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Bible Studies for Women
from Moody Publishers

1-WEEK SAMPLER INSIDE

A 6-WEEK
BIBLE STUDY

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i am found

QUITTING THE GAME OF HIDE AND SEEK
WITH GOD AND OTHERS

—
LAURA DINGMAN

TO YOU, THE ONE WHO LONGS TO BE FOUND

When my daughter, Abigail, was about a year old, I started playing peekaboo with her. I would hide her face under a blanket and say, “Where is Abigail?” After a few seconds of building anticipation, I would pull the blanket down for the big reveal and say, “There she is!” She would just bellow with giggles—one of my favorite sounds in the world.

As she grew, her peekaboo game morphed into hide and seek. She would hide and just wait. Every night before bed, she would hide in her closet or under her bed and wait for us to come in and find her. She would then squeal with delight when we finally did. We always knew where she was, but she hid anyway, believing she had tricked us.

For Abigail, it wasn't about hiding. If it was, she probably would have been more creative about where she hid. For her, it was about being found. She hid so we would come after her and *find her*.

Every kid plays hide and seek. It's a rite of passage. Although the aim of the game is *not* to be found, how fun would it be to play a game of hide and seek where you spent days hiding without ever being discovered? I'm certain it would be the loneliest game ever.

As Abigail has grown, something has changed. She doesn't hide as much for fun anymore—she hides when she gets in trouble. It's her first response when faced with the reality of her sin. She's already been introduced to shame. It's not like we sat down with her and explained what shame is. She is wired to understand it. When she has done something wrong, we can't find her. Typically, she is hiding in the same places she hid when she longed to be found—in her closet or under the bed—but now she makes it clear she'd rather stay hidden. Strangely, I think she still aches to be found, even though she tells us otherwise. She wants to know we're

coming after her, that we still love her. She longs to trade her shame for grace. I respond the same way. In the moments I feel the weight of humiliation for the wrongs I have done, I want to crawl in a hole, hoping no one can see me. I hide. I pray no one notices. I work harder to make sure you can't see it.

Sometimes, it just feels easier to stay in the dark so no one will know our business.

Maybe, like me, you play this game of hide and seek. Perhaps you're just as familiar with it as I am. If you are, you're probably less than thrilled I've just described the very thing you hope no one knows you do.

Can I be honest? I'm less than thrilled. Right now I would rather crawl under a rock than talk about being found. The truth is, this topic—how and why we hide—is a difficult one. It digs at the places in our hearts we just don't want people seeing. We don't want to unearth what we've buried. We would rather just leave it alone. Leave it unseen.

But underneath the gunky exterior lies a beautiful nugget of truth. We really are longing to be found.

Not found out, not exposed, but *found*.

Found and seen.

Found and accepted.

Found and understood.

Found and championed.

Found and deeply loved.

What if I told you being found this way is possible? These pages will explore how we got here and why we hide. We'll discover who's involved in this game we play and what their roles are. We'll discuss what it looks like to live as though we've been found. We'll consider how we can cultivate a community around us that encourages us to come out of hiding.

Each week will explore truths to shape our understanding of what the Bible says about real spiritual community and how to live in it. These steps will mold your understanding at a greater level. Walking through those pages with the Holy Spirit will allow you to hear from Him where you need to grow and change. He will add color to the picture where my words are lacking. He knows you and loves you deeply. He will walk with you through this excursion.

Life moves at a rapid rate these days. You will be encouraged to take time to listen and linger with God in the pages of Scripture throughout the study as we learn to live differently.

I am praying for you, dear reader, as you embark on this journey. My deep hope for you is that you will come out of hiding and start living the gloriously free life God intended for you to live. I trust God will show you how to strip away shame as you trade it for grace through these pages.

We don't have to hide anymore. Jesus is waiting to show us how to live this kind of life where we are free. And we are aching for it. Let's take hands and walk together out of this foreboding tunnel of hiding. It's a little dark in here. I know the light will seem bright to our squinting eyes as we emerge, but I believe the healing warmth the light brings will restore us. In the end, it *will* be worth it. Freedom is always worth it.

A handwritten signature in teal ink that reads "Jaura". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

USING THIS BOOK

I'm so glad you've decided to go through this study! Over the next six weeks, I invite you to dig in each day. If you miss a session, don't be discouraged, and don't give up! Just come back the next day and pick up where you left off. For each week we'll have an introduction to set up Day 1 and the rest of the week, which consists of five daily sessions to help you unpack the theme for the week while giving you a foundation of biblical truth on which to build.

We'll also memorize a verse or two each week. Take a moment every day to review the verse for the week. We want the truths we are memorizing to seep into our souls.

At the end of each week's lessons, we will encounter "Truth, Lies, and Action." This section is a look at the truths learned for the week, at a primary lie we need to exchange for the truth, and an opportunity for an action step to bring each of us a little closer to living as though we are found. This section can be done separately or as a part of your study on Day 5. The important thing is that you take a moment to reflect on what God has shown you and how He invites you to move forward. Taking the time to recognize the truths you've learned, the lies you're letting go of, and the action steps that will solidify it all holds great importance for your journey.

There will be some days you will need your Bible and other times when the reading is printed for you. You might want a journal to document your journey as you go. There is no substitute for spending time at the feet of Jesus to see what He has to say about these things, and in doing so, you will reap a greater harvest. I trust the Holy Spirit to speak in ways my words cannot. Ask Him to help you come out of hiding as you engage in this journey.

fig leaves

Introduction: Why Do We Hide?

Day 1: Shame's the Name of the Game

Day 2: Clothes of Grace

Day 3: Coming Clean

Day 4: Confession Can Be Beautiful

Day 5: No More Shame

Truth, Lies, and Action

WEEK ONE

don't
hide
anything

MEMORY VERSE FOR WEEK 1:

“Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.” PSALM 34:5

Shame is universal. Everyone experiences it. While the causes may vary, the results are the same. I’m looking forward to journeying in this first week of the study together, when we will be going all the way back to the beginning of shame in Eden. Where did this all begin and why? Why are we still hiding? How have we tried to cover our own shame? What does God say about it all? Who else is involved?

I’m grateful for your courage to journey with me in these pages. My prayer for you this week is that you will begin to believe, as you look to our loving Savior, your face is radiant and never covered with shame.

INTRODUCTION TO WEEK 1

WHY DO WE HIDE?

There you are. It's middle school all over again. You're standing in the center of a crowded cafeteria. Boys and girls point fingers as they double over laughing. You can hear the sound of their laughter. Your face grows hot. You feel a slight breeze. A little colder than usual. You wonder what's going on, how you got here. What is happening? Then you look down and discover you have neglected to put on a stitch of clothing. You stand stark naked, uncovered. You're also the unfortunate centerpiece of a jam-packed middle school lunch period.

We've all had our own version of this dream at some point in time. It varies in scenario, but is rooted in similarity. The possibility of being exposed petrifies us. Our fear connects to physical exposure but reaches into other areas as well. We just don't like to be laid bare. It shames us.

It hasn't always been this way. Imagining life without this embarrassing fear seems difficult. Life without shame existed in the beginning, though it's impossible for us to understand.

Let's set the stage: In the opening act of creation, God crafts beauty everywhere. A garden is planted with trees, plants, and flowers watered by rivers, lakes, and streams. Living creatures frolic, and everything is in perfect harmony, and God proclaims His creation to be good. God breathes life into Adam's nostrils and man enters the scene. God proclaims it all to be very good. Not just *good*, as it has been every other time, but *very good* (Genesis 1:31).

The Creator understands the man needs a helper (Genesis 2:18). One by one, the other living creatures parade before Adam. As he names them all, each is assessed as a potential partner for him. After all are considered, no suitable helper is discovered (Genesis 2:20). So out of Adam's own flesh and bone, God designs a woman to be a perfect complement for him.

In the midst of the creation account sits a tiny verse, seemingly unimportant at first: “Adam and his wife were both naked, and *they felt no shame*” (Genesis 2:25). Unclothed, uncovered, man and woman walk around feeling absolutely no shame whatsoever. Granted, no one points and laughs at them, but still, disgrace and humiliation are not a part of the equation at this point. No shame. No masks. No hiding. No pointing and laughing.

Enter the serpent. His arrival on the scene changes everything. To fully comprehend the shift in the story, we have to understand a little about the serpent’s nature. Genesis 3:1 says he was more “crafty” than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. The word “crafty” in Hebrew is *‘aruwm*, meaning subtle, shrewd, and sly. He isn’t a crafty DIY-er, but he *is* an artist of sorts. He just happens to be an artful liar. With his appearance, doubt, lies, and shame enter the scene for the first time, disrupting the harmony of Eden.

He engages in a conversation with the unsuspecting woman. He inquires, “Did God *really* say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1). At first, the question doesn’t phase her. She doesn’t miss a beat. She repeats God’s instructions. “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die’” (Genesis 3:2–3). For whatever reason Eve adds “and you must not touch it,” her response proves that she knows and understands full well the guidelines God gave to Adam (Genesis 2:16–17). After all, she’s been living by them.

Immediately, the sly serpent makes a simple statement that changes everything: “You will not certainly die.” He pronounces a half-truth. That’s what makes him an artful liar. There seems to be a tiny nugget of truth in what he speaks. The woman would not die *immediately* after eating the fruit from this tree, but she would die eventually if she ate it. Then the crafty creature whispers to the woman, “God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). In other words, God didn’t tell you the whole truth. He’s holding out on you. He’s keeping from you something you could have.

Most likely, before this moment, the woman had never considered the fruit on the tree. It was off-limits, so she never even wondered what would happen if she ate it. God said to stay away, so she did. He set a boundary, and she complied without question. But now, because of the voice of the shrewd serpent, her curiosity awakens. Suddenly, she views the tree differently. “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it” (Genesis 3:6). Before her diabolical dialogue with the serpent, she thought nothing of the fruit. She was content to do as God had said. Now having spoken with the schemer, she suddenly wants what isn’t hers to take. Her curiosity stirs her desire. She craves the fruit that would make her to be like God. Fearful of missing out, she wants what the serpent told her God is withholding. In her naivety, she shares her discovery with Adam and hands him a piece of fruit.

For a split second, the succulent fruit tastes delectable, sugary sweet and crisp. But the enjoyment fades instantly when shame overwhelms them. With the knowledge they have gained, they discover they are naked, exposed. Before the fruit, they were naked—they just didn’t know they weren’t supposed to be. They had no reason to feel ashamed. Now the desire to hide and cover their nakedness overtakes them.

**God continues to demonstrate deep compassion,
unrelenting mercy, and unbelievable grace.**

In an effort to fix the problem—to conceal it—they create coverings for themselves from fig leaves. Fig leaves are about five to ten inches long and four to seven inches wide. They aren’t enormous or all that sturdy. Adam and his wife sew some together anyway, attempting to camouflage themselves.

As they hear God strolling through the garden, the real game of hide and seek begins. At the sound of God’s footsteps, fear hits hard and they hide from God among the trees of the garden, hoping God won’t notice their new outfits.

God calls to the man and asks, “Where are you?” The all-knowing, omniscient

God already knows where Adam is hiding and what has been broken in Eden, but He questions anyway, giving the man an opportunity to openly admit what's transpired—an opportunity to come clean. It takes some deeper inquiry to get to the root of the problem. Adam starts with the obvious: "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid" (Genesis 3:10). Pretty sure the fig leaf getup was a dead giveaway for that one. God digs a little deeper, giving him yet another chance to tell the truth, asking, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The straight answer would have been yes. "Yes, I ate from the tree. I did what You told me not to do." But Adam's shame speaks up. "Well, you know that woman You put here with me? She gave me a piece of fruit from the tree and I ate it." In his humiliation, Adam cannot own his wrongdoing. He shifts the blame to the woman. Following suit, the woman blames the serpent.

The scene is no longer very good. The plot of Eden shifts. Conflict arises. The man, the woman, and the serpent face the consequences of their choices. God lays out a curse for each of them. Suffering accompanies their shame. Hardship clouds the once perfect garden. Hope is distant, and shame is very near.

Then God does something extraordinary. In the midst of this bleak situation, He extends grace after grace. He begins with the woman who made the choice that changed everything. Until this point, she is nameless. She is only referred to as "the woman." God allows restoration as Adam gives her the name Eve. In the midst of her shame, the curse, and the mess, *God allows her to be named*, giving her an identity. Not only does Adam give her an identity, but he gives her a purpose along with her name. He names her Eve because she will be the mother of all the living (Genesis 3:20). God could have left her in her disgrace with the curse as her future, but He didn't. He continues to demonstrate deep compassion, unrelenting mercy, and unbelievable grace. He allows her to be granted a new beginning, a new life.

Then God pours grace over both Eve and Adam by making new garments for them. God grasps the ineffective nature of their fig leaf attire. He recognizes what

lies ahead for them both and wearing fig leaves will not be helpful. They require more durable coverings. So the first blood sacrifice to cover sin is made. Full of grace, God fashions garments of animal skins for Adam and Eve, replacing their inadequate fig leaf costumes.

The last act of grace in the garden is surprising. God actually kicks Adam and Eve out of Eden. They are banished. After they are driven out, God places guardians around the tree of life. It seems a little harsh. Can't Adam and Eve just stay in the garden? But God knows what will happen if Adam and Eve eat from the Tree of Life now. This tree was not forbidden before they took the bite from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. They ate freely from the Tree of Life. They knew its fruit. Eating from both trees proved to be a toxic combination. Because they have experienced shame, living forever isn't a great idea. In His beautiful grace, God protects Adam and Eve from that kind of life. Even though they will now experience death, they will not suffer shame and disgrace for eternity. And God has a plan for eternity.

Shame, guilt, and humiliation didn't stay in Eden. When sin entered, it never exited, plaguing every generation since the first one Eve birthed, including yours and mine. With sin comes shame. They are inseparable. It's a cause-and-effect relationship. I sin, therefore I feel guilt and shame. It's a cycle that's all too familiar.

The motivation of characters in any story matters. Motivation colors the choices of each person in the plot. In the midst of this well-known progression of events, knowing the motivation of the characters in Eden aids our understanding of our own battle with shame. Man and woman wanted to be like God. Before it was so blatantly pointed out, they were fairly oblivious. However, once the serpent spoke it out loud, Eve just couldn't shake the thought. There was something God had that they didn't. Adam didn't speak up, either. They both took the bait because they desired the knowledge of good and evil God had. Was God withholding something good from them? They didn't want to miss what could have been theirs. Once they took the fruit, they realized being like God was impossible, and guilt and disgrace washed over them.

God is for us. He showers grace over us, relentless in His loving pursuit of us. His mercy never ceases. Even when it seems as though we are being punished, like the garden banishment, God protects. God provides coverings for our shame.

The serpent had one motivation. He was the opposition, the enemy. He was against the woman, against the man, against God. His primary goal was to defeat them all, even if it meant turning them against one another in the process. He was bent on destruction at any cost, relishing the outcome as it all crumbled. Pure evil.

God, on the other hand, was for man and woman. Every choice He made, every word He spoke to Adam and Eve, showed He was for them. He had their best interest in mind. He lovingly lavished grace on them, restoring them and protecting them in the process. At the same time, He declared the serpent the enemy. While cursing him, God proclaimed and prophesied the crafty creature's demise.

Our story is no different. Our motivation matches that of Adam and Eve. We choose what we want because we don't want to miss something. We sin because we want to be like God. When we fail, which is inevitable, we experience shame.

An enemy lurks for us, as well. He opposes God and seeks to destroy our lives because of it. He consistently stirs doubt and speaks deception so the cycle of shame continues.

But God is for us. He showers grace over us, relentless in His loving pursuit of us. His mercy never ceases. Even when it seems as though we are being punished, like the garden banishment, God protects. God provides coverings for our shame.

Psalm 34:5 tells us, "Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame."

Remembering God is for us is challenging when wrestling with shame. Even if you don't fully believe that God is for you yet, hang on to that truth as we continue this journey. The key is to look to Him as we go. Keep your eyes on God, and the enemy's voice will lessen and shame *will* lose its power.

LINGER AND LEARN

How have you hidden from God?

Take a moment to write out Isaiah 43:1. Reflect on the words and circle the ones that stand out. How do you feel knowing God has redeemed you, covering you with grace and has, like Eve, given you a new name?



WEEK 1 | DAY 1

SHAME'S THE NAME OF THE GAME

Recently, Abigail and I were shopping at Kohl's. We had a cartload of things and, well, I had consumed a great deal of water prior to shopping. Let's just say a grand emergency developed. We proceeded to the restroom. With Abigail in tow, I left the cart in the hallway, flew into the bathroom, and found a stall. Just as I sat down, I heard her little voice calmly ask, "Mommy, what are these funny things on the wall?" Then she paused and said, "Are we in the boy's bathroom?" As the words left her lips, I heard a low voice say, "Why yes, my dear, you are."

Panic flooded as I leapt to my feet and covered myself. With my face the color of tomatoes, I grabbed Abigail's hand, and we darted out the door. After our escape, Abigail firmly requested we leave immediately. "Can we just get out of here, Mommy? Like, right now?" she begged. Then she said it. Words I had never heard out of her tiny mouth: "I'm just so ashamed." Not embarrassed, but ashamed. We made a mistake and got caught. The natural response was to run and hide.

In the Introduction, we discussed Genesis 2:25–3:24. This passage contains the very first game of hide and seek recorded in the Bible. We discovered the man and woman felt no shame prior to this game (Genesis 2:25). There was no reason for it. There was no sin. No brokenness. Man and woman were one with God and had no reason to hide.

Then the serpent brings something new to the party. He enters the scene and begins spinning a web of deceit, and doubt begins to build in Eve's mind. She doesn't quite know what to do with it. She has no precedent for dealing with doubt. She flounders and eventually bites into the lie. She shares the lie with Adam, and together they are introduced to shame.

Shame is an interesting thing. Take a look at the dictionary.com definition of shame:

shame [sheym]: *noun*

1. The painful feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonorable, improper, ridiculous, etc., done by oneself or another.
2. Susceptibility to this feeling.
3. Disgrace, ignominy.
4. A fact or circumstance bringing disgrace or regret.¹

Yikes. Even the definition does something in your stomach. Shame likes to stay in secret places. It likes to lurk in the dark and spring up when no one else is around. It waits for well-timed attacks.

Here are some synonyms for shame:

confusion	contempt	guilt	humiliation	blot
remorse	scandal	stigma	abashment	irritation
discredit	dishonor	infamy	reproach	self-disgust

“Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.”²

READ GENESIS 2:25–3:8

Something changed in Adam and Eve, and they felt shame after their mistake.

How do you feel shame? How does it usually show up? What circumstances typically surround your shame?

1. Shame. Dictionary.com., Unabridged. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/shame>.

2. Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly* (New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2012), 69.

When Adam's and Eve's eyes were opened, their first reaction was to cover up what brought them shame. At first, they covered their nakedness. Then they heard God and they hid.

How do you hide?

From whom do you hide? From God? From others?

What circumstances cause you to hide most?

Take a look at the memory verse for this week:

**Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.
(Psalm 34:5)**

How does this truth change the way you view shame?

Take a few moments to ask God to reveal how you have allowed shame to keep you from His best for you. Ask Him to show you how to begin walking with your eyes on Him and not on your shame.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Lord Jesus, You have told me I do not have to live in shame. Although it follows me around pretty much daily, You have made a way for me to cast my shame on You. You paid a great price so I could live blamelessly and walk without shame. Thank You for releasing me from that burden. Help me not to wear garments of shame any longer. I want You to clothe me with Your righteousness. Amen.

WEEK 1 | DAY 2

CLOTHES OF GRACE

Yesterday we learned about shame. We learned definitions of shame and got real about how we feel shame and hide because of it. Today we continue digging into the first game of hide and seek.

Read Genesis 3:7–10 as paraphrased in *The Message*:

Immediately the two of them did “see what’s really going on”—saw themselves naked! They sewed fig leaves together as makeshift clothes for themselves. When they heard the sound of God strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, the Man and his Wife hid in the trees of the garden, hid from God. God called to the Man: “Where are you?” He said, “I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. And I hid.”

Read the text again and highlight or circle the words that pop off the page.

What words or phrases stand out? What do they show you? Why do they stand out?

Notice Adam and Eve’s reaction to hearing God: they hid. First, they tried to clothe themselves in a feeble attempt to cover their nakedness. Then when they heard God, they hid. Prior to the entrance of sin and shame, Adam and Eve welcomed God’s presence in the garden. Perhaps they even *delighted* in it. But things are different now. Their shame induces fear and a frantic response.

Knowing God is omniscient, it’s strange God would ask Adam where he was. God has infinite knowledge, so He obviously knew where Adam was hiding. But in His

grace and mercy, He gave Adam a chance to come clean. God allowed Adam the opportunity to confess his shame.

God does the same with Eve. When Adam tells God of her role in the fiasco, God turns to her and asks, “What is this you have done?” Eve confesses she ate from the tree.

The next part of the text (Genesis 3:14–19) lays out a bit of their future. They will carry consequences with them as a result of their choices. All three of them: the serpent, the woman, and the man. They each had a distinct role in the event and, as a result, they have distinct consequences.

And then something interesting happens:

The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. [Genesis 3:21–24]

In the midst of this curse—this reminder of shame—God’s great love and mercy arise. He has seen the “makeshift” fig-leaf garments Adam and Eve are sporting, and He knows they just aren’t going to cut it for what’s ahead.

When I’ve read Genesis 3:22–24 in the past, I thought God was punishing Adam and Eve for their wrong choices by banishing them from the garden. I think there was something more happening.

And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” [Genesis 3:22]

God was extending breathtaking grace. Bountiful kindness. Beautiful mercy. He knew Adam and Eve were going to be living with the consequences of sin. If they were to take from the tree of life, there would be no end to their suffering. They would not be able to withstand the shame to come.

As a result, God banned them from the garden and placed a safety net around the tree, guaranteeing they would not endure a double dose of distress. He set a new boundary to protect them. But before they were exiled—which was for their own good—He created lasting clothing for them. He helped them cover their shame. He said nothing to them about how ridiculous the fig leaf attempt really was. He simply—in one verse—made garments of skin to clothe them and rid them of their shame.

The first sin. The first game of hide and seek. The first death to cover shame. The first act of great love, redemption, and grace.

How have you hidden from God when you have known He knows anyway?

How has God gently corrected you and protected you like Adam and Eve from your own shameful choices?

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Lord Jesus, I am beyond grateful for the amazing ways You have continually corrected me with grace and mercy. You have shown Your very great love to me. Thank You that Your love is long and high and wide and deep. May I learn more and more what it really looks like as I grow in the knowledge of Your grace. Cover me so I will not be covered in shame. Clothe me with Your righteousness. Amen.

WEEK 1 | DAY 3

COMING CLEAN

Honesty ranks high on my list of standards. I like people to tell me the truth, even when it's hard. But for someone who values honesty and genuine authenticity so much, I have a hard time telling the truth about myself. Coming clean stinks sometimes. Admitting I have sinned or wronged someone—even in the presence of people I know love me—brings anxiety.

One of the best choices Adam and Eve made after their debacle was coming clean before God. When He inquired what they had done, they faced a choice to tell God the truth or not. While blame shifted, they eventually spoke the truth. They knew God had their best interests in mind, so being straightforward about what had transpired didn't take much convincing.

One of my favorite stories of someone coming clean involves David. David took the long way around, but he eventually got there. Over the next two days we're going to look at David's big shaming moment, how he responded, and what it means for us.

Read 2 Samuel 11:1–27.

How did David try to hide from God and others? What different things did he do to hide?

Did this rid him of his shame? Why?

Read 2 Samuel 12:1–19.

How was David forced to come clean?

How might things have been different for David if he had come clean on his own?

How do you think it affected his relationship with God and others?

How have you acted like David in the past?

What do you need to bring to God as you come clean before Him in this present moment?

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Merciful Jesus, I know You see the dark places in my soul. I want to believe You love me anyway, but that's difficult for me. Teach me to trust You. Show me how to tell You the truth about what I've done outside of Your will for my life. Help me to know I am covered by grace. Help me to come clean. Amen.

WEEK 1 | DAY 4

CONFESSION CAN BE BEAUTIFUL

Today, we continue our study of David's response to shame. When we left David yesterday, he had lost his son as a result of his own sinful actions. He had fasted and prayed and pleaded with God to spare his son, but God did not. We pick up in 2 Samuel 12:20:

Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.

Around the time of this incident, David penned Psalm 51, one of the most beautiful confessional prayers in the Bible. David recognized his intense need for God to do the miraculous and take away his shame.

Today we'll walk through David's confessional prayer in Psalm 51 and pray through it ourselves. Our struggle with sin and shame is no different from David's. Maybe you feel as though your sin is greater than David's. *It isn't*. Maybe you feel as though it's not as great as David's. *It is*. Sin is separation from God, and there are not degrees of separation. Separation is separation. God views it the same. No matter what your sin is or my sin is, God sees it as sin. It all requires the same sacrifice from Jesus to make it right.

We want to close the existing gap between our sinful selves and our Holy Creator. Christ has built a bridge for us, and we are forgiven if we are found in Him. This moment, however, is about coming clean before Him. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).³

3. Perhaps you have not yet surrendered your life to Christ. Romans 8:1 tells us, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus our Lord." In order to receive the covering for shame we need, we must confess Jesus as Lord and believe He is the Son of God. And then it is important for us to also be obedient to Him in baptism. If you are not yet a follower of Christ and need to make that decision, please take time to talk to someone about this very important decision. Christ is the bridge, but you must accept Him before you can walk across. He is waiting for you—waiting to show grace, mercy, and love.

Find a quiet place to read through Psalm 51 and answer the questions. Be honest. Be brave. Say the things that need to be said. God already knows anyway.

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
—verses 1–6

God, I have rebelled by . . .

I have sinned by . . .

Wash me and cleanse me from . . .

Wash me so I will be whiter than snow. Wash away . . .

Create in me a clean, pure heart, O God. Rid my heart of . . .

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
—verses 7–11

Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.
Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
—verses 12–15

I praise You, Jesus. I adore You because . . .

You are . . .

**My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.**

**May it please you to prosper Zion,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.**

**Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,
in burnt offerings offered whole;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.**

—verses 16–19

Help me to bring you a broken spirit, a contrite heart. Break my spirit in the areas of . . .

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Lord Jesus, thank You. Thank You for making me clean through Your blood sacrifice. You have reached beyond my boundaries and have expanded my idea of grace. Forgive me for the wrongs I have allowed to fester in my spirit. Restore to me the joy of loving You, following You, and living Your story. You are amazing, God. Amen.

WEEK 1 | DAY 5

NO MORE SHAME

One of the ways we learn God is for us is by engaging in His Word. Throughout this study, we will be engaging Scripture in a variety of ways. Taking the time to sit in the presence of God and His Word will produce transformative results in each of us. There is no substitute for listening to what the Holy Spirit has to say to us through the power of Scripture.

One way we will encounter Scripture will be through a four-part process. We will listen, linger, learn, and then live. Let's dig in.

Read through the given passage four times. Four different sets of questions will help you encounter the text in a fresh, new way and bring life to your bones. It's not about simply completing the repetition. It's about lingering and listening to see what needs to be learned and ultimately lived. We want to be changed by our time in God's Word.

Today's text is Psalm 34. Psalm 34:5 is our memory verse, so let's take a moment to discover its context.

LISTEN

Read Psalm 34. Sit quietly for a moment before you begin. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak and show you what the Lord wants for you in this passage. Mark words or phrases that stand out as you read.

I will extol the Lord at all times;
his praise will always be on
my lips.

I will glory in the Lord;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

Glorify the Lord with me;
let us exalt his name together.
I sought the Lord, and he
answered me;
he delivered me from all
my fears.

Those who look to him are
radiant;
their faces are never covered
with shame.

This poor man called, and the
Lord heard him;
he saved him out of all his
troubles.
The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him,
and he delivers them.
Taste and see that the Lord is
good;
blessed is the one who takes
refuge in him.
Fear the Lord, you his holy
people,
for those who fear him lack
nothing.
The lions may grow weak and
hungry,
but those who seek the Lord
lack no good thing.

Come, my children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the
Lord.
Whoever of you loves life
and desires to see many good
days,
keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from telling lies.

Turn from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.
The eyes of the Lord are on the
righteous,
and his ears are attentive to
their cry;
but the face of the Lord is against
those who do evil,
to blot out their name from the
earth.

The righteous cry out, and the
Lord hears them;
he delivers them from all their
troubles.
The Lord is close to the
brokenhearted
and saves those who are
crushed in spirit.
The righteous person may have
many troubles,
but the Lord delivers him from
them all;

he protects all his bones,
not one of them will be broken.

Evil will slay the wicked;
the foes of the righteous will be
condemned.
The Lord will rescue his servants;
no one who takes refuge in him
will be condemned.

LINGER

Read the passage again out loud. Are the same words or phrases you marked the first time still standing out? Write them down. How do these words or phrases apply to your life right now?

LEARN

As you read the text for a third time, ask yourself, “How is God inviting me to respond? What does He want me to be learning from this?” Write out what comes to mind.

LIVE

Read the passage one last time and answer these questions:

Why is God showing me this now?

What does this mean for my life?

What needs to change in my life?

How do I need to live differently?

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Lord Jesus, I'm crying out to You. I know You hear me even when it doesn't seem like You do. Be close. Don't crush my spirit. Deliver me and protect me when I am unable to protect myself. I want to taste and see that You are good. You deliver me from all my fears. Amen.

TRUTH, LIES, AND ACTION

Shame is ingrained in our thinking. We have carried it our entire lives. In order to begin thinking differently, we must spend some time redirecting our thoughts. This new thinking requires that we replace the lies with truth and take action.

At the end of each week, we are going to look at three very specific things:

TRUTH: A new way of looking at a truth from God's Word to replace the →

LIES: We want to name the lies we've believed and reclaim them with new truths to move us into→

ACTION: Because faith without works is dead (James 2:20), we want to be people of action. We will be looking today and tomorrow at specific action steps we can take to come out of hiding.

TRUTH: Our memory verse says, "*Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame*" (Psalm 34:5). TRUTH tells us if we are looking to Jesus, our faces are *never* covered with shame.

What truths did you discover this week?

LIES: The LIE tells us we will be covered with shame forever and we will carry it for the rest of our lives.

What lies did you discover this week?

ACTION: Over the next few days, consider one or more of these action steps to help you name your shame and come out of hiding:

- Find one trustworthy friend and share something you learned about yourself this week.
- Do you need to tell someone something, but you've been putting it off because of shame? Find the person and share what you've been withholding.
- Do you need to be honest with God about something? Are you trying to hide something from Him? Take some time today to share it with Him. Tell Him the truth and ask Him to cover and clothe you with His grace and mercy, just like He did with Adam and Eve.
- Do you need to set in place a new boundary (like God set for Adam and Eve in the garden) so you will not continue to sin? Of course, we cannot be perfect, but borders and accountability help limit our options sometimes. Ask God what your boundary should be. Commit to Him that boundary and share it with another person so you can be held accountable.

Write about your ACTION step below. Share why you chose it and what the results were.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Lord Jesus, You taught me so much this week. I want to come clean before You. I want to taste and see that You are good. I want to feel You covering me with Your grace—clothing me with Your love. Thank You for never giving up on me, even when I fail a thousand times. Amen.

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