

UNASHAMED



JADE LEE

Women of the Bible Series

Introduction

This series will help women identify Godly Characteristics by taking a deeper look at various Women of the Bible such as:

Esther
Deborah
Ruth, and
Many More.

Whether these women were Godly or unfaithful, we can learn valuable lessons, guiding us into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Each one of these women's lives brought different challenges and each woman responded in unique ways. This is why it is very easy to identify with at least one or more of the women of the Bible.

From prostitutes to prayer warriors, each woman is used to teach us GOD's unconditional love for us, our appropriate response to GOD's love, the heartaches of disobedience to GOD and the characteristics that embody Christlikeness.

Enjoy learning about women you may have never studied deeply or revisit the lives of women you have heard of for many years. Take the time to answer the Life Application Questions at the end of each chapter. Ask GOD to show you areas He wants you to experience His love or maturity on another level.

Women of the Bible: Unashamed is Part Six of this Series.

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For My Bold Sister, Lauren.

You Are Unashamed.

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CHAPTER ONE

In the Beginning

“I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” Genesis 3:10¹

Highlighted Women: Eve

If you have ever begun a project or an assignment that did not turn out the way you expected, this experience may have been accompanied with a deep sense of failure and shame. Perhaps your professor, boss or loved one was longing to see results that you simply did not produce. It's time to give them a report in the form of a final product, but all you have is a rough draft or an incomplete project. Now you are skirting around reality, seeking out a creative response to their anticipated expectation. There are two options before you: complete ignorance (also known as avoidance) or confession.

The latter is usually the most self-denying choice; you don't want to come across as incompetent, lazy nor ignorant. But the moment has arrived and acknowledging the feeling of defeat, vehemently gripping your beating heart is a seemingly unfeasible charge. Truth is at the core of your heart's reality and it is the only real guide to learning from this troubling situation. Unfortunately, we do not always choose truth. Instead, we veer on the less courageous route falling into a valley like syndrome, composed of fear, insecurity, doubt, excuses and blame.

Accepting the truth, *I did not finish what I started due to poor choices or a lack of effort; I did not exert by best effort so here I am reaping the consequences*, is a very bold act of bravery. No matter the response, I will take responsibility for my actions. I will not make excuses and I will hold my head up, knowing that tomorrow will bring another chance. There are valuable lessons to learn in this situation; I do not have to cave into a trough of hopelessness. Shame may greet the woman who has dropped her standards to a locale outside of her already set boundaries, but her determination to persist uninterrupted is key to forthcoming victory.

¹ NKJV

Now that your mind is full of memories consisting of personal past challenges, be encouraged as you make a journey with me; we will center our interest on the most stunning woman ever in existence. She is also the mother of all creation. Our very survival as a human race is bent on the novelty of this Mother of all Living, Eve. She was born into perfection and astonishing heavenliness. The world itself was beyond a beauty we could imagine, everything was brand new. Similar to the feeling we all might expect from walking into a gorgeous boutique, seeing the gown of our dreams as waves of exhilarating emotion overtake our countenance. We are in love! This must have been a flash of the emotion Adam felt when his eyes first beheld her- a woman with no blemish or semblance of the degeneration of sin. She was absolutely perfect- hair, nails, skin complexion, attitude, mindset and spirituality. She was the perfect other half and he was drawn to her beauty.

It was not good for Adam to be alone and here he was finally with another he could share the remainder of his life with, taking dominion over the entire world. Everything belonged to them and they were happily in love, until... Most of us know how the story continues. Perfection is blemished by one choice. The outcome of this decision has left the collective and individual world in a topsy-turvy state. Thousands of years later we are persisting in seeking the cure for world-wide epidemics and the ending of wars. We are praying for answers to the personal yet common struggles of unforgiveness, offense, hatred and split relationships.

Out of perfection, into a wrestling world of grief, Adam and Eve had to find a way to deal with their previous decisions, scrambling to overcome shame. In that light, it is much easier to get up from our own imperfections, knowing that the world will continue on- both personal and corporate advancements will be accomplished if we do not give up prematurely. Deciding to be persistent is key to riding above the storms of life. As the world waited an answer to the Adam and Eve problem, this is how it overcame- continual waiting, faith and a firm persistence.

Beauty, Perfection, Wisdom- they were all with Eve in the Garden, but she lost sight of one needed quality- knowing the heart of GOD. His heart was evident through His actions, which can be seen in everything He undertook thus far:

In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. (Genesis 1:1-2, KJV)

In the very beginning of everything GOD began to create a place for Adam and Eve to exist and enjoy. He was making a home for His children and He was the very first “happily ever after” novelist. As He was creating, He was also solving a major problem: A Lack of Form, Emptiness and Darkness. This is the extent He went to before even making humanity; He wanted to ensure that all was well. They were not born into a messy, empty, dark world. He was preparing a place for them as His Son would do for us thousands of years later (John 14:2).

Because GOD was and is good, He made everything good:

And GOD called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas: **and GOD saw that it was good.** (Genesis 1:10, KJV, Bold emphasis added)

And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: **and GOD saw that it was good.** (Genesis 1:12, KJV, Bold emphasis added)

And GOD made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also...to divide the light from the darkness: **and GOD saw that it was good.** (Genesis 1:18, KJV, Bold Emphasis Added)

And GOD created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: **and GOD saw that it was good.** (Genesis 1:21, KJV, Bold Emphasis Added)

And GOD made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: **and GOD saw that it was good.** (Genesis 1:25, KJV, Bold Emphasis Added)

And GOD saw every thing that He had made, **and, behold, it was very good.** And the evening and morning were the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31, KJV, Bold Emphasis Added)

GOD did more than create. He made and then He “saw”. This was like a double take, a sort of final draft edit to His rough draft. Unlike humans, He only needed one draft to make it perfect. This review of creation appears to reveal a deep type of care originating from GOD’s heart. He was not rushing through His creation; instead, He was very intent on the intricacies, looking back and admiring what He had made. We are all familiar with this phenomenon as mini creators. We create and find enjoyment in what we “see” after it is complete. There is a thrill in sharing this excitement with others, so they can then “see” and share with more viewers.

GOD did not see one time- He kept looking back to view what He created. If you are an artist or creative type, you know exactly what type of *looking back* this is describing. It’s that second look you do after you create; it’s never enough to simply make something and then leave it as is- you practically have to be pulled away from your project to stop making edits. As a writer and someone who loves beauty, I am constantly making changes- to the furniture in my house, the structure of a sentence and even my hairstyles or clothing style. When GOD created, He looked back at His creation to enjoy it; like sitting in your living room after finally getting it exactly the way you want it- you don’t just like it, you love it! I would imagine this is how GOD felt when He created each aspect of the world, including man and woman.

The Hebrew word for “saw” in the above references is, ra’ah, the same word used in Genesis 2:19, when GOD brought “every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air...to Adam” (Genesis 2:19, KJV). Adam was expected to *see* the animals, meaning to “advise (his self), appear, approve, behold...consider, discern, (make to) enjoy” in the Hebrew (Strong’s, Dictionary of the Hebrew Bible, 106). Adam was doing more than quickly glancing at these animals. He was authoritatively discerning what names he should give to each animal and bird. This was a very important task, not without feeling, but full of enjoyment. It is also the first instance we this word “saw” used in the context of humanity rather than GOD.

Not only did GOD see, but He saw that *it was good*. The very first creation He described as “good” was Light. A few of the definitions for the Hebrew word “good” are “beautiful,” “joyful,” and “pleasant.”² When GOD made light He looked at it and enjoyed its aesthetic properties. He knew it would bring the same sense of joy, creating a pleasant experience in our everyday lives. To this day, we are still fascinated with light. We love chandeliers, pendant lights and skylights adorn our kitchen ceilings, highlighting the attraction of the warm sun flowing into our home. Light can change an entire atmosphere from gloomy into happy or pleasant. We eventually realized what GOD meant when He said light was good and began to mimic this feature with the modern day light bulb. We even created different shades reflecting the varying times of day and matching with the colors of creation.

Every modern day interior decorating website, magazine or social media post loudly exclaims, *We agree with you GOD, Your creation is GOOD! We love Your warm and cool colors displayed in perfect harmony, Your daily heavenly paintings appearing in the sky and we adorn our homes with the skins of animals in varying color patterns. You are GOOD!* This is what makes a house a home- the blend of what we have found most agreeable in His creation. We then bring all those pleasant colors indoors so we can enjoy it daily. His creation literally connects with our own desires, preferences and personality.

The word *ra'ah* is subsequently used to describe the instance Eve “saw” the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in a different light. Remember, when GOD *saw* this was a look of *approval* and blessing³. Until this point all is *good*, but something in Eve’s perspective of GOD’s creation and heart towards her began to shift. GOD spoke to Adam about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil before Eve was created, telling Adam not to eat of it or he would die. Although she knew GOD’s desire concerning this tree, here she was standing right next to it- facing temptation:

¹Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD GOD had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath GOD said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? ²And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: ³But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, GOD hath said, **Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die** (Genesis 3:1-3, KJV).

Either Eve did not hear GOD’s message correctly when Adam translated what GOD told him or she was adding extra instructions to GOD’s command- probably the latter considering that Adam was perfect. He had no memory issues at this point in time. GOD’s original instruction to Adam is provided in Genesis 2:16-17:

¹⁶And the LORD GOD commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**

² Strong’s #2896. *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*

³ Strong’s #7200. *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.*

It is pretty evident in GOD's instruction that He did not want Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But GOD never told them they could not touch it; Eve's perspective was beginning to be influenced by the serpent's subtle influence. He was on a mission to present GOD as too harsh and demanding. He wanted Eve to begin thinking she was missing out on true life, she was being mistreated. The serpent commended this convincing by asking Eve if she could eat of *every* tree of the garden. At this point, we can presume what Eve's mind may have been pondering, *Why didn't GOD allow me to eat of every tree? Was He trying to keep something from me? Is GOD as good as He says He is?* She is clearly negatively influenced by the time she mentions not being able to touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The plot thickens. Now that the serpent has lured Eve in, he can tell a bold face lie, *Ye shall not surely die...* This was in direct conflict with GOD's previous message: *thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* (Genesis 2:17). Eve had to make a choice whether she would believe GOD or the serpent and because of her internal desire for the fruit, she chose the serpent. He continued to connive her with more accusations saying, "For GOD doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:5, KJV).

It is after this battle of the mind sort of tug-of-war struggle that Eve is pulled completely to the enemy's side. She then *sees* differently. The same exact word used to describe GOD's sight when He took a second look at His creation, proclaiming its goodness is now used to describe Eve's viewpoint of the tree. She has another *ra'ah* moment. Something was created in her heart, recreating her original perspective. Taking another look, she sees the tree as "good for food":

And when **the woman saw that the tree was good for food**, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Genesis 3:6, KJV)

Eve was now standing next to the same tree she once saw as not good for food and saw it as beautiful, pleasant, enjoyable...she 'discerned' that it was not bad after all, but she was wrong. Her husband was with her the entire time, watching this interaction falling into the saw of satan. His heart was being turned away from the LORD, although he had personally received the instruction from GOD. They were both now eating the fruit from the tree.

These conversations and self-talk are a commonality we all share, having to decide whether GOD is really for us or against us in creating boundaries. When we see Him as for us our actions follow and we choose obedience. When we see Him as against us, unfortunately we act out in rebellion to His command. This process can be avoided by simply fleeing from the temptation when it comes or resisting the devil until he flees. We can overcome these thoughts by keeping GOD's Word at the forefront of our minds, wearing the full armor of GOD.

Immediately Adam and Eve experience a very dismal sensation. This word 'sensation' can be defined as 'the power or process of receiving conscious sense impressions through direct stimulation of the bodily organism' or 'an immediate reaction to external stimulation of a sense

organ; conscious feeling or sense impression.’⁴ When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life were all in full effect.⁵ They both wanted more than what they had (pride of life), saw the fruit with lust (lust of the eyes) and operated in uncontrolled emotions (lust of the flesh). Now they were in direct contact with the forbidden fruit, tasting it through the sensory of the mouth. And there was a direct reaction to this sense being activated- the five letter word, Shame.

Shame has a way of producing a sort of death to our emotional life. We suddenly want to hide, disappear, no longer exist to the remainder of the world. We don’t want GOD to see us, our friends to notice us, or our enemies to behold our imperfections. This emotion is full of negativity and fear. When we think about a time we felt ashamed, we do not want to every return to the feeling in that moment. It is something we simply want to go away; now imagine never having felt a negative emotion. This had to be a striking blow to Adam and Eve. The process of choosing to eat the fruit was gradual, but the shift into this world of negativity was immediate. It had to be as striking to the bodily earth of Adam and Eve’s flesh as much as the earth, once covered in darkness, was shocked when light suddenly erupted its previous reality.

Now Adam and Eve were in a mess of confusion. How do we hide this great sin now that we know we are wrong? It’s amazing how the process of temptation tends to have a feeling of right to it, but after falling completely into it, we see so clearly how wrong it was; this revelation caused the world’s first couple to hide from GOD. They began to try to cover their nakedness, which previously was not even a consideration. They begin to see their own bodies as “bad,” trying to hide what GOD called “very good,” and “made after His own image.” They confused their behavior with their identity.

Not only were they covered in their own fig leaves, but when they heard “the voice of the LORD GOD walking in the garden in the cool of the day” they now hid behind more trees.⁶ This is the first time man believed that he could hide from GOD or even wanted to hide from GOD. GOD only wanted to spend quality time with them, He didn’t want to punish nor condemn them; if only they could see His gentle, forgiving love. It must have broken His heart when he called out to Adam, asking, “Where art thou?” Reading these words, I can feel the emotions of a saddened heart behind a well framed question. *Where are you? Why are you hiding from Me? Why don’t you want to be with me?*

GOD knows the feelings of rejection we oftentimes face when our nearest ones deny us of their presence. It never feels good when others don’t want to spend time with you, especially when they begin to ignore or hide from you. But GOD continues to speak with Adam, longing to bridge the gap He felt between them- GOD wanted to give Adam a chance to be honest. He forgave Adam with much grace, choosing to listen before accusing. This was Adam’s second chance.

⁴ Webster’s New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition

⁵ 1 John 1:9

⁶ Genesis 3:8, KJV

Adam then responds that He heard GOD's voice and was afraid. This is a tell-tale sign that something was desperately wrong. Whenever our immediate response to GOD's voice is fear, we know that we have a major problem perspective wise. Somewhere we have believed the falsehood that GOD does not like us, He has a problem with us or will not forgive our wrong choices. In our desperation for these feelings to be removed, we begin searching for other ways to deal with this sin-sickness. He is really the only answer and He wants to help cover our sin properly.

Soon thereafter, shame leads to blame. When asked how he knew he was naked and if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam hid again- instead of telling the truth. Blame was the next fig leaf fashion design of humanity. Adam said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." It was now Eve's fault, although Adam was given the first instruction, was with Eve the entire time and could have pulled her away from the tree. Something in Adam wanted to eat of the fruit as much as Eve.

The motivation behind Adam's blame was fear. He allowed fear to grip his heart, at the core of his shame. He was afraid of what GOD's response would be, having fell into the lie that GOD does not have their best interest in mind. All of this convincing from the serpent had gripped his entire perspective, like a domino effect, influencing his future decisions. He was tainted with a really bad case of deception.

The woman in turn blames the serpent when she is asked, "What is this that *thou* hast done?"⁷ GOD was not asking the woman about the serpent. He was asking her about her own behavior. But she was so gripped in fear, believing GOD was out to catch her in her sin, that she begin to turn to another fig leaf. This time it was the serpent's beguiling.

The LORD then begins to reveal the consequences of these behaviors, starting with the serpent, then the woman, then Adam. He begins questioning Adam, the first one He gave the instruction to and head of the household. This displays the order of GOD. Then He questions the second in command, Eve. When sharing the consequences, He starts with the serpent (who began this entire disarray), then to Eve (who ate the fruit first) and finally Adam (who ate the fruit last). This displays the justice of GOD.

GOD was fair in the midst of a very difficult situation. It was heartbreaking on all sides. This is the fallout of sin- broken relationships. We've all had our share of brokenness due to past mistakes but this can be restored through the redemption of Jesus Christ (this will be explored in more detail later). GOD shared the consequences with each party involved. The serpent was doomed to becoming the lowest level creature on the planet earth. He was cursed worse than any other animal and would now have to sliver on his belly eating dust.

Another outcome was division between the woman and the serpent. Before the fall, woman was not frightened nor appalled at the sight of a serpent. Today, the serpent is known for its poison; many people do not want to have anything to do with a snake. In fact, there are entire companies primarily focusing on snake removal. The serpent's reputation has been tainted and seen by

⁷ Italics added, Genesis 3:13, KJV

many as detestable. Being in close proximity to a snake like Eve was is definitely not on many of our minds- although there are some who venture out into this type of activity.

Then there was Eve. She would now give childbirth with much pain; her labor would now be very difficult. And her husband would “rule over” her.⁸ To this day, women are continuing to give birth in great pain. This all stems back to the moment of sin in Eve’s life, but every curse is now broken through the redemption of Jesus Christ.

Finally, Adam would endure through hard labor. He would have the responsibility of trying to break up fallow ground, mirroring the hardness of his heart when he ate the forbidden fruit. This could have been avoided by listening to the voice of GOD in preceding his wife’s voice. This continues to be a downfall of men today; we all err in the grounds of negative consequences when we fail to listen to GOD’s voice over others- this is in essence, idolatry. GOD told Adam, “Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life” (Genesis 3:17, KJV).

Perhaps GOD didn’t want Adam and Eve to be involved in the knowledge of evil. He only wanted them to know about good from the onset; they were made in His image, hence His own focus on Good. He didn’t even want evil in His presence. There was only the fullness of joy and pleasures in His presence. He is a very positive GOD. This is very optimistic rather than pessimistic. GOD knows that when we think about evil, our actions become bad and we see badness in our relationships (Philippians 4:8).

Shame is an emotion stemming from negative thought patterns extending to how we think about GOD, ourselves, our closest ones and others. All of these relationships were effected when Adam and Eve partook in the forbidden fruit. They no longer thought positively about GOD, themselves as individuals, their unity as a couple or their future. Instead, a downward spiral was beginning to occur in their mental stability. Originally, they were very sharp, possessing a clarity of mind with no thought of the possibility of evil happenings. GOD placed them in a position of great authority and dominion. Now they were under a very gloomy presence. We can go back to that positive, overcoming state of mind as we learn to trust in GOD’s goodness once again.

In fact, GOD gives us a new beginning throughout the Scriptures, revealing His lovingkindness. He states that ‘as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.’⁹ He also promises that ‘if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’¹⁰ We see a foreshadowing of this regeneration a moment after dire outcomes are announced. This reality begins to bring perspective to our hearts and minds as we press beyond shame into identity:

⁸ Genesis 3:16

⁹ Psalm 103:12, NIV

¹⁰ 1 John 1:9, KJV

*And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.*¹¹

In the midst of great pain, Adam is literally naming his wife. He is both operating in authoritative obedience and imparting identity into Eve. This had to bring a great sense of encouragement to his wife's heart. Although times would not be as easy now that the fall had occurred, their Adam and Eve's identity remained the same. Contrary to Adam's previous perception (that his nakedness- who he was) was bad; through this glimpse of hope, we learn that their purpose would still remain. Eve was *the mother of all living*.

Many times, we struggle with this concept of identity in the cloud of shame surrounding our hearts. Instead of realizing that GOD forgives us and we can move on, we get trapped in this gripping emotion. The knowledge of our failure, especially regarding those we love most (such as our children our spouse) can be very difficult. We can begin to merge our mistakes with our identity through thoughts like, *I am a horrible mom, I am no longer fit to be a father, I can never be the wife I am supposed to be after this mistake*. GOD was able to see beyond Adam and Eve's shortcomings to the fact that they were still His children. Their purpose would continue.

Eve never lost her identity, calling, assignment nor mantle. She would still continue in her destiny as the Mother of All Living. This was a tremendous ray of hope and blessing. Although the serpent was cursed, GOD continued to release blessing on His children. She would have many days of joy, celebration and excitement as she saw the very first child birthed, her children married, enjoying the innumerable delights of life.

GOD would even provide this couple with the covering they now desperately needed due to sin. He would replace their substandard fig leaves with fur coats made from animal skins. This would prove to be much warmer and provide a substantially better cloaking. GOD would provide a sacrifice for their shame to be removed and hidden from their perspective. This foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of GOD, is a beautiful truth we can all depend on as we fall short in meaningful relationships.

Eve's identity and calling would actually birth her Deliverer. Through her lineage she would become the mother of all living, including the Savior of the World. Eve would birth the seed, Jesus Christ:

*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*¹²

If stopping at the point of sin or the consequences of sin, we would all be disappointed and left in a state of hopelessness. Yet, we see the goodness of GOD's sovereignty operating wonderfully as Eve is awarded the ability to see her own offspring bruise the head of the enemy. GOD seemed to make a direct judgment on the serpent due to deceiving Eve's mind. His head would now be eternally bruised. There would forever be a separation between the serpent and the woman in response to the serpent's desire to separate Eve from her GOD (attempting to take the intimate place of GOD in her heart)...

¹¹ Genesis 3:20, KJV

¹² Genesis 3:15, KJV

UNASHAMED

Chapter One (Eve)

Last year we reviewed the very first woman in the Bible, Eve, the Mother of all Living. We saw Eve's fall in the Garden and examined how this could have produced deep shame in her heart. Then we compared that to when we, as women, fall into a shameful sin. Please review this lesson as a small group and discuss the Life Reflection Questions below.

Life Reflections:

Read Genesis Chapter 3 in entirety then answer the following questions.

1. Look back at Genesis 2:15-17. What was GOD's original instruction to Adam and Eve? How did Eve change this instruction in Genesis 3:3?

2. Describe a situation in your own life in which you were tempted and fell into a lie or sin. What was your faulty concept regarding GOD's love for you in the midst of that situation (and after the situation).

3. In reading this passage, what can you learn about GOD's heart for you when you fall into sin or listen to ungodly concepts? How does this touch your heart in a personal way?

4. Eve's identity and calling is revealed in Genesis 3:20 (after the fall). What does this teach you about GOD's perspective of us after we fall into sin?

This Week's Scripture Focus: Genesis Chapters 1-3. Please read in your personal prayer time and journal insight regarding the process of sin as shame enters a woman's heart.

Unashamed Overview:

This brief outline will help guide you through personal and small group Bible study as you discover how to live a life free of shame.

The Wisdom- Genesis 2:15-17

The Creation of Eve- Genesis 2:21-24

Unashamed- Genesis 2:25

Conversations & Self-Talk?- Genesis 3:1-7

The Fruit of Shame- Genesis 3:8

Fear- Genesis 3:10-11

Blame- Genesis 3:12-13

Consequences- Genesis 3:14-19, 22-24

The Beginning- Genesis 3:20 (Eve never lost her identity, calling, assignment or mantle)

Covering- Genesis 3:21

Life Reflections:

Read Genesis Chapter 3 in entirety then answer the following questions.

CHAPTER TWO

Prostitutes

“But Jesus stopped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.”
John 8:6¹³

Intro

The Forgiven Adulteress

Many of us are all too familiar with what we have done wrong, how GOD feels about our sins and what we need to do to be pleasing in His sight. But it may be very hard to see GOD’s love for us in the midst of our own struggles. We know about the sin of adultery, sexual immorality, pornography and prostitution is looked down on in our society. These acts are all very destructive to both individuals and family units. Therefore, we may not feel the need to ever question GOD’s perspective on sins like murder, thievery and adultery. It may seem unnecessary and already quite obvious.

The answer is that these people are wrong, they deserve to be punished and thrown into jail. Recently, while driving down a major street it was hard not to see the huge billboard advertising a man representing all thieves in America. The sign said to catch him and throw him and lock him away. He was literally behind bars in the picture.

My heart dropped as I watched this man, thinking about the years he would spend hidden away in a cell. A very strange response began to well up inside of me- I felt mercy, compassion and

¹³ NKJV

love for the prisoner. This is such an unusual perspective that it may not be accepted if verbalized to others due to the stigma of that type of sin.

Whereas, other sins may be more culturally accepted like unforgiveness or lying. If someone hurts you bad enough, you have the right not to forgive them. If the need arises it's okay to tell a "white lie". But then there are the unforgiveable sins because of the damage we can see when they are committed.

There was a woman in the Bible very similar to the man behind bars in the ad. His sentence would be years in jail but hers would be death. She had committed the sin of adultery which would result in stoning.

Perhaps it was a beautiful, clear mountainous day when Jesus was teaching on the Mount of Olives. This was a mountain top experience to the max. Many people flocked to hear His wisdom, gleaning on every word that came out of His mouth. Early in the morning, He sat down in the temple teaching when the meeting was suddenly interrupted.

A group of religious leaders, the Scribes and Pharisees, sat a woman right in the middle where Jesus was teaching, in front of all the listeners. Then they began to accuse her publically saying, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do you say?"

Jesus, not belonging to one of the major religious groups was sitting alone ministering to the people's needs. He did not ask for them to address Him or bring this problem to Him and it was not brought to His attention because of a genuine question. They were trying to find a way to accuse not only this lady, but Jesus as well.

When they asked for Jesus' opinion, He did not respond.

Instead, He did something that would change our understanding of adultery and sin forever. He completely ignored the woman's accusers.

This is a revolutionary concept when it truly enters into our hearts. Jesus, the Son of GOD, the Sinless and Perfect One kept on moving "as though He did not hear."¹⁴ He moved on from this sin that was literally illegal- like stealing or murder- and pretended as if He did not even hear the religious rulers accusing her.

It would be like walking into a church meeting of pastors trying to figure out how to deal with the sin of members in their congregation and Jesus is sitting back with a relaxed disposition as if it doesn't even matter.

He was not shocked, disappointed or angry with the woman's sin. He was very at peace even in the midst of knowing everything about her. He knew her strengths, weaknesses, failures and accomplishments. He knew what she did and why she did it, even before these leaders brought the issue to Him.

¹⁴ John 8:6, NKJV

She was surely feeling accused, beat down, embarrassed and frightened. Her life had somehow brought her to this point where she was thrown into a church only to find more pain...only to find deeper shame. Where was Jesus as the pastors were throwing her into a room full of believers, sitting down ready to learn? They were the good citizens, the opposite of the thief on the advertisement, wanted behind bars.

They were the ones who keep their marriages, took care of their children, kept a decent job, made a nice salary and gave to the poor. Therefore they received the right to listen to Jesus in the temple, build a relationship with Him and live in peace.

We do not know all of the thoughts His momentary pupils were having as their early morning meeting was disrupted. *What happened? Why is this woman here? What did she do wrong? I'm glad that's not me. I feel so sorry for her. Man, this is tough but it's the law. What is Jesus going to do? How is He going to respond?*

Many thoughts were filling the room unsaid.

There are times when we sin and feel the thoughts. They come storming at us full force. These are thoughts of accusation, insecurity and regret. Once again, we have found ourselves at square one, surrounded by a world of the "good people" who seem to have it all together. They are looking at us in every way imaginable. And we are struggling to fight comparison.

The really religious ones actually come to Jesus ready to put us on death row but then He does the unimaginable. He looks beyond our sin right to our heart. And He acts as though He didn't hear a word.

It's then that we see Him kneel down to the ground, the place we were first created. He begins to write in the dust, the lowest form of who we are...in the midst of dust we will blend again after our death. And He writes new words into this dust. He begins a new story line in our lives so we can resurrect from ashes into life.

This is the story of the unforgiven adulteress. Jesus' perspective and her enemies' perspective was strikingly different.

The Prophet's Wife, Gomer

Hosea 1:2 When the LORD first spoke with and through Hosea, the LORD said to him, Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of [her] harlotry, for the land commits great whoredom by departing from the LORD. (AMP)

GOD had Hosea marry a prostitute to show the people how much He longed for them even in their current spiritual state. They were prostituting themselves to other lovers other than the LORD. Hosea would become a prophetic symbol and example of the heart of GOD. He had children with a harlot to demonstrate the intimacy of the Children of Israel with other gods. Even the names of Gomer's children would reveal GOD's message to the people- they had forsaken Him and were out of alignment with His will. But the Children of Israel and Judah would reunite, forming a new people- a spiritual Jew.

Even in the midst of GOD's disappointment with Israel's decisions, He still spoke words of mercy:

“But down the road the population of Israel is going to explode past counting, like sand on the ocean beaches. In the very place where they were once named Nobody, they will be named GOD's Somebody. Everybody in Judah and everybody in Israel will be assembled as one people. They'll choose a single leader. There'll be no stopping them—a great day in Jezreel!” (Hosea 1:10-11, MSG)

Although their relationship with GOD was split--“You've become nobodies to me, and I, GOD, am a nobody to you”—the GOD could still see mercy in the future...

UNASHAMED

Chapter Two (Prostitutes)¹⁵

Upon listening to the teaching, The Women Caught in Adultery, it is clear that GOD's forgiveness extends beyond our own behavior or man's opinion. Taking the time to meditate on GOD's Perspective of us (identity) will help us when we find ourselves accused, beat down, embarrassed or frightened. Discuss the following Life Reflection Questions as we experience Scripture together.

Life Reflections:

- I. Have you ever felt "accused, beat down, embarrassed or frightened"? Ask Jesus if He ever felt that way and how He feels about your experience with one of these emotions.
- II. Failure is an experience we all can relate to, but when it occurs have we learned how to respond? Think of a time you have personally experienced failure and ask Jesus how He felt about your shortcoming. Read Romans 8:1 and 28 for more perspective.
- III. "The really religious ones actually come to Jesus ready to put us on death row, but then He does the unimaginable. He looks beyond our sin right to our heart." Feeling like others are looking down on you is a very unsafe and disturbing reality. How can you see the Father's perspective in the midst of all the other voices? Read Deuteronomy 31:6, Jeremiah 29:11, John 14:1, Romans 8:31-39 and 1 John 1:9 for a Godly viewpoint.
- IV. Pray that GOD will begin "a new story line" in your life so you can resurrect hurt areas "from ashes into life". Especially focus on particular instances you have felt shame.

¹⁵ See Unashamed: The Forgiven Adulteress video clip.

CHAPTER THREE

Widows

“But GOD demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8¹⁶

The Persistent Widow

Luke 18:1-8, MSG

Jesus told them a story showing that it was necessary for them to pray consistently and never quit. He said, “There was once a judge in some city who never gave God a thought and cared nothing for people. A widow in that city kept after him: ‘My rights are being violated. Protect me!’

He never gave her the time of day. But after this went on and on he said to himself, ‘I care nothing what God thinks, even less what people think. But because this widow won’t quit badgering me, I’d better do something and see that she gets justice—otherwise I’m going to end up beaten black-and-blue by her pounding.’”

Then the Master said, “Do you hear what that judge, corrupt as he is, is saying? So what makes you think God won’t step in and work justice for his chosen people, who continue to cry out for help? Won’t he stick up for them? I assure you, he will. He will not drag his feet. But how much of that kind of persistent faith will the Son of Man find on the earth when he returns?”

¹⁶ NKJV

“Mommy, mommy, pleaaaaassssseeee...May I please have some cookies?” After hearing this about five times in a row there is probably a desire in mom’s heart to scream, put her child in time out, gently say no or put him in time out. This is all in my imaginative world because I have never parented myself, but the point here is the power of persistence. There is one more option and that is to finally give little Tommy what he wants; this will definitely be at least an immediate solution to his tenacity. Most likely, we have all been on the other end of the picture, the hungry child longing for a sweet snack, rather than a healthy sandwich or fruits and vegetables. Sometimes the nagging questions work, others they simply end in a strict no or a distraction from a wise mother.

In the above passage, Jesus tells a story about a widow who embodied the same persistence of little Tommy. She had a need and was not going to quiet herself until her need was met by the judge. Although this judge was annoyed like we may be in the midst of our imperfection, he finally did budge (not because his heart was pure, but simply because he did not want to be bothered any longer). Jesus then provides us with the following truth: *So what makes you think God won’t step in and work justice for his chosen people, who continue to cry out for help?*

GOD obviously wants to help us and our persistence is like a mother hearing a child’s cry for help. It touches His heart. He then moves on our behalf. This widow broke beyond shame or fear to see her needs met. She was not going to be abused nor misused because she was persistently seeking help. Instead, she could have had a deflated attitude or mindset. She could have took the approach of giving up before even asking, thinking, ‘There’s no way this judge is going to help me. He’s mean, He’s bitter and He has no reason to defend me.’ Instead, she pleaded with the judge expecting mercy.

She was not going to give up until the judge heard her cry. It was her persistence confidence that created eventual change in her life.

The Persistent Widow

- I. The Persistent Widow was in a position of need- Matthew 5:3
- II. The Mindset of the Persistent Widow was eventual progress and victory- Matthew 17:20, 21:22, Isaiah 50:7
- III. This Widow was Determined to fight beyond shame- 1 Timothy 6:12, Hebrews 10:35
 - a. We stop asking when we lose our confidence or feel unworthy- Romans 8:1
- IV. Shame can hinder us from fighting and asking for help. It causes us to hide and try to protect ourselves instead of asking for protection.- James 4:3, Genesis 3:10
- V. Her Request was Given to her because she did not give up- James 1:12, Hebrews 10:36, James 5:11, Galatians 6:9
- VI. We should pray and approach GOD’s throne boldly/consistently, without shame- Hebrews 4:16, Ephesians 3:12
- VII. GOD loves us, will step in and answer our prayer- 1 John 5:14-15, Isaiah 65:24, John 15:7
- VIII. GOD will protect us- Psalm 121:7, Luke 12:32, Psalm 91

IX. We need to remain in faith- 1 Corinthians 15:58, Colossians 1:23, 2 Timothy 4:7

Amazing Grace is one of the most popular hymns of our day. People sing it at times of celebration and great grief. It instantly has a way of calming an atmosphere and stilling a room. It brings peace.

Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see.

This first stanza is probably already familiar to you, but have you ever taken the time to meditate on these words? We were lost, but now we have been found. There are times in this journey called life when we are lost and we do not even realize that we need to be found. There are other times that the awareness of our lack can be almost crippling if we are not on guard against condemnation and hopelessness.

How can I be chosen when I am so lost?

It is when we see how lost we are that we forget about how found we have been. Being lost is not the end of the story. GOD demonstrated or proved His love for us while we were still in a sinful state. Many of us knowingly lived a lifestyle of sin, but GOD's love goes beyond our actions. Not only did He forgive us of our sin; He died for us while we were in our sin.

Death isn't something that you do for someone you don't love. It would have to be your own child or a loved one for you to give your life in place of another. Most of us would not take on that type of passion for a complete stranger. It is not our responsibility.

We are compared to lost sheep in the Bible. The image of a shepherd with his sheep may not be an everyday experience for many of us, but understanding more about this lifestyle is very important to knowing the GOD of the Bible.

A shepherd is with his sheep everyday, tending to his flock, loving his flock, correcting his flock and ministering to the needs of his flock. He knows the personality of each sheep. He knows about the stray sheep, the lonely sheep, the happy sheep and the submitted sheep.

When we are compared to "lost sheep" this example is in the context of a very loving shepherd whose heart is bleeding as he wonders where his sheep has gone. Why isn't his sheep with the remainder of the flock anymore.

His sheep is out of place.

Perhaps there have been times you have strayed from the fellowship GOD wants you to have with others in the flock or even from your relationship with Him. It could be today. He wants to restore you in relationship with His self and others.

Our own hurts and pains can cause us to stray from the flock, but there is healing through the sacrifice of Jesus.

We need to pray the words of the Psalmist:

I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments. (Psalm 119:176, KJV)

The first step when we are lost is to come back to Jesus. We simply tell Him that we have gone astray. We are lost. We want to renew our sweet fellowship with Him. We are tired of looking for love in all of the wrong places. Then we ask Him to seek us. This may sound like a very strange principle, but it is the question a confident lover of Jesus asks. Even when we mess up, the Father wants to fellowship with us as His children.

We may be lost but we do not have to forget His commandments. We want to give Him our whole heart again and we want Him to find us, to seek us out. This is how we know that He loves us.

GOD will answer our prayer with the following promise:

I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick... (Ezekiel 34:16, KJV)

When we are lost, like a good shepherd, GOD leaves the other 99 to find us. He seeks us out and His desire is toward us. He wants to make amends with us. He is humble, meek and lowly in His approach toward us, not wanting to harm us but to bring salvation.

In the verse before, GOD promises to feed His flock and lie them down. Lying down is a position of rest. Feeding is a position of blessing and needs being met. GOD will feed the empty, hungry soul, the soul that is trying to be filled by the gods of this world: money, fame, success and the hand clap of man. He will bring rest to the soul that is in so much pain it is looking for any type of relief it can find, even if it must suffer the consequences of sin to find that moment of pleasure. This pleasure is a break from the torment of the mind and soul, however self-destructive in the long run.

GOD is looking for those hearts. He wants the ones who are most broken, hurting and lost. He wants the ones who feel driven away and rejected. He wants to take their broken hearts and begin to doctor them until they are healed. He wants to strengthen the sick mind and emotional life of each and every one of us.

This is not because of any good we have done; it is simply because He is a loving GOD.

GOD loves us for who we are; He does not base His love for us on what we do. He desires us all the same.

Not only are we lost or sick but we can come to points of hopelessness when we do not see GOD in our current situations. We then bury our pain, not wanting to ask Him the real questions of our heart, "Where were You when I was being mistreated, used, abused and rejected? Where

were You when I was feeling alone and ashamed?” We can then begin to wallow in our pain, failing to talk to the only One who can really answer these deeply felt questions.

Self-pity and abandonment can quickly settle in if we do not see GOD as a Loving Father, wanting to help us in our desperation.

In the same book of Ezekiel GOD asks Ezekiel an amazing question, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

Ezekiel answers back, “O LORD GOD, You know.”

There are some situations in our lives, in our childhoods that we do not understand. The situation may have been with us for so long that we do not even want to face our own doubt. If GOD were to ask us the question, “Can these bones live?” the safest answer we could say is, “GOD, You Know.” Why does He know? Because we don’t really know at this point. It seems impossible from our perspective.

Here Ezekiel was, positioned by the Spirit of the LORD, in a valley of dry bones. There was not a living soul in sight. He began to walk around in the valley, noticing that the bones were really dry. This meant they had been there for a very long time and the chances of any of these bones coming to life again was slim to none.

As I write this, it is Halloween, the time of the year where bones are celebrated. People hang bones from trees, in their yards and wear skeletons on their bodies. It is a lighthearted event to them, but to Ezekiel this was reality. It wasn’t something he could joke about or take lightly. These were real people with a real need. They were past the point of life...or so it seemed.

But GOD didn’t seem to be phased by Ezekiel’s answer to his question. As long as GOD knew the truth, He could require Ezekiel to prophesy. He told Ezekiel to speak to the dry bones and command them to live.

There were literal steps to the renewal of life in this lost group of people. It did not happen all at once. This is very much in the character of GOD whom created the entire world in seven days instead of one, had His Son live on the earth for 30 years before starting His ministry and healed a man of leprosy after washing his self in the Jordan River 7 times instead of one.

The first time Ezekiel prophesied the bones reconnected. These bones were no longer bodies. They were scattered throughout a valley (a low place of darkness and desperation). Then the muscles and skin miraculously appeared on the bones. But the bodies were just lying there in the valley lifeless. They needed life to be breathed into them, like Adam was given in the Garden of Eden.

This was a sort of reverse creation experience. GOD was taking these people from death to life in a way that only He could receive the glory because no one else could perform this operation.

He is never afraid of *how* lost His children are; He is gracious and all powerful.

Then Ezekiel prophesied to the breath and the bodies became living beings, standing in the valley.

When we first get in the valley of the shadow of death mentioned in Psalm 23, we may be laying there lifeless. We may feel like the bones of these people, scattered everywhere in a state of hopelessness. We may feel like there is no way to be made whole. Then time goes on and it gets worse because of time alone. How can GOD fix my situation or better yet, fix me, when I've been in this state for so long?

Once we see a glimpse of hope, our situation begins to come back together we fight for any bit of faith we can muster up...but then GOD speaks into our situation. He does the miraculous. He recreates us, calling on the winds to breathe life back into us and we can finally stand in the valley.

We are in the same position, same location, same situation but we can finally stand.

It is then that we see others are standing with us and we experience the miracle of being rebirthed into a restorative state. We relate to others in a different way, we have more compassion, we have been made warriors in a mighty army. We are now ready for battle.

The children of Israel were the people in this valley saying, "Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!"¹⁷

These are the words of hopelessness and pity. This is a state where we cannot see GOD in the midst of our situation. We need of reminder of His infinite power and His desire to love us out of our situation.

GOD does not want you to be stuck in despair or to remain lost. He wants to find you, even if He has to seek you out of a broken childhood, years of pain and a dry soul. He will then pick you up, cleanse you, give you new clothes and a new heart. Are you ready for this type of experience with your loving Father?...

¹⁷ Ezekiel 37:11, NKJV

UNASHAMED

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