

INTRO

What thoughts or feelings come to mind we enter into this series on shame?

IDEA 1

Shame is the sense that we don't measure up; the feeling that there's something wrong and deficient in us that we need to hide. Ultimately, that we are not enough.

How does this definition of shame sit with you?

Read over the definitions below revealing the differences between shame and guilt and conviction and condemnation.

Guilt - what I did is wrong.

Guilt - I did something bad.

Shame - who I am is wrong.

Shame - I am bad.

Conviction leads us towards wanting to love better

Condemnation focuses on how unloveable we are

Conviction is gentle and restorative and specific

Condemnation is broad and accusatory and vague

Conviction is hard but offers a way out

Condemnation leads to confusion and leaves you trapped

How do those distinctions help you as you engage with the shame conversation?

We are designed to be in a perfect relationship with God and one another. We were created to co-create, flourish, and govern. This was the scene of the garden and all that it represents before sin and shame entered. From the beginning it was God's purpose for the world to be one of relationship and rule - us and Him cultivating a place of emerging beauty and joy. Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

How would you describe God's original design for us?

IDEA 2

The serpent's ultimate goal in the garden was to disrupt the relationship of God and humankind. Shame is the emotional weapon that evil uses to Corrupt our relationships with God and each other. And as a result:

Shame prompts concealing, shame prompts flight to some self-created world of safety. Shame builds walls. Shame creates the promotion, not of who we are, but who we think people want us to be. Shame keeps us from letting people know us. Shame is destructive and comes for our identity

What does hiding look like for you?

Then, we see here in the garden the foreshadowing of the whole narrative: Shame only increases God's pursuit of us! God's pursuit began in the garden. And He does the same with us: God pursues. God comes to find us. And upon finding them: He clothes them. The first step is to come into the light and meet Him where you are.

How have you experienced God's pursuit?

What could it look like to come into the light and meet Him where you are?

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

The fact that God clothed them draws our attention toward the Atonement, sacrifice, repentance, and forgiveness. That clothing, that covering, is a symbol of salvation. We read that they were clothed in "coats of skins". Where did those coats come from? God makes a sacrifice to create the skins to bring the covering for the capstone of His creation. That sacrificial system continues through the OT to bring covering of the people's sin and it culminates with the death of Jesus on the cross. His body and blood are our clothing - covering our sin - our shame - our nakedness.

When we come out of hiding and receive that covering - shame loses power.

Find some time this week to spend in gratitude for God's pursuit of you and the clothing of salvation that He has provided.

EXPERIENCING GOD TOGETHER

As part of the Experiencing God Together section for this series, we will engage with a spiritual practice, sometimes known as the Prayer of Examen. You are invited to pay attention to the places in your life where shame shows up because until we pay attention to where shame shows up, we will continue to be controlled by it. The goal of this is not to analyze or judge yourself for feeling shame, but to simply become aware of when you experience it throughout your week. As you do, this is an invitation to bring those moments before your loving Father. Our shame is transformed not only as we recognize it, but also in knowing we are seen and loved by God in the very moments when we feel like we are not enough.

We encourage Life Groups to take 5-10 minutes during group time for members to engage with the prompts below.

Spiritual Practice

Use the prompts below to help guide you through this spiritual practice. Go at your own pace. This could be done in as quick as 10 minutes or could take you 30 minutes or longer if you have time for it:

Become Aware of God's Presence

Get into a comfortable position and let your body relax. Slow down your breathing and do your best to quiet your mind. Ask God to make His presence known to you in this moment.

What Am I Grateful For?

Spend a few moments in gratitude, thanking God for one or two of the blessings, big or small, that you've received this week.

Review Your Week

Like a movie reel in your mind, take some time to replay moments from your week. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your thoughts. As you do, ask yourself the following questions:

- How has shame shown up in my life this week?

- What situations have occurred that have made me feel like "I am not enough"?

- Where was shame spoken over me? What did it sound like in my mind? Where did I feel it in my body?

Respond to God

In light of your review, take time to respond to God. You may find it helpful to ask Him some of the following questions:

- What is(are) the lie(s) I have come to believe about myself or about who You are because of shame?
- God, where have You been present in these moments of shame?
- What is the truth You desire to reveal to me now?

Before moving on to the final section of this spiritual practice, take a moment to ask your heavenly Father, “what is it about me that reflects Your beauty and goodness?”

As you listen for His response (a word, verse, picture, feeling, etc.), we invite you to gaze at the artwork on the following page. Allow the Holy Spirit to use this piece to reveal more of God’s heart toward you.



“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

Genesis 1:27

“The Hand of God” by Herbert Mandel

Looking Ahead

As you anticipate the events of this coming week, how is God inviting you to respond to the moments where shame might show up—to walk in the truth and love He’s revealed to you during this time and to partner with Him in creating a world of goodness and beauty?
