



"Shame on You!" (part one) by Steve Freitag

I assume we all understand that children are incredibly impressionable. One of the things most easily impressed upon a child is shame.

Shame is one of the first, if not the very first, human emotions that shows up in Scripture. Shame is the reaction Adam and Eve had as they tried to hide themselves and their sin from God. Even though they sinned and tried to hide their disobedience, the Lord walked through the garden and sought them out. This leads me to believe that the Lord is not too holy to meet us in our sin. He still pursues us.



We know shame well. It is all too familiar. Because it is deeply embedded in our culture and our minds, it is an easy thing to revert to. What do we do when our children, our leaders or someone we are "supposed" to be holding accountable fail to behave in a proper way? We harshly or subtly drop the hammer of shame. This is usually done without a second thought to it. And it perpetuates the cycle of the "try harder" approach to walking out our faith.

Therefore, the nuances of our culture are critical to grasp as new generations are raised up. Our minds subconsciously absorb thousands of messages, spoken or unspoken, during our early years. All we know is what we know. Looking back, we can sometimes see the absurdity of what we were taught. Other things are often so subtle that we don't realize the impact.



Have you ever stopped to really listen to those words, "Shame on you"? And it could be heard or said, "SHAME on you," or "shame ON you," or "shame on YOU."

I remember hearing this quite a bit growing up - either directly or indirectly. Let's slow that down. Can you imagine actually wanting shame on someone? Literally. "I want this to stick to you. You should have to carry this. Live with this forever as a reminder so that you don't ever do this again."

Truth be told, we unwittingly do, at some level, want shame to attach itself to others - especially our children. Why is this? My current (and long running) theory is that this is based on fear or failed behavior.

I did a little research online. It didn't take me long to find what I suspected.

Here's a quote that I disagree with and the verse used to support the author's claim.

"A believer's shame for past sin is a spur to forsake sinning." Romans 6:21, "What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!"



If we were still living in the Old Testament, there would be an argument that we need a "spur" to keep from sinning. But the Cross changed everything, didn't it? Aren't we now perfected by His love? Isn't it His kindness that leads to a change in our hearts and minds? Paul is giving a warning and a reality check. He's not laying on guilt to produce better management of our sinfulness.

Before I go any further, I want to make sure you understand that I am not anti-shame. One of the ways our culture has tried to squelch the impact of shame is to try to erase shame all together. This has been an abject failure.

Culture, and this has impacted the Church, does not differentiate the difference between truth-based shame and lie-based shame. Truth-based shame is based on the reality of our sin. If we sin, the believer's heart should sense a corresponding emotion of shame.

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This can also be likened to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The next step is confession of the sin. This simply means to agree with God (the New Testament teaching on repentance is another subject).

If shame is still sensed after confession, then is based on false thinking that needs a renewal of the mind. If I would to offer a ball park guess, I'd say that well over 90% of the shame that we feel is based in this kind of false thinking.

A follow-up article in the near future will get back to the thought of why, "Shame on you," is based on fear or failed behavior. We inherently don't like shame. It paralyzes us. But we don't know what to do with it, but we end of projecting it on others. Breaking the cycle of lie-based shame will go a long way in paving the way for others to see the love of Jesus in those who are following Him.

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