

HELP!

GOD'S HOPE FOR THE HURTING

Ashamed

INTRODUCTION

Genesis 2:15-25 & 3:1-7

We've all experienced shame. It happens after kids are told they'll never amount to anything. It happens after someone has premarital sex. It happens after an employee loses a job. It happens after a parent lashes out in anger. The reasons for shame are different for everyone, but we all experience it.

How do we define shame? It's "the deep sense that you are unacceptable because of something you did, something done to you, or something associated with you. You feel exposed and humiliated."¹

The root of all shame is either sin or having a wrong understanding of yourself. When we engage in sin, we feel shame. When someone sins against us, we feel shame. And when we don't understand our identity in Christ, we can feel shame just for being who we are.

This week we're taking a brief look at what the Bible teaches about shame. We'll see God's help for those caught in a spiral of shame.

OPEN IT

1. What's one thing you're at least a little embarrassed to admit you aren't very good at?

READ IT

Genesis 2:15-25 & 3:1-7

¹ Edward T. Welch, *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2012), 2.

STUDY IT

2. What did God tell Adam regarding what he could and couldn't eat in the Garden of Eden in verses 2:16-17?
3. How does Moses describe Adam & Eve in verse 2:25?
4. What did Eve do with the fruit in 3:6?
5. What happened in verse 3:7 when Adam & Eve ate the fruit?

APPLY IT

We Experience Shame When We Sin

The first sin was rooted in pride, which led to disobedience. The serpent tempted Eve by questioning what God commanded regarding what should be eaten. We see this in verse 3:1, where the serpent asks "Did God actually say?" He was leading Eve to believe that she knew better than God. And Eve fell into the serpent's trap.

6. How is all sin ultimately about us asking "Did God actually say?"

There were many consequences to Adam & Eve's sin. One was the shame they began to feel at their nakedness. Prior to their sin, they were able to enjoy one another in the Garden of Eden with no shame. After sinning, everything changed. This is when shame entered the world and it has been afflicting people ever since.

7. Describe how your relationship with God and others suffers when you sin and experience the shame associated with your sin.

We can praise God for the fact that He doesn't want us to remain in our shame. Instead, He offers us a path to freedom. Read 1 John 1:9.

8. What is God's way of helping us to move beyond the shame that comes from our sin?

We Experience Shame When Someone Sins Against Us

People experience shame not only because of their own sin, but because of the ways other people sin against them. This can be any number of things such as abuse, theft, harmful words, infidelity or abandonment. The person who is sinned against can feel ashamed even though they have done nothing wrong.

9. Describe a time in which something someone has done to you has left you feeling ashamed.

There are two main ways we can respond to those who have sinned against us in order to help us remove the stain of shame. One is to forgive. The other is to ask God to help us love them. Read Ephesians 4:32 and 1 Peter 4:8.

10. Describe the difficulty of forgiving and loving someone who has caused us to feel shame.

We Experience Shame When We Forget Our True Identity

We've already discussed the different reasons people feel shame. It may be because of something they've done. For example, they may lie, cheat, steal, or lust. People may also feel shame because of something done to them. For example, a person may feel shame because they were harshly criticized by a parent or abused by someone. But there's another reason people may feel shame. This happens when something about the person or their background leads them to experience shame. A child who wears glasses or is born into a poor family feels different and may experience shame. A person who is a member of a minority group may feel that they are not welcome in the wider society. A person with less education than the people around them or who lives in a low-income may feel shame. How can we move past this?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.

11. What does this verse say about your true identity?

12. What are some identities that you have, other than being in Christ, that may lead you to feel shame?

13. How does your identity in Christ change how you view these other identities?