



Steps (Week 6) – Sex, Guilt and Shame

Michael Snetzer – October 9, 2013

It has been a good day so far. Starting today and tomorrow, we are hosting our first Recovery Groups intensive, so we have churches that have come from around the city and around the state and even from outside the state to come find out a little bit more about our Recovery ministries. What was such a blessing to me was just to go back over and to testify to God's goodness over the last 10 years to us here at the church. So my heart is full. I thank those of you who have stuck around for our night of ministry here tonight.

Tonight we're going to be talking about a few other areas of sanctification: sex, guilt, and shame. If you remember from last week, we tackled the often dark areas of anger and abuse. We began to shine light into these areas of our hearts and to show how the gospel both informs and transforms the human heart. We discussed the fact that in our anger we no longer have to sit in judgment because we have faith in a perfect Judge. We no longer have to stand in the place of God, but we can turn those resentments and that anger over to him, trusting him to reconcile all things.

We also talked about abuse. We talked about a redeemed truth about abuse, and we talked about abuse being the misuse of anything. God created all things for his glory, and the misuse of his creation is abuse and ultimately sinful. All sin is abusive, and sin against others is undeserved. We cannot overcome the effects of sin or abuse independent of God, but he has provided the way to overcome sin, the way of redemption through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God does not allow abuse or any other form of suffering in the lives of his children without a redemptive purpose. In Christ, through the Spirit, we will display his supremacy and victory over evil as we arise over sin, shame, and even death. I just wanted to share one Scripture related to that. I was attending an abuse conference up in Seattle, and I ran across a name tag (it was literally one of those name tags like what you guys have on) on the boardwalk as I was running.

It caught my attention, so I turned around and picked it up. It said, "Micah." So I started reading the book of Micah. I ended up naming my daughter Ava Micah because it was during that time that I found out my wife was pregnant. This Scripture right here has been so profound for me just in terms of the sin that has been committed against us, particularly in the areas of abuse. It says in Micah 7:8-10:

"Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication. Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, 'Where is the Lord your God?'" Let's pray.

Lord, I thank you for the incredible truth that we will overcome all things in you, that there's no sin we've committed nor sin that has been committed against us that in Christ we will not rise above. We will have victory. I think back upon our lesson, the invalid by the pool of Bethesda there in John 5, as he looks historically at the 38 years he has been there, and he looks at the pool, and as it's being stirred there's no one to lead him there, as he looks at the hopelessness of his situation in the place he thinks he might find hope, not realizing hope stands right before him in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Lord, I pray tonight, as with these other areas we need sanctification in that you've already promised us victory in, that you would grant us faith and that we might walk as this man walked, not focusing on the hopelessness of our circumstances but on the person and work of Christ. It's in Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Let's jump right into sex, guilt, and shame. When I was in AA we, like we do here at The Village, assessed, or took inventory of, our sexual behavior, our sexual immorality. In some ways it was good, but in other ways it was very lacking. It was good from the standpoint that we examined our moral behavior. It was good to acknowledge that we all seem to fall short in this area. It was good because the God of my understanding was to be considered in the formula of how I was to move forward from here, and it was good from the standpoint that I was able to discuss it with someone with more experience in the program.

Where it was lacking was defining specifically what God's intention was for sex, what the underlying causes of my immoral behavior were, and what specific means of grace had been

provided through his Son Jesus Christ in dealing with our past and helping us now in what he promises for our future. As I have wrestled with these areas, specifically around the topic of sex, I'm reminded of a conversation I had with my sponsor while I was in AA, a man who's still a friend of mine, a man whom I disciple through the program here now, a man who now loves Jesus and worships here at The Village.

I was single again, and when I came to faith was very dysfunctional in the area of sex. On one level, my conscience testified to what was right and wrong, but I somehow had convinced myself that what was acceptable when it came to sex was anything that could be shared between two consenting adults. As long as you were an adult and as long as it was consensual, that's what was okay. I had drawn a line where God does not draw the line.

I decided to ask my sponsor what his thoughts were on that. Not yet, I believe, being a born-again Christian (which he is today), he responded with an observation that I felt was helpful. He said, "The single men I know who are celibate are the happiest guys I know." Of the literally hundreds of guys he had worked with in AA, without even the Bible as a guide he concluded they were the happiest.

The other thing that was curious in AA was that although we were encouraged to examine our behavior, even the motive behind our behavior when it came to sex, what about the other areas of my life I fell short in? Sex is just one of those areas I may feel guilt or shame in. What about the fact I broke into a lady's house in the third grade and stole her candy? What do I do with that? Where do I put that on my inventory? That's minor, but you can see the list could grow and grow and grow and was very large. There was no way to deal with my guilt and my shame. There was no guilt and shame inventory.

Tonight we have given you a place to deal with all of those things, and we want to communicate to you, inform, and by God's grace, be transformed by these truths so we might walk in the freedom the gospel applies. As we were talking today in the intensive, one of the things we wanted to keep at the forefront when we wrote our curriculum was to give a comprehensive and in-depth look at each one of our struggles as human beings and a comprehensive guide to how the gospel can be applied in each one of these situations.

So if we start with God's creative design, you're going to notice there's a pattern. Remember we started with creation, fall, redemption, consummation. Sex. What's God's created design for sex? If

we start in Genesis 1:28, it says, "**And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'**"

Be fruitful and multiply. Guess what that means? Yeah. Then it says in Genesis 1:31, "**And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.**" It was very good. One question for you (and maybe it's a question you guys talked about in your small group tonight) is...*How do you see sex?* Is it through the lens of his glorious design that we're going to talk about here in a moment? Do you see it as a gift, or do you see it as gross? Do you see it as an expression of worship before God, or do you see it as something to be worshiped?

God ordains sex in the creation account within the context of marriage between one man and one woman. Let's look. "**Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**" This is in context of this first wedding ceremony that God himself presides over. The sexual union between a man and a woman is to be reserved for the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman. He is the author of it. He created it, and he determines how it is to be used and, therefore, how it is abused.

It's a beautiful thing within its created design, within this sacred covenant. It is a seal of the emotional, spiritual, and relational oneness of this couple within the context of a covenantal relationship. Giving myself physically to my spouse should be done as an act of worship to God for her pleasure, which in turn should be *my* pleasure.

As with all the creation, sex is meant to point to something more glorious in the gospel. Let me explain. We're all big people in here, so think about the physical act of sex. In the physical act of sex, a man rises. He enters into his bride. He fills her to bring forth new life. This is a picture of the gospel, that Jesus is raised from death to life, that he enters into his bride, that he fills her with the Holy Spirit, and the seed within the woman then is born and brings forth life.

Our physical birth is a picture of spiritual rebirth. The gospel and spiritual rebirth is not an afterthought; it's part of God's glorious plan of redemption even before the fall. It's not that God was caught by surprise when mankind fell into sin. So he *has* provided a way back. Here are a couple of observations I would like to make about sex.

There is greater joy and pleasure in the spiritual than in the physical, and you will never enjoy sex the way God has intended it as long as you are looking to it for ultimate satisfaction. As we look to sex for ultimate satisfaction, it becomes a lust, which, by nature, you cannot satisfy. One other thing here, as we see this glorious picture sex is to represent: God does not enter into those he is not in covenant with, nor should we.

In the Greek language, the word *porneia* means any form of sexual immorality, including engaging in homosexuality, asexuality, bisexuality, fornication (that's operating sexually outside of the covenant of marriage), bestiality, pedophilia, incest, rape, adultery, or anything else we could try to conjure up with our depraved minds that does not reflect God's intended design.

Obviously, as we look around at the culture and look back maybe on the tragedy of our own lives, we see the fall is very evident. Again, Satan's seduction into sexual immorality... It's something that he would dress up that God would say is so bad, so detrimental to us, and make it look so good. Romans 1:25 says the worship of creation in the fall becomes the agenda. Instead of sex being the overflow of worship before God in loving your spouse, the worship of other things becomes paramount: pleasure, security, safety, people, acceptance, etcetera.

Romans 11:36-12:1 says, **"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever."** All of creation is meant to glorify God, to be worshipful to God. **"I appeal to you therefore [based on that statement], brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."**

God is to be on the throne, and we are to worship him, offer ourselves to him, and be a living sacrifice for him for his glory. I'm going to say some things here that are hard, but I want you to stick with me, because, as we shine light into these areas, we are going to redress you with the gospel before you leave. So stick with us.

Women, when you engage sexually with a man outside of the covenant of marriage, you are literally giving yourself, offering yourself, and presenting yourself to a man as a sacrifice, as (as Mark Driscoll would say) your functional savior. Many of us would look at the life of a prostitute and go, "Oh, I cannot understand how a prostitute could do that for money." Listen. We're doing that in exchange for something. For some of us, we're exchanging it for love. For some of us, we're exchanging it for money. For some of us, we're exchanging it for security, for relationship.

Men, I'm speaking as a former sex addict. Woe to those of us who would take the place of God and accept this type of worship and usurp him from the throne, even if only in your mind by fantasizing about the creation, bowing down and serving your every desire and often seeking to fill your insecurities through the conquest of collecting trophies on the wallpaper of your mind. It is counterfeit redemption. It is no redemption at all for you to fill your insecurities with these trophies.

I hear all kinds of rationalizations about engaging in sexual immorality. "But we love one another. We're going to get married, and we love each other." No, you don't. It's a misunderstanding of love. You would never put another person before a holy God in sin if you loved them. That's not love. Another thing is, "But I'm just looking." Proverbs 7, all the way through that chapter, talks about a fool lacking sense, peering through the lattice, and suddenly he's overcome. The question is...*What are you looking at?* What are you looking for?

"But we're just talking." Some of us are in conversations we shouldn't be having. Another is (it's a little bit more humorous, but it's actually a biblical example), "But we are given the equipment; aren't we supposed to use it?" Let's look at 1 Corinthians 6. That's exactly the argument that's being used. In verse 12 it says, "**All things are lawful for me...**" He's quoting something. This is obviously a saying that's being tossed around. "Oh, all things are lawful for me."

Paul says, "**...but not all things are helpful.**" He repeats it again in quotes: "**All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything.**" Then here's the argument: "**Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food...**" That's a quote. "**...and God will destroy both one and the other.**" That's Paul's response. "**The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?**"

Romans 6:13 says, "**Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.**" Don't use your instruments for immorality, but give yourself to God as an act of worship.

It says, "**Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, 'The two will become one flesh.'** But he who is joined to the Lord

becomes one spirit with him." So don't take the members of Christ (your body was purchased with a great price) and present them for immorality as an act of worship.

"Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit..." God lives inside of you. So again, the thing God is calling us to is not detached from this truth. He's rooting you in a gospel truth, and he's saying, "Don't pursue those things, but pursue the things that will bring you joy."

"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." What would you call it if somebody violated the body of another against their will? What God is saying here is that you're not your own. You don't have rights, and when you utilize his body against his will... Lastly, one thing I hear all the time is, "How far is too far?" So many times I hear singles ask this question. I think it's the wrong question.

"Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?" Repentance is about walking on the other side of the street. It's not about pushing the envelope. It's not trying to live by the letter of the law and seeing how far you can push that thing. It says, "Flee sexual immorality." Jesus answers this question, "How far is too far?" **"But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."**

I remember when my wife and I, before we were married, were struggling physically. I had previously been struggling with pornography, and I was looking at Matthew where it says, "If your eye causes you to sin, cut it out," so I thought, "Well, I'll put accountability software on my computer." Somebody had made that suggestion. Accountability software is not going to change your heart, but it can be a sign that your heart is changing and that you don't want to go back there.

Then I started to read further. "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off." Some people think I'm a little radical, and I am, I think, but I don't think it's anything further than what Christ would call us to. I realized that whenever I would put my hands on Sonia I would begin to lust. That was too far. So guess what? For six months when I hugged her, I hugged her like this. That was really awkward for both of us, and I'm not sure she liked it a whole lot. She was like, "What? Do I have cooties?" But after a while, I was able to hug her without lusting. If you're not married, that is a sister in Christ. Treat her like a sister.

Here's a redeemed truth about sex: "Sex is a beautiful and sacred gift given to us by God. It is to be worshipful but not worshiped. It is to be enjoyed and celebrated within the marriage covenant as a reflection of the gospel and our union with Christ. Any sexual act that occurs outside of God's intended design is sexual immorality. Beyond action alone, God looks at the deeper issues of the heart. Only through the gospel will God align our hearts with his purposes for this beautiful and sacred gift."

I realize some of us may be feeling guilt and maybe even shame right now as we've talked through sex. That's why I think it's so fitting that sexual immorality fits into this larger category of guilt and shame. We experience guilt and shame as a result of our rebellion against God's intended design, whether within this area of sex or any other sin.

Guilt can be both a state and/or a feeling that occurs when we have violated a law or moral standard. Now here's the thing. We can *feel* guilty and not *be* guilty. It's called false guilt. And we can *be* guilty and not *feel* guilty. That's called hard-heartedness. Real guilt is a state of being, not just a feeling. I'm either guilty or I'm not, but the question is...*In whose eyes am I guilty?*

We can experience real guilt and we can experience false guilt, and there are plenty of opportunities to feel guilty. Do you have those people in your life who are always trying to make you feel guilty? Oftentimes, it's not because you're sinning against God; it's because you're not doing what they want. So false guilt occurs when our allegiance is to someone other than God, ultimately. We allow *them* to decide when we are guilty.

Who's sitting on the throne? Remember the three circles? It can either be God, ourselves, or someone else sitting on that throne. So we have someone else sitting as judge, and they are saying, "You're guilty," and all of a sudden we're flooded with false guilt. This is misplaced guilt, and this misplaced guilt may be what's pleasing to me or pleasing to someone other than God. It can be self-imposed guilt or it can be others-imposed guilt.

Let me give you an example of self-imposed guilt. If I find value and worth in getting things done, which oftentimes I do, and I make judgments as to whether or not I am guilty based on whether I accomplish everything on my task list, I will feel guilty on my day of rest. Now is that self-imposed guilt if God has called me to rest? Yes. I may be being obedient to the Lord, but I feel guilty because I

have taken his place on the throne and made judgments based on what pleases me, not what pleases him. I may or may not be guilty of sin, but the allegiance is wrong.

Others-imposed guilt is when I place someone else on the throne of my life and allow them to make judgments based on what pleases *them*. This occurs when you fail to meet someone's preferences or expectations. You know someone who tries to make you feel guilty. If a husband likes a clean house and when he comes home accuses his wife of being slothful and she automatically feels guilty, that may be false guilt. If her allegiance was to God and she had been faithful all day to attend to the kids and had not had a chance yet to get to the dishes, she would not feel guilty, because she has not sinned.

Real guilt is when we sin we are guilty, and the state of guilt remains, regardless of whether we feel guilty or not, until we come to the cross of Christ. The solution: justification, which we've already talked about. We have been imputed righteousness. However, there are times when I hear people confuse justification and sanctification and claim because they have been justified they no longer have need to take responsibility for their sin; they are not guilty anymore.

They use that banner of justification and, therefore, cease in their sanctification, because they stop taking ownership and growing spiritually as they confess and repent of sin. We have been positionally given right standing, but practically and personally we must continue to work out our salvation, our sanctification. We are guilty when we sin. However, the kind of conviction that comes from the Holy Spirit is different than the condemnation that comes in our flesh.

It's like we have a loving Father who comes along us and says, "You've stepped over the line. Now come back." He's merciful and forgiving. In 1 John (this is written to believers) he says, "**If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**" Let's look at 1 John 1 quickly, starting in verse 5:

"This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." It cleanses us as we bring that out into the light by faith.

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." This is part of the ongoing life of the believer. Why do we confess our sin and repent? Because we believe he's better.

A quick note on some of us who don't have a hard time receiving the grace of God from God but have a hard time forgiving ourselves. We don't have a hard time believing that when we sin and return to God in Christ God is gracious toward us, but we have a hard time forgiving ourselves. Dan Allender once commented on this subject. Do you hear how incredibly arrogant that is? Essentially, we elevate ourselves to a higher authority above God, which is sinful. In Galatians it says, **"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose."**

One of the things we don't want to do here in Recovery is to minimize sin. We don't want to just say, "Hey, it's no big deal." Do you ever catch yourself in that when you're listening to somebody else? "Hey, don't worry about it. It's not that big a deal." No, it's a big deal. It's a really big deal. Look at the cross of Christ. It cost him his life. It's a really, really big deal. We don't want to minimize sin, but we want to glory in the sufficiency of Christ. There is no sin that is bigger than him.

Finally, let's talk about shame. Shame is the intense feeling of being unclean, defiled, and dirty. Closely related to guilt, it may result from the exposure of one's own sin and depravity or from sin committed against one's dignity, as we are created in the image of God. Shame is deeply rooted in identity. It says, "I'm worthless. I'm dirty."

Let's talk a moment about the experience of shame. Shame is probably the most painful emotion I can think of. It is a kind of exposure and humiliation that is so deep and raw it seems we will never recover from it. It seems terminal, beyond repair, and irreconcilable. Here's the truth. Outside of the cross of Jesus Christ it is. There's an intensity to shame that says, "Run and hide." It screams, "Look away from me." You feel uncovered, defiled, and feel as an outcast. As I think back on my life, the moments of intense shame are the times I remember the most vividly.

We see again we can follow this same pattern. Creation: that the man and his wife were naked and were not ashamed. The conclusion to Genesis 2, the creation account. That's the summary of this experience of perfect harmony. Can you imagine a world without shame where you could completely be yourself without fear of rejection, without fear of sinning? It's amazing. Then we have

the fall, and we see the symptom of shame come out immediately as they become self-aware and try to cover and hide.

So what are the sources of shame? Shame has to do with being defiled. This happens, as I said earlier, when there has been a violation of our God-given dignity as image bearers or the exposure of one's depravity. So a violation of our dignity or the exposure of our depravity. Said another way, it results either from our own sin or sin committed against us. Remember the example I gave last week in abuse of a young man being made by his parents to eat out of a dog bowl? There's shame associated with that.

There's also misplaced shame, and it results from someone other than God defining what is right or wrong. You may have experienced this before too, this misplaced type of shame. Have you ever gone out and shared your faith and then, on the flip side of that, experienced shame because you were rejected? Even though that was pleasing to God, the person you were sharing with rejected you, so you felt shame when you shouldn't have felt shame. We should not be ashamed of the gospel.

I can remember a very vivid example. Again, these are some of the most vivid examples. Someone very dear to me had accused me of something. I'm guilty of a lot of things. It was just this one particular thing I was being accused of I actually didn't do. So I went to someone I believed they respected who was a part of that circle. We were all talking, and I remember going to them, and they were asking and I was explaining, and when that person I was looking to as a judge in this situation to reconcile this thing...

I remember they looked me square in the eyes and said, "Well, are you?" I felt intense shame, because the person I was looking to as the judge was now looking at me with accusation. So how do I deal with this false allegiance? I hadn't done anything wrong. I wasn't guilty of the sin I was being accused of, but I did need to repent, not of the sin but of the false allegiance of putting someone else on the throne other than God.

There's also shame by association. The same association that sometimes brings humiliation and shame, that same sort of association that when we are now associated with Christ we are made clean. There's also compound shame. This is when someone comes, and they are confessing their sin, and they run into someone who is legalistic and doesn't offer them the gospel. They're like, "How could you do that?" They're met with condemnation rather than grace.

Then there's phantom shame. Have you ever heard of "phantom limb syndrome"? It's this interesting thing I heard someone talk about one time. Evidently, sometimes when a person loses a limb they still experience pain in the limb even after it's gone. How I relate that to shame is that oftentimes, even after we have come to Christ in our identity...

Here's the thing. Guilt has more to do with what we do and shame has to do more with who we are. When we are redeemed and we are now in Christ, we have a new identity. We are sons and daughters of the living God. That is our identity. It's no longer in who we were. So oftentimes there's this undercurrent of what I would call phantom shame even after it has already been dealt with. Then sometimes we see a spirit of shame that has been assigned to a person, that has been attached to a person, that oppresses a person.

Our response, typically, in the flesh, regardless of the source... Whether it's my sin that has caused it or whether it's something that has been done to me, it feels the same, so we tend to respond in the same way by covering and hiding and dealing with it independent of God. So here are some ways of trying to deal with our shame independent of God.

First of all, if you've ever studied Freud's ego defense mechanisms, it's a very fascinating observation. His interpretations are way off, but his observations of how we, independent of God, try to cope (they're coping strategies) with the ideas of shame are fascinating. I was watching a movie one time. It was *Shrek the Third*. Has anyone seen that movie? Okay, a few of you.

In that movie, you have Prince Charming. (It's the opening scene, so you wouldn't have to watch very far if you want to catch this.) He's on a horse, and he's going to rescue the damsel in distress. As the camera pans back, you realize he's on one of those fake horses, like a stick horse. Then as it pans back a little bit farther, you realize he's on a stage and there's an audience.

In the midst of this play he has orchestrated for his life, it all falls apart. Everyone who's watching laughs, and he's humiliated. The very next scene, he goes to the mirror and looks in the mirror and says, "I will redeem myself." At that point, he becomes the villain for the rest of the movie. That is a villainous response. God has already sent a Redeemer into the world. Our attempts to redeem ourselves are futile.

We also often attempt to deal with our shame by avoiding that feeling of shame. I hate that feeling. I will do almost anything to keep that feeling off of me. For those of us who are not secure yet in our identity in Christ, that can come quickly. Somebody knows how to push our shame button, and we will respond violently. It's not just a kind of anger; it is a vicious anger. It attacks the source that is pushing that button.

Sometimes it's turned inward. Contempt toward ourselves. It's often self-condemnation. It's basically going outside of ourselves, elevating ourselves, and judging ourselves. Sometimes we deflect it toward others. Sometimes we detach emotionally. I even hear counselors do this. "You just need to detach emotionally." That's not what Jesus did. He didn't detach. He stuck in there. Jesus didn't tap in the middle. He didn't check out. He didn't go to another world. He stayed in there, and he cared all the way to the end.

Detaching emotionally is one end of a spectrum of what disassociation is, or multiple personality disorder. We deny and we suppress, which can lead to depression. We can try to avoid, which leads us to be neurotic. We're hyper-sensitive and we're belly-button gazers and we're just so worried we're going to do something wrong, that we're going to experience that feeling of shame.

Sometimes we deflect through humor and sarcasm, and sometimes we will avoid shame through self-sabotage. Think about it. Those of us who struggle with procrastination... It's great, right? Then I have an excuse if I fail. "Oh, I waited until the last minute. I really didn't try hard and fail; I just waited until the last minute, so I really didn't give it my best." There are a million different ways we can self-sabotage so we do not experience shame.

All of these strategies leave us in our shame and defiled, but there is a gospel intervention and, fortunately for us, regardless of the multiple causes of our shame, it has been dealt with once and for all in the cross of Jesus Christ through two big theological words: *expiation* and *adoption*. Through expiation we have atonement for our sins and we are cleansed. We are made pure.

Oftentimes, the first thing a victim of sexual assault wants to do is take a shower. Why? They feel dirty. They have been violated. But inevitably, a shower can only clean the outside. Jesus cleans us from the inside out. Psalm 51:7 says, "**Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**"

Remember, we said guilt is more about what we do and shame is more about who we are. Our identity is now in Christ. Through adoption, we are now sons and daughters of God. Through the life of the Spirit, God leads us back to him. His Spirit does not bring condemnation but conviction. Let's pray.

Father, you are our Father. We thank you for the fact that you had a glorious plan before we were ever thought to be by our parents. You knew where we would go. You knew the sin we would commit. You knew our guilt. You knew how we would sit in our guilt and shame apart from you. You saw, you heard our cries, and you intervened and sent your precious Son. What a gift.

Now we have glorious riches in Christ, and we thank you that, through the gospel, you have intervened in a way the world cannot, in a way we cannot; that it answers our problem of sin and all of its effects, even death. Even if we are abused to the point of death, we will rise, and we are made whole in you. We love you, Lord. It's in Christ's name I pray, amen.