
What are you ashamed of?

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Consider this: Shame can be false. False shame is entirely different from true shame. True shame comes when we are guilty of doing something we know is wrong. False shame can come from feeling defaced, or changed, as a result of another person sinning against us. A good example of this is when shame is felt after being victimized by another person. One example comes through sexual or spousal abuse or rape. Another example is seen when one verbally abuses and berates another person. Being wounded in these ways may well cause a felt sense of false shame.

When we are guilty of true shame God is willing and ready to forgive what we have done, as He desires to free us of all felt shame: That which comes due to harm we have caused ourselves and others within life. All shame, whether true or false, can be healed by bringing it to Jesus. He took on our sufferings through being wounded and nailed to the cross, giving His life so that we might be free--free of both true shame and false shame. “By His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4-6).

Many parents have said, “shame on you,” without their child having any idea of what these words mean. A child will feel bad about herself or himself when left with uncertainty, along with a parent’s scorn. They can feel unloved and unlovable when shamed by parents or other family members. However, when a child receives teaching from a parent who is showing love alongside displeasure, then the child learns certain behavior is wrong and needs to be corrected. This alleviates shame. Parents who discipline a child with truth that allows them to understand what is wanted and expected of them will most likely grow up with good self-esteem. On the other hand, a child who is blamed and shamed may well suffer from low self-esteem for the rest of their lives. They can easily think of themselves as “no damn good” or “not worthy of love.” Out of the goodness of His love, God can deliver us from such harm as we study Scripture, pray and perceive the great worth our Creator has instilled in us.

When it comes to true guilt, this is what God says about our sin (failures and harm done to self and others): God has compassion on us and “will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquity into the depths of the sea (Micah 18-19).” It is our heavenly Father’s love—and Jesus’ intercessions for us—that brings this amazing mercy to our souls.

So, if you are carrying shame, this is not God’s will for you. He has carried it for you through Jesus. When the shame strikes your heart, simply lift it up and in your mind’s eye see the cross as a reminder that God has taken it. Breathe it away and thank Jesus, your Savior. Give him praise for lifting your burden.

When we commit ourselves to the mercy and love of God, He shelters us, forming, shaping, and empowering us. As we read Scripture and learn more about this great Creator, who brought us into life, we learn how to live more and more surely by the following four principles. As these are premises that we know in our hearts to be right:

1. Respect for autonomy: This is the principle that a rational individual should be free in personal decision-making, without undue outside coercion.
2. Justice: The requirement for fair, moral, and impartial treatment of all persons.
3. Beneficence: The mandate to treat others in their best interest.
4. Nonmaleficence: “first do no harm” (as in the Hippocratic Oath).

These ethical principles have been—and ever are—honored in most instances by people throughout history regardless of the fact we hold varied religious beliefs and have widely different world views. It lies within our conscience to adhere to these four ethical principles. And when we cross them our conscience allows us to feel a pinch. I believe this speaks of the truth that we are “made in the likeness and image of God.” God is ever speaking to us, gently and quietly within our souls, wanting us to live by these high principles—wanting us to have love, respect, peace, and joy as the fulcrum of our lives. It is obvious within both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible that God does

not want us to live with shame, guilt, and self sorrow. Praise be to His name. For He has great goodness in store for all who seek truth and wisdom.

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Jeremiah 29: 11-14: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,’ declares the LORD, ‘and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,’ declares the LORD, ‘and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.’”

And:

Psalms 34:5: “Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.”