

Shame

FINDING FREEDOM



PREPARING YOUR GROUP

Complete the following items *prior* to the first meeting with your group:

1. Contact your group to introduce yourself.
2. It is better to contact them each individually by phone. This will help strengthen and encourage each member in this new journey toward freedom.
3. Give them all necessary logistical information.
4. Make sure they have their workbook before week one.
5. Advise them to take the *Shame Self-assessment* on pages 4-8 and the *Identity In Christ Self-Assessment* on pages 9-10 and come prepared to discuss on week one.
6. Have them read *Growing in Empathy* on pages 63-65 in the workbook prior to the first group meeting.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Your group will include a mixture of women. Some may have never been in a church environment that talks openly about sin and shame. Others may have been previously shamed into silence by their family, peers or even their church. Some will be timid, apprehensive, even afraid of being part of the group. Others may be excited about getting started. Some may think they don't have an issue of shame and others will be painfully aware of their shame. Some are there to find freedom from shame of being wounded, others from the shame of being the wounder. Assume that at least one person in your group has experienced abortion, depression/anxiety, disordered eating, same-sex attraction/homosexuality, or sexual abuse - even if no one has openly admitted to it. This means we must be sensitive in how we speak about these topics, so as to not further shame someone. Our goal is to create a safe environment for others to come out of hiding and into the light, where they may be known and find freedom from shame.

Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians is a good reminder as you begin:

"Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone."

—1 Thessalonians 5:14

Paul's encouragement reminds us that everyone is different and needs something different at different times. We can't treat everyone the same. We can't even treat the same person with the same solutions all the time. Some need to be challenged, others need to be comforted. Some need tender care, some need loving and gentle rebuke. This means we must prayerfully depend on the Spirit to lead us as we facilitate conversations on something as sensitive as shame, and we must be patient with all of our group members, remembering that everyone is in process.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Some issues that may come up require additional follow up or other intervention. Please be sure to read this section in order to be equipped to handle this should it come up.

Setting Appropriate Expectations for Confidentiality:

If someone says "I need to tell you something but you can't tell anyone else," tell them that you will handle the information faithfully. Remind them that you will only share what they tell you if it is necessary to help them - not to harm them, shame them, or gossip about them - or if it is an issue of safety for them or others. Information that

someone shares with you should only flow up the chain, never out and never down. This means you should only share information with those who are directly responsible for you and/or the person sharing with you (example: pastors, ministers, the person's CG leader).

Issues of Safety include:

Potential harm to self or others; abuse of a child, elderly or disabled person; domestic violence.

What to Do:

If you have any concern or feel uncomfortable addressing something, and in particular, if any of the above safety issues are disclosed tell her, *"Thank you so much for having the courage to share this with me. I would love to help you get connected to resources to help you work through this. If it's okay with you, I'd like to reach out to (Group Life minister, Ezer leadership, responsible pastor) to get some direction."*

If you are questioning whether something is a safety issue or not, err on the side of bringing this to a Group Life Minister, staff member or pastor's attention.

Other non-safety related issues:

Ask if they'd like someone to follow up with them or if they'd like to talk to someone more in depth. If so, reach out to your responsible lead (Group Life minister, Ezer leadership, etc) with details and for next steps.

Encourage women to **connect with re:gen and other Care & Recovery ministries** for support and community. Care & Recovery is a wonderful resource for working through issues that have affected people's hearts related to shame (divorce, grief/loss, trauma, addiction, etc.).

WAYS TO ENCOURAGE VULNERABILITY

We cannot overemphasize the importance of the role of vulnerability in the pursuit of life change. There are several ways that you, as a facilitator, can encourage vulnerability.

1. **Listen First, Talk Later.** Respond positively to a participant's vulnerability with warmth and caring. This does not mean you are agreeing with what they said or affirming wrong thinking. This can be done by simply thanking them for their vulnerability and courage in sharing. The goal is to create an environment where they can begin to be known and safely engage the shame that may have long been hidden. There will be time to speak truth once a person feels known, heard, cared for, loved. This takes time; don't rush it.
2. **Be interested when others are vulnerable.** You can do this by listening well and asking follow up questions. Be fully present. Put away cell phones. Don't interrupt. Restate or rephrase what the person said in your own words to make sure you understand what they are saying.
3. **Model vulnerability yourself at appropriate levels,** without making group time all about you.
4. **Address any group members who undermine vulnerability through conflict, inappropriate humor, intellectualization, confrontation or anger.** This should be done after group time in a one on one conversation with the person. Ask the person to explore where their reaction is coming from; re-emphasize the importance of creating a safe space for women to be vulnerable so that they can find freedom from shame; ask them how their engagement is or is not allowing that to happen. Their reactions may be coming from their own shame and woundedness, so we don't want to further shame them. We want to provide a safe space for them to process through their shame, but we also don't want to ignore disruptive behavior either. If they continue to be disruptive or an obstacle for other group members, reach out to your responsible lead for further assistance (Ezer coach, Group Life minister, etc).
5. **Protect the group.** Ask group members to do the same for one another. If there is unfinished business with one of your group members, make a plan to address and work through it together at another time so the person does not feel ignored, rejected, or further shamed. You can do this by saying, "Thank you for sharing with the group. I would like to hear more, but we need to give other group members time to speak also. Could you and I talk after group and set up some time to talk more in depth?"

HELP THEM IDENTIFY BELIEVABLE NEXT STEPS

You are not responsible for fixing the problem of shame in someone's life. As a facilitator your role is to walk alongside your group members as they take the first steps in learning about shame's role in their lives through thoughtful and intentional group dialog and to help them identify possible next steps in their journey toward freedom, which will be a lifelong process.

Shame requires a response; it will not go untreated. We will either manage it in unbelieving ways or we will act in faith. These aren't just one-time steps to take. Ongoing freedom from shame requires ongoing, deliberate action. We have listed some possible next steps below:

- Take a step toward authentic biblical community
 - » Attend Discovery or Foundations
 - » Attend Connecting Point
 - » Join a Community Group
 - » Sign up for an Ezer group
 - » Join a Care or Recovery group
- Take spiritual responsibility for what God has revealed to you
 - » Invite a spiritually mature woman to coffee and develop a relationship with her
 - » Reach out to your community group leader
 - » Start small - tell one thing about yourself to someone you trust
 - » Find one or two trusted people and share your whole story with them
 - » Start a text chain with a few close friends with whom you can be vulnerable and who will speak truth in love
 - » Seek professional counseling
 - » Piedmont Women's Center (post-abortion recovery)
 - » Pick up one of the other shame resources and gather a group of women to go through it with you
 - » Make a habit of reading your bible and asking God to speak to you (gospel of John is a good place to start).

REMEMBER

Lead with vulnerability

Give others the gift of going first by leading with vulnerability. Vulnerability begets vulnerability. You set the tone for the rest of the group. Share your own answers to the questions, as this may encourage others to be vulnerable.

Practice empathy

You may need to read the section on growing in empathy in your book before each session. This will serve as a good reminder of what empathy is and isn't. Remember, empathy is the antidote to shame.

Be patient

Everyone is in process. Some will move and open up more quickly, while others will take some time.

Remember you are not leading them to the cross, you are both walking to the cross together.

For additional help in facilitating, refer to the Ezer Facilitator's guide which is located here: <http://gracechurchsc.org/connect/ministries/women/leaders/>

WEEK 1

1. Opening the session

- Welcome everyone
- Introduce yourself
- Make sure everyone has necessary materials
- Importance of Confidentiality
 - » What is shared in the group stays in the group
- Guidelines for discussion
 - » Remind everyone to respond to fellow participants with empathy
 - » It might be a good time to open to that page and go over all of the non-empathetic responses
- Open with prayer

2. Introductions

- Allow time for group members to introduce themselves

3. Icebreakers

- Take 15-20 minutes to allow everyone to get comfortable

4. Set expectations for the next 6 weeks

- Group time will consist of conversations regarding the videos, workbook, and some of the questions for reflection from the homework
- Homework
 - » Stress the importance of doing their homework each week. These exercises were strategically created to help them grow in self-awareness and to learn how to take steps toward freedom from shame.
 - » Videos: Each week will contain 1-2 videos. Watch these videos at home prior to coming to group.
 - » Questions for Reflection: Each video has corresponding questions for reflection for you to answer prior to group each week.
 - » Workbook: Some weeks have additional worksheets in the workbook.
 - » Prayer: Each week has an intentional and specific focus for prayer
- Encourage them to go at their own pace
 - » What is the next believable, realistic step they can take? It won't be the same for everyone.
 - » Don't compare their journey to others

5. Group Discussion

- Have each participant answer the following questions
 - » What is one thing they are afraid of or dreading over the next 6 weeks?
 - » What is one thing they are excited or hopeful about?

6. Go Over Personal Assessments. Ask the following questions:

- What is one thing that surprised you about the assessment?
- Were you more prone toward shame, guilt or blame?
- What is one thing that encouraged you?

7. Homework for Week 2

- This week you will watch *Laura's video* about her shame story and answer the corresponding questions on page 13 in your workbook. The goal of this exercise is to learn to identify sources of shame, lies we are tempted to believe in a shame experience, and how others stories intersect with yours, even if the circumstances are different.
- You will also watch *Understanding Shame 1, Part 1* and answer the *Questions for Reflection* on pages 15-16 in the workbook. This exercise will help you begin to identify shame and its impact on a person's life.

8. Close with prayer

WEEK 2

1. Open the session

- Welcome everyone back
- Icebreaker
- Pray

2. Goal of this session

- Begin to identify the impact of shame in our lives
- Understand the importance of coming into the light
- Begin framing an understanding of the role of authentic biblical community
- Also to help women begin to see how their stories intersect with other women's through the video testimonies

3. Group Discussion Time

- Start with *Laura's video*
 - » Each woman should have watched this video and answered questions prior to group
 - » Group Discussion questions
 1. What struck you about Laura's story?
 2. How does your story intersect with Laura's?
- Next move on to *Understanding Shame, Part 1 Discussion*
 - » Each woman should have watched this video and answered questions prior to group
 - » Group Discussion questions
 1. Intro question: What has God been teaching you about shame in your life this week?
 2. Questions for Reflection: Focus on bolded questions in the workbook, unless time allows you to cover more

4. Homework for week 3

- Watch *Virginia's Video* about her shame story and answering the corresponding questions on page 19 in the workbook.
- Watch *Understanding Shame, Part 2* and answer the *Questions for Reflection* on pages 21-24 in the workbook.
- Read *What Is Shame* on page 25 in the workbook and then complete worksheets *The Story of Shame* and *Understanding My Shame Story* on pages 26-27 in your workbook. These exercises will help you begin examining your own shame story. The goal is to help you identify potential sources of shame, to recognize shame's clues, identify the lies you tell yourself, and learn specific ways you are tempted to manage shame.

5. Close with prayer

WEEK 3

1. Open the session

- Welcome everyone back
- Pray

2. Goal of this session

- Understand difference between shame and guilt
- Ability to identify and categorize shame in their lives
- Understand and recognize corrupt responses to shame
- Grow in awareness of the cycle of shame (sin gives birth to shame; shame gives birth to sin).
- Recognize difference between self-esteem and honor

3. Group Discussion Time

- Start by discussing worksheets, *The Story of Shame* and *Understanding My Shame Story*
 - » Group Discussion Questions
 1. What did you learn about your shame story this week? What did the Lord reveal to you as you worked through the worksheets?
- Discuss *Virginia's video*
 - » Each woman should have watched this video and answered questions prior to group
 - » Group Discussion questions
 1. What struck you about Virginia's story?
 2. How does your story intersect with Virginia's?
- Next move on to *Understanding Shame, Part 2* Discussion
 - » Each woman should have watched this video and answered questions prior to group
 - » Group Discussion questions
 1. Questions for Reflection: Focus on bolded questions unless time allows you to cover more

4. Homework for week 4

- Go over homework for the week
 - » Watch the panel discussion, *Modeling Vulnerability*. In addition to watching the video, you will want to answer the Questions for Reflection on pages 32-33 in the workbook. This exercise will help participants learn what vulnerability in biblical community looks like and its importance in overcoming shame.
 - » Study Philippians 4:2-3 and answer the corresponding questions in the workbook on page 33.

5. Close with prayer

WEEK 4

1. Open the session

- Welcome everyone back
- Pray

2. Goal of this session

- Learn that everyone, even those they least expect, struggle with shame
- Gain an understanding of courageous vulnerability
- See vulnerability in biblical community modeled
- Learn the impact our personal shame has on others and our relationships
- Begin taking steps of vulnerability in biblical community

3. Group Discussion Time

- Start by discussing their study of *Philippians 4:2-3*
 - » Group Discussion Question
 1. What did the Lord reveal to you as you read and reflected on this passage?
- Next move on to *Modeling Vulnerability* Discussion
 - » Each woman should have watched this video and answered questions prior to group
 - » Group Discussion questions
 1. Questions for Reflection: Focus on bolded questions unless time allows you to cover more

4. Homework for week 5

- Go over homework for the week
 - » Watch *Keri's Video* about her shame story and answering the corresponding questions on page 37 in the workbook.
 - » Watch *Battling Shame, Part 1* and answer the *Questions for Reflection* on pages 39-40 in the workbook.
 - » Complete worksheets *Rewriting the Story: Telling Truth* and *Inviting Others Into My Story: Be Vulnerable and Receive Empathy* on pages 41-42 in your workbook. These exercises will help you begin to identify the truth(s) you need to believe and the next steps you can take toward biblical community in your journey to overcome shame.

5. Close with prayer

WEEK 5

1. Open the session

- Welcome everyone back
- Pray

2. Goal of this session

- Understand the destructive nature of shame's lies
- Learn two key elements in overcoming shame: Tell Truth and Be Vulnerable

3. Group Discussion Time

- Start by discussing worksheets, *Rewriting the Story* and *Inviting Others Into My Story*
 - » Group Discussion Questions
 1. What did you learn about your shame story this week? Did you identify a core truth you need to focus on and believe?
 2. What did the Lord reveal to you as you worked through the worksheets?
- Discuss *Keri's video*
 - » Each woman should have watched this video and answered questions prior to group
 - » Group Discussion questions
 1. What struck you about Keri's story?
 2. How does your story intersect with Keri's?
- Next move on to *Battling Shame, Part 1* Discussion
 - » Each woman should have watched this video and answered questions prior to group
 - » Group Discussion questions
 1. Questions for Reflection: Focus on bolded questions unless time allows you to cover more

4. Homework for week 6

- Go over homework for the week
 - » Watch *Chris' Video* about her shame story and answering the corresponding questions on page 45 in the workbook.
 - » Watch *Battling Shame, Part 2* and answer the *Questions for Reflection* on pages 47-48 in the workbook.
 - » Study Leviticus 15:19-33 and Mark 5:21-34 and answer the corresponding questions on page 49 in the workbook.
 - » Reflect on Jesus' interactions with others in the Scripture and fill in the chart in the workbook on page 49.
 - » Read *Growing In Vulnerability* on pages 50-51 in your workbook.

5. Close with prayer

WEEK 6

1. Open the session

- Welcome everyone back
- Pray

2. Goal of this session

- Understand what empathy is and is not

3. Group Discussion Time

- Start by discussing *Growing in Vulnerability* on page 50.
 - » Group Discussion Question
 1. What did you learn about being vulnerable?
 2. How is this different from what you originally thought and how you currently live?
- Discuss *Chris' video*
 - » Each woman should have watched this video and answered questions prior to group
 - » Group Discussion questions
 1. What struck you about Chris' story?
 2. How does your story intersect with Chris'?
- Next move on to *Battling Shame, Part 2* Discussion
 - » Each woman should have watched this video and answered questions prior to group
 - » Group Discussion questions
 1. Questions for Reflection: Focus on bolded questions unless time allows you to cover more

4. Homework for week 7

- Go over homework for the week
 - » Watch *Getting to the Cross* and answer the *Questions for Reflection* on pages 57-58 in the workbook.
 - » Study Ephesians 1:3-8, Colossians 1:1-22, and 1 Peter 2:4-12 and answer the corresponding questions on page 59.
 - » Complete worksheet *How God Meets Me in My Story* on page 60 in your workbook.
 - » Review Possible Next Steps and Recommended Resources on pages 69-73 and come ready to discuss some potential next steps you can take.

5. Close with prayer

WEEK 7

1. Open the session

- Welcome everyone back
- Pray

2. Goal of this session

- Identify and understand the reality of both your personal and your spiritual identity
- See Jesus as the one who overcame shame on your behalf and confers honor to you as his bride
- Learn how to receive comfort from the cross of Christ as the answer to your shame

3. Group Discussion Time

- Start by discussing *How God Meets Me In My Story* on page 60.
 - » Group Discussion Question
 1. What did the Lord reveal to you through his interaction with Peter?
 2. How has God met you in your shame?
- Next move on to *Getting to the Cross* Discussion
 - » Each woman should have watched this video and answered questions prior to group
 - » Group Discussion questions
 1. Questions for Reflection: Focus on bolded questions unless time allows you to cover more

4. Watch “I AM” video as a group

- Ask the group to respond to what they heard
- What spoke to you?
- How did you identify?
- What truth did you personally need to hear and receive?

5. Discuss next possible steps for each woman

- Have each woman identify one or two next possible steps she plans to take after the study concludes.

6. Close with prayer