

Published based on [The Truth about Shame](#)

# **The Truth about Shame**



Yesterday I blogged about a situation I had experienced where a mother wrongly used the Word of God with her son. In my estimation, her communication with her son was not honest and forthright. One of the most troubling things about the mother/son exchange that I witnessed was the way this mother tried to use shame to control and correct her son, all the while using the Word of God as her instrument of correction. (You'll have to go back to yesterday's post for more information.)

So the entire experience caused me to think about shame.

*What is shame?*

*Why do we feel shame?*

*When should we feel shame?*

*When is shame unjustified?*

*How do we get rid of shame?*

[Dictionary.com](http://Dictionary.com) defines shame as the painful feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonorable, improper, ridiculous, etc., done by oneself or another. And another definition which applies to the scenario I saw yesterday is: to drive, force, etc., through shame. For most of us, shame is another word for embarrassment yet it can be much deeper than embarrassment.

I can think back to a time when my fourth grade teacher made me read a sentence over and over again into a tape recorder in front of my entire class until I could say a word correctly. Seems my Southern brogue was already in place and was corrupting my speech. I felt so ashamed as I tried repeatedly to say the word correctly.

And my mental DVD holds no lack of instances during which or about which I felt shame.

Should we ever feel ashamed? Well, yes, we can and should feel ashamed over our actions at times, however, that is much different than living with a sense of shame about yourself.

When we have sinned, we are guilty until the sin is covered by the blood of Jesus. Guilt needs atonement. It calls for action to correct something, to heal, or to make amends. But shame, if not dealt with correctly, can make us feel that not only have we done something wrong, but that there is something wrong with us.

We all experience shame as a part of our human existence and it can have purposeful uses if it

leads us to repentance, leads us to extend healing for a relationship, etc., but when it is not processed and released, it can be a crippling emotion that hinders us from healing and recovering in our relationship with God and with others.

Jean-Paul Sartre says that shame is a hemorrhage of the soul. It is a horrible experience when we are painfully aware that others see our insufficiencies and we feel uncovered. We fear being unloved and rejected when others see these deficits inside us that we have tried to keep covered.

I find that inside many of us is a deep rooted fear that says “If anyone really knew me, they would know I am not worthy of their love or their friendship or the kindness or...”

We oftentimes have lingering shame that we feel because of something we have done in the past or something that has been done to us. This kind of lingering, undealt with shame harms us and doesn't serve a good purpose. It colors our perception of ourselves, others, and God.

How can we deal with shame? That is a subject for an entire book – and I am sure they are out there- but for today, here is a small beginning list:

Deal with any true guilt. Ask forgiveness from others when appropriate. Ask God for His forgiveness for any sin.

Forgive yourself, giving yourself the gift of kindness towards your own humanity.

Let go of your shame. Resist the urge to take it back.

Remember to distinguish between guilt and shame.

Refuse to live in a state of feeling “ashamed” because God never intended for us to live that way. Remember, He covered Adam and Eve and paid for their sin. He covered their shame, and He can also cover our shame.

Know that God wants you to live in freedom, including freedom from shame and its effects.

You can also find this article published on [The Truth about Shame](#), and on the tag pages [forgiveness](#), [guilt](#), [shame](#).