



## Lesson 2. The God Who Removes Shame

### 1. What is shame?

“Ready or not, here I come!” I’m sure we’ve all had the experience of squeezing into cramped spaces, trying to breathe quietly while calming our racing hearts, hoping we won’t be found in yet another round of hide-and-go-seek.

As we get older, though, our hiding often takes a different form and is almost always inextricably linked to shame.

According to Brené Brown, a researcher at the University of Houston, shame is an “intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.”<sup>1</sup> It is a painful and powerful emotion that strikes at the core of who we are and can drive us to great lengths in an attempt to cover it up. Right from the beginning of time, when Adam and Eve realized they had disobeyed God and became aware of their vulnerability, they tried to cover themselves up with garments of fig leaves and hid behind the trees instead of joining their Creator for their usual evening stroll.

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” Genesis 3:6-8, NKJV

#### **Shame vs Guilt. What’s the difference?**

Shame and guilt can both occur when we make a mistake. The difference is that shame focuses on ourselves, whereas guilt focuses on behavior.

“Shame is ‘I am bad.’

Guilt is ‘I did something

bad.’ Guilt: *I’m sorry. I*

*made a mistake.* Shame:

*I’m sorry. I am a*

*mistake.”<sup>2</sup> “Feelings of*

*shame can be painful and*

*debilitating, affecting*

*one’s core sense of self,*

*and may invoke a self-*

*defeating cycle of*

*negative affect.... In*

*comparison, feelings of*

*guilt, though painful, are*

*less disabling than shame*

*and are likely to motivate*

*the individual in a positive*

*direction toward*

*reparation or change.”<sup>3</sup>*

### 2. What areas of your life do you prefer to hide from others?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Of all the root causes of shame, which ones do you identify with the most?

- A. Disappointed expectation—*when you fail to meet the goals you or someone else has set for yourself. This could include anything from moral failings to societal or inherited messages that we are not good enough.*
- B. Unwanted exposure—*when you mess up in front of others.*
- C. Rejection, *whether by a loved one or a larger social group.*
- D. Abuse, trauma, or neglect, *particularly from those who were supposed to look out for you.*

4. Shame is a key theme threaded through the major characters of Season One of *The Chosen*. Put an X in the column for what you think was behind their shame.

	Peter	Mary (Lilith)	Nicodemus
A. Disappointed expectation			
B. Unwanted exposure			
C. Rejection			
D. Abuse, trauma or neglect			

- *Nicodemus is embarrassed at how he failed to cast out Lilith's demons (unwanted exposure) and is also crushed internally that he has no real spiritual power despite his position as a religious leader (disappointed expectation).*
- *Peter feels he is letting down his wife and brother with his inability to make enough money (disappointed expectation) and is ashamed to let his wife know what a desperate financial situation they are in (unwanted exposure).*
- *Mary had experienced sexual abuse, everyone knew she was a prostitute who battled with demon possession, and as a result she was rejected by society. She was also disappointed in herself that she cannot seem to cure her demonic influences.*

5. As the series unfolds, it's easy to see what each person resorted to in an effort to hide from their shame.
- Peter resorts to gambling and betrayal to fend off his financial woes.
  - Mary (Lilith) tries to drown her shame in alcohol and even considers ending her life.
  - Nicodemus is inwardly crushed by his inability to cast out Mary's (Lilith's) demons in the Red Quarter but resorts to blaming his failure on other reasons and outwardly maintaining his performance as 'teacher of teachers', even while his hypocrisy eats away at his conscience.

At some point, each character realizes that no matter how much they try to hide, cover up, or blame away their shame (just like Adam and Eve did—see Genesis 3:6-13), **they are powerless to remove their shame on their own.** They are left to face shame's crushing burden of depression and hypocrisy... until Jesus enters. Most people think God causes shame. Yet nothing could be further from the truth!

6. **Back to our story of when Adam and Eve sinned and hid, they're hiding because they're assuming that the way they feel about themselves is the way God feels toward them.**<sup>4</sup> But while they were trying to cover their shame with fig leaves, God went looking for them—not to condemn them, but to try and restore them. After God gives them the consequences of their actions, he curses the snake and the ground ("for your sake" Genesis 3:17) and covers them: "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them." Genesis 3:21, NIV
7. Of course, this animal sacrifice to cover Adam and Eve was a foreshadowing of when God's son, Jesus, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) would lay down His sinless life in our stead, taking our punishment so someday we could live eternally in heaven.
8. John 3:16 is often considered the most famous verse of the Bible, but many people forget the verse after it, verse 17. Both of these verses testify to the reality that God longs to take away our shame and condemnation:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God **did not** send his Son into the world to **condemn** the world, but to save the world through him.” John 3:16-17, NIV, (emphasis supplied)

9. The grammatical flow of the text essentially says that it is precisely this lack of condemnation that defines His love for us. **God loves you and therefore does not condemn you!**<sup>4</sup>  
“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:1-2, NIV
10. As Mary (Lilith), and later Peter and Nicodemus encounter Jesus, all heard the same words that Jesus would later speak to the woman caught in adultery: “...Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.” John 8:11, NKJV
11. Mary has been hiding in shame as Lilith for all these years. But the fact that God knows her and loves her all the same erases her shame. **It is that non-condemning, unconditional love that not only frees us from our shame and gives us the power and motivation to follow God.** Without receiving that love, it is impossible to sin no more; instead, we get stuck in a cycle of shame and sin that spirals ever downwards.
12. Read Isaiah 53:3-6. The Bible is clear that **Jesus took our shame**, enduring the humiliation of the cross and the separation from His Father, so we wouldn’t have to. What amazing love!
13. Why do you think Jesus endured the cross and its shame? See Hebrews 12:2.

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

It was for us! All of the suffering, humiliation, and shame of the cross was worth it to Him because of the joy it brings Him to see you, me, any of His beloved creation, reunited with Him in heaven forever. All we need to do is to realize our powerlessness and ask Him to cover us and help us.

14. What would you like to ask Him for today? Today, I would like to ask Jesus to:
  - ☐ Forgive me for hiding from You and/or not trusting You
  - ☐ Take away my shame
  - ☐ Help me find peace in my life
  - ☐ Help me receive a new perspective on life
  - ☐ Receive the same type of new life that Mary (Lilith) received

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1. <https://brenebrown.com/articles/2013/01/15/shame-v-guilt/>

2. <https://fs.blog/brene-brown-guilt-shame/>

3. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-scientific-underpinnings-and-impacts-of-shame>

4. Ty Gibson, “Running from the Wrong Person.” <https://youtu.be/zrvLhjLFBfs?t=2702>

5. Ty Gibson, “Running from the Wrong Person.” <https://youtu.be/zrvLhjLFBfs?t=3084>