

## Love is greater than Shame – 9<sup>th</sup> July 2017 – Tino Todino

### Introduction

Today I want to talk about 2 things, love and shame.

We were created by God to be loved by Him. Since God is love, to be image bearers of God means that we bear the image of love and learn how to love God and love one another. This in essence is what constitutes the great commandments and is the motivation for the great commission.

So let me ask you, how is your quest for love and loving others going?

I'll let you know how you can find out. Look at your life. Right now, your actions that come out from your core beliefs are the reflection of how your love quest is going at this moment.

To bear the image of God means that we bear the image of love. If we do not or cannot love then something is broken, something is wrong. If we are still bound by fear, something is broken.

**There is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18**

### Shame

One of the most severe reasons we still live in fear is because of shame.

“Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love or belonging” – Brene Brown

How we experience shame will differ for each of us, but it usually comes as a result of:

1. Something said or done to us by a trusted figure or authority figure (parent, teacher, confidant, friend)
2. Something we have done wrong (usually to someone we have a connection with)

The voice of shame has different messages for everyone here. However, it has something in common for each of us too. It is a voice inside of us that wants to talk about everything that is wrong with us. The same voice convinces us that because there is something wrong with us that it makes us unworthy and unlovable; that's the voice of shame! It is the voice of the accuser, it is the voice of the enemy.

***The voice of guilt is somewhat different. The voice of guilt tells us we did something bad. It can be helpful at times to know we did something bad. However, the voice of shame tells us that we ARE bad. Voice of guilt is topical, the voice of shame attacks the core of our identity.***

So why do we listen to the voice of shame?

Because the voice seems to show us evidence. It gives what seem like valid reasons for our unworthiness – Let's say you got fired from your job, you are not a good parent, look at how your kids are turning out (or have turned out), you've gained weight, your house is a mess

etc, you are ugly, or it might be because you did that bad thing, or because you're not smart, etc.

Even if it is something that you were a victim of, e.g. abuse, it will lie to you and tell you that you did something to deserve it. (you were at least a little bit at fault)

**My testimony example of shame. Ellie and the slipper. Her face, her shock, her fear, my shame.**

Here's my take on what happened at the unspoken level in that exchange -

"Oh poo.....What have I done? I need glasses, how on earth could I have hit her like that? She is going to hate me! I'm the worst parent ever and I deserve to go to prison"

The voice of shame immediately piped up "How are you going to explain this to Rob and the church? Kid beater! You preach non-violence, what a hypocrite!"

Ellie thinks "Dad must hate me to be that mad. I must be a really bad person to deserve that"

The problem is no one is talking about any of this, because shame makes us hide and internalise it all. And so we give shame, the voice of the accuser a foothold from which to persecute and sow fear and rejection. And we have whole areas of our lives where we are just hiding. **Hiding and through self-isolation, alone.**

What I needed shortly after that moment was reconnection with my daughter who I love and adore. What she needed shortly after that moment was reconnection with her dad who loves and adores her. Why?

Because the only way to deal with shame is to bring it into the presence of transforming love through connection. A loving truthful connection will help take the shame away.

I confronted this shame and humbled myself, asked Ellie to forgive me and put this issue into the past. But for several weeks after, every time I picked up a slipper to put it on Ellie would feel fear.

For me, well we have had many weeks of calm, fun and great times, but on occasion the accuser comes back and says, "it seems like you are having fun with your kids right now, but remember that slipper....." Talk about a Joy Killer!

**It's then that I have to remind myself of Romans 8:1 "that there is therefore now No Condemnation for those that are in Christ Jesus"**

### **Beginning to deal with shame**

In order to begin the process of dealing with shame we have to feel it once again on the way to the cross to be healed by love. But feeling it again and talking about it isn't something we really want to do, because being that vulnerable exposes us to the risk of being rejected.

**The problem is, if we don't bring it to the light, if we don't bring it before someone we know and trust who will pray for us, listen for us, minister to us, then invariably we will turn to other things to try to numb the pain of the shame. Things like alcohol, drugs, shopping (or**

the pursuit of stuff), holidays (the pursuit of pleasure), pornography or other addictions are all efforts to deaden the pain. “if I can just get high enough, if I can just have more of, if I can just get away enough.....to make this feeling go away then I’ll be OK for a while. But it is simply a deception! Like all anaesthetics, they wear out and the pain returns before long.

Shame is like the carnival game “Whack-a-mole”. You numb one feeling of shame, and then the voice of shame pops up somewhere else and says “yea, but what about that other thing you did! Oh no!!!”

**Shame and transforming love cannot co-exist. The voice that says “I’m not worthy to be loved” cannot co-exist with the voice of the Holy Spirit that says “I love and accept you anyway”. We get to pick which voice we are going to listen to and believe.**

Truth spoken in love causes us to turn toward one another and look each other in the eye whilst shame causes us to turn away and hide.

*We see examples of shame in the scriptures too:*

Think of Adam and Eve. They ate, then they hid because they were ashamed. This didn’t take God by surprise, He already knew they had disobeyed but went after them anyway to restore the connection (relationship)

**We often confuse the voice of shame with the voice of the Holy Spirit. We think the Holy Spirit is there to convict us of our wrongdoings. That’s not right, He convicts us of the sin of not believing in the restorative work of Jesus to put things right. John 16 says the Holy Spirit convicts the world of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged. In other words He convicts us of His righteous judgement upon the one that accuses (And if the voice of shame is anything, it is the voice of accusation!) The voice of shame and its originator stand judged before our God!!!!**

God forgives but He doesn’t forget! Really?

**Hebrews 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”**

**Hebrews 10:17 then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”**

**This makes it possible for us to fully love God. To be fully loved means that we need to be fully known. God knows our rubbish, there are no secrets before Him. (7 secrets analogy)**

**Shame tries to annul love, but love is the only force that can obliterate shame.**

A person of any age that has never really felt loved is going to bear the scars of that. They will be difficult to know and difficult to love because they build protective walls, they isolate, they lash out. The irony of that is you try to love them and they lash out from behind their protective walls because they don’t know how to receive love. It’s a pattern that repeats until it is broken in Christ. There are no easy fixes, but there are some difficult fixes. For those Kingdom people looking to live a life of love in Christ, we can make a difference by doing some difficult things in this broken society and in this broken church.

Some ideas if you suffer from shame.

1) Name your Shame. Telling others is the last thing the shame voice wants us to do, but it is by far the most effective tool in extinguishing it. Whether it's with a pastor, friend or therapist tell your story and name your shame. This defuses its power over you. Jesus takes all of our shame, guilt, failures and mistakes. Shame says, "Go take them back". Not good advice, leave them with Him.

2) Come out of hiding. We all know the posture of shame: Head down, shoulders hunched over. We hide in our bodies. Come out of there! Let yourself be seen and known. Because unless we are really known, then we discount any love we do receive as being only because they don't really know us! Being known and loved is where healing happens.

Consider this quote:

"The more of me that is exposed to another, the greater will be my wounding when I am betrayed. We deeply long for connection, to be seen and known for who we are without rejection. But we are terrified of the vulnerability."

- Dr Curt Thompson

The lifelong game of hide and seek we are playing needs to stop, because the life we are called to is a life of being found.

3) Let Jesus love you. He came here looking for you not because you were awesome and perfect, but because you were the opposite! Because you were broken and in desperate need of love and healing He came to destroy the one who comes to steal, kill and destroy. Allow Jesus to enter in when He knocks and love and accept you!

If you are fortunate enough to already have received adequate love in your life, then this is your call to give that love to others who haven't been as fortunate. This was the most important transformative part of what God came to do, and therefore it's the most important task of the church. Your job is to \*love as an act of war\* against shame. This can be hard, because let's face it, some people are difficult to love. Nobody said war was easy. But these victims of shame are the ones that need it most.

### Further thoughts on Shame.

Shame causes us to hide, to be dishonest, to lie, to draw back, to isolate. Shame causes us to want to control to prevent hurt. It causes us to want to put on veneers that hide the real us, from each other and from God. It is the foreshadowing of rejection and abandonment – If you find out what is wrong with me you will want to turn your back on me and leave.

Shame destroys identity and confidence. It nags at us with a voice that seemingly never goes away, even though sometimes it seems quiet for a while. When we are at best, the voice of shame pipes up and reminds us of our failure, our fear, our dark side.

Shame is powered by the accuser (satan) and the accusing principle (Blame). It causes us to want to lash out because perhaps others feeling shame will make us feel better!. However, to love another properly means that we have gained the position of trust and have the knowledge and ability to destroy the other but choose not to but instead build up and encourage.

God wants us to be honest.

Friendship is based on trust and disclosure. The more I trust the more I disclose. The more I disclose the closer we become. The closer we become the more I disclose and so on and so forth. Where there is no disclosure there is often shame. Where shame is there is always fear. Fear of judgment, both by God and by others, that causes rejection.

Rick Warren says:

Genuine friendship is built on disclosure. What may appear as audacity God views as authenticity. God listens to the passionate words of his friends; he is bored with predictable, pious clichés. To be God's friend, you must be honest to God, sharing your true feeling, not what you think you ought to feel or say.

To instruct us in candid honesty, God gave us the book of Psalms — a worship manual, full of ranting, raving, doubts, fears, resentments, and deep passions combined with thanksgiving, praise, and statements of faith... When you read the emotional confessions of David and others, realize this is how God wants you to worship him — holding back nothing of what you feel. You can pray like David: "I pour out my complaints before him and tell him all my troubles. For I am overwhelmed" [Psalm 142:2-3 NLT].

## **Scriptures**

**1 Cor 13:13**

**And then abides faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is Love**

**Coll 3: 14**

**Above all clothe yourselves in love which binds everything together in perfect harmony**

**1 Peter 4:8**

**Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins**

**John 13:34-35**

**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."**

**1 John 4:19**

**We love Him because He first loved us.**

**1 John 4:8 Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love.**