

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

April 26, 2019

Shame No More

Joel Schmidgall

You'll never be able to shake those words of rejection from your dad as a kid; you'll never live up to them. It doesn't matter what other people think of you, you'll always know what your dad knows about you. You're no good. You don't live up to his life. You don't live up to his expectations, it's what shame is. With tears in his eyes Tony confesses to Madison his sexual addiction. How could he do that? She lays into him and berates him with everything she's feeling. She turns numb. She turns cold for weeks and she's barely able to even talk to him while burying herself in her studies, her work and whatever can keep her busy. She's alone and so is he, shame. You had such high hopes for your career and life, yet you're nowhere near the promise you had in your head. You thought you'd be higher up the ladder or higher up the pay scale at this point, surely you would be a GS 16 by the age of 24 right? When someone asks about your work, you play up your role; you feel the need to exaggerate your importance to those that don't work with you, shame. It feels like no one really likes you or accepts you. You feel worthless to the world and walk around in a malaise wondering why you're here. All of us experience shame. None of us talk about shame. We don't even like the word right, makes us queasy a little bit. We use other descriptors to describe things horrible and terrible and all these other words, but to call somebody shameful, that's the lowest of the low, that's the worst of the worst that we can think of. It's shame and shame keeps us from being honest about our struggles, it keeps us from being honest about our sins, honest about our hurts, honest about our hang-ups, honest about our abuses but all of us have shame at some level. And this is where a 30 minute message just doesn't cut it. We can't get to where all the places that we need to go in 30 minutes because I have 20 versions of shame just right here, let alone everything that's going on out here, right? Because you know, think about it in three categories, some of us feel shame and things that we've done, some of us feel shame in things that we haven't done. Some of us feel shame in things that were done to us. And so it's impossible to go in every different direction. But I'm praying today that we can go to those places of shame that have paralyzed us and have hijacked our identity of who we are and who we can become in Christ Jesus.

And so Lord we give you these moments right now and I ask for your grace, God, your grace on my words, the words that I say, the words that I don't say, the things that I don't cover, the things that I do. And I ask for your anointing God, on the areas that do connect with us today. Lord, may you anoint the words and the receipt of these. Take us where you want to go. I just take a moment, Lord, to thank you for the Hall family as Terry Hall went to glory this morning and a forerunner of this church, a saint, an angel that we've had on this earth. God, we thank you for her. We bless Pastor Hall and thank you. He's a father to our church, so we bless their church today and just ask for you to strengthen them. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Ah, man, we love the Halls and sorry to hear that but we rejoice in heaven today for what is happening.

Shame is the root of so many individual problems. Michigan State University research, it ties shame to bullying and drug and alcohol abuse, eating disorders, suicide among many of the other challenges associated with shame. But it's shame not in addition to, but shame at the root of so many of these things. It's a feeling of being unworthy, a feeling, of being unlovable, but shame is also the root of our collective problems. If we go back to the creation story in the beginning of Genesis and we see these fascinating scriptures, it's one of the best scriptures that we find on shame. And we find Adam and Eve they're in the garden, they're in the Garden of Eden in verse 25 of chapter two in the book of Genesis and it says this, it says, "*And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*" One commentator observes, it's interesting, the scripture didn't say naked and joyful, didn't say naked and happy or naked and excited. It didn't say naked and peaceful or but it said naked and unashamed. Life is meant to be lived in a way that we are not hiding things or we don't have to hide ourselves from others. But the scripture continues on and Adam and Eve are tempted by the serpent who comes along and tries to get them to do what they know they shouldn't do. He gets them to do what God told them not to do, to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. But the serpent, he gives them excuse, he gives them reason to step into it and so they do it.

They eat the fruit and we find them in Genesis chapter three verse seven it says, "*Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and they made themselves loincloths.*" So the first thing they tried to do was to hide their shame. Isn't that all of our first reactions to shame, right? Secrecy, we'll do anything to keep that out of the light of day, we'll do anything to keep it in the shadows. And Adam and Eve what they do is they take fig leaves and they think, okay, this is the best we got. So they try to sew them together and when we try to fix our shame by ourselves, it's grossly inadequate, isn't it? It just doesn't get us there; a fig leaf just doesn't cut it. Let me say that again. A fig leaf just doesn't cover it, right? It doesn't get us where we need to be. Shame will cause you to try to conceal your mess with inadequate means. Hear me today; we go around demanding perfection from those around us when the truth is we haven't dealt with the imperfection in our own lives.

Dr Buxton Sr. would say that ain't nothing but a fig leaf. We don't love ourselves. Fact is we have self hatred on the inside, and so we go around using the people around us. Somebody say, that ain't nothing but a fig leaf. Listen, we work and we work and we work and we work some more because we don't want to deal with a mess that we have waiting for us at home. That ain't nothing but a fig leaf. We go out and we start talking stuff or mess about that person over there. But the fact is we're just jealous that they got something that we don't. That ain't nothing but a fig leaf. Listen, we help others with their problems, but we help others with their problems because we don't want to deal with our own problems. That a nothing but a...[congregation answers "fig leaf"]. We get involved in alcohol and marijuana because we want to find something that will numb us from the reality that we haven't achieved, the dreams that we thought we would, we're not in the place that we desired to be. And so listen to me today; do not smoke a fig leaf.

We cover it all up, right? And here's the problem. Fig leaves, they always end up falling apart, they're inadequate. And the very thing that we use to cover up our shame is the very thing that will expose our shame eventually. We got to get scripture in the mix here. Titus chapter three verse five and six it says,

<sup>5</sup> *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy [according to his mercy] he saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit;*

<sup>6</sup> *Whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior;"*

I came today to let you know something, I have something to say today and that's this, that the mercy house is open for business. His mercy is here. His mercy is good. His grace is sufficient for what, for all our needs; that's emotional needs, that's spiritual needs, that's physical needs, that's provincial needs. His mercy is good and he desires that we might step out. If you're in a place of hurting today, the over and abundant grace and mercy of the Lord may he fill your life, may he fill your heart, may he give you healing and wholeness in his name. Verse eight,

<sup>8</sup> *"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."*

Psychotherapist Bonnie Martin, who's an NCC'er and an expert on this topic and has had a wonderful influence on me and a lot of these thoughts are from Bonnie today. She talks about shame and the progression and the pattern that happens with shame, going from secrecy to isolation to insecurity. It starts with secrecy which leads to isolation, which breeds insecurity in us. We see this pattern in the scripture that we're reading. Adam and Eve, they first tried to hide their shame. What did they do next? They go and they try to isolate themselves, right? Any tree that they can find, they try to get behind and they try to hide, our natural reaction is to turn inward. We recoil at the thought of anybody knowing our mess. Don't we? We'll do anything; keep that a secret to hide.

What we don't know is that shame thrives in darkness. This is where it works best, in the shadows. But when shame comes into the light, it withers and it dies. But in the darkness in secrecy, it feeds off of isolation and it feeds off of shadows. Research shows that not discussing a shaming event can actually be more damaging than the actual event. So keeping secrets about shame can actually be more damaging than the shame itself. But when people share their difficult experiences, when they allow them to get out, those things that are debilitating and those things that have given them a view of being unlovable or unworthy as an individual, when they share those things with loving and empathetic people around them, what happens is their stress levels go down and their quality of life and their mental and emotional state go up. This is what happens when we are willing to step out. Isolation is the engine that fuels the life of shame.

Verse nine <sup>9</sup> *But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"*

The first thing they tried to do was hide, right? And then they isolated themselves. And here in this scripture they've stepped back and they're trying to continue to stay away from God. And there seems in the scripture he asked this question, where are you in? There seems to be a problem with God's omniscience here, right? Like he of all people or of all beings should know; like he is omniscient, that's the definition he's all knowing. So why does he ask this question? Like is God on a break like what? Can he not find them in the mix of everything going on in his being or do we have our theology wrong? Is He not really omniscient? But I don't know if you've

experienced this or you know this, but a lot of us know that when God asks questions in the Scripture or he asks questions in our prayer life, a lot of times it's not for new knowledge for him. He asks the question for us. He asks the question so that we will go and pursue the answer because he knows that we need to know and have a reminder of what is true about ourselves. God knows you in your shame. He knows where you are, but he still asked the question, Adam, where are you? Joel, where are you? And I try to hide and I try to cover myself with anything that I can find, I just got to get behind a tree. Where are you Steve, Phil, Ashley, Antwan, where are you? And he keeps calling out even though he knows where Adam is, he keeps calling out his name. Adam, where are you? It's almost like he needs Adam to be ready to be found. He needs Adam to know first where he is. It's like he's giving margin, right like he's giving space and room for Adam to be ready to. It's like the scripture in Revelation chapter three verse 20 where God says, I stand at the door and knock and if you would just hear me and opened the door, I would come in and dine with you and you with me. Right? He's just waiting. He's just knocking. He's just hoping that you will come to a point of readiness or have the courage to actually step out and be ready. But are we willing to be found? I'm going to say that one again? Are we willing to be found in our isolation and our shame?

Verse <sup>10</sup> "And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

Our reaction is fear and its insecurity because if other people know about this thing they won't love me, they won't even like me. They won't respect me; I got to keep it hidden. But God gives such a beautiful response.

In verse <sup>11</sup> "He said, "Who told you that you were naked?" He speaks to the shame here. He doesn't condemn in this moment. You have to separate yourself from the act. There's a difference between guilt and shame. Shame focuses on the entire self. Guilt focuses on the act that harmed them. Shame feels bad about who I am, but guilt feels bad about what I did. Shame believes that there is no control over a different outcome. Guilt believes I can make different decisions and have an effect on a different outcome. Shame desires to shrink or avoid or get away. Guilt feels tension and remorse.

I was talking with Doctor Most this week, another wonderful resource that we have here at NCC. And we were talking about how beautiful and healthy guilt or I would call it a conviction, how healthy that can be for us. We need that in our life to help guide us and keep us in moral parameters and for both ourselves and for the people around us. But it's those who attach their wrong action to who they are as a person that not only live in a scriptural lie, but also find themselves in paralysis to actually move away from that thing that they find themselves stuck in. And so there's a huge difference between the two of these things.

Psychologist and author Robert Weiss, he gives two scenarios that guilt scenario and ashamed scenario. So Sharon goes shopping for a Christmas ornament and she gets a \$60 ornament. She puts it in a \$10 box and then she goes to the checkout counter. I feel like I'm giving you a bad idea right now, I don't know. She goes to the counter, she purchases, she goes home. She's putting the ornament up on the tree and she starts to feel bad, so she turns to her husband and the guilt scenario and she says, listen to what I've done, and he says, here's my advice. Go back, you

take the ornament back, then you go to a local charity, you give them 50 bucks and so she takes this advice. She goes and she does this and she feels better about herself and she learns a lesson in the process. That's the guilt scenario. The shame scenario goes to the store \$50 and the \$10 box goes purchase it, goes home. She's putting it up on the tree and she feels bad. She turns to her husband, she turns back, she thinks in her mind, I'm a horrible person, why would my husband ever love or respect me? Why would my kids have or love or respect me? And night after night she gets eggnog and she laces it with Bourbon and more and more every single night she goes and sits down on the couch. She looks at that ornament because it's a symbol and a reminder of the fact that she is a horrible human being and will never grow out of that. There's a huge difference between guilt and shame. We're debilitated in shame, but guilt or conviction can drive us towards wholeness and can drive us out of our problems, out of our challenges, out of our sin. We've got to understand that we can't allow shame to hold us back and I want to remind us of something today. I want to remind us of our origins and its Genesis chapter one and two that we are made in the image of God, our body and our mind and our soul, we are made and we are patterned after the Almighty good and creator Lord. He formed us after himself. Toxic shame says you are worthless and we allow that voice into our head, don't we? And we allow it to become the truth and it leads us down a road of paralysis, whether it's something you did or something somebody else did to you. We find ourselves in an inability to do anything and grow and develop into the creation that God has desired us and designed us to be.

We read stories throughout the scripture that show this pattern. It shows the pattern of secrecy to isolation, to insecurity. We see Moses who lived in his shame and ran from his shame for 40 plus years. He went out into the wilderness. It was finally God getting his attention. He had to blow up a bush, right? It was a fire burning bush that God speaks to Moses and he pulls him out of his hiding. He pulls him out of a secrecy and he uses his very insecurity to bring about life in him and to bring about purpose and redemption for the people of Israel.

Then you've got Saul. Saul was called to be king, but he knew he shouldn't be. He was way too insecure about who he was. He and his family, he knew his family, he was from the wrong family to do this, and so he hides in his shame. And when that moment, when he's supposed to be, he runs and he hides off in the wilderness. But God knew something and he spoken it through the Prophet Samuel, that it doesn't matter where you come from, it doesn't matter your family, it doesn't matter your family sins, your family is not your destiny.

And then in John chapter four, the woman comes to the well, and this woman had been married five times. She had all kinds of mistakes over her life. And she goes, and she gets a drink, but she goes when the sun is highest so that maybe nobody will be around. And she didn't have to get those sideways looks or those judgmental looks. And she goes, and then Jesus comes along and he breaks social norms and he draws water for her and he has a conversation with her in the middle of the day at the well. And Jesus calls out, he exposes her shame, the very thing that she was trying to hide, he calls it out, he draws it out, he pulls it out. And then he says something, but I have living water to give you, I have eternal purposes that are for you and he draws her out.

In each one of these different stories with each person shame was peeled back and wholeness was brought to life. Wholeness replaced those things that were holding people down and purpose was restored. Earlier we talked about building the progression, right. In shame this progression

builds and it starts with a secrecy and it goes to isolation to insecurity. I just want to take a minute, I want to take a minute that maybe we can try to peel back some of these layers today. And Doctor Brene Brown would call this developing shame resilience. Her research revealed key elements and I want to interlace these and some of the antidotes if you will, to the issues that we find ourselves in.

So first secrecy, the way to combat secrecy it's through confession. James 5:16 *"confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."* We confess our sins to the father and we find forgiveness. We confess our sins one to another and we find healing. This is what happens when we can take a step of courage. Shame resilience would say it's being able to recognize, name and understand our shame triggers. Shame hates it when we reach out and tell our story. It hates having words wrapped around it. It can't survive when it is shared.

Isolation, the way to battle isolation, it's obvious; you pursue community, step out of separation and seclusion and be willing to pursue others. Listen to what Dr. Brown says; she says, owning our story can be hard, but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky, but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy. The experiences that make us most vulnerable only when we are brave enough to explore darkness will we discover the infinite power of the light. The only way we learn to swim as by swimming and the only way we learn to courage is by couraging.

Insecurity, the third thing. We can test insecurity by reminding ourselves who we are and who made us, us. I love what Pastor Mark said a couple of weeks ago; we say it over and over at NCC. Nobody can worship God for you and nobody can worship God like you. That's not just a testament to you, that's a testament to the God who created you. We've got to be reminded of our foundation of who we are in Christ. And testimony, we have something to say and God has something to say through us and it's redemptive and purpose. In DC were crippled by shame, aren't we? We try to outperform it. We try to just work harder and we scratch and we claw our way to the top and we do anything we can, but the enemy the whole time is using shame to cut us down at the knees and he uses it against us. We don't talk about this enough, do we?

Satan, the enemy the scripture says the accuser of the brethren and he comes after us and he cuts us and he comes behind us and he tries to take us down. Remember at the very beginning of the creation story, right, where God, he just starts creating all kinds of stuff. And he creates stuff out of nothing and he calls the heavens and the earth into existence out of nothing. And he calls light into being out of nothing. And as he's creating all this stuff out of nothing and he keeps creating and then he comes along and he creates us and he takes dirt and he forms the dirt and he breathes into the dirt and humanity is created. You and I are one part dirt, one part breadth of God. That's how we're made. That's what we're made of. And so the whole time God is creating something out of nothing, but then he creates us and it's the first time he creates something out of something, right? And so listen, therefore, you are not nothing. Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, you are something. Isn't that something today? You have the breath of God within you. You say, you know, I got nothing to give. False. You say I got no way to serve. False. I have no purpose in my life. False. The breath of God is keeping you going. If you have a breadth today, if you can move, if you've got to pulse today, the breath of God and his purposes are in front of you, it's time to leave our shame behind. It's time to step up and shake that dirt and do a

little shimmy, a little step curry shimmy and let the dirt fall off our back and go get our destiny and go get our purpose and step into the destiny that God has laid before us. These are his purposes.

There's a train of thought in psychology that we cast God in the image of our earthly father. So if you had an unapproachable dad, you think, God, I can't go to God. If you had a harsh father, you think, I don't want to go to God, I'm nervous about going to God. If you had an absentee father, well you don't even know if you can go to God. But Jesus comes along and in chapter 14 of the book of John and he says, you know what, "*no man comes to the father except through me*". Listen, don't listen or don't buy into the idea that Freud talks about, which is, which is transference. We take and we transfer something onto somebody, right? We do that in life and we transfer our view of our earthly father onto our view of our heavenly father, but Jesus comes along and he says, no, transference is not going to happen here. "*No man comes to the father except through me*". This is the right way to look at him. This is who he truly is because he wants us to know the heart of the father. He wants us to know the heart of the father. When he chased down Moses he was acting out the heart of the father, right? That was the heart of the father scene when he came to Saul and he wouldn't let them hide in the wilderness. That was the heart of the father coming through when he went to the woman at the well; he wouldn't let her remain in this place of shame because the heart of the father had to come through. He chases us down.

It was on display with an NCC'er to find the heart of the father. He was walking through infidelity and a painful divorce to the point that they were open to share their story today with us. A walk with shame, that season of life is a scarlet letter from me, I feel so dirty. I felt so disgusting. If only I acted a different way, they wouldn't have done, they wouldn't have done that. If I would've done something different, there could have been a different outcome. To be real with you, I drank a lot in that season. I couldn't sleep. I would stay up to console myself in an unhealthy way, then try and get back on track the next day. It uprooted me. Life will bring you to your knees, but it's what you do on your knees that will determine whether you get back up again. It wasn't until I committed everything, everything to the Lord. That chains started to break and I started to come back. There was a realization that my God is bigger than my shame. If I really believe God has plans and purposes, I have to trust him and this process. I have to understand things like this will come. He will give me grace in the hard conversations and the embarrassment to be able to get through. I had to learn to forgive, as Jesus said 70 times seven and God has brought me redemption. I'm so grateful, but if I'm honest, I still fight feelings that I bring less than my best self right now. That season still seems gross to me, old pictures regurgitate that feeling. Jesus taught us to pray, give us this day our daily bread. So daily I need reminders that I am worthy, chosen, and called. Daily, I go back to the cross as he continues to make me something new. Daily, he goes back to that cross. Jesus came to die for our sin, but Jesus also came to die for our shame to die so that we can overcome our shame and he came to save us from our shame.

Hebrews 12:2 "*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.*"

Satan comes against Christ and he desires not just to kill him, but to put them to shame up on a cross. This is what Satan does, he comes against them and just like in Genesis chapter three verse 21 it says,

<sup>21</sup> *And the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and Eve.*

What they tried to ineffectively do, God did for them, right? He helped them cover their shame. He devised a path out of shame for them. That's what Christ did on the cross when he took his arms out wide. He devised a path out of our shame for us. When we come to the foot of the cross, he brings healing. Satan will use shame to destroy us, to accuse us, to keep us silent, but guess what happens to the enemy? His head meets Christ foot and he finds victory over the accuser, yet he continues to accuse us and take us down, but God calls us to overcome.

It's Revelation 12 *"Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night."*

And they overcome because of what, because of the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony. He preaches a sermon in a verse. What does God do? He turns our story of shame into a story of redemption. Would you consider taking up courage today and trying to step, begin to step away from shame? What are the questions we have to ask ourselves? Who do you need to have a conversation with to confess? This is where the rubber meets the road. Who are you going to go to and confess? That's courage. Who are the brothers or the sisters that you need to begin to build community with? What are the promises, the scriptures of God that you need to begin to stand on and recite and call out just like we'll do in a couple of moments, we'll confess the scripture and who we are in Christ. How can you begin to tell your story in a way that takes power from the enemy and brings glory to God? Come to the foot of the cross. Jesus calls us out of our sin. He calls us out of our shame to new life in him.

So Jesus, we approach you and we approach your throne of grace. We approach your mercy that is here today. And God, we pray that you would enlighten our hearts. God, I pray today that you would break chains that have bound us. The enemy as the accuser has held so many of us back and it's like we live. We come to you and we release things to you, but we live with a sense of shame deep down in our soul. So, I pray you would do a deep dive in the spirit today if we're willing. I pray that you would call us out where are you and today that we will be ready to answer God and take some of these simple steps. Not simple, simple, yes, easy, no fruitful, absolutely. So I pray for each of us today if we're willing to respond that you would bring life and bring it into abundance. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.