

Does Christianity Shame People?

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[0 : 0 0] So good to be with y'all. Thank y'all. I just want to say before I start, we also have been just so refreshed and continue to be refreshed, and even this morning, just being with y'all.

I know I don't know many of you just by faces, but I can't tell you just how sweet the fellowship is to just sing and be in here and hear y'all sing and feel your love. And look, I know we all live hard lives. We have hard things that are going on. I'm going to talk a little bit about that. But I just want to encourage you as a church. Like, I'm coming in from the outside, and I haven't been here in a long time. This is my first time in this building.

It's amazing. It's lovely. But I just want to encourage you all. Man, the Lord is with you. The Lord is with you. And one of the main ways He's with you is through these men and their wives who are leading you, and through the people who are serving you. I got to join in with just a little bit with the prayer that all the people serving this morning. I don't know if everybody knows. They get here and they pray for the time this morning. So it what an amazing church. What an amazing blessing. Thank you for having me. I'm excited to be here. So what I would like to speak about this morning, what is one thing that everyone who has lived long enough has, but no one ever wants? Among many things. I realized, I actually looked it up because I'm like, oh boy, that's going to be a lot of answers to that. It's shame.

Shame. It's shame. If anybody lives long enough and nobody wants that. You know, some of y'all may be into those reality cooking shows, and Gordon Ramsey has, I can't even remember how many now. Hell's Kitchen, Master Chef, even with the kids. I mean, he's harsh. Like, he's known for being harsh, right? And one of his marquee statements is, shame. And that's just his pronouncement. If he says that, that's all that's been said. That's it. You're done. Am I right? This is, this is, this is what we live with, isn't it? I want us to ask the questions this morning, and I'm only going to be able to touch on them. What is shame? Is it different from guilt? Is it different from embarrassment?

Where did it come from? Is that from God? Is that from us? From others? From culture? What does it do to us? What should it do to us? How does God deal with our shame? How does God mean for us to respond to it? So, these are the questions I want us to, to tackle. And as we tackle them, any question in life, and especially on something that this is, this big, this is a big topic. But in any question in life, you have to immediately ask your, yourself, well, what's my frame of reference for answering that question? You understand what I mean? Like, even at the simplest level, if we wanted to measure this, we have to have a frame of reference to measure the room. Everyone's like, well, yeah, duh. Or you can guess. See how well that works for you in your contracting business. Right? The frame of reference matters. Is it the culture around us? Is that our frame of reference? What the common expectations are? The de facto standards? Is it our personal experience? That's valid.

[3 : 2 3] It's what we feel. It's what we've lived. But is that the frame of reference for answering these questions? Or is it Scripture? Is it what God says? What God has said from all time? I submit to you, it's the last. And I know we all know that, that that's the church answer. But actually, don't we live by the other frames often? So, let's so go see what Scripture says. And let's go back to the very beginning and see what Scripture says.

I love this passage. The origins, how things should be, and how they are. That's kind of in my mind the subtitle of the book of Genesis. How things should be, and how they are. Let's jump in. It's a familiar story, but I'll jump into chapter 2, beginning with verse 15.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, you may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat. For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. Then the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him. Now hopping ahead to verse 22. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And now here is the particularly key verse for us this morning. Verse 25, and the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Every word in Scripture matters. And these are not passing words that we just read out of verse 25. It made me think of, you know, I do a lot of my consulting business.

I do a lot of Zoom meetings. And if I'm off video, what comes up is a thumbnail of my face. Or on your socials, you got your, it's a thumbnail what you put there, and hopefully it looks pretty good. It's representative of you in some way, right? I think verse 25 is a little bit of a thumbnail of how humankind is supposed to be. Obviously in the context of man and wife. It's, it's, it's a little thumbnail. It isn't a passing reference. Oh, they're innocents. And yes, there's that. But it's a, this is how things were supposed to be. Not ashamed. Not ashamed.

But of course, we know how things should be. It's not how they are, is it? And in the next chapter, the man and the woman who are the crown of God's creation, I skipped for time's sake through all of the readings. I encourage you to go read the whole thing. It's beautiful. They're the bearers of his very image together. They must be together to bear God's image. They're the recipients of his sole command. And I did read that. What happens? They're deceived and they're lured into a fateful choice that has reverberated down through the ages and the generations and affects us to this very day.

[7 : 02] Genesis chapter three, verse six. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. And she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate. Verse seven. Then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, where are you? And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. So we see here in this passage, the man and his wife took their own reason and their own perception of what is good and beautiful and true and they chose to live by that. They chose a frame of reference that was no longer what God had said and God had directed and they chose their own. And by making that choice, they opened the door to sin and to shame. Now, sin, goodness. Now that's a freighted word. It's a religious word. It's an offensive word. But I want us to deal with it. Sin is, it's just wrong. It's the simplest definition of it's wrong and it's universal, isn't it? Do we need to train anybody to do what's wrong? In any culture, at any time. Comes quite naturally. Anybody who has kids, we all know this is true.

You know, we got silly stories about that too. My son Tim was a, when he was young, he was a klepto. Sweetest face. Absolutely bold face. Brazen. Go into Ellie's room and he'd take her jewelry and he'd have it in his hand behind his back. Tim, did you take Ellie's jewelry? No, daddy.

Bold face. Tim, what do you have in your hand? Nothing, daddy. Pull the hand around, open his hand. There's all the jewelry. What's that, Tim? He's just looking at me smiling. Am I the only one that watches this kind of stuff? It's been many years for me. My kid, Tim is now in Nashville and lives by himself. So he's, and he is not stealing anymore. So praise the Lord for that, right?

My point is the sin opens the door and sin is, you know, we can't just brush this off culturally. Oh, we don't talk about sin. We need to move on. Listen, it, something's wrong with us, family.

Something is broken in us as humankind, personally, collectively, individually, all of it.

[10 : 24] That is sobering. And shame follows sin. So do you see that from the passage? Shame follows sin. What is it? What does it look like? Well, just looking at these words, and again, these are paradigmatic. Like, they establish. They're not just telling us what happened. They're telling us how things now are because of what has occurred. Shame is a massively discomforting self-consciousness because they adopted this new frame of reference, an infinitely narrow one compared to what God had created for them. Oh, we're going to decide what's good. Oh, that's, see how that decision works for you.

They, and it's exposure. It's vulnerability that's realized. When the text says their eyes were opened and they knew, it does not mean that they were dumb and now they're wiser. It's easy to read it that way, but that's not what it means. It means that they were exposed because of their choice.

Their frame of reference became, what I want to make me happy must be this, and I'm the best person to determine that. Who doesn't live by that mantra, even in this room? Do you see my point? It's the sin that leads to shame and the vulnerability that's realized. It says they knew they were naked. Now, later in the text, I won't read it, God says, who told you that? And I think that's a kind question from the Lord. He's like, that's not how I made things to be. So shame is vulnerability that's realized. It's, it leads them to hide. Did you see that in the text? There's an impulse to hide, that they make fig leaves. I mean, this, this is so, so commonly known even among non-Christians now that we refer to fig leaf as a way to foolishly try to cover oneself. It's a common cultural idiom.

They tried to hide, and clearly what's happening here is not just an instance of guilt, but a sickening sense of something that is irreparably wrong, something that is irrecoverably lost, something that is now unavoidably going to bear consequences. It is hard for me, as familiar as I am with these scriptures to read them. Isn't it? Because when we really own it, we realize, oh, and that set the standard for, for all of our human history. I was trying to think of illustrations of this sense of not just an instance, but an irreparable loss.

There's lots of little examples. When, when you're going to bed at night and your spouse says, you knew it was our anniversary today, right? That's an irreparable loss. You don't recover from that, right? You know, Jesse and I were talking this morning, he's like, yeah, you know that when you just think you're trying to be a faithful dad and you're angry and you need to correct your kids and you raise your voice because you're trying to correct them, you can't take the words back.

[13 : 40] That's an irreparable loss. The morning after a one night stand is an irreparable loss. I'll tell you a real one. I was a valet parking in my, I think it was college, and I scratched the car.

The full length of the driver's side of the car ending with breaking the side mirror. And, uh, do you understand the sickening feeling? Like you all know, like, and this was not a nice car.

It was a Buick. It was, no offense to anybody who has a Buick. I walked right into that one, didn't I? I'm so sorry. It was an old late model Buick. Nobody drives these anymore. This was a long time ago, okay?

Work with me. So I'm, I'm, I'm a kid. This is my job. I'm making no money and I need that money. And family, I'm ashamed to this day of what I did to that couple because I drove it back up to them and I opened both doors because there were four of them and allowed them to get in.

And then I shut the door and sent them off after they paid me. That's irreparable. I don't even know where they are. And I know it's a small thing, but it's not a small thing, family.

[15 : 04] Eating an apple is not a small thing. We make choices because we think this is going to make me happy. This is going to, I'm going to decide what's good and right and true. My frame of reference, and this is where shame comes from.

Not God, not our culture, not other people fundamentally. We'll get to that. They are part of it. But it comes from these choices. It comes from sin.

And we try, we try to cover ourselves, to deal with ourselves. We try to hide. We fear the vulnerability that results from our choices and our beliefs. Shame is tied to who we are.

Not just in our bodies. The scripture is showing us in bodily terms. But it's also our identities. It's our sense of self. And it's the reality of our human frailty.

Our limitations. As people. So shame, it does not come from God. It doesn't inherently come from others or our surrounding culture. Those, those contribute.

[16 : 07] Shame is a product of sin. We cannot understand shame without understanding sin. Nor can we face it without facing sin. So, back to these scriptures.

From the beginnings. We see that sin leads to shame. But we're not done with our origin story. We're not done by a long shot. Look again carefully.

The same verses, how God responds to our shame. Verse 8 of chapter 3. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees. So much irony there. They're hiding in the trees that he had given them. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, where are you?

Do you see in these few verses how God immediately responds to their shame? Do you see it?

[17 : 09] He seeks them out. He draws them out. Do you think God didn't actually know where they were? Do you think God didn't actually know what had already happened?

Do you think God didn't already actually feel the complete fullness of their rejection of him? He felt all of that more than we can imagine because he's infinite.

We're finite. And yet, and yet, where is he? He's walking in the garden looking for the man and his wife, calling out to them, why?

Why? Why? Because of his steadfast love. It is amazing to me that God in his godness, when he created man and woman, man knew this was going to happen.

And he did it anyway. I mean, does that blow your mind? Because it should. We cannot wrap our heads around a steadfast love like that.

[18 : 20] We can't wrap our heads around a loving presence like that. And that's what it is. God's response to their shame is loving presence. Oh, that's beautiful. I know you all didn't scratch somebody's car and send them off like I did.

And there's other examples that we had more time I could share. But you're thinking of your own. And I'm asking you to think of your own, and now think of God's loving presence, because that's his response to you.

Not, oh, I can't be around you. You go clean yourself up, and then we'll talk. That's not God. God is lovingly present. He's walking in the garden.

He's walking with you. He's calling to you, even right now. This is how he responds. The passage goes on.

This one's so rich, so I'm only touching on. He reads in verse 15 in the middle of pronouncing judgment, because he does pronounce some judgment. It's not absolute, which is amazing.

[19 : 24] But he pronounces judgment on the serpent, who's the deceiver. And he says, he shall bruise your head, speaking of the promised restorer who would be coming, and you shall bruise his heel, Genesis chapter 3, verse 15.

This is a powerful glimpse of the coming redemption and restoration. It's the first, it's almost like a proto-pron. I don't know what the theological term is. But it's like the most earliest stage seed version promise of Jesus.

It's promise of what's coming. And the rest of the Bible unpacks this. We don't have time this morning to go through the rest of the Bible. But I'll give you little snippets throughout. Isaiah in chapter 54 says this to God's people.

Fear not. So I'm speaking it to you. Again, hear these words from the Lord. Fear not, for you will not be ashamed. Be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced.

You will forget the shame of your youth. Can you imagine? The reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.

[20 : 27] For your maker is your husband. The Lord of hosts is his name. And the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer. The God of the whole earth he is called. It's amazing.

This is what's happening. This is what's going to happen. All the rest of human history, redemptive history, is God moving towards us with loving presence to fulfill his personal promise to make it right.

Not because we're doing what's right, but because of his steadfast love. Even the passage ends in Genesis, again, I can't get into all of it. Verse 21 says, What humility to just immediately come on side, I'm going to cover you.

He literally covered them. He literally responded, you chose to live in this, there's consequences for that, but I'm going to provide covering for you. That's beautiful. Just beautiful.

But he doesn't just cover the first sinners. He covers us too. He covers us too. All the way to Romans chapter 3.

[21 : 35] What does it say? For all. Family, what does all mean? All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

That, by definition, is a profound shame. But God deals with us and our shame the same way that he dealt with them, the first man and his wife, with loving presence, covering, coming alongside.

And, of course, we know on this side of the cross that ultimately Jesus fulfilled on all these promises. Jesus took on our flesh, and he took on our shame. Isaiah 50 of the many prophecies that talk about that.

The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious. I turned not backward. I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard.

I hid not my face from what? Disgrace and spitting. But the Lord God helps me, therefore I have not been disgraced. Therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

[22 : 43] This is Jesus' work on our behalf. He entrusted himself to God even as he was becoming sin. 1 Peter 2 describes he committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

He was reviled, but he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

By his wounds, you have been healed. Do you know the scripture talks about sin and shame in healing terms? It isn't just, I'm going to fix it, clean you up, and then I'll be embarrassed about you that I had to.

No, no, it's healing. It isn't just cover, make it okay in the interim. No, it's healing. It's restoration. That's what Jesus is about. And then the verse that Kirk opened us with this morning, Hebrews 12, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.

I think we often think of the cross, for those of us familiar with the Christian story and the gospel, Jesus died on the cross for my sins. Yes, he did. Do you know what a shame the cross was?

[24 : 07] In that culture and society, the biggest reason that the early disciples were mocked and dismissed was because they worshiped a God who died on the cross. He went to the worst form of execution that's ever been known and claimed that that was their main hope.

But he despised the shame. He took on our shame and knew that on the other end, it was the joy set before him. The scripture goes on. Kirk read the rest of it. Lovely. It's beautiful.

So these are just glimpses, family, of some of what God is doing throughout, not just scripture, but now in our lives, the way he's responding to shame.

You see how God responds to shame. It's not what we would expect. It's not what we would anticipate. It's not what we would think is right by our own little frame of reference, is it? Far from it.

We must grasp this because if you think of God in your frame of reference terms, you cannot understand this loving presence in the face of undeserving shame. And that's the first step to responding.

[25 : 12] We're going to come to that. Let me ask you a question. Is all shame bad? What? Should no one be ashamed at all?

Should I not be ashamed for what I did to that poor couple's car? Of course, we know the answer is yes. Absolutely. There's a place for it.

There is a place where it should be leading us somewhere. And in fact, there's many, many other scriptures. If you just enter shame on your Bible app on your phone, read some of the scriptures that pop up. Because some of them talk about it in very negative terms.

You will not be ashamed. We'll take it away, et cetera, et cetera. And other ones are like, you should be ashamed for how you're behaving. Psalms in particular. There are other examples. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5, wake up from your drunken stupor.

Do what is right and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. There is a place. So it sounds to me like, again, at a high level, shame, properly functioning, properly understood, ought to be pointing us to this loving God who is with his loving presence coming alongside us.

[26 : 29] If it's functioning correctly, it points us to him, not fig leaves hiding and covering. That's paralyzing. And too many of us live in a paralyzed state because we're staying with our little frames of reference instead of embracing what God has for us.

So I want us to see that it's not that all shame is bad and God's just wiping it all away. He's drawing us back to himself. The real answer is not get rid of my shame.

The real answer is be with God. Isn't that how he made it to be in the first place? Do you see how important those origins are? So shame that causes us to be appalled at sin, ours and others, to turn from it, is good because it points us to him.

But shame that causes us to hide and turn in on ourselves has become a tyrant and a trap. The more we hide, John Mark Comer says, the less we heal.

Let that stick, please. The more we hide, the less we heal. I want to ask you, who of you are gripped by shame?

[27 : 46] Who of you are gripped by shame? Some of us struggle under this tyranny. We struggle under the tyranny of our past. And I didn't talk about this enough before.

I want to touch on it now. Sin is not just sin when it's done by us. Sin is also sin when it's done to us by others.

And shame results from both. It also affects us just because of the cultural context that we're in. The broken world we live in. There's so many effects upon us.

And I want to acknowledge all of that. It's not just our own sin. It's everybody's. It's not just our own brokenness. It's everybody's. And the impact that has on us.

There is a profound sense of shame. As someone who has suffered through verbal or physical abuse, there is a sense of shame that comes with that.

[28 : 45] And it is not a fault-oriented one. Do you understand that? But it can still be a trap and a tyranny, can it not? We can be tyrannized by our traumas and our shames.

And that's not what that shame's for. No, it's still a pointer, family. It's still a pointer back to who is with us. What is his loving presence all about?

I want to ask the flip side of that question. Some of us may be gripped by shame. Are some of us sufficiently ashamed? Or are our sins too refined for that?

Do we see that we are broken and need healing and help? Did you come here this morning at all aware of how much you need help?

We can be awfully proud of our fig leaves, can't we? So I want to say this carefully.

[29 : 58] I know this is tentative ground. I know it is. But I'm trusting the Spirit of God to speak to your hearts. Because if some of you are captured in the grip of shame, sins done by you, sins of others done to you, whatever it is, and you're caught in that, there's an answer for you.

There's grace for you. There's loving presence to save you and come alongside you. But it's almost as bad, if not worse. If you are unashamed and unaware of your need and your help, because family, if you don't believe or even know you need help, how can you receive it?

The gospel then will not mean anything to you. What is the gospel? It's the good news that Jesus has come and taken on our flesh and our sin. He became sin for us to take on our shame, to take on the judgment that we deserve for the sins that we have done, to take on the brokenness of the world and restore it completely.

But if you don't see your need, that's not for you. You can't receive it. It's like going to the doctors. What's your problem? I'm a problem. Okay, good to see you. We'll see you next year.

Meanwhile, you got pancreatic cancer. Or you got something else going. Do you know what I mean? This is what I'm getting at. Like we have to acknowledge our need. We have to see that. So this is where I want us to land for this morning.

[31 : 25] How do we today lay claim to the freedom from sin and shame that God intends for us in His loving presence and that He has provided for us now through the work of Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit speaking to us, present with us, drawing us even in this very moment.

How? Acknowledge our needs, our sin, our shame, our own, and those of those around us. Acknowledge it honestly, humbly.

Guys, no more hiding. Can I beg you? Don't hide. Can I beg you?

Don't just pray to the Lord. Find someone who loves you. And there are many in this room. And share. And confess.

There's room for confession. I'm not talking about Roman Catholic. Go in a box and check here that I confess. I'm talking about vulnerability. Real vulnerability.

[32 : 31] Because why? The Scripture says that God gives grace to the humble. This is the means. He's not looking for us to check the box so that He can actually do it. No. It is the way we appropriate what He's given to us.

I know that exposure can be humbling. It's hard for me to tell you that valet story. I wish I didn't do that. Guys, it's embarrassing. I was a believer. It wasn't like I can point back and say, Oh, I hadn't given my life.

No, no. And there's more than that. There's so much we can be shamed for. Legitimately. But I'm asking you to acknowledge it.

Confess it. And then the Scriptures just say, and I won't read them for time. Just believe. This is amazing. Just believe in Jesus. Romans 10, 11. For the Scripture says, everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame.

There's the summary of the message. Romans 10, 11. You hear anything else? Romans 10, 11. Take that home. Camp on it. So good. Believe in Him. But we know, we know.

[33 : 33] Again, the rest of the Scriptures, and I'll let you read them on your own. Romans 5, Psalm 31. Believing is not just saying something in your head and not following through. Believing means you're going to act accordingly.

And I think part of that acting accordingly is confessing. It is obeying. It's doing His Word. That's why I included that psalm one. It's like, oh, that my ways may be steadfast. Psalm 119. There's tons of other places that says it.

In keeping your statutes, that's obedience. That's doing what God says. That's, I'm not going to do this little frame reference that the first man and his wife did. I'm coming back to yours. I'm going to do what you said.

Not as a way to earn His favor. He's already here. Loving presence. But as a way of embracing what He's provided for us. Do you see the difference in that? We acknowledge, we confess, we believe, we obey.

Because He is with us, then, then we shall not be put to shame. Family, let's stand. As we're going to continue, Jesse's going to lead us in communion.

[34 : 36] But I want to invite you, whatever the Lord's been speaking to your heart in these things, whatever is pricking you the most, can I just invite you in these moments that follow, do business with God.

Don't hide anymore. Speak to Him. Pray to Him. Find someone else before you leave this morning. And talk with Him. And embrace His loving presence for us.

It is amazing, is it not? Appreciate it. Thank you.