less you will want others to know what there is to know about you.

“...Trusting and believing what God says is true about you forms a solid foundation for self-revelation, enabling you to look past any negative self-stories to see God's perspective of you. 'Who you are' needs to be known by at least one other person (someone who will echo God's perspective) and in turn, many others, as it is the response of others to 'who you are' that is critical to your maturation and development.”

*Bill Thrall and Bruce McNicol,
Forming the High-Trust Culture, pg. 2-12*

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

⁸“Be self-controlled and alert. 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 your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

¹⁰“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.

I Peter 5:6-11 (NIV)

a note to God

WHAT would you like to say to God about showing kindness to others—especially the unlovely?

part 7: grace and mercy as God's solution for our shame

"Sin is the mark of Adam and Eve passed on to their descendants, including us. And sin has consequences. Shame, guilt, and fear of condemnation—that's the unholy trinity of the human price we've all paid for sin. And the only hope to remedy all three rests on the mercy of God."

*My Identity In Jesus: Living Out of Who God Says I Am
Jesus' Good News, Module 201*

the personification of shame

...**SHAME ADMITS** we are fundamentally flawed as human being – we are totally depraved, not partially depraved (see **Romans 3: 9-18**; "they are together become worthless" v. 12).

...**SHAME SEEKS** to hide that reality from others AND even ourselves.

...**SHAME CONCLUDES** we do not deserve what we long for – to be totally acceptable and loved.

the personification of grace and mercy

"An ENVIRONMENT OF GRACE [provides] a social context where people relate to each other with unmerited concern and favor. Though somewhat of a mystery, an environment of grace can actually be seen and felt. It generates certain 'artifacts' or outcomes. You will find genuine kindness, mercy, forgiveness, energy, honesty and people who take off their masks and let down their guard. Most of us know an environment of grace when we see it because people feel safe within it. People grow up and mature emotionally. They trust each other and begin to live authentically.

"...Grace means they don't get what they deserve...Grace transcends justice."

*Bill Thrall and Bruce McNicol,
Forming the High Trust Culture, pg. 1-12*

MERCY PROVIDES what we do not deserve. When a judge extends mercy in a court of law, he or she hopes to never see the previously condemned person again.

GOD'S MERCY is extended with an offer of intimacy. He deals with our unworthiness by giving us a new identity—as new creations—and He invites us to have intimate fellowship with Him as beloved children to the Father Who invites us to call Him *Abba*—Daddy.

paul's journey through shame to mercy

REFLECT ON Philippians 3:4-6.

*...⁴though I myself have reasons for such confidence.
If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.
Philippians 3:4-6 (NIV)*



ALSO CONSIDER Matthew 5:20.

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:20 (NIV)

CONSIDER Paul's self understanding recorded in these passages. **Write down your reflections on these passages.**
1 Corinthians 15:9,10; Ephesians 2: 7, 8; 1 Timothy 1:15,16

⁹For I am least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

1 Corinthians 15:9,10 (NIV)

...⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...

Ephesians 2:7, 8 (NIV)

¹⁵Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy, so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

I Timothy 1:15,16 (NIV)

X **WHAT** do you think was the Apostle Paul's primary emotional orientation before meeting Jesus?

X **WHY** do you think God took Paul on a spiritually transforming journey that started in self-righteousness as a young man and led to a "trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance" that he was the worst of all sinners?

X **WHAT** emotions do you think Paul experienced on this journey?

X **HOW** does Paul express both being weak and empowered?

⁷To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

II Corinthians 12:7-10 (NIV)

HOW well do you think you are in touch with your internal realities? What emotions do you experience as you reflect on who you are?

PAUL'S SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY seems to have led to a deep embracing of flawed human identity possibly through the emotion of shame and a deeper experience of God's mercy. Paul positions this journey as a walk into the mercy of God.

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

I Timothy 1:15, 16 (NIV)

a note to God

WHAT would you like to say to God about grace and mercy and its place in your life today?

in closing: the power of the cross

TO CLAIM healing and release from shame, there must be an effective solution. The very center of our belief is God's grace through Jesus' death and resurrection power!

Jesus, the "Suffering Servant" came to heal the sickness of our sin. He came to bear the weight of our infirmities and sorrows. How does this give you hope?

*⁴Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.
Isaiah 53:4 (NIV)*

X **WHAT** is the power of the cross?

¹Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

⁵Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;

Romans 8:1-6 (NIV)

READ Hebrews 9:8 through 22 where the writer confirms that the cross replaces in superiority the symbolic Old Testament system and sacrifices. Note especially verses 9,10,14,22.

⁸The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. ⁹This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

¹¹When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. ¹²He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

¹⁵For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

¹⁶In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, ¹⁷because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. ¹⁸This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. ¹⁹When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. ²⁰He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep." ²¹In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. ²²In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:8-22 (NIV)

OUR SHAME, even to the depth of our conscience, can be released, cleansed and redeemed at the foot of the cross.

personal reflection and application

The Ghost made a sound something between a sob and a snarl. "I wish I'd never been born," it said. "What are we born for?"

"For infinite happiness," said the Spirit. "You can step out into it at any moment..."

"But I tell you, they'll see me."

"An hour hence and you will not care. A day hence and you will laugh at it. Don't you remember on earth - there were things too hot to touch with your finger but you could drink them all right? Shame is like that. If you will accept it - if you will drink the cup to the bottom - you will find it very nourishing: but try to do anything else with it and it scalds."

"You really mean?..." said the Ghost and then paused.

"Yes," said the Spirit. "Come and try."

Almost... the Ghost ...obeyed. Certainly it had moved: but suddenly it cried out, "I can't. I tell you. I can't. For a moment, while you were talking, I almost thought...but when it comes to the point...You've no right to ask me to do a thing like that. It's disgusting. I should never forgive myself if I did. Never, never. And it's not fair. They ought to have warned us. I'd never have come. And now - please, please go away!"

C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

Is Lewis possibly right?

X DOES DRAINING THE CUP OF SHAME open the way to infinite happiness?

(Personal reflection) If so, how do you deal with your shame?

HOW has shame been harmful in your spiritual growth? Consider **Revelation 12:10-11**.

*“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:
‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Christ.
For the accuser of our brothers,
who accuses them before our God day and night,
has been hurled down.
They overcame him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
they did not love their lives so much
as to shrink from death.’”*

Revelation 12:10-11 (NIV)

HOW has shame been helpful to you in your spiritual growth?

X DO YOU FEEL that you deserve to be loved by God?

DO YOU FEEL WORTHY of God's love? *Explain.*

X IS A HOLY GOD obligated to love you? *Explain.*

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

¹¹In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1: 3-14 (NIV)

X WHY do you think God, by choice, loves and delights in you?

HOW SECURE do you feel in God's love? If you don't feel secure, why not?

"God's heart is always to redeem—to reach into the fire of our own making and by His mercy pull out the good. Only God can bring blessing where we have sown curse."

Paula Rinehart, Sex and the Soul of A Woman, pg. 119

HOW would you like to or how have you experienced God's mercy in your life?

REFLECT on **Hebrews 9:14**. To what extent have you allowed the blood of Christ to wash over your shame?

¹⁴How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Hebrews 9:14 (NIV)

X HOW can you continue to go deeper into God's mercy, through the doorway of shame into the "cleansing bath of truth?"

WHO can come alongside you in this journey of the soul? Who will you ask to commit to pray for you? Who can you ask to guide you?

AS GOD is breaking the power of shame in your own life, who may God be putting in your heart to gently love on their own journey?

"Relational, transforming trust is absolutely mandatory to fully embrace who you are in Christ. Without humility—trusting God and others with you—you will not live in the reality of who you really are. Your self-view will not be transformed; it will be informed by your delusions. With humility you have the opportunity to live in the light and clarity that an environment of grace [and truth] affords. The Spirit of God can form you according to your pre-existing spiritual DNA—your identity in Christ."

*Bill Thrall and Bruce McNicol,
Forming the High-Trust Culture, pg. A-6*

Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.

Ephesians 3:20 (NLT)

take some time to pray.

- ~ Be silent before Him.
- ~ Talk to God about the consequences of sins—yours and others’.
- ~ Talk about your capacity to receive His mercy and love.
- ~ Talk with Jesus about His taking all your sin, guilt, shame, and condemnation to the cross with Him. Thank him for the price He paid.
- ~ Ask Him for a deeper sense of His presence in ordinary life and a deeper sense of His mercy and love for you.

The unfailing love of the Lord never ends!
By his mercies we have been kept from complete destruction.
Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each day.

Lamentations 3:22-23, (NLT)

optional

We invite you to read the following poem and journal your thoughts and reactions, and how God may be speaking to your own soul convictions.

As you read through this poem you may or may not be able to relate to this one man's life experiences. But in today's world we are crossing paths with more and more people living in shame.

No matter what your life experience has been, we invite you to consider how you would create an environment of grace and truth for one living in shame, guiding them to the mercy of God in order that they may be released from the power of shame and receive love.

an ordinary man

What have I done?
I have not murdered or dismembered
 though I could in a fit
 of rage or
 the irrationality of fear.
I have not adulterated or romantically deceived
 though I am capable of
 sexual indiscrimination
 when the pains of
 loneliness
 pierce and twist through
 my soul.
I have not sinned
 any more than any
 ordinary man.

And even if I did these things,
 how wrong would
 that be?

Others before me have
 trodden the route of
 dehumanization
 for the sake of their
 humanity
 and the fulfillment of
 their lust.

And yet in silent, dark times
 upon my bed
 as I self-condemn
 my judgment of those
 whose sins are just as mine...
I judge their small lies to me

with the torment of a
whirlwind.
I condemn their
inconsiderateness in
friendships
with the torment of a
whirlwind.
I condemn their
inconsiderateness in
friendships
spawned by their own
fears as emotional
betrayal and reject them
before they abandon me.
I show contempt for their
plight to achieve
humaneness while I
struggle inwardly on a
similar endless spiral
fraught with
self-contempt.
I have not brutalized
any man's flesh and yet
with brutal words in
thoughts I have slain
many souls who have
crossed me - only my
powerless fear has
restrained me.
In all I have drowned
my soul by anesthetizing
my pains.
Even still I have sinned
no more than any
ordinary man.
What of these sins I bear?

My weight is not one
of guilt.
Yet deep within my soul,
my passions,
my sinews,
the burdens of shame
pierces daily
with irrational, chaotic
brutality:
For who I am -
For what I do -
For my world around me -
I am shame...
And all others too.

I am an ordinary man
with ordinary shame.

Shame
is burdensome

Shame
is constant

Shame
is my emotionally
honest reality.

I cannot deny it -
for it is true

I must not deny it -
or the final savage act
against my soul will
be complete at
the wickedness of my
own dehumanized
masculinity.

I will not deny it -
that price is too great even
for me.

I am shame
and so my emotional
integrity takes a final stand against
the death of my humanness.

I am shame
I am waste
I deserve to be unloved
I am unlovable
I deserve to be abandoned.

I would abandon me
yet that act would relieve
my burden and I don't
deserve such deceptive soul-comfort.

My shame
is your shame

Your shame
is mine.

I deserve to feel
deeply the collective
weight of it all –

No act of honor can
free me

No act of dishonor can
bind me more deeply
for I am -

and we are.
Come Holy God
whom I rage against
whom I reject
whom I fear
by whom I get my just
compensation.
Come, validate my shame -
my existence!

Treat me like waste
in your eternal
cycle of butchering
shame with justice -

Butcher me,
only You can give me
my justice!

And in Your presence
before my doom,
Let me hear the words
I long to hear
And so validate my
being and preserve my
integrity for eternity
with Your holy condemnation-
"You deserve all of this
For you truly are unlovable."
And with this merciful benediction
I gain a faint praise for what
my soul so longed for -
a breath of true humanness.
Thanks -
But what is this I feel -
a warm touch of a hand
upon my shoulder
a strong gentle voice
affirmingly saying -

"I agree,
you are waste
and I will make you
lovable.

"Your integrity is true
you are right
but
I will set you free from
shame, indignity
and clothe you with

soul-beauty beyond
imagination -
you will be lovable
in the presence of holiness -
and honored to the highest degree
—you will be My beloved
child.

"All this I offer you
not because of your
irresponsible integrity
which felt only a fraction
of your true shame before perfection—
not because of
restraint of your shame
which could indulge openly
with a portion of its
lust for power limited
only by time.

"All this I offer you
because of My seemingly
irrational choice of
love which conceives of
no boundaries but
for your sake does not
violate your shame with
the demand to be received.

"Come enter in,
enjoy, be free
in Jesus' Name.
Your waste-soul will change
to gold-beauty.

"Your waste-body will also
change—in time—through
the gate of death.
So be patient and wait and enjoy Me
and do not forget from where
you have come or to where
you're going
or else sin and shame will
bind you again and
strip you of joy.

"If this be done,
even then know that
the beauty of your soul
will not return to waste.
But a miserable soul
you'll be

smear'd with indecent scent.

"Enough—Come!
Enjoy My beauty—
The beauty of holiness—
The beauty of the
 gift Child Jesus
 and His glorious ascent!
 through the cross of shame!"

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shame references

VERSES on SHAME, shamed, shameful, shamefully, shameless, shamelessly, ashamed: (192)

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additional materials

- **THE ISSUE OF SHAME IN REACHING PEOPLE FOR CHRIST:** *When Guilt-Free Isn't Enough*, resource book

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