

“Shame” // Luke 8:40–48 //

Smoke from a Fire #5

Announcements

Reinforce the **all-call baptism**

- There are certain defining moments in your life, moments of demarcation...

Intro

LUKE 8. It’s our last week in our series *Smoke from a Fire*, and I want to talk about a pretty heaven one, shame.

All of us, at some point, know what it is to experience shame. It can range from simple embarrassment to things much more serious.

I read a book a while back where a guy told a story I really identified with...

“Because of my family’s financial status, growing up I never had the coolest name-brand clothes. One year my parents bought me two pair of Sears’ Tuffskin jeans for school, a brown pair and a blue pair. All the cool kids had Levis with the silver or red tabs (I hated those kids). I had two pair of Tuffskins that had to last all year. (SHOES) Even worse, when my jeans started wearing out and getting holes in them, my mom, who was big into cross-stitching, made a huge Indian head on the leg of my brown jeans and an

American flag on the rear end of my blue jeans. I can still hear kids pledging allegiance to my rear end and calling me Tonto. I vowed that I would never have to face that kind of rejection again.”¹

So, most people know what the experience of shame is like, but most don’t understand whether it is good or bad, or what role it is supposed to play.

People tend to think it is just an extreme form of guilt—**like guilt on steroids**. Guilt is feeling bad about something bad you did; shame is feeling *really bad* about it.

But while guilt can produce shame, **shame is different**.

- Guilt is focused on the what of what; shame is focused on the who.
- Guilt says, I did something bad. Shame says, “I am something bad.”

Now, like I said, shame can certain arise from feelings of guilt (we see that in the Garden of Eden, right? After Adam and Eve sinned... That’s the first-time shame is mentioned and it has been an inherent part of the human condition ever since then), but **shame can also be triggered in our lives by things that have nothing to do with choices we have made...** We might feel shame because of something done to us.

- For many people, for example, **shame comes from something traumatic that happened in their past**. You were abused—physically, sexually, or verbally. You were talked to or treated in

¹ A. Stanley, *7 checkpoints*, p.116

Works consulted:

“Overcoming Shame,” Craig Groeschel

“Sanctification,” Matt Chandler

“Nakedness and the Holiness of God,” Tim Keller

ways that communicate you were no good, worthless, damaged—until eventually those things seeped into your soul and they believed these things about themselves.

- Or maybe it comes from **something about them over which they have no control**—a disability; a weakness; infertility; you were divorced or cheated on through no fault of your own; even an unwanted attraction.

Christian counselor Ed Welch says, *Shame is the deep sense that you are inherently flawed, unacceptable, and unworthy of love because of something you've done, something done to you, or something associated with you.*²

- Brad Hambrick, our own pastoral counselor says you can think of **guilt like a stain on a shirt**: It *can* be washed, even though it may prove difficult to remove.
- Shame, by contrast, would be a **disfigured face. It feels like a permanent part of who you are**. And, if you had a disfigured face, even if the disfigurement had nothing to do with choices you have made, you still don't want to show your true face for fear of what others will say or do in response.

Shame says: *I am defective. I am damaged. I am broken. I am flawed. I am dirty. I am ugly. I am impure. I am disgusting. I am unlovable. I am weak. I am pitiful. I am insignificant. I am worthless. I am unwanted.*³

- **If you're sitting in shame today**, you don't need me to get you to consider, "Hey, is this you?" You have heard or thought these things about yourself so many times they are an inexorable part of how you see yourself.

For many of us, others have attempted to control us through shame. Your **parents**, or a **friend**, or a **boss**, or a **pastor or church leader**, or

² From Brene Brown, supplemented with Ed Welch, Brad Hambrick.
<https://brenebrown.com/blog/2013/01/14/shame-v-guilt/>

³ Craig Groeschel, "Overcoming Shame," part 2 in the *Ghost of Christmas Past* series, preached at Life Church in 2016.

maybe your **professor**, tried to make you feel bad about yourself as a way of getting you to do what they wanted: *You're lazy. You're ignorant. You're a bad student. You're a tramp. You're a racist. You're not a good father.*

- **Brené Brown**, a research professor at the Univ of Houston, who has written and spoken a lot about shame, and whose TED talk on shame is one of the top 5 most-viewed TED talks of all time—said that the **dilemma** is that **shame-based motivation often works**, at least in the short run: She cites a study done at a college campus in which participants in a survey about campus life were given a chance in the survey to cheat the researchers out of some money. Some of the surveys read, "How common is cheating on this campus?" On the other, "How common are cheaters?" That was the only difference. Those who had the question framed in terms of "cheaters" (as an identity) had a much lower rate of stealing from the researchers than those who simply had to identify it as cheating. IOW, those people who thought of cheating in terms of something that they *did* were more likely to do it than those who had to identify cheating as something they *were*.⁴
- But **even though it may work in the short run**, it can have devastating effects in the long run. **Pastor Craig Groeschel** points out that shame often leads to...⁵
 - **Hopeless perfectionism**—We attempt to overcome our shame through flawless performance, and we find it difficult to ever admit failure because that would confirm this judgment our shame has declared over us. If we perform at the highest standards, we feel like we will be able to say, "*There, I did it. I proved it. I exceeded expectations, and therefore I have worth after all.*"
 - **Harsh criticism (of self and others)**—People suffering from shame are really hard on themselves because they nurse a

⁴ <https://brenebrown.com/blog/2013/01/14/shame-v-guilt/>

⁵ Craig Groeschel, "Overcoming Shame"

deep dislike of who they are, which makes them hard on everyone else, too. When they see their own faults mirrored in other people, they become really judgmental as a type of self-loathing. You might see people like as arrogant or self-righteous, but in reality, they are dealing with personal dislike that comes from secret shame. As you've heard said, "Hurt people hurt people."

- Lastly, shame produces **Helpless feelings**⁶—People with an overwhelming sense of shame tend to focus on the worst possible outcomes, saying, *'I know this bad thing is going to happen. They're never going to like me; we'll never have a good relationship. This will just fall apart, too. // I'll never get the promotion. I'm never going to amount to anything.'* You assume the worst because deep down you believe you are the worst and you deserve the worst.

Today I want us to walk through the story of a woman consumed with shame and **show you how Jesus lifted** her out of it. It's the **answer for all of us** consumed by shame, whether that shame is brought on by sin—i.e. something we've done; or suffering—i.e. something done to us.

- Note: this **will be a heavy message** for some of you today, but I am also praying this message will point you toward hope.
- (As with all these other messages, **some of you will need more than I can offer up here**, and I invite you to engage with our G4 ministries or our Bridgehaven counseling service to start a conversation.)

Luke 8:40–48

[40] Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. [41] And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue.

- This **woman's story doesn't start with her**; it starts with a man named Jairus, and that is to set up a very important contrast.
- Jairus was a **very respected** man; he held one of the **top positions** in the city—he was the "ruler of the synagogue."

And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house,

- **Grown men in Jewish culture** would never "fall at someone's feet." Men like this wore long robes; they walked slowly and stately; they were staid in their emotion; they would never run or appear to be in a hurry and they certainly wouldn't prostrate themselves at another man's feet.

But this man was **desperate...** **[42] for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying.** And so, he implores Jesus to come to his house and heal his daughter, and Jesus consents. **As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. [43] And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone.**

- **"Having a discharge of blood"** is a polite way of saying she had a disease that produced "*an uncontrollable menstrual flow*," which meant that not only was she sick, and likely suffering from severe, chronic pain, she was unable to have children and according to Jewish law she was ceremonially unclean.
 - That means wasn't allowed in public for 12 years. No public worship. No place where others could come in contact with her.
 - It means no one has touched her—for 12 years—lest they become unclean.

⁶ Groeschel: **Self-defeating thoughts** as a form of protection and escape.

- For 12 years no one has hugged her or laid a hand on her to pray for her.
- She is outcast. Lonely. At one point she had so many hopes for her life—marriage, family, life in the community. All those seem over now.
- **Luke**, the author, who was a doctor by trade, **lets us know that according to medical opinions of the day she was incurable.** And what's more, he tells us she had **spent her family's entire fortune** attempting to find a cure but nothing's helped. She's hopeless.
- **One last observation about her** this woman—and it comes from a detail that's left out: **She's nameless.** In **contrast to Jairus**, whose name everybody knows, Luke leaves this woman's name out because no one knows who she is anyway.
- **That's intentional:** She is hidden; she is invisible to people.
- **That's as much her choice**, by the way, as anyone else's—shame does that to people. It makes them want to hide lest they just get exposed and more humiliated.
- **She has a disfigured face that keeps her out of public, behind closed doors**—she doesn't want even to be seen or known.
- So, do you see the **contrast with Jairus?**
 - Jairus is the **ruler of the synagogue**; she's not allowed in the synagogue.
 - He was **respected**; she, rejected.
 - His is a **household name**; hers is a name nobody knows.
- **But both need Jesus just the same:**
 - **He's got a daughter, the apple of his eye, joy of his life, who is 12 years** old and deathly sick.
 - She's an outcast and dead to community and dreams **for 12 years.**
- **(And BTW, in this story you see illustrated** what keeps different kinds of people from Jesus.
 - **What keeps people like Jairus from coming to Jesus is usually pride**—*feeling like they don't need Jesus's help. And a lot of times it takes a tragedy like this one to get their attention: the death of a loved one. A job loss. A health scare.* Through these

things God is just gently waking you up saying, “You really don't have it all.”

- Maybe happening right now... God has been shaking you... putting you **flat on your back so you will finally be looking the right direction.**
 - **But what keeps people like this woman from coming to Jesus is different**—*Her shame has led her to a subtle despair. It's not that she doesn't know she needs Jesus's help, she thinks if he knew the truth about her he'd never help her.*
- BTW, remember that I told you that **shame can come from things we've done or things done to us?**
- **Well, this exchange is supposed to represent** both kinds of people. **Follow me here:**
 - **In one sense**, she's a **victim; she didn't choose her disease.** She's not suffering because of something she did.
 - **But at the same time**, when you step back from the story, we see that biblically, **she is supposed to represent an uncleanness that we all have from our sin.** The Levitical laws about uncleanness which keep this woman separated from society were supposed to give Israel a picture of the uncleanness we all have brought upon ourselves through sin—an uncleanness and corresponding shame that goes back to the Garden of Eden.
 - **So, in the immediate sense**, this woman represents someone who feels shame because of something that has happened to her—she has a disease she didn't choose; but in a bigger picture she also represents in her uncleanness the shame we all feel because of our sin.
 - **The point is, whether or shame is legitimate, shame** that we have brought on ourselves; **or illegitimate shame** brought on by things done to us, **Jesus is the solution.**

Let's watch...

[44] *She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment,*

- The Gospel of Mark says that **she had heard about Jesus**, which led her to try this. You have to wonder: **What had she heard?**
 - We know that during Jesus's time there was a **legend** that the Messiah would be **so powerful** that even the "wings" of his garments would possess healing power that came from a prophecy in **Malachi (4:2)** that the Messiah would rise "with healing in his wings."
 - Maybe she had heard that and thought, "**Maybe it's true—maybe if I can touch the wings of his garment, I'll be healed.**"
- But here's her **dilemma**. Remember, she's **not even supposed to be in public**. If people see her they will scorn her. And what would Jesus, the holy man, say? Is there a way to steal the miracle?

And so, she clandestinely makes her way through the crowds, and as he passes by she reaches out and grabs hold the hem of his clothes.

- (BTW, the word **"touched"** there, in verse 44, literally means clutched. She grabbed it, like it was rope, and pulled it and when she did...)

[44] *...and immediately her discharge of blood ceased.* It was like she pulled the rope of a **bell** and **healing rang out of him**.

[45] *And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?"*

- **QUESTION: Does he really not know?** I mean, surely, if he's God—and he's got the power to heal like this—**surely**, he could figure something simple like that out. So, why ask?
- **Here's how I see it:** When **my kids were younger**, I'd come down and the lid is off of the cookie jar... and **all 4 kids** are sitting there watching TV. Three look totally relaxed, and one looks really guilty, which chocolate smudges all over his face, and I say, "Who ate some cookies?" It's not that I don't know, it that's that I'm giving them an opportunity to identify themselves.

He's saying, "Identify yourself... because I have something even more amazing for you than the healing you just received...

You say, "What is that?" And just when we are about to find out, Peter steps in with his requisite dullness. [45]... "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" Peter has this ability to respond in profound moments with profound stupidity. *"Uhh, Jesus... you know, everybody is touching you, Jesus. This is a crowd."* And you can almost hear Jesus say, "Thank you, Peter. What would I do without you and all your amazing insights?" BTW... [46] But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me."

- **Lots of people were touching Jesus** that day, but this was a touch of faith. And that's a whole different thing, y'all.
- **It happens every weekend.** (Lots of people are in here touching Jesus—you touched him a little bit during worship and a little bit in this sermon—but a few of you are reaching out in faith, and that's a whole different thing.)

[47] *And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.* Trembling. Terrified. She just wanted to steal her miracle and get home. The **last thing she wanted** was to be exposed again—and now in front of this famous Rabbi! Is she just going to be humiliated and rejected again in front of everyone?

What **happens next might be the most profound moment** in the Gospels, because it answers the most basic question of all religion: What is it like to be exposed in all of our shame and ugliness and mess before a holy God?

[48] *And he said to her, "Daughter,*

- Not stranger. Or ma'am. Or even sister or friend. But a term of most intimate endearment: **daughter**.

- **Tim Keller** says you should probably read it something like, “Sweetheart.”
- **BTW, it’s the only place in the Gospels** where Jesus addresses someone this way.
- It’s the **kind of word** you would never use to address someone you just met.
- **Think about what is happening:**
 - The **girl nobody wanted** Jesus refers to as “precious sweetheart.”
 - The **girl no one would touch** is now being embraced by the arms that shaped the stars.
 - The **name nobody else knows** Jesus knows. He’s on more than a “first name basis” with her. He’s in the tender nickname stage.
- Don’t miss the contrast! **Jairus is a dad** who is pleading the cause of his 12-year-old daughter before Jesus. But this **woman for 12 years has had no father to plead her cause!**
- So, Jesus pleads it for her. And he **won’t let her just steal a miracle in secret**, because as much as he wants to heal her, and as great as that is, he also wants her to know the **even greater thing**—that she is loved, accepted and cherished.
- It reminds me of what I **heard once from a family** adopting a baby they found out was special needs... When no one else wanted me, **Jesus said, “I want you...”**
 - *That’s what Jesus does with the unwanted, the disfigured— he finds them in their pain, calls them beloved, and makes them sons and daughters.*
 - He **lifts their heads** when they can’t lift it for themselves.

So, Jesus said to her, “Go... **...your faith has made you well; go in peace.**”

- You know, there is something **here that you** and I, as Americans, typically miss. I used to love sharing this story with **Muslims** I lived with in SE Asia because they always noticed something even if I didn’t point it out!

- **How dare a ceremonially unclean woman touch a clean, holy man!**
- What typically happens when an unclean thing touches a clean thing? The clean thing doesn’t make the unclean thing clean; the unclean thing makes the clean thing **unclean**.
 - **Think about it like sickness.** What happens if a sick person comes in close contact with a healthy person? **The health of the healthy person doesn’t pass into the sick**; if anything transfers from one to other, it is the sickness of the sick going to the healthy.
 - **We don’t say, “Wow, my kid is sick. Throwing up all weekend. I think I’ll drop them off in the nursery with all the healthy kids so that their wellness will rub off on him.”** **If you think that way**, maybe consider visiting another church for the next few weeks.
 - In the same way, when the unclean thing touches the clean, the clean thing becomes unclean.
- **But here**, with Jesus, when the unclean thing touches the clean thing, the unclean thing becomes clean. So, what happened to the uncleanness? **That’s the million-dollar question of the Gospels.**
 - And the **answer is that** (though you can’t see it), Jesus silently takes it into himself.
 - You see, **he’s on his way to die on a cross** where he will bear our sin and our shame.
 - **Isaiah said** he would be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities... but he would also carry our shame: people would hide their faces from him and consider him cursed by God.
- **Jesus took this woman’s uncleanness into himself.** She went **home in peace**, restored to her family, and he headed toward the cross, where he’d be hung up in shame and forsaken by his father.
 - **It’s like that scene in that movie *Green Mile***, with Tom Hanks, where the guy has the power to heal, but only by taking people’s sickness into himself. He removes the shame from our sin by taking it into himself.

So, to those whose shame comes from something you have done, mistakes you have made, Jesus offers cleansing through his substitutionary death on the cross. He went to a cross so you could go home in peace.

- **When you touch Jesus** in faith, he takes into himself the guilt and penalty of your sin, like this woman's disease and uncleanness passed into Jesus, and his righteousness and new life passes into you.
- **There is a fountain, filled with blood... The dying thief...**
- I touch him and my uncleanness passes into him and he calls me by a new name—I'm no longer called by what I've done, but by what he declares over me.
- I heard about a guy that was saved out of a really bad lifestyle... Girl to him, **"Jack, it's me!"** He said, "All I could say is, 'But it's not me anymore...!' Gal 2:20)."

And, to those whose shame comes from things done to you—you need to hear **Jesus's response** to this woman, because it is his **response to you. He calls you "daughter."**

- **And see, this new identity outweighs** anything other identity put upon you. **You are not what others have said about you.** You are not what others have done to you. You are what **Jesus has declared** over you.
 - **Right now, you are hiding in the crowd** wondering what it's like to be exposed in all this mess before Jesus... He is calling you daughter. He wants you to know that you are not damaged, second-rate, unworthy or unloved; you are a **precious and beloved child** whom he has created and redeemed specifically for his purposes.
 - You were **precious enough for him to shed his blood** to buy you back; he put **his Spirit inside** of you; and **destined you to rule and reign** with him forever.

- **One day, Hebrews says, he will put you on a throne higher than the angels** and all creation will shake their heads in wonder at the love God has bestowed on you and the honor and esteem with which he holds you.
- And it's **time the shame others** have put on you gives way to the honor he has declared over you.
- **She went home "in peace"**—you can also! Stop listening to others; your past; the voices. **Start listening to him!**

So, what does all this mean for those stuck in shame? Christian counselors say the person held captive by shame needs 3 things, and they are all right here in this story:

We need...

1. To have our story heard

- You have to come out of the shadows. Like this woman. Shame thrives in secrecy. You have to take the chance of exposing yourself.
- **And here's the thing:** Most of people around you love you will be so glad you did—they love you and want to help. You'll be surprised the compassion you are met with.
- And I can **assure you that Jesus** is ready to meet you.
- **Brené Brown** calls it "Speaking your shame." She says that verbalizing shame diffuses it of a lot of its secret power.
 - Maybe you need to **tell someone about past abuse**. Or reckon honestly with **words or insults** you endured. Talk about how that diagnosis of infertility makes you feel. You need to expose and verbalize those thoughts of self-doubt, or insecurities that come from disabilities, or secret fears you have about your life.⁷
- **Maybe you need to be honest about temptations** you are dealing with. An attraction you don't know how to process.

⁷ Brené Brown, *Thought It Was Just Me (But It Isn't)*.

- In churches like ours we have people who experience things like SSA and don't know what to do with it. **I have known...** You feel ashamed because of it—the church should be the one place where it is most safe to talk about that. We understand that everyone is broken and Jesus came from broken people.
- **Maybe you have a secret sin to confess.** Or a **weakness.** A prolonged **addiction** you can't shake.
 - **You think,** if they knew...
 - **And** maybe you've been rejected. **I hope you won't experience that at this church...**
 - It is certainly not true of Jesus...
- **Like this woman, Jesus is calling you to speak your shame.** *In the church it's ok not to be ok.*
- **We understand that** Jesus only saves broken people because that's the only kind of people there are!
- This church is **not supposed to be a trophy case** of the righteous but a hospital for the broken.

Second, we need...

2. To have our head lifted

- **In this story, Jesus takes the initiative. He raises her head before she can even raise it.** She's still looking at the ground in fear and shame and he **says, "Look up to me, precious daughter!"**
- Psalm 3 calls God "the lifter of my head." **Pastor Raudel**, our SEE pastor, says that this is one of his favorite places in the Psalms because when I felt like I couldn't lift my head, God lifted it for me!"

Greatest gospel secret: The power of new life begins with a new identity.

- It's **what separates Jesus's message** from that of every other religion: Every religion tells you—change be better, and then you'll be a good person and God will accept you.

- The **gospel flips that upside down**—God declares you righteous in Christ as a gift, an identity he bestows on you that you don't deserve, and you change in response to it.

Beware of any spiritual growth strategies that don't make this central—because they are not from God.

Many people assume that whenever they feel bad about their sin it must be the HS. Satan also loves to talk about your sin—he's called "the accuser of the brethren." **He'll talk to you about your sin** night and day if you'll let him. But there's a difference in how Satan and the HS convict you of your sin

- **When Satan convicts you of sin, he starts with what you did and tears down who you are...**
 - **3 times Satan** tempted Jesus in the wilderness—each time he began the temptation with this statement, "If you are the Son of God..." Interestingly, that's just what the Father had declared over Jesus at the baptism. *You are my beloved Son.* **Satan's first attempt was an attempt** to tear down Jesus's identity! It's what he will do with us, too.
 - **He does the same to you!** Are you a child of God? You're really just a failure, a cheat, a liar, damaged goods.
 - **Starts with what you did (guilt) and tears down who you are (shame)**
- **The Holy Spirit (by contrast) starts with who Christ has declared you to be and rebuilds what you did.** (i.e. he addresses your sin, shows you its inconsistencies with your new identity, and helps you in the repair work for the damage caused by your sin.
 - **You must know the difference!**
 - **Illus.,** Kharis and Allie, "You're by big sister."
 - *He **breaks** the power of **cancelled** sin...* I'm **not that** anymore!
- **Satan holds many of us captive** by getting us to believe that we are still something that God has declared we are not—and he uses shame-based thinking to keep us under the power of sin.

- *The only way to heal from shame is to shift your focus from what you are or are not to who Christ is and what he believes about you.*
- **Who are you? Say, “I am not what others say I am. I am not who I think I am. I am definitely not what somebody else did to me.”** *I am not defective, or damaged, or broken, or flawed, or dirty, or ugly, or impure, or disgusting, or unlovable, or weak, or pitiful, or insignificant, or worthless and definitely not unwanted.*
 - Who am I? I am **who Christ says I am. I am forgiven. I am free. I am redeemed. I am healed. I am brand new. I am chosen. I am changed. I am blessed. I am beloved. I am complete. I am a child of God.**⁸
 - **You are not what others have done to you. You are not what others have said about you. You are not what the voices inside whisper about you. You are what Christ has declared over you.*
- The **lifter of your head** is here!

Well, I’m tempted to stop there... but one more thing that may be the most important!

3. To be restored to loving community

- Feeling the embrace of Jesus will **give you the courage, eventually**, to re-engage with community.
- We have **every reason to believe Luke included this story** because this woman was a part of the early church. I love, as I’m reading the Bible, to think about those earliest Christians as they studied the teachings of Jesus and they came to storisa bout people they knew; people in the church. “Hey, this was when Sue Ellen over there came to Jesus.”
 - **Here is a woman**, who used to be confined by shame, and living in secrecy, **now a thriving, healthy member** of the First Baptist church of Jerusalem—the church that launched the most powerful peaceful movement in history.

That’s what God wants for you, too. He forms his church from broken people—guilty people; people overwhelmed by shame. He declares them new creations and endows them with purpose and power. *His* purpose and power.

- **Are we the kind of church where people that are not ok** can find Jesus like this in the church?
- **Are you the kind of person others** would feel ok opening up to you about some secret shame? People around us are suffering, often profoundly, usually silently. Are we the type of community that says to them, “It’s ok not to be ok in the church! Your story is safe to share here”?

The road to healing from shame begins as we speak it. As you come out of the shadows and speak it, you’ll hear the voice of your Savior and Shepherd saying, “Daughter! My son!” And his declaration will heal those wounds.

And, **if your shame does come from, or tie into, things you have done**, he’ll take that from you and make you a new creation in him!

⁸ Adapted from Groeschel.

