

Reframing Emotions

Reframing Shame: A Guide for Going Deeper

Note for Users:

Reframing Shame: A Guide for Going Deeper is the second week in an 11-week guide that accompanies the podcast *More to It: Reframing Emotions*.¹ Each session is designed to help you and your community know, love, and praise God for His wonderful design for our emotions, even the ones we view as “negative.” The sessions feature an episode summary, definitions of relevant terms, Scripture reading, discussion questions, activities, prayers, and reflection prompts.

Each section in a session (for example, prayer and discussion) features a timestamp, but the timestamp is simply a suggestion for the amount of time to spend. At times, you and your community may want to linger with the discussion questions. Or maybe you need to spend more time engaging with a concept through a small group activity. You should prioritize what produces the most flourishing in your community, even if it means bending or breaking the time “rules.”

In the podcast, one of our counselors suggests emotions—even the negative ones—are echoes of Eden. If we listen to those echoes and follow them to their source, we might just end up back in the garden, not hiding from God, but experiencing the forevermore joy found in His presence. As you use this guide with your community, we pray that a spirit of unity, curiosity, and humility will be present, creating a space in which you can be vulnerable, drawing near to God and one another.

The Austin Stone Institute, The Austin Stone Counseling Center

¹ Subscribe to the podcast here: <https://pod.link/1626545281>.

Session 2: Shame

Episode Main Point

Shame dehumanizes us, but a healthy understanding of shame and guilt leads us toward confession, repentance, and praise.

Episode Summary

When we experience shame, we sense we are not as we were meant to be. This is a normal feeling. Shame is a part of the human experience. Shame becomes problematic when we respond as Adam and Eve did, hiding behind fig leaves and thus, hiding from ourselves, each other, and God.

We experience freedom from shame through living in Christ, who loves us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:22). Jesus doesn't cover our sin and shame with better "leaves." He gives us a new life and a new name. We are no longer slaves and orphans but beloved sons and daughters of God.

We live in between those realities in the here and now. Shame keeps trying to convince us we're irreparably broken and unclean. Jesus declares we are made new. Somewhere in between those two realities, we experience guilt, which is not shame.

Guilt can nudge us toward a deeper relationship with Jesus and our brothers and sisters in Christ. When expressed in healthy ways, guilt leads us out of ourselves. It invites us to examine ourselves clearly, confess sin regularly, and walk in God's way continually. Expressed unhealthily, guilt curdles into shame. We curl in upon ourselves and hide from what we need most: God and other people.

Definitions

- **Shame:** Shame is the sense that something is wrong or bad *with* us. Shame takes over our identity. We *are* the bad thing we have done. Shame dehumanizes us. It also lends itself to forgetfulness. We forget how to orient ourselves toward God and often become incapable of sensing His glory and grace in our imperfections.
- **Guilt:** Guilt is the sense that we have done something wrong or bad. Guilt exists outside of us, and, because it is outside of us, we can examine, confess, and repent of it. A healthy understanding of guilt leads us to navigate the rupture and repair of where and when we err.



Scripture

Genesis 3; 2 Corinthians 5:16–17; Hebrews 4:16; John 10:10; Philippians 2:1–11; Luke 15:11–32; Romans 1

Pray (5 min)

Before beginning the study, pray aloud, using either your own words or the words provided.

Heavenly Father, help us to approach our emotions with curiosity. Give us courage to confess our feelings of shame to our friends. Inspire us, by Your Word, to reframe how we view and engage with shame. We want to honor You, Father, in all we do and in all we feel. May even our shame draw us closer to You and one another. Amen.

Read (5–10 min)

Either read the following Bible verses aloud or invite a volunteer to read.

¹¹ And he [Jesus] said, “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.” (Luke 15:11–24)



Discuss (15–20 min)

Answer the following questions.

- Make a list of what the younger son does and what the father does. What surprises you about those actions, and the responses to those actions?

What does the younger son do?	What does the father do?

- In the episode, the counselors list a couple of qualities helpful to engaging shame: curiosity, community, humility, and vulnerability. Where do you see those qualities in the Bible passage? How do those qualities cultivate trust and create a space in which repair can occur?
- How is shame different from guilt? How can both help us mature in our relationship with and obedience to Jesus?
- Compare and contrast how the world engages shame versus how God engages it. What story does the world tell about shame? What story does God tell? In what ways is God's story the better one?

Engage (10 min)

In smaller groups of two and three, respond to the following questions.

- In many ways, shame is the voice of our old self—who we were before we believed in Jesus. When are you most prone to listening to that voice rather than Jesus' voice? What truths would help you resist that voice? Make a list and read through it every day this week.
- In the episode Shanda Anderson uses the metaphor of a house to describe our relationships with people. With some people, we're simply saying "hello" on the sidewalk. Others hang out on our porch, while some sit at our kitchen tables or in our living rooms. A small number of people receives an invitation to our "closets," the deepest and sometimes darkest and most painful places within us. Consider your relationships. Who is welcome in your "closets"? What would it look like to nurture a relationship toward those closets?



Pray (5 min)

Either read the following liturgy, a worshipful prayer, aloud or invite a volunteer to read.

A Liturgy for the Lifting of Shame

My body trembles,
 Mind races.
 Accusations tightening—
 Swirling—

Lesser.

I swallow hard to push away
The evidence of my undoing.

Innocent trust, displaced by unintended knowledge.
My nakedness
Seen and longing to be unseen—
Flesh now flushed,
Hastily concealed,
By the work of my hands.
My soul weeps.

Where can I go?

To where can I carry my disgrace?

Shame hides every path.

Tear-soaked hands cradle my shrinking frame.
A familiar voice rises,
And my downcast head shifts—
 “Where are you?”

A once-welcomed phrase,
Imbued now with dread.
Heart pulsing, gaze averted,
Quick-paced response, the inner cry—

Hide.

Your greeting gaze,
a piercing invitation.
As You gently lift my head,
Reminding me, that You, oh Lord,
Have borne my shame,
And been humiliated in my stead.



Reflect

Complete the following reflection on your own.

Spend 15–30 minutes this week responding to the following prompts.

- What do I refuse to share with others because I'm afraid I would lose relationships if I shared those things?
- God already knows all those things about you. He knows you, He sees you, and He loves you still. Sit in that reality for a few minutes. What would it look like for your heart to experience and live in that reality? How might God's unchanging love for you give you confidence to be vulnerable with Him and others?



Written by Erin Feldman
Edited by Lindsay Funkhouser and Lindsey Lundin
Special thanks to Greg Breazeale

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