

All In: Week 4 – From Shame to Grace

Being labeled with a disorder from the time I was three was one of the hardest hurdles of my life. For some, a diagnosis feels like relief: *“Ah! That’s why I spiral into worst-case scenarios—it’s not me, it’s just anxiety.”* But for me, being told I had ‘Reactive Attachment Disorder’ felt like wearing tattered garments I could never remove. Every label screamed: *This one is broken. This one is troubled. This one will never know healthy love.*

I don’t think my parents meant harm when they referenced it -yet every time someone said, *“She’s a RAD kid,”* shame rose in me like a flood. I wasn’t just a girl navigating challenges - I wasn’t a child who had experienced trauma and was surviving the best way I knew. I felt branded by this dirty label. Different. Defective. Not enough. Not normal.

The crazy thing about identity is that what we think about ourself is the truth -because we will match our actions to that identity. Boy did I ever! Every possible opportunity I proved to myself through my actions that what everyone had spoken over me was true - I was unlovable so I would chase after unavailable relationships. I was a failure - so whenever presented with an opportunity I would destroy it through patterns of drug use, financial destruction - making decisions that would essentially ruin my life. The embarrassment would cause me to flee from people, scared to look them in the eye and prove them right.

That’s what shame does. It’s why it’s such an effective tool of satan - because it seeps beneath the surface and welds itself to identity. It’s not just about what you did, but who you believe you are. Neuroscience tells us shame hijacks the brain, lighting up the amygdala and triggering fight, flight, or freeze. Over time, those messages sink in so deeply they feel like truth. *I’m not worthy. I’m not lovable. I am broken.*

But then came the reversal. In Jesus, I heard another voice stronger than the shame, deeper than my fast. The first time I heard the idea that despite any part of me, Jesus was still chasing after me to declare a new identity -*Chosen. Beloved. Redeemed.* That identity washed over me like grace breaking chains. Suddenly my worth wasn’t anchored in what had been said about me, but in what God declared over me. I was no longer the “broken one.” I was the *chosen one.*

And grace changed everything. It reshaped how I interacted with others, how I loved, even what I thought I needed from people. Because that’s what grace does—it doesn’t just pardon behavior; it **shifts identity.**

Day 1 – The First Naked Moment

Genesis 2:25; Genesis 3:7–10

The Bible’s first mention of shame comes in a whisper: *“Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”* Nakedness was never a problem—until it was. The moment sin entered, the same nakedness that once symbolized safety now burned with exposure. They grabbed fig leaves, they hid, they ran.

This is the pattern of shame. It doesn't just say, *"You did wrong,"* it says, *"You are wrong."* And once that voice takes hold, our minds wire around it. We anticipate rejection, we cover ourselves with performance, perfectionism, or withdrawal. Just like Eden, we hide.

And just like Eden, God comes looking. *"Where are you?"* Not to expose, but to restore.

Shame was not part of creation's design, and it is not meant to be the final word over us.

Reflection: Where in your life do you still feel the need to hide? What fig leaves do you reach for when shame rises?

Day 2 – When Shame Becomes a Storyline

Isaiah 54:4; Jeremiah 3:25

Israel's story is riddled with shame. Jeremiah doesn't sugarcoat it: *"Let us lie down in our shame, and let our disgrace cover us."* Failure after failure left them clothed not in glory, but in disgrace.

But Isaiah offers another word: *"Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated."*

Shame wants to write the story: *"This is who you are. This is all you'll ever be."* And because of how our memories store humiliation with vivid clarity, it can feel impossible to escape. But God's promise is that shame will not be the narrator of your life. Grace will.

Peter would one day feel this acutely. Shame said, *"You are a denier."* Grace said, *"You are a shepherd."* The shift wasn't instant, but it was real.

Reflection: Where has shame felt like your defining storyline? What would it mean to believe God is writing a different ending?

Day 3 – Bitter Tears and the Look of Jesus

Luke 22:61–62; John 8:10–11

When the rooster crowed, Peter denied for the third time, and Jesus turned and looked at him. That look sent Peter outside in bitter tears.

We all have moments like that. Memories burned into us where everything collapsed at once. The way we are wired, those memories stick because they're encoded with such emotional intensity. That's why shame can feel like it happened yesterday, even decades later.

But notice: Peter's tears were not the end of the story. Paul writes that there are two kinds of sorrow—worldly sorrow that leads to death, and godly sorrow that leads to repentance and life (2 Cor. 7:10). Shame tries to trap us in the first: despair, isolation, hiding. Grace opens the door to the second: repentance, return, restoration.

The difference lies in Jesus' look. Not a glare of condemnation, but a gaze of compassion.

Reflection: What's a "rooster crow" moment in your life—where shame feels cemented into memory? How could Jesus' compassionate gaze begin to rewrite its meaning?

Day 4 – The Cross and the Public Spectacle

Hebrews 12:2; Colossians 2:13–15

The cross was Rome's ultimate weapon of shame. Naked, mocked, displayed. It wasn't just meant to kill—it was meant to humiliate.

But Scripture says Jesus "*endured the cross, scorning its shame*" (Heb. 12:2). Paul adds, "*He forgave us... and made a public spectacle of the powers and authorities, triumphing over them by the cross*" (Col. 2:13–15).

Think about that reversal: the cross did not leave Jesus ashamed; it left shame itself disarmed. What shame meant to parade, God turned into victory.

And here's the beautiful mystery: our minds are built to reshape meaning over time. Experiences of compassion and forgiveness create new pathways, so that what once triggered shame can eventually become a testimony. That's what the cross does. It doesn't erase memory—it rewrites its meaning.

Reflection: What memory does shame try to parade in your life? What would it look like for the cross to reinterpret that memory into victory?

Day 5 – Renamed and Re-Sent

John 21:15–19; 1 Peter 2:9

By another fire, Jesus asks Peter three times, "*Do you love Me?*" Each denial is matched with restoration. And then the call again: "*Follow Me.*"

This is grace. It doesn't lower the bar, it lifts us back into calling. Grace doesn't just forgive—it renames. Grace doesn't just pardon—it sends.

Peter carried those new words into his own ministry. Later he would write: "*You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession*" (1 Pet. 2:9). He could say that with authority because he had lived it. Shame had tried to brand him as unworthy. Grace had renamed him as chosen.

Our brains learn who we are through repetition. And in Jesus, we are invited to repeat the truth until it becomes our reality: *Beloved. Forgiven. Restored. Sent.*

Reflection: Where do you need to hear Jesus say, "*Follow Me*" again? What would living renamed and re-sent look like this week?