

2 Words to Say When You Feel Shame

Have you ever felt ashamed? Do you know that ugly prospect of being seen through the lens of “less than”? Has your vague sense of your own unworthiness or dishonor left you feeling naked, afraid and wanting to hide? This is called shame.

A family friend innocently asks me about my real-estate contract gone bad. Knowing I lack the verbal skills of a litigator, I start scrambling in a weird frenzy to make sure this friend knows I wasn’t foolish in the transaction.

I tell a story to a small group of women, revealing a place of sexual struggle in my life, and I read my listeners’ faces. Real or imagined, their perceived disapproval triggers my heart racing, heat flashing through me.

A new hair stylist asks me about my husband and children. When I tell her I’ve always been single and childless, her silence screams to me, “Misfit!” and I suddenly feel defensive. I want to run and take cover.

David, that Israelite king who lived a thousand years before Jesus was born, understood this need for cover. A strong, faithful, adulterating, honest, murderous, God-seeking mixed bag of a great man knew that God not only covered David’s sin but could protect him from the reproach of others, from wagging tongues, from danger. David knew what it was to want to run and hide. But repeatedly—as he learned to run toward and hide in his heavenly Father—he discovered what it was to find himself safely covered.

Sometime, you might study how David uses that word “cover” in his poems, recorded in the biblical book of Psalms (Ps. 27:5, 31:20). His situations were, of course, unusually dire. Most of us aren’t kings facing fickle masses or angry political

enemies. But as I've tried to put David's words into practice, turning to our Father for cover when shame attacks me, I've found that I can slow down and breathe.

"Cover me, Lord," I've learned to whisper.

"I've got you covered with My fresh and righteous robes," He reminds me.

"Oh yes ... sorry. I forgot. But thank you."

Inevitably, this reminder settles me on the inside. I find myself replying to that hair stylist, "Yep, sometimes it can be socially awkward to be single and childless. But the truth is, I'm actually OK—more than OK, come to think of it."

In the warmth of His cover, the "misfit" label melts away. The lie has no more power over me. And I walk away that afternoon, emboldened, with really great-looking hair. {eoa}

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