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How Do We Manage Guilt?

Proverbs 24:16: (NASB) *For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, but the wicked stumble in time of calamity.*

We have all made mistakes in our lives and we have all had the experience of carrying those mistakes with us often unnecessarily in the form of guilt. Left unattended, guilt like this can turn to shame which can bring darkness. How does a Christian overcome deep and debilitating guilt and shame over past mistakes? Because we are sinners, aren't we inherently guilty? Is guilt good? Is guilt bad? How does the Bible say we should deal with this? Stay with us!

Are guilt and shame the same?



Shame vs. guilt, Listening to Shame, Dr. Brené Brown, TED Talk

- *Shame drives two big tapes: "Never good enough" and if you can talk it out of that one, "who do you think you are?" The thing to understand about shame is it's not guilt. Shame is a focus on self and guilt is a focus on behavior. Shame is: "I am bad." Guilt is: "I did something bad." How many of you, if you did something that was hurtful to me, would be willing to say, "I'm sorry, I made a mistake." How many of you would be willing to say that? Guilt: "I'm sorry, I made a mistake." Shame: "I'm sorry, I AM a mistake." There is a huge difference between shame and guilt. And here's what you need to know: Shame is highly, highly correlated with addiction, depression, violence, aggression, bullying, suicide, eating disorders. And here's what you need to know even more: Guilt is inversely correlated with those things.*

If we never let guilt go, shame can define who we have become. Guilt can keep you from many of the negative behaviors associated with shame.

(One example of a word used in the Old Testament)

Shame: Strongs #7036: shame, disgrace, dishonor, ignominy

Proverbs 13:18: (NASB) *Poverty and **shame** will come to him who neglects discipline, but he who regards reproof will be honored.*

Back in those days if you were not disciplined, it would show in comparison to the rest of society. In our society...not so much, unfortunately.

(One example of a word used in the New Testament) **Shame:** #152 1) the confusion of one who is ashamed of anything, sense of shame 2) ignominy, disgrace, dishonor

Philippians 3:19: (NASB) *...whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their **shame**, who set their minds on earthly things.*

This is talking about those posing as Christians but who are in it for the personal glory. Their shame is presented before God. We will soon talk about when shame can be a good thing. But when it is not teaching us something, we need to learn how to get rid of it, because it can be destructive.



Introduction, Twisted Grief, a guest on Dr. Phil

- *I can remember in slow motion, all of a sudden to see this tip of a brown thing on the front of my car. It was a little boy, his name was Stewart. Stewart hit the front of my car, hit the top of my car, hit my windshield, shattered my windshield and then flew behind me.*

Here is the "Recipe for Guilt and Shame-Free Living." Ingredient #1: Conviction.

Psalms 51:1-3: Our first ingredient is to have a **RIGHTEOUS CONVICTION OF HEART and MIND** towards that which we have done. This is the *opposite* of the denial we so often experience.

Can shame or guilt be a good thing?

A reason for guilt and shame: **Acts 9:1-5:** Guilt and shame can help us identify where we should and should not go.



Healthy shame is a boundary, John Bradshaw

- *Healthy shame is knowing your limits. In fact, healthy shame is the feeling that lets me know that I'm limited. If I don't have healthy shame, I'm not in touch with my basic boundary. A boundary is, "no, don't come any closer." That's like when a country has to guard its borders. A person without boundaries is like a country without any borders.*

A healthy shame should stop us in our tracks, whether it is by observation or personal experience. It can be a boundary to prevent us from going where we should not go.

A reaction to the guilt and shame: 1 Corinthians 15:9-11: The Apostle Paul had to live with what he had done in his past while persecuting Christians. He took his human emotion of worthlessness and realized that God gave him this privilege anyway. Through the grace of God, he used his guilt and shame to move him forward. It did not paralyze him.

 **Graphic result, *Twisted Grief, a guest on Dr. Phil***

- I immediately slammed on the brakes and can remember thinking to myself, what just happened? I got out of my car and ran over to Stewart. I remember as I walked up to him the whole lower half of his body had been turned around. His arms were just kind of out to the side and his face was bruised. I remember yelling at him to get up.*

Grief, anxiety, sorrow...can you image all of the emotions one would feel in this circumstance? There is no hope in that moment, so guilt and shame begin their work. It can begin a good work or a nasty, debilitating work.

Ingredient #2: Confession. Psalms 51:4-5

Enter the forgiving power through Jesus: 1 John 1:7-9: Not only are we forgiven, but we are cleansed from our unrighteousness. But we first have to bring our sin to God and Jesus.

 **Antidote for shame, *Listening to Shame, Dr. Brené Brown, TED Talk***

- If we are going to find our way back to each other, we are going to have to understand and know empathy, because empathy is the antidote to shame. If you put shame in a petri dish, it needs three things to grow exponentially: secrecy, silence and judgment. If you put the same amount of shame in a petri dish and douse it with empathy, it cannot survive. The two most powerful words when we are in a struggle: "Me, too." So, if we are going to find our way back to each other, vulnerability is going to be that path.*

We of all people should be tuned into the "me, too" empathy that provides hope in darkness. Empathy douses guilt and shame by mutually building one another up rather than allowing them to grow and fester in darkness alone. Romans 15:1: Get involved in each other's lives. Galatians 6:2

What are the consequences of living in guilt or shame?

Proverbs 28:13-14: We can harden our hearts against forgiveness by only focusing on our transgressions. This is saying, "Somehow what I did is bigger than what Jesus forgave me for."

 **The funeral, *Twisted Grief, a guest on Dr. Phil***

- Stewart's parents contacted my family and asked us if we would like to attend the funeral. It was an open casket. My father was almost pushing me. I can remember being very reluctant and almost holding my arms out and dragging my feet. As I saw him, I can remember how beautiful of a boy he was. He looked very peaceful. There was just a flood of emotion and I started screaming and my dad walked me outside. This accident has impacted my life in just about every way possible.*

Shame and guilt are - should be - necessary pit stops in the race of our lives, but should never under any circumstances be our home address. We can truly trust in the forgiveness of Jesus. Do we consider spiritual things while we go about our daily lives? Rick tells the story of his recent zip lining adventure through the treetops and equates the harness attached to the cable as the forgiveness of Jesus. Are you willing to leap off the safety of the "platform" of guilt and shame into just the "harness" of Jesus, leaving the guilt and shame behind? In what do you have the most faith...your shame and guilt? Or the forgiveness of God? Romans 8:6-7

 **Shame in women vs men, *Listening to Shame, Dr. Brené Brown, TED Talk***

- For women shame is: Do it all, do it perfectly and never let them see you sweat. I don't know how much perfume that commercial sold, but I guarantee you, it moved a lot of anti-depressants and anti-anxiety meds. Shame for women is this web of unattainable, conflicting competing expectations about who we are supposed to be. And it's a straightjacket. For men, shame is not a bunch of competing and conflicting expectations. Shame is one: Do not be perceived as weak.*

Ingredient #3: Contrite Heart. Psalms 51:6-8: The contrite heart focuses on whatever it takes to be made whole. **Jesus is the source of true healing:** Luke 4:18: We need to know we are broken so that we can stand in the line for repair in the hands of God. If we stay in guilt

and shame, we are instead in the line of Satan to be broken. We need to keep these things in perspective.

 **Rest of my life paying, Twisted Grief, a guest on Dr. Phil**

- *Since the accident, I fear that the people I love will be affected or will die. I worry about Maddox (my son) who is just a year old now. And I fear that something like this could happen to him as well. I put all my efforts into keeping Maddox safe. I have a baby monitor that I watch constantly. I check on him three, four, five times a night. I'm very cautious about where I take him, who touches him, where he goes. I live with a lot of guilt from the accident. Because Stewart's life was taken, I need to spend the rest of my life paying for that.*

She isn't allowing herself to grow from the experience.

If we put our faith in the healing power of Jesus, we can then live with guilt being our compass to determine right and wrong and shame becoming our standard of behavior.

Matthew 12:20-21: God understands our pain, suffering, guilt and shame. Put Jesus in our lives as Lord and Master. The power of forgiveness is in Jesus' hand. Live a life forgiven!

Matthew 11:28-30

What is the difference between feeling guilty and being guilty?

This text presents us with a contrast between earthly and heavenly ambition - one leads to shame, the other to glory: Philippians 3:17-21: Guilt and shame can be baggage that prevents us from getting to where we want to go. Limit the amount of carry-ons you take!

Ingredient #4: Pray for mercy. Psalms 51:9-12: Grab ahold of any one of these ingredients we are going over and you will have access to them all!

It takes God's mercy... Ephesians 4:21-24: Shame and guilt, carried unnecessarily, are the *lusts of deceit*. They twist us around and turn our perspective around. We have to make the effort to put these aside and know that the forgiveness of Jesus is our strength. Does our guilt, in a constructive way, create a boundary to a place we know we should not go again?

Finally! Here is where the theme text comes into play. As we deal with the experiences of our lives, it is important to see them through the eyes of the righteousness of Christ. It is then that we can have the strength to follow through on this model: Proverbs 24:16 Psalms 34:19 Psalms 37:24

What do we do to make our guilt or shame right?

 **Defining guilt vs. remorse, JJ the Life Coach**

- *Instead of feeling guilty about things, I've shifted that into remorse. Remorse is the agent of change. Guilt - that doesn't work for you. Guilt just makes you stuck, keeps you replaying things and ruminating...remorse is when you can honestly feel sadness over something and decide how you want to make amends and how you want to change things.*

Ingredient #5: Put the pieces back together. Psalms 51:13-16: David could not fix what he broke. He committed adultery and took a man's life. Once he put himself into a God-honoring way of being, he was able to take his experience to show others how wrong he was and how right God was. He dedicated himself to moving forward in righteousness. Sometimes we cannot fix what we broke - but we can “pay it forward!” The Bible gives us real life examples of real people that made real mistakes. **Other times we CAN fix what we broke:** Luke 19:5-10: This man was guilty but didn't want to stay living in the guilt and wanted to make recompense. Jesus saw that in him. The secret for being courageous enough to work to fix things lies in having humility, which brings us to being vulnerable.

 **Vulnerability is the birthplace, Listening to Shame, Dr. Brené Brown, TED Talk**

- *Vulnerability is our most accurate measurement of courage, to be vulnerable, to let ourselves be seen, be honest. One of the weird things that has happened is after the TED Talk explosion, I got a lot of offers to speak all over the country - everyone from schools and parent meetings to Fortune 500 companies. So many of the calls went like this: Hi, Dr. Brown, we loved your TED Talk and we would like you to come in and speak. We would appreciate it if you wouldn't mention vulnerability or shame. (I would say) what would you like for me to talk about? There were three big answers, mostly from the business sector: innovation, creativity and change. So let me go on the record and say vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change!*

We must be willing to be vulnerable: 2 Corinthians 4:1-2: Shame is a boundary that tells us, “Don’t go there!” So we can be honest and step above and away from shame and guilt. We do not belong there if we are in Christ. God measures the *efforts* of our hearts. Pride (it’s all about ME) can hold us back, but humility (it’s all about JESUS) can actually move us forward.

Let’s take a look at vulnerability at its best, both on the part of Ananias and Saul. **Saul accepted his vulnerability when he said to Jesus “who are you Lord?” Acts 9:13-17:** Saul was on his way to arrest Ananias, when Ananias was told to basically go see the man he was hiding from! Ananias was vulnerable. He stepped forward and not only greeted him, but calls him, “Brother.” We must embrace forgiveness for our own guilt and shame. Psalms 34:18

What does it look like when we truly live forgiven?

 **The way out - embrace the pain, John Bradshaw**

- *The only way out is through. In order to heal the pain you have to embrace the pain. That’s the great paradox! Although it’s something all the religious masters have said. Buddha’s first Noble Truth was that life was suffering. Jesus said there’s no resurrection without crucifixion. The Israelites were in bondage in Egypt before they went to the Promised Land. I don’t know why the world is that way. I would’ve saved the world with tennis and golf and nice meals, myself. But it doesn’t seem to be that way. It seems to be that you’ve gotta be willing to come out of hiding.*

Ingredient #6: Passionate Faith. Psalms 51:17-19

Coming out of hiding is essentially coming out of the darkness of denial and into the light of reality: Hebrews 12:11-13: David had felt the dark misery of having sinned and having lived in the shame and guilt of his sin, and it almost cost him his life. Once he came back to God with a clean and contrite heart, he could now begin to praise God with acceptable sacrifices.

David knew praise would not reach God otherwise: 1 Samuel 15:22: King Saul was supposed to wait for Samuel before a battle, but he went out anyway. David would have known that obedience was of utmost importance, because that is what caused the king before him to fall. He would have understood this principle.

 **The man in the arena, *Listening to Shame*, Dr. Brené Brown, TED Talk**

- *There is a great quote that saved me this past year by Theodore Roosevelt. A lot of people refer to it as “the man in the arena” quote and it goes like this: “It is not the critic who counts. It is not the man who sits and points out how the doer of deeds could have done things better and how he falls and stumbles. The credit goes to the man in the arena, whose face is marred with dust and blood and sweat. But when he is in the arena, at best he wins and at worst he loses. But when he fails, when he loses, he does so daring greatly.”*

This puts the passionate faith ingredient we are talking about right in perspective! We have to be willing to “be in the arena” with our guilt and shame.

Dare greatly - and thereby banish guilt and shame as a dwelling place! Philippians 3:7-11: Being forgiven means that guilt and shame have lost their value. If we live in guilt and shame, we are conforming ourselves to our own death. In order to conform ourselves to the death of Christ, those things have to be put where they belong. Then we can be conformed to his sacrificial death to a higher and greater cause. Guilt and shame are not a higher and greater cause, but instead they are a black hole that can destroy us.

It is so important to see guilt and shame for what they are. See the value of them but don’t confuse the value with the destructiveness of living with them. Remember: Shame and guilt are - should be - necessary pit stops in the race of our lives, but should never under any circumstances be our home address. We are living in God through Christ. Our guilt and shame should provoke us to love and good works. We need to make the choice to move forward.

***So how do we manage guilt...?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!***