

How To Overcome Shame

Series: How God Changes Our Attitudes

Have you ever felt shame?

Guilt typically focuses on a single act.

Shame focuses on who you are. “I am a bad person.”

What Does The Bible Say?

Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, 2 but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. 3 As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. 4 “Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?” 6 They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus

stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. (John 8:1–6 NLT)

Has anyone ever tried to trap you in your faith?

Why did they want to trap Jesus?

Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. 2 This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them! (Luke 15:1–2 NLT)

Do you hang out with the wrong crowd? I hope you do!

7 They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” 8 Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. 9 When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. (John 8:7–9 NLT)

You need to be reminded often of what you have done.

10 Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?”

11 “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.” (John 8:10–11 NLT)

You are not to condemn the person caught in sin, but you are also not to condone the sinful actions.

How Can You Obey?

17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:17 NLT)

17 When Jesus heard this, he told them, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.” (Mark 2:17 NLT)

Don’t judge sin, but diagnose sin.

When you judge sin, you isolate from the person caught in the sin.

When you diagnose sin, you try to help the person caught in the sin.

Please realize that God loves you regardless of what was done to you, or what you have ever done!

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Explore:

Today's Talking Theology segment comes from the book:

Powell, D. (2006). Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian

Apologetics (p. 153). Nashville, TN: Holman Reference and Thomas, R. L. (2000). How to choose a Bible version: an introductory guide to English translations (p. 61). Fearn, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications.

Explore:

And what of the man? Adultery requires two participants. What happened to him? Could it be that he slipped out?

The evidence leaves little doubt. It was a trap. She's been caught. But she'll soon see that she is not the catch—she's only the bait.

As for the woman? Why, she's immaterial. Merely a pawn in their game. Her future? It's unimportant. Her reputation? Who cares if it's ruined? She is a necessary, yet dispensable, part of their plan.

Lucado, M. (1999). He still moves stones. Nashville: Word Pub.

Explore:

Shame has its roots in Old English, where it meant to cover or hide an exposure. Covering up was a defense against being exposed, which wounded self-respect. Baldwin (1901) examined the historical development of shame and noted it involved two types of exposure. The more prominent occurred in situations in which the physical functions of elimination and sexuality were exposed. Sigmund Freud and Ruth Benedict viewed shame as a defense against exhibitionism and voyeurism; shame was an assurance that privacy would be maintained. When an individual says, “I feel ashamed,” the meaning may be, “I do not want to be seen.”

Timpe, R. L. (1999). Shame. In D. G. Benner & P. C. Hill (Eds.), *Baker encyclopedia of psychology & counseling* (2nd ed., p. 1114). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Explore:

Patriarchs threaten other men (and women) with their power, especially the power of shame. Although shame is only one of the three types of awareness that propel people into counseling—guilt and anxiety being the other two—shame is the leading propellant for men.

Culbertson, P. L. (1994). *Counseling men* (p. 24). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Explore:

They would not be likely to catch a couple in the “very act” of adultery; so we wonder if the man (who never was indicted!) was part of the scheme. The Law required that both guilty parties be stoned (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22) and not just the woman. It does seem suspicious that the man went free. The scribes and Pharisees handled the matter in a brutal fashion, even in the way they interrupted the Lord’s teaching and pushed the woman into the midst of the crowd.

The Jewish leaders, of course, were trying to pin Jesus on the horns of a dilemma. If He said, “Yes, the woman must be stoned!” then what would happen to His reputation as the “friend of publicans and sinners”? The common people would no doubt have abandoned Him and would never have accepted His gracious message of forgiveness.

But, if He said, “No, the woman should not be stoned!” then He was openly breaking the Law and subject to arrest. On more than one occasion, the religious leaders had tried to pit Jesus against Moses, and now they seemed to have the perfect challenge (see John 5:39–47; 6:32ff; 7:40ff).

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 319). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Explore:

Jesus does not immediately respond to them. Instead, He stoops down and begins to write or draw (Greek *katagrapho*) on the

ground. John gives no clue as to the nature of what Jesus writes. One supposes that he would supply this information if it were pertinent. The point seems to be that Jesus deliberately ignores them.

Stallings, J. W. (1989). *The Gospel of John*. (R. E. Picirilli, Ed.) (First Edition, pp. 124–125). Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications.

Explore:

The accusers are not seeking to debate the woman's guilt or innocence (no one questions her guilt). They are attempting to thrust Jesus into the role of the sentencing judge. They remind him of the ancient and powerful legal code, that Moses commanded us to stone such women. Presumably the reference is to Leviticus 20:10, which decreed death for both the man and the woman judged to be guilty of adultery. This text, however,

did not prescribe the method of execution. Their demand for stoning betrays their blood lust, for stoning was little more than mob lynching during this period of Roman occupation. The Roman overlords did not permit the Jews the legal authority for execution (John 18:31). Stoning was community justice at its worst, with too many executioners for the Romans to take effective action against the perpetrators.

The reader is left with a great deal of anticipation. What will Jesus do? Will he engage these legal scholars in an argument based on technicalities that might save the woman (such as a demand that her sex partner also be produced)? Will he break new legal ground that lessens this terrible penalty for adultery? Jesus does neither. Without a word he squats down and begins to write on the ground.

Bryant, B. H., & Krause, M. S. (1998). John (Jn 8:3–6). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

Explore:

8:9–11. Why do they leave? The text says that the words of Jesus cause the accusers to depart, in traditional order beginning with the oldest. The KJV includes the phrase, “being convicted by their own conscience,” implying that these were men who could still feel some shame for their actions. Whether or not this is the case, none of them rises to the moral challenge issued by Jesus. None of them makes a claim to sinlessness by launching the first death rock. They withdraw in silent procession, admitting no guilt and discarding their human pawn, the terrified woman, like roadside litter.

Bryant, B. H., & Krause, M. S. (1998). John (Jn 8:9–11). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

The new cast of characters includes only two: Jesus and the woman. The Scribes and Pharisees are gone. Apparently the crowd has gone. There seem to be no disciples around Jesus. Jesus asks, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” The prosecution has abandoned its case, in effect moving for dismissal by their walkout. But one possible threat remains for her: the Rabbi Jesus. Indeed, Jesus now assumes the role of judge that has been thrust upon him. But he “rules from the bench,” “neither do I condemn you.” This judicial sense is developed even more as he commands her to Go, as if to say “you are free to go.”

Does this mean that Jesus the Judge is winking at a serious sin, marital infidelity? Not at all. To “not be condemned” does not mean there is no guilt. In this case, it means the woman is indeed guilty, but has been forgiven. Jesus reminds the woman of this fact by his final words: leave your life of sin, perhaps more accurately translated, “sin no longer,” or even, “quit

sinning.” Jesus has not rescued her so that she could be more careful and not get caught the next time she engaged in illicit sex. He is asking for her to demonstrate a heart of repentance, for repentance and forgiveness always go hand in hand in the Bible (see Mark 1:4; Luke 17:3–4; Acts 2:38; 8:22).

Bryant, B. H., & Krause, M. S. (1998). John (Jn 8:9–11). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.

Question 1 of 5

In our society, what things bring shame on a person?

Question 2 of 5

How have you seen the church respond to a person living with shame?

Question 3 of 5

Why do you think the older people were the first to leave?

Question 4 of 5

How would you outline the steps of finding healing from shame?

Question 5 of 5

What steps can we take to help people deal with the shame they feel?