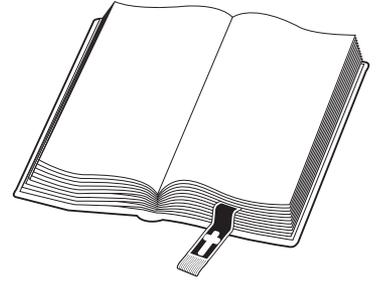


The Destructive Power of Shame

"I cling to Your testimonies; O Lord, do not put me to shame!" Psalm 119:31



Number 15 in the series "The Joy of Obeying God's Word"

The first time we see the word "shame" in the Bible is in Genesis 2:22-25, which tells us that God brought Eve to Adam to be his wife, that they were both naked, and that they were not ashamed. In Genesis 3:7-11 we see that after they sinned and rebelled against God, they were afraid. They tried to hide from God and tried to cover up their guilt and shame. So we see from the Bible that shame entered our lives through sin. The greatest destruction that shame brings in our lives is in our relationship with God. It also affects everything we do, hear, and think. It affects every decision we make, how we relate to God, how we see ourselves, and every relationship that we have.

In Psalms 51:5 David said, *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."* Here David was talking about being born with a sin nature. Since Adam and Eve sinned, we have all been born with a sin nature. And as we have all sinned and been sinned against, we all have a measure of shame in our lives.

Over the last two lessons, I told you of the *shame* I lived with as an illegitimate child. There was the *shame* of growing up in an alcoholic, violent home...the *shame* of my mother living with different men whom I was made to call "father"...the *shame* of never knowing who my real father was...the *shame* of constant physical, verbal, and sexual abuse...the *shame* of trying to cover up before teachers, doctors, and neighbors...the *shame* of missing so much school and always feeling so dumb and stupid...the *shame* of always feeling like a failure...and the *shame* of poverty. *Shame* was a heavy burden and an oppression I carried through life.

Then there was all the *shame* of my own sin—the sinful choices that I had made. There was the *shame* of walking out of my first marriage...the *shame* of choices I made that were immoral...the *shame* of countless times I lied, stole, and deceived people. And there is no way I can adequately describe the weight of *guilt and shame* I lived with for years after I committed murder through having an abortion.

It seemed like the destructive power of shame would never end in my life. Then in 1976 God in HIS AMAZING GRACE opened my eyes to see that I was a sinner. I repented and put my trust in the finished work of Christ on the cross. I accepted Jesus as my Savior. I remember reading Isaiah 54:4 which reads, *"Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore."*

For the first time in my life, I had hope!!! It was such a personal word to me, even the part about freedom from the reproach of my widowhood. You see, one year after I married my present husband, my first husband died. However, I carried a lot of guilt and shame from my sin in my first marriage for many years. As God forgave, cleansed, healed, and set me free from the shame of sin done to me and the shame of my own sins, I have seen Him give me an international teaching and speaking ministry.

Beloved, He can forgive, heal, and set you free, too.

— *Janice McBride*

All scripture is taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

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