

Gospel Answers

The Gospel is the good news of our salvation: that we are no longer condemned by our sin, but forgiven through God's grace. Therefore, the Gospel provides the answer to our greatest need and question. Yet we have many other needs and questions. We desire answers to our pain, loneliness, shame, meaninglessness, and desire for justice. What about these questions? The Gospel is still the answer. It is the vastly better answer to our most fundamental questions and needs.

WEEK FOUR

The Gospel provides a better answer to our shame

Message Passage: Luke 22:54–62 & John 21:1-14
Small Group Passage: John 21:15-19

TEACHING AND VIDEO NOTES

The Gospel is the good news of our salvation: that we are no longer condemned by our sin, but forgiven through God's grace. Therefore, the Gospel provides the answer to our greatest need and question. Our need for a savior and our question about our relationship to God. But the Gospel doesn't just change our eternity; it transforms every part of our lives. When we fully understand the Gospel, we see its fruit everywhere in our lives. We can understand and see the fruit of the Gospel in our lives by answering four simple questions.

1. Who is God?
2. What has he done?
3. Who am I because of what he has done?
4. How should I live my life because of who I am?

The problem is we do this completely backward more often than not.

1. What am I experiencing?
2. Based on my experience, what is true of me?
3. Based on what is true of me, what has God done?

4. Who is God?[1]

In doing so, we let our experience shape our view of ourselves, the Gospel, and God. Rather than letting who God is and what Jesus has done shape how we see ourselves and the world around us. Nowhere do we get this order more backward than when we are experiencing shame.

THE QUESTION

What am I experiencing? Shame. I have done something that I am ashamed of. I feel worthless.

Based on my experience, what is true of me? Because I am ashamed of what I have done and I feel worthless, I am, in fact, worthless. Not only that, but I must also be unlovable and irredeemable.

Based on what is true of me, what has God done? Because I am not lovable and fallen short of expectations, God has rejected me altogether.

Who is God? God must be the God who loves the lovable but rejects the broken.

This is what we do on our own. No one had to teach us this. We drift towards this. No one in Scripture showed this more than Peter.

Background of the passage: As Jesus warned the disciples of his coming death, he also warned Peter that he would deny his dear friend and Rabbi three times the night he was betrayed (Matt 26:34). Peter responded to this accusation with denial and confidence in his loyalty. Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you (Matt 26:35)."

Luke 22:54–62 *Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance.* ***55*** *And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them.* ***56*** *A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him."* ***57*** *But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said.* ***58*** *A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied.* ***59*** *About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean."* ***60*** *Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed.*

[1] Jeff Vanderstelt, Gospel Fluency: Speaking the Truths of Jesus into the Everyday Stuff of Life (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 118-123

61 *The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.”* ***62*** *And he went outside and wept bitterly.*

What was Peter experiencing? Shame. “I have denied my dear friend Jesus. The man that I believe to be the Messiah, God himself, I denied even knowing Him in his moment of greatest need.” Peter felt like a coward.

Based on that experience, what did he believe about himself? Because of that shame, he felt unworthy to be counted among Jesus' disciples, much less in his inner circle. He felt unworthy of the Savior's love.

Based on what is true of himself, what has God done? Because I am not lovable and have fallen short of the expectation of an apostle, God is done with me. Surely God has washed his hands of me and would be pleased if I crawled back into the hole I came from.

Who is God? God must be the God who loves the lovable but rejects the broken, and I am the broken.

You see, our feeling of shame dictates our answer to what we do with our shame when we allow our feelings to inform our view of Christ and the Gospel. But there is good news. There is a better way, and Jesus was going to show Peter that better way.

THE GOSPEL ANSWER

John 21:1–3 *Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. b It happened this way:* ***2*** *Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together.* ***3*** *“I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.*

Why was Peter fishing? Well, it was what he knew, and he did need to make a living. But deep down, this was hiding. Jesus didn't teach and equip Peter for three years so he could go back to fishing. Yet that was all Peter felt qualified to do. He was ashamed. His answer to shame was to hide. Not all that different from how Adam and Eve responded to their sin and shame (Gen 3).

John 21:4-7 *Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.* ***5*** *He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered.* ***6*** *He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of*

the large number of fish. ***7*** *Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"* As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.

This is an appropriate response to shame. Run to Jesus! Swim. Crawl if you have to. But get yourself to the feet, shame and all.

John 21:8-9 *The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.* ***9*** *When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.* ***10*** *Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."* ***11*** *So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish,* ***13****, but even with so many the net was not torn.* ***12*** *Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.* ***13*** *Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.*

Jesus was having a meal with cowards. Each of these men had abandoned him in His moment of need. Peter's just happened to be prophesied, verbalized, and recorded. Yet this meal was no accident. Jesus sought the men out. He found them hiding in their shame. He even provided the enormous catch of fish. Why would he do that? Keep reading!

John 21:14 *This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.*

Jesus did not rise from the dead to befriend the righteous and fellowship with the saints. He rose from the dead to conquer sin and death on our behalf. The Gospel is not that God makes good people better. The Gospel is that he makes dead people alive. He makes condemned people redeemed.

You see, Peter, in his shame, had become aware of his sin. But sin was not unique to Peter. We are all dead in our sin apart from Jesus. Jesus died for Peter's sin, all of it. He knew he would deny Him, and He still went to the cross and paid the penalty for that denial and cowardice. That is the Gospel. That is the answer to our shame.

Small Group Transition: If we believe that the Gospel is the answer to our shame, how will that shape how we respond to our mistakes, especially our worst mistakes? Will we fully trust in God's mercy, knowing we can be forgiven, restored, and, in Peter's case, even reinstated?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Jesus did not love and seek out Peter because he had much to offer Jesus. It was the opposite. Jesus loved Peter and sought him out because He had much to offer Peter. The same is true for each of us. Why is that Truth foundational to our faith and relationship with Jesus?

   Leader Note: The Bible describes our relationship with God as a father-child relationship. As believers, we are God's children. We are not employees of God! But when we mess up, as Peter did, we sometimes act more like employees than Children. When an employee messes up, they fear they'll get fired. They have failed their boss, who was depending on them. God is not depending on us! Like a loving father, he desires for us to walk in obedience because he loves us and wants what is best for us. So when we mess up, as Peter did, approach God like a loving father, not an angry employer.

2. The feeling of shame is an emotion that, if left unchecked, can lead us to develop a warped view of Jesus and the Gospel. Are there any other emotions that, if left unchecked, can lead us to develop a faulty view of Jesus and what he has done for us?

3. Have you ever had a point in your life where you realized, like Peter did, that Jesus is the answer to our shame?

   Leader Note: This is a very personal question. It is okay if many in the group do not answer. The key is to foster a small-group culture that is a safe place for those who do answer honestly.

   Read: John 21:15-19

4. Vs Jesus asked John, “Do you love me?” three times, matching the number of times that Peter had denied Him. Why do you think Jesus did this?

   Leader Note: Jesus wasn't trying to shame Peter by alluding to his rejection. Jesus wasn't rubbing Peter's nose in the mistake. But Jesus wasn't going to pretend nothing had happened. That would be ignoring Peter’s sin. Jesus did not die on the cross to ignore our sin. He died on the cross to atone for our sin. The answer to our sin and shame is not to sweep it under the rug and try to forget it. The answer is to trust that Jesus' atoning sacrifice is sufficient.

5. Three times Jesus commanded Peter to “feed my lambs.” This shepherd language referred to the pastoral ministry Jesus trained Peter and the other apostles for over

three years. Put yourself in Peter' shoes. Why would these words have been such good news?

Leader Note: Many Christians, when they commit an egregious sin, believe the lie that they are tainted, ruined. Sure, they may still be forgiven and bound for heaven, but they believe they are now unusable because of what they have done. In their minds, they are a second, lower class of Christians. As part of this lower class, they are to stay on the sidelines and watch the professionals (those who have not disqualified themselves) serve, lead, and do ministry. This is a lie! While our actions affect our ability to serve, lead, and do ministry, Jesus showed Peter, and us, that we are not only forgiven but can also be restored and reinstated. We can serve, lead, and do ministry if we respond to sin with confession and repentance.

Vs 18-19 passage and question context: The historical record supporting Jesus's prophecy of Peter's death comes primarily from early church tradition rather than within the Biblical canon. Early church writers Hegesippus and Jerome documented that Peter was martyred by Nero in Rome [2], and John appears to have written his Gospel account after Peter's death, hinting at the form of execution Peter experienced.[3] By all accounts, Jesus' prediction about Peter death via crucifixion did in fact come to pass.

6. Vs 18-19. Peter did not always choose cowardice when his faith was challenged. Far from it! At the end of his life, Peter chose death over denying his savior. This fulfilled Jesus' prediction of the kind of death Peter would suffer later in life as a martyr for the faith. Like Peter, we are not doomed to make the same mistake again and again. But if we respond to sin with shame, we are almost guaranteed to repeat the same mistake. Why is that? Why does responding to sin with shame often lead to more sin?

   Leader Note: When we respond to sinful mistakes with shame, we tend to run away from God because we believe any number of falsehoods. We are unforgivable. We are worthless. We are unlovable. Shame leads us to do any number of things rather than the one thing we should do, which is to go to God in confession and repentance. Trusting that he is faithful to forgive, restore, and give us the strength, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in obedience.

PRAYER TIME

DISMISS

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[2] Johnnie Moore and Jerry Pattengale, The New Book of Christian Martyrs: The Heroes of Our Faith from the 1st Century to the 21st Century (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 2023), 13.
[3] Adam Hamilton, Simon Peter: Flawed but Faithful Disciple (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2018). [See here, here, here, here, here, here.]