

Overcoming Shame

From Dr. Val Gonzales' sermon, we learn that shame comes from faulty relationships. However Christ's redemption is perfect and we can be set free from our shame. Keep the sermon in mind when working through this discussion prompt!

1. Let's start by comparing shame and guilt and being clear about the differences between them. Define each and describe what we feel when we experience each.
2. Take some time to think through both some of the causes of shame and some of the out-workings (“tentacles”) of shame in peoples behaviour.
3. Give some examples of how you see shame being used in our daily lives (in the society in which we live).

In Genesis 3:6-12 we see shame enter creation as result of sin – compare 3:7 with 2:25. We also see its first “tentacles”; alienation from and avoidance of God (v10), of vulnerability (v7) and of each other (v12) as blame starts (v12) in the presence of fear and anxiety (v10). To overcome shame, we must first humbly accept it's presence. We then need to expose ourselves to validating and growth producing relationships and, in doing so, commit ourselves to three overlapping experiences:

- Vulnerability
 - Connectedness
 - Community
4. *Vulnerability*: why is it necessary that we make ourselves vulnerable? What can we learn from Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 2:25?
 5. *Connectedness*: reconciliation with God, ourselves and others. What can we learn from Psalm 51:4 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Psalm 8:4, and Matthew 5:23-24.
 6. *Community*: this is where we can be exposed to validating and growth producing relationships. What can we learn from Hebrews 12:1-2 and 1 Thessalonians 5:11? If there is time, read also John 13:34 & Romans 15:7. Do these verses include the word “change”?!
 7. Why is keeping our eyes on Christ so important for overcoming shame? Read Hebrews 12:2 again, and also Mark 1:9-11.

To close, read the whole of Psalm 8 and wonder once again at our Heavenly Father's great love for us!

Here are two key lists of information from the sermon in case you have not had chance to note them down. They can be helpful for questions 2 and 3 in particular:

Faulty relationships lead to shame and alienation. Faulty relationships result when/where:

- basic needs (food/water, clothing, shelter) are not met
- love is absent
- thought, expression, questioning and enquiry are not allowed
- there is abandonment (especially if absence is more than 3 months)
- there is divorce
- there is abuse in any form
- there is neglect
- there is frequent (negative) comparison with others
- there is addiction in any form
- a parent has an unresolved psychiatric issue
- the environment is too strict / demanding

Reactions (defences) to shame - "tentacles" of shame

- perfectionism / workaholism
- rigidity / legalism (the need to always be right, in the right)
- fear of rejection, an overwhelming need for approval
- frequent outbursts of anger
- blame
- alienation / profound loneliness
- anxiety
- addiction in any form
- depression