

SIDEXSIDE

People in Need of Change **Helping**



People in Need of Change

WHY DISCUSS SHAME?

- Guilt gets all the press in church and theological circles
 - This results in a severely underdeveloped understanding of almost every aspect of shame
- The devastating, pervasive effects it has on people's lives
- The incredible power of the Gospel to redeem shame
 - Shame isn't like the flu—Scripture has powerful things to say about how to address shame directly



WHAT IS SHAME? (GEN 2:24-3:24)

- Shame: The feeling that there is something deeply wrong with us and the accompanying fear that we will be rejected or do not belong because of it.
- An Associational Phenomenon
 - Outside the Camp
 - Shame is usually tied to the perception of others within a particular community; I am perceived to be “outside” the community standard, and therefore, disconnected and rejected
 - Lev. 13:45-46
- Guilt vs. Shame
 - Guilt: I made a mistake; I did wrong—focused on behavior
 - Shame: I am a mistake; something is wrong with me—focused on identity



WHAT IS SHAME? CONT.

- Shame and guilt collide when certain sins are regarded as more heinous than others
 - Vulgar language vs. Child abuse
 - Though both sinful, only one generally carries a great deal of shame when confessed—one identifies someone as a guilty sinner “like everyone else”; the other, a guilty sinner who is perceived by the community as particularly disgusting.
 - “Only this kind of person (identity) could do X (behavior).”



WHAT GIVES BIRTH TO SHAME?

- **Our Own Sinful Actions**
 - Ps. 51:9-11; Rom. 1:27
- **Sinful Actions Done to Us**
 - Rape (Gen. 34:1-2)
 - “Not guilty” does not equate to “feeling clean”
 - Injustice (Isa. 53:1-3)
- **Allegiances and Associations**
 - Lk. 22:54-62
 - Younger sibling of an older sibling with a bad reputation at school
 - Example: Mom at school
 - We move away from things we think will damage our reputation and towards things we think will enhance it (Luke 14:7-11)
- **Micro-Shaming Over Long Periods**
 - Never living up to expectations or standards of your parents
 - Constant put downs from your spouse, friends or co-workers



HOW DOES SHAME WORK?

- Shame Speaks Loudly
 - “Because of X, I’ll be rejected or looked down on by this community.”
Therefore...
- Shame Hides (Gen 3:7-8)
 - “Therefore, I must conceal X to avoid rejection and not fitting in.”
 - Shame pushes us away from vulnerability and being truly known and therefore, toward disconnectedness.
- Stuck in the Loop—Shame is Self-Reinforcing
 - We avoid genuine community to temporarily avoid or relieve feelings of shame, and our disconnectedness, unbeknownst to us, actually increases our sense of disconnectedness.
 - Our attempts to constantly avoid and ignore our shame causes it grow in the dark silence.



HOW DOES SHAME WORK CONT.

- Shame Attacks Genders Differently
 - Shame *feels* the same for men and women but is *often* experienced for different reasons. Research has strongly confirmed the following for Americans:
 - Women: be everything, easily
 - Be an omnicompetent mom and wife
 - Be skinny and attractive
 - Don't struggle doing either—competent women don't
 - Men: do not be perceived as weak
 - Emotional control/levity
 - Primacy of work
 - Pursuit of status
 - Capacity for violence



CLOSING RECAP

- Shame, accompanied by guilt, entered the world through sin in Gen. 3.
- Shame is the feeling that there is something deeply wrong with us and the accompanying fear that we will be rejected or do not belong because of it—actually being rejected intensifies these feelings and fears.
- Our experience of shame has multiple origins.
- Shame thrives in the dark, pushes us toward disconnectedness and reinforces itself.

