

5 Crucial Ways You Can Stop Shame's Soul-Crushing Impact

Redirect Your Focus

Shame's reach depends on what we focus on. The choice is up to you and me. Do we focus on the pain of our shame, or the one who delivered us through it all? Maybe the deliverance we hoped for would have been to have never encountered the demoralizing shame, but having walked through the deep waters and seeing our God part the waters and bring us through them, we are changed forever. No longer untouched by the painful side of life, but aware of an enabling God. That is, if we have given Him our shame and have let Him heal us. We defuse shame when we let go of the enemy's accusation, let go of bitterness and adopt the mindset of Christ. Christ endured the cross for the joy set before Him. When we have the joy God has for us set before us, we focus on His promises more than our circumstances.

Resist the Voice of Shame

The elephant in the room is our flesh. It propagates shame and tries to keep us earthly-minded. But we have been given an incredible gift in God's grace that enables us to choose to walk in the Spirit rather than the flesh. We can resist the flesh. This is such a simple truth but so hard in practice when the thoughts of shame just keep coming. When shame is overwhelming, we need to resist listening to its loud voice and resist accusation or distrust of God. Shame is a lie from the enemy. Hiding our shame from an all-knowing God won't work. Instead, we bring our shame to God because we know He chose to bear our shame to set us free. The high price He paid was not so we would remain in our sin and shame, but so we could rise above it all.

Start Fresh

Still sometimes, ya just have to “get out of Dodge.” (That’s French for “start over.”) There is beauty in blooming where you are planted, but sometimes God just moves us on. Not to avoid the pain or the shame, but to get us out of our comfort zone and to kick the dust off and go where God has called us for the next season of life. The shame we leave behind might show up again where we are going, or perhaps there will be a new shame that we will encounter. But when we walk through our shame with God, the shame loses its power to condemn us and becomes a tool for our freedom instead.

Allow God to Redeem Shame’s Consequences

Gazing at Hagar’s son, Ishmael, Sarah’s chest pounded with the questions, *Why couldn’t I have birthed him? Why did God let me feel such shame?* Tauntingly, Hagar rubbed her victory into Sarah’s face like lemon juice over an open wound, boasting of her ability to bear a son even though she herself had not volunteered for such a task. Sarah let the shame of her infertility control her actions, which led her to try to take control of her destiny to avoid the shame that pierced her soul. Shame did not just reach Sarah in that moment. Her decisions made in shame impacted the rest of her life—far beyond the time when she felt trapped by shame. The consequences for taking matters into her own hands are still felt today. Modern-day enemies of God’s people were formed because of shame. What if Sarah had trusted God in her shame? What if she had not chosen a shameful remedy to cure her shame? We may not be able to undo the reach of shame, but God can redeem it. And even the boy a slave woman bore was cared for because our loving God takes our shame and uses it to fulfill His purposes and demonstrate His unconditional love.

Change Your Perspective

What was it we wanted from man? Praise? Our desire for man’s

approval can be idolatry. But some might say we just want acceptance. Christ warned us that we cannot serve both God and man. If the world loves us or if we love the world, we cannot love God, too. When we let go of man's praise and let go of the need for man's acceptance, we can reach them with the good news of the gospel instead of their shame reaching us. Man's opinions can seem endless, but they will eventually end. Being thoughtful about the impact of shame and seeing it through the eyes of grace, truth and humility frees us to rise above shame. Shame off you and me, friend. {eoa}

Denise Pass, author of *Shame Off You* and *31 Days to Hope Reinvented*, is an award-winning CCM recording artist and singer-songwriter, accomplished writer/blogger, speaker, worship leader and podcaster ("Black and White" podcast). After making the crushing discovery of her former husband's hidden life as a repetitive sex offender and surviving a painful divorce, she now shares an inspirational message of seeing the deeper truth in God's word when life hurts through her ministry, *Seeing Deep Ministries*. A graduate of the University of Maryland, Denise resides in Virginia with her "kinsman redeemer" husband and five children. Find her online at .

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