

## **“How Can I Grow Through Shame?”**

*John 7:53-8:11*

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### **John 7:53-8:11**

*<sup>53</sup>They went each to his own house, <sup>1</sup>but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup>Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. <sup>3</sup>The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst <sup>4</sup>they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup>Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” <sup>6</sup>This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. <sup>7</sup>And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” <sup>8</sup>And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup>But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. <sup>10</sup>Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” <sup>11</sup>She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”*

### **Introduction**

We’ve been journeying through doing the Large Group series, “How can I grow?”. We’re at this final sermon for the large group series with “How Can I Grow Through Shame?” John 7:53 to 8:11. I wanted to show this video to get us to think about this topic of shame. Many people know Oprah Winfrey, and if you’re in academic circles, you might know Brené Brown who is an expert on the topic of shame. She’s done extensive research, given many talks, and has written several books. I wanted to show this video for two reasons: one, it’s a good video that gives us insight onto this topic because many of us we struggle with shame and we must know how to deal with it. Two, we need to analyze everything that we see and hear in culture from a biblical perspective because sometimes we can think what people say is more important than what God says. So today, we will analyze the topic of shame from a biblical perspective.

How can I grow through shame? This a challenging topic to discuss because it’s shaped by our past and it might be shaped by our culture. Some people say that Eastern culture is more shame-based, while Western culture is not shame-based. The assumption is that people who come from an Eastern culture do things so they or their community will not be shamed because it’s more of a communal culture. Since Western culture is very individualistic, it swings the other way and says, “Do not be ashamed of who you are. Be yourself.” Regardless of whatever culture that you grew up in, Western culture or Eastern culture, the one truth is that we all face shame.

What is shame? It’s the emotion you feel from the perceived wrong associated with you.

What is guilt? Guilt is the emotion you feel for the wrong you have done.

It’s different. Shame is what you feel for what the perceived wrong, but guilt is the feeling that you have about the wrong you have done. Guilt is a legal term. You are Guilty.

I didn't title this "How can I grow through guilt and shame?" because guilt is embedded within shame. Shame is all-encompassing. For some people, shame can be more crippling than guilt because in shame, you don't intentionally do wrong, but you feel the weight of it. I remember when I was in seventh grade, four foot eight, sixty-five pounds, I was going to my youth group event with a hundred students. Long story short, on accident, I took off my shirt in front of my whole youth group. After it, I felt ashamed, big time. For some of us, we feel this immense amount of shame as we live life.

## **I. Truths about shame**

As we look at these things, there are three different reasons why a person may feel shame and two kinds of shame.

### **A. I may feel shame when I have done wrong in the eyes of God [3]**

<sup>3</sup>*The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst*

When we look at this passage, a woman had been caught in adultery. According to Exodus 20:14, it says,<sup>14</sup> "You shall not commit adultery" because adultery is sin in the eyes of God. We are not to have sexual relations with anybody outside of a marriage covenant and that's what this woman was caught doing. When we think about it, all of us are like this woman because all of our sins are acts of adultery against God. Maybe you're not physically doing that, but spiritually, we are loving ourselves or other things more than loving God. Therefore, we're committing spiritual adultery. Sometimes, we feel shame because of the wrong that we've done in God's eyes. Did this woman feel shame? We don't know if she felt shame doing something wrong in the eyes of God, but we also don't always feel shame when we do wrong in the eyes of God.

### **B. I may feel shame when I have done wrong in the eyes of others [3-5]**

<sup>3</sup>*The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst* <sup>4</sup>*they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.*

<sup>5</sup>*Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women*

Placing her in front of all these people, her private sin now became public embarrassment and public humiliation. What is embarrassment? *Embarrassment is shame in front of others.* If you trip and fall, your first reaction is to look around and think, "did anybody see me?" If no one saw you, it's all good, but if people see you, hundreds of people see you, you feel embarrassed.

There are many opportunities to feel shame from different types of people. You can feel shame from people that are close to you, such as your parents. Maybe they've said to you, "Why'd you get this grade? Why did you do this?" or "Why didn't you do this well?" One of the most hurtful things to hear from a parent is "I'm ashamed that you're my child." I don't think any child should ever hear that. We can also feel shame from people that are not close to us. I remember when I was in fifth grade, I did something on accident in front of my classroom, and my teacher said, "Where were you when God passed out brains?" Still scarring. Today shaming has gone to a whole new level. With the development of the internet, public shaming has become a new ravaging beast. Before people would be shamed by signs, such as "kick me" being physically

placed on your back, but now these “kick me” signs are posted on the internet for all to see. The scary thing about the internet is that anybody can be publicly shamed and all can know about it. It’s dangerous when that shame begins to shape what you think about yourself.

### **C. I may feel shame when I have done wrong in my own eyes**

Sometimes people feel shame when they have not done anything wrong objectively, but in their own eyes, subjectively, they feel like they have. As I met with people in our church, counseled them, sometimes people feel completely unworthy of anybody’s love. As I hear them, sometimes they’re not breaking God’s standards, but it’s their own perceived standards. They are crucifying themselves on their own crosses. It’s scary when the shame turns into self-harm. Self-harm always begins with harm in the mind and harm in the heart.

For undergrads, maybe you feel this deep sense of shame when you’re not getting the grades you expected or maybe not formally serving the church. For those who have graduated, sometimes it’s not having life go the way you imagined it to be, or your life is not as great as other’s in your same age bracket, vocationally, relationally with others, or relationally with God, and you feel like there is something wrong with you. The shame you feel when you’ve done nothing wrong but have done wrong in your eyes is an extremely hard shame to deal with. This can lead to discouragement. *Discouragement is shame about past defeats* and if you think about it over and over and over again, discouragement can lead to depression.

*Self-consciousness is shame in present or potential performance.* You start to think that you can’t or won’t it. Shame shows itself in many ways, and we need to examine all this shame from a biblical perspective because the question is, should we ever rightfully feel shame for what we have or haven’t done? We need to correctly identify the shame that we feel.

### **D. There is self-centered shame**

Romans 1:16 – <sup>16</sup>*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*

*Being ashamed of your association with God* is self-centered shame. You love yourself more than you love God. Sometimes I preach at youth retreats and I talk about not being afraid to pray for your meals during the lunch time. Sometimes people would refuse to pray for their meal in front of people, so during their meal they drop their napkin and quickly say, “God, thank you for this food.”

*Feeling shame even though you have done nothing wrong in the eyes of God* is self-centered shame. Let’s say you tripped and fell and a lot of people saw you. You may feel a huge amount of shame, but you’ve done nothing wrong. On a more serious level, when you do your best, but it really did not turn out well, and you still condemn yourself, the condemnation reveals your self-centered heart. When you’ve done wrong in your eyes or other’s eyes, but in the eyes of God you have not done wrong and you still feel ashamed, that’s self-centeredness and self-condemnation. These memories can leave deep deep scars. We need to ask ourselves is my shame due to self-

centeredness or is my shame leading to more self-centeredness? But don't throw away all the shame that you face, because there is God-centered shame.

### **E. There is God-centered shame**

1 Peter 4:16 – <sup>16</sup>*Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.*

*Receiving shame from others because you are living for God.*

When the shame is God-centered, that shame is right. You don't shy away from that, but that shame is right. It shows itself in two ways. One way is that when you stand up and live for God and other people shame you. 1 Peter is saying do not feel ashamed because this is God-centered shame you're encountering. Sometimes people will shame you for how you spend your time with God – "What? you went to church on Friday and Sunday? You're a Jesus freak, what's wrong with you?" or with sometimes how you spend your life. "You're not taking that job because you want to serve other people? You want to serve the church? You're a fool." We don't run away from that shame, but we press into it - receiving shame from others because you're living for God.

*Feeling shame because you have done wrong in the eyes of God.*

When you have sinned before God and you feel that shame, you don't run away from it, but press into that shame that much more. You should feel that shame and feel sorry because that is a God-centered shame. This woman feeling shame for committing adultery is a God centered shame. Some people say that you need to avoid guilt and shame but guilt and shame are the bleeding of the heart, and if you're bleeding, you don't ignore it. See that you're bleeding and try to assess why. We need to assess our shame correctly and respond correctly.

## **II. Lies about shame**

Four lies that this world has to offer about guilt and shame.

### **A. I should never be ashamed of who I am 18:24**

Proverbs 3:35 – <sup>35</sup>*The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace.*

I am who I am, therefore, I should do whatever I want to do. We live in a society where acceptance is highly valued. It says "don't be ever ashamed of who you are, just display it over and over again." There are some correct components of this. We should never be ashamed of how God has created us, you should never be ashamed of your race, and you should never be ashamed of your gender, but don't be foolish.

Proverbs 3:35 – <sup>35</sup>*The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace.*

Foolish people will bear that shame, and what do foolish people do? Foolish people put secondary things first, and primary things second. Our race and our gender are important, but they are secondary identities. If you accepted Christ as your Lord and savior, your primary identity is that you're now a child of God, and you must keep primary things first. In the case of race, we should not shun that God has made us that way. God is not colorblind, nor should we be. We have every right to celebrate our race, but we also need to give grace to other people that are ignorant of race

issues. We can correct people that are ignorant and their understanding of race, gender, other social issues, but don't do it in a manner that will hinder your sharing of who God is. Sometimes we demonize people when they do not understand race issues. Remember this: ignorance of what God has done is a greater problem for humanity than ignorance over any social issue.

### **B. I should never be ashamed of what I do**

1 Corinthians 15:34 – <sup>34</sup>*Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.*

Just as society says “this is who I am, so be who you are”, society can also say “this is what I do.” In some cases, we should not be ashamed of what we're doing. It can be hard to get up in front of a lot of people and do what you're going to do because you feel like you're going to fail, but you still try to do it for the glory of God. In other cases, we should be ashamed of what we do. Sometimes people will say I will do whatever I want to do regardless of what others think and that is self-centered thinking and self-centered living.

1 Corinthians 15:34 says this, it's harsh and it's talking to the church of Corinth – <sup>34</sup>*Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning.* - because they were facing this- *For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.* Paul is trying to wake up that church in Corinth and saying don't live as an atheist having no knowledge of God, but also don't live as a practical atheist - as if God does not exist and keep sinning. If you just keep on doing whatever you're doing, you're going to bear shame. If you're sinning, try to fight it, don't keep on doing it, and don't embrace it. Examine what you're doing and who you're doing it for. Examine the motive of your heart. Billy Graham, said this, “Self-centered indulgence, pride, and a lack of shame over sin are now emblems of the American lifestyle.” “Be whoever you are, do whatever you want to do, and be proud of it” are now emblems of an American lifestyle but that is not an emblem of what God has for us.

### **C. I can overcome shame by loving myself more [6]**

<sup>6</sup>*This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.*

Berné Brown says “Shame is the inability to find worth and value within oneself.” Some people say what you must do is love yourself. We can love ourselves if we find ourselves sufficient of love, but we're insufficient. In this very passage, we see that the leaders are trying to find sufficiency within themselves. Although they were not facing shame at this point, we see how they're trying to prove themselves better than Christ but their self-sufficiency is not good enough. In John 8:6, they are testing him. They didn't really care about the act of adultery of this woman, but they said this to test Christ so they might have some charge to bring against Jesus and hold onto their position of authority. According to the Mosaic law, he needed to punish that sin but according to Roman law, you could not punish that sin on your own. In trying to prove Christ wrong, they were loving themselves more than loving God. Out of the grace of God in this passage, He allows them to see their sins as he says “*whoever is without sin let them throw the first stone*” and that's what God allows us to do too.

In 1 Corinthians 1:27 it says this—<sup>27</sup>*But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;* In the world, you're not wise enough to outwait God and you're not strong enough to outstrengthen God. If a person thinks that they are self-sufficient, they are delusional. A person may not feel shame because they have so much confidence in themselves, but sufficiency will run out one day. *Why do we need a Savior?* Because we're sinners. It is grace to see your shame, and it is grace to see that you cannot love yourself enough. We all need a Savior because we're not sufficient enough to save ourselves from our sin and shame.

#### **D. I can overcome shame by sharing with others more [9]**

<sup>9</sup>*But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.*

Berné Brown says “if we could share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive.” I think that's insightful and extremely helpful. Shame, when it's left all by itself, it just continues to grow, but can we find these types of people who will respond with our type of empathy and our type of understanding? When we try to find that solution within ourselves and within others, the problem may continue. It may just continue to grow and grow, because you are elevating human beings to do what only God can do himself. Berné Brown is helpful and I think we must think about what she's saying, but there are holes in her system. Sometimes we elevate experts' words over The Expert's Word. When we share with other people, we elevate their words over God's Word. Healing begins when we're all alone with Jesus. We see this in verse 9: <sup>9</sup>*But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones,-and this is beautiful- and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.* Being alone with Jesus is the perfect formula for healing. Sharing with others is important, but make sure their presence is leading you to God's presence because this woman is now in the perfect place to meet her shame. Is shame a bad thing? The world will say yes but John Calvin says this: “Only those who have learned well to be earnestly dissatisfied within themselves and to be confounded with the shame at the righteousness, understand the Christian gospel.” When you see your shame, you see your need for help, help that no human being can offer but help that only God can offer.

### **III. How can I grow through shame?**

And as we look at these five things, the first two is about us and God, three and four is about us and others, and the last one is a final thought. These points say “do not do this, but do this” because the response to shame is more holistic than what the world has to offer.

#### **A. Do not focus on what you have done, but focus on what Christ has done [10]**

It's true, we need to correctly identify our shame whether it's a self-centered shame or a God-centered shame. If it's a self-centered shame, see it but then see what Christ has done. Verse 10-<sup>10</sup>*Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”* This woman knows that she deserves to be condemned for her sin of adultery and she says, “No one Lord.” Then Jesus says, “Neither do I condemn you.” That's legal language. We said guilt is legal language and condemnation is legal language too. In the court of God, our sin and our shame

deserve condemnation, but Christ is able to say, “Neither do I condemn you”, and we’re going to celebrate this during passion week.

He was condemned on the cross for our sin and shame. The book of Hebrews talks about it much more. Hebrews 12:2 – *looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* You run the race in light of this. He’s able to say, “Neither do I condemn you”, because He was condemned for us. Despising shame means Christ despised all the shame that was put on the cross for our sins. Christ despised all the shame that we bear, and He became the most shameful person ever in eternity. He was beaten, He was mocked, He was denied, and He was despised. Christ became shame so we would not have to eternally bear the consequences for our sins. So now when you see your shame, look at it, but focus on what Christ has done because when God looks at those who trust in Him, He does not see your shame and your sin, He sees a child of God. Your deeds do not define you, but His deeds define you. You are not valuable in it of yourself, but we are valuable to God, not because of what we have done or not done, but because of what God has done for us on the cross. So, glance at your sin but gaze at the Savior.

### **B. Do not hide from God, but run to God [11]**

*<sup>11</sup>She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”*

Do not ignore your sin and shame. The solution is not to do whatever you want or be whoever you are because that’s hiding in your sin and shame. In Genesis chapter 3 verse 8, after Adam and Eve sinned, they hide. Genesis 3:8 – *And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*<sup>9</sup> But the Lord called out to the man and said where are you? They try to hide themselves in their sin and shame. But God says, “Where are you?” This is not in a physical sense, as if God doesn’t know, but this is in a relational sense. We should ask ourselves this question all the time because the scary thing in this passage is that there are many people physically with Jesus, but only one person relationally with Jesus, the adulterous woman. There are many people that come into the house of God physically, but how many people are in the house of God relationally with Jesus? I hope that whenever you’re in the house of God, you’re saying “God I want to be so close to you. I need your Word in my mind so I can know Your mind. I need your Word in my heart so I can know Your heart.” Do not hide from God but run to God. The beautiful thing is Jesus doesn’t stop there. He not only says in chapter 8 “Neither do I condemn you” but he says go and from now on sin no more. *<sup>11</sup>She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”* We are to leave different. Christ accepts us as we are but does not leave us as we are in our sin and shame, but He says be with me. Run to God and run with God with all your life. Don’t go back to your sin, don’t go back to your self-centeredness - fight it and keep on running to God and with God.

### **C. Do not be afraid to share with others, but use wisdom**

What Berné Brown says is true – shame cannot survive in the midst of empathy and the church needs to be a safe place where people can share our sin and shame. Sometimes it’s scary to share

because when we share we're wondering if they are even listening. We must learn how to listen carefully to people, not only their words but also to their heart. We have to learn to do exactly what Jesus did, not only as we listen but also as we share. Sometimes we want empathy and understanding from other people, but think through if they really trying to love you. Is their presence trying to lead you to God's presence? We need to be wise with what we share and when we share because people may not always be able to handle what we share. After Adam and Eve sinned, they realized that they were naked that's what's said in vGenesis 3:7 – *7Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.* And in Genesis 3:21, after God deals with the consequences of sin, it says – *21And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.* Even after sin, God's not saying "just be naked and do whatever you want. Just share whatever you want," but he clothed them. He clothed them because people are not able to handle complete transparency all the time. The goal of life is not transparency and you have to be wise with what you share. We have to be thinking about what other people are able to handle, so when you share, think about who you share with and what you're sharing. Use wisdom and know that the goal of accountability with others is integrity in accountability with God.

#### **D. Do not shame others, but share God with others [7]**

It is a travesty when people in the church are shamed and I apologize on behalf of our church if anybody has experienced that. As I was preparing this, I was repenting. People should not feel shamed by a self-centered shame. They should not feel shame that will lead them away from God. We have no right to shame others, because we all have sin. Jesus tells the people on that day, in John 8:7, *7And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."* We may feel like we have a right to shame other people because we see their sin, but what Jesus says in verse 7 is so insightful. "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone." Truthfully, if somebody were to follow you around with a camera 24/7, they could easily find a reason to shame you because we're not perfect.

Shaming others is a major problem today whether it's intentional or not, and this should not occur in families. Parents, we need to be extremely careful of shaming our children and this should also not occur in the church. Trolling others, roasting others can be fun, but it can be backhanded ways of shaming others. Gossiping and bullying has no place in the house of God. Instead of shaming others and tearing people down, we need to build people up. Instead of shaming others, see God's love for them and share about God with them. That's what Romans 1:16 is saying, *16For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* Do not be ashamed to share God with others because when you share God with others, instead of tearing them down, you're building them up in the grace of God. We should be thinking, "How can I share God with others in wisdom? How can I do that, even if they're going to shame me? how can I do that in wisdom?"

#### **E. Do not quit, but keep hoping in God**

We will struggle with guilt and shame on this side of eternity because we have sin in our hearts, but do not quit and do not abuse the shame, rather use the shame to draw closer to God. Max

Lucado said this insightful thing: God's guilt brings enough regret to change us; Satan's guilt brings enough regret to enslave us. Don't let him lock his shackles on you. Remember that if you're in Christ, you are free. "Go and from now on sin no more" doesn't mean you will never ever sin right now, but one day you won't sin anymore. One day sin and shame will not shackle you, but until then keep on going. Don't quit, but keep on hoping in God because God is not done with us yet.

See, before sin entered the world, Genesis 2:25 it says <sup>25</sup>*And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.* Before sin entered the world there was no shame, but when sin entered the world, there was shame. So what do we do in our struggle against sin? What's our hope? Romans 10:11, <sup>11</sup>*For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame."* For everyone who believes in Him, God will not be ashamed of you. Others may be ashamed of you, but God will not be ashamed of you because He says "you are my child." Although you struggle with your sin and your shame, know that God sees you and loves you. Keep on going to Him because one day sin will be removed like in Revelation 21:4 it says, <sup>4</sup>*He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.* Shame has an end date, and the grace of God will continue. Keep on growing in His grace until then. All the things of this broken world, including shame and guilt, will come to pass. Until then, keep on going and hoping in God. Keep on fighting self-centered shame and keep pressing into God-centered shame. Do not be ashamed of God and may we be okay with the temporary shame that we experience from other people. If people ridicule us for following Christ and loving God, may we be okay with that temporary shame so others will not experience eternal shame. When you experience that shame from other people as they ridicule you and your love for God, think about this: Christ experienced that on the cross for us. As you experience that, think about how much He loves you, and say "God I love you." All for the glory of God's name.

## **Conclusion**

As we end, I want to show a video. It's about Dwayne Wade, a basketball player who just played his last basketball game of his career. All throughout this year, at the end of the games, he would exchange basketball jerseys with some of the best basketball players. This is saying is "I want to have your jersey and in exchange I will give you mine. I'm going to give you my best and I want you to give your best." This week, a video emerged of some unexpected jersey exchanges with Dwayne Wade. Let's watch this. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjXKS6ONtLQ>

Instead of giving a jersey, they gave something less than a jersey, but they gave their best. When we see Christ on that day, what do we have to offer Christ? It's a lot of dirty hands, a lot of sin and shame. What does God still give to us? He gives us His best, His son clothed in righteousness, and he says "I'm going to take your sin and your shame. I'm going to make you mine." Shame, it's a real thing, but don't run away from God. Run to God, because He runs to us.