

Uncharted Territory: Taking Life Where You've Never Been

Week Three: *You Are Not Who You Think You Are*

Your success with God is not a matter of keeping up with the “do's and don'ts” of religion. There is a much greater relationship and identity to be understood—a right-standing with God (*righteousness*) that comes by faith in HIS work, not yours. In this new identity, you can live without shame and condemnation, but rather in true right-ness with God and others. You don't have to fight for proper behavior, but rather a proper understanding of your identity in Jesus. That will then lead to actual behavioral change flowing from a new identity, not an old way of thinking.

This week, make a commitment to *invest three blocks of time* to meditate on God's Word slowly and carefully, to reflect on the internal leanings of your own heart, and surrender to God for His help.

Day One: Shame – *Is it good or is it bad?*

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon these handful of verses:

Romans 9:33	Romans 10:11	1 Corinthians 1:27
1 Corinthians 4:14	1 Corinthians 6:5	1 Corinthians 15:34
2 Corinthians 4:2	Ephesians 5:12	2 Peter 2:2

Reflect: It is commonly taught that “shame” is a bad thing, and that Christ has come to set us free from it—as established in [Romans 9:33](#) and [10:11](#). Psychologists would echo this, but with a twist: they would divide shame into “*healthy shame*” and “*toxic shame*”. The concept of **healthy shame** is that God created an internal emotional mechanism to alert us to dangerous behaviors. When we sin, we feel a sense of shame; it is a “*moral nervous system*” of sorts to inform us of limits and boundaries to our behavior. **Toxic shame** is a distortion of this internal mechanism that God designed. The devil (*the accuser, a liar*) leverages this emotion against us to tell us *we are* bad instead of *we did* something bad. Toxic shame becomes an **identity** instead of a **behavioral boundary**.

- *In these New Testament passages, how does God use shame?*
- *While it is obvious that shame speaks to negative and sinful matters in these texts, if God is leveraging that word against sin, is it a healthy or an unhealthy leverage?*

- *How do I experience shame? Does it define my identity (toxic shame), or does it call me to healthier behavior (healthy shame)?*

Pray: *God, examine my heart for how I process and receive shame. Help me see how I may be misinterpreting your warnings against sin in my conscience as being a definition of my identity. Help me to receive your guidance in my life as defining my identity as a child of God, not as a failure or a screw-up. Reveal to me the beauty of how you see me, how you love me, and how you have chosen me. Frame a new identity within me. In Jesus' name!* (**ALSO:** Consider praying [Psalm 31:1-7](#) and [14-20](#) as your own prayer to God!)

Day Two: Guilt – *Is it good or is it bad?*

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon these handful of verses:

Leviticus 4:27	Psalm 7:3	Psalm 32:5
Psalm 69:5	Isaiah 6:6-7	John 16:8
Hebrews 10:1-2	Hebrews 10:19-22	James 2:10

Reflect: Every place the word “guilt” is found in the Bible, it is associated with sin and wrongdoing. Of course, we consider sin as bad—as does God. It leads us, as [Hebrews 10:2](#) and [10:22](#) describes, to feel guilty and to have a guilty conscience.

- *When I sin and then feel guilty, is this helpful to me or unhelpful?*
- *Does the biblical concept of guilt describe me—an identity—or does it describe a condition—a legal status? What is the difference? How is the difference relevant to me?*

But then also reflect: Much of the biblical discussion about guilt is how God has come to cleanse us from our guilt. We are told in [Hebrews 10:22](#) that God will cleanse not only our guilt, but also our guilty conscience.

- *Have I experienced and received a true cleansing from the guilt I feel in my conscience? Why or why not?*
- *When God declares my guilt to be cleansed, do I still feel guilty? If I do, why might I still be feeling this way? What does this say about what I believe regarding God's activity in my life?*

Pray: *God, reveal to me the difference between an identity of guilt and a legal status of guilt. Show me how your forgiveness of my sin indeed cleanses me not only of the status of my guilt, but also of the painful feelings of a guilty conscience. Help me to trust in your mercy and to approach you in bold confidence to find your mercy and help. I confess my faith in you to forgive me of all my sin and to cleanse me thoroughly. In Jesus' name!* (ALSO: Consider praying **Psalm 32** as your own prayer to God!)

Day Three: Sinner or Saint – Which am I? (...and does it matter?)

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon these handful of verses:

Romans 1:4

Romans 3:10-12

Romans 3:21-26

Romans 4:17

Romans 6:5-7

Romans 8:1-5

Reflect: In **Romans 1:4**, Paul says that the Romans Christians were “*loved by God*” (we get that and like that) and “*called to be saints*” (we don’t feel like saints, do we?). At the same time, he also declares that “*all have sinned*” (**Romans 3:23**). So, which is it? **Are we sinners or are we saints?**

- *Reflecting on what I learned by studying “shame” and “guilt” the last two days, how might I differentiate between the status of having sinned and the identity of sainthood?*
- *What is different between those two terms—sinner and saint? Does one speak of behavior and one of identity? How?*
- *If God now provides an actual righteousness through faith in Jesus (**Romans 3:22**) and has thoroughly justified me (**Romans 3:24**), am I still to be defined as a sinner? Why or why not?*
- *How would I live differently if I truly saw myself as a saint?*

Pray: *God, help me recognize the difference between having sinned and being a sinner. Reveal to me the reality of being fully justified by you. Reveal how that should redefine my identity. I put my faith in you and accept that you have made full atonement (full payment) for my sin. Help me to no longer carry the guilt of sin, but rather to run in the freedom and joy of being righteous. I accept my new identity, in Jesus' name!* (ALSO: Consider praying **Psalm 30** as your own prayer to God!)

NOTES:

- *What is God showing me in His Word this week?*
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