

JANUARY 2016

TODAY IN THE WORD™



*In you, LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.*

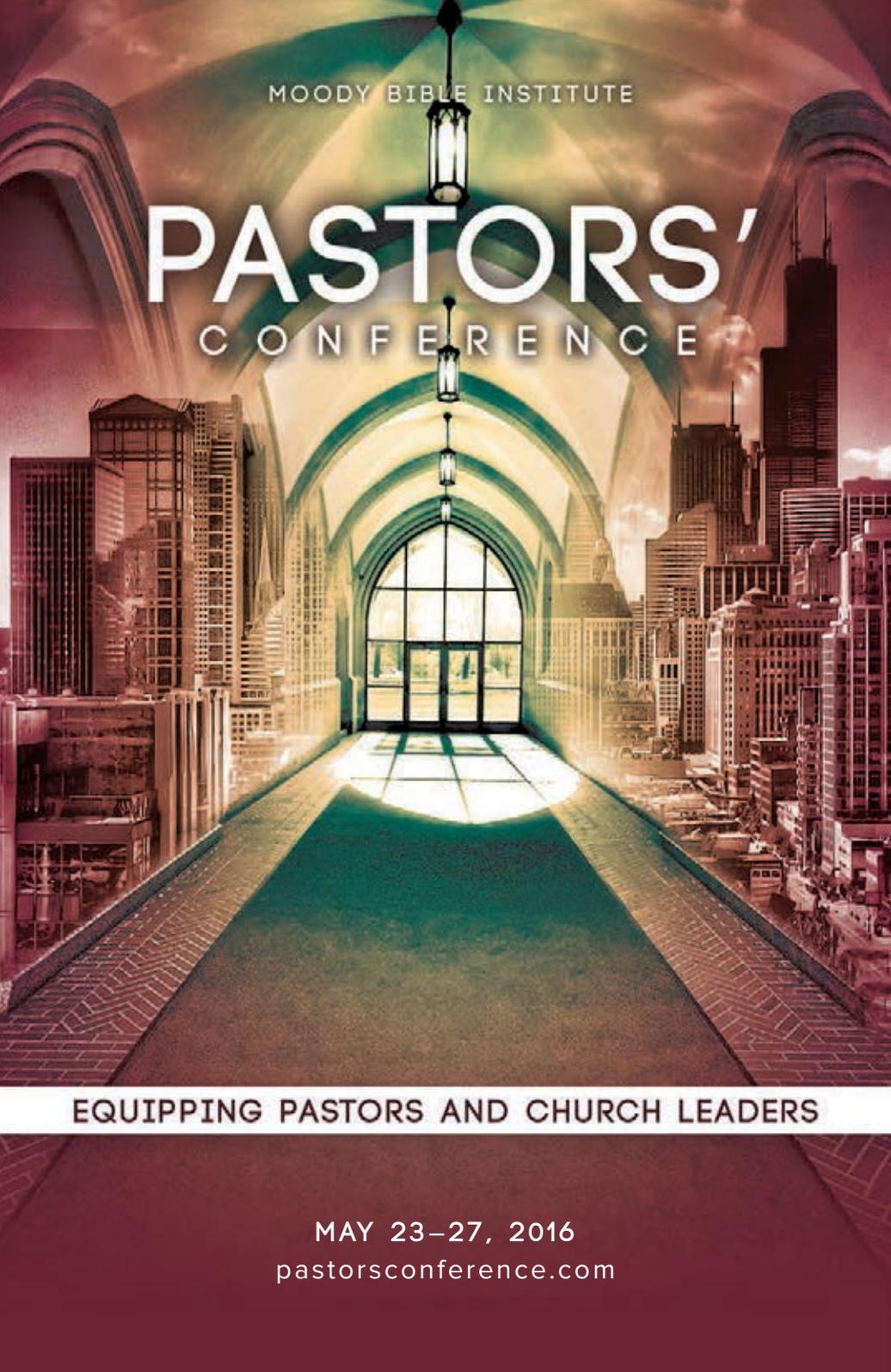
Psalm 31:1

SHAME: History and Healing

A devotional from



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The image is a promotional poster for a pastors' conference. It features a perspective view of a long, arched hallway with a red carpet. The hallway is flanked by brick walls and has a series of arched doorways. At the end of the hallway is a large, arched window that looks out onto a cityscape. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall color palette is dominated by reds, oranges, and blues. The text is centered and uses a clean, sans-serif font.

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TODAY WITH DR. PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Global Ministries

Boasting in the Temple



In Luke 18:9–14, Jesus tells a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector who were both worshiping at the temple.

The Pharisee was outwardly religious. He was well spoken and appropriately dressed. He stood near the front and prayed, arms stretched high, words flowing eloquently as he expressed his love for God and his contempt for sinners. “I am not like other people,” he boasted (v. 11).

Those present might not have noticed the man standing near the back. The tax collector’s hands were stretched out in dismay, and his whole body was wracked with sorrow. If you listened closely, you might have heard his words between sobs, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!” (v. 13).

Jesus explained that this parable was meant for people who trust too much in themselves. We are not to be puffed up by our own accomplishments. Jesus pointed instead to that tax collector, grieving over his sinfulness in the face of a holy God.

In verse 14 He says, “I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts

himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

We are to have an attitude of humility. And, if we understand the gospel, we cannot help but be humbled. Scripture teaches that we are all sinners. On our own, none of us is able to please God, “not even one” (Rom. 3:10). But Scripture teaches that all of our guilt and all of our shame have been fully covered by Jesus’ work of redemption on the Cross.

The good news is that in Him, we have been justified. Because of Him, we are made worthy. While we certainly experience the shame of sin (which needs confession), we do not need to experience the shame of worthlessness. Romans 8:1 assures us that there is no condemnation for those who trust in Christ.

Will we ever feel guilt over our sinful behavior? Definitely. Like that tax collector, we should humble ourselves and confess our sin. But if we wallow in shame, we are missing the point of the gospel. While shame tells us we are worthless, as believers we can have the certainty that God has declared us worthy through Jesus.

We do not need to be ashamed, because Jesus has paid the price of our sin. Our shame has been taken away. ■

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by Dr. John Koessler

Guilt and Shame

This month's theme focuses on healing from shame. In order to understand shame we must also understand guilt. The two are related, but they are not identical. Guilt refers to our legal status before God. Shame refers to our feelings. We should note that it is possible to be guilty without feeling shame. It is also possible to feel shame when we are not guilty. And when we feel shame as a result of our sin, it can be a blessing.

Guilt has its origin in sin, and it is the result of violating God's command. Guilt began with Adam who disobeyed God in the garden and whose trespass made all his descendants guilty of sin (see Rom. 5:12). This original guilt is enough to condemn us in God's sight. Guilt is compounded, however, as we continue to make our own choices to transgress against God's instruction. Violation of one point of God's law makes us guilty of the whole law (James 2:10).

When we are guilty of sin but do not feel a corresponding sense of shame, we are either ignorant, self-deceived, or in a state of denial. Ignorance does not free us from the burden of guilt (1 John 1:8–10). We are still guilty even when we do not feel it, which means that we cannot deal with our guilt by simply feeling better about our sin.

Only the blood of Jesus Christ can deliver us from the guilt that comes from sin (1 John 1:7).

This means that the blood of Christ is the ultimate remedy for shame. Since Christ's sacrifice removes our guilt, it is the only answer for shame, whether that feeling of shame is deserved or undeserved.

Forgiveness, like guilt, has to do with our legal status in God's sight. Just as we do not need to feel guilty in order to be guilty of sin, we do not necessarily need to feel forgiven in order to be forgiven. Some who have trusted in Jesus may continue to feel a sense of guilt even after they have been forgiven. A healthy sense of sorrow over sin can lead to repentance, and regret for past sin is understandable. But Scripture warns of the danger of morbid grief over past sin. Dwelling on the past leads only to despair: "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death" (2 Cor. 7:10). ■

FOR FURTHER STUDY

To learn more, read *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness* by John MacArthur (Crossway).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Helen Moline

New Year of God's Faithfulness

Happy New Year! When a year comes to a close, it's a great opportunity for reflection, to examine the season of life that has ended and to think about the new one that is beginning. How was 2015 for you? Do you have joys to celebrate and remember? Let's thank God for them! Do you have sorrows or regrets? Let's bring them to Him for healing and wisdom.

As we reflect on 2015, we can invite God into the process and ask Him to help us see our lives from His perspective. Where have we built with gold, silver, and precious stones this past year, and where have we built with wood, hay, and straw (1 Cor. 3:11–15)? In what ways can we live with eternity more in mind in 2016?

Most of what 2016 may bring is a mystery. But we do know it will bring new mercies from God every morning. We know it brings us another year closer to Jesus' return. And we know it gives us the opportunity to develop our intimacy with Him through studying His Word and spending time in His presence daily.

For me, 2016 also brings a new responsibility and privilege, editing *Today in the Word!* I'm honored to be joining the team here and am looking forward to unearthing fresh spiritual riches from the Bible with you, our readers. Let's sharpen one another and pass on our knowledge of God to others this year!

I'm reminded of a friend who has passed on to glory. He built with spiritual gold, silver, and precious stones, and he shared spiritual riches with me and others. J. P. knew the value of God's Word and hid it in his heart. At the end of his life, he could look back on both blessings and challenges and say, "Praise the Lord!" His redemptive love was threaded through it all.

Romans 8:28 states, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." What good news! Whether we stand at the transition of one year to another, or at the very transition of life itself, we can put our trust and hope in God. Because of His great faithfulness, we can say with joy, Happy New Year! ■

VOLUME 29 • ISSUE 1

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TODAY IN THE WORD™

Shame: History and Healing

People of different cultures used to deal with shame in various ways. Japanese samurai warriors chose to kill themselves rather than suffer shame and disgrace. For Europeans, spilling the blood of the offender was the way to go, and over the centuries hundreds died in duels—from Alexander Hamilton, one of America's Founding Fathers, to Alexander Pushkin, one of Russia's greatest poets.

This month in *Today in the Word* we'll trace the history of people in the Bible facing shame: from Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; to Noah, Tamar, and David in the Old Testament; to the apostle Peter, the crippled beggar, the Samaritan woman, and others in the New Testament. We'll see that only one death could overcome shame—the redemptive death of God's obedient Son on the cross.

We hope this month's study will draw you closer to Christ's love and forgiveness. And we pray that you will experience God's healing and freedom from shame through this time in His Word.

May the Scripture reading each day remind you that "We do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved" (Heb. 10:39). Thank you for praying and studying with us in 2016! ■

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FRIDAY
JANUARY

1

The LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

Genesis 2:7

Life without Shame

Marketing specialists know that an image of naked babies—cooing or playing or smiling—will capture most people’s hearts. Wide eyes and chubby tummies catch our attention, appealing to happy thoughts of a world full of innocence and wonder.

Today’s passage paints a similar picture, one of freshness, beauty, and discovery. God had just created the earth, bathing it with freshwater streams and preparing it to produce life. Finally, God shaped some dirt into a being who would bear His own likeness (Gen. 1:26; 5:1–2). He exhaled His own breath into this sculpture, filling it with life, personality, and spirit (v. 7).

God placed the newly created man in a garden and surrounded him with beautiful things to explore, create, and enjoy (v. 8–9). This human would be God’s image-bearer on the earth, imitating His creative work and tender care (v. 15).

Just as a parent would instruct a child to be safe on a playground, the Father warned Adam about dangerous temptations (vv. 16–17). But for the most part, his existence was unfettered and free. He had no need to worry, to fear, to doubt, or to hide. God was with him, solving his problems and providing for his needs.

God noticed Adam’s need for a companion and allowed him to discover it, too (v. 18). He took Adam through the educational exercise of examining the animals one by one, noticing their differences and naming them accordingly (vv. 19–20). By the end, it was obvious that Adam’s mate was missing.

God used Adam as a participant in His act of creating woman (vv. 22–23). Far from being threatened, Adam delighted in the woman God had made as a perfect partner for him. They worked together in the garden, untouched by shame.

APPLY THE WORD

The simplicity and freedom of Eden was lost, but through the work of Jesus our relationship with God is being restored. Have you thought of yourself as a beloved child in whom He delights? During your prayer time today, thank Him for the ways you have experienced the freedom and joy of living in His beautiful creation.

PRAY WITH US

We’d like to thank our readers for all your support and prayers for *Today in the Word* in 2015. We invite you to continue praying with us in the New Year and to start with a prayer for our trustees who faithfully serve Moody Global Ministries.

*You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;
but you must not eat from the tree of the
knowledge of good and evil.*

Genesis 2:16–17

SATURDAY
JANUARY

2

Shame Uncovered

A child playing hide-and-seek will often cover her eyes with her hands, thinking that the rest of her body is then also hidden. An adult learns to hide his secrets more effectively, avoiding eye contact in order to disguise his thoughts and feelings.

As we saw yesterday, Adam and Eve were created by God, and they were innocent and guileless in the way they related to God and to others. When Eve encountered the serpent, she was not guarded or discreet in her interaction with him. Like a child, she took his questions at face value. She did not have knowledge of good and evil—though she did know God’s command (see Gen. 2:17).

The serpent, on the other hand, had already seen what her eyes were unable to see at that point. He craftily used his knowledge of good and evil to cover the truth and to introduce doubts that had not occurred to Eve’s

mind. What if God weren’t so good after all? What was this knowledge that He wanted to keep hidden from them?

As soon as their eyes were opened, the first thing Adam and Eve felt was shame (v. 7). They felt shame over the naked bodies that they had enjoyed in innocence and delight. Even with fig-leaf coverings, they felt shame at the thought of God gazing on them. This wasn’t just an issue of modesty: they knew something was wrong in the core of their being. They knew they were no longer good, knowledge that instantly redefined their relationship to God and to each other.

The perfect beings that God had created were now corrupted, and shame in God’s presence replaced their freedom to worship and work. They clung to their own idea of independence and tried to cover themselves and their sin.

APPLY THE WORD

The same knowledge of good and evil that Adam and Eve received has been passed down to us. We know we fall short of God’s glory—and all of us fail (see Rom. 3:23). Are you still trying to cover the areas where you feel shame on your own terms? Neither our attempts to beat ourselves up nor to puff ourselves up will free us from this shame.

PRAY WITH US

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, invites you to include Moody’s finances in your prayers today. As we come to God, we acknowledge our dependence on God’s provision in everything, which comes through our partners—friends like you!

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

Genesis 3:21

Shame Provided For

A Ugandan pastor tells the story of the day his father kicked him out of the house. The young man had grown restless and disrespectful, thinking he knew better than his father. His father told him to leave the family home and directed him to a hut at the edge of his property. He provided his son with enough goats to start his own herd. At the time, being forced from the family home felt like a punishment, but later the son was able to see how his father's gracious provision allowed him to mature and to learn how to be a man.

God's treatment of Adam and Eve following their rebellion was a severe but fitting punishment. Because they had not cooperated with God's rulership, the woman's body wouldn't cooperate with her attempts to bear children; the ground would not cooperate with the man's attempts to bear fruit. Even their relationship would

be defined by tension and frustration (v. 16). Their lives would become a constant struggle against death, reminding them of the dust from which they were made and the low position to which they would return.

But embedded in the punishment was a gracious provision. As a wise Father of prodigal children, God cut them loose to fend for themselves, kicking them out of the garden to work the ground (v. 23). His goal was their eventual return to Him as humbled children. And despite the frustrations to their labor, He also promised that they would succeed in bearing children and producing food.

By faith Adam clung to this promise, giving his wife a name to match their new hope in life (v. 20). And in love God covered their shame, sacrificing the lives of animals to clothe them for their new status in life.

APPLY THE WORD

God did not remove the experience of shame from Adam and Eve. He did not pretend everything could go back to how it had been. Instead, God provided the covering for shame that they needed. If you are clinging to your own fig leaves, accept God's gracious provision in Christ to permanently deal with your shame through His forgiveness for your sin.

PRAY WITH US

The Controller's Office, headed by Linda Wahr, provides financial analysis, oversees accounts, and develops budgets for Moody's ministries. Please uphold in prayer its staff today: Alice Leighton-Armah, Annita Smith, and Eunice Childress.

By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did.

Hebrews 11:4

MONDAY
JANUARY

4

Cain: Shame Covered Up

Presenting gifts is a customary part of official government visits. Lady Kramer, the British transport minister, discovered too late that her present to Mayor Ko Wen-je of Taipei, Taiwan—a watch from the House of Lords—was more gaffe than gift. In Chinese culture, giving someone a clock or watch is considered in bad taste, since the phrases “giving a clock” and “attending an old person’s funeral” are pronounced similarly. “I had no idea a gift like this could be seen as anything other than positive,” Lady Kramer said. “In the U.K. a watch is precious—because nothing is more important than time.”

Cain had worked the earth by the sweat of his brow to produce a gift for God, but God favored his younger brother’s instead. We are told in the book of Hebrews why Cain’s offering was insufficient: it was not offered in faith (Heb. 11:4). Cain might have responded to God’s rejection of his offering with

humble contrition, but he chose to turn away from God in anger.

God saw Cain’s rebellion and shame leading him into a downward spiral of sin. He encouraged Cain to repent and promised him acceptance—if only he would submit to doing things on God’s terms. But Cain decided to blame someone else for his situation. He attacked his own brother, Abel.

God couldn’t ignore the murder of one of His image bearers. Notice that God still pursued Cain, giving him the opportunity to acknowledge his sin and be freed from it. Again Cain avoided God’s question and tried to cover up his crime. So God sent Cain into exile.

His unrepentant acts of murder and lies caused both earth and heaven to turn against him. God spared his life, but Cain’s rejection of God led to God’s rejection of him.

APPLY THE WORD

The experience of shame led Cain to compensate for his lost dignity through jealousy, anger, and violence. Can you relate to his reactions? Just as God invited Cain to release his shame in humble confession, He is inviting you. Confess your sin and shame to Him—He has promised restoration and forgiveness (see 1 John 1:9).

PRAY WITH US

Keeping in prayer the Controller’s Office today, please uphold these employees: Roger Sipes, Marie Bailey, Marya Preston, Robert Thomas Jones, and Michael Duong. We pray for God’s grace and love to encourage them as they work and study God’s Word together.

TUESDAY
JANUARY

5

For in the image of God has God made mankind.

Genesis 9:6

Noah: Shame Exposed

Many people have experienced a nightmare in which they find themselves in public half-dressed or even naked. They feel mortified over being so exposed and spend the rest of the dream desperately trying to cover themselves and escape the situation, hoping no one else has noticed.

Noah woke from his sleep to discover that the nightmare had really happened. He had always been conscious of living an upright life before God and men, and God had honored him accordingly (see Gen. 6:8–9). But Noah was human, and he fell prey to the temptation to misuse the fruit of the earth for which he had toiled and with which God had blessed him. In a moment of weakness, he consumed too much wine and fell into a drunken sleep, oblivious to the fact that his nakedness was shamefully exposed.

Noah's sons responded to their father's vulnerable state in radically different

ways. Ham took delight in his father's humiliation, drinking it in with his own eyes and then exposing it to others. Shem and Japheth chose an honorable course of action. They had heard God affirm the value of each human body as made in His image (vv. 5–6), so they found a way to protect their father's dignity rather than further degrade it. They averted their eyes from Noah's exposed body while carefully covering the nakedness that caused his shame.

While at first glance Noah's reaction to the news seems vindictive, it turned out to be both fitting and prophetic. His response revealed a willingness to take seriously the offense given by his son. Ham had behaved shamefully and shame would become his lot in life. Shem and Japheth had honored their father, and in turn they would receive blessing and honor.

APPLY THE WORD

Because we are God's image bearers, our bodies have value. We affirm or degrade that worth by the way we use them and by the way others treat them. How do you treat your body in ways that affirm its value to God? How can you protect the dignity of others, especially when they are in danger of being shamed?

PRAY WITH US

Paul Santhouse, vice president of Publications, welcomes your prayers for the ministry of Moody Publishers today. May the Holy Spirit lead the Moody Publishers teams as they reach readers with the truth of God's Word through the printed and digital word.

*The priest shall . . . make atonement for them,
and they will be clean.*

Leviticus 14:19–20

The Law: Shame Enacted

To our modern Western sensibilities, the treatment of lepers prescribed in the Old Testament law can seem harsh. But in ancient times, such illnesses were a deep cause for shame. People born with deformities or afflicted with certain diseases were thought to have been cursed by the gods, and they endured lifelong public shame.

As painful as it seems, the treatment prescribed in the Law (13:45) would be an external enactment of the internal shame that a leper already felt. Though everyone might know he was without guilt, his shame was unavoidable. His status had been redefined by a condition outside his control, rendering him unfit for the company of normal people and excluded from the public worship of God.

Such ostracism might be shocking to us, but in the context of the ancient Near East, the Law's provision for

a shamed person's restoration was merciful in comparison. The Mosaic Law instructed priests—those closest to the worship and holiness of God—to examine the leprous person outside the camp (14:3). Hope remained that if their disease had cleared, their shame could be dealt with, too.

But what was the purpose of a long, drawn-out purification process? In part, the multiple cleansing rituals and proclamations of purity served to slowly counteract a former outcast's shame, restoring her self-image and her public image. Like the ten healed lepers that Jesus sent to the priests for cleansing, it would publicly reinstate her status as an honorable member of the community, fit to dwell in God's presence (see Luke 17:11–19).

APPLY THE WORD

Our culture tends to ignore shame, confusing it with guilt and insisting that an innocent person should feel fine. But we often need space to express these feelings. Expressing the cause of your shame to a pastor, Christian counselor, or mentor could help you begin to receive God's cleansing and restoration.

PRAY WITH US

A veteran of Moody, Dr. Tim Arens, VP and dean of Student Life, is at the forefront of Moody's ministry to our students on the Chicago campus, in and out of the classroom. Would you pray for his important service?

THURSDAY
JANUARY

7

I was pouring out my soul to the LORD.

1 Samuel 1:15

Hannah: Defined by Shame

Katherine seemed to have it all—at age 17, she was a successful student with a college scholarship to the school of her choice, plenty of friends, and a supportive family. But no one knew that Katherine was deliberately starving herself. “At first, I just wanted to feel prettier—which I thought meant being thinner,” Katherine said. “And then I was so ashamed that it felt like a good way to punish myself for any way I messed up.”

In our reading today, Hannah might have initially appeared to have it all together. She was happily married to a husband who adored her. But her inability to bear children caused her constant grief and shame. In her day, an infertile woman was considered as worthless as an infertile field.

Despite her husband’s assurances of love, Hannah felt like cursed ground, useless and barren. Her rival taunted her, further confirming her degraded

status. Notice that Hannah had done nothing wrong, yet others believed she deserved shame.

Hannah knew that only God could remove her shame. Her response to feeling shame was completely different from that of Cain. Instead of pulling away from God, Hannah went to Him with increasingly bold faith. She poured out her bitterness before Him and begged Him for a son.

Eli the priest initially misinterpreted her desperate posture (v. 14), but Hannah humbly shared her heartache with him too. As God’s representative, Eli blessed Hannah and prayed for her.

Assured that she had found favor with God, Hannah felt her shame lift. She could eat. She could smile. Her honor was in His hands. In a few days, we’ll see even more of how God worked in Hannah’s life.

APPLY THE WORD

Shame is a powerful internal voice. It can be tempting to think we must punish ourselves for these shameful feelings. Instead, like Hannah, we can take our shame before God. When you cry out to Him, He will uphold your honor and redefine your life from shame to praise.

PRAY WITH US

Spring semester orientation starts today! As our students arrive on campus, please spend time in prayer for a great new semester for them in pursuit of the knowledge of God and His Word. Also pray for the fulfillment of God’s will for their lives.

What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace?

2 Samuel 13:13

FRIDAY
JANUARY

8

Tamar: Shame Imposed

A woman was on her way to an elegant charity event in New York City. She had gone to great lengths to make herself ready: her hair was perfectly styled, her dress was beautifully draped, and her jewelry sparkled in the streetlights. As she was preparing to enter the building, however, a car drove by and splashed mud from a nearby puddle all over her. Through circumstances beyond her control, her appearance was completely marred and she was no longer fit to attend the party.

Tamar's shame came upon her in an unforeseen and uninvited manner, through no fault or choice of her own. She savored her status as a royal princess, wearing the beautiful robes that signified her virginity (v. 18). She went to her brother's house only out of obedience to her father, King David. When it became obvious that Amnon's intention was dishonorable and repulsive, she did all within her power to stop him.

But despite her best efforts, Tamar was violated. Her purity was stolen from her and replaced with overwhelming shame. She tried to make things right by pleading with Amnon to marry her. But he rejected her altogether, completing her degradation by summoning a servant to shove her out the door.

Locked out, abandoned, and defiled, Tamar felt the full weight of her shame. She was too upright to pretend that nothing had happened. Her only recourse was to show her shame, to act out the disgrace that she felt on the inside. She ruined her beautiful clothes and covered her head with ashes.

The text says that David was furious, but we have no record that he made any attempt to comfort his daughter or punish his wicked son Amnon (v. 21). Though she had no choice in the matter, Tamar was left to bear the disgrace, a desolate woman.

APPLY THE WORD

We offer a great gift by allowing people to acknowledge their shame and grieve what they have lost. Ignoring it will not bring healing. If you have been molested, abused, or trafficked, you may need the help of a trained counselor. Your local church may be able to help direct you to Christian counseling resources.

PRAY WITH US

Moody's President Dr. Paul Nyquist, as well as his executive assistant Judy Sandiford, welcome the prayers of the *Today in the Word* family for the fruitful new year for Moody Global Ministries. Ask God for guidance in all decisions.

God . . . devises ways so that a banished person does not remain banished from him.

2 Samuel 14:14

Absalom: Shame in Broken Relationship

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the father illustrates our Heavenly Father’s ready forgiveness and restoration of His errant children. The parable also demonstrates what true repentance looks like when a prodigal returns.

Absalom was disillusioned with his father. For two years, King David had done nothing to address the disgrace brought on Absalom’s sister, Tamar. Absalom’s vindictive anger caused him to handle things much the way Cain had. He murdered his brother Amnon, and then fled into exile to escape punishment.

Perhaps David realized his own wrongful inaction by not dealing with Amnon’s treatment of Tamar. Instead of lashing out in anger toward Absalom, he longed to restore his wayward child. Joab used the woman from Tekoa to convince David he would be justified in bringing his son back from exile without

the punishment of death. David humbly received Joab’s advice and allowed Absalom to return.

This prodigal, however, wasn’t about to grovel upon his return or accept a lowered status in the family. Although his punishment had been mitigated, he showed no repentance. He demanded an audience with the king.

Sadly this was no heartwarming scene. Unlike the prodigal, Absalom did not say, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (Luke 15:21). Instead, the text does not record any words of repentance from Absalom.

Absalom didn’t acknowledge the shamefulness of the act he committed, didn’t forgive David for the shame brought upon Tamar, and didn’t desire reconciliation with his father in his heart. Time would reveal the consequences.

APPLY THE WORD

Has someone wronged you? How can you, with the help of God, affirm that person’s value even as you seek healing? Have you wronged someone? God’s heart is to forgive our sin and remove our shame to bring restoration to relationships. Will you humbly repent and accept His forgiveness, or will you insist on doing things your own way?

PRAY WITH US

Please include in your prayers today the Exterior Maintenance Services staff: Ryan Yoder and Jacob Santhouse. Thanks to their work, Moody’s Chicago campus always looks attractive and clean—a great Christian testimony to all who visit us.

If I find favor in the LORD's eyes, he will bring me back and let me see his dwelling place again.

2 Samuel 15:25

SUNDAY
JANUARY

10

David: Shame in Rejection

A child runs off the playing field because no one picked him for a team. A teenager frowns after the boy she likes ignores her. A man weeps when the company he faithfully served for decades includes his name in the first round of layoffs.

David also experienced rejection. He was devastated by how swiftly the hearts of his people had turned from him, how craftily his own son had plotted against him, and how thoroughly his life had been turned upside down. Seemingly overnight he had been changed from hero to zero. People who before had risked their lives for him were now acting as if he would be better off dead. Their actions sent the message that he was disgraced, without honor, and unworthy of their loyalty (v. 31; see 2 Sam. 17:1–4).

Rather than fight to defend his position and his honor, David withdrew in

disgrace. Absalom's sister, Tamar, had been disgraced; now it was David's turn. He disfigured his royal appearance, covered his head, and slunk out of the palace. He wept as he retraced the route he had often traveled in triumph, now as a broken, barefoot exile.

David wondered if God was punishing him, causing him to question whether he was a victim or the bad guy. He cringed at the thought God might be rejecting him, just as He had rejected Saul (see 1 Sam. 15:26).

In faith, David placed himself and his honor in God's hands, praying as he fled, "LORD, how many are my foes!... Many are saying of me, 'God will not deliver him.' But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high" (Ps. 3:1–3).

APPLY THE WORD

Rejection creates feelings of shame, causing us to second-guess ourselves in areas where we base our worth. When layers of David's identity were stripped away, he turned to God to find his worth. In what roles or relationships do you find your value? When you experience rejection in these, where do you turn for comfort and affirmation?

PRAY WITH US

We say that at Moody, stewardship is a "two-way street." We value our donors' support and the lasting relationships we establish with them. Please uphold in prayer the ministry to Moody's friends by Jim Elliott, VP of Stewardship.

MONDAY
JANUARY

11

It may be that the Lord will look upon my misery and restore to me his covenant blessing instead of his curse today.

2 Samuel 16:12

David: Shame in Accusation

“Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me.” As much as children would like to think this taunt is true, it doesn’t take long to discover just how deep words can wound, especially when they carry a false accusation.

David was being pelted by both stones and words. As he suffered his son’s betrayal and his people’s rejection, another person came to add insult to injury. Shimei, a relative of David’s old nemesis Saul, took advantage of David’s exposed position to retaliate on behalf of his clan. Shimei cursed and hurled rocks, but his most vicious verbal attack landed where David was most vulnerable.

Shimei played on David’s shame, accusing him of wrongdoing and blaming him for the mess he was currently in. *It’s all your fault. You deserve this and more*—Shimei’s

message rang out. He declared that God had rejected David and was punishing him for being a man of blood.

David had to listen as Shimei narrated his life story to cast him as the villain and Saul as the victim. David’s companions were ready to use violence to defend his honor, a sentiment David himself understood (see 1 Samuel 25). But Shimei’s accusations resonated with the shame he was already feeling over Absalom (v. 11), destroying his defenses against this verbal assault. Who was he to say Shimei was wrong? Perhaps he was expressing God’s judgment. Maybe David was guilty as charged.

David could only appeal to the character of God. Perhaps his ability to judge reality was impaired—but God’s was not. If God was cursing him, then he deserved it. If Shimei’s curses were unfounded, then God would defend him. He could trust God’s perspective.

APPLY THE WORD

Accusation can catch us off guard, causing us to doubt and fear. But whether we are right or wrong, we can trust God to defend or forgive us, as need be. Recount the ways God has upheld your honor or offered you restoration. Like David, you can respond graciously to criticism and accusation because you trust God.

PRAY WITH US

Please uphold in prayer Intercultural Studies professors at Moody in Chicago—Walter Cirafesi, Stephen Clark, Maria Mocuta, and Clive Craigen—as they prepare for the new semester. May God’s love and His peace be with them throughout the year!

I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

Luke 22:32

Peter: Shame in Failure

Failure has become a taboo word in our society. Teachers tell us to believe in ourselves. Motivational speakers pump us with slogans like “Where there is a will there is a way!” and “Failure will never overtake me if my determination to succeed is strong enough.”

The apostle Peter is one of the most memorable characters in Scripture. He was enthusiastic, impetuous, and brave. His determination and strength distinguished him as someone who could be relied on to push through obstacles. These qualities fit the name Jesus had given him—the rock (see Matt. 16:18).

But the rock crumbled when placed under pressure. Peter had been so sure that, of all people, he would be strong enough to stand up for Jesus in any situation. At dinner when Jesus predicted that someone would betray Him, it hadn't crossed Peter's mind that it could be him (see John 13:21–24). He had protested

against Jesus' specific prophecy about himself; only hours later, he would fulfill that prophecy by vehemently denying that he knew Jesus. The rock turned out to behave like shifting sand.

Imagine Peter's shame as he remembered that he had been debating rather than listening to Jesus' warnings. All his images of greatness came crumbling down. And underneath the crashing rubble were Jesus' sorrowful eyes watching his inexcusable betrayal and pathetic cowardice. Peter's shame drove him into self-imposed isolation.

Thankfully, this was not the end of Peter's story. He did not persist in his denial of his Savior. His shame also caused him to reconsider the basis of his former confidence. Jesus' repeated reminders to watch and pray lest he fall finally began to make sense (v. 46). His own strength and determination had failed, but God did not fail (v. 32).

APPLY THE WORD

The shame of failing to live up to expectations breaks down our self-confidence. But it also paves the way for us to humble ourselves in childlike faith, admitting to God that we can't measure up—but He can. What pleases God more: your success or your faith? What is He asking you to do with the situations in which you most fear failure?

PRAY WITH US

Please add to your prayer list these members of our Intercultural Studies faculty: Samuel Naaman, Mary Cloutier, Michael Rydelnik, and Timothy Sisk. Ask the Lord to strengthen them in their work of training students with a heart for missions.

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY

13

*Because the Sovereign LORD helps me,
I will not be disgraced.*

Isaiah 50:7

Jesus: Shame in Abuse

In his book *Mending the Soul: Understanding and Healing Abuse*, Steven Tracy argues that abuse attacks the image of God in a person. It not only damages the body but also wounds the soul. Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse work to break down their victim's sense of identity and worth.

Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated in Scripture than in the brutal series of attacks that Jesus endured in the hours leading up to His crucifixion. The religious leaders used their spiritual authority to assault His identity. He was on trial for being Himself, the Son of God. Silence infuriated His accusers; His calm restraint incensed them even more.

When verbal abuse failed to break Jesus, the religious leaders resorted to physical abuse. Their fists and saliva sought to destroy His identity; their mockery sought to degrade His worth. Pilate's reference to Him as the Christ

provoked the crowds to a bloodthirsty roar. Their hatred of who He was went beyond disdain or rejection: they wanted Him dead whatever the cost.

But the ultimate attack on the Image of the Living God came at the hands of sadistic Roman soldiers. The Bible is not specific about the details of what they did to Jesus, but soldiers of their day were known for their perverse pleasure in breaking the spirits of their victims. From what Scripture does tell us, we know Jesus endured degradation as they stripped Him naked and poured out their abuse on Him. They mocked the King of the Jews, not realizing they were also defacing the temple of the Holy Spirit.

But despite their best efforts, Jesus' identity remained intact. The sign above His broken body—though intended to mock Him—told the truth about who He is.

APPLY THE WORD

Our great High Priest experienced the shame of having His body and spirit treated like rubbish. You bear His image, so any abuse of you is ultimately an attack on Him. If you have suffered abuse, take your painful memories and your broken image to Him. Because He is your Helper, you, too, can be delivered from shame.

PRAY WITH US

Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, leads Moody's education ministry on our three campuses. Pray that he will find renewed strength, encouragement, and refreshment to serve Moody faculty and students.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Matthew 27:46

Jesus: Shame in Abandonment

As the poet John Donne wrote, no man is an island. Like it or not, the way others treat us affects how we feel about ourselves. People who inform our self-perception are usually parents and leaders. Their attention to our needs confirms our value. But what happens when they ignore our cries for help?

We sometimes think that Jesus didn't experience this human struggle, but His response to the Father's silence reveals His emotional anguish on the cross. When criticism surrounded Him during His ministry, His Father's affirmation sustained Him.

But through the long, torturous night of His trial and resulting crucifixion, God the Father seemed silent.

Like His ancestor David, Jesus had entrusted His honor to God, remaining silent before His accusers rather than

engaging in a heated self-defense. He clung to His identity as God's beloved Son, an identity confirmed by His Father (see Matt. 3:17). But as wave after wave of mockery, abuse, and false testimony crashed against Him, Jesus felt weaker and ever more alone.

Matthew's account describes what was happening in the external events Jesus experienced, but David's prophetic Psalm 22 provides a glimpse into His internal angst. People's scorn must have been painful, but the Father's silence during His suffering on the cross was worse. If Jesus was so precious to God, why didn't He intervene?

Yet with His dying breath, Jesus affirmed His faith in the Father's unfailing love (Luke 23:46). Though He felt forsaken, He believed God heard His cry and would come to His aid and rescue Him from the grave.

APPLY THE WORD

It may be disturbing to think of Jesus experiencing shame and abandonment, but it should be comforting to know even the Son of God felt as we sometimes do. His prayers on the cross model for us how to express ourselves to God in a way that is consistent with His Word. When you wonder where God is, you can pray these psalms, too.

PRAY WITH US

Cecil Bedford, director of Moody Aviation, and Jan Seiersen, administrative assistant, will be grateful for your prayer support of Moody's aviation ministry in Spokane, WA. In the next two days we'll keep praying for faculty and staff of Moody Aviation.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

By Dr. Winfred O. Neely, Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Studies

Q **What does Paul mean when he says, “Christ will be exalted in my body” (Phil. 1:20)?**

A The Greek verb translated here as “will be exalted” means “to make great, to make large, to magnify.” Of course, we cannot make the Lord greater or larger by adding something to Him, but we may give Him a larger place in our hearts and lives, and thereby make Him more conspicuous and prominent to others by how we live.

In the passage, Paul does not say he will exalt Christ, but that Christ will be exalted (note the passive voice) in his body, whether by life or death. The implication here is that God exalts Christ; Paul’s body and physical existence is the sphere where Christ’s magnification occurs. In this regard, Paul’s life is a model for us. Our bodies—our physical existence—should be the sphere where the Lord Jesus is made great, exalted, and glorified.

Q **How should we understand Paul’s passionate statement in Philippians 1:21: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”?**

A Paul’s words are some of the most passionate expressions of devotion to the Lord Jesus

in the New Testament! The little word that begins this verse—“For”—is key. The word *For* unlocks the twofold reason why Christ will be exalted in Paul’s body by life or by death.

First, Christ was everything to Paul. The expression “to live” could also be translated as “the living.” The focus of living his life in all of its facets, ups and downs, and twists and turns was Christ. The Lord Jesus was his reason and motivation, his one all-in-all purpose for living.

Even being under house arrest did not diminish Paul’s passion for Christ. Indeed, it was because of his passion for Christ and His cause that Paul was in his current circumstances. In light of Paul’s example, the question we should ask ourselves is this: Is Christ our reason and motivation for living?

Second, Paul reasons that no matter whether he lives or dies, he does not lose. In fact, for Paul death would provide the passageway that ushered him into the presence of Christ. He would be with Christ face to face, which is even better than the privilege of serving Him in this life on earth (Phil. 1:22–23). Death for the Christian is the gateway to glory; we gain Christ in a way that is not possible in this life.

Choosing not to be bound by the past is an ongoing discipline of Christian living.

Q I am having trouble with Paul's words, "forgetting what is behind" (Phil. 3:13). How can we just simply forget the past?

A I agree with you—we are not computers! We can't just press the delete button and remove files of life from our memory banks. Some of us truly wish we did have the capacity to erase sinful, sorrowful, and painful memories from our minds and dreams. And despite our best efforts to forget, sometimes an unwanted memory as real as our breath this morning invades our minds. Sometimes we try to suppress memories in unhealthy ways.

Forgetting, however, in the biblical sense does not mean deleting or suppressing the memories of the past. Forgetting in the biblical sense is also not the passive notion of forgetting; for example, you may have every intention to call someone but then have a memory lapse from being caught up in the busyness of the day.

Biblical *forgetting* is a choice. We do not delete or suppress the past but face it. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we choose not to allow the failures, hurt, pain, and sins of the past to hinder or prevent us in our walk with God in the present. We do not allow the victories of the past to make us complacent in the

present, nor do we allow the pain and failures of the past to paralyze us in the present. It is important to note that the word *forgetting* is in the present tense. Choosing not to be bound by the past is an ongoing discipline of Christian living.

Q What is the "prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14)?

A The word *prize* draws on imagery from the ancient world. The prize was the victory wreath or crown given to the winner or victor at the end of a sporting event. Today, the top finishers at Olympic events are awarded gold, silver, or bronze medals.

But Christians should determine to win a prize better than a gold medal. We should desire the celestial crown, the heavenly and eternal gold medal (see 1 Cor. 9:24–25) that Christ will grant to us at the end of the contest of this life! The prize is not given because we earned salvation or because we finished in the top-three of all Christians. It is offered to all who serve the Lord faithfully.

FRIDAY
JANUARY

15

*Weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.*

Psalms 30:5

Jesus: Resurrection from Shame

Every story needs conflict. In the best stories, the conflict increases the tension and complexity, causing a reader to wonder how any happy resolution could be possible. Often, when all hope is lost, something amazing happens.

For the next nine days, we'll study biblical examples of how God heals us from shame, and we'll begin with the greatest example of all. Jesus' story is packed with edge-of-your-seat conflict, superseded only by its out-of-this-world ending. The depths of suffering that He experienced on the cross provide a fitting contrast for the glorious ending God has for Him.

God allowed Jesus' enemies to succeed in their evil plan—for a time. But in the end, God was victorious. He not only raised Jesus' body from death, He also took care to restore Jesus' wounded honor. The crowd, soldiers, and religious leaders mocked Jesus on the cross—but when Sunday dawned it

was a different story! Now the Roman soldiers were the victims of terror, and the religious leaders' lack of integrity was exposed.

Matthew supplies us with the external details of the story but perhaps Psalm 30 provides some insight into how Jesus felt after he arose. In this psalm, David praises God for rescuing him from the threat of death and compares his experience to someone who has been drawn out of a deep pit. For a time, David's circumstances made it seem as if God's face was hidden, but God's mercy turned his mourning into dancing.

Jesus had staked His honor and His life on the Father's love (favor) for Him. For a time, it seemed God turned His face away, but in the end God proved His faithfulness. "You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy" (Ps. 30:11).

APPLY THE WORD

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, we too can have healing from shame in our lives. He bore both our sin and our shame on the cross. As you bring Him the things that cause you shame, His resurrection power can raise you up too. You can have hope in God's faithfulness that your story is not yet finished.

PRAY WITH US

Would you lift up in prayer Moody Aviation's faculty and staff who train future missionary pilots and aircraft maintenance missionaries? Praise God for the faithful service of Ian Kerrigan, James Conrad, Jay Bigley, Brian Writebol, and Gregory Heller.

There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

1 Samuel 2:2

SATURDAY
JANUARY

16

Hannah: Reversal of Shame

Versions of the Cinderella story are found in cultures around the world. The tale of a heroine brought from rags to riches and from ashes to beauty resonates with universal human desires. Justice has been done! Evil has been defeated! We cheer when the worthy underdog shines and the arrogant antagonist has to eat humble pie.

Hannah's story stands as a prototype for all of these. She who was "as good as dead" because of her barrenness ended up having her "horn lifted high" over her antagonistic co-wife (2:1). The long period of waiting and despair served to increase Hannah's joy over the answer to her prayers, so much so that the birth of one son was as fulfilling to her as giving birth to seven.

Hannah's exuberance erupted in a profoundly prophetic prayer, mirrored years later in the *Magnificat* of her New Testament counterpart, Mary (see

Luke 1:46–55). For Hannah, finally being able to give birth was far more than the fulfillment of one dejected woman's dream. It was a concrete example of how God works. Though the world seems full of unfair suffering and unaddressed injustice, God does make things right. He is actively at work in the realm of politics and economics, warfare and relationships, health and fertility. In all of these, He pays careful attention to shame and honor. Those who exalt themselves He will most certainly humble, and He will be faithful to bring honor to those who suffer shame. God specializes in the grandest of role reversals.

Hannah's prayer concludes with a call to all people to entrust their honor to God. After being healed from her shame, she could testify that ultimately God has the power to abase or exalt a person.

APPLY THE WORD

Where are you in your story? Think of the ways God has humbled or exalted you when you needed it. Name the unresolved situations in which you are still waiting for Him to act. You may want to write out a prayer of your own, recording your history of honor and shame from the perspective of God's faithful intervention.

PRAY WITH US

As we conclude our prayers for the staff of Moody Aviation in Spokane, WA, please add Jodi Appleby, Mark McIntire, Steven Thimsen, Joel Powell, and Neal Bachman to your prayer list. Ask God for good teamwork and safety in training.

We know that this man [Jesus] really is the Savior of the world.

John 4:42

Samaritan Woman: Identification of Shame

Traces of chocolate around his mouth betray a young child who has had his hands in the sweets jar. Evasive eyes indicate a neighbor has a secret. Telltale signs of shame provide clues that unmask our elaborate attempts to disguise our shame.

The Samaritan woman exhibited many shame-driven behaviors. She went to the well in the middle of the day to avoid the other village women. Her initial prickly, defensive replies to Jesus revealed her deep-seated insecurity. What was driving such behavior? Their first round of banter uncovered her sense of inferiority as a Gentile and a woman.

Jesus disarmed her with a humble request, addressing her fear of rejection with an offer of something she needed. He affirmed her humanity by including her along with everyone who needed the living water of His Spirit. And He

looked deeper, recognizing that the first explanations for her attitude and actions didn't fully explain her shame. His insightful question exposed the secret she had valiantly fought to hide. Her confession came out, along with the assumption that this religious Jewish man would dismiss her.

The condemnation never came. Jesus had known her secret all along. It didn't change His offer, and neither did her attempt to divert Him with an argument over politics and religion.

Having identified the source of her shame, Jesus affirmed the woman's worth in God's eyes. The Father would accept her as a true worshiper—He had sent the Messiah to seek her out. Liberated from her shameful secret, the woman ran to the people she had formerly avoided, boldly and shamelessly testifying to what Jesus had said.

APPLY THE WORD

Jesus already knows the worst about you, and yet He offers you His cleansing Holy Spirit and invites you to worship Him. Write down what makes you feel disqualified. You may even want to confess to a trusted friend. Now read aloud verses 13–14 and 23–24 and hear Jesus speaking these words of invitation and acceptance to you.

PRAY WITH US

Janet Stiven, vice president and general counsel at Moody, is thankful for the prayers of Moody's friends. She requests your prayer support for all the business and educational matters to which her team is lending their legal expertise.

“Neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared.

John 8:11

MONDAY
JANUARY

18

Adulterous Woman: Provision for Shame

Try to imagine this scene: a woman is on trial for a crime that everyone knows she has committed. The judge renders the verdict of “Guilty!” But then the judge steps down from the bench and offers to take the punishment in her place. The woman is left standing, free from guilt before the law but not free from shame before the crowd. They all know what she did.

In our reading today, a woman was caught in the act of adultery. She stood silent before her accusers, defenseless before the Law and the crowd. Her guilt and her shame were exposed and confirmed by all.

What would Jesus say to this woman? God the Father once carved the Law on tablets of stone; now the fingers of God the Son etched a pattern in the temple dust. The Law was not wrong to condemn adultery. Using it as a weapon to justify self-righteousness at

the expense of someone else, however, was wrong. Jesus demonstrated how to uphold both the Law and God’s original intent for it.

Jesus had the authority to forgive the woman’s sins and spare her from the punishment of stoning. But his concern was not only for the woman’s physical life. He knew her shame would remain with her the rest of her days. Jesus reminded the crowd that none of them were blameless before the Law. They all needed mercy.

After the stones dropped and the footsteps retreated, the woman remained standing before her Judge. He did not pretend that she was innocent or excuse her crime. He healed her shame by forgiving her sin and instructing her to live in a way that reflected the healing and forgiveness she had received.

APPLY THE WORD

Long after you have confessed your sin, do you still feel like you are walking around with its stain? God promises not only forgiveness for sins but also purification from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). If you have confessed your sin to the Lord, then He proclaims you clean. Ask His Spirit to help you accept the truth of your healing.

PRAY WITH US

Keeping our prayer focus on the Legal department on Moody’s Chicago campus, please mention its staff—Cassandra Blakely, Emmy Koh, and Ryan June. May the Lord bless their faithful service on behalf of Moody Global Ministries.

TUESDAY
JANUARY

19

*Go home . . . and tell them how much
the Lord has done for you.*

Mark 5:19

Gadarene Demoniac: Deliverance from Shame

Some military veterans survive the horrors of war only to come home to find captivity. Some are hounded by memories of atrocities they've experienced; others feel adrift without purpose in daily life apart from the battlefield. Veterans say no one understands their struggles except others who have been there.

The demoniac in our passage had been held captive for years, tortured by invisible enemies who had infiltrated his body and his mind. Instead of standing by him, his family and friends identified him with the evil spirits tormenting him.

Even after the man was free from the demons' control, he was still bound by the stigma of what they had done to him. His community expressed more concern over their economic loss than in the gain of their friend. Rather than thank his Rescuer, they tried to drive Him out.

No wonder the man wanted to go with Jesus. Only Jesus had looked beyond his bizarre behavior and dealt with the cause of his trauma. Where else could he go for refuge?

At first glance, Jesus' refusal seems insensitive. Why shouldn't the man come along as a disciple? This was not rejection. Jesus' refusal to grant his request was a mark of acceptance. He sent this man back as a disciple. No longer an outcast, he had been welcomed by Jesus and restored to his family. His mission? To tell others how much the Lord had done for him.

Jesus commissioned him as the first evangelist to the region, giving him a significant role that would connect his former experience to his current context. Every time the man repeated what God had done for him, he would testify not only to Jesus' power but also to his worth in God's eyes.

APPLY THE WORD

Repeating our story can release us from shame's isolating prison, inviting others on our journey and creating opportunities to see our past in light of God's gracious intervention. Thank the Lord for your testimony, and share it with someone else. Your story of what God has done for you may be just what they need to hear.

PRAY WITH US

Steven Mogck, executive VP and chief operating officer, oversees several departments on Moody's Chicago campus. Please pray for God's guidance and encouragement as he ensures focused and coordinated work of the Operations teams.

Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.

Mark 5:34

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY

20

Hemorrhaging Woman: Healing from Shame

The life of a Dalit, also known as “Untouchable,” in India is defined by ritual impurity. Inherited from their parents at birth, this unclean status excludes them from mixing with so-called pure people, from doing clean work, or from entering any holy place. Their touch is considered defiling.

In today’s reading, the shame of the hemorrhaging woman’s unclean status was something she could not escape. The chronic nature of her condition was miserable. The doctors had bled dry her economic resources, too. But the worst effect of her ongoing illness was how it redefined all her relationships. Like a leper, the woman’s bleeding condition excluded her from approaching God in His temple or from interacting freely in her community. Anything she touched would be instantly unclean.

In contrast to the synagogue leader who could directly ask Jesus to touch

his daughter, the woman had to try to figure out a way to get His needed touch without either making Him ritually unclean or receiving His rebuff. If she were caught, the whole crowd would deride her for daring to defile a holy man. Fear held her back, but faith compelled her to risk reaching out.

Jesus instantly knew the healing that had happened in her body. But He also knew the bleeding that continued in her heart. Twelve years of shame wouldn’t stop in a moment. So He put the crowd on hold—including the high-ranking religious leader who was a worried father—and focused his attention on her.

He affirmed her faith in Him and her worth to God. He transformed her from an untouchable woman to a daughter in the family of the Lord.

APPLY THE WORD

Are there people that you prefer to exclude from your community or family? Ask the Lord to give you His perspective on these people. Does He offer them forgiveness and welcome them into His family? How can you be an agent of His healing and love? As followers of Jesus, let’s be willing to restore the “untouchables” to fellowship.

PRAY WITH US

During the next three days, please uphold in prayer our Integrated Marketing and Communications staff, a talented team that helps all Moody ministries communicate their message. Brian Regnerus and Nicole Johnson are in our prayers today.

THURSDAY
JANUARY

21

Wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told.

Mark 14:9

Mary of Bethany: Protection from Shame

Every church has prominent contributors, like teachers, leaders, organizers, servers, and givers who keep everything afloat. Without them, everyone knows the church just wouldn't be what it is. But what about those who tend to stand in the shadows, whose contributions are not the sort to get listed in the bulletin?

Martha—outgoing, energetic, and highly gifted—embodied both the Proverbs 31 and Titus 2 woman, rolled into one. Mary was quiet, sensitive, and contemplative. How did that help anyone else? Martha's complaint to Jesus was really intended to goad Mary into some sort of productive action. This manipulative tactic was probably not her first attempt to get Mary to fit her mold of a godly woman. Despite Martha's good intentions, Jesus noticed its shaming effect on Mary and came to her defense.

Martha wasn't the only person who misunderstood Mary and underrated her

contribution. Jesus' disciples scolded her harshly for wasting her expensive perfume in such a rash, unproductive manner. Their shaming response implied that she and her gifts were a waste.

Jesus would not stand for it. In the same way that He had defended Mary when Martha accused her of laziness and thoughtlessness, Jesus came to her defense when the disciples complained about her extravagant act of devotion. Jesus was not criticizing the disciples' efforts to serve the kingdom. Rather, He was calling them to recognize the significance of Mary's contribution too. Her quiet attention at His feet and her attentive care of His feet were worthy of praise.

Jesus appreciated the gift of Mary's devotion and worship. He put the spotlight on Mary's unique contribution to His story, memorializing it for the rest of the world to notice and admire.

APPLY THE WORD

Shame can come in subtle forms, including neglect or a simple lack of appreciation. Jesus defended the quiet gifts that others overlooked. If you have felt underappreciated, remember that God sees and values your service. If you have marginalized someone's gift, consider how you can instead affirm their unique contribution.

PRAY WITH US

As we continue in prayer for the IMC department, please include Julia Baad, Max Clayton, Rhonda AuYeung, and Nikita Cunigan during your quiet time. As they work on various print and digital projects, may they grow spiritually and professionally.

*Lord, you know all things;
you know that I love you.*

John 21:17

FRIDAY
JANUARY

22

Peter: Restoration from Shame

Sometimes we wish for a remote control with a giant rewind button. If only we could start the day, the conversation, or the relationship all over again, we would do it differently!

Peter longed for a second chance with Jesus. The unresolved shame of his denial gnawed at him. Jesus understood Peter's shame and reconstructed the circumstances under which they had first met. The sea, the boat, the long night without fish—all were in place. Jesus called out from the shore and the nets came up overflowing. Peter got the message. Jesus was inviting him for a redo!

This second chance meant confronting the shame of his failure. Peter watched Jesus' hands breaking bread just as they had that fateful night. The Master he had denied served him breakfast. Reliving those events must have brought all his shame to the surface.

Jesus finally asked the question Peter was dying to answer. Yes, his words had betrayed their relationship, but now his words attested that his love was true. But when Jesus continued to question Peter's love, he began to lose heart. How could he convince Jesus of his sincerity in light of his earlier failure? If only he could have another chance to prove himself true.

Jesus' three-fold question was really an opportunity for Peter to counteract his three-fold denial. His three-fold commission was a restoration of Peter's former leadership position. And His prophecy of the difficult road ahead was an affirmation that He did know Peter's true heart: one day Peter would get the chance to prove his undying love.

Having confronted the cause of Peter's shame, Jesus reissued His call to discipleship. Now their relationship was restored.

APPLY THE WORD

Are you carrying burdens of regret over your past failures? God can still use you! Whether or not you get the opportunity to remedy things with others, you can make them right with God. He knows all things, including your heart. Confront your shame in His presence, confessing your failures and regrets. He can restore you and make your life a blessing.

PRAY WITH US

Concluding our prayer time for the IMC department, please add Lynn Gabalec, Linda Piepenbrink, Larry Bohlin, Kevin Mungons, Elena Mafter, and Jamie Janosz to your list. Pray for insight and skill in capturing the Moody mission in design and writing.

SATURDAY
JANUARY

23

Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.

Acts 3:6

Crippled Beggar: Raised from Shame

Asking for help is difficult. Whether we need driving directions or a financial loan, we have to admit some degree of inadequacy to the person we're asking.

Imagine the difficulty—even shame—involved in *always* having to ask for help. The crippled man had been asking for forty years. He had to ask for transport, money, and food to make it through each day. He was not a drain on society by his own choice, but people treated him as inferior. Ignored by some, condescended to by others, day after day he sat in the dust outside the temple while they went to worship God inside. The irony of the location where he sat should catch our attention: the temple was beautiful; his disfigured form was not. He was so close to the community of worship, but he couldn't enter or participate. He needed the charity of pious people; he often received their condescension instead.

Peter understood shame. He had only recently been restored from it himself. He didn't avert his eyes or awkwardly toss a few coins to avoid further contact with this man. Peter spoke to the man in a way that acknowledged his dignity, honestly explaining what he did and did not have to give. Using the resources he had at his disposal, Peter tended Jesus' broken sheep. He touched him, prayed for him, and literally helped him up.

The man's physical and emotional transformation was instant. His first impulse was to celebrate everything he had just been given: the ability to walk, to jump, to join the others in the temple, and to worship. Like the Gadarene demoniac, he boldly testified to all God had done for him. The pitiful beggar had been transformed into an exuberant evangelist, offering to others the gift of life.

APPLY THE WORD

Is there a rescue mission in your area that you can support financially or through volunteer service? Can you treat the homeless people in your city as created in the image of God? Ask God to give you wisdom to know whether you need to share your "silver and gold," time, or friendship with those often ostracized from communities of worship.

PRAY WITH US

We are grateful for the ministry of Moody Theological Seminary! Today, please lend your prayer support to its faculty and administration headed by Dr. John Jelinek, vice president and dean of Moody Theological Seminary.

*Rise up and help us; rescue us
because of your unfailing love.*

Psalm 44:26

SUNDAY
JANUARY

24

Locating Shame

A story map is a tool that teachers use to help students understand the overall direction of a story. The map provides a context for interpreting the significance of the various events involved at different points in the narrative. Knowing where the story is coming from and where it is going keeps a reader from getting lost in the middle.

In a way, Psalm 44 and Romans 8 provide us with a story map to understand where we are in the biblical story about shame. Psalm 44 starts by looking back and recalling what God has done in the past. It can be read from different perspectives: that of the Jews in exile, that of Jesus on the cross, and that of people trying to make sense of the degrading experiences God has allowed into their lives.

This psalm grapples with how God could show such love and favor to His people in the past and then suddenly

seem to treat them as if they have no value to Him. They had entrusted their honor to God, but He hadn't protected it from the vicious assaults of their enemies. Who were they to Him—simply sheep that He had fattened for the slaughter?

Romans 8 picks up the same question and examines it in light of God's promised future glory. How do setbacks like frustrated hopes and fruitless labor fit with the bigger picture of what God has planned for us? How can we interpret our degrading experiences of accusation (v. 33), condemnation (v. 34), hard times, persecution, poverty, and abuse (v. 35)?

Both passages conclude by anchoring trust in the bedrock of God's unfailing love. His love has protected us from shame in the past, and will deliver us from shame in the future.

APPLY THE WORD

For the rest of this study, we'll examine what Scripture says about overcoming shame. Have you anchored your trust in the certainty of God's love? You may face accusation and persecution—but nothing can overcome God's love for you. He knows the end of your story, and you can trust Him to be faithful to deliver you.

PRAY WITH US

Please focus your prayer support on Moody Theological Seminary in Michigan. Today, we invite you to pray for its faculty: Raju Kunjummen, Brian Tucker, John Restum, and Eric Moore. May their study of Scripture transform them and their students.

MONDAY
JANUARY

25

*Into your hands I commit my spirit;
deliver me, LORD, my faithful God.*

Psalm 31:5

Avoiding Shame

During the South Asian monsoons, heavy rains can swell rivers and flood entire cities. Mixed with mud, debris, and sewage, the unavoidable floodwaters invade streets, homes, and businesses alike. Residents have no choice but to wade through the sometimes chest-deep filth, carrying their precious possessions high over their heads to keep them safe.

The desperate attempt to preserve our lives and dignity in the midst of overwhelming circumstances is an experience that David knew all too well. Psalm 31 describes a metaphorical rising river carrying slander, contempt, abandonment, and terror. This river stemmed from the evil intentions of his enemies and was compounded by the unwitting cooperation of his friends. It seemed only a matter of time until he would be completely engulfed. His only hope was to lift his spirit over the muddy floodwaters and commit it into

God's hands for safekeeping (v. 5), just as Jesus did when He quoted the verse as a final prayer from the cross (Luke 23:46).

Psalm 31 offers us a prayer for those times when shame and defeat seem inevitable, when life's foul circumstances threaten to sully our souls. Only God could provide a safe refuge for David's spirit in the midst of overwhelming attack and shame. Despite the failure of friends to stand by and defend him, David was confident he could trust God's unfailing love for him. As long as God still looked on him with favor, other people's disgraceful treatment couldn't destroy his soul.

David took refuge in God. He had confidence in knowing how God works. God not only shelters the souls of those who trust in Him, He also restores their honor in the sight of all (v. 19).

APPLY THE WORD

Because we live in an imperfect world, we inevitably come into contact with situations that threaten our reputation. When the waters of shame rise around you, where do you turn for help? Do you look for refuge in your status, accomplishments, or relationships? Entrusting yourself into God's hands is the best refuge.

PRAY WITH US

Please pray for Christopher Brooks, James Wood, Eugene Mayhew, Paul Wilson, Amber Tucker, and Micah Jelinek—members of faculty and staff of Moody Theological Seminary in Michigan. We thank God for their powerful ministry of training Christian leaders!

“It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.

Romans 12:19

Fighting Shame

Bullies target colleagues and classmates in an endless need to prove their own superiority. As long as they get away with it, bullies will not stop the relentless pursuit to break their victim's spirit. In light of Jesus' call to turn the other cheek, what godly recourse is available for a victim of targeted, shaming attacks?

At first glance, Psalm 35 might seem to violate New Testament teachings about revenge. Shouldn't David simply be content to take refuge in God and wait out the storm? But his enemies were persistent. They would attack him from every angle until they succeeded in completely destroying him.

Their attacks had already successfully caused him to second-guess himself. Was he somehow to blame for the way he was being treated? After reexamining the past, he verified he had loved these people wholeheartedly.

His openness toward them made their malicious betrayal more devastating and broke his spirit further.

Instead of passively giving in to shame, however, David fought back—but not with weapons or harsh words. Despite his skill with them, he chose not to employ them in self-defense. Instead he resisted the shame his enemies sought to impose on him by fighting with prayer.

David would not take vengeance into his own hands, but God had every right. David appealed to God's protective justice, laying his case before the Judge and asking for righteous vindication. Without it, David would be left with the message that he was worth nothing more than the way he was being treated. But when God rose up and fought off the bullies, He would prove to everyone that His beloved servant was worth defending.

APPLY THE WORD

Bullies, abusers, and worse are still with us, and ultimately, God will hold them accountable. But Christians can also use the appropriate legal means to stand with those who have been violated. International Justice Mission and American Center for Law and Justice are two organizations that defend the oppressed.

PRAY WITH US

Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, invites you to pray for Moody's media ministries: Moody Radio and Moody Publishers. Praise God with us for their Christ-honoring content across the globe, cultures, and generations.

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY

27

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 2:1

Redefining Shame

What would you think of a man dressed in an orange jumpsuit with cuffs on his wrists and ankles? If flanked by uniformed police officers, we might see him as a dangerous criminal. But if held between black-hooded ISIS militants, we might think he was a martyr.

The same situation can be a cause for shame or honor, depending on whose interpretation we accept. This is the essence of Paul's message to Timothy. Paul was wrestling against the shame of his incarcerated status. Both Roman and Jewish officials had treated him as though he were dangerous. Many of his fellow Christians, influenced by public perception, had subsequently turned away from him (1:15).

But when Paul raised his eyes above the world's view of his life, he saw God smiling on his chains. In God's economy, these were chains of honor, proving his love for Christ and commitment to

His gospel. As long as he held on to a heavenly perspective, Paul could resist the world's shame.

Enduring the world's shame and redefining its code of honor didn't come easily. It required a minute-by-minute reality check, looking to his "Commanding Officer" for approval rather than to the surrounding civilian population (2:4). It was like dancing to a different rhythm than everyone else.

Thankfully, Paul was not alone. Others (like Timothy and Onesiphorus) shared God's value system, and their support was invaluable. The foundation of Paul's confidence was the Father's faithfulness, the Son's example, and the Holy Spirit's help (1:12–14; 2:8–13). Paul encouraged Timothy (and us) to join him in suffering for Christ. If we endure, we will reign with Him and receive the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

APPLY THE WORD

Maintaining a heavenly perspective while living in an earthly body hasn't become any easier in the years since Paul. We need regular interaction with like-minded believers to help us stave off the shame modern society puts on us as Christians. Look for a church that encourages you, proclaims Christ, and offers fellowship.

PRAY WITH US

Would you join us in praying for Satellite Network Operations staff? Peter Dhuse, Sam Beirut, Eric Hufford, and Jose Lemus work diligently to ensure an error-free delivery of Moody Radio programming to our stations across the country.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus . . . who for the joy set before him endured the cross.

Hebrews 12:2

THURSDAY
JANUARY

28

Shunning Shame

Superheroes have never been more popular. Comic book sales are the highest they've been in decades; superhero movies make millions of dollars, and superhero television shows have millions of viewers. People love to imagine a character with extraordinary abilities who is not constrained by gravity or fire or limited strength like the rest of us mortals.

We might be tempted to think of the people listed in Hebrews 11 as superheroes of faith. But a closer look at their stories in other parts of Scripture reveals that they struggled with fear, doubt, and susceptibility to shame just as we do. They were human beings just like us, and they looked ahead to a reward so valuable that they persevered in focusing on and trusting God.

These individuals are included in this passage as examples of faith not because

of their personal accomplishments but due to their belief in what God would accomplish for them. They fixed their eyes on that prize and ran for it, even as the world unleashed its abuse, degradation, mockery, and rejection. Their very refusal to succumb to shame put their enemies to shame. In God's opinion, the world wasn't worthy of them.

Why didn't they give up? Because they were not looking to the world for approval. As long as God was pleased with them, they could withstand anything. They listened for His voice and sought His face, doing whatever it took to be faithful to His calling. In return they received His priceless affirmation. God was proud to be called their God.

We share their weaknesses, and we also share their God. We can focus on our Savior Jesus and stay faithful to God with the help of the Holy Spirit.

APPLY THE WORD

Removing these heroes of the faith from a pedestal removes our excuses. Looking to God in faith was sufficient for them to overcome shame, and it is enough for us. What prize are you fixing your eyes on? How would wanting God's pleasure change the way you relate to everything else? What do you need to "throw off" to pursue Him?

PRAY WITH US

Again, let's continue to ask for God's leading in the ministry of Satellite Network Operations staff. Pray that the truth of the Bible broadcast by Moody Radio with the help of Phil Shappard, Tom Svoboda, and Tracy Haney would bring abundant fruit.

FRIDAY
JANUARY

29

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise.

Hebrews 13:15

Bearing Shame

Family members have profound power both to shame and to honor each other. Children make their parents feel embarrassed or proud, depending on how they choose to act. Older siblings often either defend or oppress their younger ones; little siblings usually either idolize or annoy their older brothers and sisters.

Hebrews gives us a breathtaking glimpse into the dynamics of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son (see Hebrews 1–2). The Father allowed His Son to be made “lower than the angels” and to suffer death (2:9–10). As the perfect Son, Jesus willingly subjected Himself to His Father’s discipline.

Jesus’ submission brought glory to the Father. And the Father’s carefully laid plans for the Son’s humiliation culminated in Jesus’ restoration to His glory.

But the divine circle of mutually honoring relationships doesn’t end there. God reaches out to draw us into His family too. Jesus lowered Himself to struggle and suffer like us so that He could raise us up to share the Father’s love the way He does. Like a good older brother, he proudly identifies with us, coaches us along the way, and intercedes to the Father on our behalf (2:11).

Jesus invites us to join Him in drawing others into His family. When we share in His suffering and humiliation, we can offer a sacrifice of praise because we will also share in His rewards (see Rom. 8:17). Jesus calls us to be consecrated priests like Himself, those who willingly leave their comfortable, safe places in order to go out among the “unclean” (13:12–13). When we have the privilege of bearing disgrace for Jesus’ sake (see Acts 5:41), as members of His spiritual family, we also share in the honor of bringing glory to God.

APPLY THE WORD

Have you experienced shame? God can transform your past and the shame offered by this world into His glory. When we join His family, our willingness to bear shame for His name’s sake becomes part of our glory. If you are taunted or rejected for the sake of Jesus, offer Him a sacrifice of praise and thanks for allowing you to serve Him.

PRAY WITH US

Remember in prayer the ministry of Moody Distance Learning, led by Vice President Dr. James Spencer. As MDL develops new courses and programs to reach more learners across the globe, praise God for unity, spiritual growth, and care for students.

Let us draw near to God . . . having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience.

Hebrews 10:22

SATURDAY
JANUARY

30

Shedding Shame

In a unique twist on the old Cinderella story, one movie includes a scene in which Cinderella stands accused before the king and queen at the ball. Her wicked stepmother rips off her beautiful finery, gleefully exposing Cinderella's lowly status in front of the elegant crowd. Even the prince turns away in disgust, leaving Cinderella helpless and condemned.

In our reading today from Zechariah, Satan stood ready for the kill. His victim was undeniably tarnished and without defense. The main character in Zechariah's prophetic vision was his post-exilic contemporary, the high priest Joshua, sullied from working in the trenches alongside Nehemiah. This vision points forward to the cleansing work performed by the Messiah, Jesus, the true High Priest. It also illustrates the experience of believers today, tarnished in the ongoing struggle to overcome the world and the flesh.

Satan preys on his victims' shame, certain that if he can convince them (and God) of their inadequacy and impurity, they will be condemned. But Satan has misjudged the Judge. Rather than condemn the shamed, He rebukes their accuser. The Lord is not flummoxed by raging seas, raging fevers, or raging demons. God uses His authority to defend those who come to Him needy and oppressed.

God not only delivers them from a verdict of guilt, He also removes their garments of shame. In place of filthy rags, He dresses His chosen ones in the finest of clothes and places them in a position of honor and authority over His kingdom.

Hebrews 10 extends this theme of purity with a call for all believers to approach God's throne with boldness, not shame. Our status before Him is secure through the cleansing work of our spotless High Priest.

APPLY THE WORD

In addition to the world and our flesh, Satan also tries to shame us. Silence this accuser by remembering that your High Priest defends your cause to the Father. Trust the Lord to complete your purification process and to present you to Himself without spot or stain (see Rom. 8:28–34 and Eph. 5:25–27).

PRAY WITH US

Ann Meyer and Kristen Killebrew in Health Service will appreciate your prayer support today. Their faithful service, cheerful attitude, and love for God make their office a welcoming place for students and employees on Moody's Chicago campus.

SUNDAY
JANUARY

31

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem . . . prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

Revelation 21:2

Trading Shame

In most cultures, great expense and care go into a bride's preparations. Beauty treatments are applied, fine gowns are made, and exquisite jewels are presented, all culminating in the moment when the bride enters and the groom sees her in all her radiant glory.

In a way, the biblical story of shame is intended to prepare us for the glorious moment when we are presented to our Bridegroom. As we saw in the Garden of Eden, shame informed Adam and Eve that they had marred the image of God. Shame drove Peter to recognize the limits of his own abilities, and it caused Hannah to cling to God. It paved the way for the Samaritan woman and the Gadarene demoniac to receive and then testify to God's love. And it prepared Paul to minister to others suffering under shame who needed to hear the message of freedom and forgiveness found in Jesus Christ.

Shame has never been God's intention for the final destination for humanity. Revelation offers us a vision into the glorious future God is planning for His people. Lifetimes of pain, struggle, and frustration will be redeemed, resulting in a people ready to be presented as Christ's bride. His people will enjoy close, unending fellowship with God forever. Believers in Christ will be welcomed fully into heavenly communion and made co-regents with the Lord over a new heaven and earth. Christ and His bride, the church, will live happily and gloriously ever after.

From where we sit now, this glowing description of the bride hardly matches our experience of the church—or of ourselves! But we believe God is in the process of making us fit to dwell with Him forever. Therefore, by faith we can persevere under the curse of shame, knowing that we will trade it for glory.

APPLY THE WORD

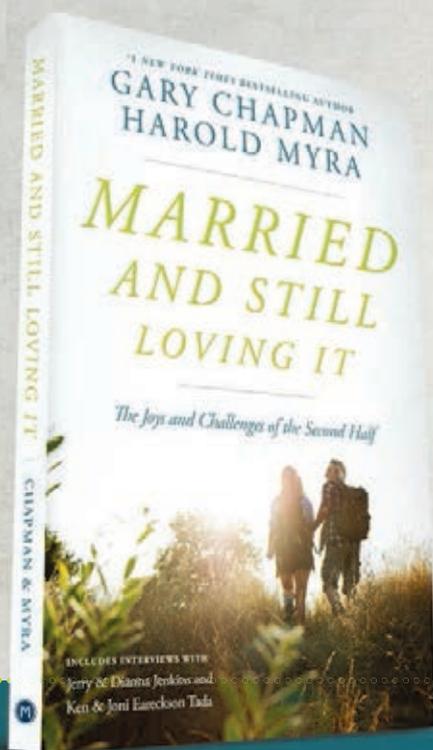
If you have trusted in the work of Christ to deal with your sin and shame, this is where your story is going! By knowing your true identity, you can relinquish shame and offer God's healing to others. You can live in light of God's kingdom today, bringing glory to God and joy to your Bridegroom, Jesus.

PRAY WITH US

As we come to the end of this month's study, let's express gratitude in prayer for the healing, forgiveness of sin, and sanctification we have received in Christ. Thank Him for His indescribable gift!

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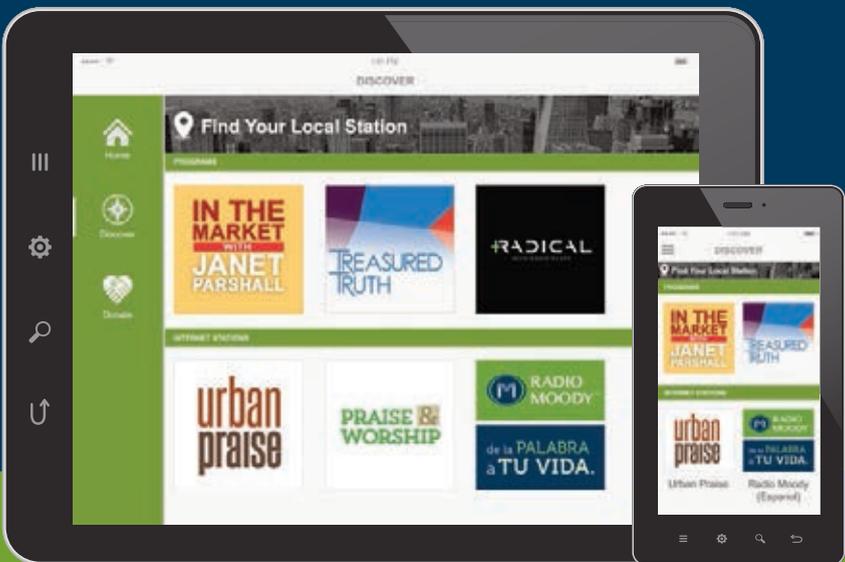


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Isaiah 40:25





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