

## **5 - Shame: From Hiding to Healing** **Pastor Joe Oakley - GFC - 5/12/24**

We are in a sermon series entitled Greater Freedom. We've learned how to get free from sin through repentance, how to get healed of a broken heart and how to get healed from sorrow.

One of the things we identified as a cause of a broken heart is shame. In Psalm 69:20, David said:

***Their scorn and insults have broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy and for comforters, but I found none.***

Words play a big part in causing shame. So does childhood abuse or neglect, inability to reach overly high standards, or even our own bad choices, sinful behaviors, or misbeliefs.

On Mother's Day I normally preach a message on motherhood. I thought about doing that but as I studied on shame, I realized it would be a great sermon for today because many people like me grew up in shame-based families. Those families are based on control rather than grace. The opposite of grace is disgrace, which is a synonym of shame.

So, I'm preaching a message entitled Shame: From Hiding to Healing. This message is for all of us - for those who struggle with shame and for parents who need to learn how to parent with grace rather than shame.

When God originally created the world, He called everything He created good until Genesis 2:18 which says:

***The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."***

So God made woman for the man. Genesis 2:23-25 says:

***The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'Woman,' for she was taken out of Man."***

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Here we see the characteristics of grace-based families –

- They are God's provision for aloneness
- They are a safe place for us to be totally open and honest
- They are a place where we should feel no shame

Unfortunately, many people feel alone – even in their families! Many families value secrecy over openness and many shame-based rather than grace-based.

What caused that? God's created man and woman to be totally open, honest and exposed to Him and one another with no shame. But when sin entered the world, instantly Adam and Eve felt ashamed. They hid from God. They turned on each other. Families do the same things today.

Genesis 3:1-13 tells how Satan tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God by eating from the one tree God said not to eat. The result was-

***Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.***

***Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.***

***But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"***

***The man said, "The woman You put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."***

This passage shows us how the fall of man affected families.

- Sin caused us to move from innocence to shame.
- Sin caused us to move from unity to blame.
- Sin caused us to move from opening up to covering up.
- Sin caused Adam and Eve to hide from God and each other because of shame.

Shame still causes people to hide today. We're going to talk about overcoming shame – but first I want to define it.

Shame comes from Old English word meaning to cover or hide exposure.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary says that shame is –

A painful sensation caused by a consciousness of guilt or exposure

To feel reproached, disgraced, degraded, or dishonored

To be hurt by a consciousness of guilt, inferiority, failure or disappointment

Biblical definitions of shame – (about 20 Hebrew & Greek words)

- Pain – physical and/or spiritual from a wound, hurt or insult
- Confusion
- Blush – to look down
- Disgrace – reproach – contempt – dishonor – condemnation

- One Greek word for shame is entropē – which means to turn inward – to turn on oneself.

Put it all together for my definition of shame – Shame is a painful feeling of confusion, condemnation, worthlessness and despair which causes you to turn on yourself and to hide from God and others.

Let me differentiate between healthy shame and unhealthy shame. Healthy shame is a feeling of guilt due to sin. It is convicting and constructive because it shows us where we need to change. Many people do not have a healthy sense of shame. Jeremiah wrote about this in Jeremiah 6:15

***Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush.***

Healthy shame that is a result of conviction of sin drives us to God. On the other hand - unhealthy shame is false guilt or condemnation that is destructive – it drives us away from God. Unhealthy shame says:

I am worthless      I am a mistake    I am nothing  
I don't belong      I deserve to be abandoned

What are the sources of unhealthy shame? Ultimately it is Satan. But he usually shames us through relationships.

### **1- Family**

In some families shame is a powerful motivator. Guilt, condemnation and “shame on you” are heard constantly are heard constantly through shaming messages like:

- You should be ashamed of yourself!
- I can't believe you did that!
- What's wrong with you?
- You don't belong – why aren't you like everyone else in this family
- You're not loveable – when you do that, I don't love you – God won't
- You should not exist – I wish you had never been born –
- You're an accident, a mistake
- You're no good – you never do anything right –

Years ago we went camping at Joe Pool Lake. There was a little boy just learning to ride a bike. He said, “Look at me mom, I'm riding a bike. She responded – “You call that riding a bike? I call that barely keeping from falling down.”

If you were the victim of abusive words growing up, I'm sorry. If you speak any of these shaming words – please stop now! It just causes shame to be passed down from generation to generation.

I know in my own family – shame goes back for generations. I grew up as a shame-based person. Some of that was the result of growing up in a pastor's home where I constantly heard, "Don't do anything to hurt the ministry." Everything was appearance based. For example, we couldn't have playing cards at home or play pinball games because they gave the appearance of gambling. If we did anything slightly out of line – we were shamed.

As a result, I grew up hating any kind of negative attention. Anything I did or my family did that seemed to draw negative attention really bothered me. For example, if we were at church or a movie and our kids would make any noise, I would make Deb immediately take them out.

When shame reared its ugly head, I would get into this parental role with Deb if she did anything I thought was inappropriate in public. Understand, the things she did were not usually inappropriate – the issue was not her – the issue was my shame. I remember as a child my dad said, "I'm a failure because of this family."

Where'd he get that shame? As a grown man I took my family out to eat with my grandfather after a revival he preached. We went to Furr's cafeteria back when they had the all you can eat special going on. My son Jason and nephew Scott kept going back. My grandfather got embarrassed and said, "If you boys go back one more time, I'm going to pay again." He literally felt ashamed because he was concerned about appearance. The sins of the fathers just keep getting passed down.

## **2- Culture**

What's important in our culture? Looks, money, success, intelligence  
Anyone "different" is shamed – income, ethnicity, looks, Christians

## **3- Legalistic Churches**

Many people grow up in churches that shame people into outward conformance rather than love them into inward change.

## **4- Significant People**

These are usually authorities or peer groups. This is particularly painful. I can relate to it. When I was in school, the two main ways of discipline were swats and shame.

I'll never forget standing outside my classroom in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at N. Twin Lakes Elementary School in Hialeah, FL.

The school was overcrowded, so my class met in a portable building behind the school. We were lined up outside to go to lunch and I looked over at the building

and saw my reflection in the glass. I could not see in, but I started making faces at myself in the glass.

Soon, this teacher came out yelling about someone making faces at her class. I couldn't believe anyone would do that and looked around wondering who it was. Finally, they came over and got me. I declared my innocence, but she would not believe me because she saw me making faces.

She marched me into her classroom – the 5<sup>th</sup> grade – and ordered me to make faces at her class while they all laughed at me. Shame was imposed upon me that day and carried by me for years. After that I never wanted to stand out as different, even as a Christian.

I carried shame for years until a deliverance seminar revealed that day as the source of my shame. Fortunately, God did a work in me that gave me freedom over shame. I know firsthand the results of shame, which include

1. Fear
2. Embarrassment
3. Turning on Oneself – through neglect or abuse
4. Hiding – covering up – this is the main one

Shame says “I don't want to be seen for who I really am.” “If you really knew me, you would reject me.”

Shame looks for ways to hide, escape, cover up. Here's some common fig leaves, or cover ups:

Denial	Withdrawal	Isolation	Talkativeness	Defensiveness
Lying	Criticism	Anger	Perfectionism	Passivity
Blaming	Addictions	Acting superior / better than others		

None of these things really fix our problem. It's like putting a band aid on cancer. All you're doing is covering, not curing. All you're doing is hiding, not healing.

We've seen the causes and results of shame – so how do we heal it? How do we go from hiding to healing? We overcome shame by answering the same questions that God asked Adam and Eve. Genesis 3:8-10 says:

***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."***

**1- “Where are you?”**

God is omnipresent and omniscient – He knew where Adam was! Think about the ridiculousness of Adam and Eve trying to hide from God. It reminds me of when my grandchildren were young we played hide and seek. They would hide in my closet with their heads stuck under some clothes, but their whole bodies visible. I played along and pretended not to see them.

That's what it's like to hide from God – you can't! God knew where Adam was – He wanted Adam to realize where he was – that he had gone from a place of communion and closeness with God to a place of hiding in shame.

Likewise – God knows where you are – DO YOU?? The first key to healing shame is realizing where you are. Until you see and admit that you are hiding, you won't get any better.

We must deal with our denial by being real, open and honest with ourselves, God and others. This can be the hardest step – recognizing and admitting the problem.

Remember, you are as sick as you are secret!

True healing requires forgiveness, and forgiveness requires confession, and confession requires you to open up, not cover up! It requires you to get real, not conceal. Genesis 3:11-12 says:

***God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman You put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."***

## **2- “Who told you?”**

For Adam – there were only 4 options – God, Eve, himself or the serpent. For us, there are only the same 4 options, God, others, self or Satan.

God wants us to recognize the source of our shame. Shame always involves others. If there was no one else around, there would be no reason for shame.

It's important to know who was involved in shaming us in order to know how to deal with it. God will never shame you. That leaves only 3 options, others, self or Satan. And Satan usually operates through other people. Genesis 3:13 says:

***Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What have you done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."***

## **3- “What have you done?”**

God wants us to realize our condition and recognize its source. Then He wants us to take responsibility for our own actions.

We all have a tendency to blame shift. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed Satan. Adam actually blamed God.

We must take responsibility – not by placing blame or covering up – but by recognizing shaming voices and responding correctly.

How have you responded to the voices that have shamed you? Incorrect responses include to believe them, to accept them as truth, to hide or cover up. Instead you need to resist the lies of the enemy that shame you and replace them with the truth of God that will set you free!

So when you hear a voice saying you can't do anything right – instead, believe God's voice that says you can do all things through Christ!

When you hear a voice saying, "You're no good" – instead, believe God's voice that says you are the righteousness of God in Christ.

When you hear a voice saying you are not loveable - instead, believe God's voice that says nothing will separate you from the love of God.

When you hear a voice saying you don't belong or fit in anywhere - instead believe God's voice that says you belong to the family of God and you are a perfect fit for the body of Christ.

And when you hear a voice saying, "You'll never amount to anything" –believe God's voice that says He has plans for you that are good and not evil, plans to bless you not harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope!

The most important thing is knowing that everything we have done or will ever do is under the blood of Christ! He bore our sin and our shame. Think about this. Hebrews 9:22 says:

***Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.***

That's why Genesis 3:21 says:

***The Lord God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.***

Not only did the garments cover them, but to make garments of animal skin required the sacrifice of that animal. That meant there was the shedding of blood.

God showed us from the beginning that our cover ups are inadequate. We need something greater! We need the blood of Jesus!

Are you willing to give up your cover ups and be clothed in Christ! This takes faith because Romans 9:33 says:

***Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.***

This takes Abiding in Christ - 1 John 2:28 says:

***Abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.***

Abide means to continue – remain – don't give up and turn to other things like our cover ups and addictions.

Healing also involves the Family of God – James 5:16 says:

***Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.***

Since shame mainly comes through relationships, a big part of healing is in relationships – with God and others. Shame begins to be healed when you open up to others – when you move from hiding to healing.

To experience freedom from shame and be a grace-based family, we must be willing to give up our cover ups, our shame and our blame.

I remember when I preached on shame nearly 35 years ago. At the end, we had an altar call and an elderly lady came up. I knew her as a saintly woman who had raised her family, then went to Bible college and the mission field.

She told me that she had been molested by an uncle as a young girl and had felt shamed and dirty her whole life. We prayed and got her into a support group and she got freedom from shame!

Don't wait until you're 70 years old.  
 You can begin to overcome shame now!  
 You can go from hiding to healing in Jesus' name!