

Gospel Answers
Nov 18: The Answer to Shame

Series Summary: One word defines the message of 1, 2, & 3 John: Love. Specifically, God's sacrificial and perfect agape Love. This love is so perfect and so powerful, it does not lead us the way it finds us. It transforms us. It marks us. In this small group series, we will see how God's agape love for his people transforms us and every part of our lives.

Big Idea: Shame is something we all feel and deal with. Unfortunately shame is also something that we tend to listen to and define ourselves by. How does the Gospel answer our problem of shame?

Schedule:

- Video Teaching
- Small group

VIDEO TEACHING

Overview of the series: We all face questions and challenges, both in our regular lives and our spiritual walks. The Gospel provides answers for all of them!

Tonight: How does the Gospel provide the answer for our shameful moments? Our moments of regret?

THE QUESTION

What am I experiencing? Shame. I have done something that I am ashamed of. I feel worthless.

Based on my experience, what is true of me? Because I am ashamed of what I have done and I feel worthless, I am, in fact, worthless. Not only that, but I must also be unlovable and irredeemable.

Based on what is true of me, what has God done? Because I am not lovable and have fallen short of expectations, God has rejected me altogether.

Who is God? God must be the God who loves the lovable but rejects the broken.

This is what we do on our own. No one had to teach us this. We drift towards this. No one in Scripture showed this more than Peter.

Background of the passage: Jesus, in warning the disciples of his coming death, has also warned Peter that he would deny his dear friend and Rabbi three times the night he was betrayed (Matt 26:34). Peter responded to such an accusation with denial and confidence in his loyalty. Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you (Matt 26:35)."

Luke 22:54–62 Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. **55** And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. **56** A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." **57** But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said. **58** A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied. **59** About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean." **60** Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. **61** The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." **62** And he went outside and wept bitterly.

What am I experiencing? Shame. "I have denied my dear friend Jesus. The man that I believe to be the Messiah, God himself, I denied even knowing Him in his moment of greatest need." Peter felt like a coward.

Based on my experience, what is true of me? Because of that shame, he felt unworthy to be counted among Jesus' disciples, much less in his inner circle. He felt unworthy of the Savior's love.

Based on what is true of me, what has God done? Because I am not lovable and have fallen short of the expectation of an apostle God is done with me. Surely God has washed his hands of me and would be pleased if I crawled back into the hole I came from.

Who is God? God must be the God who loves the lovable but rejects the broken and I am the broken.

You see, our feeling of shame dictates our answer to what we do with our shame when we allow our feelings to inform our view of God, our view of the Gospel. But there is good news. There is a better way, and Jesus was going to show Peter that better way.

THE GOSPEL ANSWER

John 21:1–3 Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. b It happened this way: **2** Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. **3** "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Why was Peter fishing? Well, it was what he knew, and he did need to make a living. But deep down, this was hiding. Jesus did not teach and equip Peter for three years so that he would go back to fishing. Yet that is all that Peter felt he was qualified to do. He was ashamed. His answer to what to do with his shame was to hide. Not all that different from how Adam and Eve responded to their sin and shame (Gen 3).

John 21:4-7 A Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. **5** He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. **6** He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. **7** Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"...

Why did Jesus love Peter? It was not because Peter was always lovable. Peter was the brash, loud one of the group. He always wanted to please Jesus, but he often lacked discernment and tried to make up for it with confidence. Jesus did not love him because Peter had much to offer Jesus. It was the opposite. Jesus loved Peter because He had much to offer Peter.

John 21:7 B ... As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.

This is an appropriate response to shame. Run to Jesus! Swim. Crawl if you have to. But get yourself to the feet, shame and all.

John 21:8-9 The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. **9** When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

This was a call back to the miraculous meals that Jesus had prepared for the crowds. In both cases, Jesus provided the bountiful meal.

John 21:10-13 Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” **11** So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, **13**, but even with so many the net was not torn. **12** Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. **13** Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

Jesus was having a meal with cowards. Each of these men had abandoned him in His moment of need. Peter’s just happened to be prophesied, verbalized, and recorded. This meal was not by mistake. Jesus sought the men out. He found them hiding in their shame. He even provided the enormous catch of fish.

Transition - Why would he do such a thing? Keep reading!

John 21:14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus did not rise from the dead to befriend the righteous and fellowship with the saints. He rose from the dead to conquer sin and death on our behalf. The Gospel is not that God makes good people better. The Gospel is that he makes dead people alive.

You see, Peter, in his shame, had become aware of his sin. But sin was not unique to Peter. We are all dead in our sin apart from Jesus. Jesus died for Peter's sin, all of it. He knew that he would deny Him, and he went to the cross and paid the penalty for that denial and cowardice anyway. That is the Gospel. That is the answer to our shame.

Transition to small groups: As we go to groups, we’re going to continue to look at Jesus’s love of reinstatement towards Peter, and how he does the same for us.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. **(Lead-in)** Jesus did not love Peter because he had much to offer Jesus. It was the opposite. Jesus loved Peter because He had much to offer Peter. The same is true for each of us.
   Why is that truth foundational to our faith and relationship with Jesus?

Leader Note: The Bible describes our relationship with God as a father-child relationship. As believers, we are God's children. We are not employees of God! But when we mess up, as Peter did, we sometimes act more like employees than children. When an employee messes up, they fear they'll get fired. They have failed their boss, who was depending on them. God is not depending on us. He desires that we obey Him, but He desires this because it is best for us. Like a loving father, He desires for us to walk in obedience because he loves us and wants what is best for us.

2. **(Lead-in)** The feeling of shame is an emotion that, if left unchecked, can lead us to develop a warped view of Jesus and the Gospel. We can begin to think that we have to earn God's love because of it.
   Are there any other emotions that, if left unchecked, can lead us to develop a faulty view of Jesus and what he has done for us?

Leader Note: Some of these might be: doubt, fear, worry, self-righteousness.

READ JOHN 21:15-19 AS A GROUP

John 21:15-19 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." 16 Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." 17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. 18 Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." 19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

3. **Jesus asked John, "Do you love me?" three times, matching the number of times that Peter had denied Him. Why do you think Jesus did this?**

Leader Note: Jesus wasn't trying to shame Peter by alluding to his rejection. Jesus wasn't rubbing Peter's nose in the mistake. But Jesus wasn't going to pretend nothing had happened. That would be ignoring Peter's sin. Jesus did not die on the cross to ignore our sin. He died on the cross to atone, or to pay for, our sin. The answer to our sin and shame is not to sweep it under the rug and try to forget it. The answer is to trust that Jesus' atoning sacrifice is sufficient.

4. **(Lead-in)** Three times Jesus commanded Peter to "feed my lambs." This shepherd language referred to the pastoral ministry Jesus trained Peter and the other apostles for over three years.
   How would you put the phrase "feed my lambs" in your own words?

5. **Put yourself in Peter' shoes. Why would these words have been such good news to hear?**

Leader Note: Many Christians, when they commit an egregious sin, believe the lie that they are tainted and ruined. Sure, they may still be forgiven and bound for heaven, but they believe they are now unusable because of what they have done. In their minds, they are a second, lower class of Christians. As part of this lower class, they are to stay on the sidelines and watch the professionals (those who have not disqualified themselves) serve, lead, and do ministry. This is a lie! We can serve, lead, and do ministry if our response to sin is confession and repentance that depends on Jesus. Jesus showed Peter, and us, that we are not only forgiven but also restored and reinstated.

(For the next Question) Vs 18-19 passage and question context: The historical record supporting Jesus's prophecy of Peter's death comes primarily from early church tradition rather than within the Biblical canon. Early church writers Hegesippus and Jerome documented that Peter was martyred by Nero in Rome [1], and John appears to have written his Gospel account after Peter's death, hinting at the form of execution Peter experienced.[2] By all accounts, Jesus' prediction about Peter's death via crucifixion did in fact come to pass.

- Jesus predicted the type of death that Peter would suffer later on in life as a martyr for the faith. Peter did not always choose cowardice when confronted for his faith. Far from it! At the end of his life, Peter chose death over denying his savior.

6. **Like Peter, we are not doomed to make the same mistake again and again. But if we respond to sin with shame, we are almost guaranteed to repeat**

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[1] Johnnie Moore and Jerry Pattengale, The New Book of Christian Martyrs: The Heroes of Our Faith from the 1st Century to the 21st Century (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 2023), 13.
[2] Adam Hamilton, Simon Peter: Flawed but Faithful Disciple (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2018). [See here, here, here, here, here, here.]

the same mistake. Why does living in shame almost guarantee that we will continually repeat the same sins over and over?