

OVERCOMING SHAME



Shame has plagued human beings since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. For many of us coming out of addiction into life with God in recovery shame is a huge obstacle. Whether it is the shame we feel for the ugly things we said and did in our addiction or the shame we felt after someone harmed or abused us, God wants us to overcome it and live life to the full.

We can recognize shame when we constantly feel unworthy, insecure, or inferior. If we struggle with intimacy with God or others there

is a very strong possibility that the root cause is shame. People struggling with shame feel like they are no good and not loveable. They find it impossible to reach out to others and stick around others for very long. They are afraid to be known for who they really are. Isolation and aloneness seem easier to deal with than living in community

God is love, and created us in love, so we could relate to Him and to others. His desire is that we live in loving caring relationship with Him and with others. Life with God in recovery includes recognizing where shame is active in us and inviting God to heal the wounds of those wrongdoings that have caused us shame and embarrassment.

Instead of shame and dishonor, you will enjoy a double share of honor. You will possess a double portion of prosperity in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours. For I, the Lord, love justice. I hate robbery and wrongdoing. I will faithfully reward my people for their suffering and make an everlasting covenant with them. (Isaiah 61:7-8NLT)

The first step in rooting out shame is to receive God's forgiveness for any way we have sinned against God and others. Jesus died on the cross and bore the guilt and shame for every wrong we have done. Are we willing to admit that we've done wrongful things and ask God for forgiveness?

He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.
(Titus 2:14 NLT)

When we put our trust in what Jesus did for us on the cross, not only is our guilt removed, but God promises to cleanse our consciences from the shame. Some of us fear that we have done is just too awful for God to forgive. Others feel so dirty from what was done to them that they feel they can never be clean and whole again. These thoughts are nothing more than lies from the evil one that we need to renounce.

Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.
(Hebrews 9:14 NLT)

Jesus's blood washes away ALL sin. If we are truly sorry and turn away from our wrongdoing, God forgives us. When the evil one says our sins are unforgiveable we must counter this lie with the fact that Jesus is the perfect sacrifice for OUR sins.

The power of another's abuse is not stronger than the power of God's love. We are not defective and dirty because of the evil one's influence on someone else to sin against us. Satan however will do everything in his power to keep us obsessing on the abusive act we experienced, and the feelings of hopelessness

associated with it. God's plan for our restoration is based on the truth of who He says we are. God says we are precious in His sight. God through Jesus has provided a way for us to live a blessed joy filled life. Believing and speaking the truth of God's word in faith to ourselves will break the power of the evil to keep us from all the good gifts and plans God has for us. All God's promises are YES for us who belong to Jesus.

Let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!
(Hebrews 10:22, 2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT)

It is not easy to let go of powerful lies that have hindered our well-being for much of our lives, but God will give us the power to do so if we will follow His instructions and act on His word. If we are holding anything back it's time to confess it to God and receive His grace and power to overcome. God, through Jesus, has generously provided all we need to break the chains of bondage to sin and shame.

My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness. So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right

with himself depends on faith. (2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 3:9 NLT)

Those who live with shame run to isolation when they feel threatened. God calls us to overcome shame by living in community with Him and others. When we want to run away because we feel threatened, our best choice is to stay. We may feel shame choking us from talking with a trustworthy individual about the things in our past but the only way to find real freedom is to get it all out. The truth will set us free. Wise counsellors will help us understand who's responsible for what took place in our past and give us advice on how to speak the truth to ourselves which will hopefully reorganize our thinking around what is true.

As we intentionally turn away from all sinful acts of the past when we turn our will and our life over to God's care, we must also deliberately challenge memories that trigger shame. We must remind ourselves that we are washed clean by the blood of Jesus and that evil has no power to take the future from us. We are beloved sons and daughters of God with hope and a future. We must focus our thoughts on these things, intentionally affirming them as often as necessary. We must also behave in accordance with the truth rather than react to our feelings. When we resist the evil one in this way shame will go, peace and stability will come, and we will enter more fully and freely into the wonderful life God has planned for us.

The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed. The righteous person faces many troubles, but the Lord comes to the rescue each time. (Psalm 34:17-19 NLT)

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How has shame impacted my life and my recovery?
2. In what ways am I dealing with shame?
3. Where do I see evidence that with God's grace I am overcoming shame and moving forward with hope into all that God has for my life?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I give thanks that You created me for a life of loving relationship with You and others. Forgive me for running to isolation, addiction, and destructive actions when I felt ashamed rather than calling on You for help. Thank you that Jesus died on the cross for me, so I could be forgiven, cleansed, healed and made whole. I acknowledge that only You can restore me to new life and I choose to put my trust in You to do that. Help me to focus my thoughts on truth and not react to my feelings. When I feel like running or isolating, please strengthen me to remain and seek out healthy people in recovery with whom I can be honest about my feelings. I am forever grateful that You care for me. AMEN