



REDEEMING SHAME WEBINAR BY PETER EVERTS, PHD

SCHEDULE FOR REDEEMING SHAME WEBINAR

APRIL 26, 2021—PETER EVERTS

7:00 – 7:10 PM	Introduction and Goals of Webinar
7:10 – 7:25 PM	Talk through slides 2-20
7:25 – 7:30 PM	Break and write down questions.
7:30 – 7:45 PM	Talk through slides 21-32
7:45 – 7:55 PM	Break and chat input
7:55 – 8:10 PM	Slides 33 through the end
8:10 – 8:30 PM	Question and Answer

PP2 INTRODUCTION: Hi, I am Peter, and I am a recovering perfectionist. I am talking about shame, a subject with which I am well-acquainted, struggled with all my life, and can still experience its grip.

I would like to tell you that I have done all my homework, have mastered the content and will do justice to this subject. But that simply is not the case. I am still in the middle of this topic that is much bigger than what I ever imagined after I offered to speak about shame and grace.

So, I am feeling a bit vulnerable right now but that might be the best place to begin when talking about shame and grace!

By now you have read the goals for this webinar but really there is only one...I want everyone by the end of this talk to find at least one practice or exercise that will help free you from however shame binds you so you can walk in the lightness of God's grace.

First, we need a bit of humor before we get too deep into this shame stuff...

PP3-6

PP7



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Charlie Brown's posture says it all? His eyes look away, his shoulders slump, he looks like he is about to shut down and go somewhere to hide. "Shame is embodied"!

PP8

Shame erodes our soul.

It leaves us feeling:

- there is something wrong, something lacking or inadequate about us.
- we are not worthy of love and belonging.

When shame festers and grows, it can consume us.

PP9

Shame is not like guilt.

(Point one) Guilt points to behavior and says, "I did something wrong"; shame points to self and says, "I am wrong".

(Point two) Guilt leads to pro-social action; it moves forward with acknowledgement and repair. Shame triggers a fight/flight/freeze response; disconnects us from ourselves, others, and God.

Notice how shame triggers us. We may withdraw and isolate from others or avoid feeling shame by engaging addictive behaviors. We can act angrily towards others or we can turn that anger towards ourselves.

Do you see how shame can be so well-disguised? The workaholic, the codependent, the perfectionist, and the bully—all can share shame at their core. We will do anything to avoid the feeling of shame!

Sometimes we experience guilt and shame at the same time. It can be a challenge to sort out one from the other!

For example, when I do something wrong, experience guilt and take appropriate action, I should feel emotional relief. But if I continue to beat



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myself up for it and persist in “feeling guilty”, I really am experiencing shame.

(Skip points three and four.)

PP10

Is there a sense of healthy shame?

Most researchers say, “yes”. Healthy shame helps build social boundaries, a sense of propriety, a kind of humility. My friend and colleague Tom Wilkinson reminds that healthy shame “is what helps us keep our clothes on” when we go out the door.

Perhaps healthy shame works more like guilt, both can lead to constructive action. A social miscue that leads to embarrassment can spur someone to apologize even if she is not guilty of anything.

PP11

Shame is harmful to us.

-it shows up in traumatic disorders, all forms of abuse, emotional and behavioral problems, and underlies addictive patterns.

-it undermines our intimate connections in marriage, family, and communities.

-it distorts our very identity: how we see ourselves, others, and God.

PP12

What are some key facts about shame and brain functioning?

-the experience of shame comes early, well before language is mastered, and well before guilt is formed. Guilt requires development of conscience and empathy, which are developed later in childhood.

-shame neurons are hard-wired and less adaptive to than other neurons.



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-shame disrupts our thinking, emotions, and behavior.

-some good news: the brain is adaptive and can rewire; we can learn new patterns of reacting and behaving.

PP13

What are some implications from brain research? I am especially caught by these questions...

-if the initial experience of shame is pre-verbal, disruptive, hard-wired, and not easily remediated, how can we lessen shame's power while raising and educating young children?

-how do we heal from shame if it is deeply rooted in our brain, not easily accessed by language, and yet is so disruptive in its impact? How does that influence how we counsel or engage healing practices?

PP14

How do we heal from shame? Let's start with the contributions made by a couple of researchers over the last twenty years, Brene Brown and Kristen Neff.

Brene Brown is a social science researcher on shame. If you have not read one of her books or listened to one of her TED talks or podcasts, I strongly encourage you to do so.

For those who struggle with self-acceptance a good starting point would be to read the *Gifts of Imperfection*, then follow it up with a deeper look at shame and the role of vulnerability in her subsequent book *Daring Greatly*.

In the *Gifts of Imperfection* Brown challenges us to live whole-heartedly. As we embrace our imperfections, we have the courage to let go of what other people think, build compassion by establishing healthy boundaries for



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ourselves, and connect more intimately with others as we come to self-acceptance.

PP15

In *Daring Greatly* Brown concludes that when we vulnerably tell our story to someone who offers us empathy and understanding, shame can't survive. To build shame resilience we need to be able to recognize when shame comes up in our bodies, to feel our way through it, learn what messages and expectations triggered it. The next step is to do a reality-check on these messages. Are they realistic, attainable, what we want or what others want from us? Then we need to share our story with someone who can empathize with us. When we share our story, we are "speaking shame"—talking about how we feel and asking for what we need when we feel shame. These steps are fluid and do not necessarily happen in order!

PP16

Brown concludes that being vulnerable is a hallmark of shame resilient people—the willingness to be seen, and the willingness to be known. In *Daring Greatly*, she skillfully writes about the ways we defend against being vulnerable by wearing vulnerability armor. A helpful read!

PP17

What are the research findings on self-compassion, especially the work by Kristin Neff and her colleague Chris Germer?

The goal of self-compassion is not to increase self-esteem but self-acceptance.

PP18

What does self-compassion look like? It means that we are kind to ourselves, when we fail or struggle, we do not isolate but connect to others and we practice staying in the moment, non-judgmentally, accepting "what



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is". This last concept is what is so difficult for many of us to put into practice.

When I let my perfectionism take over, I experience an inner critic reviewing everything I say or do or think. I worry about the future; I beat myself up over the past. My body's cortisol levels start to climb! If I practice self-compassion, I stop and observe what I am feeling, am thinking...I stay curious, not condemning myself for any of the negative messages that are coming up within me. As I stay non-judgmental, I let my body and emotions relax. I become better at letting go of shame's lies.

For those of you who want a Christian perspective on mindfulness I recommend the books by Oden and Kraeger.

PP19

Neff uncovers the erosive impact of self-criticism on self-compassion. She challenges the myth that self-criticism is the way to do more or perform better. Self-criticism is a literal attack on ourselves.

PP20

You have listened to a lot of information about shame, shame resilience and self-compassion. You can see some of the questions that have come up for me. But what are your questions or observations at this point in the webinar? Take 5 minutes and reflect. You may want to write them out now and share later when the chat function is open near the end of our time together. Talk to you in 5 minutes!

7:25 – 7:30 PM Break

7:30 – 7:45 PM

Let's deepen our own understanding of how shame and grace are central to our spiritual life.

PP22



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Gerald May, a Christian psychiatrist, wrote a classic called *Addiction and Grace* (1988). He makes clear that we all desire to be loved and accepted, but we are afraid to be vulnerable. We protect ourselves from the potential of rejection by engaging in a variety of attachments (idols) or addictive behaviors, which take us further away from the love and acceptance we desperately seek. We will come back to him when we talk about grace.

Quick note: Attache is the French word that means “nails”. Is it helpful to look at the Cross as the place where our attachments/addictive behaviors are “nailed”, crucified and let go? Does this go deeper than what we mean by “Jesus died on the Cross for our sins?”

PP23

Curt Thompson is a Christian psychiatrist, who applies his understanding of the neurobiology of shame, to the Scriptural narrative. In the Garden following the temptation by the serpent Adam and Eve immediately experience shame, cover themselves and hide even as God gently seeks them out. In creating us God makes himself vulnerable to us by risking our rejection. In turn we must become vulnerable to restore our connection with God and others.

Thompson interprets Good Friday in the most intimate way.

(Point 3) “Good Friday is God coming to find us...saying that there is no place in your shame that I am not present and already there waiting for you...and I am going to wait for you...until you open your eyes to me being with you in that space, and let Resurrection take us both home.”

(Skip point four)



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PP24

Simon Cozens, who spent time as a worker in an honor and shame culture, wrote *Looking Shame in the Eye* (2019). He brings theology, psychology, and cultural anthropology to the intersections of shame and grace.

Jesus took on shame not only on the Cross, but it was at the very heart of his ministry and teaching. While I don't think Jesus tried to shame the leaders of his day, when he confronted their role in the shame-based religious system that they had created, he provoked their "shame blame" which ultimately led to his arrest and death.

But when Jesus engaged those who were shamed, he put himself at risk, became vulnerable, saw through their shame, honored the worth of the individuals and freed them to no longer be in bondage to their shame. Notice Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, how they both take risks with each other, and Jesus makes it safe for the woman to acknowledge her shame and be released from it. Or how about the Lukan account of the prostitute who risks social shame in Simon's house; where Jesus turns shame on its head and pronounces that the prostitute not only has honored him over and above what his host has failed to do, but that her shame redeemed allows her to love more deeply than those who don't think they need shame redemption!

So much more to explore here, but we need to move forward.

PP25

(For the sake of time, I will leave you to ponder Clapp's brief, but penetrating analysis of shame and his challenge to us.)

Rodney Clapp, a prolific Christian writer, wrote a penetrating analysis of shame and the Cross in a brief article from a Christianity Today magazine published in 1991.

He makes a prophetic statement about how we as believers must not join our shame-based culture's denial of shame and too quickly run from the



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Cross where shame is crucified to the Resurrection where hope obliterates shame.

The challenge? “Our hope is that resurrection transforms and paradoxically elevates the shame of crucifixion.” What would it mean to embody this paradox in our spiritual practice?

PP26

Lewis Smedes, a former professor of Christian ethics at Fuller Seminary, wrote a classic book called Shame and Grace. Both simply written and profound; it is still relevant today.

Grace is understood by Smedes as four dimensional: it pardons guilt, overcomes shame, empowers us into the “lightness of grace” and deepens our gratitude and joy!

PP27

Are we worthy of grace? The answer is yes! We don’t deserve grace; it is a gift and unmerited, but we are worthy of it! Grace accepts us for who we are right now. God does not ignore our fallenness, but he also does not diminish our inherent worth. We are image-bearers, inherently worthy, but shame has eroded our self-worth and grace provides a way to restore it.

PP28

Does grace lead us to self-forgiveness, self-acceptance, or both? The answer is both. “When we forgive ourselves, we heal our guilt; when we accept ourselves, we heal our shame. Forgiving ourselves is spade work we do on the way to accepting ourselves.”

When I hear someone say, “I know that God forgives me, but I cannot forgive myself”, I wonder how much grace he or she has received. I suspect that guilt is gone but shame and lack of self-acceptance continues to have full sway.

PP29



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Gerald May views grace not only as a gift but a challenge. The challenge is to go on a spiritual journey of relinquishment of our attachments (idols). During that journey we “discover the depths of our weakness, the power of grace and the price of both” until we find our worth that comes from dependence on God.

A perfect example of this is when God did not remove Paul’s “thorn in the flesh”— which was humiliating to Paul. Paul walks through the desert of unanswered petitions, hears God’s voice saying, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Of course, God doesn’t enjoy Paul’s humiliation, but offers a Grace so empowering that Paul moves from humiliation to humility and a deeper dependence upon God.

PP30

(Skip this) I want to reserve this slide for later in our time together. It is a wonderful example of embodied grace, but let’s move on.

PP31

If grace is so inviting, why do we resist it? Let us look at some of the reasons I think about. I would welcome any thoughts you have about it during our Q and A.

(Read the first point.) Those of us who have worked hard, made sacrifices, done the right thing, if honest, we find grace difficult to receive. We have built our identity around achievement and merit. The prodigal son is thrown a party, the laborers who started work at the beginning of the day get the same wage as those who show up with a few minutes left in the day. Grace upends our merit system.

(Read the second and third points.) We cannot do it alone; we need support and assistance along the way. This is hard for many of us to admit. Ask most recovered addicts what the secret to recovery is and they will tell you about their inability to recover on their own, dependency upon God and reliance on a group of other recovering addicts on their road to sobriety. We need to learn from them!



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(Read the fourth point.) When we FEEL abandoned by God, we still may hold onto the fact of God's love, but it doesn't feel this way. It is hard to feel the benefits of grace: its lightness, joy, and gratitude. We need to process our pain with someone who will not give answers to the why; but will help us with our lament.

PP32

(Read the fifth point.) Leaving grace at the pardoning of sin, and not incorporating its healing for shame is like going to a party and opening up just one gift and leaving the others unopened. Grace is meant to heal our shame as well.

(Read the sixth point.) We have been hurt, betrayed, or judged when we have become vulnerable and risked our shame with others—including in our faith communities. The shame that was risked in sharing has only been reinforced. This is a travesty; this is Shame's proudest moment.

If grace is to be embodied through us, we must make our relationships safe; we must hold confidences; we must hold sacred all the spiritual journey someone is on without judgment. Vulnerability offered needs to be received with vulnerability.

(Read the seventh point.) We accept salvation as a gift, freedom from sin, our guilt and penalty paid. Then we go about trying hard to imitate Christ, follow Biblical teachings and spiritual improvement plans that result in more failure and shame. I will talk more about this later in the webinar.

(Read the eighth point.) We will come back to this later.

We are about to take a 10-minute break. Please get up and stretch for a few minutes but I would like you to come back and use the chat function. Make your observations or questions about shame and grace brief. You also may wish to share a resource or a practice for healing shame with us. Please forward them to Lisa and Amber. They will organize your questions and responses for our Q and A that will follow my presentation.

(Then break for 10 minutes.)



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PP33

Welcome back! Please feel free to use the chat function if you have questions that come up as we come to our close.

Let's look at how shame shows up in cross-cultural living. I believe those of you who live in these settings face some unique challenges. Here are some of the most common statements we hear.

Notice how we struggle with "am I enough?" as we learn a new language, find energy for our work, spend money, write support letters...

PP34

Feel spiritually empty, struggle with team members, have personal problems that question our spirituality...

PP35

Face burnout, lack sufficient joy, and carry doubt about calling.

Later you might come back to these questions and ask: Where is shame arising in these situations—from within the worker or from others? What are the messages of shame? What would it mean to practice shame-resilience in each of these situations?

I want to add this before moving on.

Many of us know how difficult cross-cultural living is. As we try to fulfill our vision and demonstrate our effectiveness, we can allow shame to come in the back door and whisper, even shout: You are not enough!

Yet there can be another layer of difficulty--that is, we can be shamed by team members, leaders in ministry areas, by our supporters, and by the organizations to which we belong. When this shame goes unhealed or unrecognized, the burdens of living cross-culturally grow even more difficult.



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The good news is that you can still build shame resilience in the face of this; but you will need to find grace-filled relationships elsewhere!

PP36

Now let's turn to some practices in healing shame. When you receive my PP talk after the webinar, you will see that I have offered some suggestions for each of these practices that we will not have time to review. So, I will focus on just a few.

PP37

Let's look at the first 4 practices. All of them encourage you to dig more deeply into your own story; then you are challenged to share your process with someone else or within a small group.

When we have a chance to rework our stories, we can give them new meaning and perspective. When we are emotionally vulnerable in sharing our stories with someone who enters into our experience, we have a chance to heal from shame. You can read more about this in Thompson's *Anatomy of the Soul*, especially pages 65-80.

A powerful example of embodied grace can be found on PP30. Michael Cusick, author of *Surfing for God*, shares his story of how an early sexual abuse memory sent him reeling backwards in time. God invited him to ask for the presence of a close friend to enter into this painful experience. His friend became the embodiment of grace to Cusick as he healed from the shame of his childhood abuse memory.

Go to PP38 and skip below:

- 1. Start with the first step in shame resilience and recovery...acknowledging where shame shows up in your life and how you manage it.** How do you experience shame? What are its triggers? How do you respond to shame? Share this with a person who knows you the best, who can speak truth gently and lovingly. Ask for feedback about how he or she sees you.



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2. **Make an inventory of your unhealthy attachments (idols) or addictions. You may also wish to read May or Rohr (*Breathing Under Water*) for assistance.** What function do they serve in your life? How have you tried to relinquish them? What was your experience? With whom can you share your inventory and give support in letting go of your unhealthy attachments?
3. **Create your own narrative about shame and grace in your life. Find someone who can be the face of Jesus for you; share your story openly and courageously.** Shame and grace are embodied; the way out of shame and into grace must be embodied as well.
4. **Study Brown's *Gifts of Imperfection* along with Pritchard's companion guide *Worthy in Jesus* in a small group.** Use the guidelines for sharing that Pritchard suggests and find embodied grace for your imperfections in the group.

PP38

5. **Develop an embodied theology of shame and grace as you reflect on Scripture. Books by Thompson, Smedes, Wilks or Cozens may be helpful templates.** If you have primarily viewed salvation through the lens of guilt and disobedience, what would it mean to view salvation through the lens of shame and shame redeemed? What would it mean to embody a theology of shame and grace? What spiritual practices would you engage? How would the good news be shared? Would our witness to the world be better served if we spoke the language of shame rather than one of guilt, morality, and sin? (Cozens)
6. **Treat yourself with compassion and acceptance—especially when you fail. Resources by Neff, Oden and Kraeger can help.** Listen to your inner dialogue during the day; write down what your



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thoughts are about yourself. Can you allow Christ's compassion to transform your self-criticism into gentle self-acceptance, embracing your imperfection and seeking the gracious acceptance of others?

- 7. Let go of the gap between your "ideal self" and your "actual self"—it only increases your shame.** Many of us strive to "be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect" and be "imitators of Christ". We are quick to read another Christian self-help book or listen to a podcast on how to be a better "whatever" but end up faulting ourselves when we fail to do it well. The difference between who we are and who we want to be becomes a point of spiritual measurement. We can begin a process of shaming ourselves believing we are not "faithful, spiritually mature or whatever enough".

The truth is that we are worthy of God's love for our actual selves, both the parts that are visible, but also the shadowy parts. While God yearns for us to love as completely as he does, his love and acceptance is not affected by our performance; it only seems to impact our view of ourselves!

For those of you inclined to be perfectionistic, read the articles out of the Oneing journal on Perfectionism or read about Type One on the Enneagram. If you would like a quick laugh about the subject, go to <https://idea.library.drexel.edu> and locate the M Performance Standards chart for cross-cultural workers. My sister Jana who is a worker in Costa Rica put me onto this.

- 8. Witness to your imperfections using the language of shame and shame redeemed.** Cozens argues that whether we are from Western (individualistic) or Eastern (group-oriented) cultures, we end up experiencing shame. Our world is in search of authentic and genuine connections. "If our witness is to show people how much we need Jesus, then we need to share our failures" (Fischer), become vulnerable and speak the language of shame redeemed.



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PP39

9. **Read authors who understand that the most profound experience of grace often comes through suffering and shame. Books by Yancey, Manning, Nouwen, Rohr in *Falling Upwards* come to mind.** Read the Biblical accounts of God’s unfailing pursuit in deliverance from our shame; but especially read the Gospel accounts of how Jesus addresses shame. Cozens helps here.
10. **Explore how shame uniquely intersects with your Enneagram type.** All of us experience shame; but we are likely to be triggered differently depending upon our attachment histories, our traumatic experiences and by our personality types. If you appreciate the wisdom underlying the Enneagram, then listen to the podcast in 2020 created by Cron, a co-author of *The Road Back to You*, who interviews Curt Thompson on shame and enneagram types.
11. **Engage Christian contemplative practices that involve “being” not “doing”.** Many of our prayer practices engage a verbal, structured, left-hemisphere approach and ignore ancient Christian practices, such as, centering prayer, breath prayers, the Jesus prayer, welcoming prayer, the prayer of examen, practicing the presence of God—all of which may better ground us in our bodies and daily rhythms. (Resources: Oden, Bourgeault and Edwards)
12. **Observe rest and engage relinquishing practices.** Keeping the Sabbath requires us to stop our striving; reminds us of letting go of outcomes and our busyness to God. Periods of silence and solitude strip us of our normal activities, which can help to reveal our attachments and addictive patterns. Fasting practices, from eating



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to unplugging from the screen, can also have the same effect. Read May's description of the desert journey.

PP40

As you look at these practices, the common thread running through them is to engage not just your left hemisphere, but right hemisphere as well! Grace needs to be embodied!

13. **Absorb Scripture through the practice of lectio divina and other non-analytic methods.** If we can engage our imagination and not approach Scripture simply to study or memorize, we improve our capacity to retain its powerful stories of shame and grace when we do this. The use of lectio divina invites us to let the Spirit speak to us as we reflect, not analyze; non-analytic methods encourage us to imagine ourselves being one of the characters in the biblical stories we read to experience more profoundly its message.
14. **Engage as many senses as possible to experience grace and shame redeemed.** Listen to music that lifts our spirits, has us cry confessionally and/or with joy, is grace-filled. We retain words and phrases much better alongside body movement and song...that is embodiment! Sing the psalms. Use body posture and movement while praying or meditating. Read books on grace out loud to each other. Watch movies with redemptive themes that can engage our emotions, where shame and suffering meet grace. (my favorites: *The Mission*, *Les Miserables* and *Schindler's List*) Walk in God's creation and marvel at the constant cycles of death and renewal, life out of decay.
15. **Develop your capacity for beauty, joy, and gratitude. Everything we create suggests beauty—including when brokenness is restored,** or ruptures are repaired. Imagine Jesus



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during the day saying to you, “I love you. I love how...” Or imagine a loving Father speaking personally to you through his Word daily (go to FathersLoveLetter.com). Be grateful for not just the special graces (answer to prayers, salvation experience, etc.) but also for the ordinary graces, from our own breathing to all the ways we are being sustained daily by God). Experience the “lightness of Grace”, the experience of being loved in whatever ways that comes to you daily.

PP41

- 16. Deepen the practice of confession and forgiveness as a vital pathway to release shame and restore intimate connection.** When we privately confess to God and receive His forgiveness for our sin and shame, we bypass a powerful way to renew our minds. (Thompson and Cozens)

In our counseling my wife and I recommend a comforting confession to heal hurts caused in relationships. This happens when a sincere apology is made only after the emotional pain that has been caused by the offender is understood. Deep apology requires the ability to empathize with the one who has been hurt. When that happens, forgiveness and connection deepens.

James 5:14-16 serves as a reminder for what can happen in a healthy, confessional faith community.

- 17. Seek spiritual direction or life coaching with someone who can listen to your story of shame and grace. A spiritual director or life coach can help reflect with you what you are discovering about yourself and God.**

PP42

(Read this power point slide without comment.)

PP43



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Some closing observations...

We need grace-filled relationships and communities to assist us in moving out of shame.

How can the church in its worship, sacraments, practices, disciplines, and witness create a healing place for shame? How can we practice confession and forgiveness so that actual healing and repair of our mutual shame is embodied?

We always have lived in a world where shame tells us that we are not worthy of love and belonging. In the 21st century the corrosive, soul-eating effects of shame have been heightened as we can now instantly react out of our shame by blaming, defriending, bullying, and judging through social media platforms. We can “cover our shame” by presenting what we want others to see about us, but in so doing our longing to be accepted for who we really are goes unfulfilled. Our world desperately needs to know how to redeem shame, it needs people who know personally and collectively how to deal with their own shame and walk in the lightness of grace.

PP44

I will end my presentation with how Lewis Smedes ended his book on Shame and Grace. I encourage you to author your own version some day!

(Read Smedes free verse.)

PP45-48

This list of sources is only a beginning. I know that there are many more good sources on this subject. For example, I have not read Heather Nelson’s *Unashamed: Healing Our Brokenness and Finding Freedom from Shame* (2016), Sandra Wilson’s *Released from Shame: Moving Beyond the Pain of the Past* (2002) or Kevin Butcher’s *Free: Rescued from*



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Shame-Based Religion, Released into Life-Giving Love of Jesus (2021) but they look like good books.

PP49

Questions?