

It's OK to NOT be OK
GUILT & SHAME

We all live in a "not okay" world. We all have "not okay-ness" in ourselves. Two very heavy "not-OK" burdens we carry within us are the weights of guilt and shame. Today my hope and prayer is that the Holy Spirit will touch each of your hearts to give you a new understanding of guilt, and a new understanding of shame, and that you will be set free from both.

We are focusing on the Gospel reading today, the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. In this story, Jesus describes a young man who asks his father for his share of the inheritance, only he wants it *now!* This was unthinkable wrong for Jesus' day. He demanded his inheritance before his father had died. That was a huge insult. This boy was in essence saying, "Dad, I wish you were dead. I want your money, but I don't want any relationship with you." There is no doubt this son's action was very wrong.

But that isn't all. Not only did the boy take all the money, he also blew all his money in wild living. His family was a family that honored God, but the boy's parties didn't honor God. He disgraced his family morally, and religiously.

Then a famine hit and the boy could finally clearly see his wrong. He was hungry. No roof over his head. Once the beer cans were empty. It was then he was finally struck with guilt. The Bible says he "came to his senses."

He formulated his apology speech and rehearsed it with every step he took on the journey back to his father's house. And as he came over the hill, his eyes met the eyes of his father. His father was thrilled to see his son returning, so the father RAN to meet his son. Middle Eastern dignified men NEVER ran. But this father is so joyful he ran to his son, threw his arms around his son, and hugged him. It was one of those close, tight hugs where you can feel the other person's heart beating. And then the father kissed his

son. And in those actions, the father FORGAVE his son. The guilt has been taken care of.

But the boy still feels shame. He may be forgiven by his father, but will his father forever remind him of his disgrace? The past may be forgiven, but will the boy be known as “the inheritance waster,” the black sheep of his family?

The son says “*I’m not good enough to be your son. I can understand if you disown me. Please just let me be a ranch-hand and sleep out in the bunk house.*” But the father said, “Nonsense! Put a ring on his finger – a sign of being a son. Put shoes on his feet – only slaves would be barefoot. Put the BEST robe on him.” The boy’s status was returned – removing his shame.

Being OK requires dealing with guilt, ... and shame.

Guilt and shame are not the same.

GUILT has to do with our BEHAVIOR, what we do.

SHAME has to do with our IDENTITY, who we are.

***Guilt* says I’ve done something wrong.**

***Shame* says there is something wrong with me.**

***Guilt* says I’ve made a mistake.**

***Shame* says I am a mistake.**

***Guilt* says what I did was not good.**

***Shame* says I am no good.**

You see guilt. You *feel* shame. These are two of the biggest terrorists that a Christ-follower faces: guilt and shame. Guilt because of our sin. And shame because either our sin OR the people and world around us, are trying to rob us of our true identity in Jesus Christ.

1. GUILT: When we sin we fall short of God’s standard. And when we sin we feel guilt, because we KNOW the benchmark of God. We feel guilt because we know we don’t measure up to what God desires.

Guilt is like a hook. It hooks you. The Evil One doesn't want to let you off that hook, and the Evil One does whatever he can to set that hook deep down inside of you.

Guilt has some destructive Effects:

Guilt destroys our confidence. If you are trying to do what you are called to do, but you are wrestling with guilt, it's really hard to have the courage and confidence to function.

Guilt disintegrates relationships. Even in the Garden of Eden, at the beginning Adam and Eve got a long perfectly with each other and with God. They saw eye-to-eye. They communicated openly and honestly with God and with each other. But once they sinned, guilt BROKE their relationships. They began blaming each other. They began running from God.

Guilt damages our bodies. Unresolved guilt, hurts us physically. Look with me at Psalm 32. David speaks about the effects of long-term un-confessed sin, and the pain and the power of guilt: ¹ *Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.* ² *Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.* ³ *When I kept silent, [when I didn't deal with my guilt, when I didn't confess my sin] my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.* ⁴ *For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.* ⁵ *Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.*

Today is the day to deal with guilt. If you've been carrying around guilt over your past, today is the day to bring it to light, confess it to God, allow His forgiveness to wash it away.

When I was about 10 years old, I and the other boys in the neighborhood used to play a lot of baseball. But after we had broken a few windows with a hardball, we switched to playing waffle ball – those light plastic bats and balls.

One day, we chose up teams, and were playing a game in someone's back yard, and my younger brother was pitching. It wasn't going well. The other team was beating us badly, and I

blamed it on my younger brother's pitching. I probably said something like "you STINK at pitching." I don't remember all the details, but I lost my temper – as boys playing sports do. And in my anger, I threw a punch. He was wearing a hard plastic batting helmet, and somehow, one of my knuckles broke this helmet he was wearing. I hit the sweet spot on this plastic helmet on his head. It broke, and it went into his head, and hurt him badly. He ended up with his forehead so bruised, so black & blue & purple – and his eyebrows so puffy and swollen – that he looked like Frankenstein's monster. He looked like Herman Munster. He looked that way for weeks.

I felt so badly. I apologized. My brother forgave me. But like brothers do, from time-to-time he brings it back up even today – not because he's still sore about that, but he brings it up to get a laugh, because he knows how badly I feel over what I did. And every time that incident is brought back up, his laughing about the whole thing reassures me of his forgiveness.

Do you have unresolved guilt over something you have done. What do we do with guilt?

Acknowledge what you have done, and confess it to God.

Like the prodigal son, let the Father throw his arms around you and give you His hug of forgiveness. God forgives you. Jesus paid for your wrong. It's over. Let it be. Be restored and find the peace you are looking for in God's amazing and complete forgiveness.

But the Evil One will try as hard as he can to bring it back up. Satan will remind you – even in your thoughts – what you did. "Oh, you're still guilty." And this is where, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we have to believe what God promises. We have to trust God's Word and rely on God's Word. And let the Bible BE the reality for us, that God's Word is.

Jesus promises that if you confess your sins, He is faithful and just and will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. You ARE forgiven. There is no wrong that Jesus hasn't paid for. There is not wrong that Jesus can not remove. Trust His promise – even if you don't feel that way inside. Rely on the truth that you are forgiven

and your guilt has been removed, and in time, your feelings will come around to agreeing with this truth that is in your head and heart.

Take a look at these prayers that overcome guilt. These are Scriptures – God’s Word. These are true:

Scriptural Prayers:

+ “Lord, I acknowledged my sin to you and didn’t cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’ – and you forgave the guilt of my sin.” *Psalm 32:5*

+ “Lord, according to Your Word, he who conceals his sins doesn’t prosper but whoever confesses and renounce them finds mercy.” *Proverbs 28:13*

+ “Father God, You made my Savior’s life a guilt offering for me. His death was enough to handle my guilt.” *Isaiah 53:10*

+ “Blessed am I, God, because my transgressions are forgiven. My sins are covered. Blessed am I because you, Lord, will never count my sins against me.” *Romans 4:7-8*

THAT’S what you do with guilt. That’s what you do with sin. You know full well that Jesus handled it all when He lived what we couldn’t live and died what we couldn’t die. He is the sacrifice for our sins. Guilt gone. Sins forgiven.

Look at shame with me now. How do you shake off shame? Shame is crippling. Shame has to do with identity.

There is an old playground saying about shame. It goes, "Shame, shame, I know your name." Shame kind of renames us, doesn't it? It puts a new label, a new title on us. Shame works on the equation, *I did therefore I am. I've done this thing therefore that marks me as a person for now and forever more.* We've done a lot of things in our lives that probably have labeled us, have shamed us.

Sometimes things HAPPEN to us – someone attacks or violates or abuses us – and we end up seeing ourselves differently. We end up labeled as a loser, as damaged goods.

So we carry these new names with us, don't we? Names like sinner or liar, or cheat, adulterer, addict, pervert, whatever the name, the title is.

There are a number of sources for this kind of shame in our lives. We can feel shame for something that goes way, way back to our childhood to how we were treated at home or in a school, something we did early in life. Shame can be the result of past or previous pain or hurt or a wound, especially when it comes to areas when it's been a broken relationship or potentially maybe abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse.

Shame can be the result of poor choices we've made, choices we might regret, and choices we might keep locked away as our secrets. Shame can be the result of compulsive habits that seem to control us. Promiscuity, substance abuse, pornography addictions - - all these can that label us with this shame.

Shame would be that forever I would be known as the “helmet breaker.” What a joy that we are not known by what wrongs we have done!

In Jesus' story, the son had shame. ***“I'm not worthy to be called your son,”*** the boy says. But the father's response was that he said, ***“Nonsense! Put a ring on his finger – a sign of being a son. Put shoes on his feet. Put the BEST robe on him.”*** The boy's status was returned – removing his shame.

You may have FAILED at many things – all of us have – but you are NOT a FAILURE. The world around us, other people, constantly try to redefine us.

We often hear about the crime of identity theft. Crooks open up credit cards and spend lots of money, buy houses or cars in another person's name. The devil is trying to steal your identity. His goal is to bring you to ruin. He wants you defined by what you haven't done, or the wrongs you did do.

So we have to reclaim our identity. How do we reclaim our identity? Again, turning back to God's clear truth of who we are.

The people of this world, even we ourselves, don't have the last word on us. God does. He made you. He bought you. He will claim you when this world is all over.

Instead of being shaped by what you've done, what you haven't done, or what has been done to you – I pray that your identity is shaped by 4 solid and wonderful truths:

You are deeply loved.

You are completely forgiven.

You are totally acceptable.

You are a new creation.

Isn't it interesting, that because of what Jesus has done, God gives you a new identity! Over and over the Bible calls you a saint, a child of God, a son or daughter of the King, an inheritor of heaven.

So what do you do with your shame? The Bible says: Acknowledge your shame. **Name your shame**. And then bombard it to realign your identity with the truth of God. When you cling onto who you really are and what Christ has done for you to make you who you are, then the shame will fade away, and you see yourself more and more – as the new creation that you are.

Reclaim your identity by the power of the Holy Spirit speaking to you through God's Word.

Share Your Identity with your world. Just hearing one sermon on your new identity isn't going to be enough. So reaffirm and repeat who you are by sharing your identity with others. In doing that, you'll not only be telling others about the incredible love of God, but you will also be redefining yourself, as you again remember who you are and WHOSE you are.

Scriptural Prayers:

+ “ Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore, I have set my face like flint and I know I will not be put to shame.” *Isaiah 50:7*

+ “ Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.”
Romans 12:10

MY RESPONSE TODAY:

1. Re-read the Scriptural Prayers each day this week so that God’s Word sets you free from guilt and shame.
2. Place the 4 Truths to Reclaim Your Identity on your bathroom mirror, your morning coffee cup, your computer screen, or your car dashboard – someplace where you will see them each morning to remember who you are and Whose you are.