

Shame

FINDING FREEDOM



A STUDY FROM
EZER



Welcome to Grace Church's Ezer women's discipleship resource, Shame: Finding Freedom.

Over the last couple of years and throughout the development of many of our Ezer resources, we began to see that shame is rampant, not only in culture but also within our own church. We found that shame has played a strong role in hindering vulnerability and honest conversations about the life of faith within biblical community, which are so crucial to life change.

We desire to equip women with language to help them identify shame in their lives, combat it on a daily basis, and to be able to have thoughtful and productive dialog in community with one another. While you can use this resource alone, we believe this is a resource that would be best used in the context of biblical community. We suggest gathering a small group of girlfriends together, use it in a community group, or even in a one on one discipleship relationship.

We created a website to assist you in going through these resources: www.gracechurchsc.org/shame (<http://www.gracechurchsc.org/shame>). On this page you will find 7 video teaching sessions that correspond with this workbook as well as videos of women sharing their own battle with shame. You can also download or purchase additional workbooks, a leader guide, encouraging graphics to share on social media, and lock screens for your phone. We also have included some next possible steps you could take upon completing this study and additional resources for further study.

If you are a member of Grace Church, we want to help you in this process toward finding freedom from shame. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have need. If you are not a member of Grace, we encourage you to reach out to your local pastor or to get involved in a local church in your community.

We pray this resource is a helpful step in your journey toward freedom from shame.

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Week 7

INTRODUCTION TO SHAME

TEST OF SELF-CONSCIOUS AFFECT, VERSION 3 (TOSCA-3S)*

TOSCA-3S is to be handed out at the end of session 1.

Below are situations that people are likely to encounter in day-to-day life, followed by several common reactions to those situations.

As you read each scenario, try to imagine yourself in that situation. Then indicate how likely you would be to react in each of the ways described. We ask you to rate *all* responses because people may feel or react more than one way to the same situation, or they may react different ways at different times.

For example:

A. You wake up early one Saturday morning. It is cold and rainy outside.

- | | not likely | | | | very likely | | | | |
|--|------------|-----|---|-----|-------------|-----|---|-----|---|
| a. You would telephone a friend to catch up on news. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| b. You would take the extra time to read the paper. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| c. You would feel disappointed that it's raining. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| d. You would wonder why you woke up so early. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |

In the above example, I've rated *all* of the answers by circling a number. I circled "1" for answer (a) because I wouldn't want to wake up a friend very early on a Saturday morning—so it's not at all likely that I would do that. I circle a "5" for answer "b" because I almost always read the paper if I have time in the morning (very likely). I circled a "3" for answer (c) because for me it's about half and half. Sometimes I would be disappointed about the rain and sometimes I wouldn't—it would depend on what I had planned. And I circled a "4" for answer (d) because I would probably wonder why I had awakened so early. Please do not skip any items—rate all responses.

1. You make plans to meet a friend for lunch. At five o'clock, you realize you have stood your friend up.

- | | not likely | | | | very likely | | | | |
|--|------------|-----|---|-----|-------------|-----|---|-----|---|
| a. You would think, "I'm inconsiderate." | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| b. You'd think you should make it up to your friend as soon as possible. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| c. You would think, "My boss distracted me just before lunch." | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |

2. You break something at work and then hide it.

- | | not likely | | | | very likely | | | | |
|--|------------|-----|---|-----|-------------|-----|---|-----|---|
| a. You would think, "This is making me anxious. I need to either fix it or get someone else to." | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| b. You would think about quitting. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| c. You would think, "A lot of things aren't made very well these days." | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |

* Developed by June Price Tangney and others, *The Test of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA-3S)* (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University, 2000).

3. At work, you wait until the last minute to plan a project, and it turns out badly.

- | | not likely | | | | very likely | | | | |
|---|------------|-----|---|-----|-------------|-----|---|-----|---|
| a. You would feel incompetent | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| b. You would think, "There are never enough hours in the day." | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| c. You would feel, "I deserve to be reprimanded for mismanaging the project." | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |

4. You make a mistake at work and find out a co-worker is blamed for the error.

- | | not likely | | | | very likely | | | | |
|---|------------|-----|---|-----|-------------|-----|---|-----|---|
| a. You would think the company did not like the co-worker. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| b. You would keep quiet and avoid the co-worker | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| c. You would feel unhappy and eager to correct the situation. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |

5. While playing around, you throw a ball, and it hits your friend in the face.

- | | not likely | | | | very likely | | | | |
|---|------------|-----|---|-----|-------------|-----|---|-----|---|
| a. You would feel inadequate that you can't even throw a ball. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| b. You would think maybe your friend needs more practice at catching. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| c. You would apologize and make sure your friend feels better. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |

6. You are driving down the road, and you hit a small animal.

- | | not likely | | | | very likely | | | | |
|---|------------|-----|---|-----|-------------|-----|---|-----|---|
| a. You would think the animal shouldn't have been on the road. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| b. You would think, "I'm terrible." | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| c. You'd feel bad you hadn't been more alert [while] driving down the road. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |

7. You walk out of an exam thinking you did extremely well; then you find out you did poorly.

- | | not likely | | | | very likely | | | | |
|---|------------|-----|---|-----|-------------|-----|---|-----|---|
| a. You would think, "The instructor doesn't like me." | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| b. You would think, "I should have studied harder." | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |
| c. You would feel stupid. | 1 | --- | 2 | --- | 3 | --- | 4 | --- | 5 |

8. While out with a group of friends, you make fun of a friend who's not there.

- | | | | |
|----|--|---------------------------|-------------|
| | not likely | | very likely |
| a. | You would feel small...like a rat. | 1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 | |
| b. | You would think that perhaps that friend should have been there to defend himself/herself. | 1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 | |
| c. | You would apologize and talk about that person's good points. | 1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 | |

9. You make a big mistake on an important project at work. People were depending on you, and your boss criticizes you.

- | | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------|-------------|
| | not likely | | very likely |
| a. | You would think your boss should have been more clear about what was expected of you. | 1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 | |
| b. | You would feel as though you want to hide. | 1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 | |
| c. | You would think, "I should have recognized the problem and done a better job." | 1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 | |

10. You are taking care of your friend's dog while she is on vacation and the dog runs away.

- | | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------|-------------|
| | not likely | | very likely |
| a. | You would think, I am irresponsible and incompetent. | 1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 | |
| b. | You would think your friend must not take very good care of her dog or it wouldn't have run away. | 1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 | |
| c. | You would vow to be more careful next time. | 1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 | |

11. You attend your co-worker's housewarming party, and you spill red wine on a new cream-colored carpet, but you think no one notices.

- | | | | |
|----|--|---------------------------|-------------|
| | not likely | | very likely |
| a. | You would stay late to help clean up the stain after the party. | 1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 | |
| b. | You would wish you were anywhere but at the party. | 1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 | |
| c. | You would wonder why your co-worker chose to serve red wine with the new light carpet. | 1 --- 2 --- 3 --- 4 --- 5 | |

Scoring Sheet for the TOSCA-3S

The TOSCA-3S scenarios that you just responded to were created from the personal experiences of several hundred college students and non-college adults. Your responses can now be used to calculate your scores for Shame Self-Talk, Guilt Self-Talk and Blaming Others.

Transfer your circled answers from the TOSCA-3S to the lines below. For example, if you answered a "4" for item 1a, enter a 4 under the column labeled "Shame Self-Talk" on the line next to 1a. If you entered a "1" for item 1b, enter a 1 under the column labeled "Guilt Self-Talk" on the line next to 1b, and so on. Carefully transfer your responses, because the order for a, b and c will be different for each question.

When you have finished transferring your answers, add up for score for each column. For example, your "Shame Self-Talk Total" score will be the total of all of the numbers written in the first column. Compare your total scores to the scoring interpretation on page 8.

Shame Self-Talk	Guilt Self-Talk	Blaming Others
1a _____	1b _____	1c _____
2b _____	2a _____	2c _____
3a _____	3c _____	3b _____
4b _____	4c _____	4a _____
5a _____	5c _____	5b _____
6b _____	6c _____	6a _____
7c _____	7b _____	7a _____
8a _____	8c _____	8b _____
9b _____	9c _____	9a _____
10a _____	10c _____	10b _____
11b _____	11a _____	11c _____
= _____	= _____	= _____
Shame Self-Talk Total	Guilt Self-Talk Total	Blaming Others Total

Scoring for TOSCA-3S

For men

If your score on "Shame Self-Talk" is:

- 0-24 you seldom use shame self-talk.
- 25-32 you use shame self-talk an average amount.
- 33-55 you often use shame self-talk.

If your score on "Guilt Self-Talk" is:

- 0-38 you seldom use guilt self-talk.
- 39-45 you use guilt self-talk an average amount.
- 33-55 you often use guilt self-talk.

If your score on "Blaming Others" is:

- 0-21 you seldom blame others.
- 22-28 you blame others an average amount.
- 29-55 you often blame others.

For women

If your score on "Shame Self-Talk" is:

- 0-26 you seldom use shame self-talk.
- 27-35 you use shame self-talk an average amount.
- 36-55 you often use shame self-talk.

If your score on "Guilt Self-Talk" is:

- 0-42 you seldom use guilt self-talk.
- 43-48 you use guilt self-talk an average amount.
- 49-55 you often use guilt self-talk.

If your score on "Blaming Others" is:

- 0-20 you seldom blame others.
- 21-28 you blame others an average amount.
- 29-55 you often blame others.

IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Because of Jesus, all of the following statements are true for the believer. Think about the way these truths impact your thoughts, emotions, behavior, and relationships. Use this scale to rate how strongly you identify with each of these biblical truths.

Rarely/Weak

1

2

3

4

Often/Strong

5

I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Psalm 139:13-14 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

I am seen.

Genesis 16:13 "You are the God who sees me."

I am known.

Psalm 139:2-3 "You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do."

God adopted me into his family with great pleasure.

Ephesians 1:5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

I am a new creation.

2 Corinthians 5:17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

I am loved by God.

1 John 4:9-10 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

Jesus is not ashamed to identify with me.

Hebrews 2:11 So now Jesus and the ones he makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters.

I am forgiven.

Colossians 2:13-14 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

I am holy, blameless, and without fault in Christ.

Colossians 1:22 Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.

I am complete in Christ.

Colossians 2:9-10 For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

I am free from condemnation.

Romans 8:1 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

I am accepted.

Romans 15:7 Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.

I am not forgotten.

John 14:18 I will not abandon you or leave you as orphans.

I am secure.

Romans 8:38-39 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am unfinished.

Philippians 1:6 And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

God is working in and through me to serve His people and accomplish His purposes.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Romans 12:4-5 Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body.

As you reflect on these truths, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Which truth(s) do I struggle to believe?

2. Which truth(s) do I need to focus on in order to renew my mind and believe the truth about the work of Christ in my life?

Week 2

UNDERSTANDING SHAME

PART 1

HOMework IN PREPARATION FOR WEEK TWO

UNDERSTANDING SHAME, PART 1

Watch the required videos and answer the following questions for reflection. Be prepared to discuss bolded questions during group time.

Watch Laura's story and answer the following questions.

Questions for Reflection

1. What was the source of Laura's shame?
2. What lie did she believe?
3. What brought her freedom?

4. How does your story intersect with Laura's story?

Notes

Watch *Understanding Shame, Part I* and answer the following questions.

Notes

Questions for Reflection

1. After specifically addressing certain women in the room, what lies did Chrystie say shame tells you? Why is that an effective tool in shame's arsenal?

2. Real life change happens in the context of authentic biblical community. What might an authentic biblical community look like? Why do you think this is important in finding freedom from shame?

3. Read the following passages and answer the questions:

» Read Galatians 6:2. What does this verse say? Write it here.

» How does Paul push us toward authentic biblical community in this verse?

» Read James 5:16. What does this verse say? Write it here.

» How does James push us toward authentic biblical community?

4. Have you ever been in authentic biblical community before? If not, what concerns do you have about this type of fellowship? If so, what was your experience? How has that experience influenced how you perceive the role of biblical community in your life?

5. What forms of biblical community do you currently have in your life? Are there any forms of community you might not have considered before that you can move toward?

6. Chrystie said "You are as sick as your secrets". Why do you think secrets fuel and perpetuate shame in a person's life?

7. What did Chrystie say is the way out of shame?

8. Why do you think we are so afraid to speak our shame? What is at stake if we do speak it? What is at stake if we don't?

9. What has God been teaching you this week about shame in your own life?

Prayerfully Consider

Spend this week in focused and intentional prayer. Consider why you want to do this study, and ask yourself how much you are willing to change as a result of what you learn? Are you willing to do the work necessary to move toward freedom?

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. –Psalm 139:23

Week 3

UNDERSTANDING SHAME

PART 2

HOMWORK IN PREPARATION FOR WEEK THREE

UNDERSTANDING SHAME, PART 2

Watch the required videos and answer the following questions for reflection. Be prepared to discuss bolded questions during group time.

Watch *Virginia's story* and answer the following questions.

Questions for reflection

1. What was the source of Virginia's shame?
2. What lie did she believe?
3. What brought her freedom?

4. How does your story intersect with Virginia's story?

Notes

Watch *Understanding Shame, Part 2* and answer the following questions.

Notes

Questions for Reflection

1. Chrystie said that shame (including shame's close associations defilement, unclean, nakedness, dishonor, disgrace) is mentioned ten times more than guilt in the Scriptures. Does this surprise you? Why or why not?

2. How did Chrystie define shame? What were the three categories she listed? How is this definition of shame different from what you thought?

3. What is the difference between legitimate and illegitimate shame? What are some examples of legitimate shame in your life? What are some examples of illegitimate shame in your life?

4. Shame isolates and drives disconnection. Why do you think this is the case? How have you seen shame isolate you or disconnect you from community?

5. What is the reason you are afraid of being truly seen and known?

6. There are three corrupt ways we try to manage our shame (proving our worth, escaping, and powering up).

» **What are some examples of proving our worth (covering)? Can you think of some stories in Scripture where you see this in action?**

» **What are some examples of escaping (hiding)? Can you think of some stories in Scripture where you see this occurring?**

» **What are some examples of powering up (blaming)? Can you think of some stories in Scripture where you see this happening?**

7. Sin gives birth to shame and shame gives birth to sin. Can you think of an example where this has been true in your own life?

8. Look at the chart below and then answer the following questions.

<p>Self-esteem is defined as:</p> <p>Confidence and satisfaction in oneself A feeling of respect for yourself and your abilities A favorable opinion of oneself</p> <p>Synonyms: Self-assurance, self-regard, self-satisfaction, self-content</p>	<p>Honor is defined as:</p> <p>To be held in high respect, worth or merit High public esteem, fame, glory Value attached to a person by another/by the beholder</p> <p>Synonyms: Recognition, reputation, esteem, dignity, prestige, tribute, distinction</p>
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» What did Chrystie say is the opposite of shame?

» How do you get self-esteem? Where do you go to get it?

» How do you get honor? Where do you go to get it?

» **Why is honor more substantial and secure than self-esteem?**

9. Freedom from shame is a spiritual reality that has to be appropriated by faith every day. What do you think this means? What might it look like to do this?

10. What has God been teaching you this week about shame in your own life?

Workbook

Review the worksheet, *What Is Shame* on page 25 and then complete worksheets *The Story of Shame* and *Understanding My Shame Story* on pages 26-27 in your workbook. Come prepared to discuss with your group next week.

Prayerfully Consider

Spend intentional time in prayer this week considering and focusing on Chrystie's final statement, "Are you willing to believe what God says about you is true, and are you willing to receive it and apply it to your life?"

I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief. —Mark 9:24

WHAT IS SHAME?

Shame* is a sense that you are flawed, unacceptable, or unlovable because of:

- Something you did or failed to do (personal sin)
- Something someone did to you (harms to you)
- Something or someone you are associated with (cultural/social stigmas)

This definition places shame in three categories:

Personal sin

- Examples of personal sin: lying, gossip, sexual sin, pornography, abortion

Harms to you

- Examples of harms to you: abuse, parental neglect, mother/father wounds, spouse's infidelity

Cultural or Social Stigmas

- Examples of stigmas: poverty, gender, mental illness, singleness, lack of education, race, infertility, unemployment

Legitimate Shame

Though shame is a consequence of the fall and part of the curse, there are times when shame is legitimate. Legitimate shame is a natural consequence of personal sin. It is the result of doing something shameful that dishonors God or another.

Illegitimate Shame

Illegitimate shame is sometimes the results of the sin another committed against you. In these instances, you are not the one who sinned, therefore shame is illegitimate. You did not do anything shameful.

This definition of shame has been adapted from the definition provided by Ed Welch in the book Shame Interrupted.

THE STORY OF SHAME

Sources of Shame

Body	Abuse	Addiction	Adultery	Divorce	Aging
Performance	Mental Illness	Financial	Parenting	Pornography	Suicide
Family	Health	Sexual	Trauma	Anger	_____
Infertility	Miscarriage	Abortion	Education	Poverty	_____
Neglect	Disability	Masturbation	SSA/Homosexuality		_____

Verbal Clues—The story I am telling myself

I am not _____ enough	I am unworthy	I am dumb	I am invisible
I am too _____	I am a terrible mom	I am incompetent	I don't matter
I am a failure	I am weak	I am worthless	I am defective
I am a slob	I am a mistake	I never do anything right	I am insignificant
I am ugly	If others knew...	I have to be perfect	I am inadequate
I am unlovable	I don't deserve...	I'll never change	_____

Physiological Clues—The story my body is telling me

Rapid heart rate	Sweaty Palms	Flushed cheeks	Avoiding eye contact
Dry mouth	Watery eyes	Headache	Tight chest
Fight/Flight	Stomach turning	Tunnel Vision	Sweating under arms
A loud rushing in ears	Dizzy	Inability to focus	_____

Emotional Clues—The story my emotions are telling me

Anger	Regret	Unsafe	Exposed	Fear
Dread	Alone	Unknown	Self-Loathing	Self-Conscious
Insecurity	Rejected	Remorse	Contempt	Anxiety

Relational Clues (My reaction to shame)—How the story plays out

Proving My Worth (Covering): characterized by scrambling for my worth, over functioning, people pleasing, perfectionism, self-promoting, controlling, over identifying with work, overcompensating, trying to be seen

Escaping (Hiding): characterized by hiding, isolating, moving away from connection, keeping secrets, silencing ourselves, self-protecting, withdrawal, avoidance, self-soothing/self-medicating, trying not to be seen

Powering Up (Blaming): characterized by attacking, getting defensive, bullying, disconnecting by creating shame and pain in others, being aggressive, self-protecting and/or self-promoting, criticizing, blaming/deflecting, trying not to be seen

UNDERSTANDING MY SHAME STORY

Shame never shows up as shame. It operates in subtle ways and works best when it can remain unnamed. Do you know where shame lives in your life? Assume it lives somewhere, and use these questions to help you find it. The word banks on the previous page will help you answer these questions.

What source or sources of shame do you think you carry?

What typically triggers your feeling of shame?

What Verbal Clues do you hear when you are experiencing shame?

What Physiological clues do you notice when you are experiencing shame?

What Emotional Clues do you notice when you are experiencing shame?

What Relational Clues do you notice when you are experiencing shame? Do you try to prove your worth to yourself and others, escape, or power up? Which one do you rely on more? Pick a few of the added descriptions that describe how you interact with others when you are feeling shame.

Week 4

MODELING VULNERABILITY

Questions for Reflection

- 1. What is the gift of going first? Why do you think it is especially important in the church?**
2. How did the shame Doris' mother put on her give birth to sin in Doris' life? How did Doris' sin further her own shame?
3. We often shame others - sometimes without even realizing it. Who were the people who shamed Doris? How did they shame her?
- 4. What are some ways others have knowingly or unknowingly shamed you? What are ways you might be knowingly or unknowingly shaming others?**
- 5. How long did Doris say she carried her shame? What impact do you think carrying secret shame for that long had on her life? On her relationships with others? With God?**
6. Doris said that when she was around others she would think, "If you only knew..." This is a key phrase in shame language. Have you thought this about your own life before?
7. What were some of the responses from others when Doris finally shared her shame story?
8. How did LeeAnne's upbringing (abuse and feeling unwanted) and the shame put on her by her family of origin shape her? How did she try to manage her shame?

9. Have you ever felt the shame of being “too much”? If so, how are you tempted to respond to your shame?

10. Chrystie’s shame of not being enough and Ruthie’s shame of being too much caused conflict between them. How might shame be at the root of some of your conflicts with others (past or present)?

11. What steps did Chrystie and Ruthie take to resolve their conflict with one another? What was required of each of them in order to move toward restoration?

12. What has God been teaching you this week about shame in your own life?

Study

Read Philippians 4:2-3 and reflect on the following questions:

1. How is this similar to the situation between Ruthie and Chrystie?
2. What was at stake in each situation if the two women didn’t resolve their conflict?
3. What reason did Paul give in urging them to resolve their disagreement?
4. Is there anyone you need to move toward for resolution and unity?

Prayerfully Consider

Reflect on the vulnerability that was modeled during the panel discussion. Spend intentional time in prayer this week considering this question: Are you willing to be known?

Father, help me have the courage to be known so that shame may lose its hold on me.

Week 5

BATTLING SHAME

PART 1

HOMWORK IN PREPARATION FOR WEEK FIVE

BATTLING SHAME, PART 1

Watch the required videos and answer the following questions for reflection. Be prepared to discuss bolded questions during group time.

Watch Keri's story and answer the following questions.

Questions for reflection

1. What was the source of Keri's shame?
2. What lie did she believe?
3. What brought her freedom?
- 4. How does your story intersect with Keri's story?**

Notes

Watch *Battling Shame, Part I* and answer the following questions.

Notes

Questions for Reflection

1. Ruthie named three elements necessary in battling shame. What were they?

- 2. The truth can transform you as much as a lie can destroy you. How have you seen this be true in your life? Name one way believing a lie brought destruction in your life. Name one way truth has transformed you.**

3. In the movie Moana, the people allowed a false narrative to define them to the point that they were going to starve to death. What are the potential consequences of the lies you allow yourself to believe about who you are?

- 4. Ruthie said that we tell ourselves the truth by taking every thought captive. This is a fight for faith. What does it mean to take your thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ? Give an example of what fighting for faith might look like in the midst of a shame storm.**

5. Lifelines keep us anchored in truth. What were some of the lifelines Ruthie listed? Can you think of any she didn't mention? How do these lifelines keep us anchored in truth?

6. True vulnerability means we need to tell our stories, share our sin, speak our shame, and talk about the ways we've wounded and been wounded. Do you have someone in your life who really knows you? Or do you hide behind vague generalities when discussing your struggles? What is the benefit of being truly known?

7. Why is confession important in the life of a believer? Can you think of an instance where you confessed a current sin struggle? What impact did confession have on shame in your life?

8. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. Paul was willing to boast in his weaknesses, so that the power of Christ could work through him. What are some of the weaknesses you've been hiding? What might it look like to boast in them rather than hide them? Give a real-life example of how you could do that at least one time this week.

9. What has God been teaching you this week about shame in your own life?

Workbook

Complete the worksheets *Rewriting the Story: Telling Truth* and *Inviting Others Into My Story: Be Vulnerable and Receive Empathy* on pages 41-42 in your workbook. Come prepared to discuss with your group next week.

Prayerfully Consider

Spend intentional time in prayer this week considering and focusing on Ruthie's three questions:

1. When was the last time you were vulnerable? Think about a specific instance.
2. What are you not doing because you are afraid and you don't want to take the risk?
3. What specific gifts and abilities are you currently hiding because of shame?

Lord, your grace is sufficient in my weakness. Help me be willing to boast in my weakness, rather than hiding it, so that your power may work through me.

REWRITING THE STORY: TELL TRUTH

Shame is ghost-writing our stories for us, without us realizing it. A ghost writer is supposed to sound like the author, but isn't. Shame works in subtle and insidious ways to make us believe the narrative it is writing about us. Shame is deeply rooted in the stories we tell ourselves, which often contradict the story of Scripture.

In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul says, *"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."* As we seek to rewrite the story of shame in our lives, it is important that we learn to take these false beliefs captive and replace them with the truth of who we are in Christ. This will be an ongoing battle for us, but we are not without hope.

Choose a specific statement from the Verbal Clues section on The Story of Shame page that describes something you believe about yourself. Write it here.

1. When is the first time you remember feeling this way? What's the event or circumstance that made you feel this way.
2. Can you remember a time when you didn't believe this about yourself?
3. In what ways does this still feel true?
4. In what ways does it not feel true?
5. As a child, when I felt that I was _____, what was I really longing for?
6. How have I continued to live as though this statement were true?
7. Is holding onto this belief helping or hurting me?
8. What would be different if I lived as if this weren't true about me?
9. Am I willing to release this thought and believe something else?
10. What is the worst thing that could happen if I let go of this belief? Can I live with that?
11. In what ways does Jesus satisfy what I am longing for?

In order to rewrite this narrative, we must confront the lie with the real Truth about who God is and what that means for us as his children. **On pages 9-10 there are a list of statements that remind us of these shame-smashing truths. Choose a Truth from this list that can specifically combat the lie you are believing about yourself and write it here.**

Shame statement: I am _____

Truth statement: I am _____

What actions can I take to reinforce this truth in my life? (journaling, memorizing scripture, praise and worship, focusing on God's character, praying, asking friends to remind me of what is true, etc.)

Refer back to this section often. Use the questions on these pages whenever you need to identify and combat shame in your life.

INVITING OTHERS INTO MY STORY: BE VULNERABLE & RECEIVE EMPATHY

By its very nature, shame drowns us in lies and isolates us. But shame loses its power when it is spoken out loud. We are as sick as the secrets we keep. James wrote,

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results."

James 5:16

It is important that we do not allow ourselves to remain alone in the darkness of our own shame - whether the shame is over something you've done, something someone has done to you, or something or someone you are associated with. We do not have to cover up or overcompensate for our weaknesses because God's power works best in weakness. Instead, we can join with Paul in saying, *"So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me"* (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Confession is God's gift to us; it is the key that unlocks the door of our spiritual prison. Ironically, the thing we desperately try to avoid—confessing our sin, hurts, struggles, weaknesses, inadequacies, failures, and fears—is the very thing that will set us free.

Inviting others into our story is a crucial step in overcoming shame. Sometimes, we find it easier to confess past struggles but it is much harder to talk about our current shame-inducing issues. But this is where James' exhortation to us is so important. Confession is the path toward healing.

God created us to live in community with one another. In our battle against shame, we need someone to come alongside us—someone we can be vulnerable with and who will throw us a truth life line to help reshape our shame story.

1. Name one or two safe people who can do this for you? Give yourself a deadline by which you will ask them.

2. What is one thing you need to share with your safe person in order to move toward healing?

Week 6

BATTLING SHAME

PART 2

HOMWORK IN PREPARATION FOR WEEK SIX

BATTLING SHAME, PART 2

Watch the required videos and answer the following questions for reflection. Be prepared to discuss bolded questions during group time.

Watch Chris' story and answer the following questions.

Questions for reflection

1. What was the source of Chris' shame?
2. What lie did she believe?
3. What brought her freedom?

4. How does your story intersect with Chris' story?

Notes

Watch *Battling Shame, Part 2* answer the following questions.

Notes

6. What did Ruthie say are the two phases of empathy? Why is each phase important?

7. What is the result of empathy? What does it produce in the shamed person's life?

8. How does ezer (biblical femininity) in its fullness embody empathy?

9. Can you think of a time when you felt seen, known, and loved by another? Describe how that impacted you. Can you think of a time when you felt seen, known, and loved by God? Describe how that impacted you.

10. Ruthie talked about going back home, facing her shame, and her desire to see how the fragmented pieces of her story clung together to create a mosaic of shattered beauty. How might God be molding the fragmented pieces of your story (sins you have committed, harms you have experienced, and stigmas you wear) into a mosaic of shattered beauty?

11. What has God been teaching you this week about shame in your own life?

Study

Read Leviticus 15:19-33 and then read the story of the bleeding woman in Mark 5:21-34. Answer the following questions.

1. Because she was bleeding, she was considered unclean. How did being unclean impact her? How did impact those around her?
2. How did she make herself vulnerable? Why was this a risky move?
3. Jesus invited her to come out of hiding. Why was it important for Jesus to invite the woman to be seen and known? What did this ultimately give her?

Reflect on Jesus' interactions with those who were shamed, whether through their own sin, harms done to them, or things they were associated with. Write your reflections in the boxes below. List as many as you can and be prepared to share your findings with the group.

Who is the person?	What is the category of their shame?	Was their shame legitimate or illegitimate?	What lie could they be tempted to believe?	How did they respond to their shame?	How did Jesus respond to them?

Workbook

Complete the worksheet *Growing In Vulnerability* on page 50 in your workbook. Come prepared to discuss with your group next week.

Prayerfully Consider:

This week spend intentional time in prayer focusing on how you respond to Jesus in your shame. Is your desire to hide from him and others, cover yourself with good deeds and image management, or blame others? Or do you want to get to Jesus?

Lord, help me lay down my failed attempts at managing my shame and do what it takes to get to Jesus.

GROWING IN VULNERABILITY

From Jesus' call to make disciples and build the church, His people have been called to a different lifestyle centered on the cross and relationships bathed in life-on-life proximity. In order to foster this type of intimate connection with others it requires being vulnerable. This is hard. It involves coming out of hiding and exposing our true selves. It is easy to equate vulnerability with weakness, yet the reality is that to be vulnerable takes great courage. A risk that gets easier as we slowly begin to comprehend the reality of who we are in Christ.

We want to encourage you to take steps to grow in becoming vulnerable.

Who Should I Be Vulnerable With?

We are not called to be vulnerable with everyone, and there are certainly degrees of vulnerability. What is appropriate in a one on one setting with another woman may not be appropriate for a group setting. But for starters, think of one or two women that you can safely trust. You do not need to share every detail of your life with every person. But one or two people need to know you fully.

You might want to begin with initially getting together and sharing parts of your story, or your current struggles. As your relationship grows, this person will be uniquely equipped to throw you a truth-life line when you are allowing shame and unbelief to hijack your heart.

Learning To Tell On Yourself

Sometimes the things that cause us to feel shame may seem silly, inconsequential, and embarrassing. Sometimes they are serious, scary, and overwhelming. Because being vulnerable is scary, we hide behind vague generalities. Even our prayer requests are vague. The Scripture encourages us to bear one another's burdens. This means we need to learn to share our burdens in order for others to help us. This requires honesty with ourselves and those who are in biblical community with us. So how do you tell on yourself in a shame storm?

Admit

The first thing you need to do in a shame storm is admit it. Reach out to someone close to you and tell them what is going on and how shame is clinging to you. Remember, shame can't survive being spoken. Admitting you are feeling shame - whether it is from something you have done, something that was done to you, or something or someone you are associated with - is the first step toward freedom.

Be specific

We hide and cover behind vague generalities. We say things like, "I am having a hard day. Will you pray for me?" Or, "I am believing lies today." These things may be true but vague generalities make it too easy for us to hide and for shame to remain. This hinders others from really knowing how to help us. We need to be specific when discussing our shame struggle with those we trust. Doing so equips them to help us identify lies and point us toward truth. The following questions can guide you as you think through what to share:

- What are you feeling?
- What triggered it?
- How did you respond?
- What impact has it had on you?

Remember, the goal is freedom from shame, not preservation of our own image.

Confess

How are you feeling tempted to cover, hide, or blame in your shame storm? Again, be specific when discussing this with your biblical community. This helps them know you and equips them to lead you toward truth. Here is a practical example of what it looks like to tell on yourself when shame threatens to take over.

"I need to tell on myself. I was having a conversation with someone at work today. She pointed out something I had overlooked on a project. She was right and offered some great suggestions on how to fix it. It was a small mistake and not a big deal, but I was embarrassed and started feeling like a failure. It triggered my shame of feeling like I am not good enough. I started thinking things like, 'I might as well just quit my job because sooner or later everyone will see I am incompetent.' I know this is shame.

I am feeling tempted to blame her. I found myself picking her apart in my thoughts, focusing on her flaws as a way to deal with my own shame. I wanted to hide out in my office the rest of the day and wondered if everyone thought I was incompetent. Then in the next meeting, I was more aggressive and wanting to prove my competence to everyone.

I just needed to tell on myself. And if you see me hiding, blaming, or covering would you say something?"

This may feel foreign for a while. It will take practice. But it is a helpful tool as we fight against shame.

Week 7

GETTING TO THE CROSS

Questions for Reflection

1. Bill shared part of his story about wondering why God didn't fix his broken thought patterns. These patterns were a consequence of shame put on him by someone else, as well as shame from his own sin. Bill said that if God had fixed those things in him, he would have taken away the very thing that humbled Bill and drove him to God on a daily basis.
 - » What have you wanted God to fix in you?

 - » Has your struggle driven you to God or away from God?

 - » Describe some ways it has driven you away from God.

 - » Describe some ways that struggle has driven you to God.
2. Our true gospel identity is a both/and identity - it doesn't deny the real brokenness and shame from other's actions against us, our own sinful actions, and stigmas and labels we wear, but it reminds us there is another reality at work in us at the same time. Spiritual maturity comes as we embrace the truth of both of these realities. Take a few moments to reflect on your identity in the boxes below.

<p style="text-align: center;">Write A Few Realities of Your Personal Identity Here</p> <p>Our individual identities are shaped by multiple factors: our sin, wounds, strengths, accomplishments, weaknesses, interests.</p> <p><i>How would you describe your personal identity?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Write A Few Realities of Your Spiritual Identity Here</p> <p>Our spiritual identity is shaped by the finished work of Christ and as those who have been brought into his family with all of the benefits of an heir.</p> <p><i>How would you describe your spiritual identity?</i></p>
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As you look at the boxes above, answer the following questions:

- » **Does one reality feel more true than the other? If so, which one? Why?**

 - » Are you tempted to deny or over spiritualize your personal identity? Does that help you in your battle with shame or hurt you? Why or why not?

 - » **Is it hard for you to believe that both of these can co-exist? Why or why not?**

 - » **How might an either/or identity be detrimental to you mentally, emotionally, spiritually? What are some potential pitfalls of only identifying by your physical reality? What are some potential pitfalls of only identifying by your spiritual reality?**

 - » Why do you think it is important to embrace your both/and identity?
3. Read Isaiah 53 and Luke 22-23 and answer following:
- » **List some of the ways Jesus was shamed by others.**

 - » **Can you identify ways he was shamed by labels or stigmas?**

 - » **What was some of the shame he carried?**
4. Read 1 Peter 2:21-25 and Hebrews 12:1-2 answer the following question.
- » How did Jesus "manage" his shame?
5. The above passages show us that Jesus is familiar with shame. But unlike us, the shame Jesus carried was illegitimate; Jesus bore our shame. He endured scorn, rejection, betrayal, mockery, isolation from us on our behalf. Our shame, legitimate and illegitimate, was placed on him and he carried it by way of the cross. **How might believing and receiving comfort from this truth interrupt your shame?**
6. You cannot hide and/or cover yourself and receive the covering he gives. How are you currently hiding or covering? Are you willing to lay your attempts to cover down in order to receive true covering from Christ? Why or why not?

Watch “I Am” as a group and discuss the following question.

1. What is your reaction to this? How did it move you? What spoke to you?

Study

Read Ephesians 1:3-8, Colossians 1:1-22, 1 Peter 2:4-12 and answer the following questions. According to these passages:

- » How do you receive honor?

- » What is the honor you have received?

It is too easy to forget or minimize the work Jesus has done and the identity he has given us. It is a fight for faith, which is what Paul emphasizes in Colossians 1:23. *Rewrite this verse in your own words below so that you may hold onto it.*

Workbook

1. Complete the worksheet *How God Meets Me In My Story* on page 60 in your workbook. Come prepared to discuss with your group next week.
2. Review Possible Next Steps and Recommended Resources on pages 69-73 in your workbook.
 - » Identify one or two possible next steps you can take.
 - » Tell one or two people in your group which steps you plan to take.
 - » Practice an act of vulnerability each day (in big or small ways).

Prayerfully Consider

Spend intentional time this week reflecting on what you have learned and what next steps you can take toward freedom from shame.

Father, thank you that Jesus took my shame and has given me his honor. Please help me hold onto this truth when shame threatens to overtake me.

*Responding to Other People's
Shame Stories*

Quick Problem Solving responses also seem helpful because the focus is on helping the person fix their problem. This also falls short because quick problem solving doesn't fix the problem of pain. It is seeing your friend down in the hole and throwing them a ladder but never stopping to see if they are okay. Quick problem solving is hyper focused on the solution but ignores the pain a person may be experiencing. This type of response might even increase a person's feelings of shame, failure, and isolation.

On their own, both of these responses lack true compassion and concern. These two errors are often more about our own discomfort with suffering than they are about helping the other person. We will vacillate between these two errors depending on our own personality, our relationship to the person who is suffering, our schedules, and a variety of other factors.

A true empathic connection requires our time, energy, compassion, courage, wisdom and discernment. *We cannot be in a hurry if we are going to extend empathy to another!* Empathy begins with connecting relationally, emotionally, spiritually and physically with the other person.

The beginning stages of empathy:

- Invite others into a safe relationship with you where they can be fully known and loved
- Climb down into the hole and sit with them while they regain their bearings
- Suffer alongside them
- Consider the other person's perspective, validate their suffering (this does not mean that you have to agree with what they are feeling or their interpretation of events)
- Connect with the feeling, not the experience
- Listen well; let them talk
- Ask open ended questions
 - » What was that like?
 - » How did it make you feel?
 - » Help me understand?
 - » Can you tell me more?
- Demonstrate empathy with phrases like:
 - » I don't know what to say, but I am really glad you told me.
 - » It sounds like you are in a really hard place.
 - » I know that hurts, I've been there.
 - » I am really sorry you were treated this way.

As we have learned, when someone is in the midst of a shaming experience or exposing a part of themselves to you, they are very vulnerable. Sometimes even telling the story makes them feel as if they are right back in the middle of the event-even if it happened years ago. It's important to stay in the boat with them as long as it takes to help them know that they are seen, heard, loved and known. This may take a while, or even take place over several conversations. There is a time and place for gently offering wise counsel, to throw them a truth life-line, but we do not need to be too quick to rush the process.

Helping Them Out of the Hole

Empathy invites others into a safe relationship with us - where they can be known, where they can be vulnerable. But understanding alone leaves a person in their frailty and weakness. Understanding without direction leaves us impotent. We have to help others rewrite their shame stories. We have to help them shift their focus from self to God, to view their story through God's eyes and see how God might be at work in their lives.

Eventually, empathy must include guidance and direction. To exercise true empathy is to love someone enough to not leave them where they are. But it is crucial to understand that in order to hear truth, they must first experience a listening empathetic voice, from one who is willing to be the hands and feet of Jesus to them.

Doing the work of creating a safe relational environment, plows up the soil of a wounded heart and makes it fertile ground to begin planting seeds of truth. It is through this connection with the other person that we can begin to gently re-frame the lies of shame and replace them with the truth about who God is and who they are in Christ. Pointing them to Christ and his comfort is ultimately the only way they will be able to rewrite their own story and find him in it.

Jesus is the Great Empathizer

Time after time Jesus demonstrates empathy to those who come to him in pain. Ultimately, for us, Jesus is the great empathizer who interrupts our shame and releases us from its bondage. He looked down on our vulnerable and needy state; he *saw us, heard us, knew us and loved us*. So Jesus, the one who created the universe, made himself subject and vulnerable to it by becoming like us in every way. In doing so, he descended into the hole with us and provided us a way out through his own suffering. Now, as those created in his image, we are able to extend true empathy to others.

Next Steps

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

Shame is best addressed in the context of authentic biblical community. We recommend exploring some of these options as possible next steps for your journey toward freedom from shame.

re:generation

We all experience brokenness in life. We all struggle with sin, our own, the sins of others and the effects of sin all around us. We believe that there is hope for each of us found in Christ and that God gives us steps of healing in His Word, the Bible.

re:generation is a 12-step discipleship process through recovery, oriented around life change and hope through the application of God's Word. By working through these biblical steps within an authentic community, people have found freedom from substance abuse, codependency, pornography, disordered eating, depression, fear, control, emotional/physical abuse, same sex attraction, anger, obsessive thoughts and many other personal struggles.

re:generation meets weekly with a large group time of either teaching or a personal testimony, followed by a time of discussion in a small group format. You are welcome to join us any Tuesday night. All who are tired, broken or hurting are invited to come find recovery in Jesus Christ.

For more information on how to get involved in re:generation, visit the Grace Church website www.gracechurchsc.org/regen or call 864-284-0122.

DivorceCare

DivorceCare is a ministry of support, encouragement, and help for those who are separated, going through a divorce, or have been divorced but have not healed. DivorceCare meetings are a safe place to heal and renew hope through one of the most difficult times of your life. It is not just a Grace Church ministry but a trusted program used in a network of over 13,000 churches worldwide.

DivorceCare is a support group that meets weekly. There are three key parts to the DivorceCare weekly experience: Video Seminars, Group Discussions, and a Personal Workbook. Each video seminar features dynamic teaching from top divorce recovery experts. After the video/teaching time, your small group will discuss the video content and issues faced by group members. Each small group is led by people who have been divorced and can relate to much of the pain, emotions, and challenges you are experiencing. Your personal workbook will help reinforce each topic throughout the rest of the week.

For more information on how to get involved in DivorceCare, visit the Grace Church website www.gracechurchsc.org/connect/pastoral-care/divorcecare or call 864-284-0122.

re|engage

Would you rate your marriage a 2 or a 10? No matter where you fall on the spectrum, you are not alone. re|engage is a marriage ministry for all married couples. Whether your marriage is in crisis or you are looking to take your marriage from good to great, re|engage is a safe place for couples to reconnect. re|engage will offer hope and encouragement to marriages by helping couples move toward oneness through stories of grace, teaching and small groups.

re|engage meets weekly with a large group time, during which you will engage in worship, listen to a couple share their marriage story, and be taught principles for marriage growth, followed by a time of discussion in a small group format.

For more information on how to get involved in re|engage, visit the Grace Church website www.gracechurchsc.org/connect/pastoral-care/re-engage or call 864-284-0122.

Ezer

Ezer is a series of short-term discipleship groups that provide a biblical perspective on current issues impacting women in the church today. The goal of Ezer is to train women to think biblically about what it means to be a woman and how to follow Jesus in all areas of life. Ezer provides women an opportunity to engage in purposeful dialog in a small group format around core issues of a woman's life: identity, sexuality, body, and her words.

Biblical Femininity is a study about a woman's core identity as an ezer kenegdo, an essential counterpart. An ezer is one who comes alongside another and brings strength in the context of relationship. God's design isn't based on a woman's age, her personality, her marital status, or a role she may play. *All* women share this core calling, but how a woman lives this calling looks different for each woman based on her personality, gifts, strengths, perspectives, and season of life. The study explores God's design for women, how sin has corrupted that design, and how the gospel brings freedom from issues of shame, control, guilt, and despair that hinder her from living fully in that calling.

Body Matters provides a biblical understanding of the body and why it matters to our spiritual lives. Countless women battle a spirit of restlessness, insecurity, shame, and discontent with their own bodies. This issue is particularly complex within the church, because Biblical truth is often intertwined with cultural standards. Whether facing physical challenges such as aging, disability, illness, and death, or more emotional challenges like comparison, discontentment, envy, and insecurity, most women will struggle with their bodies at some point during their lives, which makes this an important topic for all women.

Redeeming Sexuality is a study about God's design for sex and sexuality. Sex was God's idea, which means it is inherently good. And yet, so many women experience shame in this area of their lives, whether as a result of their own actions or the actions of someone else. Our sinful desires for approval, control, affirmation, security, and comfort twist and corrupt God's good creation. Whether self-righteous or self-indulgent, we need to learn what it looks like to steward our sexuality in a way that honors God and serves others in love. No matter your perspective or experience of sex, every woman needs hope and a vision of how sex and sexuality fits into God's story of redemption.

For more information on how to get involved in an Ezer study, visit the Grace Church website www.gracechurchsc.org/connect/discipleship/women or call 864-284-0122.

Piedmont Women's Center: Post-abortion recovery

There is no physical evidence that the baby ever existed. There is no place to go and grieve the loss. A woman may feel she has no right to grieve because she chose this herself. A man may be the last person to admit that he has a problem. Whom can they tell? Friends may reject them. People in general may disapprove of their life choices. Even pastors or counselors may not understand the deep shame of post-abortion distress. Where can a person turn?

People deal with the aftermath of abortion experiences in different ways. The way they choose to deal with it changes them. Try as they may to forget, it is a day that will remain in their memory forever. Piedmont Women's Center offers a post-abortion support group for women.

The Forgiven and Set Free Bible study is based on the premise that a genuine, permanent healing of post-abortion pain can only come when a woman has come to grips with a more primary issue: her reconciliation to God. In small, confidential groups women share their abortion experience and explore Bible passages that show what God is really like and how He demonstrates compassion to women. They also learn to apply Bible truths to symptoms such as emotional numbness, anger, depression, and grief.

If you are interested in speaking with someone about abortion recovery or the Forgiven and Set Free Bible study, please call Piedmont Women's Center at 864-244-1434 or email ara@piedmontwomenscenter.org. It is safe, confidential, and supportive.

** If you have a need that is not addressed here, please call the church office at 864-284-0122 or email the church at info@gracechurchsc.org and we will be glad to assist you in taking the next step.*

Recommended Resources

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We've listed additional resources below. Any of resources can be helpful in furthering the conversation about shame. While it is possible to read them individually, we believe you would be better served in your journey toward freedom by gathering a small group of friends to go through them together.

Unashamed: Healing our Brokenness and Finding Freedom from Shame, Heather Davis Nelson
Whether it's related to relationships, body image, work difficulties, or a secret sin, we all experience shame at some point in our lives. While shame can manifest itself in different ways—fear, regret, and anger—it ultimately points us to our most fundamental need as human beings: redemption. Through the gospel, we discover the only real and lasting antidote to shame: exchanging our shame for the righteousness of Christ alongside others on this same journey.

Craving Grace: Experience the Richness of the Gospel, Ruthie Delk
In order to do battle with shame, we need our heart and mind to be anchored in the reality of our new identity in Christ. It's easy to forget. Craving Grace offers a simple tool to help you remember that you are dearly loved by a God who longs to be in relationship with you.

Uncovering Shame and Guilt, David Powlison, Ed Welch, and Joe Novenson
Guilt seems fairly straightforward, it is about what you do. It results when you fall short of a moral standard or you cross a line. But shame is more difficult to grasp, it is about who you are and how you feel before the eyes of someone whose opinion matters. Shame is different than embarrassment. You feel exposed and worthless, rejected and humiliated.

This 4-lesson study emphasizes the human experience of shame, not because the problem of guilt isn't important, but because shame is often overlooked as a universal struggle. So one goal of this study is to uncover shame and understand its relationship to guilt. Here you will learn how to identify the experiences of guilt and shame, know how Scripture speaks profoundly to both, and see how God responds. Study comes with a DVD and workbook.

Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection, Ed Welch
Shame controls far too many of us. Worthless, inferior, rejected, weak, humiliated, failure...it all adds up to wishing we could get away from others and hide. We know what shame feels like. The way out, however, is harder to find. Time doesn't help, neither does confession, because shame is just as often from what others do to you as it is from what you have done. But the Bible is about shame from start to finish, and, if we are willing, God's beautiful words break through. Look at Jesus through the lens of shame and see how the marginalized and worthless are his favorites and become his people. God cares for the shamed. Through Jesus you are covered, adopted, cleansed, and healed.

Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault, Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb
In *Rid of My Disgrace*, a couple experienced in counseling victims of sexual assault explains how the grace of God can heal the broken and restore the disgraced. This book is primarily written for those who have been assaulted (either as children or adults) but also equips family, friends, pastors, and others to care for victims in ways that are compassionate, practical, and informed.

The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves, Curt Thompson
We're all infected with a spiritual disease. Its name is shame. Whether we realize it or not, shame affects every aspect of our personal lives and vocational endeavors. It seeks to destroy our identity in Christ, replacing it with a damaged version of ourselves that results in unhealed pain and brokenness. But God is telling a different story for your life.

I AM

by Haley Barinowski

I am blank.

It always starts there and no matter what goes there
It's always an accusation.
It's a condemnation, an expectation to master perfection.
A constant race, an endless chase that requires a pace that
I just. cannot. maintain.

I am unfaithful. I am incapable.

I am too much, too loud, too touched, too proud.

I am.

The whispers are taunting
The standards are haunting
The pressure is daunting
And I am left wanting
For someone to give me a break
I can't seem to shake the voices even if they're fake
because it feels like it takes too much
to fight what they say.

I am too sad. I am too lazy.

I am too bad. I am too crazy.

I am.

I run from connection, I refuse affection because if the goal is perfection
Then I have to punish myself for failing.
So I go to the well because the chores must be done well
And as the clock ticks I need a quick fix and maybe the to-do list
will make me feel worthy.
Maybe there I can hide and let no one inside to see how much I have cried
Because I'm sure I'm too far gone.
I come to the well looking for relief and maybe a place to breathe but I tried this last week
And all I got was water and I'll just need more tomorrow.
The shame is suffocating but I can't picture escaping
Because all I know is being alone and if I were ever truly known
I think they would just throw stones.
I'm scared of being exposed because "there my mask goes" and I can no longer pose
for that picture I want them to see.
I can't win the fight, and if I make it through the night, I still can't find the light because
never enough is a
very. dark. place.

I am worthless. I am useless.

I am helpless. I am hopeless.

I am.

I couldn't stay hidden forever, I guess I thought I was clever but I should have known better.
I came alone to the well, but there's someone else at the well and I expect Him to yell,
"She pretends she's good, but she's not!"

...which would confirm exactly what I thought.

My greatest fears should bring me to tears, I'm the talk of the town with all my peers,
But instead He is here and He is different.

I should feel defensive because my life is offensive
but when I look at His face all I see is grace
and of all things to say, what does He say?

"I am.

I am He. I am holy.

I am mighty. I am worthy.

I am.

And it won't be easy, but if you'll just believe me, I promise there is a better way.
Shame is just a game trying to blame you for things that
I have taken away.

I am loving. I am kind.

I am gentle. I am wise.

I am.

Don't you see that forgiveness is freedom? Come into my kingdom
Where I don't hold things against you.

It may sound strange to you, but something has to change for you and
in my kingdom, open and vulnerable is always better than closed off and miserable.
I've written your freedom in the dust and all I'm asking is for you to trust
That my death is stronger than your sin.

My mission changed history so when I say that confession brings victory
I think you should give it a shot.

If the light I put in you is meant to shine out of you,
then the cracks in your story are there for My glory.

*You may be bruised, but I get to choose the words that we use
to say what is true."*

(pause)

I am flawed. I am healed.

I am raw. I am real.

I am.

I am loved. I have grown.

I am free. I am known.

I am.

Because of His name, His power is here, so let shame cower in fear
As forgiveness shakes the ground and drowns out the sound
of every lie I have ever believed.

*He is the Protector, He is the Rescuer, He is glorious, He is victorious
And because He is, I am.*

