

4 Ways You Can Send Your Shame Packing

Dr. Brene Brown, an author and research professor, has done extensive research on shame. She defines shame as “the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging—something we’ve experienced, done or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection” (*Dare to Lead*, 2018, p. 126).

While many of us think we live shame-free lives, a little introspection shows otherwise. Shame hides behind:

- The need to be seen as “the expert.”
- Relational difficulties.
- Perfectionism.
- Drivenness.
- Busyness.
- Poor boundaries.
- Religiosity.

Remember the story of the woman at the well? (John 4:1-26). The woman trekking to the well at noon was definitely held captive by shame. How do I know? She hid from the other women, coming to the well at a time when the others wouldn’t come. She hid behind a mask of promiscuity, believing the only path to love was to give her body away. She hid behind her theological beliefs, saying that the Samaritans knew the true place to worship (John 4:20).

Shame will always cause us to hide in some way, shape or form. Remember in the Garden of Eden? Right after Adam and Eve sinned, they realized they were naked and hid from God (Gen. 3:8). And just as Satan tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God, he is also the author of shame. He lives to accuse us (Rev. 12:10).

Jesus came as the answer to our shame. He invites us to come into the light with our shame and to bring those messages to His feet. He invites us to allow His living water to wash over our souls and set us free.

So, what should you do the next time you realize shame is tripping you up? Great question! I'm glad you asked.

Get on your knees: Prayer is always a great place to begin. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and show you the places where shame is lurking. Ask Him to help you to remember the first time you felt shame (Ps. 139:23-24).

Journal: When the Lord shows you the places of your heart where shame is hiding, write about it in a journal. Write about the circumstances that first led to that feeling of shame. Write out the lie you have believed because of shame and how you behave as a result of the shame you feel. For instance, maybe when shame overwhelms you, and you feel inadequate, you compensate by putting on your "expert" hat. Or maybe you try to numb the pain of feeling worthless by eating an entire chocolate cake or drinking alcohol. Shame is a sister to addiction. Face the truth about how you cope with your shame and write it down. That way, you will have more accountability.

Write out the truth of what God says about you: For example, if you realize you feel shame over feeling inadequate, write out, "I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Or if you are feeling down on yourself or unlovable, write out, "I am chosen, holy and dearly loved" (see Col. 3:12).

Dare to be vulnerable with someone you love: When we dare to confess our feelings of shame to other people, we bring our fears out into the open where others can help love us through our fears. Shame messages that are brought out into the open lose their power. What's hidden can't be healed.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you: Every morning, and several times throughout my day, I ask the Holy Spirit to fill me. I am well aware that Satan continually wants to sabotage my thinking with shame messages. In light of that, I carry on a continual conversation with the Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus, I praise you that you have come as my Messiah and the answer to my shame. When shame messages flood my mind, would you remind me of how deeply you love me? Fill me with your Holy Spirit, I pray, and help me to live out of the overflow of your love today. {eo}

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This article originally appeared at .