**SHAME OFF YOU : THE SHAME GAME**

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Three of the most powerful yet poisonous words I can say, "Shame on you". I think we would all agree. All of us process shame. We feel it. We sometimes identify it, but if we were asked, "Okay, define shame." In fact, if I could bring every single person on this stage, and if I ask you, "Define shame", most of us would have a hard time with the definition. We might bring up guilt or remorse, or maybe we might talk about our family of origin or some embarrassing moment. But what is shame? The Bible talks a lot about shame. It talks more about shame than guilt. In fact, six times more. Here's a definition of shame that we're going to work with over the next several weeks. **"Shame is the all-consuming condition that we've let down ourselves, others, and God."**

Shame is truly like an onion. I love onions. I was making a sandwich couple days ago, and I like to put a lot of onion on the sandwich. And you've heard the saying, "Oh, there are so many layers. It's like peeling an onion. Or that deal has layers and layers." When it comes to today's topic, and thank you for showing up, knowing what was going to be on the agenda, because this is some deep-water stuff. Shame though has so many different layers.

For example, I have shame in my life. You have shame in your life. Most of the shame that we carry is **self-imposed.** In other words, it's caused by you and me, our behavior and our toxic thought processes. Also, some shame would be caused by what we have not achieved or what we should have done or could have done. We turn that over on the rotisserie grills of our minds, and if we go on social media, man, is that a shame machine or what?

Another reason I carry shame is what **others have done to me.** And that's real. Maybe you look back and someone took advantage of you. Maybe a family member did something that's unmentionable. Maybe you've struggled with pornography or an eating disorder or whatever. Just maybe you have narcissistic tendencies, which basically is pride out of control. Often shame is a driver of that. So, we have self-imposed shame, and then we have shame heaped onto us by others.

Guilt is different than shame. **Guilt is, "I made a mistake, my bad."** That's guilt, a case of “the guilties”. **Shame is "I am a mistake"**. Shame is about identity; guilt is more about activity.

Yesterday, Lisa and I were flying back to Dallas. I was sitting behind her, and usually when I fly, I love to study. Pulled out the Dr. Dre Beats, put them on, had about a hundred pages of notes, research that I've done, and some other technology, had it spread out.

We were just sitting on the tarmac, minding our own business. And I thought, "I'm going to start writing." So I'm tweaking this message, put the tray table down, and this flight attendant walks up. She was very nice. She goes, "Sir, put the tray table up." "Okay." Put the tray table up. All right, so now I'm just writing on my lap and all the papers and things are spread out around me, journals, I mean, all sorts of paraphernalia.

Then she walks up to me again, she goes, "Sir", and this time I was snappy. I was rude. I go, "Yes?" And I said it so loud that people kind of looked back and even Lisa looked back and I'm like, "Uh-oh, I'm in trouble." She goes, "Would you please put your papers up? Because sometimes on takeoff they can fly all over the place." And I'm like, "Okay, okay." I was rude. So, we take off. Finally, we can put the tray tables down. I'm writing. And Lisa, after a while, looked at me and she goes, "Honey, you were rude." Well, the Holy Spirit had already told me that first, but isn't it true guys, wives can be like the Holy Spirit, can't they?

I'm sitting there with the case of “the guilties” because I didn't yell, it was just arrogant, wrong. So here she comes down the aisle, she's working hard, serving people, giving us the little snacks. Everything's little in a plane, little things to eat, a little bit of water, had a little bit of coffee, little stuff. And so, she walks past us a couple of times, and then unlike the third time, she goes, "Ed Young. Oh my gosh, I thought that was you. I got an ad on my Facebook about this new series you're doing on shame." "Oh, thank you. Thank you so much." So, she walks off and I'm like, "Man, I need to apologize. I need to apologize. I need to apologize." And I promise you, I would have done this even if she hadn't recognized me. But that heaped on more and more guilt. So finally, she walked by and I said, "Hey". Her name was Tamara. She's a very sweet girl, I said, "Tamara, I want to apologize. I was rude when you asked me to put up all of my papers and get everything tidy." She goes, "Oh, don't worry about it. No, I understand." "No, no, no, no, I was wrong." That's guilt. I had a case of “the guilties”.

The formula goes something like this. **Sin, guilt** and then it should lead to **repentance**. Our culture talks a lot about shame. We're pretty good at identifying it, yet we don't know how to process it. Guilt is, "I made a mistake, I sinned and because of that it should drive me to repentance." Repentance, and going the other direction, repentance, "God, I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?" And then also doing the work in a relationship, which most of the time needs to be carried out. And the beautiful thing, here's some good news. The devil is always about shame on you. God is always about shame off you.

When we seek forgiveness, when we repent, not only does God forgive my sin and your sin, but he also chooses to forget our sin and our shame. He's God, he knows everything. So, I might dredge up the past in my shame, and God's like, what are you talking about? I might talk about; I can't believe I committed that sin. What sin? If it's under the blood of Jesus, we're as white as snow before Him. That, in a nutshell, is what dealing with shame is all about.

But let me say guilt is a good thing. If we camp out on guilt, if we don't run to repentance, we live in shame, because guilt unchecked, will segue into shame. Not only did I make a mistake, not only did I mess up, but I am also a mistake.

Shame is the language of the enemy. The word shame in Hebrew is pronounced "bosch". Have you ever seen that series Bosch before? I watched a little bit of it, but finally, man, that guy became an F-bomb's best friend. I'm like, what? Every sentence he had to throw out an F-bomb. I was with a group of guys the other day. They were all married, they were just dropping F-bombs left and right. I go, man, you guys must not have sex very much because all you talk about is the F-bomb. "Hey man, I'm sorry. I know you're a pastor." I said, "Don't apologize to me, apologize to Thee". And I know these guys. I'm not Mr. confrontational with everybody. It's not like, "Oh my goodness, I won't be around Ed. He might call me up for blowing my nose". No, no, I know these guys and whatever.

The Greek term for shame is “entropy”. The second law of thermodynamics. If you have an object that does not have an outside force upon it, it'll crumble, it'll die, it'll turn inward. Shame, depression, et cetera is like that. If it doesn't have an outside force... hello, the Lord Jesus, repentance, forgiveness, then we're just going to crumble and die. That is what is happening in our culture today. We try to deal with shame ourselves, and we don't have the bandwidth to do so. This formula sin, guilt, guilt's good, guilt should take us to repentance. Yet most of us camp out on guilt. We grill guilt. Shame is, and this is gross, but it is true, is the sewage of sin. That's what it is. It's the residue of sin. The enemy traffics in shame.

This is just the introductory installment. It's going to get deeper and deeper, as we continue to unpack this. I want you to look at the genesis of shame. I want you to meet me in the Garden of Eden, because that's where shame, the first shame, really happened. I love what **Genesis 2:25** says, **“Adam and his wife were both naked,”** because I'm from the south, I grew up saying nekked.  **“…and they felt no…”** what? **“…shame.”**

I find that interesting. The writer of Genesis talks about a man and woman being naked, a husband and wife. Then He says, and they felt no shame. Why didn't He say, and they lived happily ever after? Why didn't He say they were really cool? Why didn't He say they were sexy. He said, they were naked, and they had no shame in their game.

Have you ever seen someone who was naked and unashamed? I have. I'll tell you the story. I met Lisa, and it's not about Lisa. I met, no, no, no, no, no. Let me... I met Lisa when I was 14 and a half. She was 15. It's not about that. I thought, “wow, there's no way this girl will like me.” And somehow, by God's grace, she liked me. So, one of the first dates, you see, we were “talking” young people. Have you ever heard of that? And then we “became official”. Probably, you've never heard that. So, we “became official”, and I invited her over to our house. Well, she lived 30 minutes away. So, dad drove me over to her house, picked her up, came all the way back, and my mother, God bless her, she's with Jesus now, cooked a meal.

Now, mama's a good cook. She really was. She cooked though, too small a portion. I was always hungry, my whole life. She should have worked for the airlines. Little, little chicken, little coffee. So, we had some chicken, fried chicken. I mean, I had the A game. I had the Jovan Musk Oil on. Some of you don't even know what that is. I had my best John Travolta disco shirt on. I had these jeans with designs. I mean, I was like... Nike shoes. I mean, you couldn't even get Nike shoes back then. I had those on. Dad's sitting there. I'm thinking, okay, dad's pretty cool, mom, all right. And then Ben... he's two years younger. Ben's hip, but my little brother, surprise, surprise, surprise, 12 years younger, he's there, too. Cliff.

So that can be problematic. He's asking Lisa all these questions. “You're not drinking your tea; you don't like the chicken?” I'm like, oh. So, we have dessert, little one scoop of ice cream, and my little brother Cliff leaves. I'm thinking, “good, he's gone”. Five minutes later, he comes through the kitchen buck, or you might say butt, naked. Starts taking laps around the table. Mom and dad are trying to chase him. He's going, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. He was naked and he had no shame. But I had a lot of shame, and I'm still dealing with that today. I just want you to know that.

Now Cliff's talented, speaking of him. He's a producer. He had a band back in the day. They sold millions of CDs called “Caedmon's Call”. You got to look them up. They're doing a reunion tour. It was his band. He's the lead singer. He produced a movie playing God. But he's doing this new show. I'll just brag on him a little bit. He's doing it on Amazon Prime. It's coming out Super Bowl week called “Faith, Family and Football”. I've seen excerpts. I think this will do incredibly well, but that's my brother... the Streaker, the nudist.

So, Adam and Eve were totally vulnerable before God and each other. That was God's original intent. Are you feeling me? God's original intent was no shame on the earthly game, zero. But enter the enemy, the serpent, the evil one. Shh. He's all about shame. That's right, the devil. Who's the devil? Well, read his LinkedIn. He was one of the lead angels in the heavenlies. He tried a kingdom coup d'etat that didn't work. He wanted to become God. They kicked him out to earth, along with the fallen angels who were now the demons. We see, he's done a pretty good job on planet Earth.

Just think about the evil that's out there. This kid that murdered those four students in Idaho. What? This other guy that sexually assaulted and took the life of this child. You think about child pornography, you think about the torture that's going on right now in China, you think about Christians in the Middle East who are being killed right now for their faith. How do you explain that? A damaged chromosome? Were their diapers put on too tight? Straight up evil.

Yesterday morning before we flew here, I was talking to a guy that owns this little coffee shop, tiny little hole in the wall place, and he's a former police officer, and he made me an espresso. He goes, "Ed, this is on the house." I go, "Oh, all right, cool." So, we're sitting there, drinking espresso, and he looked at me, he kind of got teary. He said, "Ed, what are we going to do in our culture? What are we going to do?" And he began to tell me just some of the evil things that he's seen and that he's processing. And man, he's struggling with the evil in the world.

So, the enemy comes in, and the enemy does something with Adam and Eve. He gets them to play some games with him. He's all about that. The enemy is a gamer. And don't you become a gamer, because he's brilliant at luring us into the shame game. The first game, and this is the part of the shame game, is fame. **THE FAME GAME**. Basically, I'll give you the cliff notes. The enemy said, "Hey, Adam and Eve, you can become like God." (**Genesis 3:1-5**)

There are, I'm trying to think about the number of species of trees. There are 73,300 species of trees, just for your knowledge. 7,200 varieties of apples. So, Adam and Eve, check this out, had 73,299 options, yet they go after the fruit on the tree, that one tree that God said, don't mess with it. Don't jack with the tree. They ate the fruit from the tree saying, "I'll run my own life. I'll be the God of my universe. I'll cut out the source. I'm the man. I'm the girl. I'm going to run the show." The fame game.

Sounds familiar. We have this tendency, don't we? I want to run my own life. I want to run and call the shots. I'm going to. I know what's best for me. I know what's best for my finances. I know what's best for my family. I know what's best for my marriage. I'm the man.

The devil is all about shame. When he was kicked out of heaven, what a shameful event. The demons are all about shame. The devil simply wants you and me to feel as shameful as he does. God does not move in shame. Only the enemy. The enemy's always saying, “shame on you, shame on you, shame on you. Can you believe that Ed? You don't deserve to speak. Do you remember what you did? Hey, you deserve this, and you messed up here and you're not that smart and you're a no count.” Or maybe you're a woman, “you're not curvy enough”, and maybe a guy, “you're not muscular enough. You're not rich enough, you're not big enough, you're not bad enough.”

Those thoughts are a loop from hell. Shame. Shame. So, you serve God, Adam and Eve. And because of that, because of their fame.

Remember that song by David Bowie, “Fame”. I'm the only one? Do you know what? I'll tell you something crazy. Before Bowie died, we think he visited our Dallas campus. No lie. We have great security cameras. We were in staff meeting and they were like, "Ed, David Bowie was at the Dallas campus." I'm like, "There's no way." I said, "Give me some evidence." They showed me the videos. I mean if that was not him, fame, he's talented. The fame game. This is the cycle of shame. Once we say, "I'm God," we're signing up for some serious, serious shame.

The next thing they did, so they played the fame game with the devil, and then they played the **LAME GAME.** They tried to cover their nakedness. The Bible says, **(Genesis 3:6-7)** "When they sinned, they realized they were naked." So, they made the first speedo and the first bikini. But here's the deal, God has x-ray vision. How pathetic, using fig leaves to cover yourself. We use fig leaves now, don't we, to cover ourselves. Instead of feeling those feelings of shame, we power up in rage. Instead of feeling and processing those feelings of shame, we starve ourselves or we become addicted to looks. Instead of feeling feelings of shame, if we have enough money, we just take trips all the time. We travel, because let's face it, trips or buying something gives us a fast, temporary relief from that pain, man.

The devil is talking, shame-ease. “You're an addict. You have a porn problem. You messed up in that relationship. You're divorced.” It goes on and on and on. It's a lame game. We try to cover it with all of these things, and they don't work.

Then we play the **BLAME GAME**. When God confronted them, they covered themselves and then they camouflage themselves, and then they begin to condemn one another. **(Genesis 3:8-13)** So, God discovers where they are.

It's like me playing hide and go seek with my grandkids. They're little and they cover their eyes like this, and because they can't see me, they think I can't see them. That's how we look when we try to hide from God. Is that sad? And then God's saying, "I want to love you and receive you. I want to forgive you. I want to cleanse you. I want this." And yet we're like, "Oh, no, no, I'm God. I can take care of it. I can cover my own tracks. The next deal will do it. The next person I take to bed will do it. The next high, the next." And then we're confronted, and we blame.

I think it's sad, but God confronts Adam, and Adam goes, “oh, this is my wife, She did it. It's her problem.” I'm thinking, “come on, Adam, you were right there, you should have stepped up. No, we're not eating the fruit. No, no, no. Put it back. Put it back.” He didn't do anything. Then God talks to Eve. Eve blames the serpent. That's probably the first marital fight we have in recorded history. Can you imagine? think about it. What were they talking about when they were lying in bed that night? Adam and Eve. Eve was like, “I cannot believe it, Adam. You threw me in the fire in front of the Lord.” That's my interpretation.

Fame. Lame. Blame. We blame and blame and blame and blame and blame. I'm going to put a big pause sign right there, because a lot of us live on pause, don't we? Right there in that cycle. We never escape and the devil loves it. Satan loves it. He wants us to feel and to experience the kind of shame that he does.

So, what do we do? I mean, is that it? God didn't leave them in a lurch. God initiated a relationship with them, right? God said, man, forget trying to make the speedo or the bikini. He covered them with coverings from an animal spilling its blood, foreshadowing the ultimate sacrifice on the cross that Jesus would make when His blood covers our sin in shame.

Let's draw another circle. So, fame, “I'm God.” Lame. “Oh, I'll cover my sin, I'll cover my shame. I know what to do. Thank you, God.” Then I'll blame others. “Oh, I'm not going to take responsibility.” So over here, instead of fame, what do we do? We should **humble** ourselves before the mighty hand of God. God, I humble myself before you. You are God, you've made me. I am your workmanship. I'm one of a kind. I'm unique. I'm forgivable. I'm lovable. I'm capable. That's some power.

When the devil starts talking, shame-ease. You tell him, “Man, shut up. All that's under the blood of Jesus.” Instead of the lame game, how about this one, **vulnerability**? We have to be vulnerable before God and also vulnerable with the right people. That's why I am for Christian counseling. That's why I'm for small groups. That's why I'm for Bible classes and Bible studies in the church, that's why I'm for getting to know one another. We can be vulnerable and real.

Think about all the masks we wore during COVID. We're still wearing those masks. Mask of shame. Humility, vulnerability, and here's a good one. **Responsibility**. We don't want to take responsibility anymore. We live in a victim culture, and especially when it comes to this stuff. Well, here's what I'm going to do with this one.

Instead of the pause, I'm going to put the play, because this is the loop, we need to play from heaven each and every day. “God, I humble myself before you. God, I'm vulnerable before you and others, and I take responsibility for this sin, guilt, shame, and repentance.” The good news is this, Jesus forgives and forgets. The **cross** was an instrument of shame. Think about it. Jesus took all of our shame, all of our sin, upon His life as He hung there, suspended between heaven and hell and death couldn't hold Him down. He burst forth with resurrection power. And that power is available to you and me in this sin-stained world. So, what's it going to be? Who are you going to listen to? Shame on you, or the words of Jesus? Shame off you.

Father, thank you for this message to my life and to every life here. And God, as we continue to go deeper into this topic, continue to reveal the things in all of our lives that we need to deal with, that we need to process, give us the courage to do what we need to do, to humble ourselves before you, to be vulnerable and take responsibility for this one and only life. We thank you, God, and I pray that if you've never, ever, ever responded to the gospel, that you would receive Jesus, that you would simply say, Lord Jesus, take control of my life. Forgive me. The moment you say that He's forgiving you and He's choosing to forget all of your sin. We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.