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WEEK 1 | DAY 1

SHAME'S THE NAME OF THE GAME

Recently, Abigail and I were shopping at Kohl's. We had a cartload of things and, well, I had consumed a great deal of water prior to shopping. Let's just say a grand emergency developed. We proceeded to the restroom. With Abigail in tow, I left the cart in the hallway, flew into the bathroom, and found a stall. Just as I sat down, I heard her little voice calmly ask, "Mommy, what are these funny things on the wall?" Then she paused and said, "Are we in the boy's bathroom?" As the words left her lips, I heard a low voice say, "Why yes, my dear, you are."

Panic flooded as I leapt to my feet and covered myself. With my face the color of tomatoes, I grabbed Abigail's hand, and we darted out the door. After our escape, Abigail firmly requested we leave immediately. "Can we just get out of here, Mommy? Like, right now?" she begged. Then she said it. Words I had never heard out of her tiny mouth: "I'm just so ashamed." Not embarrassed, but ashamed. We made a mistake and got caught. The natural response was to run and hide.

In the Introduction, we discussed Genesis 2:25–3:24. This passage contains the very first game of hide and seek recorded in the Bible. We discovered the man and woman felt no shame prior to this game (Genesis 2:25). There was no reason for it. There was no sin. No brokenness. Man and woman were one with God and had no reason to hide.

Then the serpent brings something new to the party. He enters the scene and begins spinning a web of deceit, and doubt begins to build in Eve's mind. She doesn't quite know what to do with it. She has no precedent for dealing with doubt. She flounders and eventually bites into the lie. She shares the lie with Adam, and together they are introduced to shame.

Shame is an interesting thing. Take a look at the dictionary.com definition of shame:

shame [sheym]: *noun*

1. The painful feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonorable, improper, ridiculous, etc., done by oneself or another.
2. Susceptibility to this feeling.
3. Disgrace, ignominy.
4. A fact or circumstance bringing disgrace or regret.¹

Yikes. Even the definition does something in your stomach. Shame likes to stay in secret places. It likes to lurk in the dark and spring up when no one else is around. It waits for well-timed attacks.

Here are some synonyms for shame:

confusion	contempt	guilt	humiliation	blot
remorse	scandal	stigma	abashment	irritation
discredit	dishonor	infamy	reproach	self-disgust

“Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.”²

READ GENESIS 2:25–3:8

Something changed in Adam and Eve, and they felt shame after their mistake.

How do you feel shame? How does it usually show up? What circumstances typically surround your shame?

1. Shame. Dictionary.com., Unabridged. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/shame>.

2. Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly* (New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2012), 69.

When Adam's and Eve's eyes were opened, their first reaction was to cover up what brought them shame. At first, they covered their nakedness. Then they heard God and they hid.

How do you hide?

From whom do you hide? From God? From others?

What circumstances cause you to hide most?

Take a look at the memory verse for this week:

**Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.
(Psalm 34:5)**

How does this truth change the way you view shame?

Take a few moments to ask God to reveal how you have allowed shame to keep you from His best for you. Ask Him to show you how to begin walking with your eyes on Him and not on your shame.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Lord Jesus, You have told me I do not have to live in shame. Although it follows me around pretty much daily, You have made a way for me to cast my shame on You. You paid a great price so I could live blamelessly and walk without shame. Thank You for releasing me from that burden. Help me not to wear garments of shame any longer. I want You to clothe me with Your righteousness. Amen.



WEEK 1 | DAY 2

CLOTHES OF GRACE

Yesterday we learned about shame. We learned definitions of shame and got real about how we feel shame and hide because of it. Today we continue digging into the first game of hide and seek.

Read Genesis 3:7–10 as paraphrased in The Message:

Immediately the two of them did “see what’s really going on”—saw themselves naked! They sewed fig leaves together as makeshift clothes for themselves. When they heard the sound of God strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, the Man and his Wife hid in the trees of the garden, hid from God. God called to the Man: “Where are you?” He said, “I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. And I hid.”

Read the text again and highlight or circle the words that pop off the page.

What words or phrases stand out? What do they show you? Why do they stand out?

Notice Adam and Eve’s reaction to hearing God: they hid. First, they tried to clothe themselves in a feeble attempt to cover their nakedness. Then when they heard God, they hid. Prior to the entrance of sin and shame, Adam and Eve welcomed God’s presence in the garden. Perhaps they even *delighted* in it. But things are different now. Their shame induces fear and a frantic response.

Knowing God is omniscient, it’s strange God would ask Adam where he was. God has infinite knowledge, so He obviously knew where Adam was hiding. But in His

grace and mercy, He gave Adam a chance to come clean. God allowed Adam the opportunity to confess his shame.

God does the same with Eve. When Adam tells God of her role in the fiasco, God turns to her and asks, “What is this you have done?” Eve confesses she ate from the tree.

The next part of the text (Genesis 3:14–19) lays out a bit of their future. They will carry consequences with them as a result of their choices. All three of them: the serpent, the woman, and the man. They each had a distinct role in the event and, as a result, they have distinct consequences.

And then something interesting happens:

The 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 3:21–24]

In the midst of this curse—this reminder of shame—God’s great love and mercy arise. He has seen the “makeshift” fig-leaf garments Adam and Eve are sporting, and He knows they just aren’t going to cut it for what’s ahead.

When I’ve read Genesis 3:22–24 in the past, I thought God was punishing Adam and Eve for their wrong choices by banishing them from the garden. I think there was something more happening.

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.” [Genesis 3:22]

God was extending breathtaking grace. Bountiful kindness. Beautiful mercy. He knew Adam and Eve were going to be living with the consequences of sin. If they were to take from the tree of life, there would be no end to their suffering. They would not be able to withstand the shame to come.

As a result, God banned them from the garden and placed a safety net around the tree, guaranteeing they would not endure a double dose of distress. He set a new boundary to protect them. But before they were exiled—which was for their own good—He created lasting clothing for them. He helped them cover their shame. He said nothing to them about how ridiculous the fig leaf attempt really was. He simply—in one verse—made garments of skin to clothe them and rid them of their shame.

The first sin. The first game of hide and seek. The first death to cover shame. The first act of great love, redemption, and grace.

How have you hidden from God when you have known He knows anyway?

How has God gently corrected you and protected you like Adam and Eve from your own shameful choices?

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Lord Jesus, I am beyond grateful for the amazing ways You have continually corrected me with grace and mercy. You have shown Your very great love to me. Thank You that Your love is long and high and wide and deep. May I learn more and more what it really looks like as I grow in the knowledge of Your grace. Cover me so I will not be covered in shame. Clothe me with Your righteousness. Amen.

WEEK 1 | DAY 3

COMING CLEAN

Honesty ranks high on my list of standards. I like people to tell me the truth, even when it's hard. But for someone who values honesty and genuine authenticity so much, I have a hard time telling the truth about myself. Coming clean stinks sometimes. Admitting I have sinned or wronged someone—even in the presence of people I know love me—brings anxiety.

One of the best choices Adam and Eve made after their debacle was coming clean before God. When He inquired what they had done, they faced a choice to tell God the truth or not. While blame shifted, they eventually spoke the truth. They knew God had their best interests in mind, so being straightforward about what had transpired didn't take much convincing.

One of my favorite stories of someone coming clean involves David. David took the long way around, but he eventually got there. Over the next two days we're going to look at David's big shaming moment, how he responded, and what it means for us.

Read 2 Samuel 11:1–27.

How did David try to hide from God and others? What different things did he do to hide?

Did this rid him of his shame? Why?

Read 2 Samuel 12:1–19.

How was David forced to come clean?

How might things have been different for David if he had come clean on his own?

How do you think it affected his relationship with God and others?

How have you acted like David in the past?

What do you need to bring to God as you come clean before Him in this present moment?

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Merciful Jesus, I know You see the dark places in my soul. I want to believe You love me anyway, but that's difficult for me. Teach me to trust You. Show me how to tell You the truth about what I've done outside of Your will for my life. Help me to know I am covered by grace. Help me to come clean. Amen.

WEEK 1 | DAY 4

CONFESSION CAN BE BEAUTIFUL

Today, we continue our study of David's response to shame. When we left David yesterday, he had lost his son as a result of his own sinful actions. He had fasted and prayed and pleaded with God to spare his son, but God did not. We pick up in 2 Samuel 12:20:

Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.

Around the time of this incident, David penned Psalm 51, one of the most beautiful confessional prayers in the Bible. David recognized his intense need for God to do the miraculous and take away his shame.

Today we'll walk through David's confessional prayer in Psalm 51 and pray through it ourselves. Our struggle with sin and shame is no different from David's. Maybe you feel as though your sin is greater than David's. *It isn't*. Maybe you feel as though it's not as great as David's. *It is*. Sin is separation from God, and there are not degrees of separation. Separation is separation. God views it the same. No matter what your sin is or my sin is, God sees it as sin. It all requires the same sacrifice from Jesus to make it right.

We want to close the existing gap between our sinful selves and our Holy Creator. Christ has built a bridge for us, and we are forgiven if we are found in Him. This moment, however, is about coming clean before Him. "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).³

3. Perhaps you have not yet surrendered your life to Christ. Romans 8:1 tells us, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus our Lord." In order to receive the covering for shame we need, we must confess Jesus as Lord and believe He is the Son of God. And then it is important for us to also be obedient to Him in baptism. If you are not yet a follower of Christ and need to make that decision, please take time to talk to someone about this very important decision. Christ is the bridge, but you must accept Him before you can walk across. He is waiting for you—waiting to show grace, mercy, and love.

Find a quiet place to read through Psalm 51 and answer the questions. Be honest.
Be brave. Say the things that need to be said. God already knows anyway.

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.

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.
—verses 1–6

God, I have rebelled by . . .

I have sinned by . . .

Wash me and cleanse me from . . .

Wash me so I will be whiter than snow. Wash away . . .

Create in me a clean, pure heart, O God. Rid my heart of . . .

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.
—verses 7–11

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.
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
—verses 12–15

I praise You, Jesus. I adore You because . . .

You are . . .

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.

May it please you to prosper Zion,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.
Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,
in burnt offerings offered whole;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.
—verses 16–19

Help me to bring you a broken spirit, a contrite heart. Break my spirit in the areas
of . . .

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Lord Jesus, thank You. Thank You for making me clean through Your blood sacrifice. You have reached beyond my boundaries and have expanded my idea of grace. Forgive me for the wrongs I have allowed to fester in my spirit. Restore to me the joy of loving You, following You, and living Your story. You are amazing, God. Amen.

WEEK 1 | DAY 5

NO MORE SHAME

One of the ways we learn God is for us is by engaging in His Word. Throughout this study, we will be engaging Scripture in a variety of ways. Taking the time to sit in the presence of God and His Word will produce transformative results in each of us. There is no substitute for listening to what the Holy Spirit has to say to us through the power of Scripture.

One way we will encounter Scripture will be through a four-part process. We will listen, linger, learn, and then live. Let's dig in.

Read through the given passage four times. Four different sets of questions will help you encounter the text in a fresh, new way and bring life to your bones. It's not about simply completing the repetition. It's about lingering and listening to see what needs to be learned and ultimately lived. We want to be changed by our time in God's Word.

Today's text is Psalm 34. Psalm 34:5 is our memory verse, so let's take a moment to discover its context.

LISTEN

Read Psalm 34. Sit quietly for a moment before you begin. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak and show you what the Lord wants for you in this passage. Mark words or phrases that stand out as you read.

**I will extol the Lord at all times;
his praise will always be on
my lips.**

**I will glory in the Lord;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.**

**Glorify the Lord with me;
let us exalt his name together.
I sought the Lord, and he
answered me;
he delivered me from all
my fears.**

Those who look to him are
radiant;
their faces are never covered
with shame.

This poor man called, and the
Lord heard him;

he saved him out of all his
troubles.

The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him,
and he delivers them.

Taste and see that the Lord is
good;

blessed is the one who takes
refuge in him.

Fear the Lord, you his holy
people,

for those who fear him lack
nothing.

The lions may grow weak and
hungry,

but those who seek the Lord
lack no good thing.

Come, my children, listen to me;

I will teach you the fear of the
Lord.

Whoever of you loves life
and desires to see many good
days,

keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from telling lies.

Turn from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.

The eyes of the Lord are on the
righteous,

and his ears are attentive to
their cry;

but the face of the Lord is against
those who do evil,

to blot out their name from the
earth.

The righteous cry out, and the
Lord hears them;

he delivers them from all their
troubles.

The Lord is close to the
brokenhearted

and saves those who are
crushed in spirit.

The righteous person may have
many troubles,

but the Lord delivers him from
them all;

he protects all his bones,
not one of them will be broken.

Evil will slay the wicked;

the foes of the righteous will be
condemned.

The Lord will rescue his servants;
no one who takes refuge in him
will be condemned.

LINGER

Read the passage again out loud. Are the same words or phrases you marked the first time still standing out? Write them down. How do these words or phrases apply to your life right now?

LEARN

As you read the text for a third time, ask yourself, “How is God inviting me to respond? What does He want me to be learning from this?” Write out what comes to mind.

LIVE

Read the passage one last time and answer these questions:

Why is God showing me this now?

What does this mean for my life?

What needs to change in my life?

How do I need to live differently?

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Lord Jesus, I'm crying out to You. I know You hear me even when it doesn't seem like You do. Be close. Don't crush my spirit. Deliver me and protect me when I am unable to protect myself. I want to taste and see that You are good. You deliver me from all my fears. Amen.

TRUTH, LIES, AND ACTION

Shame is ingrained in our thinking. We have carried it our entire lives. In order to begin thinking differently, we must spend some time redirecting our thoughts. This new thinking requires that we replace the lies with truth and take action.

At the end of each week, we are going to look at three very specific things:

TRUTH: A new way of looking at a truth from God's Word to replace the →

LIES: We want to name the lies we've believed and reclaim them with new truths to move us into→

ACTION: Because faith without works is dead (James 2:20), we want to be people of action. We will be looking today and tomorrow at specific action steps we can take to come out of hiding.

TRUTH: Our memory verse says, "*Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame*" (Psalm 34:5). TRUTH tells us if we are looking to Jesus, our faces are *never* covered with shame.

What truths did you discover this week?

LIES: The LIE tells us we will be covered with shame forever and we will carry it for the rest of our lives.

What lies did you discover this week?

ACTION: Over the next few days, consider one or more of these action steps to help you name your shame and come out of hiding:

- Find one trustworthy friend and share something you learned about yourself this week.
- Do you need to tell someone something, but you've been putting it off because of shame? Find the person and share what you've been withholding.
- Do you need to be honest with God about something? Are you trying to hide something from Him? Take some time today to share it with Him. Tell Him the truth and ask Him to cover and clothe you with His grace and mercy, just like He did with Adam and Eve.
- Do you need to set in place a new boundary (like God set for Adam and Eve in the garden) so you will not continue to sin? Of course, we cannot be perfect, but borders and accountability help limit our options sometimes. Ask God what your boundary should be. Commit to Him that boundary and share it with another person so you can be held accountable.

Write about your ACTION step below. Share why you chose it and what the results were.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Lord Jesus, You taught me so much this week. I want to come clean before You. I want to taste and see that You are good. I want to feel You covering me with Your grace—clothing me with Your love. Thank You for never giving up on me, even when I fail a thousand times. Amen.