

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

March 3, 2024 "Above and Beyond: Elements of a Healthy Relationship. Dealing with Shame"

I Intro.

Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. We don't want you to miss out on anything. So, make sure you stay connected to keep informed. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Sunday.

It's March...we're nearly at Spring. Other than the pollen, we're ready aren't we? And we start a new series on relationships. This is ALL relationships. Friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, those people you run into on a regular basis. We have to admit that relationships can be messy at times. Because people are messy. And in order to have a genuine conversation about relationships, we have to admit we can also be messy. And it's our mess that can make relationships messy. So...

What have you experienced in relationships that can be 'messy'?

And the hard question. How have you contributed to the messiness of your relationships?

The scripture we used was kind of an unusual story that doesn't get preached much. And when you read it you'll understand why. Read **Genesis 9:18-29**.

What jumped out to you from this story?

Did anything in the story make you uncomfortable?

What do you believe drove Shem and Japheth to treat Noah like they did?

A short note about context and culture. We have to be careful about placing our experiences and context on this story. Ancient people had a very high view of respect, honor and dignity. Important values I believe we've lost. That's why what the two sons did was a bigger deal than it seems. We also have to address how this passage has been misused over the years to defend the oppression of people of color and support slavery. Some very misguided people in the past, and surprisingly still do, use the curse of Canaan through Ham to say he was the origin of black people. And since all generations were cursed, then it was okay to treat them lesser...as NOT people. This is an outright lie and misuse of scripture. And is an example of how careful we have to be in interpreting scripture. Let's talk about shame. Fun...huh? One of the most powerful driving forces in relationships. And how do we often react to shame? What is our response to protecting someone who is carrying around shame over some part of their life. Whether we're close to, or like that person, or not.

Truths of being good in a relationship with someone experiencing shame.

1. We all have moments where we just...mess up. And we mess up for a variety of reasons. Remember; relationships are messy because...people are messy. Noah was a righteous, good person, honored and chosen by God who just had a bad moment. But we need to remember we are not defined by our mistakes or our worst moments. We all can look back at things we said, did, and wish we chose differently in that moment. This is the power and message of grace. We don't sin, mess up, make poor choices because there is grace. But grace is fully available for when we do. This is where we can connect with others. You may not have done specifically what the other person has done. However, we all have done, said, things, we wish we could just take back, or change. You may not be able to understand, wrap your mind around what the other person has done. But you understand what it's like to mess up. And it's from this place, and the receiving of grace for ourselves, that we meet, approach, the person who is still in the middle of their mess.

2. How to be with someone stuck in shame.

We'll focus on Shem and Japheth. And two specific acts.

Shielding ourselves from knowing too much. We love details, the dirt, the tea. Whatever word you use to describe how another person messed up. We are a voyeuristic society. We love our celebrities. We love even more when we watch them crash and burn. And we want to see all the details. Truth is we don't need to know all the details. In relationships, when a person messes up, whether they know it or not, whether they feel remorse or not, they don't need anyone, including us, making sure they know what they did. As in the parable of the prodigal son, the father never read a list of all the things his younger son had done. Learn the honoring and dignifying skill of walking in backwards towards someone who has messed up. This act of empathy is what takes away shame.

Shielding them from potential shame from others. Not only do we love getting all the details about someone else's crash and burn. We also love making sure everyone knows what someone else did. In all of our relationships, whether the person has hurt us or not, we protect their honor and dignity by shielding them from being shamed by others. This is the act of actively protecting the honor and dignity of another. This combats the damage that shame does. We see this in the story of Jesus and the woman caught in the act of adultery. First she was caught in the act. That means they were outside the window, watching, not walking backwards so they couldn't see. They already broke the first rule. And now they were going to break the second rule. Making sure everyone else saw her shame. And what did Jesus do? He stood between her and the people who wanted to punish her for her behavior. In relationships we are called to be the one who puts the blanket on the person who messes up and hides their shame from others. And at times it will call us to stand between the person who messed up and the people who want to throw rocks at them. To call out their shame for everyone to see. Have hard talks in private. But in public we close our eyes, we cover their embarrassment, because that's what we're called to do.

III Challenge.

The topic of shame is a big one. Especially now, because we're growing in our understanding of its nature, what it does to us, and how to undo the horrible effects of shame. And in the relationships of all kinds we find ourselves in, it's good and helpful to know just how to minimize shame, and how to help people walk the path of navigating shame. **So, in your relationships. From your close ones to the distant ones, how can you do these things to help free others from the bondage of shame?**