

Coach House Church

BEACONS

COVERING UP

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Shame is something we all know well. Whether it's that we get a bit embarrassed because we've dripped food on ourselves or whether it's that we have something in our past that we hide away because we are so ashamed of something that we have done or that we have had done to us. It's the same for all of us. We all know this very well. It's part of our makeup. But how did it start? Is it good for us or should we get rid of it? And how?

This feeling started all the way back in the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had sinned and taken and eaten fruit from a tree that they were supposed to avoid eating. Let's read what happened from Genesis 3:6-10 - "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

So our shame, especially about our bodily functions and nakedness comes straight from the fall. Before that point Adam and Eve didn't realise there was anything to be ashamed of. After they sinned they suddenly began to feel shame. They felt the need to cover up what they had done, they felt spiritually naked, and that led to them also covering their bodies.

We feel ashamed when we have done something wrong. We feel ashamed when we have made a mistake or made a faux pas in a social situation.

So should we feel shame? As I've discussed in a previous beacon, guilt is a perfectly normal, logical reaction and is actually healthy for us to feel sometimes. But what about shame?

I would say since shame is a direct result of the fall it's something that we were not made to feel and from experience it can often be unhealthy. The difference between guilt and shame is that guilt is to do with what we've done and shame is to do with

who we are. Not that we should be walking around naked, I very much like wearing clothes, but shame can make us hide too much. Shame is something the devil uses to make us feel that we have to cover up and separate ourselves from the people around us. It makes us feel that we have to separate from God and isolate ourselves. It puts us in a prison so that we can't get out of our wrongdoing. We keep repeating the same sin over and over.

Now when we have done wrong this is the worst thing we could do. Alone, the devil can convince us more of his lies. He can convince us that we are the worst human being and we will never be free of sin and that no one would ever look at us the same if they only knew what was inside or what had happened. The sad thing about this is that we're all struggling with the same things and we could really help ourselves out if we talked to others more.

This means that we have to form strong trusting relationships with others and we need to really open up, but it also means that when someone comes to us with something they are ashamed of we need to treat them as we would want to be treated. We need to not push them to open up but allow them to and not treat them any differently because they have said something they are ashamed of. We need to create communities where the fear of being ostracised because we struggle with this or that is not there. We need to know how to love each other in this way. The point of sharing with each other and being accountable to each other is so that we can grow and learn and become better together because we all have failings. It's not so we can compare or judge one another. It's not about condemnation. We need to remember that when people open up to us.

James 5:16 says "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." This is a really hard thing for us to do. It is really difficult to tell someone else that we have done wrong, especially if it's something we are really ashamed of, but I believe it is important. It's important to know that God still loves you and to find that out through a person continuing to love you.

We need to find people we trust to do this. Some churches put people in accountability groups but I think it is much more effective if we find our own people to be in a group with. These should be people that you know want the best for you and won't go behind your back and share things. Opening up might not immediately make you feel better, but over time you will see the difference. You might feel weird for a time but then you will see that accountability is really powerful.

Accountability can be helpful in so many ways. It can deepen our relationship with God as we avoid temptations. Sin separates us from God and the quicker we can confess it and the more we can avoid it, the better.

It can help us see blind spots that we may not have seen otherwise. Other people, especially our closest friends, can see things as they really are, not how we pretend they are. They can see things that we can't see, like when something is stuck in your teeth. We sometimes need an outside unbiased point of view to help us reframe the situation.

It can deepen our friendships as we open up to others. We need others to encourage us on our walk with God and as we go through the struggles of life, so it's important we have strong friendships that we can rely on. Life can be really tough and having someone that will be there no matter what can help us get through this tough stuff. Opening up to trustworthy people can help us find people that will be this for us.

It can help us put things in perspective. Some of us are very good at putting too much on our plates. Good accountability can help us stop doing this or will come up with solutions when we do this time after time.

So we need to find people to be accountable to, people that will help us be all that God wants us to be. People that we can trust to be there for us. And we also need to be those people for others. Help and encourage others to live the life God has designed for them.



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