

The Shame Game Sermon Series

"I think shame is lethal, I think shame is destructive. And I think we are swimming in it deep." Brene Brown.

Shame is defined as 'a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behaviour'. A mild description of what can be a crippling emotion!

"Women are quicker to feel humiliated than men, and adolescents feel shame more intensely than adults do. As a result, women and adolescents are more susceptible to the negative effects of shame, such as low self-esteem and depression". Scientific American 2019.

The over-arching story of the bible is the story of God's radical and loving solution to the ancient problem of human failure, shame and isolation. Genesis dives straight in as it tells the story of the catastrophic separation that results from human beings choosing independence from God. By the end of the third chapter of Genesis, two vulnerable human beings are hiding in the bushes, not wanting to be seen, known and exposed. Sound familiar? It's the ancient story of the human race.

February 5th | Hearing Voices

Genesis 3

Before everything else, human beings were made in the 'image of God' and for intimacy with God. In the Genesis account a 'serpent' embodying the enemy of God attempts to disrupt the intimate relationship between God and the image-bearers and one of the consequences of that disconnection is shame. The *enemy of our souls* wants to **argue about our identity, significance and purpose, and also about the nature of God**. These are the conflicts that play out over and over in our lives.

Genesis 3 1- 24

The voices (Genesis 3 : 1-6) What are the nature and context of the offers the serpent makes to Eve? ("Did God really say...") What other voices influence our understanding of ourselves, our value, our purpose and personal power?

What are the immediate consequences of listening to and following these voices? (Genesis 6-10). Brene Brown's TED talk on vulnerability and shame is the most watched TED talk - why is this?

Living according to God's voice (Genesis 3: 8-9) What is God's first question? What does this tell us about God? What examples in scripture show the God who seeks the lost, and meets people in their shame?

What does God's voice sound like? How can we confidently represent God's voice of kindness, compassion, challenge and call into the myriad voices of our culture?

Prayer/Ministry time

What are some of our belief about our worth and around our mistakes and weaknesses? **Do we need to forgive** those who's voices have defined us over the years and drawn us down into shame? Listen to God for prophetic words that speak the truth about one another.

Resources: Brene Brown books on Shame and Vulnerability

WholeMinds.org.uk is the Woodlands Church Family mental and emotional health resource. Do look at this as a group and consider how you could use it.



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Wholeness starts on February 21st. Please encourage people to [sign up on website](#). You could attend as a group and pray together?

February 19th | No more hiding

Genesis 3, Luke 8 : 43-38, John 4

Most of us have experienced the desire to cover up mistakes and failures, or the desire to make ourselves look better than we really are. Many of us hide behind masks, shyness, false identities to avoid being really seen, we fear that as we are, "naked", we are not really enough. What are we really afraid of? The bible teaches us that hiding and covering up don't solve the problem of shame, only God can do that - and it's a radical solution.

What sends Adam into hiding? (V 9-11) No one needs to teach us to feel vulnerable and ashamed. What are the various forms this emotion can take? What are you familiar with? Talk about shame and how it affects us.

Covering up v 8: What masks do we wear and why do we wear them? What do we sometimes 'hook' our identity onto and what happens when these fail us?

Interrupting the cycles of shame: In John 4 Jesus meets a woman with a 'checkered history' at a well, showing her empathy and radical acceptance. He interrupts the cycle of shame. What examples have you seen of God doing this in people's lives? How can prophetic insights show people God's acceptance and help them journey out of shame?

God's solution: Gen 3 V21: What is the difference between us covering ourselves in shame, and God covering us? What does this all point to in the arc of the biblical story

How is the church called to demonstrate this radical love acceptance and ministry of healing to those who's lives are defined by shame? How can being part of home groups and other groups encourage opens and vulnerability, interrupting the cycles of shame in people's lives?

Prayer and ministry time

Read Psalm 139 together. Discuss the picture of God that is revealed in this Psalm. What stand out to you?

"Shame begins to disappear when it is shared in a safe place" (Wholeminds) Discuss why this is. What is your experience of finding love and acceptance that overcomes fear?

Pray together using the prayer at the end of Psalm 139.

February 26th | Where are you?

Genesis 3, 2 Corinthians 12; 9-10, Psalm 34: 4-5, Hebrews 4: 12-16

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8: 38

The journey of overcoming shame feels fraught with risk and for all of us, there are challenges around living a truly authentic life. The impostor syndrome is alive and well in the church! God's love, acceptance and

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healing are exactly what people who live with shame need to know, but they also need to know that the church is a place where this stuff can be worked out in family life, without having to keep up appearances!

God calls: Genesis 3 v 8-9: God asks Adam and Eve "where are you?", and perhaps he asks that same question of each one of us. How do we find out who we really are? **Genesis 1** describes the blueprint for human life and connection to God but sometimes the call comes in the middle of a time of failure.

Contested ground: Gen 3: v 4-5: "you won't die, your eyes will be opened" What does it mean to have our identity confirmed and affirmed by God in a culture that seems to offer enlightenment around identity but is so conflicted about it?

Authentic lives Genesis 3 v 20-24 "Eve: the mother of all the living". What is the kind of life on offer? What does it mean to be a truly authentic person, at peace with ourselves, growing in confidence and leading a fruitful life?

Prayer and Ministry Time

Overcoming the power of shame is part of the churches mission to the world. Tell some stories. How have you found knowing Jesus is helping you to become the best version of yourself? What are the battles you have faced and how has church community helped or hindered with that?

"Vulnerability is not winning or losing; it's having the courage to show up and be seen when we have no control over the outcome. Vulnerability is not weakness; it's our greatest measure of courage." Brene Brown.

*Resources - WholeMinds section on shame and various articles/stories on identity.
Brene Brown books and articles on vulnerability and shame.*

Thank you for the invaluable work you do as mid week church leaders in supporting people and helping them grow. There are immense pressures on people's mental and emotional health and the moment and we know it can be challenging being on the frontline! We are praying that you will experience the reward of God's peace and presence in your own lives as you serve him.

