

4 Ways to Kill the Root of a Destructive Religious Mindset

There is a huge difference between a saint repenting of sin, and someone who always feels like a sinner!

Most people who find themselves feeling stuck in a cycle of sin, shackled to the need to prove their innocence or constantly striving to measure up to unreachable expectations are rooted in the religion of shame. They chase the golden carrot of perfection without ever finding true fulfillment.

As we discussed last week, shame is one of the most underrated weapons of the enemy. It is the belief that you are uniquely and fatally flawed; that you will never meet the standard for acceptance and approval. It leaves its victims striving to be perfect until they are left worn out with withered self-esteem.

Shame Traps You Into Constantly Fulfilling the “Ifs”

Shame always puts conditions on our sense of worthiness, attempting to lure us into the contractual terms of “if ..., then ...” to achieve well-being and fulfillment.

Have you ever heard these shame stipulations speaking?

–If I were I would be accepted.

–If I made more I would be significant.

–If I were people would like me.

–If I looked I would be valued.

–If I could just sing I would be appreciated.

...

Let me ask you this: If your “ifs” were fulfilled, would you really feel valued and accepted—worthy?

Honestly, I doubt it. I’d propose that you would just find more “ifs” to fulfill. Unless you can conquer the root of the “If..., then...” contract, you’ll find yourself in a tireless, never-ending cycle of low self-worth.

The struggle with perfectionism is actually a struggle with shame.

What are the consequences of a life governed by shame? Feelings of insignificance, unacceptance and unworthiness lead to the lifelong pursuit of performing for approval. When we feel “less-than,” it is natural to want to prove the voice of shame wrong. Unfortunately, even our best performances will not silence shame.

Rather, performance will simply insist on more performance, causing a ceaseless cycle of falling short of ours, and others’, expectations. Our continual awareness of inadequacy and ineptness results in the need to do more, and to do it “right.”

This perpetual push for performance leads to perfectionism; never possessing a sense of well-being. What an extremely exhausting way to live.

How to Find Rest From the Religion of Shame

Performance and perfectionism are the foundation of religion, which is man’s attempt to please God through self-effort and striving. Religion measures our worth by our work.

The religion of shame offers no rest for the weary, demanding that we work harder, accomplish more and perform better to achieve a sense of well-being and worthiness.

Jesus addressed the religious mindset when he said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will

give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me. For I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

"Rest from what?" you may ask:

- Producing for approval.
- Achieving for acceptance.
- Performing for value.
- Accomplishing for acknowledgment.
- Striving for recognition.
- Working for fulfillment.

The good news is that it is absolutely possible to break free from the religion of shame!

Revival Rest Is Possible

It is only when we understand the truth that we are saved by Jesus' work, not ours, that we can be set free from the religion of shame.

The apostle Paul wrote, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

In other words, no one can achieve approval from God through performance. Rather, grace gives us what we don't deserve and could never hope to accomplish through striving for perfection.

Revival rest is operating out of a sense of worthiness and well-being because of what Christ already purchased for us on the cross.

He worked to secure our love, acceptance and approval so that we don't have to. J