



Shattering
The Shackles
Of Shame

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Introduction:

How This Message Was Birthed

One of the most powerful and devastating forces in the world is the emotion of shame.

Shame is not something I learned about through research. I didn't read a book or go to a seminar on the subject. I agonized with its intensity when as a child I was told I was no good, stupid, and would never amount to anything.

When I became a born-again Christian, I understood from that time on that Jesus died for my sins, but it was years later when I understood that He also died for my shame. Since I no longer carried my sins, then I no longer needed to carry the shame of my sins or the shame imposed upon me by others.

Multitudes around the globe are carrying heavy burdens of shame. Some are ashamed because of their own sinful conduct. Some carry shame because it has been imposed upon them by others who have condemned them. Still others have inherited a cycle of shameful behavior or feelings from their parents.

Shame is an emotion that will keep you forever shackled to the past. It will prevent you from rising up to fulfill your God-given destiny.

The purpose of this book is to shatter the shackles of shame that have bound you, your loved ones, or those to whom you minister.

The shame of divorce, abortion, sexual abuse, abandonment--the shame of every sinful act you may have committed or that was committed against you--you will no longer need to carry it!

This book draws upon the knowledge of several Christian psychologists regarding the subject of shame, and while much can be learned from their wisdom on the subject, it is only the Word of God that can effect change in your life.

As John McKenzie notes:

"Analytical psychology...can lay bare where the roots of man's estrangement lie; but it cannot offer forgiveness...Psychiatrists have realized that there are no techniques whereby they can dissipate real guilt feelings and their associated shame." [1]

...But don't despair! The truth of God's Word can and will set you free, not only from sin--but from the shackles of its associated shame. God did it for me and countless others. He will do it for you also.

God's strategy for shattering the shackles of shame in your life is not psychology, self-improvement, or group therapy. It is divine revelation. His strategy is based on His Word. If you follow His plan, you, too, will break your shackles regardless of the reason for your shame, the type of shame you bear, or the length of time that you have been held captive by its force.

If you pause and listen closely, you may already hear the sound of your shackles beginning to break in the spirit world.

Chapter One

Shame On You!

What exactly is this potent force called shame? We find this word often linked with "guilt" and "guilt and shame" used as if they were one descriptive term. Both words derive from similar Old English roots, but there is a definite difference between the two.

GUILT:

Guilt means "debt" and it is essentially an emotion resulting from transgression of an accepted standard by a definite, voluntary act. It is concerned with doing or lack of doing, sins of commission or omission--failing to do something right or doing something you know to be wrong.

Common sources of guilt include acts of dishonesty, lying, stealing, selfishness, cheating, infidelity, and hurting others. Guilt says to your conscience, "You made a mistake. What you did was bad."

God-given remorse is actually a positive emotion that distinguishes us from psychopaths who commit grievous offenses without conscience.

SHAME:

Shame, on the other hand, means "to cover up and to envelop" and it is concerned with being rather than doing. Shame says, "You are no good, you are bad, you are inadequate. Shame on you!"

The Apostle Paul illustrates the difference between guilt and shame when he says, "*For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice*" (Romans 7:19). That is guilt emanating from doing. Then Paul agonizes, "*Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*" (Romans 7:24). This is a cry of a tormented soul experiencing the shame of being.

SHAME IS SPIRITUAL BANKRUPTCY

Shame is more than remorse for an act, regret, or a feeling of responsibility. It is internalized disgrace, humiliation, and degradation. Psychologist John Bradshaw portrays shame as hopelessness and spiritual bankruptcy and describes it as:

"A state of being, a core identity. Shame gives you a sense of worthlessness, a sense of failing and falling short as a human being. Shame is a rupture of the self with the self. It is like internal bleeding...An inner torment, a sickness of the soul. A shame-based person is haunted by a sense of absence and emptiness."

Lewis B. Smedes, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, defines shame as:

"A vague, undefined heaviness that presses on our spirit, dampens our gratitude for the goodness of life, and slackens the free flow of joy. Shame...seeps into and discolors all our other feelings, primarily about ourselves, but about almost everyone and everything else in our life as well."

Shame drives you on a hunting expedition into your past, scrutinizing everything you have done wrong and building a case against you like an aggressive prosecutor in a court of law. Many of you reading these pages can readily identify with this description because "court" is in session daily in your own mind. The prosecutor raises the issues of...

...Your failed marriage.

...That aborted or abandoned child.

...Past criminal or sinful actions.

...A lost opportunity, a word spoken in anger, or an affirmation withheld in bitterness.

Relentlessly, the internal interrogation continues.

Guilt leads to godly sorrow which results in confessing and repenting of wrong doing. Paul explains that the Old Testament law was designed for this purpose:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of

the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19-20)

James explains that whoever keeps the whole law and yet offends in one point is guilty of all (James 2:10). Such overwhelming guilt was designed by God to direct us to Jesus Christ...

...Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed...Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:25, 28)

Guilt produces godly sorrow which leads to repentance which results in salvation:

For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (2 Corinthians 7:10)

The "sorrow of the world" is shame because, left unresolved, it leads to death. Dr. Paul Tournier explains that shame is negative if denied and guilt is positive if acknowledged and confessed:

"It is abundantly clear that no man lives free of guilt. Guilt is universal. But according as it is repressed or recognized, so it sets in motion one of two contradictory processes; repressed, it leads to anger, rebellion, fear, and anxiety, a deadening of conscience, an increasing inability to recognize one's faults, and a growing dominance of aggressive tendencies.

But consciously recognized, it leads to repentance, to the peace and security of divine pardon..."

THE SEQUENCE OF SHAME

Shame is associated with the loss of respect by others and the eradication of self-respect. It prohibits intimacy with God because we feel unworthy. Unlike guilt, which is resolved by confession and repentance, shame becomes an identity.

Shame--as distinct from constructive sorrow--is the devil's strategy. For centuries, many have thought shame was the voice of God speaking to their conscience. But the Bible clearly identifies Satan as the accuser of believers and confirms that he is continually active in this commission (Revelation 12:10).

Godly sorrow leads to repentance, but shame produces misery, discouragement, and emotional pain. Constructive sorrow produces a positive change in behavior and once change is made by reconciliation with God and others, the constructive sorrow of guilt vanishes because its purpose is accomplished. The devil's shameful accusations remain, however, even after forgiveness has been sought and received. Such torment haunts the souls of some believers who have walked for 20, 30, or 40 years with the Lord. They simply cannot forget the shame of their past and as Thomas Oden notes:

"The trail of guilt becomes more difficult to track when our footsteps are blurred by the winds and wash of time. Eventually guilt is not directed toward a specific deed at all, but only generally toward 'the past'."

Shame torments you internally through your conscience and externally through condemnation by others. Shame moves into your life and establishes a base of operations resulting in what some psychologists call "a shame-based" personality, meaning that every facet of your person is affected by shame's deadly poison.

HOW SHAME ORIGINATED

Shame was not a natural emotion given to mankind by his Creator. God created Adam and Eve as innocent beings and placed them in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden. They had abundant provision and access to all the trees and fruits of the garden except one. Adam and Eve were warned not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for if they did they would die. The couple did not heed this admonition and their transgression resulted in a continuing cycle of sin being passed down through subsequent ages.

Man's first transgression stemmed from a desire to be other than God created us, to be more than human. It is in the context of this original sin that men first encountered shame. When Adam and Eve were created, they were both naked and were not ashamed (Genesis 2:25), but after they ate the forbidden fruit...

...the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. (Genesis 3:7)

That evening God came for His regular time of fellowship with the couple:

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said,

"Who told you that you were naked...?" (Genesis 3:8-11)

This record confirms what psychologists now recognize, that...

"Exposure of one's self lies at the heart of shame. A shame-based person will guard against exposing his inner self to others, but more significantly, he will guard against exposing himself to himself."

Cowering, hiding, covering...Adam and Eve experienced an emotion that was new to them: SHAME.

- They ran...but you cannot outrun the accusations of shame.
- They hid...but there is no refuge from shame.
- They created a covering of fig leaves...but there is no man-made covering that will conceal shame.

Three basic human relationships were ripped apart through sin, creating the base from which all shame operates:

- 1) The relationships of man with God,
- 2) man with himself,
- 3) and man with others.

With the lethal force of a deadly riptide, Adam and Eve were caught in the swirling spiral of shame.

Chapter Two

The Spiral Of Shame

The shame that originated in the Garden of Eden has spiraled down through the centuries much like an uncontrolled aircraft caught in a powerful wind shear. Its continued revolutions generate a myriad of shame-based reactions which are triggered by words, sounds, feelings, and even tastes and smells. Psychologist John Bradshaw explains:

"The sensory perception is our first and most immediate way of knowing...Every thought we think was first perceived, seen, heard, touched, tasted, or smelled. ...When shame has become internalized, these images are often triggered and send the shame-based person into shame spirals."

A word, a smell, the lyrics of a song, and other similar sensory images trigger the shame associated with painful memories, resulting in a downward spiral of shame-based thoughts and reactions.

SHAME-BASED THINKING

When shame establishes control in your life, it programs your internal faculties to think in terms of "shame-based thinking." This distorted reasoning may include any or all of the following:

PARANOIA:

Shame whispers, "You can tell they don't like you. You don't fit in. They think you aren't good enough." This makes you paranoid--constantly interpreting events as personally threatening. It also creates expectations of ultimate betrayal by friends.

PERSONALIZATION:

Shame-based people relate everything to themselves. When your mate says he is tired, shame says "Yeah...he is tired of you...that's the problem!" Shame causes you to

constantly compare yourself to others and, when you seem to fall short, this generates more shame.

GENERALIZATION:

Shame distorts your thinking. One mistake means, "I'll never learn how to do this." Generalization leads to declarations such as "Why can't I ever get it right? No one cares about me." This results in "either/or" thinking. If you are not brilliant, then you must be stupid. There is no middle ground. Words like "all, everyone, no one, always" signal such shame-based generalization. Shame-based mentality views a simple misdemeanor as a capital offense.

Professor Lewis Smedes provides insight into why shame-based people magnify their flaws. They do it...

"...Mainly because early on they...were permitted to know only their flaws... Nothing good or true or beautiful about them was worth noticing. No smudge was too small to ignore. The least of their weaknesses outweighed the greatest of their strengths."

RATIONALIZATION:

A shame-based person constantly rationalizes their behavior. They excuse, explain, and justify so they do not have to deal with their shame. On the other hand, they may also do good works to try to neutralize their shame and rationalize that they aren't such a bad person.

REPRESSION:

Another attempt to deal with shame is repressing or denying the incidents that produced it. King David learned that this doesn't work too well. He said:

"When I kept silent, my bones grew old, Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night, Your hand was heavy upon me..."

(Psalms 32:3-4)

Denial leads to the submersion of terrible secrets:

"For example, a mother knows that her husband is abusing her daughter, but she chooses not to know. What he is doing is so shameful that...she lies to herself and denies that she is lying--all in order to escape the shame of the horror that is happening inside her lovely family."

CONDEMNATION:

Shame's voice replays repeatedly in your mind like an old record stuck in a groove. It says, "You should have done this...You ought to have done that." Phrases like "I should have" and "if I'd only" are signals of shame's accusations.

Condemnation is different from the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Conviction is specific, focusing on a particular sin and eliciting godly sorrow which leads to confession and repentance. Condemnation is generalized. It declares you convicted, censured, and hopeless without remedy. Jesus declared:

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned..." (John 3:17-18)

HELPLESSNESS:

Shame declares you a victim of circumstances. You view yourself as controlled by other people, your hopeless addictions, bad luck, or fate. You mentally surrender to this helplessness and accept a shamed existence as your destiny.

A SHAME-BASED CONSCIENCE:

Some people attempt to deal with shame by letting "conscience be their guide," as the old saying goes. They allow themselves to be governed by a set of internal morals, principles, and standards.

This is dangerous because your conscience is influenced by society, education, your parents, and peers--and these influences can all be wrong. They may condone lying, stealing, cheating, and even killing, resulting in a conscience that is shameless. The Bible

speaks of a "weak conscience" (1 Corinthians 8:12), a "defiled conscience" (Titus 1:15) and of those whose conscience is "seared with a hot iron" so that they no longer experience guilt (1 Timothy 4:2). The forces of society, training, parents, and peers, can also create a "shame-based" conscience by constantly reinforcing that you are a bad person.

You cannot trust an unregenerate conscience to "be your guide" because it is nourished by environment and experience instead of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul described this struggle:

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do...For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. (Romans 7:15, 19)

Only through the blood of Jesus can a shameful conscience be absolved:

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:22)

SHAME-BASED REACTIONS

Shame-based reactions are implemented to avoid dealing with the root issue of shame. We disguise and distort our shame and cloak it in new vocabulary until we often do not recognize these responses as protective devices designed to avoid self-confrontation. Here are some common shame-based reactions:

SCAPEGOATING:

The term "scapegoating" comes from an Old Testament practice involving the blood sacrifice for sin. Leviticus 16 describes how the High Priest of Israel selected and sacrificed animals for the sin offering. At the climax of the ceremony he laid his hands on the head of a live goat, confessed all the iniquities of Israel over it, and the animal was then led away into the wilderness symbolically bearing the sins of the people. Through this practice the word "scapegoating" entered our vocabulary as a method of avoiding shame or guilt by projecting it onto someone or something else.

Blame is a cover up for shame and a way to pass it on to others. You reduce your own feelings of shame by putting down and criticizing someone else. Carl Nelson observes:

"Psychologically, putting guilt on someone else allows us the opportunity to hate or blame that individual, thus discharging our emotions while our rational faculties justify it. It is a strange procedure, but one of our oldest strategies."

Old indeed, for it actually began in the Garden when Adam blamed his sin on "the woman You gave me" (Genesis 3:12). In blaming our God-given circumstances, environment, or relationships, we are in reality saying that the blame rests with God. As Narramore observes:

"Each time we do this, we deny our own responsibilities and failings...and instead of resolving our problem, we burrow deeper into a rut of self-deception and character stagnation."

PERFECTIONISM:

Because shame portrays you as inferior, you may constantly attempt to prove your worth by being a perfectionist. You must always be right, there is no room for mistakes, you cover up your own errors, and critically shame others who blunder.

Perfectionism goes far beyond simple excellence or pride in performance. It is a driving, controlling force and no matter how hard you try you never quite measure up to the standards you set. Because of this predisposition to failure, perfectionism fosters additional shame and leads to judging, moralizing, and criticizing others who fall short of your arbitrary standards.

You can become so preoccupied with perfectionism that you miss the positive benefits generated by mistakes. As John Bradshaw notes:

"Mistakes are a form of feedback. Every error tells us what we need to correct...You become so preoccupied with defending yourself against the inner critical voices that you miss the opportunity to heed the warning of the mistake."

SELF-PUNISHMENT:

There is a long history of people who mutilated their bodies or in other ways punished themselves to atone for their shame.

In its more subtle forms, such self-punishment is the voice of shame saying, "You don't deserve to be happy." In its acute stage, self-punishment ends in suicide when the internal voice of shame becomes so loud that all voices of hope are drowned out and the only answer to your pain is to end it all. Some of you reading these pages may be at this point right now. If you are--please--do not act on the destructive suggestions of the voice of shame. Before you finish the final page of this study, you will be delivered from your shame.

Self-punishment stemming from shame actually causes neurotic illness:

"When guilt has been pushed into the distorted forms of repressed memory (such as shame), it may return through the back door disguised as asthma, migraine headaches, peptic ulcers, and other psychosomatic illnesses. We punish ourselves, so to speak, with physical pain."

DEFENSIVENESS:

Defensive people are extremely sensitive to criticism or the suggestion of personal blame, they are argumentative, and always must be right. Shame-based people interpret criticism of what they *do* into a judgment of who they *are*. They confuse their do and who.

A defensive person tries to exonerate himself because if he cannot do so then he is forced to admit his own inadequacies. Instead of confronting his shame and dealing with it, he constantly defends his actions, position, and reasoning:

"Our shame defenses keep us from showing ourselves to anyone else. More tragically, these defenses keep us from looking at ourselves."

PATRONIZING:

Patronizing is a very subtle way of deferring your shame. On the surface, you seem to help another person by support and encouragement, but in reality you have a condescending attitude which defers your own shame by shaming them.

CONTROLLING:

A shame-based person attempts to control other people's thoughts, feelings, and actions to insure that no one can ever shame him again. In many families this control results in suppression of true feelings. There is no honest feedback, emotional growth is hindered, and shame is further perpetrated.

In its extreme form, such control results in physical and emotional abuse, for if you are an abuser then those you abuse have no power to shame you. This may be one reason many who are abused as children later become abusive parents:

"Parents who physically humiliate and abuse their own children were typically abused when they were young. They have never resolved the internalized shame in their own lives."

ARROGANT SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS:

Arrogance is a psychological cover up for shame. The arrogant, self-righteous person hides his true self from others and in so doing, hides from himself.

The Old Testament story of Abner and Saul's son, Ishbosheth, illustrates this arrogant, self-righteous, self-justifying shame-based response. Abner initially took King Saul's side in his conflict with David, but when it was evident that David was growing stronger and Saul correspondingly weaker, Abner's status (as well as his life) was jeopardized (2 Samuel 2-4).

Abner's dealings with Saul's concubines and resources were sinful and as Saul's fortunes declined, Ishbosheth, Saul's heir, confronted Abner. Ishbosheth hardly began

his reprimand when Abner blazed forth at him with chagrining accusations. By arrogantly branding Ishbosheth as a criminal, Abner justified his own sinful conduct as well as his disloyal desire to switch to David's side in the conflict.

The Pharisees and Sadducees of New Testament times exemplified similar self-righteousness. They gave, prayed, and fasted to be seen of men and demanded that others abide by their oppressive standards. "I thank you that I am not as this poor sinner," said one proud Pharisee who witnessed a poor sinner's prayer. His arrogance cloaked his own guilt and shame in a disguise of religious self-righteousness.

ADDICTIONS:

Psychologist John Bradshaw views shame as the core and fuel for all addictive behavior. He comments:

"The content of the addiction, whether it be an ingestive addiction or an activity addiction (like work, buying, or gambling) is an attempt at an intimate relationship...Each addictive acting out creates life-damaging consequences which create more shame. The new shame fuels the cycle of addiction."

AGGRESSION:

Because a shame-based person does not value himself, he lacks respect for others. This leads to contempt, anger, retaliation, and rage. If a person with internalized aggression also acquires power, then it results in violence and criminal behavior. Bradshaw comments:

"While no one can or has proven that every criminal is acting out his own shame, I believe there is enough data to support the hypothesis that this is most often the case. Surely no one has offered any other solution to the everlasting problem of crime and criminality. Without any doubt, criminals feel like social outcasts and bear enormous shame."

ALIENATION AND DISASSOCIATION:

A shame-based person sometimes will alienate himself by self-imposed isolation. Such behavior may be disguised by explanations such as "I am very reserved" or "I am a private person." In reality, the withdrawal is an attempt to conceal shame. In its ultimate form, such alienation results in living life as a recluse from society.

RITUAL:

In New Testament times the Pharisees and Sadducees learned they could not keep the law of God themselves, so they became self-righteous, demanding, critical leaders. They formulated hundreds of detailed rules which they tacked on to their religion.

Their rituals emanated from the shame-base of their own failures as evidenced in the story of the woman caught in adultery. They brought her to Jesus, quoting their law that prescribed she should die for her sin. We find them quietly slinking away when Jesus said, "Let him without sin cast the first stone."

The religious rituals of the Pharisees and Sadducees were attempts to conceal their own shame but, as God's Word declares, there are no gifts, sacrifices, or rituals that can rid the conscience of the shame of sin. These things were "*symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience*" (Hebrews 9:9).

THE POWER OF SHAME

We have examined the definition, origin, and the downward spiral of shame-based thinking and responses. We are now ready to examine the tremendous power this negative emotion of shame exerts over our lives.

As we have learned in this chapter, shame affects us all. It motivates the perfectionist, fuels the aggressor, and entombs the alienated in emotional isolation. People try many ways to escape shame, but shame-based thinking and responses are like a Band-Aid covering a festering, infected sore. The Band-Aid has no healing power and, if the

wound is not treated, gangrene will eventually spread its toxic poison throughout the entire system. Lewis Sherrill notes:

"We do not get rid of it (shame) merely by failing to recognize its existence or by misunderstanding its nature. It continues to be one of the common experiences, perhaps not of all persons, but certainly of many. By some it is overpoweringly felt, by others it is carefully hidden..."

The power of shame is manifested in five areas in our lives:

- 1. Inherited shame** results from the basic sin nature which we all receive at birth due to the original transgression of man in the Garden of Eden.
- 2. Individual shame** results from sins you personally commit.
- 3. Incessant shame** refers to the continuous cycle of shame manifested from generation to generation. If you do not deal with shame successfully, then you pass it on to your children and they duplicate it by passing it on to the next generation.
- 4. Imposed shame** is inflicted upon you by others who put you down and tell you that you are stupid or not good enough.
- 5. Institutional shame** comes through the institutions of society. You may be shamed because of the color of your skin, your family background, or the city or nation in which you live.

In the next five chapters we will examine each of these manifestations of shame in detail so you will better understand how these strongholds are established. In the remaining chapters of the book, you will learn how to shatter these shackles in your life and the lives of those to whom you minister.

Chapter Three

Inherited Shame

Shame shackles you to the past. It erects a spiritual partition between you and God and until you learn how to break through this barrier, you will continue to struggle with unresolved issues in your life:

- You will never feel good enough to approach God in prayer.
- You will never be able to put the past behind you and as long as you live in the past you will never have a future.
- You will never rise up to fulfill your destiny in God.

The levels of shame that shroud us are multilayered, much like an onion's skin. The first level of shame with which we must deal is inherited shame. In subsequent chapters we will examine individual, incessant, imposed, and institutional shame.

THE SHAME YOU INHERITED

Inherited shame results from the basic sin nature we all receive at birth due to the original transgression of man in the Garden of Eden. Prior to their original sin, Adam and Eve were sinless and knew no shame:

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:25)

Living in an exquisite garden, Adam and Eve had permission from God to eat of every tree except one: The tree of knowledge of good and evil. Into this pristine environment slithered the serpent, Satan, who challenged:

"...Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the

*day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
(Genesis 3:1-3)*

The appeal of the enemy was "you shall be like God," indicating that Eve somehow was not living up to her potential. The temptation was to be better, to know more, to reach some illusive standard of perfection--but it led to iniquity which generated shame.

Once activated, shame has a ripple effect like a stone shattering the placid calm of a quiet pool. The one who is shamed (in this case, Eve) draws others into their shame--and so we find Adam yielding to the same temptation. The spiral of shame-related responses and shame-based thinking discussed in the last chapter affects not only the individual who is shamed, but all those related to him whether by blood or acquaintance. If you do not deal with shame, you will lure others into its cess pool--your children, your mate, your friends--because shame begets shame.

HIDING IN SHAME

Immediately after their transgression, we find Adam and Eve experiencing the shame of their act, covering their nakedness with fig leaves, and hiding from the presence of the Lord:

*Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he (Adam) said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."
(Genesis 3:9-10)*

Why was Adam afraid? Why did he hide? Because he was naked and ashamed. Shame generated fear and led to alienation, withdrawal, and cover-up. From shame came blame--"the woman gave me of the tree" and "the serpent deceived me and I ate." The spiral of shame-based thinking and responses was activated.

God's question to you today is the same as it was to Adam and Eve: "Where are you?" Are you alienated from Him by your shame, cowering in humiliation, fearful to come into His presence, and blaming others for your condition?

SHAME WAS PASSED ON

Man's original transgression created a sinful nature that was transmitted to succeeding generations resulting in the sad reality that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). We all inherit this basic sin nature and its propensity to catapult us into the spiral of sin and shame:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. (Romans 5:12)

This means all of us must deal with the inherited shame of this basic sin nature which is sometimes called the "flesh" or the "old man." The flesh entices us to sinful acts which generate more shame. The Apostle Paul wrote of the resulting dilemma:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells, for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. (Romans 7:18-19)

Paul said it was sin living in him that kept him in bondage (Romans 7:20). But we cannot simply blame sin for our struggles and go merrily on our way in life because God holds us responsible for sin: "*The soul who sins shall die*" (Ezekiel 18:20).

This responsibility for sin, left unresolved, generates even more shame when we realize that...

...the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:7-8)

The inherited sin nature gives birth to the works of the flesh listed in Galatians:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

These sins emanate from the inherent sin nature, each generates more shame, and so the cycle continues. It seems to be an impossible dilemma because...

...the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (Galatians 5:17)

Paul's description of this sin nature in Romans and Galatians portrays a tremendously powerful negative force. It is evident in Romans chapter 7 that he is testifying from firsthand experience because of his repeated use of the word "I." Talk about shame-based declarations! "*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells,*" said Paul. "*O wretched man that I am,*" he cried. The word "wretched" denotes the exhausting struggle in which he engaged. He realized that although the fault lay in the corruption of his nature, it was not an excuse for the guilt and shame of his sin. Finally Paul cried out, "*Who will deliver me from this body of death?*"

Perhaps you are making similar shame-based declarations...

..."I just can't seem to change."

..."I've always been like this."

..."I am a wretched, evil person."

And perhaps--like Paul--you are crying out, "Who can deliver me? How can I be free of the shame I have carried for years?"

"HEY, PAUL...WHAT HAPPENED?"

The major portion of Romans 7 paints a dismal picture, yet we find Romans 8 starting with a powerful proclamation that there is no more condemnation:

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus... (Romans 8:1)

As Matthew Henry notes:

"He does not say, 'There is no accusation,' for there is; but the accusation is thrown out and the indictment squashed. He does not say 'There is nothing that deserves condemnation,' for there is...But (he says) there is no condemnation against him."

Romans chapter 8 concludes with Paul's declaration that there is no separation from God's love:

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

Paul proclaims that there is no depth of disgrace--no shame in this life or the one to come, no person or power--that can separate him from God.

How can this man possibly declare "no condemnation" and "no separation" from God? Isn't this the same guy that wrote of his internal struggles in Romans chapter 7, calling himself a "wretched" man who was no good?

Later we find Paul recalling his life and dramatic conversion. He said:

"I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him."
(Acts 22:4, 5, 20)

How can the same man who did these things shamelessly say, "There is no more condemnation? I am no longer separated from God's love!"

We also find Paul declaring to the chief priests and the Jerusalem council:

"...Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (Acts 23:1)

"Hey, wait a minute Paul," we say. "What about all those people you persecuted and put in prison? You stood there and did nothing when they were killing Stephen. You were consenting to his death. How can you say that you have a good conscience before God?"

Paul recalls the facts of his sin but the feelings of shame are gone. What made the difference between his struggle in Romans 7 and the victorious declarations of Romans chapter 8? What happened that enabled this man, having just admitted his sins, in the next breath to shamelessly declare, "I have lived in good conscience before God?"

How did Paul overcome the shame of what he had done? We must learn his secret. We must find out what effected this great victory in his life, for in so doing we, too, can be freed from our own inherent shame.

Chapter Four

Individual Shame

Individual shame--as well as imposed, institutional, and incessant shame--is rooted in the inherited shame nature we discussed in the last chapter. Individual shame, however, is activated by sins you personally commit.

The Bible itemizes specific shame-generators including pride (Proverbs 11:2), refusing correction (Proverbs 13:18), lack of discipline (Proverbs 19:26), hasty, uninformed decisions (Proverbs 18:13), forsaking God (Jeremiah 17:13), and iniquity (Ezekiel 43:10; Proverbs 13:5)--the latter of which is inclusive of all sinful acts. The guilt and condemnation generated by such sins result in shame if there is no resolution through confession and repentance.

Shame alienates you from God, others, and self. Individual shame is the most difficult type of shame to deal with, for it is hard to forgive yourself for sins, mistakes, and bad decisions. This is graphically illustrated by the following quotation from a prison inmate describing her shame:

"I could hide my sins from everyone but myself. No physical torments can match the torments of an accusing conscience. An accusing conscience means hell on earth. No earthly wealth, human love, music, fun or intoxication can dispel or comfort the agony of its gnawing teeth. My sins were finding me out. I was suffering for every sin I had ever committed. Sin was breeding a moral ulcer. A diseased character is worse than a diseased body. My character was suffering. I could not escape my sin."

A SEASON OF SHAME

The Old Testament account of King David's sin with Bathsheba illustrates the powerful force of individual shame. David's season of shame began when he was well on his way to fulfilling his God-appointed destiny in life. David had survived the trying years of exile and now reigned as King of Israel. As Ivor Powell notes:

"David's career was at an all-time high. Fresh from a series of victories in battle, he had reached the peak of public admiration. He enjoyed an endless supply of money, power, and fame. Never are we more vulnerable than when we have it all, and David was no exception."

One afternoon, David arose from a nap to walk on the roof of the palace where the cool breezes offered relief from the heat of the day. David actually should not have been relaxing in the luxury and ease of the palace, for Israel was at war and it was the duty of kings to lead the battle. Matthew Henry comments:

"Had he been now at his post at the head of his forces, he would have been out of the way of this temptation. When we are out of the way of our duty we are in the way of temptation."

From the palace roof, David saw a beautiful young woman bathing. This pause in the way of temptation, like that of Eve on the path winding by the tree of knowledge, plunged David into the devastating cycle of sin and shame.

Despite the fact that Bathsheba was another man's wife, David brought her to the palace and had intimate relations with her. A short time later, Bathsheba sent word to David that she had conceived a child from their adulterous union.

The news that Bathsheba was pregnant panicked David. Her husband, Uriah, was one of David's mighty men and a national hero (2 Samuel 23:39). As Matthew Henry notes:

"Uriah...was a person of honor and virtue, one that was now abroad in his service, hazarding his life in the high places of the field for the honor and safety of him and his kingdom, where he himself should have been."

David also knew that, according to the law, he and Bathsheba deserved death by stoning.

Trying to conceal his sin, David sent for Uriah to come back to Jerusalem and bring news of the battle. David wined and dined Uriah and encouraged him to spend the night with Bathsheba, but Uriah refused this pleasure. He said:

"The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." (2 Samuel 11:11)

Manipulation having failed, David conceived an even more diabolical plan. He sent orders to the commander of the army to set Uriah in the front of the hottest battle and then abandon him to the enemy. Matthew Henry comments:

"He sent the letter by Uriah himself...nothing could be more base and barbarous than to make him an accessory to his own death."

One sin has led to another in David's life. First there was transgression, then manipulation, and now murder. Chuck Swindoll warns:

"Playing with sin is playing with fire. If you don't snuff out temptation when it first sparks in your mind, the fire may burn out of control. What started as a lustful thought in David's mind spread to adultery, which spread to deception, which culminated in murder...Take temptation seriously. Stop sin before it ever starts."

After Uriah was killed in battle and Bathsheba properly mourned his death, David sent for her and she became his wife.

It appeared for a while that David got away with adultery and murder, but the Bible records that "the thing David had done displeased the Lord." You may think you get away with sin, but you really don't and--for sure--as long as you do not deal with your sin you will never eliminate its associated shame. Psalms 32 describes David's shame in this unrepentant state:

When I kept silent, my bones grew old, Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. (Psalms 32:3-4)

David was depressed, guilty, and even suffered physical effects from his shame. Did you know that physical illnesses can be perpetuated by negative emotions like shame?

The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, But who can bear a broken spirit? (Proverbs 18:14)

When you are sick, a peaceful, settled spirit will sustain you during your illness and aid recovery. A spirit broken by shame (or other emotions like bitterness, anger, unforgiveness, etc.), will hinder your recovery.

God's convicting power was at work in David, for he acknowledges that the Lord's hand was "heavy upon me," but David's deception and lack of repentance produced the internal misery of shame.

THOU ART THE MAN!

Several months after David's sin, the Prophet Nathan came knocking at the palace door:

"Notice that God didn't send Nathan to confront David immediately after he committed adultery--or even after the murder. He doesn't always settle up with us in the springtime of our sin. Often, He waits until we've experienced a barren winter in our souls."

Nathan used a parable to expose David's unconfessed sin. It was a moving story of a poor man who had one lamb raised as a beloved pet and a rich man with many flocks and herds. When a traveler came to visit the rich man, he refused to kill his own animals to prepare dinner, but instead slaughtered the lamb that was dearly loved by the poor man.

This parable aroused David's anger and he said to Nathan, "*As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!*" (2 Samuel 12:5). A poignant hush fell over the throne room as Nathan said to David:

"...You are the man! Thus says the Lord of Israel; I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives...the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more! Why

have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife" ... (2 Samuel 12:7-9)

Talk about shameful accusations! Nathan declared...

...You have despised the commandment of the Lord.

...You have done evil.

...You have killed.

...You have taken another man's wife.

Here is David, who as a lad killed a giant on the battlefield, but as a king failed in the confrontation with the giant of lust. The warrior who slew thousands of enemy forces is now taken captive by sin. Here is the "man after God's own heart," the sweet psalmist of Israel, with shameful accusations reverberating down the halls of his palace. He cannot blame his inherited sin nature and go on his way. He cannot blame another person or circumstances for his shame, because God said, "Thou art the man!"

In the last chapter we left the Apostle Paul crying out from his **inherited** shame, "Oh wretched man that I am!" Now we leave David with God's hand heavy upon him, his vitality gone, and his soul groaning from the effects of his **individual** shame.

Is there any hope for release from the shame that binds us?

Chapter Five

Incessant Shame

In previous chapters we exposed the problems of inherited and individual shame. This chapter concerns incessant shame, which is the continuous cycle of shame manifested perpetually from generation to generation.

Shame is essentially fostered in significant relationships because if you do not respect or value someone you usually cannot be shamed by them. John Bradshaw explains how shame is perpetuated within a family:

"When children have shame-based parents, they identify with them. This is the first step in the child's internalizing shame."

Psychologists have come to realize that shame-based parents act shamelessly and pass their shame on to their children because *"There is no way to teach self-value if one does not value oneself."*

If you do not deal with your shame, you pass it on to your children and they will pass it to their children. Shame then becomes multi-generational, meaning it is firmly entrenched within the family and passed from one generation to the next. Bradshaw explains the continuing cycle:

"Shame-based people find other shame-based people and get married. As a couple each carries the shame from his or her own family system, their marriage will be grounded in their shame-core."

Shame results in a lack of intimacy in marriage because it is difficult to maintain close relationships when you feel defective and flawed. The results of this shame-based union are detailed by Bradshaw:

"Shame-based couples maintain non-intimacy through poor communication, nonproductive circular fighting, games, manipulation, vying for control, withdrawal, blaming, and confluence (the agreement never to disagree)."

THE HAZARDS OF HEREDITY

"Heredity" is the term given to the means by which living organisms reproduce after their kind. The word "heredity" concerns the presence or absence of certain characteristics including physical, emotional, and personality traits that are passed from one generation to another.

It is evident that physical problems are transmitted from generation to generation through heredity. Secular insurance companies and doctors know this and this is why they ask, "Is there a history of heart disease in your family? Is there diabetes or high blood pressure?"

While doctors, psychologists, and scientists recognize that physical infirmities and characteristics are passed down through generations, they usually do not acknowledge that spiritual tendencies have multi-generational consequences. This accounts for observable phenomena like the following:

- A child who is abused swears, "I will never do that to my kids," yet, when he becomes a parent, he abuses his own children.
- The child of an alcoholic takes one drink and is addicted for life.
- Criminal behavior, suicide, depression, etc. appears to "run" in certain families.

In an article in Newsweek Magazine entitled "Breaking The Divorce Cycle" it was noted that during the 1970's and 1980's a million children a year in the United States watched their parents divorce and these youngsters, when they became adults themselves, were the first generation to experience widespread divorce. Data confirms that these descendants of divorce have a higher chance of getting divorced themselves than kids from intact families. This was certainly not caused by genes, physical heredity, or chemical heredity. So what is the problem?

GENERATIONAL HEREDITY

The Bible offers answers to these and similar dilemmas. Scriptures reveal that man is body, soul, and spirit. Chemical and environmental heredity affect your physical body and spiritual heredity affects your soul and spirit. The Bible describes the spiritual

forces behind inherited criminal behavior, hereditary illness, and recurring social problems as "curses" or "strongholds" of Satan.

God's Word teaches that man's spiritual heredity is influenced by invisible forces. The Bible addresses both the negative and positive aspects of this invisible generational link.

Exodus 20:5 warns that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children down to the fourth generation. God said:

"...I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me." (Exodus 20:5)

God established a law of "culpability" which is "responsibility for wrong or error." The Bible teaches that while every man will answer for his own sin, physical, mental, and emotional weaknesses can also be transmitted to succeeding generations and become spiritual strongholds.

THE STRONG MAN MOVES IN

Proverbs 26:2 (KJV) declares, *"...The curse causeless shall not come."* When the curse of shame--or any negative emotion, illness, or deviant behavior--is passed on in a family there is a reason for it. Jesus said:

No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. (Mark 3:27 KJV)

One meaning of the word "house" used in this Scripture is "generation." Satan thinks that your house--your family and its succeeding generations--is his house. Left unchallenged, he establishes residency and expands his base of operations to succeeding generations. The bondage grows stronger in each generation; hence a "stronghold" of the enemy is entrenched.

In Matthew 12:43-45, Jesus explained:

"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation." (Matthew 12:43-45)

When the devil is cast out, he says to himself, "I am going to return to my house." The devil desires your house--your generation, your seed, your children--for himself! If you try to get rid of your shame--or any other negative emotion or sin--and you don't have the right strategy, Satan returns with seven more wicked spirits and your condition worsens. Satan goes after the next generation and they will suffer even greater reprisals from shame.

Marilyn Hickey questions:

"Why is this generation so bad? Sin is the worst we've ever seen it because the evil spirits have come with seven times more to attack. Whenever there has been a cleansing, they come after the kids to make them seven times worse."

The original root of shame is your own inherent and individual sin. Left unchallenged, shame will be passed on incessantly using your "house"--your generational heritage--as the mode of transmission--and it will grow increasingly stronger in each generation.

THE CYCLE OF DAVID'S SHAME

Shortly after David's adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, we find similar sins being committed by David's sons. The "curse" was passed on and the cycle of shame continued:

After this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. Amnon was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick; for she was a virgin. And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her. (2 Samuel 13:1-2)

We find David's son, Amnon, tempted with the same sin his father battled, lusting for a woman he could not have. With the help of a crafty cousin named Jonadab, Amnon concocted a plan that rivaled David's scheme for Bathsheba.

Amnon pretended to be ill and when King David came to see him, he requested "Please let Tamar my sister come and make a couple of cakes for me." So David sent a message to Tamar saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare some food for him."

When Tamar arrived, Amnon was lying down still feigning illness so she baked some cakes and placed them before him. Then Amnon said to the other people who were in the house, "Have everyone but Tamar leave."

Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the bedroom that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes which she had made and brought them to Amnon her brother in the bedroom. Now when she had brought them to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing!"

(2 Samuel 13:10-12)

Despite her appeals, Amnon raped Tamar and afterward told her to get out. When she refused to leave, he had her thrown out by a servant. Tamar put ashes on her head, tore her robe as a symbol of mourning, and went her way crying bitterly.

When David's son Absalom learned what Amnon had done, he was outraged and orchestrated Amnon's death in revenge (2 Samuel 13:21-39). David's shame had passed on to his children.

Perhaps you, too, recognize that shame has been passed on to you by previous generations or that you are passing shame on to your own descendants.

The question is: Is there any hope for breaking this cycle of incessant shame?

Chapter Six

Imposed Shame

Shame is the belief that who you are and what you have done is bad. Some of us have lived with this conviction so long that...

"We feel toward our shame the way a person who has been in prison for forty years feels about his cell: He longs to be out of it and yet is frightened to leave it."

Unresolved inherited, individual, and incessant shame are the foundations of imposed shame which is a shame inflicted upon you by others who put you down, tell you that you are stupid, or say you are not good enough. Imposed shame says, "You have let us down. You are a bad person."

People imposed shame on Jesus, for the Bible says He was "despised and rejected by men" (Isaiah 53:3).

The seeds of imposed shame are planted in childhood through circumstances that reinforce feelings of worthlessness. These experiences may include religion, identification with shame-based models of shame, shameful accusations, abandonment, and abuse.

RELIGION:

Imposed shame is often disguised as religion. One of the first mentions of the word "shame" in the Bible is in a religious setting where Aaron shamed God's people before the enemy by condoning idol worship (Exodus 32:25).

Shame is advanced by religious regulations that dictate you must live up to certain traditions in order to be acceptable. It is even promoted in some hymns we sing denouncing ourselves as "worms" and "unworthy" of relationship with our Creator.

If a church is preoccupied with guilt, the sermons provide opportunities for moralizing and criticizing and even prayer time can perpetuate shame. Professor Smedes explains that...

"...We feel compelled to make up for what we lack inside by obeying all the prescriptions on the outside. Graceless religion creates the illusion that if we only follow the letter of the rules, we will be acceptable, and that if we fail we will be rejected and despised."

It is true that Old Testament people who had personal encounters with God came away with such feelings, but this was before God manifested His humanity through Jesus Christ. The way for sinful man to approach God was cleared through the sacrificial blood of Jesus and we can now enter boldly into His presence. Professor Smedes comments:

"Undeserved shame may come from religion, but it only gets in God's way. Religion without grace can tie shame around our souls like a choke chain and never offer relief."

IDENTIFICATION WITH SHAME-BASED MODELS:

Identification is a normal human process and one of our most basic needs. We all seek to belong to something or someone beyond ourselves. John Bradshaw notes:

"With the exception of self-preservation, no other striving is as compelling as this need, which begins with our care givers and extends to family, peer group, culture, nation, and world."

When we have shame-based care givers, family, and friends we internalize the shame imposed by identification with these models.

ACCUSATIONS:

Children face a barrage of shame-producing accusations. "Aren't you ashamed to behave like that?" the parent questions. Professor Smedes explains that such shaming may be done...

"...in bits and pieces, with facial expressions, chiding voices, and pious rebukes, without ever saying, 'I disown you.' However, they get the message across to their children as clearly as if they announced it in the newspaper."

Teachers sometimes shame students in front of the class or shame is imposed by a child's peers who call him stupid, fat, ugly, or tease and laugh at him.

ABANDONMENT:

Abandonment by parents or a spouse always results in imposed shame because you think it is your fault the relationship terminated. Feelings of abandonment are not generated by physical absence alone. Shame also results when children are told they were unplanned, unwanted, or what society terms "illegitimate." A tragic alienation also separates children and parents who are addicted to drugs and alcohol.

ABUSE:

Physical, verbal, and emotional abuse creates a strong shame-base because they reinforce a child's belief that he is bad, stupid, and worthless:

"While it is a rare person who cannot recall a parent's loss of temper and name calling, the people who suffer from this sort of abuse can rarely remember anything else. The parent on whom they depended for their first sense of self-worth gave them the message, 'you are bad and deserve to have bad things happen to you.'"

An abused child always carries some expectation that their parents will love them if they are just a little better and this false assumption frequently leads to perfectionism. Their shame is expressed by constantly trying to prove themselves and measure up to their parents' standards. Their shame leads them to accept pain and suffering as their lot in life, to settle for and endure loveless relationships because they believe they deserve no better.

"SHE DESERVES TO DIE!"

One of the greatest examples of imposed shame is found in the New Testament account of the woman caught in the act of adultery:

Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him.

(John 8:3-6)

This woman was observed committing immorality and the religious leaders were livid. The voice of legalistic religion always says, "You deserve to die." Bruce Narramore observes that their response is not surprising:

"...for legalism has been a problem since the day Christianity was born...In Jesus' time there were highly legalistic religious leaders. In fact, some of the worst legalists who ever lived were operating then. They were known as Pharisees."

The Pharisees created long lists of regulations, inflicted them upon others, and then imposed shame on them when they fell short. They became accusers of the accused. This was confirmed by the story of the adulterous woman, for it reveals the motive of the religious leaders was "that they might have something of which to accuse Him" (John 8:6). Before the incident concluded, however, their own internal shame-base was exposed.

The poor adulterous woman trembled under the harsh accusations of these legalistic religious leaders:

"Thus this woman symbolizes all the despised people of the world, all those whom we see daily, crushed by judgments which weigh heavily upon them...She symbolizes all psychological, social, and spiritual inferiority. And her accusers symbolize the whole of judging, condemnatory, contemptuous humanity."

Jesus does not deny this woman's guilt or suggest a rehabilitation program. He does not argue with the scribes and Pharisees or start gathering up stones to join them. Jesus didn't say a word. He simply stooped down and began to write on the ground:

Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. (John 8:9)

The Word says "those who heard it." Heard what? Jesus hadn't said anything yet. He simply wrote in the sand. We don't know what He wrote, but we do know this-- something these religious leaders "heard" caused them to quietly steal away. Perhaps they "heard" the voice of their own shame?

When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8:10-11)

Jesus blotted out conscious shame in the adulterous woman and brought to consciousness the repressed shame of the Pharisees. Their silent withdrawal was an admission of their own shame.

Jesus then told the woman, "You are no longer condemned." Do you long to hear these same words? Does your heart cry out for release from the shackles of shame? Has religion declared, "You deserve to die?" Were you shamed by abandonment, abuse, and accusations?

Then you must persevere in your quest to break the shackles of shame. Do not be intimidated by your accusers, even if they are picking up stones to hurl against you. Before you finish this study, you will learn how to break free from the shackles of imposed shame!

Chapter Seven

Institutional Shame

Institutional shame is a type of shame that is based on concepts of what is considered right and wrong, acceptable or unacceptable by others. It results when we are rejected by the group or when our group is rejected by another or our culture at large. Institutional shame belittles you because of your personal background, your family, where you live, or the way you dress.

One man who is now a minister in an international Christian organization struggled with shame all his life. Because when he was young, his family was poor. They lived in a tumbled-down shack on the wrong side of town and he was embarrassed to invite his friends to his home. Society considered his family "lower class" or "white trash" and he wasn't accepted by his peers because he was from "the wrong side of town."

This early environment created a shame-base that marked his entire life. Even as a successful professional, this man struggled constantly with inferiority feelings. When his marriage failed, he battled the shame of divorce and the institutional attitudes of the denomination by which he was ordained. "You can no longer be a minister," they said. "You are a failure."

Institutional shame is sometimes inflicted by society within the context of simple transactions like collecting an unemployment check or accepting charity. The person across the counter glares at you and you are shamed. A severely disabled or disfigured individual may be rejected in some societies because his affliction is erroneously believed to be judgment by evil spirits for wrongdoing.

You may experience institutional shame because you are an ex-felon or you are a convict currently serving time in prison. In a new legal climate designed to penalize repeat offenders society has declared, "Three strikes and you're out." You may be facing

incarceration for the rest of your life with no hope of parole. You understand the debt you owe society but you struggle with the shame imposed by a society that concludes, "There is no hope for you. You are a bad person. You cannot change."

Someone reading these words right now may even be suffering from the most extreme shame any society can infer—you may be sitting in prison on death row waiting for your sentence to be administered.

SHAME-BASED SOCIETIES

There are entire societies that are actually shame-based cultures. For example, many Germans still bear the institutional shame of the holocaust of World War II. Their minds are tortured with scenes of injustice about which--most likely out of fear--they said and did nothing. A few Germans carry even deeper remorse, struggling with the hidden shame of having actually participated in atrocities against the Jews.

The treatment of Black people in America during the pre-Civil War period generated an institutional shame that still afflicts that nation today. During the slavery era some people claimed that slaves were not civilized or fully human. Other people erroneously contrived Biblical explanations for such beliefs, claiming the curse placed upon Ham by Noah in Genesis 9:24-25 justified Black slavery.

Institutional shame is actually a form of scapegoating, which as we learned in Chapter Two, is a shame-based response. Carl Nelson observes regarding the false claims of Biblical justification for slavery:

"This was a perfect scapegoat strategy, for it discharged the guilt and shame of slavery right back to God."

When "scapegoating" like this continues, it eventually results in an absolution of personal responsibility:

"A person gives up responsibility for some of his or her actions by identification with a socially approved norm of behavior. When this happens, the individual...feels little guilt when orders are executed from that collective will which, in fact, may go against his or her own personal norm of conduct."

Thus, unresolved institutional shame in its ultimate manifestation produces shameless conduct leading to a mob mentality and brutality such as that demonstrated by Hitler's forces in World War II:

"When Hitler's field marshal, Hermann Goering, sat in a row with the Nazi criminals and listened to lawyers recite the specifics of his evil life, he felt no shame. He leaned over to Albert Speer and said, `Never mind, in a few years they will build monuments in our honor. "

Goering had succumbed to a shameless conscience like that spoken of by the prophet Jeremiah:

Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush... (Jeremiah 6:15)

SHAME AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Institutional shame is a concept that must be dealt with if we are to be successful in spiritual warfare in our communities and nations. Peter Wagner explains:

"Guilt that has never been dealt with is an open invitation to demonic powers. Before we can bind the strongman, we need to deal with the sins that have given the enemy a legal right to occupy. The devil and his principalities have been defeated by Jesus on the cross and they would not be able to stay on unless they were relying on old invitations that have never been canceled."

Unresolved shame is one of the "old invitations" that provides the enemy with occupational rights and creates spiritual strongholds over specific geographic areas.

The Bible addresses the subject of individual trespasses, declaring that all have sinned and advising us of our personal responsibility for sin. But the Bible also addresses

corporate sin and reveals that intercessors can confess collective sin even though they did not personally participate in the transgression. Ezra provides an example of this. He prayed:

"And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments." (Ezra 9:10)

Ezra itemized a whole list of transgressions in his prayer recorded in Ezra 9, none of which he committed personally, but for which he interceded corporately for God's people. He concluded by saying:

"Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!" (Ezra 9:15)

Just as there is corporate and individual sin, there is corporate and individual guilt and shame. In order to execute spiritual warfare in behalf of our communities and nations we cannot ignore the issue of institutional shame. It must become a subject of our intercession and warfare strategies. As Wagner notes, intercessors can engage in confession and, even though they did not personally participate in the sin or shame, something that displeases God can be removed through their prayers. Wagner explains:

"When that happens, God can pour out His Holy Spirit. It then becomes easier for unbelievers to hear the gospel of Christ, repent of their personal sins and be saved. This is how strategic-level intercession paves the way for effective evangelism."

BATTLING INSTITUTIONAL SHAME

Whatever form of institutional shame you bear, you are not alone in your struggle. Jesus endured institutional shame because of His birthplace. The Pharisees questioned:

"...Are you also from Galilee?... for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee." (John 7:52)

Jesus also endured the shame surrounding the circumstances of his birth, having been conceived by Mary through the Holy Spirit prior to her marriage to Joseph. In one

confrontation the Pharisees boasted, "*We were not born of fornication*" (John 8:41). They also accused Jesus of being a Samaritan, a segment of society greatly despised by Jews:

"...Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (John 8:48)

Jesus came unto His own people and they would not receive Him (John 1:11). Jesus battled institutional shame all His life.

A woman named Rahab, whose story is recorded in Joshua chapters 2 and 6, also was a target of institutional shame. From these chapters we learn that Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan, detailed in the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy, concluded as they reached the eastern side of the Jordan River, on the plains of Moab, just north of the Dead Sea.

Joshua assumed leadership of God's people to direct the occupation of their promised land of Canaan and he dispatched two spies to survey the fortified city of Jericho, the first target of their invasion. Unlike the venture of the 12 spies recorded in Numbers 13, the object of this mission was not to determine whether they should enter Canaan, but when and how it should be done.

Jericho, the ancient "city of palms" to which the spies were sent, was a prosperous and populous city surrounded by two great walls. These walls represented the city's greatest strength and it would be necessary to breach or destroy them to take the city. According to archaeological findings, there was a space of 12 to 15 feet between these walls. Timbers were laid from one wall to the other and houses of sun-dried brick were constructed to bridge the space between them.

Built over this gap between the two walls of Jericho was the house of a woman named Rahab who was a harlot. There was a constant stream of visitors in and out of her house and this probably influenced the spies to seek refuge there. They presumed that two strangers would not be noticed and the character of the woman was of no particular concern to them. The presence of these men did not go undetected, however:

And it was told the king of Jericho saying, "Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country." So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country." (Joshua 2:2-3)

Rahab took the men to the roof of her house and hid them with stalks of flax that were laid out for drying and processing. When the king's messengers arrived she told them:

"...Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them." (Joshua 2:4-5)

After the departure of the king's messengers Rahab went up to the roof and addressed the spies:

"...I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the Lord, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." (Joshua 2:9-13)

The two spies agreed to this request and Rahab helped them escape over the city wall from a window in her home. The spies told her to hang a scarlet cord from the window through which they escaped so they could easily identify her house and spare it from destruction when Israel invaded Jericho:

"Some Bible commentators say that this scarlet ribbon represented Rahab's immoral occupation. It was her 'red light' and therefore, would cause no suspicion. Nobody would suspect it to be a sign of espionage."

Could it be that this scarlet cord--the symbol of her shame--would become the instrument that would affect Rahab's deliverance?

Having eluded the enemy, the spies returned from Jericho and declared to Joshua:

"...Truly the Lord has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us." (Joshua 2:24)

A few days later, God parted the Jordan River and the Israelites walked across on dry ground. The people of Jericho peered across their walls to see a mass of Israelites walking around the city in a silent procession. For six days, the strange ritual was repeated. On the seventh day, again the people walked silently around the city but this time, at the conclusion of their hike, seven priests with trumpets blew their horns. The people began to shout, the earth trembled, foundations cracked, and walls which had safeguarded the city for years collapsed.

Remember now--Rahab's house was built on the walls. What tremendous faith she demonstrated to remain in her house while the walls of the city were shaking and crumbling in the dust. But there she stayed--Rahab and her entire family--and from the window of their home fluttered the scarlet cord. Then Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the country:

"...Go into the harlot's house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her." And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. (Joshua 6:22-23)

Although Rahab escaped the destruction of Jericho, she still carried the institutional shame of being a harlot:

·She was courageous to risk her own life to protect enemy spies.

·She was obviously industrious, for when she hid the spies her harvest was drying on the roof.

·She was devoted to her family and was a wise woman, acting upon the information she gained to secure their safety.

· She even acknowledged Israel's God...

...But despite all this, society still considered Rahab a harlot. When she was escorted to safety by the spies she was taken "outside the camp" because no unclean person was allowed to enter the camp of Israel.

But Rahab did not remain forever in exile. Biblical records reveal that this woman became the wife of Salmon, a prince of Judah. She gave birth to Boaz who married Ruth, who bore a son named Obed. Obed was the father of Jesse, who was the father of King David, through whose line came Jesus Christ.

Rahab is listed among the ancestors of the Lord in Matthew 1:5. James commends her for the faith demonstrated by her works (James 2:25) and Paul enrolls her in the hall of fame of the faithful, declaring:

By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace. (Hebrews 11:31)

The scarlet cord from Rahab's window was certainly a symbol of redemption through the blood and the promise of God, "*When I see the blood I will pass over you*" (Exodus 12:13).

But there was another great spiritual truth entwined with the strands of this scarlet cord. This cord was red, and traditionally and historically this color has marked what is called "red light zones," identifying brothels of prostitution and houses of ill repute. The very thing that symbolized Rahab's greatest shame became the instrument that effected her deliverance. That scarlet cord enabled her to be in the genealogical line of Jesus and to be one of two women in the famous roll call of the faithful. Gien Karseen observes that...

"God took her tarnished portrait, cleansed it and hung it next to Sarah in the gallery of the heroes of faith."

In previous chapters we witnessed Paul's struggle with **inherited** shame, David experiencing **individual** and **incessant** shame, and the adulterous woman bearing the **imposed** shame of her accusers. Now we find a woman named Rahab, bound by **institutional** shame, who takes the very symbol of her shame--a scarlet cord--and uses it to effect her deliverance. While the city of Jericho was in flames, Rahab led her family to safety. And behind her, hanging from the window, she left the scarlet cord of her shame.

If you are shackled by institutional shame, the concept of this scarlet cord may seem like a lifeline thrown to a drowning man. Perhaps you are thinking, "If I can just grab hold of the truth that cord represents I can escape my own shame." And you are right...Before you finish this book; you will take the very thing that caused your shame and use it to affect your deliverance.

Do you want to break free from your shackles of shame? Are you fed up with your shame-based thinking and responses? Do you long for your hidden, festering sore of shame to be healed? If so, then it is time for you to shatter the shackles of shame.

Chapter Eight

Shattering The Shackles

- "You are divorced, therefore you cannot be a minister."
- "You committed adultery and you can never rise above this."
- "You aborted your baby. How can God ever forgive you?"
- "You stole, you cheated, you lied. God can't use you!"
- "Your parents said you would never amount to anything and they were right."

...These are the assertions of shame for which psychologists have no answer. John McKenzie notes:

"Analytical psychology...can lay bare where the roots of man's estrangement lie; but it cannot offer forgiveness...Psychiatrists have realized that there are no techniques whereby they can dissipate real guilt feelings and their associated shame."

In the last few chapters we examined the power of shame as it is manifested in five areas in our lives. Let's briefly review what we learned:

Inherited shame results from the basic sin nature which we all receive at birth due to the original transgression of man in the Garden of Eden.

Individual shame comes from sins you personally commit which result in guilt and condemnation.

Incessant shame refers to the continuous cycle of shame which is manifested perpetually from generation to generation when you do not deal with shame successfully.

Imposed shame is inflicted upon you by others who put you down and say you are stupid or not good enough. This type of shame is imposed by religion, as a result of abandonment, through identification with shame-based models, by abuse, and by shameful accusations.

Institutional shame comes through the institutions of society. You may be shamed because of your social, religious, or cultural background.

By now you are probably saying..."All right, I understand the problem! So what's the solution?" If psychology offers no solution for the shame that binds us, how then do we deal with our shame?

"Our struggle with shame, then, leaves us with this critical question...Is there an alternative to the shame-producing ideals of secular culture, graceless religion, and unaccepting parents?"

HOW TO SHATTER THE SHACKLES OF SHAME

God's strategy for shattering the shackles of shame in your life is not psychology, self-improvement, or group therapy. It is divine revelation. His strategy is based on His Word. If you follow His plan, you, too, will break your shackles regardless of the reason for your shame, the type of shame you bear, or the length of time which you have been held captive by its force.

As we examine these steps, we will return to the examples of shame used in the previous chapters--the Apostle Paul, King David, David's heirs, the adulterous woman, and Rahab--to see how this strategy was applied to shatter the shackles of their shame.

STEP ONE: ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR SHAME

You do not effectively deal with shame by denying or ignoring it. You must boldly admit your shame. Thomas Oden explains:

"You do not effectively do away with guilt by dismissing the reality of the transgressions that caused it."

Psychologist John Bradshaw confirms this in the account of his own confrontation with shame:

"Ten years ago I had one of those life-jolting discoveries that significantly changed everything. I named the core demon in my life I named 'shame.' Naming shame means that I became aware of the massive destructive power that shame had exerted in my life. I discovered that I had been

bound by shame all my life. It ruled me like an addiction. I acted it out; I covered it up in subtle and not so subtle ways; I transferred it to my family, my clients, and the people I taught."

You cannot blame your inherited sin nature for your shame. You cannot blame another person or your rotten circumstances. If you do this, shame will continue to characterize your life, responses, and relationships as it did Bradshaw's. You must fearlessly confront shame before you can act against the negative force it exerts over your life. Bradshaw explains:

"The only way out of the pain was to come out of hiding--I had to surrender. I had to embrace my shame and pain...Embracing my pain led me to expose my pain, sorrow, loneliness, and shame. This is what I had feared doing for so long."

Shame is a signal that something is wrong. One psychologist describes it as "the red light on our internal dashboard," cautioning:

"When you see the light's feverish glare, you have a choice to make. You can either pull over, get out of the car, open the hood and see what's wrong; or you can smash the light with a hammer and keep driving. The first option leads to fixing the problem; it makes you aware of the broken water hose or the cracked radiator or the low oil level. The second only relieves the symptoms. You may be able to keep the light from glaring, but after a few more miles, the whole engine might burn up. How do you treat guilt's red light? Do you take it seriously, stopping to analyze why its flashing? Or do you smash it with the hammer you conveniently keep in the glove compartment of your conscience and let your spiritual motor burn up?"

King David, whose shame resulted from his sin of adultery and murder, suffered reprisals while he remained in an unrepentant state. He said:

While I kept silent, my bones grew old, Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me. My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. (Psalms 32:3-4)

You may think you get away with sin but you really don't and--for sure--as long as you do not deal with your sin you will never be free from its associated shame.

When God used the Prophet Nathan to confront David with his unconfessed sin he told a moving story of a poor man's lamb that was slain by a rich man when a traveler came to visit. The parable aroused David's anger and he said to Nathan, *"As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!"* A poignant hush fell over the throne room as Nathan said to David, *"You are the man!"* (2 Samuel 12:7).

When David heard these words he did not try to justify or deny his transgressions but immediately acted against them. "*I have sinned against the Lord,*" he said. Psalm 51 reflects his response as he prayed:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight..." (Psalms 51:1-4)

When David repented, Nathan immediately responded, "*The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.*"

Jesus dealt with shame at the cross, for the Bible says that He endured the cross and the hostility of sinners, "*despising the shame*" (Hebrews 12:2). The prophet Isaiah declared of Jesus:

I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame... (Isaiah 50:6)

The cross is more powerful than your shame. Because Jesus took your shame to the cross, you no longer must live imprisoned by inherited, individual, incessant, imposed, or institutional shame:

All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

Remember the Old Testament scapegoat which symbolically carried the sins of Israel into the wilderness? Jesus is the "scapegoat" for your shame. Spiritually, you can watch your scapegoat as it is being led into the lonely hills...There goes your shame! You no longer have to bear it, because Jesus bore it!

God wants the shackles of shame broken in your life so you will never again be condemned in this world or the world to come, but in order for this to happen you must acknowledge your shame. If the end result of what you are doing is shameful, then it is from Satan and he is using it to destroy you. Acknowledge your shame before God.

STEP TWO: ACT AGAINST YOUR SHAME

Acting against your shame means you must repent of everything that produces it. True repentance is an inward decision that results in the outward act of turning away from sin. David said "*I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin*" (Psalms 38:18). He asked God to search his heart, know his thoughts and ways, and cleanse him from secret sins (Psalms 139:23-24).

When you act against shame by repenting of the sin that propagates it, you take an important step in shattering the shackles of shame:

- The Apostle Paul confronted his **inherited** shame, came out from under condemnation, and became the greatest advocate of God's grace in New Testament times.
- David acknowledged his **individual** sin and repented.
- The **incessant** shame passed on to David's sons was reversed and from his bloodline came our Lord Jesus Christ.
- The woman caught in adultery dealt with her **imposed** shame by seeking forgiveness and changing her lifestyle. Jesus didn't deny her shame, but forgave the sin that generated it.
- Rahab acted against the **institutional** shame of her harlotry when she acknowledged the God of Israel.

Continue to act against your shame by refusing to engage in shame-producing conduct. Jesus told the woman caught in adultery, "*Go and sin no more.*" The Bible says you should live "*as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God*" (1 Peter 2:16).

Paul admonishes us to:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage...For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh... (Galatians 5:1, 13)

STEP THREE: ADDRESS YOUR SHAME

After acknowledging your shame and acting against it, you must address your shame. David did this. He spoke positive words to counteract the lingering accusations of shame. He said:

I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the iniquity of my sin. (Psalms 32:5)

Jesus bore your shame on the cross so that you do not have to bear it, but even after you repent of shame-producing conduct the voice of the accuser will continue to echo in your soul. You have reinforced your shame-based thoughts for years and now you must learn how to reprogram that inner voice much like a programmer changes the data base of a computer.

You may have been caught in the very act of adultery, as the woman in New Testament times, but you must make a decision that you will not listen to the voice of shame once you have repented of your sin. The accuser says, "She is guilty. Stone her!" The intercessor says, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more." Ask yourself, "Is the end result of the voice I am listening to death or life?" This question will help you distinguish between the voice of shame and that of mercy.

The Bible teaches that confession is instrumental to experiencing salvation, for if you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord, you are saved (Romans 10:9). We gain other spiritual victories, as well, by confession:

- Paul declared regarding his **inherited** shame, "There is no condemnation."
- David confessed his **individual** shame and declared, "You forgave the iniquity of my sin!"
- David became a man after God's own heart through repentance, and the curse of **incessant** shame was eventually lifted when Jesus Christ was born of his lineage.
- The woman caught in adultery confessed regarding her **imposed** shame, "No man has accused me."
- Rahab broke the power of **institutional** shame over her life through her confession of faith symbolized by the scarlet cord in her window.

Psychologist John Bradshaw notes:

"No matter how good you are at stopping thoughts, the mind will not stay blank for more than 30 to 60 seconds. Nature abhors a vacuum so within 30 to 60 seconds the old thought may come back if you don't replace it with a positive thought."

When you hear the voice of shame speak to you, address it instead of ignoring it. When the accuser says, "Shame on you," respond by declaring, "I do not receive that. Jesus, who knew no sin, bore my sin and shame so that I stand righteous before God through Him."

When you really grasp the true meaning of God's forgiveness, it will be easy to address shame. David said *"As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us"* (Psalms 103:12). God said, *"I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, And like a cloud, your sins..."* (Isaiah 44:22). This is not self-improvement or building self-esteem to dissipate shameful emotions. It is a divine act of God's forgiveness that totally obliterates your shame.

Even if you are guilty like the woman caught in adultery, don't listen to shame's voice. Listen instead to your Savior who speaks conviction, never condemnation. The scribes and Pharisees declared of the adulterous woman, "She must die," but Jesus said, *"Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more"* (John 8:11). The Apostle John declares:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness...If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world... (1 John 1:9; 2:1-2)

Speak to shame just like you would address a man standing there with stones ready to kill you. Answer the accusations of shame with God's Word.

If you surrender to shame, it will have the same effect on you as it did Judas after he betrayed Christ. Sucked into shame's whirling spiral, tormented by its reprisals, and alone in the darkness of night, Judas died in his shame. You do not have to die in your shame because Jesus already died on the cross bearing your shame.

STEP FOUR: ASK GOD FOR AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

After you acknowledge your shame, act against it, and address it, ask God to give you a passion for Him. The only way you will get out from under shame's dominion is through an intimate relationship with God.

When Jesus was led away to be crucified, all of His disciples turned and fled, including Peter who subsequently denied Christ three times. After Peter repented, Jesus asked him three times with increasing levels of intensity, "Do you love me?" Peter responded each time, "You know I love you, Lord!" Then Jesus commissioned him, "Feed my sheep."

To paraphrase, Jesus said to Peter, "You failed me, but you have repented and are forgiven. Now all you need to qualify you to feed my sheep is an intimate relationship with me." The new, vital union Peter developed with Jesus enabled him to become one of the greatest leaders in the early church, a man so anointed of God that the mere shadow of his body resulted in miracles of healing (Acts 5:15).

·Delivered from his **inherited** shame, Paul's impassioned cry was "*That I might know him in the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering.*"

·Forgiven of his **individual** shame, David sought a passionate relationship with God. He prayed, "*Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation...Open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise*" (*Portions of Psalms 51*).

·From David's bloodline came Jesus Christ--proving that the generational curse of **incessant** shame can be broken.

·When the woman caught in adultery broke her shackles of **imposed** shame, she received a passion for God that enabled her to live a new life.

·...And after **institutional** shame was shattered in Rahab's life, she developed such a passionate relationship with God that she was included in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11.

THE GOD OF A SECOND CHANCE

Many people let the shame of their sins and failures prevent them from fulfilling their God-given destiny. Denominational regulations propagate this when we refuse to restore leaders to ministry after they fall into sin. But we serve the God of a second chance...

·When Paul broke the shackles of shame in his life; he became one of the greatest ministers of New Testament times.

·David was restored and declared "*I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You*" (Psalms 51:13). His work wasn't over. He broke the shackles of shame to fulfill his destiny and in so doing impacted his entire generation.

- Although David's household suffered from his sin, the power of incessant shame was broken through the Lord Jesus Christ.

·The scribes and Pharisees said the woman caught in adultery deserved to die, but she rejected their verdict and accepted the words Christ spoke over her life..."*Go your way...sin no more.*"

·And then there was Rahab, who was so changed that she was grafted into a new nation and a divine bloodline.

Each of these individuals, hostages to the shame of their past, refused to let shame control and dictate their future. When you break the shackles of shame, you come to the realization that:

...you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)

Years ago, there was a young woman named Kathryn who--like the woman caught in adultery--came to know the God of a second chance. Called of God to ministry at an early age, Kathryn was powerfully used by God in the word of knowledge and healing ministries.

In the course of her travels, Kathryn met a young man--also a minister--and a mutual attraction developed into plans for marriage. There was only one problem...the man was already married.

This young minister left his wife and children so he and Kathryn could marry and, like King David, there were no immediate reprisals for their sin. At first they were happy and continued on with their lives, but soon Kathryn noticed a change. No longer did she experience the tremendous anointing for healing and deliverance and she constantly wrestled with feelings of guilt and shame.

Eventually, Kathryn realized she could not minister with God's special anointing while remaining in this sinful union. She repented, asked God's forgiveness, and separated from her husband. The ensuing scandal bred gossip and imposed shame, but the young woman persevered and when she broke the shackles of her shame, multitudes of people were impacted.

This woman was none other than Kathryn Kuhlman, whose ministry resulted in thousands of conversions to Christ and numerous healings documented by medical professionals. A tremendous anointing flowed through her life, as she was gifted with an unprecedented pure word of knowledge and powerfully used by God to impact her generation.

From the time of her divorce until the day of her death, Kathryn went by "Miss" Kuhlman. "Don't you think that is deceitful?" she was once asked. "After all, you were married and divorced."

"Absolutely not," said Kathryn. "When God forgives, He forgets and it is as though it never happened. In God's sight I am Miss Kathryn Kuhlman."

Kathryn had broken free from the shackles of shame.

DELIVERED FROM SHAME IN THE SHADOW OF SIN

Sometimes there are lingering consequences to our shame. For Kathryn Kuhlman it meant remaining single for the remainder of her life. For King David it meant the death of the child born to Bathsheba.

Chuck Swindoll notes:

"If you have taken lightly the grace of God...if you have childishly skipped through the corridors of the kingdom, picking and choosing sin or righteousness at will...the storm is just brewing on the horizon. Though God's forgiveness is sure, so are sin's consequences...Don't be deceived. God's grace doesn't necessarily chase away the dark clouds of sin's consequences." [8]

Even though you repent from sin and address its associated shame, there may be consequences as you live in the shadows of your former transgression.

For example, if you are incarcerated and you act against your shame by asking God's forgiveness you may still be required to complete serving your sentence. But even if you dwell for a time in the shadow of sin, you no longer must live in the shame of it. As Chuck Swindoll notes:

Soon after David's loss, he held a new baby son in his arms...Likewise; God is not through blessing your life."

In a few years, David and Bathsheba had another son and named him Solomon, which means "peaceful," for his birth was a token of God being at peace with them. Solomon was also called "Jedidiah" which means "beloved of God"...

"...signifying that those who were by nature children of wrath and disobedience should, by the covenant of grace, not only be reconciled, but made favorites."

Even if you are experiencing lingering consequences of sin, do not let shame prevent you from fulfilling your destiny.

·**Acknowledge your shame:** Whether it is inherited, individual, incessant, imposed, or institutional shame--it will be used by Satan to destroy you. Shame will keep you shackled to your past so that you cannot move forward to embrace your destiny.

· **Act against your shame:**

Repent of any shame-producing, sinful behavior. Repent of any bitterness or unforgiveness you may harbor against those who caused you shame.

·**Address your shame:**

When the voice of accusation says, "Shame on you," respond by declaring, "No, Jesus bore my shame."

·**Ask for an intimate relationship with God:** ...and then rise up from the shackles of shame to fulfill your God-given destiny!

Take these steps and the power of shame will be broken over your life! Make this declaration right now:

"I repent of everything in my past and in the present that generates shame. I no longer bear my sin and shame because it is on Jesus and His righteousness is upon me. Give me a new intimate

relationship with You, Lord. I accept Your second opinion over my life as You are speaking it into my spirit right now."

Now accept it...Your shackles of shame have been broken through the power of the blood shed by Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary!

·No matter what you did in the past.

· No matter what shame-producing words your parents, spouse, friends, or denominations have declared.

· Regardless of the source of your shame.

· Even if you are reading these words while sitting in a cell on death row...

...If you have taken these steps and made this declaration with a sincere heart before God, your shackles of shame are shattered! As God said to the Prophet Jeremiah, He has declared to you: *"And now look, I free you this day from the chains that were on your hand..."* (Jeremiah 40:4). Jeremiah was set free by God to fulfill his divine destiny. The same is true for you. God has set you free for a divine purpose: To fulfill His plan for your life--and that plan is in today and tomorrow, not in yesterday. That is why you had to be set free from the chains of shame that bound you to the past.

Remember, however, that Satan will try to return with accusations and attempt to resurrect your shame. You must continually reprogram your inner computer--your mind and spirit--to reject shame. Whenever you hear the voice of shame, immediately reject it and declare:

"No...My sin and shame are on Jesus. His righteousness is on me. I reject your accusations and accept God's second chance for my life!"

...Then, rise up to fulfill your destiny. If you act upon this revelation--just as David and Bathsheba--you will soon give birth to new dreams and visions. Like David, you will rise up shame-free to embrace your destiny and impact your generation because God has declared...

"My people shall never be ashamed." (Joel 2:26)

Chapter Nine

Silencing The Accuser

There are two forces at work in the universe which are operative both in Heaven and here on earth. One is that of Satan, an "accuser of the brethren," who continually accuses God's people, seeking their destruction (Revelation 12:10). The other force is that of the intercessor Jesus Christ who intercedes in behalf of our deliverance.

These two forces are constantly operative in the universe and you will conform to the spirit of either one or the other in your personal relationships, your attitude toward others, and by the words of your mouth. Paul Touriner observes:

"In actual fact, we are all, not by turns but at the same time, accused and accusers, condemners and condemned...the persecuted became persecutors. We are accusers because we are accused, and accused because we are accusers."

Jesus silenced the voice of the accuser when He died on the cross because He bore the sin and shame of the whole world. When you accept Christ's sacrifice for your sin and shame, you no longer stand accused. The only way the spirit of accusation operates now is when you allow Satan to malign you or use you to malign others through unforgiving words, feelings, and actions which, as we have learned, often are a cover-up for shame:

"Although we try to disguise our judgments as 'constructive criticism' or 'Christian concern', our hidden attitude may be very different. By focusing on the faults of others, we can manage to avoid looking at ourselves. Sometimes we're even guilty of the very acts we criticize in others."

The spirit of accusation says "You have a right to be mad. Look what they did to you!" The spirit of intercession, however, responds as Jesus did when He hung on the cross. Jesus had every right to accuse those around Him, for He knew their sins and He was suffering terrible agony at their hands. Jesus chose to intercede in their behalf, however, praying, "Father, forgive them."

Christ continually demonstrated the spirit of intercession. To the woman caught in adultery, He said, "Where are your accusers? Go your way and sin no more." He aligned Himself with an unpopular tax collector named Zacheus, dined at the home of a Pharisee, and intervened when the disciples wanted to call judgment down through fire from heaven. When Satan planned to sift Peter "as wheat," Jesus interceded in his behalf.

THREE LIES OF THE ACCUSER

Our accuser, Satan, constantly perpetuates three major lies, all of which relate to this issue of shame which we are studying. Satan's accusations focus on doubt, destiny, and denunciation.

THE FIRST LIE: DOUBT

Doubt is a satanic strategy that dates back to man's original sin. Satan's first temptation centered on creating uncertainty when he said to Eve, "Has God indeed said?... You will not surely die...If you eat of this fruit, you will be like God." Eve should have said to Satan, "I am already created in God's image. But the accuser sowed seeds of doubt and Eve, Adam, and all mankind reaped a bitter harvest.

Satan employed a similar strategy in the temptation of Christ. Immediately after His baptism with its powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit and God's audible voice, Jesus faced the wilderness temptation. Each of Satan's attacks centered on doubt as he questioned three times, "If you are the Son of God." Right up to the time when Jesus died the accuser continued this strategy through those observing His agony who said, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matthew 27:40).

Satan will also bring similar accusations against you:

."If you are a child of God, then why doesn't He help you?"

."If God loves you, you wouldn't have this problem."

."There is no way you will make Heaven. You just aren't good enough."

Jesus stands against every accusation of doubt and proclaims, "You are my child. I am a present help in time of need. You are loved. If you serve me, then your eternal destiny is assured!" God looks at you through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and says, "You have all the rights to the inheritance of My Son. You are My child and Heaven is your eternal home."

The Bible declares you are assured acceptance by God through the blood of Jesus:

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:22-23)

When the blood of Jesus Christ is sprinkled on your shame-based conscience your acceptance by God is assured.

The Apostle John repeatedly uses the phrase "that you may know" in his epistles, finally concluding with this explanation:

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:13)

The accuser uses shame to perpetuate doubt. When you break the shackles of shame, you will no longer be defeated by it because its power will be rendered impotent in your life. You will be assured of your salvation, your acceptance by God, and your eternal future.

THE SECOND LIE: DESTINY

The second lie propagated by the accuser concerns your destiny. Satan says, "You won't be able to reach your full potential. You will not be able to complete God's plan for you. You will fall short of your destiny."

Failure, falling short, never reaching the goal--these all stem from shame-based thinking. Breaking free from shame brings the revelation that:

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

God has already determined what He wants to accomplish in and through you and it was decided before you were born. God ordained the path you are to walk, but the enemy comes through your circumstances, your failures, your age, and your shame to declare that you will not be able to fulfill your destiny.

The accuser says, "You are too young and immature," but the Virgin Mary was only 15 when God chose her to mother His Son Jesus. David was 17 or younger when he faced Goliath and most of the great revivals in the history of the church were birthed through children or young people.

The accuser says, "You are too old. You missed your destiny." Moses undoubtedly battled these lies of the accuser. Supernaturally preserved by God at birth and having received the finest education possible, Moses was commissioned to deliver Israel from slavery. But Moses killed an Egyptian in anger and fled to the wilderness for refuge from Pharaoh's judgment. There he remained for 40 years. Day after day the accuser taunted, "You missed your destiny. You can't return to Egypt, for Pharaoh will kill you. You are getting too old. It just won't happen."

But one day Moses' soul was ignited by words spoken from a burning bush. God said:

"Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." (Exodus 3:10)

Moses had listened to the accuser for too many years. He had a whole list of excuses prepared:

- "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and deliver Israel?"
- "What shall I say to them?"
- "Suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.' Then what will I do?"
- "You know I am not eloquent, but slow of speech and tongue."

God answered Moses and said:

"...Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say." (Exodus 4:11-12)

God knows your abilities and He knows your disabilities. He is the One who created and called you and He is the One who will empower you--despite your weaknesses--to fulfill your destiny.

THE THIRD LIE: DENUNCIATION

The first lie of the accuser is doubt. The second lie of the accuser concerns your destiny. If you stand victoriously against these first two attacks, Satan subtly markets his third accusation--denunciation--which means criticizing and condemning others. He wants to make you an accuser instead of an intercessor. He wants you to impose shame on others.

It is true that there are plenty of failures around to target with our denunciations. There are many believers--and even great leaders--who have lied, deceived, and committed immorality. This was true in Bible times also for the Scriptures detail several "great men of God" who experienced tremendous spiritual defeat:

·Moses: He was a murderer who fled into exile to escape Pharaoh, yet called of God to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

·David: He committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered Uriah, yet this man is called a "man after God's heart."

·Jonah: Commissioned by God to evangelize the city of Ninevah, Jonah deliberately headed the other direction, yet God restored him and he preached the greatest revival in history--the whole city repented.

·Peter: After three years of personal training by Jesus, Peter denied the Lord, turned his back on his calling, and returned to his previous lifestyle--yet this man became one of the greatest leaders in the early church.

Many denominations today would never welcome these men back into the church fellowship. The spirit of accusation says to these people:

· "You committed adultery. You cannot return to leadership."

· "You took another man's life. This disqualifies you for Christian service."

· "You turned your back on God's call. You are a deserter and not worthy to be a minister."

Medical science used to declare about cripples, "If they are lame, let them stay lame. Don't waste time trying to rehabilitate them." The problem with that approach was that eventually the cripple's limbs began to atrophy.

Too often this has been the attitude of the church. We make offenders withdraw and their "limbs" become atrophied. Yes, there should be a time of rehabilitation, but there should also be the opportunity to be used of God again. We should be like Peter and John at the temple gate saying to those who are spiritually and emotionally crippled by shame, "*Rise up and walk!*" The Scripture says:

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. (Hebrews 12:12-13)

We should strengthen those who are feeble and whose hands are weak in the battle. We should make paths for the feet of these errant ones, humbled and repentant yet still bound by shame. We should encourage them to rise up and walk again!

After the incident with Bathsheba and Uriah, King David sought and received forgiveness. He cried out to God:

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow...Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. (Psalms 51:7-12)

After David acknowledged his shame and repented, he received a new passion for God. Immediately he began to minister to others:

Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You. (Psalms 51:13)

David said "then"-when was "then"? Immediately after he was forgiven and restored. It was "then" that he began to teach sinners and they were converted to God.

We often brand offenders with the "scarlet letter," so to speak, and they are marked for life, but the Apostle Paul details how we should deal with repentant, fallen believers:

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. (Galatians 6:1)

When believers fall we are to restore them. The word "restore" in the original Greek means "setting of a broken bone." Restoration does not mean glossing over the sin, treating it lightly, or pretending it did not happen. Instead, like a doctor dealing with a broken bone, you deal directly with the injury. Amputation is not the solution for a broken bone!

WILL YOU COVER NOAH?

A classic Old Testament story graphically illustrates these forces of intercession and accusation. Genesis chapters 6-9 records the story of a righteous man named Noah who God commissioned to build an ark and save a remnant of creation from the flood. This

man was mightily used of God and received tremendous covenants and promises, yet later on we find him in a wretched condition:

And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. (Genesis 9:20-21)

Here is God's man of faith and power, drunk and naked in his tent:

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness. (Genesis 9:22-23)

From time to time God allows us to view each other's carnal flesh to test our response: Will we be accusers or intercessors? Noah's youngest son comes along and exposes his father's nakedness. Shem and Japheth take a cloak and put it over their shoulders, walk backwards, and drop it over their father.

The accuser says, "*We thought our father had the anointing, but look at him now. He is drunk and naked.*" The intercessor provides a covering, for "*love covers all sins*" (Proverbs 10:12).

Noah cursed his son, Ham, for exposing his nakedness and that curse continued on to Ham's son, Canaan, and down through the evil generations of Canaanites. When you enter into the spirit of accusation, you set in motion a chain reaction of demonic forces and begin to operate under the curse. You reverse this when you become an intercessor for those who stand naked in their shame.

The message of this book has brought deliverance from your own personal shame, but the question remains, how will you respond when others are caught in shameful behavior? Will you be an accuser or an intercessor? These are two of the most powerful forces in operation in our world today. One leads to life and restoration. The other leads to death. When you find the man of God naked and drunk in his tent, what will you do? Will you cover Noah?

BREAKING THE FORCE OF ACCUSATION

The revelation in this chapter is the difference between psychological health and disorder, the difference between spiritual life and death. It makes the difference

between failure and fulfilled destiny. It distinguishes a mediocre, divided church from one that unites in intercession to impact its community for God.

God is not concerned with a new building, your five-year plan, or the great talent your church has to offer. He is concerned that you say an eternal "no" to the accuser and an eternal "yes" to the intercessor.

There are those reading these pages who have lived their whole lives in doubt, not knowing for sure that they are saved and going to Heaven. This is a lie of the accuser.

There are those who believe they will not be able to finish the work God has for them. God says to you, "I have started a good work in you and I will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." God is taking all things in your life--both bad and good--and working them together to accomplish the vision He gave you.

There are others reading these pages who are being used by the enemy as accusers of the brethren.

Right now, you can take authority over the lies of the accuser and release the forces of intercession. Make this declaration in the name of Jesus:

"I turn from the spirit of accusation to the spirit of intercession. I reject doubt. I say to the accuser, get under my feet. You will not dominate my life. I will rise up to fulfill my destiny! I put my foot down on you and declare right now, I will be an intercessor."

As you made this declaration, the force of accusation was broken in your life. Receive your deliverance right now from God. Put up your hands, praise God, and let the Holy Spirit baptize you in the Spirit of intercession!

Chapter Ten

Life After Religion

"Caught in the very act of adultery," they said. "The law dictates that she should be stoned. What do you say?" The words of the scribes and Pharisees still echo in our ears and the image of the accused woman cowering in the midst of her accusers haunts our memories.

Religion said, "Stone her!" The voice of shame always leads to death. But we witnessed how Jesus declared, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw the first stone." In one moment of time, the chains of her shame were shattered...

...It did not take years of psychotherapy.

...It did not take painful group sessions or a self-improvement course.

...The woman did not have to delve into her past and dredge up painful memories.

Instantly, her shame was gone! Freed from the condemnation of religion that says, "Stone her, she deserves to die," this woman was about to discover there is life after religion.

After her sins were forgiven and her shame shattered, Jesus said to her:

"Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8:10-11)

Five powerful words--"go and sin no more"--capsulizes God's purpose after He shatters the shackles of shame in our lives. He heals our shame so we can go, sinlessly and shamelessly, to fulfill our destiny. He calls us to life after religion.

OBEDIENT TO THE HEAVENLY VISION

The Apostle Paul--the man who persecuted believers--discovered this life after religion. As a self-righteous religious leader, Paul witnessed the "stones of religion" strike their blows upon the body of a young martyr named Stephen and he imprisoned and persecuted believers. After he conquered the shame of these experiences, however, he realized there was a divine purpose for his breakthrough:

According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:20-21)

Paul's deliverance from shame enabled him to achieve his God-given destiny, to fulfill the heavenly vision for his life, to finish his course with faith.

Shame whispered to Paul, "You will never reach your full potential, you will not finish your course. Look what you did. You persecuted God's people."

In the stillness of the night, shame likely recreated scenes of a dying Stephen, bruised and battered by stones, but because Paul broke the shackles of shame he was able to overcome these images.

Paul remembered the fact of his sins, but not the feelings of shame. His shame was so totally annihilated that he could claim, "I have a clear conscience...I have done no man wrong."

Paul fulfilled his destiny and at the end of his life declared, "*...the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*" (2 Timothy 4:6-7).

FULFILLING GOD'S PURPOSE

God does not free us from shame just so we can feel good, although of course He is pleased when we avail ourselves of the abundant life He offers. God's purpose is greater. The objective of our breakthrough is to enable us to fulfill His purposes.

This reality is exemplified by King David who, after dealing with his sin and overcoming its shame, went on to fulfill his destiny. Acts 13:36 declares, "*For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers...*" Despite his shame, David rose up to fulfill the divine purpose for his life and served his generation by the will of God.

Contrast this with the fate of King Saul who reigned as the first king of Israel. At first, Saul was surrounded by valiant men whose hearts God had touched (1 Samuel 10:26), but in 1 Samuel 13:2 we find Saul selecting 3,000 men whom he perceived to be valiant warriors and from that time on things begin to deteriorate.

The Philistines gathered together to fight Israel with a formidable force of 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and so many warriors that the multitude looked as numerous as grains of sand on the seashore. Saul's "valiant" men scattered and hid in the surrounding caves and mountains (1 Samuel 13). In the midst of this panic, Saul took it upon himself to offer a burnt sacrifice which was against God's implicit instructions that only a priest from the tribe of Levi could make such an offering. When Samuel arrived, he asked Saul, "What have you done?"

Saul answered, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together, I felt compelled to offer a burnt offering."

Saul thought he had good reasons for not doing things God's way. The people had deserted him, the enemy was amassed against him, and God's instrument of deliverance, Samuel, was late in coming on the scene. But upon arrival, Samuel reprimanded Saul:

"You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which he commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." (1 Samuel 13:13-14)

Immediately after this incident, the enemy disarmed Israel and made them materially dependant, for although they were permitted to have farm implements they were required to go to the Philistines to get them sharpened.

The record of Saul's downfall continues in 1 Samuel 14 where he sought counsel from God but received no answer, blamed someone else for his sins, and would have killed his own son had it not been for the intervention of the people. Saul's disobedience in not destroying the Amalekites and their property as he had been commanded is recorded in 1 Samuel 15. Finally, God rejected Saul as king.

Although Saul acknowledged his sin, he never sought forgiveness in the scripturally prescribed manner. He basically told Samuel, "Let's go through the forms of worship together and not let the people know I have been rejected." Saul never acknowledged his sin or dealt with its shame and because of this he never fulfilled his destiny:

"Few men have had beginnings as bright as Saul's. Physically, emotionally, spiritually, professionally--he had it all. Yet from that high and noble beginning, Saul sank to an infamous ending. His epitaph could have read, 'behold I have played the fool.'"

Let me ask you a question: What has God given you to do in your generation? Will you be a victor like King David or will you be like King Saul, who died on a lonely hill near Beths-shan having never fulfilled his potential and purpose?

"The city of Beths-shan wasn't far from where the trumpet's blast had inaugurated Saul as king. During his forty year reign, Saul gained no ground for his kingdom. Tragically, his lifetime of accomplishments were of little value. Symbolically speaking, when you die, will you be far from where you began your life in God's kingdom? Will there be miles of growth to mark the path of your spiritual journey? Will the kingdom have benefitted because of your life?"

If you are to fulfill God's purpose, you must allow God to break your shame shackles so--as the woman caught in adultery--you can "go your way," rise up, and embrace your destiny.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF A FINISHER

God is a finisher. He instituted His plan from the foundation of the world, He is constantly at work bringing all things to pass on the basis of His will, and He declared in the book of Revelation that it will be completed.

Jesus had a passion to finish what God gave Him to do. This ardor transcended even His natural desires, enabling Him to proclaim, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work"* (John 4:34). Finishing was what motivated Jesus and kept Him going in the difficult times. His final words on the cross were, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30).

Victory over the enemy comes through finishing, not just trying. When they put the first nail in Christ's hand He might have said, "That's it...I'm out of here!" and called for the angels to deliver Him. But Jesus knew if He did this He would not fulfill God's purpose. It was when He finished the sacrifice on Calvary that the rewards of salvation, healing, and deliverance became realities.

God determined before you were born what He wants to accomplish in your life. The Bible declares that you are God's workmanship *"created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10). God ordained

the path you are to walk, but the enemy comes through the shame of your past--your circumstances, failures, and sins--to declare that you will not be able to finish your course.

The Bible describes four attributes of a finisher that will empower you to fulfill your destiny. These are identified in 1 Peter 5:5-10:

Likewise, you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. (1 Peter 5:5-10)

ATTRIBUTE ONE:

ACKNOWLEDGE JESUS AS LORD OF YOUR LIFE

Total commitment to God as Lord of your life is the first attribute of a finisher. You must humble yourself before God. A sinful tax collector named Zacchaeus was willing to make this commitment and submit to God (Luke 19:1-9). The rich young ruler was not (Mark 10:17-22).

The Apostle Paul compares this commitment to crucifixion, explaining:

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

Acknowledging Jesus as Lord of your life requires a total change of heart, perspective, and priorities. It requires exchanging life in this world for life in Jesus, the riches of this world for the treasures of heaven. The first mark of a person who has the "spirit of a finisher" is this quality of submission to God the Father and the lordship of Jesus Christ.

ATTRIBUTE TWO:

ASSOCIATE YOURSELF WITH A LOCAL CHURCH

Your ability to finish is enhanced by submission to the covering of a local church. Peter exhorts, "submit yourself to your elders" and the Amplified Version further identifies "elders" as the ministers and spiritual leaders of the church (1 Peter 5:5).

It is in the church, where two or more are gathered in His name, that Jesus is present to work signs and wonders and where you will find comfort and help in times of crisis. There, you will find fellowship with other believers who have put the shame of their past behind them and are moving on to fulfill God's purposes for their lives.

ATTRIBUTE THREE:

ABANDON ANXIOUS CONCERNS

Next, Peter admonishes to "*cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). People who have the spirit of a finisher do not sit down in the rubble of negative circumstances and cry. They cast all of their concerns upon God.

The Amplified Version reads, "*Casting the whole of your care-all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, (and your shame) once and for all-on Him*" (1 Peter 5:7). The Apostle Paul says:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

"Be anxious for nothing" means "don't worry about anything." Instead of worrying, pray about your problems and let your requests be made known to God with thanksgiving. Worry is a negative force, but praise has positive potency and is the language of faith.

When you face challenging circumstances or devastating problems, instead of crying "What will I do now?" raise your hands and declare...

"Father, You said you would finish what You began in me. You said everything is working for good in my life to conform me to Your image. Now, here's my problem..."

...then lay it out before Him, praise Him for an answer, and leave it there. When you do this, it releases the peace of God to guard your heart and mind from worry.

In 2 Chronicles 20 we find a story that illustrates this principle. King Jehoshaphat was in quite a dilemma, for he was completely surrounded by the enemy nations of Ammon and Moab. In the midst of these fearful circumstances, Jehoshaphat set himself to seek the Lord. He didn't worry or fret, but made up his mind to seek God about his problem.

King Jehoshaphat went to God in prayer and acknowledged that he did not know what to do, but he declared, "Our eyes are upon you." He also called God's people together to wait on the Lord for an answer.

God's response came through a man named Jahaziel who declared:

"Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the Lord to you: `Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go down against them...You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you...Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord is with you.'"

(2 Chronicles 20:15-17)

The next day the people advanced on the enemy, not with man-made weapons of warfare, but with the supernatural spiritual weapon of praise. A cloud of confusion descended upon the enemy, causing them to turn on each other and battle their own comrades to the death.

Men and women who have the spirit of a finisher are like Jehoshaphat. They have their eyes on God instead of the problem. They do not worry over past, present, or future circumstances, but pray over each situation in faith believing that God will resolve it. They do not remain captive to their shame. They acknowledge it, act against it, address it, ask for an intimate relationship with God, and then they rise up from the mire of their shameful past to fulfill God's purpose for their lives.

ATTRIBUTE FOUR:
ADOPT A WARTIME MENTALITY

Never forget that you live in a war zone. Peter instructs us to get serious about this spiritual battle and adopt a wartime mentality:

Be sober; be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith... (1 Peter 5:8-9)

The days are past when we can take a causal attitude toward the enemy. The devil is prowling around like a roaring lion seeking to devour so don't be surprised when he roars at you.

Matthew 12:43 indicates that when an unclean spirit goes out, a void results and it must be filled or Satan will return with even greater force. Shame is an unclean spirit and when you cast it out of your life it leaves a void which you must fill with the Holy Spirit.

Did you know that a good, shame-free conscience is actually a spiritual weapon? Paul told Timothy:

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you might wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck.
(1 Timothy 1:18-19)

Do you want to wage effective supernatural warfare? Do you want to keep your faith from spiritual shipwreck?

Then keep your conscience free from shame. Put on the whole armor of God every day to protect yourself from Satan's shaming accusations (Ephesians 6:11-18). Put up your shield of faith to divert his fiery darts of shame. When Satan tries to bind you with shame again, use the sword of the Spirit of God's Word to resist his attacks and stand fast in the freedom you have received!

YOUR LIFE AFTER RELIGION

You are no longer shackled by shame but you are free to rise up and embrace your destiny as you:

- Acknowledge Jesus as Lord of your life.
- Associate yourself with a local church.
- Abandon anxious concerns.
- Adopt a wartime mentality.

Make this faith declaration out loud right now as you conclude this chapter:

"I am no longer bound by shame. I have acknowledged and acted against my shame. I have addressed my shame and it is no longer on me because Jesus bore it for me. God is renewing my passion for intimacy with Him, enabling me to rise up and fulfill my destiny. I acknowledge Jesus as Lord of my life. I bind the power of shame to operate in my life. I am declaring right now, I will finish my course with faith!"

CONCLUSION:

Chapter Eleven

Receiving Double For Your Shame

From the opening pages of Genesis to the closing book of Revelation, this issue of shame tarnishes the lives of numerous Biblical characters. Some of them rise up from the cess- pool of their humiliation and overcome it while others--tragically and needlessly--die in their shame.

The Prophet Jeremiah summarized the extensive toxic effects of shame on God's people, Israel:

For shame has devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth--Their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. We lie down in our shame and our reproach covers us. For we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God. (Jeremiah 3:24-25)

Shame plagued God's people from their youth. It marked the lives of their sons and daughters and affected their livelihood (flocks and herds). They were continually tormented by shame. It was with them when they laid down at night and when they rose up in the morning.

Captives of the spiral of shame, God's people gladly received a powerful word from the prophet Isaiah:

Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; Everlasting joy shall be theirs. (Isaiah 61:7)

This tremendous revelation concerning the double portion is actually rooted in an Old Testament law that requires double restitution for what an enemy steals from you (Exodus 22:4,7, and 9). God declares that His people will receive double honor for their shame and that instead of confusion there will be peace and everlasting joy.

Think of the impact of this tremendous Word from God! God will take the very thing that has bound you--your shame--and use it to affect your deliverance:

·Has shame caused depression and discouragement? You will receive double joy and happiness.

·Has shame robbed you of income because of a lack of confidence that you are able to achieve? Then God will restore your abilities so you can recover twice as much as you lost.

·Everything you lost through shame will be restored double to you!

Here is God's Word for you:

Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; Neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; For you will forget the shame...and will not remember the reproach...anymore. (Isaiah 54:4)

You will not be ashamed or disgraced anymore! God will even heal the memories of your shameful experiences! In Zechariah, God returns to this theme to reiterate:

Return to the stronghold, You prisoners of hope. Even today I declare that I will restore double to you. (Zechariah 9:12)

Formerly a prisoner of shame, you are now a prisoner of hope! You do not need to be concerned about the years spent trapped in shame's downward spiral, for God declares:

"So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten,

The crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust..." (Joel 2:25)

Shame crawls, it chews, it consumes. God says, "I will restore double what shame destroyed in your life."

RECEIVING THE DOUBLE PORTION

A young man named Elisha received this double portion from God. Elisha yearned to minister under the same prophetic anointing as his master, Elijah. When Elijah was supernaturally transported to Heaven in a chariot of fire, his cloak--symbolizing the anointing of God--fell upon Elisha. He picked up the mantle and began to minister like Elijah, but with double the power and impact (2 Kings 2:1-14).

God is raising up men and women with the spirit and power of Elijah who will do things in the unconventional way--God's way. These people will not seek reputation and position because they have nothing to prove. They know who they are in God.

They will deliver God's message fearlessly because they cannot be shamed by the enemy's accusations. You, by a decisive choice, can be one of those people.

In the closing revelation of the Bible,

God addresses shame one final time as He appeals:

"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see." (Revelation 3:18)

This book has provided you with supernatural "eye salve" to open your spiritual eyes and heal your shame. You know how to acknowledge your shame, act against it, address it with the Word of God, and then ask for a vital, intimate relationship with God which will enable you to fulfill your destiny.

When the shackles of shame were broken in your life, a new mantle descended upon you, even as that which was passed from Elijah to Elisha. You did not read this book by chance, any more than the mantle of Elijah fell upon Elisha by accident. God wants to break the shackles of shame in your life, but He has an even greater purpose for you.

God wants you to pick up this mantle--this revelation of breaking the shackles of shame--and share it with others. You come in contact with people every day who are suffering from shame. You work by them, you live by them, you shop in their places of business, and play golf with them at the country club. Some who are reading the pages of this book are imprisoned, surrounded by people who are consumed by shame.

These people are caught in a crisis of shame. Like Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus, shame torments them as they trudge alone through the dense darkness.

These people are at the crossroads of shame, at a point of decision that will determine their final destiny. Before them stands two trees. On one twisted, gnarled tree there dangles a hangman's noose. The other tree is stained by the blood of Jesus Christ.

You now have a message from God to share with these people...

"You do not have to die in your shame."

HAS THIS STUDY IMPACTED YOUR LIFE?

If so, we would like to hear from you. Please write to us and share what God has done for you through "*Shattering The Shackles Of Shame*." Please share with us:

1. What caused shame in your life?
2. What were its effects?
3. How long were you bound by it?
4. How did this book help you break the shackles of shame in your life?
5. How was your life changed by this book?
6. How do you plan to use this message to help others?

SHATTERING THE SHACKLES OF SHAME HOMEWORK

INTRODUCTION:

1. What are the purposes of this study?
2. Why is it important to deal with shame?
3. Have you ever struggled with shame? If so, what caused your shame?

CHAPTER ONE:

1. Define guilt.
2. Define shame.
3. What is the difference between guilt and shame?
4. According to Lewis Smedes, how does shame affect us?
5. What is the purpose of guilt?
6. What is the "sorrow of the world"?
7. According to Dr. Tournier, what two processes are set in motion by shame?
8. Who is the accuser of believers?
9. How does shame prohibit intimacy with God?
10. How does shame torment internally and externally?
11. How did shame originate?
12. What three basic human relationships were ripped apart through sin?

CHAPTER TWO:

1. What is meant in this chapter by the downward "spiral of shame"?
2. Define the following effects of shame:
Paranoia
Personalization
Generalization
Rationalization
Repression
Condemnation
Helplessness
A shame-based conscience
3. Why does Professor Smedes say shame-based people magnify their flaws?
4. What is the difference between condemnation and the conviction of the Holy Spirit?
5. Look up and summarize what you learn about your conscience in the following scriptures:
1 Corinthians 8:12
Titus 1:15
1 Timothy 4:2
6. Why is it dangerous to let your conscience be your guide?

7. What is the only remedy for a shameful conscience?
8. Why are shame-based reactions initiated?
9. Define the following shame-based reactions:
 - Scapegoating
 - Perfectionism
 - Self-punishment
 - Defensiveness
 - Patronizing
 - Controlling
 - Arrogance and self-righteousness
 - Addictions
 - Aggression
 - Alienation and disassociation
 - Ritual
10. What are some positive benefits of mistakes?
11. How did the Pharisees and Sadducees of New Testament times exemplify self-righteousness?
12. How does shame relate to addictive behavior?
13. Define five areas of shame that can be manifested in our lives.

CHAPTER THREE:

1. How does shame erect a barrier between you and God?
2. Name and define the first level of shame discussed in this chapter.
3. From what does inherited shame result?
4. Explain the ripple effect of shame discussed in this chapter.
5. Why was Adam afraid when God came to meet with him and Eve?
6. Complete this sentence:
From shame came b_ _ _ _.
7. How was shame passed on to succeeding generations?
8. What is meant by the "flesh" or the "old man"?
9. To what does the inherited sin nature give birth?
10. List the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 and research the definitions of each.
11. Using Romans 7, summarize the battle that the Apostle Paul had with the flesh.
12. Summarize the change recorded in Romans 8 and subsequent statements by the Apostle Paul.

CHAPTER FOUR:

1. What is individual shame?
2. Study the following verses regarding shame-generators:
 - Proverbs 11:2
 - Proverbs 13:5
 - Proverbs 13:18

Proverbs 19:26

Proverbs 18:13

Jeremiah 17:13

Ezekiel 43:10

3. Why does shame alienate you from God, others, and self?
4. What Old Testament example was used in this chapter to illustrate individual shame?
5. Summarize the sinful acts that resulted in David's shame.
6. How can shame affect you physically?
7. Summarize the confrontation between Nathan and David. How did Nathan apply the story he told to David's sin?

CHAPTER FIVE:

1. What is imposed shame?
2. Summarize each of the following which can result in imposed shame:
Religion
Identification with shame-based models
Accusations
Abandonment
Abuse
3. What New Testament example was used in this chapter to illustrate imposed shame?
4. What was the response of the religious leaders to this woman?
5. What was Jesus' response to her?

CHAPTER SIX:

1. What is institutional shame?
2. How does it result in our lives?
3. Give examples of some shame-based societies mentioned in this chapter. Do you know of others?
4. How does institutional shame relate to scapegoating?
5. What is the ultimate manifestation of unresolved institutional shame?
6. Explain why institutional shame must be dealt with in order to wage effective spiritual warfare.
7. Explain the importance of repenting for corporate sins as well as your own individual sins.
8. Explain how Jesus experienced institutional shame.
9. What Old Testament example was used in this chapter to illustrate institutional shame? Summarize her story.
10. What was the symbolic meaning of the scarlet cord?

CHAPTER SEVEN:

1. What is incessant shame?
2. How is shame passed on through generations?
3. How can you prevent shame from being passed on to future generations?

4. Why does shame result in a lack of intimacy?
5. What is meant by the term “heredity”?
6. Are physical problems transmitted from generation to generation?
7. Are spiritual problems transmitted from generation to generation?
8. What is meant by “generational heredity” as it is used in this chapter?
9. How does generational heredity affect you spiritually?
10. What is the law of “culpability”?
11. True or false? The Bible states that while every man will answer for his own sin, weaknesses can also be transmitted to succeeding generations and become spiritual strongholds.
12. What do you learn about curses in Proverbs 26:2?
13. What does the word “house” mean in Mark 3:27?
14. How is a “stronghold” created?
15. Why does shame grow worse with each succeeding generation?
16. Explain how the curse was passed on in David’s family.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

1. List and discuss the four steps given in this chapter for dealing with shame.
2. Explain how each of the following Biblical characters used these steps in dealing with their shame:

Inherited shame: Paul

Individual shame: David

Incessant shame: David

Imposed shame: Adulterous woman.

Institutional shame: Rahab

3. Apply the four steps discussed to your own shame and make the declarations in this chapter.

CHAPTER NINE:

1. As discussed in this chapter, what are the two forces at work in the world today?
2. Give some examples which illustrate the spirit of intercession as demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus Christ.
3. List and define the three lies of the accuser, Satan.
4. Explain how you will deal with each of these lies.
5. How can you break the force of accusation in your life?

CHAPTER TEN:

1. Summarize the four attributes of a finisher discussed in this chapter.
2. In which of these four attributes are you strong?
3. In which of these four attributes are you weak?
4. What specific steps can you take to strengthen your areas of weakness?

5. Contrast the lives of David and Saul in terms of how they dealt with their sin and shame.

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

1. Summarize what the Prophet Jeremiah said about the toxic effects of shame on Israel.
2. What was the prophet's message to God's people in Isaiah 61:7?
3. On what Old Testament law was Isaiah's promise based?
4. Summarize the story of Elijah and Elisha recorded in 2 Kings 2:1-14. What attitudes and actions enabled Elisha to receive a double portion? How can these be applied to your own life?
5. Specifically, how will you apply the truths you learned in this book to help others who are shackled by shame?