



# Lesson 8: SHAME

By Ashley Grice

With contributions from Melody Hill

*Instead of your shame you will have a double portion and instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore, they will possess a double portion in their land. Everlasting joy will be theirs.*

Isaiah 61:7 (NASB)

**Opening Song:** You Are More – Tenth Avenue North

**In Review (Group Discussion):** How helpful did you find the illustration of the two hooks last week? Did you experience any breakthroughs in areas you previously struggled to forgive or receive forgiveness? Share with the group what you are comfortable telling.

**Group Activity:** Consider the following questions and use art supplies to depict your answer to one or both of them:

- What comes to mind when you think of shame?
- What feelings immediately rise to the surface?

## **Lesson:**

In preparation for this curriculum, I did an intense study on shame. This led me to realize my previous understanding of the topic was much too narrow. I discovered many pieces in my story that actually had already been healed. Yet, in the past, I would not have even recognized those places were riddled with shame. I used to confuse shame with guilt. But there are actually clear and important differences between them which we will define in a moment. Maybe you can relate to my discoveries. I invite you to consider this topic in a potentially different light than you are used to and examine this week if there are indications of shame in your own story that the Lord wants to heal.

In my recent studies, I gleaned a lot from Tim Fletcher, a Canadian pastor and counselor, founder and president of RE/ACT (Recovery Education for Addictions and Complex Trauma). I'll be using several quotes from him, and you can access his full lessons in the "Additional Resources" section at the end of this curriculum.

<sup>1</sup>Fletcher states, "Shame by definition is not an emotion. It is a core belief about yourself, about who you think you are. There will be emotions that go with that, that we call shame emotions, but at its core . . . shame is a [negative] belief about myself . . . I see myself as not having a lot of value, not being very loveable . . . not being good enough, and therefore, less than others around me."

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Fletcher, "Shame and Complex Trauma –Part 1 –What is Shame?" YouTube video, 56:01, FindingFreedomMedia, October 5, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOQTfqUdytc>, 3:17.

Shame begins with believing a lie about our identity. It can produce very powerful negative emotions like pain, fear, anxiety, insecurity, depression, self-hatred, anger, jealousy, envy, negativity, discontentment, and hopelessness. Shame is often developed when people experience the trauma (often in childhood) of abuse, abandonment, or consistently unmet needs. As a result of this trauma, they can develop damaging beliefs, such as, they aren't good enough, something is wrong with them, and the pain is their fault. Shame shapes how they relate to others and how they think about themselves long-term.

As I mentioned, there are differences between shame and guilt.

Guilt	Shame
is about my wrong actions, what I do.	is about identity, who I am.
is resolvable by self. Guilt creates a conscience about doing wrong, motivating me to correct unloving behavior and make amends.	is not resolvable by self. Shame says "I'm not good enough and there's nothing I can do about it."
can be false guilt—I feel guilty for someone else's actions or behaviors toward me or someone else.	is fed by false guilt, "Something bad happened, so I must be bad."

<sup>2</sup>Pastor Joby Martin from Church of Eleven22 in Jacksonville, Florida, confirms this by saying, "Sometimes we confuse our activity with our identity. I know that people walk into church week after week and bring a whole bunch of 'shame' because of your past, because of what you've done. But there is no place for shame in the gospel of Jesus Christ." Through the gospel, Jesus changes our identity from wretched to righteous. Shame disagrees with the truth of what Jesus says about who we are.

If you Google images of "shame" or "ashamed," the main depictions are of people hiding their faces or turning away from others. Shame causes us to want to hide. It started way back in the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sinned against God. At first, they rightly felt guilt for their sin. But then their perspective of themselves changed and turned to shame. Genesis 3:7-8 says, "At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt **shame** at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to **cover** themselves. . . . So they **hid** from the Lord God among the trees." (NLT, emphasis added)

Shame deeply affects our relationship with God, whether we realize it or not (as was the case in my own story). We may intellectually believe that God loves us, but deep down we don't think He really wants us or we assume He is holding something against us. We don't feel lovable so we can't accept love from God. We hide from Him emotionally and adopt a "works-based thinking" that we need to earn God's love. But with shame, God doesn't have a problem with us; we have a problem with us!

Let's look at how humans can sometimes see broken people vs. how God sees them.

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<sup>2</sup> Joby Martin, "Bridges - Week 5: Bridging Shame", 55:48, September 8, 2019, <https://www.coe22.com/sermons?sapurl=Lys5NjdkL2xiL21pLytudHJmcXM1P2JyYW5kaW5nPXRYdWUmZW1iZWQ9dHJ1ZQ>, 1:36.

## TRUE STORIES MINISTRIES

Matthew 12:9–21 (NIV) says, *Going on from that place, [Jesus] went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the*