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Paper 2

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INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This insert contains the passage for Paper 2.

This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.

Pat Wingert and Gregory Koukl call for the return of shame in society.

- 1 Shame – that is something they have over in Japan, isn't it? America is about shamelessness. Here we have TV shows where people tell the world about their perverted sexual encounters... and the world yawns. And how many Americans now have their own experience with shamelessness? But just when shame seems dead, red faces have begun to shove themselves back into our consciousness. One belongs to us – it represents our anger over crime, welfare, politicians; the other is the red face we would like to see on the guilty – a face of remorse, even mortification. The very complaints about shame's absence testify to its new strength. 5
- 2 Properly calibrated, shame falls somewhere between mild embarrassment and cruel humiliation. The goal is not mere retribution but conformity – good conformity, the kind that makes it easier for people to form communities. Somewhere along the line, shame picked up a priggish, finger-wagging connotation that has lingered in our moral attics – we are immoral if we say that other people are immoral. It is as if we are desperately trying to make people who do bad things not feel very bad about what they have done. But now the pendulum seems to be swinging again, this time away from making people feel good when they do something bad. We are finding the moral fortitude to say with conviction, "Shame on you. You ought to be ashamed of yourself." But, to some, it still sounds rude and kind of awkward to even say that. 15
- 3 Many people who work with troubled youths consider the whole idea of shame a major step backward. Nowadays, it seems that the very last thing we would ever want any child to feel about anything at all is a sense of shame because making them feel ashamed is child abuse in the minds of many people. Certainly no one can seriously favour a return to the days when out-of-wedlock children were called bastards. Even the biggest advocates of shame agree that in many confrontational situations, the goal should be to let the other side back down without losing face or feeling ashamed. Yet, if the means of provoking shame are rooted in hardheaded compassion, the results can indeed be redemptive. Methods that show signs of success in changing one's behaviour depend not on imposing shame but imposing punishment – then giving the person a choice of feeling shame as a way back to the fold. 25
- 4 One challenge in instilling shame is that some sanctions go too far; others not far enough. In America, trying to shame 14-year-old criminals with harsh jail time often just backfires, but many states allow students thrown out of school for violence to feel no stigma at all. At the same time, certain states are bowing to public pressure and moving away from the brightly coloured license plates identifying convicted drunk drivers, which unquestionably help keep the roads safer. Similarly, requiring a father who is not paying child support to stand outside the courthouse with a sign stating "Need job to support children" may have been a throwback to olden days, but agencies that help people collect child support say that one of the most effective and little-used techniques available is for the wife to carry a sign denouncing her ex-husband outside his office. 30 35 40

- 5 There is another problem with shame: it is so much easier to judge others than it is to judge ourselves. Child abuse and drunk driving are easy, but single-parenthood and divorce strike close to home. Broad swaths of the middle class – not to mention role models at the top of entertainment, business, government, media – have themselves been divorced or neglected their children. However, a little hypocrisy does not disqualify them from participating in a moral recovery. If hypocrisy were a barrier, nothing would ever change – anywhere. But it does slow down the moral recovery process. Is it really plausible to say that the poor should get married when they have children but the rich do not have to? Can the media really talk about getting other people to act more responsibly when they do not change what they put on the screen? 45 50
- 6 We are now experiencing a loss of a sense of personal responsibility. More and more people are saying that they are not the ones who are really responsible and if they are not responsible, then there is no need to feel shame about what they are not responsible for. Think about the things that used to bring shame: cheating and dishonesty, unwed pregnancy, sexual perversion, divorce, being on welfare. Welfare was sometimes necessary of course, but it was something that people should get off of as soon as possible. Nowadays we go out of our way to act as if there is nothing marginally questionable about any of these things. Society needs to say that some actions are shameful and shame should be equally felt by both men and women. (The fathers in many cases of teen pregnancy should be guilty of statutory rape, but they have gone unprosecuted.) The goal here is to avoid ostracising the mother or her children through harsh stigma, but also to make clear exactly how society views the act. We need to move beyond stigmatising only teenage mothers toward an understanding of the terrible message sent by all of us when we minimise the importance of fathers. 55 60 65
- 7 Restoring shame requires being judgmental. That makes people uncomfortable. Yet, it is better to err on the side of self-righteousness than be immobilised by a fear of being considered prudish. Indeed, breaking through to a clearer sense of shame may require nothing short of intolerance, a word that has been unfairly associated with negative connotations in recent years. Shame means being intolerant of certain types of behaviour that are either illegal or simply destructive to the social contract. While people have been increasingly intolerant of behaviour like smoking in public, wearing fur or passing out condoms, the bigger subjects where the social consequences are higher – sex and the family – are still sometimes seen as off-limits to outside judgment. 70 75
- 8 In other words, restoring a sense of shame is only partly about today's miscreants. It is more about tomorrow's – the ones who might grow up in a world where the moral boundaries are clearer. And it is ultimately about the law-abiding as much as the lawbreakers – the moral compass of a nation. Shaming and punishing those who misbehave makes those who do not feel better. There is a catharsis. If the public believes that those who transgress will be called to account, its cynicism may ease a bit. That could make a little more finger-pointing worthwhile. 80

*Adapted from Newsweek, The Return of Shame, 5 February 1995, and
Stand to Reason, Shame, 1995*

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