

Biblical S-words that can shape your life. “Shame”

1. Scriptures: Psalm 34 contains 6 of the 7 concepts we will be studying these next few weeks. Lets look at verses 1-5 today:

- 1 I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- 2 My soul will make its boast in the LORD; The humble will hear it and rejoice.
- 3 O magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt His name together.
- 4 I sought the LORD, and He answered me, And delivered me from all my fears.
- 5 They looked to Him and were radiant, And their faces will never be ashamed. (SHAME²)

Look at verse 5 for today’s word:

2. *“Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.”* Psalm 34:5
 - a. Contrast this with: *“O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens.”* Ezra 9:6
 - b. How does shame shape your life?
 - c. I find that shame is a deeply rooted emotion in all of our lives. We experience shame at a very early age and it influences our actions for the rest of our days.
3. What is shame?
 - a. It is found 101 times in the bible.
 - b. The basic dictionary definition is, **“a painful emotion aroused by recognition that one has failed to act, behave, or think in accordance with the standards which one accepts as good.”**
 - c. A couple of questions we ought to ask are:
 - i. Is shame a “bad” emotion?
 - ii. What is the role of shame in our lives?
 - iii. How does shame work?
4. Where does shame come from?
 - a. Is shame about “bad dog” or “shame on you”?
 - b. Popular Psychology says that with shame is something bad, and that we simply need to discard the emotion, and “be happy” with ourselves just the way we are.
 - i. There is no need to change, but rather, to just “accept” ourselves and call what we feel and do as normal.
 - ii. According to this line of thinking, when we do something that produces feelings of shame, we should simply ignore the feelings and keep on doing the behavior.
 - iii. The feeling is wrong but the actions are okay if you want them to be okay.
 - iv. According to this line of reasoning, certain emotions are “bad” and others are “good.”
 - v. But the bible doesn’t teach it that way.
 1. The bible doesn’t condemn our emotions, in fact, it celebrates the fact that we have a variety of them.
 - c. **We have to remember that emotions are not either good or bad, but are INFORMERS to our WILL.**
 - i. They alert us to things that are going on in our lives.
 - ii. The emotion of shame is there to alert us to something.

5. Let’s look at where it comes from:

- a. The first time mankind felt shame was in Genesis 3:1-6, when Satan tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden tree, and we see that he ensnared her with the power of pride. He said, *“if you eat of this tree, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”* (see v.5).
 - b. The implication of this statement is what we hear all of the time:
 - i. To be fulfilled and successful in life, you need to be more than you are.
 - ii. You are somehow deficient. The God who made you cannot be trusted to make you enough.
 - iii. The tree of life is insufficient for the task.
 - iv. What you need is something from the world --- (i.e. the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) to make you complete.
 - c. Three messages Adam & Eve took from Satan in the garden: (we still hear these messages)
 - i. **You are not enough;**
 - ii. **God is not enough to make you enough;**
 - iii. **You need something from the world (something from your own understanding) to make you enough.**
 - d. The first statement is true.
 - i. In ourselves we are not enough.
 1. We are created to live dependent on God.
 - ii. But Satan loves to mix lies with truth. The next two statements were pure lies.
 1. God alone is able to meet your needs and to make you all you need to be. He created you with a God-sized hole in your heart that only He can fill. He knew that from the day He created you.
 2. The world can never satisfy and meet your needs. And this is the problem. We try to fill that God-sized hole in our hearts with everything BUT God.
 - a. But that is another sermon.
 - e. Let’s look at Adam and Eve’s actions in the garden in the first incident of shame:
6. Genesis 3:7-11 *“Then the eyes of both of them were opened (Hebrew means “to see things you didn’t see before”), and they knew (realized, perceived) that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. 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. 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 He said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.” 11 And He said, “Who told you that you were naked?”*
- a. The very first effect of Adam and Eve’s sin in the garden was the emotion of shame.
 - i. It shows up by their awareness of their nakedness.
 - ii. They are exposed, not just physically, but emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.
 - iii. They immediately “cover up” and then when they hear God walking in the garden, they hide.
 1. Verse 10 says, *“I heard the sound of You in the garden and I was AFRAID because I was naked, so I hid myself.”*
 2. Hello? He was naked before he sinned and was never AFRAID.
 3. What changed?
 4. Nothing in his physical condition had changed...he was naked before and he was naked afterwards.
 5. What did change was their mental and spiritual condition.
 6. Being naked just as God made them and all the rest of His creation was wonderful before sin entered the scene.
 7. But now that their eyes were “open” and they see the world differently because their position of judgment and interpretation has changed...they are ashamed of being naked.

- a. In other words, they were suddenly ashamed of being just God's creation.
 - b. The effect of "opening their eyes" was that they hadn't just gained mental knowledge, but that they had moved from reliance upon God for decision making and guidance to their own rule of thumb, apart from and independently of God.
 - c. Their actions led them to begin to make rules and judgments about what was right and wrong apart from God, thus to somehow see their nakedness was wrong, when in fact it wasn't.
 - d. They were conscious that they had been stripped of the honor and glory that innocence and creation had given them, and the loss of these elements were the direct result of sin...and consciousness of sin produces shame.
- b. From this passage and from experience, I believe that shame has two roots:
- i. **Fear**
 1. Fear has a great deal to do with the feelings of shame.
 2. Adam and Eve experience fear...fear of exposure (to one another) and fear of consequences (from God).
 3. The description of nakedness implies exposure.
 - a. So they did what our children do when they fear our reaction...they hide.
 - b. Think about how the FEAR of someone looking at you differently, how the fear of the loss of image, fear of reprisal or judgment might affect you.
 4. **Illustration:** Describe my Smoking and drinking youth days...dad might catch us!
 - ii. **Failure**
 1. Failure is another key ingredient of shame.
 2. If you have ever failed a course in school (or some of you might have simply dreaded a "c") you know about the shame of failure.
 3. If you have ever lost your first job, you know the shame of failure.
 4. If you have ever filed for bankruptcy, you might know the shame of failure.
 5. However you define failure...when we encounter failure, we will experience the emotion of shame.
 - a. Why is that? What is it about failure that leads us to feel shame?
 - b. I believe that the shame of failure lies with falling short of the glory of God.
 - i. It has to do with coming up short of what we thought, or believed ourselves capable of.
 - ii. We discover we aren't god, and that we have come up short of perfection. The experience tells us that we are flawed.
 6. Most of the biblical examples of shame deal with humiliation and defeat, failure and dishonor,
 7. Have you ever failed?
 - a. Isn't the hardest part is to own up to the truth that you have failed.
 - b. There are some of you who have had to deal with the shame that is associated with the failure of a marriage.
 - c. That is a very painful experience.
 - d. Not just the pain of the broken relationship, but the pain of shame.
 - e. The pain of facing failure. The pain of others seeing your failure.
 - f. Acknowledging you failed.
 - g. That is an experience that defines shame in its most painful form.

8. Exposure of our failure. It is one thing to fail, it is another to be confronted with it.
 - a. Shame is the primary reason why we keep our hearts locked up tightly.
 - i. We know the truth about ourselves, and the truth is that we are not what we want to be.
 - ii. We are certainly not what we pretend to be.
 - b. Garrison Keillor has said, "We always have a backstage view of ourselves."
 - i. We only let the audience see the neatly arranged stage. But behind the curtain there are all kinds of things lying around: old failures, hurts, guilt, and lots of shame.
 - ii. It is also backstage that we go for those last minute make-ups before we walk in front of the curtain again.
 - iii. If someone were to walk behind the curtain or if, God forbid, the curtain were to fall, everyone would see the truth about your life. You would feel so ashamed
 - c. Dobson said something interesting, "we are not who we think we are, nor are we who others think we are, we are what we think others think we are."
 - d. Image is everything to us. Loss of image, whether before others or self brings a sense of shame.
 - e. The feeling of shame is not just about some bad thing we do or say but it is also about who we find out we are... we discover that we are somehow unacceptable.
 - i. Guys, if your wife found pornography on the computer and confronted you with it.
 1. What do you do? How do you react? What shame do you carry when you try to cover it up, explain it away or hide from the truth?
 2. Exposure of our sin and sinfulness is very painful to face.
 3. When we are caught in a lie or face a sin we have been rationalizing away for years it is a shame experience.
9. Remember that I said that the emotion of shame is actually an "informative" emotion...then what is it telling you when you experience it?
 - a. It is telling you that you have been believing a lie (about yourself, about God, about something).
 - b. This leads us to a very important point about shame that we need to come to grips with:
- iii. **Facing the truth is facing the shame.**
 1. The hardest part of life is admitting failure.
 2. The bible calls this confession.
 3. It is "agreeing with God" about what He says about you.
 4. His verdict, concerning you (and every human being) is that you have failed to live up to His perfect standard.
 - a. What we tend to do, however, is to simply TRY harder, to exercise our will and work more diligently to NOT FAIL again.
 - b. That isn't the path of faith. It is the path of works. And it is destined to fail
 5. But when we ask for and receive God's forgiveness, we find healing and wholeness.

6. Such as the woman caught in the act of adultery and brought to Jesus
 - a. She was caught, unclothed, brought out naked and ashamed before a crowd and before the perfectly righteous Son of God.
 - b. He doesn't look at her nakedness, but writes in the dirt, and finally looks her in the eyes and pronounces her forgiven.
7. God is not surprised by your failure and your sin!
 - a. He knew you needed a savior from before the day you were born!
 - b. There is no shame in acknowledging that you need a Savior.
 - c. There is no shame in releasing your shame and your sin and guilt!
 - d. Won't you acknowledge you need Jesus today? There is no condemnation with Him...only forgiveness and freedom and peace.

7. Breaking the POWER of Shame

a. Shame can only be broken when a person is broken.

- i. Broken of self, pride, and image.
- ii. When you are less concerned about what someone else, or even what you think about yourself than you are about how God sees you...you are entering freedom.

b. **Religious Shame Dogs** say, "Bad dog!"

- i. This is supposed to encourage people to try harder, but since they cannot meet the standard, it has the effect instead of forcing people to pretend they are not as bad as they are.
 1. They learn simply to look religious.
 2. They get kind of a pained expression on their faces.
 3. They learn all the right language.
 4. But it is just pietistic wrapping paper.
 5. They know the truth, and deep in their hearts they have internalized a lot of false guilt, which leaves them depressed, angry, and terrified that they will be discovered
 6. Shame is not just guilt about what we did, it is also about what we have failed to do.
 7. We have failed to be who we pretend to be.
- ii. One mistake that churches make today is to designate themselves as guilt-free zones.
 1. In these "progressive" churches, the message is that it doesn't matter how you live, as long as you are sincere.
 2. They advertise that you can sleep with whomever you choose, set your own ethical standards, or not have any standards at all as long as you are honest.
 3. "Just trust your instincts," we hear.
 4. My dog trusts his instincts, and you wouldn't believe what that gets him into.
- iii. Our job in the church is not to add guilt or to pretend there is no guilt.
 1. Our job is to point you to Jesus Christ, the only one who can absolve you of your true guilt.
 2. **Example:** Imagine going to your doctor for an annual routine exam that reveals you have a treatable disease. Do you really want that doctor to think, "But should I tell her? After all, the word "disease" sounds so judgmental. And who am I to make a judgment about something so natural? Maybe I should be gracious, and just keep my opinions to myself." No, that's not being gracious. Grace would be for your doctor to look you in the eye and say, "Something is wrong here, but I know how to heal you."

8. The Antidote for Shame: Grace!

- a. It is not the ministry of Jesus to beat us down with guilt, but to get us back on our feet.
 - b. **Grace doesn't remove only guilt but shame as well, because shame is about condemnation!**
 - 1. The bible promises, **"There is now no condemnation to those who are in Jesus Christ."** (Romans 8:1)
 - 2. It just doesn't matter what you have done.
 - a. What matters is what God has done for you.
 - b. Your responsibility is not to get free of your guilt, but to turn to Jesus.
 - c. He is the only one who can get you back on your feet.
 - c. Sin can be dealt with instantly, but overcoming the shame takes time.
 - d. A common notion is that one can get rid of shame by fighting against it.
 - i. However, arguing with Satan about our worth is self-defeating.
 - ii. We need to bring our shame out into the open, to be honest about our struggles, moral failings, etc.
 - iii. We combat shame by turning to God for our worth.
 - iv. **When we let God define us, the voices of shame in our lives lose their significance.**
 - e. It is by accepting God's grace that we turn shame around.
 - i. He doesn't wait until we get our act together to bless us.
 - ii. In the midst of our sin, God gives us a double portion (Isaiah 61:7).
 - iii. It is by first seeing God's love for us that we are led to repentance.
 - f. Nothing is more crippling to our souls, because covering our shame has become the agenda of life for most of us.
 - i. We are always locking up more and more doors, sealing off more and more rooms of the heart to prevent our true selves from being discovered.
 - ii. We think we are keeping the world out, but in fact we are keeping ourselves locked in.
 - iii. And we are not free.
 - g. This is why that in Jesus Christ, God has come looking for us.
 - i. Jesus walks right through locked doors to find us.
 - ii. He shows us his wounds from the cross, the marks of our forgiveness. Then he says, "Peace be with you."
9. This is because Jesus bore our shame.
- a. The Cross was a place of immense "shame" for Christ.
 - b. The cross was a place of a curse – and shame for Jews.
 - i. Pause for a moment with me and reflect on Jesus' willingness to bear our shame.
 - ii. He was willing to bear my shame. And yours
 - iii. Jesus endured hate as His single greatest act of love.
 - 1. That was my cross He died on.
 - 2. Those nails-they should have gone through my flesh.
 - 3. That cat of nine tails should have been wrapped around my body.
 - 4. I should have hung on the cross.
 - 5. He died in my place. He died for me.
 - 6. And He died for you.
 - iv. All the pain. All the suffering. All the shame. He did it all for you.
 - v. Jesus loves you and was willing to "hang on the tree" for you.
 - vi. Please let the impact of those words sink in.
 - vii. As undeserving as you are, Jesus still loves you.

10. What does a Christian who is free of shame look like?

- a. They are able to be more concerned with how God sees them than how anyone else sees them.
- b. They have stopped seeing themselves through their failures or successes (worldly value) and instead see themselves through God's eyes.
- c. They refuse to waver when they expose their faults and failings to others because they are free of the oppression of shame.
 - i. Shame doesn't define them anymore.
 - ii. Grace defines who they are.
- d. How about you?
 - i. What defines you? What are you afraid someone will find out about you? What lie have you built your life on? What fragile house of cards have you built that you fear a wind might knock over? Come to Christ. Christ alone. He is the one who bore your shame and offers grace...just as you are, without one plea, just as you are. Right now you can have your sin and shame removed because He bore your sin and shame on the cross.
 - ii. Come to Him today. Leave the past of performance, fear of failure, fear of discovery, fear of rejection, fear of exposure...leave it behind.

11. "They looked to Him (the Lord) and were radiant, and their faces will never be ashamed."

- a. Won't you look to Him today?

12. Twelve Steps: The key to the entire Twelve Step program lies in Step One: *We admitted we were powerless over [sin*

- a. Most people working the Twelve Steps have identified some compulsion that causes problems for themselves and others. Usually, they tried on their own to control the compulsive behavior but never attained more than short-term success. They used their will power against it, tried "mind over matter," and prayed for help. Nothing worked!
- b. where reason and will power fail, surrender and "seeing" will succeed. The spirit of Step One says, "You can't control your compulsion, so why not stop trying? See how many ways you have tried and failed. Quit pretending things aren't all that bad, that somehow you can make them better. In other words, be completely honest about what has happened in your life as a result of this compulsive behavior. Only then will you create a space within where the power of the Spirit can work."
- c. Step One presents a paradox, saying that the way to regain control of our life is to give up trying to control it - to throw in the towel and admit defeat. This doesn't make sense at first, but later it will be seen as the beginning of wisdom.
- d. A sinner, then, might be described as one whose life is ruled by selfishness. Using the addiction model, we would say that a sinner is one who is compulsively selfish - in other words, resistant to loving relationships. This selfish direction of the will demonstrates itself in specific acts of behavior, which we call personal sins. Most personal sins are not planned or calculated but happen compulsively when we feel threatened in some manner. However, these sins bring consequences to us and to others.
- e. Most of us, when reflecting on these questions, will find that our selfishness is directed toward one or more of five passions: **pleasure, power, status, security, and esteem**.
 - i. There are legitimate ways to meet these needs, but selfishness makes them the very centers of meaning and value.
 - ii. People can live for years selfishly pursuing pleasure, power, status, security, and esteem. In the end, however, none of these bring happiness, for they are conditional achievements - they can be taken away at any time. Empty though they are, the world holds them out as roads to human fulfillment, and many there are who travel these roads.
 - iii. Happily, God has created us in such a manner that we cannot find true happiness apart from living in the Spirit.
 - iv. The selfish road leads to broken relationships and inner emptiness. Whatever material gains we make are bracketed by anxiety, for the economy could fail and leave us with nothing.
 - v. Paradoxically, it is the unhappiness of our selfish ways that can lead us to commit our lives to God in earnest. Some, it seems, must go through considerable pain before coming around; others learn by observing the consequences of selfishness experienced by others. But none among us is immune to the insidious powers of sin, and none among us has escaped from selfish tendencies.

13. He bore my sorrows, he bore my shame. Jesus is His Name.

Thought provoking Questions:

How do you experience powerlessness in your life? What kinds of problems/situations have you tried to change again and again, but to no avail? What are the consequences to you? To others?

3. How do you experience selfishness in your life? How have you tried to reverse your selfish behavior? Have these strategies been successful?

4. If you could change anything about yourself, what would you most like to change? Why?