

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**ADDRESSING SHAME THROUGH A COMMUNITY LIFE EXPERIENCE
DESIGNED TO NURTURE THE RESTORATION OF THE IMAGO DEI**

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SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND DISCIPLESHIP**

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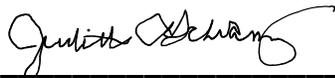
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We, the undersigned, determined that this dissertation has met the academic requirements and standards of Nazarene Theological Seminary for the Doctor of Ministry program.



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ABSTRACT

Linda A. Bynum

Addressing Shame Through a Community Life Experience Designed to
Nurture the Restoration of the Imago Dei

How might an understanding of shame inform our communal and formative spiritual practices in the church? The conceptual framework is a work in practical theology that begins with an autoethnographic reflection and considers various typologies of shame from the disciplines of theology, psychology, and sociology. Shame is the disorienting state of not knowing one is loved by God and worthy of belonging. It binds one to the untruths of being unloved, flawed, and undeserving of relationships.

An authentic community experience is proposed that will introduce spiritual practices to foster deeper intimacy with God and transform the narratives of shame. The small group experience is designed to move participants toward restoration of the imago Dei. The loving mutuality and belonging between the persons of the Godhead invites humanity into this community of wholeness and healing.

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CHAPTER ONE

Establishing the Framework and the Problem

Introduction

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; if you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness because you will have the light that leads to life” (John 8:12).¹ And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb (Revelation 21:23). While we wait for the fullness of God’s Kingdom to come, we live in a liminal space where light is interrupted, and shadows obscure the light. The scriptures mentioned above and the metaphor of “light interrupted” are tools to aid a practical description of the experience of shame. Shadows form when something solid blocks a source of light from a surface. One might think of shame as a shadow cast on human identity. It is something that blocks the light of God’s love from being fully received. As the earth orbits around the sun, the length and direction of one’s shadow change.

Consequently, a shadow represents an object malformed by time and directionality. A shadow distorts its subject as shame distorts one’s sense of value, worth, and belonging. Further treatment of the typology of shame will come later in this work, but first, we will establish the skeletal bones of this endeavor.

The conceptional framework that fuses and defines this research is a work in Practical Theology that elects a qualitative methodology. The first section of chapter one will also introduce autoethnography and reflexivity. As part of the autoethnography, the second section summarizes my ministry setting and personal, ecclesial, and academic

¹ All scripture references from Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation*, 2015.

experiences that have fueled my passion for researching shame. The third and final section of this chapter will introduce definitions of shame from three differing angles. The first will compare and contrast shame and guilt. Though often used in tandem, Robin Stockitt suggests that shame is more personal, existential, and corporate than guilt. Also, shame does not garner the legal connotation guilt holds. She writes, “Could it be that shame as a theological category has been tragically overlooked, especially when we attempt to build a bridge from shame to the entire mission of Christ?”² Section three introduces the multifaceted effects and origins of shame. Typically, shame is global and internal, and its nature is to cause one to hide. The research will reveal how shame drives propensities toward perfectionism, anger, withdrawal, and how shame makes connections in community life more challenging. Shame may result from an insecure attachment or shattered love and/or trust in a relationship. After considering definitions from various researchers and scholars, I will present my current definition of shame that reflects and synthesizes my research to this point. Finally, why shame is a problem worthy of our attention will close chapter one.

I. Conceptual Framework

The opening section introduces this as a work in Practical Theology and defines what is meant by that delineation. Second, the methodology of research will be addressed. A qualitative methodology has been chosen over a quantitative one due to the mitigating factors of shame that defy a quantitative approach. Finally, Ethnography, Autoethnography, and Reflexivity will help frame the following research.

a. Practical Theology

² Robin Stockitt. *Restoring the Shamed: Towards a Theology of Shame* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 44.

Practical Theology is defined by John Swinton and Harriet Mowatt “as a critical theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world with a view to ensuring faithful participation in the continuing mission of the triune God.”³ James Poling defines it as “reflection arising out of the living experiences of communities of faith and resulting in faith-informed interpretations that serve to guide the ongoing life and actions of those communities.”⁴ Practical theology attempts to bring fuller expression to the more academic disciplines in theology that have mainly become epistemological and deficient in integration to everyday life. Poling describes communities as living organisms and further offers that “theology is practical when it enables the living community to reflect upon and guide its own action in the context of God’s continuing action.”⁵ Practical Theology may reflect upon other disciplines such as sociology and psychology to broaden the contextual understanding. For example, Poling suggests, “experiences of oppression do lead to alternate views of faith that have validity, and often directly challenge the dominant interpretations of the faith.”⁶ More than a body of knowledge, the work of practical theology helps imagine deeper and richer ways of speaking of the possibilities of life in communities.⁷

b. Qualitative Methodology

³ John Swinton and Harriet Mowatt, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 2., rev. ed. (London, England: SCM, 2016), 24.

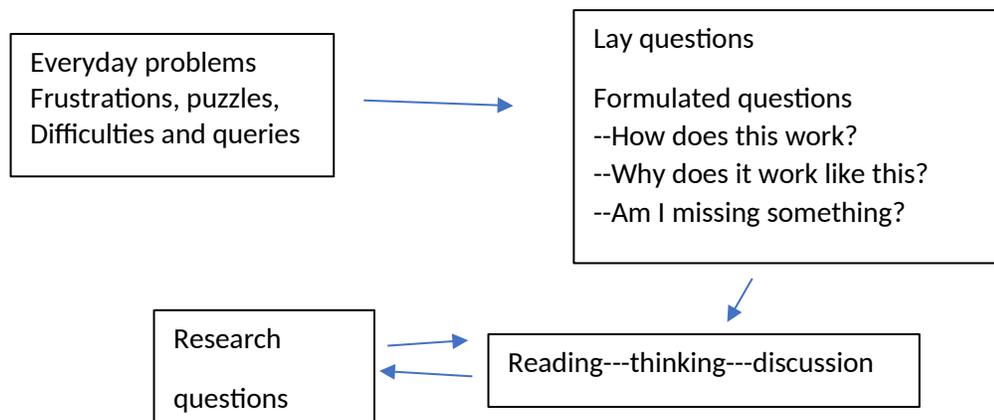
⁴ James N. Poling and Donald E. Miller. *Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), 11.

⁵ Poling 12.

⁶ Poling, 23.

⁷ Poling, 64.

The sun casts shadows in shifting directions at regular and systematic times of the day, depending upon the earth’s rotation and tilt. One can scientifically and quantitatively measure the movement and progression of the earth. Though using the description of the ‘shadow shame casts,’ the methodology for this project will be qualitative rather than quantitative. Swinton and Mowat suggest that this methodology appears most helpful when little is known about a problem or situation. They write, “the locus of the qualitative research process is a particular situation that the researcher or the funding body thinks merits further attention because it is confusing or little understood.”⁸ Swinton and Mowat offer this helpful diagram of developing the research question.



Developing the research questions⁹

Qualitative methods pay attention to how everyday people view and describe their existence.¹⁰ Sometimes, there is an overlapping between qualitative and quantitative, but Geoff and Judy Payne categorize examples as the best identifier of qualitative methodology. They suggest that social research conventionally falls into one of two

⁸ Swinton, 50.

⁹ Swinton, 51.

¹⁰ David Silverman. *A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book About Qualitative Research*, Second Edition. (London, England: SAGE, 2013) 170.

types: (a) qualitative or soft, and (b) quantitative or hard.¹¹ To better understand the shadow shame casts, we will look at Restoration Therapy, Attachment Theory, sociology, and theology. There are many mitigating factors in research encompassing shame that defy scientific, quantitative measures. Section three will attempt to expand on whether the nature of shame is an experience or an emotion. For now, it is enough to recognize that an experience or emotion largely escapes quantitative measure, thus pointing to the choice of qualitative research methodology. Payne writes, “Qualitative methods produce detailed non-quantitative accounts of small groups, seeking to interpret the meanings people make of their lives in natural settings, on the assumption that social interactions form an integrated set of relationships best understood by inductive procedures.”¹² David Silverman articulates the value of qualitative methodology this way.

The real strength of qualitative research is it can use naturally-occurring data to locate the interactional sequences (‘how’) in which participants’ meanings (‘what’) are deployed. Having established the character of some phenomenon, it can then (but only then) move on to answer ‘why’ questions by examining how that phenomenon is organizationally embedded.¹³

c. Ethnography/Autoethnography and Reflexivity

As stated, Payne identifies examples as the best qualifier of qualitative research; therefore, introducing an additional method or methodology is helpful. Silverman writes, “Ethnography simply puts together two different words: ‘*ethno*’ means ‘folk’ or ‘people,’ while ‘*graph*’ derives from ‘writing.’ Ethnography refers, then, to highly descriptive writing about particular groups of people.”¹⁴ Autoethnography then uses the researcher’s personal experience as data. The data describes, evaluates, and comprehends the cultural

¹¹ Geoff Payne and Judy Payne, *Key Concepts in Social Research*, SAGE key concepts (London, England: SAGE Publications, 2004), 175.

¹² Payne, 175.

¹³ Silverman, 84.

¹⁴ Silverman 2.

experience. Stacy Jones, Tony Adams, and Carolyn Ellis discuss research encompassing the use of narrative and personal experience in the *Handbook of Autoethnography*.¹⁵

Autoethnography is a method of self-narrative that places the self within a social context.

Heewon Chen warns of some potential problems when engaging in autoethnography in research:

(1) Excessive focus on self in isolation of others; (2) overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation; (3) exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source; (4) negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives; and (5) inappropriate application of the label autoethnography.¹⁶

Keeping in mind the potential challenges autoethnography presents makes it a practical and viable methodology. Chang writes, “Autoethnography is a rigorous ethnographic, broadly qualitative research method that attempts to achieve an in-depth cultural understanding of self, and others.”¹⁷ Qualitative research by nature is subjective. Using autoethnography helps the reader understand the researcher’s biases. It is a recording of the researcher’s beliefs and attitudes that affect the subjectivity of qualitative research. Reflexivity is part of the analytical process. Swinton describes it like this, “Reflexive knowing occurs when researchers deliberately turn their attention to their own processes of constructing the world, with the goal of saying something fresh and new about that personal (or shared) world.”¹⁸

The following section of this paper is auto ethnographical, inviting the reader into an understanding of my background and experiences to have a broader context of my values, beliefs, and attitudes to lessen subjective bias. Within qualitative research, reflexivity is a

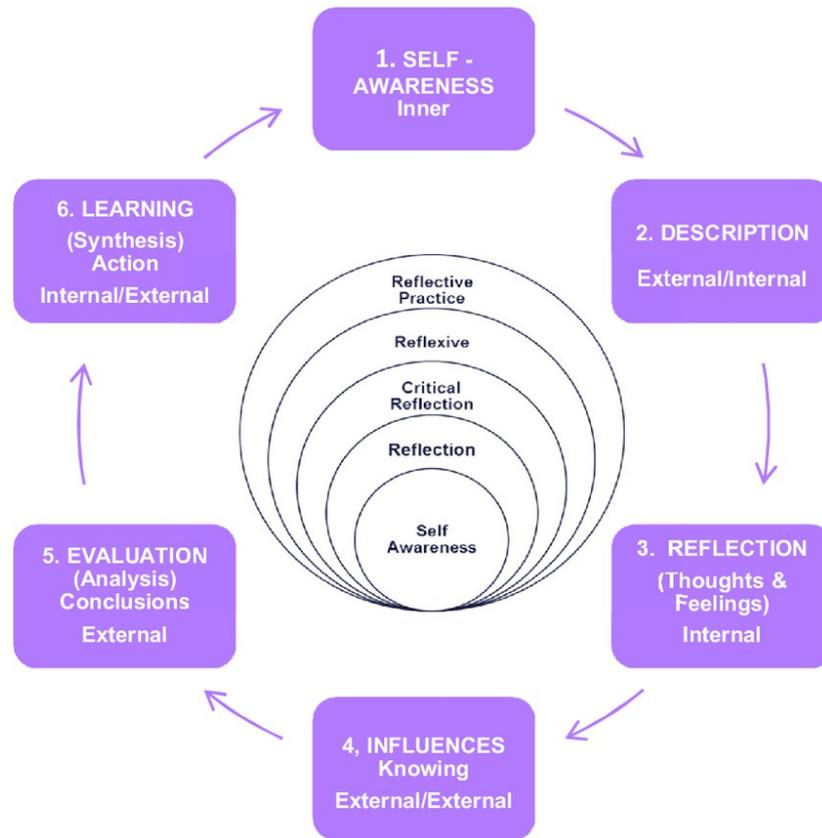
¹⁵ Stacy Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis, *Handbook of Autoethnography* (London, England: Routledge, 2016), 20.

¹⁶ Heewon Chang, *Autoethnography as Method*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 57.

¹⁷ Chang, 57.

¹⁸ Swinton, 33.

dynamic process. Self-reflection and self-awareness are critical elements in reflexive knowing. Swinton suggests that meaning comes to the situation through the researcher instead of looking to other methods and tools.¹⁹



Model of Reflexivity adapted for training medical professionals²⁰

While this model may seem to come from an unusual source, it has a ubiquitous purpose. It is a supportive model in demonstrating the dynamic process of reflexivity in qualitative research. With an awareness, description, and reflection that encompasses a receptivity to additional influences, a critical review synthesizing all the “data” permits more

¹⁹ Swinton, 58.

²⁰ Janice Bass, Jennifer Fenwick, and Mary Sidebotham, “Development of a Model of Holistic Reflection to Facilitate Transformative Learning in Student Midwives,” *Women and Birth* 30, no. 3 (June 2017): 231.

comprehensive learning. As with any dynamic process, learning continues with increased of self-awareness.

II. Autoethnography

a. Ministry Setting

Located approximately 20 minutes from downtown Detroit, Michigan is a Church of the Nazarene, an eleven-year-old church congregation; situated in the center of a lower middle class, predominately white neighborhood. This local community encompasses all stages in life and is intentionally gracious in our vastly differing social-economic and political leanings. My responsibilities as the Teaching Pastor include preaching at least monthly, creating the weekly order of worship and liturgy, pastoral care, oversight of the children's staff, visitation, and helping to introduce and teach formative practices as "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). The following section, describes the ministerial experiences that motivated the development of an artifact in the form of a community group²¹ curriculum that will offer an understanding of shame and its adverse effects. The small group experience addresses shame with its primary aim to nurture the restoration of the *imago Dei*. In the Fall, one's understanding of what it means to be created in the *imago Dei* became distorted (Genesis 3). When the first humans ate from the forbidden tree, they acted on the serpent's lie suggesting they were somehow not enough. They were missing something that the fruit would give them. Their action demonstrated a distortion in their understanding of their identity. More will be said later about the *imago Dei*. The couple who once walked in communion with God was now afraid for their Creator to see them. The subsequent hiding and shame they experienced

²¹ I chose this word over "small group" in an ongoing conscious decision to increase the understanding that God created us for community with the Triune God and one another.

indicate a new, distorted belief of unworthiness. The hypothesis is that shame impacts the quality of relationships and community life.

b. Personal, ecclesial, and academic experiences that have led me to research shame.

Since my teenage years the church has been a significant part of my life. Much of my experience in the church has mirrored the positive effects of the sun. It has shed light on the purpose and meaning of existence and provided elements essential to nurturing and forming of one created by God for community. Sometimes the church has been the cause of intense pain, like overexposure to the sun. There have been scorched and barren times and ones of abundance and life through the years.

I was raised in a self-described loving home where I experienced unconditional love from my father and conditional love from my mother. In adulthood, I recognize that my mom's need to manipulate and control me came from her early experiences of not feeling valued. I learned early that my worth was tethered to what I could produce or do for others. I rarely felt what I offered was good enough. Consequently, I have battled perfectionism, which is a manifestation of shame. Paul Goodliff describes the correlation between a controlling mother and an inaccurate understanding of self, "the normal self-awareness can be distorted into a painful and embarrassed self-consciousness when a child is not recognized for who she really is but becomes the object of her mother's desire to shape and control."²²

As a new Christian, I became involved with the Presbyterian Church USA (In 1981, they left the PCUSA and hosted the First General Assembly of the Evangelical

²² Paul Goodliff, *With Unveiled Face: A Pastoral and Theological Exploration of Shame* (London, England: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2005), 26.

Presbyterian Church, EPC) around the corner from the Episcopal church in which I held my membership. At Ward EPC, I was a student leader and then a youth leader for several years. My call to ministry came as I was leading a high school Wilderness Stress Camp outing. The day we climbed Mt. Mitchell, I heard God speak to my heart that this is what God wanted me to do. Moved by the clarity to which I understood the call, I still questioned why God would call me? I did not have a dramatic conversion story to proclaim God's greatness. In what I understood as obedience to God's call, I transferred to Taylor University and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Christian Education. Subsequently, I completed a Master's in Pastoral Psychology and Counseling. Through my master's studies, I became increasingly self-aware of the tether between performance and value. Unfortunately, the growth was not yet sufficient to keep me from marrying a personality similar to the one I failed to please as a child. That relationship ended with profound experiences of shame, further etching a diminished value. Other contributing factors to my shame are having no biological children²³ and a life-long battle with weight. The part of my story that loudly declares the glory of God is the genuinely miraculous way God softened my iron-clad heart and gifted me with a godly man who demonstrates my intrinsic value. My husband, of twenty-eight years, has helped me know God's love, just because I am His. I want to suggest that perhaps learning to live as the beloved of God may hold the key to combating shame.

Through my years of ministry experience, I have engaged in many hours of pastoral counseling. I have walked through the devastation of broken trust and violations of love²⁴

²³ I say it this way because God has blessed me with three children that are biologically my husband's but mine by choice. They have blessed us with twelve grandchildren that only know me as grandma. God has done a tremendous amount of healing in this particular area.

²⁴ Terry D. Hargrave and Franz Pfitzer, *Restoration Therapy: Understanding and Guiding Healing in Marriage and Family Therapy* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 3–31.

with many couples. Also, I have counseled and prayed with numerous individuals who are enduring the scars of insecure attachment and substance-addicted parents. An overwhelming number have expressed feelings of worthlessness, not being valued, or loved; most have expressed shame or feeling ashamed. It was a common experience for the spouse who was the victim of abuse or adultery to express shame. *If I had only been more worthy, he/she would not have turned to another.*²⁵ I expressed similar things at the demise of my first marriage.

Ecclesiastically, the influences of my early teenage years were more heavily Calvinistic²⁶ which reinforced the lack of good in me. One of the five main points of Calvinism, “Total depravity,” does not intrinsically convey the value of God’s good creation in the here and now. John Calvin wrote the following about original sin, “although they have not yet produced the fruit of their own unrighteousness, they have the seed implanted within them. Nay, their whole nature, as it were, a seed-bed of sin, and therefore cannot but be odious and abominable to God.”²⁷ Calvin viewed everything that came from humankind as sin, “the whole of man, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, is so deluged as it were, that no part remains exempt from sin, and, therefore, everything that proceeds from him is as imputed as sin.”²⁸

I was left with the life-altering question, if there is nothing good in me, what hope do I have for a relationship with a holy, perfect God? A good friend in seminary and I used to

²⁵ Not a direct quote, but a common experience for those victims of affairs.

²⁶ I volunteered with children and youth in the Presbyterian Church USA that left the Presbytery in 1981 and held the first General Assembly for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. Francis Schaeffer was the main speaker.

²⁷ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion: The Four Books - Complete and Unabridged*, trans. Thomas Norton (North Charleston: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, Pantianos Classics, 2017), Book 2, 96.

²⁸ Calvin, Book 2, 97.

playfully banter back and forth the points of Wesley-Arminianism, and Calvinism. The Wesleyan Way seemed to speak deeply to the questions that troubled me. In 1986, I joined the staff of a United Methodist Church, a position I held for over 22 years. So, it was in my late twenties that I discovered Wesleyan Theology resonated in life-altering ways for me. Humanity's understanding of what it meant to be created in the image of God and for relationship became distorted in the fall (Genesis 3). There was a shadow cast on my understanding of my identity. The image in which humanity was created was not totally obliterated by original sin. Wesleyan theology introduced me to the loving, transformative nature of God, who is actively healing, restoring, redeeming, and reconciling all of God's creation. To understand this as more than a future hope following death, but as God presently and actively restoring all of creation, has been life-altering. The image of God, marred in the garden, can be restored through the transforming power of God. Wesleyan theology speaks to the restorative nature of God who moves us through our shame, guilt, and fear to participate in our divine potential more fully. The pervasiveness and insidious nature of shame have fueled my passion for researching the mitigation, healing, and becoming shame resilient, as Brené Brown suggests.²⁹ Shame adversely affects the cohesiveness and formative nature of community. Many of the voices influencing my teen years were openly hostile to the place of women in pastoral ministry. One of the last senior pastors I served under in the United Methodist Church offered a new voice and encouraged my engagement in pastoral responsibilities. He appointed me as "interim" during two prolonged absences for health issues. Following his retirement, I soon left the UM Church for the Church of the Nazarene, where God

²⁹ Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, First trade paperback printing. (New York, NY: Avery, 2015), 61.

confirmed my call to pastoral ministry. I completed a Master of Divinity degree at Nazarene Theological Seminary and was ordained the same year.

Pursuing this endeavor was confirmed and heightened by attending a workshop at M-19, a mission conference held every four years in the Church of the Nazarene. The presenters were Roland Hearn and John Comstock. Roland Hearn was the Registrar, and Dean of Students at Nazarene Theological College in Brisbane, pastored several churches, and serves as the District Superintendent for Australia's North and West Districts. Working with Hearn is John Comstock, the CTL Coordinator at the Global Ministry Center of the Church of the Nazarene. These men continue to extensively research the problem and pervasiveness of shame and address it. Subsequently, I attended "A Vision of Healing and Hope," one of several conferences taught by Hearn and Comstock on the same subject. A personal experience incited Roland's research when as a 20-year-old, he was the driver in a fatal car accident that claimed the life of his sister and girlfriend.

This ultimately led Hearn to a,

profound desire to understand the healing and transformational nature of grace. This desire led to a fascination, and later academic study, of the nature of love and shame within a Wesley theological construct. Roland believes that love - vulnerable, self-giving, valuing love – holds all that is necessary for healing, restoration of the human spirit, and the living of the life of holiness.³⁰

In my research, I have encountered a dissertation for a Doctor of Ministry, by Dr. Linda Settles and one for a Doctor of Philosophy by Dr. Sally Nash on the subject of shame in the church. As an African American pastor, Settles encountered many “who have experienced things such as abuse, violence, and sexual promiscuity, and who were

³⁰ (https://discipleshipplace.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=403:rev-roland-hearn&catid=2&lang=en). Accessed June 3, 2020.

dealing with feelings of abandonment, rejection, and shame.”³¹ She also speaks to shame in the Church that stems from slavery and racism. Nash documents her personal experiences with shame and her encounters with it as an ordained priest in the Church of England. Several practical measures suggest shame is a pervasive state that impacts one's relationship with their environment, others, and self. One such tool is “The Experiential Shame Scale (ESS), an ‘opaque’ measure of physical, emotional, and social markers of shame experiences, was developed to address the difficulties of assessing state shame.”³² Another assessment tool called the State Shame and Guilt Scale (SSGS-8) was developed and tested in Italy. Cesare Cavalera of Catholic University in Milano reviewed and validated the test results in a published article, “Shame and guilt are crucial emotions regulating individual’s interactions with the surrounding environment as well as social relations and the development of the self.”³³ Another article compares the reliability of two measures of shame guilt-proneness using the Harder Personal Feelings Questionnaire and the Hoblitzelle Adapted Shame and Guilt Scale. This article views the measurements and concludes that the “results support the reliability and shame/guilt factor structure of each scale.”³⁴ Psychological assessments, the ongoing theological and psychological research of Hearn and Comstock, and the sociological research of Brown support that shame is a problem. It is a pervasive shadow that distorts one’s value, and it does not discriminate between genders, status, or ethnicity. Experience and the people mentioned above have testified to the need to address shame in the church and unchurched.

³¹ Linda Settles, “Reconstructing Shame: A Model For Transforming Lives For the Empowerment of Healthy Church Leadership” (DMIN, Dayton, OH: United Theological Seminary, 2017), 13.

³² Jeannine E. Turner, “Researching State Shame With the Experiential Shame Scale,” *The Journal of Psychology* 148, no. 5 (September 3, 2014): 577.

³³ Cesare Cavalera, “A Short Version of the State Shame and Guilt Scale,” *TPM* 24, no. No. 1 (March 27, 2017) 99.

³⁴ David H. Harder and Alysya Zalma, “Two Promising Shame and Guilt Scales: A Construct Validity Comparison,” *Journal of Personality Assessment* 55, no. No 3-4 (1990): Abstract.

III. Definitions of Shame

This section will first attempt to broaden our understanding of shame by differentiating between shame and guilt. Second, it will present diverse facets of the effects of shame; and finally, it will propose a working definition of shame synthesized from the many ways others have defined it.

a. Shame vs. Guilt

The relationship between shame and guilt needs some further definition. Though sometimes difficult to articulate, shame and guilt are different entities. There is broad agreement, across disciplines, distinguishing guilt and shame. Most often, the typology of guilt is in relationship to the law. One may be found guilty or innocent of committing a crime or breaking a known law of God. Roland Muller writes, “when man broke God’s law, he was in a position of guilt.”³⁵ Guilt is something one experiences or feels as a response to something one has done, whereas shame is the belief that one is bad. Shames cause one to view their identity as unloved and lacking in value. Muller writes of three conditions resulting from the first humans’ sin. Guilt was the result of doing wrong. He also writes that the conditions of shame and fear are the consequences of the first sin. Shame made the humans feel unworthy and no longer valued by God. Fear is experienced in brokenness.³⁶ Paul Goodliff offers further delineating emotions and experiences, “The shame family of experiences includes embarrassment, humiliation, disgrace, shyness, modesty, pride, ridicule and narcissism. The family of emotions linked to guilt is different and includes injury, duty, offense, transgression, culpability, wrong and good/bad.”³⁷ If guilt is about something one has done, then Goodliff believes that

³⁵ Roland Müller, *Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door* (Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris Corp., 2000), 21.

³⁶ Müller, 21.

³⁷ Goodliff, 6.

forgiveness is the path to restoration.³⁸ Guilt can be a motivating influence to make the wrong right. June Tangney and Ronda Dearing write, “shame involves fairly global negative evaluations of the self (i.e., ‘Who I am’). Guilt involves a more articulated condemnation of a specific behavior (i.e., ‘What I did’).”³⁹ Curt Thompson agrees that guilt relates to something one has done and shame to believing the self to be bad.⁴⁰ Capsulizing historical Christian thought on sin, Robin Stockitt suggests, “The predominant term that has consumed the energies of theologians—at least in the Western theological tradition—has been ‘guilt,’ and this metaphor has defined, shaped, and molded subsequent theological reflections as a result.”⁴¹ Muller traces through the early church theologians the Western culture’s transition from the honor/shame culture of Jesus’s time to one of guilt/innocence. Tertullian, who first developed systematic theology, was well-versed in Roman law. Basil the Great practiced law and taught rhetoric. Augustine studied rhetoric and used it in the debate of Roman law. He also, taught legal rhetoric prior to his conversion. Ambrose, John Calvin, and Arnauld Antoine were all legal professionals.⁴² These legally educated, influential, Western theologians helped change the trajectory from a shame/honor culture to that of guilt/innocence in the West. Why is this important? The culture of the east is one based on relationship where the Western church was concerned whether one could stand in the presence of God with sin and guilt. In the West, salvation from sin becomes the primary focus.⁴³ The locus for this Western culture’s concern was differentiating between right and wrong, which

³⁸ Goodliff, 6.

³⁹ June Price Tangney and Ronda L. Dearing, *Shame and Guilt, Emotions and Social Behavior* (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2002), 24.

⁴⁰ Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 63.

⁴¹ Robin Stockitt. 43.

⁴² Müller, 28-31.

⁴³ Müller, 30, 35-40.

ultimately points to who is in and who is out. It is essential to recognize the worldview we bring to scripture and hermeneutics. While lecturing on worldview and culture, a participant approached Muller, who inquired if Muller was saying that evangelical theology is wrong. The listener's question illustrates the point Muller presented concerning Western culture.⁴⁴

Edward Wimberly is an African American theological professor and pastor who brilliantly weaves together the interrelatedness of preaching and pastoral care in its ability to transform the narratives shaping people's attachments and identity. Drawing from Freudian theory and family systems, Wimberly writes of narrative psychology and plot narratives that are foundational human functioning.⁴⁵ Wimberly also writes of Satan's temptations to Jesus' identity and purpose and then makes this hope-filled statement, "Shame was not possible because his (Jesus) identity was rooted in his relationship to God."⁴⁶ He offers crucial insight into the mitigation of shame. Wimberly offers his definition of shame, "I defined shame as feeling unlovable, that one's life has a basic flaw in it."⁴⁷ There is a broad agreement linking guilt to an action and shame to a belief that one's whole self is defective and of little worth.

Dr. Linda Settles interviewed group members who participated in the artifact she created on shame. The group differentiates between guilt and shame in this way, "a person feels guilt because they did a wrong thing. Therefore, guilt is based on one's

⁴⁴ Müller, 33.

⁴⁵ Edward P. Wimberly, *Moving from Shame to Self-Worth: Preaching and Pastoral Care* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 29.

⁴⁶ Wimberly, 30.

⁴⁷ Wimberly, 11.

behavior. But a person feels shame because they feel that they are the thing that is wrong or bad.”⁴⁸

b. Multifaceted Effects of Shame

This section will explore a multifaceted approach to shame. First, the difference between internal and external shame and whether it is global or specific. Second, a consideration of what role broken trust plays a causation or a contributing factor to shame. Third, we will identify a reaction common to shame. Finally, this section introduces the effects of shame that transcend the individual’s experience and impact family and community bonding.

i. Typically, Internal and Global

Does the experience of shame come from within or without? Is the experience specific in nature or global, pervasive to the totality of self? Michael Lewis writes about how one attributes the experience of shame, “Shame finds its orientation in determining whether shame is internal, external, specific, or global.”⁴⁹ Internal shame is experienced as a flaw of self. External shame means one does not internalize the shame experience. Wimberly offers an example from the gospels. Luke 7:36-50 tells of Jesus being invited to the home of one of the Pharisees. Upon arrival, Jesus does not receive the common expressions of hospitality. Jesus tells of receiving no water for his feet or the customary greeting of a kiss and anointing with oil. We typically focus on the woman that Simon ridicules for being a sinner. However, the Pharisee attempted to apply external shame to

⁴⁸ Settles, 130.

⁴⁹ Michael Lewis, *Shame: The Exposed Self* (Place of publication not identified: Free Press, 2014), 132, accessed July 29, 2021, <http://rbdigital.oneclickdigital.com>.

Jesus by his lack of hospitality and accusations. To this Wimberly writes, “obviously the religious host sought in every way to humiliate Jesus.”⁵⁰ It is important to note that Jesus, knowing who he is, did not internalize the attempt at shaming. Jesus’ identity and value remain intact and unmarred by the Pharisee’s attempt to shame Jesus.

June Tangney, Ronda Dearing, and Michael Lewis write concerning the global attributions of shame. Shame is internal and global. Guilt is linked to an action and is therefore identified as a specific attribution.⁵¹ Global shame is characterized as shame attributed to the whole self. In contrast, guilt results from specific behavior and therefore located in that failure and not in the view of the whole self as bad.

Lewis views shame as normal, and while he says some styles of handling shame can be maladaptive, he does not identify it as pathological.⁵² He suggests that a therapist who focuses on the client’s presenting symptoms may fail to identify the root cause as shame.⁵³ Lewis labels shame as a normal emotion and conversely not to experience shame is the pathological condition. For example, Lewis identifies Narcissism as the extreme effort to avoid shame.⁵⁴ If by normal he means most everyone experiences shame, he would find Brown agreeing to the universality of shame.⁵⁵ It is part of the fallen nature of humanity that needs restoration. I am not comfortable labeling shame as normal. Common seems to be a more accurate description. Later, I will address at greater length how the restoration of the *imago Dei* in humanity offers hope for the shamed.

ii. Trust is evasive

⁵⁰ Wimberly, 76.

⁵¹ Tangney, 53; Lewis, 72.

⁵² Lewis, 295.

⁵³ Lewis, 142.

⁵⁴ Lewis, 140, 2.

⁵⁵ Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 61.

Trust is essential in building relationships, and broken trust can have devastating consequences for the intimacy and health of relationships. John Bowlby believes the ability to create intimate emotional bonds with others and good mental health largely depends on the quality of those early attachments.⁵⁶ The more secure a child is in their attachment, the more likely they will venture beyond that relationship and explore their world.⁵⁷ Muller also locates shame as often coming from an attachment violation though he does not limit it to childhood attachments. He does recognize that essentially shame correlates to a form of abuse in childhood that prohibits the child from learning to trust.⁵⁸

iii. Hiding

The natural tendency of one experiencing shame is to hide. Settles writes of the tendency to hide in plain sight.⁵⁹ Brené Brown identifies secrecy as fuel for shame.⁶⁰ To understand hiding and secrecy as feeding shame must mean exposing and naming shame deflates the wind from shame's sails. Thompson illustrates it this way, "Whether it is the involution into the silence of our own minds or the literal turning away from someone with a downcast facial expression with eyes lowered, shame leads us to cloak ourselves with invisibility to prevent further intensification of the emotion."⁶¹ In Genesis, the propensity to hide does not appear until after the first couple partakes of the forbidden fruit. They broke God's command; they believed the serpent's lie that they were "not enough," and that eating the fruit could somehow make them more. Genesis 3:10 tells of God inquiring as to the humans' whereabouts, "He (Adam) said, 'I heard the sound of

⁵⁶ John Bowlby, *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development* (London, England: Routledge, 1988), 24–38.

⁵⁷ Bowlby, 120.

⁵⁸ Müller, 48.

⁵⁹ Settles, 11.

⁶⁰ Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 67.

⁶¹ Thompson, 29.

You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so, I hid myself.’” Brown describes the traits of shame in this way,

Shame derives its power from being unspeakable. That’s why it loves perfectionists—it’s so easy to keep us quiet. If we cultivate enough awareness about shame to name it and speak to it we’ve basically cut it off at the knees. Shame hates having words wrapped around it. If we speak shame, it begins to wither.⁶²

God called Adam and Eve out of hiding, so one’s shame must also be called out of the shadow of hiding to break its grip.

Brown has done extensive research on shame and its triggers. The leading trigger for women is body image and appearance, while the perception of being weak more often triggers men.⁶³ The complexity of shame responses, while varied, seem to broadly fit into two primary reactions to shame for men 1) anger or 2) withdrawal. She offers an ethnography of various scenarios where women ask their husbands to be vulnerable and share their fears. In each example, when the husband was honest about his fear, the women’s non-verbal communication was to “man up,” not to be weak or afraid. Knowing their husbands’ fear made women more afraid and insecure. The conclusion men took from the experience was that women wanted them to pretend to be vulnerable.⁶⁴ Shame causes one to mask their authentic self, thereby disrupting mutuality and transparency in relationships. Shame can cause isolation because it is too painful to risk being completely open with others. The nature of shame is to hide, a veiling one’s true self. Furthermore, if one’s true self cannot be made known, neither can one genuinely believe themselves loved and valued.

⁶² Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 58.

⁶³ Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 82, 96.

⁶⁴ Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 94-96.

Often when we speak of shame, we talk primarily of its effects on the individual experiencing it; however, its effects reach beyond the individual. Shame casts its insidious shadow on relationships with spouse, family, and church, impacting others' perceptions.⁶⁵ Humanity, created for community by a triune God that models the interconnectedness of relationship and mutual affection, cannot be an island unto themselves. Peter Block writes, "Community is the container within which our longing to be [belonging] is fulfilled. Without the connectedness of a community, we will continue to choose not to be."⁶⁶

Shame is common to all human experience. Brown writes, "We all have shame. We all have good and bad, dark and light, inside of us. But if we don't come to terms with our shame, our struggles, we start believing that there's something wrong with us—that we're bad, flawed, not good enough—and even worse, we start acting on those beliefs."⁶⁷ Shame can prohibit full engagement in community, a failure to be vulnerable. Brown continues, "Shame keeps us small, resentful, and afraid."⁶⁸ Simply put, shame hurts and isolates. Shame is a problem because of the internal pain it causes. That pain results in maladaptive means of relating to others, causing the need to control, avoid, or pick fights to mask the pain. Such reactive events cause more hurt and isolation. When experiences of being unloved or not good enough go unaddressed, they frequently result in coping mechanisms, addictive behaviors, or aggressive retaliatory behaviors that further isolate

⁶⁵ Sally Nash, "Landscapes of Shame in the Church: A Typology to Inform Ministerial Praxis" (Ph.D., Queen's Foundation, 2015), 9.

⁶⁶ Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2009), xii.

⁶⁷ Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 61.

⁶⁸ Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 64.

and cause more hurt. It is emotionally painful to feel shame and often causes the shamed to lash out and shame others which only deepens their internal and external shame.

c. Definition of Shame

Lewis Smedes describes shame as a “very heavy feeling.... that almost everybody feels sometimes.”⁶⁹ Henri Nouwen states, “Shame makes me aware of my surroundings and susceptible to the negative assessments of others.”⁷⁰ Brown offers this definition of shame, “Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love, belonging and connection.”⁷¹ In *The Body Keeps the Score*, Bessel Van Der Kolk writes this about shame:

The safety of the group allows you to notice things that you have hidden from yourself-usually the things you are most ashamed of. When you no longer have to hide the structure allows you to place the shame where it belongs-on the figures right in front of you who represent those who hurt you and made you feel helpless as a child.⁷²

Curt Thompson identifies the self-reinforcing nature of shame and suggests one’s self-judgment leads to the judgment of others.⁷³ Restoration Therapy understands shame as a secondary emotion of self-reactivity to a violation of love. As a secondary emotion, shame is often challenging to assess. It carries a propensity to hide or withdraw because the individual does not believe he/she is worthy of love and value.⁷⁴ It is necessary to consider that shame is more than an emotion. The experience of broken bonds or insecure attachments fans a range of emotions. Thompson writes, “shame is certainly formed in

⁶⁹ Lewis Smedes, *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don’t Deserve* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 5.

⁷⁰ Henri J. M. Nouwen, Michael J. Christensen, and Rebecca J. Laird, *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Books, 2013), 125.

⁷¹ Brene Brown, *Dare to Lead* (London, England: Vermillion, 2018), 126.

⁷² Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014), 302.

⁷³ Thompson, 31, 29.

⁷⁴ Turner, 577-601.

the world of emotion, but it eventually recruits and involves our thinking, imaging and behaving as well.”⁷⁵ Out of the discipline of Attachment Theory, Johnson identifies shame as an “avoidance emotion evoking withdrawal and hiding.”⁷⁶ It is one of the possible occurrences of an insecure attachment. Some common threads throughout the definitions of shame are 1) a need to hide or withdraw; 2) feelings of unworthiness or being unloved; 3) it is global to identity, and 4) causes pain.

Shame was not part of God’s creative design but a result of the Fall. On the sixth day, God declared that all creation was very good (Genesis 1:31). Shame entered creation when Adam and Eve believed the serpent’s lie that if God loved them, God would not keep this fruit from them. The serpent enticed the humans to believe that they were “not enough,” something was missing in them that the fruit could change. Also implied is that God could not be trusted because God withheld something good from them. Genesis 3 records that their eyes were open; they were naked, and hid because they were ashamed.

I have come to refer to shame as a shadow that darkens humanity’s existence, an experience that causes one to hide, withdraw, and feel unworthy of love. There are many definitions for, and ideas of origin for this shadowy experience called shame. Brown captures the breadth of it in her definition, “Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love, belonging, and connections.”⁷⁷ Shame obscures the *imago Dei* in which humans have been created disrupting their experience of Divine love and hindering participation in Kingdom ministry.

⁷⁵ Thompson, 26.

⁷⁶ Susan M. Johnson, *Attachment Theory in Practice: Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) with Individuals, Couples, and Families* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2019), 36.

⁷⁷ Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 26.

There is no one widely accepted definition of shame. While numerous writers attempt to define it, a couple of more widely reported attributes are feeling unloved, unworthy, and frequently a desire to retreat or hide. Stockitt defines it this way, “Shame is an expression of separation, division, the tearing apart of that which was always intended to be held together in harmonious beauty.”⁷⁸ Drawing from the wisdom of many authors, I define shame in this way. *Shame is the disorienting state of not knowing one is the beloved of God and worthy of belonging, whether it is the result of insecure attachment, a violation of love/trust, or misperception. It binds us to the untruths that we are unloved, flawed, and undeserving of relationships. Shame alienates and isolates.* It is essential to note the pervasiveness of shame.

Conclusion

The introduction of the conceptional framework for this dissertation identifies it as a work in Practical Theology. An emotion or experience is difficult, if not impossible, to quantify; therefore, a qualitative methodology using autoethnography and reflexivity have been chosen to minimize the subjective nature of this research. The hope is to accurately present the context from which the research is pursued so that greater integrity to subjectivity will prevail. Reflexivity as a dynamic model enables scrutinizing and reflecting upon the input obtained, leading to increased learning and awareness. As the diagram exemplifies, this model is cyclical and continues repeatedly. One can think of it as a forward-moving spiral.

Section two fleshed out the autoethnography describing my ministry setting. The congregation I am a part of is the context for the attached artifact, a curriculum

⁷⁸ Stockitt, 89.

specifically created for our use. Additionally, I identified some of my personal experiences of shame and one ecclesial experience. There were several other ecclesial or institutional experiences with shame that I have chosen not to disclose to maintain confidentiality. I expounded on my educational experience and the many opportunities to engage in pastoral counseling. Those I have had the privilege of listening to and praying with, coupled with my introduction to Roland Hearn and John Comstock, led me to pursue this area of research. Hargrave offers a helpful model called the Pain and Peace Cycle. Shame is illustrated as a painful problem through his diagram. More on this will come later, but for now, it is enough to recognize that when something makes one feel unloved, alone, or like a failure, the Pain Cycle exemplifies maladaptive ways of coping. One may withdraw, shame self, step up their performance (control), get angry, or blame. In reaction, others then pull away, withdraw, vie for control, or match the anger of the other. The Pain Cycle reinforces feelings of being unloved or not valued.⁷⁹

The final section of this chapter considered shame from three paths. The first differentiated between shame and guilt and looked at a multifaceted approach that introduced shame as internal and global. Second, the role of broken trust as a source of shame. Third, hiding was identified as a common reaction to shame. Fourth, we considered the effects of shame that transcend the individual and impact the family and community. Shame left unaddressed keeps one bound in a vicious cycle that reinforces the worst fears. I am unworthy and unloved. What will interrupt this painful cycle?

The capstone of chapter 1 considered several definitions of shame and offered my current definition of shame. The reflexivity of this working definition will be clear. Also,

⁷⁹ Terry Hargrave et al., *Vital Tools For Relevant Church Leaders: Restoring Relationships and Building Community During Difficult Conversations* (Malibu, CA: Pepperdine Boone Center for the Family, 2018), 33.

set forth is the expectation that this still is a work in progress as the research continues. The “State of Guilt and Shame Scale” appears in Appendix A to help demonstrate the course I am pursuing as laid out in the section on a conceptual framework.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter 1 established the framework for this research, offering definitions of shame and the pain and brokenness it potentially causes. This chapter is a literature review of the many authors, researchers, and therapists I have engaged with throughout this project. First, we will view shame from the psychological approach of Attachment Theory by leading experts John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. Second, an understanding of shame from Marriage and Family Therapy, drawing from Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and Restoration Therapy (RT) modalities. Susan Johnson will inform the modality of EFT. Terry Hargrave and Franz Pfitzer, as the founders and experts in Restoration Therapy (RT), will contribute an in-depth understanding of shame. The third section explores theoretical and theological issues of shame. Section 3, part 1, suggests the locus for being fully human is situated in the community of the Holy Trinity, encompassing such vital voices as Tom Noble, Stanley Grenz, Miroslav Volf, and Jurgen Moltmann. Part 2 undertakes a biblical exploration of the *imago Dei* with the help of Walter Brueggemann and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Part 3 introduces Jack Balswick and Associates and their theological viewpoint on human development called the Reciprocating Self. Section 3 concludes with locating shame in the larger Christian context. This chapter will conclude with ground research scientist Brené Brown. A ground

researcher does not begin with a hypothesis but allows the data to shape the theory. Brown is perhaps the leading expert in a sociological treatment of shame.

Approaches to the Origin of Shame

The field of psychology is a vast umbrella encompassing many theorists and methods of approach to psychological and personality theory. Most theorists would identify themselves with at least one of these 20th Century Approaches to Psychology: Neuroscience, Cognitive, Behaviorist, Psychoanalytical, or Humanistic.⁸⁰ To talk about theory is to recognize there is no definitive scientific evidence defending the methods and ideation of these theories. We will accept Calvin Hall and Lindzey Gardner's definition of theory for our purposes, "Theory is an unsubstantiated hypothesis or a speculation concerning reality that is not yet definitely known to be so."⁸¹ Hence there is ample space for both affirmation and disagreement when we embark in this field. It is a dynamic, ever-changing one.

The first section will summarize the psychological approach of Attachment Theory. This exploration intends to locate an epistemological understanding of shame's potential source and experience. It will also show how theorists from these theories view shame. Personality deals with a wide range of both conscious and unconscious human behavior. Robert Ewens helps us here,

To most theorists, personality includes virtually everything about a person – mental, emotional, social, and physical. Some aspects of personality are unobservable, such as thoughts, memories, and dreams, whereas others are observable, such as overt actions. Personality also includes aspects that are concealed from yourself, or unconscious, as well as those that are conscious and well within your awareness.⁸²

⁸⁰ Ronald J. Comer and Elizabeth Gould, *Psychology around Us* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2011), 29.

⁸¹ Calvin S. Hall and Lindzey Gardner, *Theories of Personality*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1978), 9.

⁸² Robert B. Ewen, *An Introduction to Theories of Personality*, 7th ed. (New York, NY: Psychology Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 3.

Attachment, love, and identity are primarily influenced by the love or lack of love an individual experienced as an infant and child. To not experience this love from life's inception will likely bring tragic consequences that could last a lifetime.⁸³

Section one encompasses three parts. First, we will consider the origin of Attachment Theory with a glimpse into the contributions of two prominent Attachment Theorists: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. Both believe early attachments directly affect one's identity development, future relationships, and response to stressful life events. Secondly, the role of attachment in personality development will grant insight into the nature of attachment in constructive and destructive personality formation. Insecure attachment leads to feelings of being unloved, not valued and will offer insight into the origin of shame. Finally, we will consider the contributions secure attachments make to competence and confidence.

Section two will address a more recent therapy model known as Restoration Therapy. This model identifies love and trustworthiness as "the essential constructs that human beings need for healthy individual identity and a sense of safety in interacting in relationship."⁸⁴ Love and trustworthiness are the foundation of the primary emotions of feeling loved and safe, necessary for building and continuing relationships. Violations of love cause one pain resulting in feelings of being unloved, worthless, and unacceptable, to name a few. The reactivity to this violation is to blame others and or shame oneself. A violation of trust disrupts one's sense of safety, causing a reaction of controlling behaviors and/or escape/chaos behaviors. Secondly, we will explore the Pain Cycle and Peace Cycle models, which can benefit the exchange of unhealthy cycles for those that

⁸³ Hargrave, *Vital Tools*, 19.

⁸⁴ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 29.

create peace rather than pain. Thirdly, the role of forgiveness in restoration will briefly be explored.

Finally, it is of primary importance to recognize violations of love or insecure attachments as the source of one's shame. Acknowledging and practicing new ways to address them opens the potential for healing and restoration.

I. Attachment Theory

a. Origin of Attachment Theory

Susan Johnson describes Attachment Theory as “a comprehensive developmental perspective on personality and affect regulation.”⁸⁵ It helps to understand one's sense of self based on the early relationship of parent or caregiver to child. A secure attachment is the critical emotional link to a child's understanding of self, the development of identity, and success in future relationships. Recognizing the impact secure and insecure attachment had on the couples they saw in therapy, Alan Gurman and Neil Jacobson wrote, “Attachment theory originated with John Bowlby and emphasizes the importance of emotional closeness to others as a necessary survival function from which infants begin to foster emotional bonds.”⁸⁶ In the 1930s and 1940s, clinicians across the globe were noting the impairments in personality development that came from changes in the mother figure or long-term institutional care during a child's first years of life.⁸⁷ Bowlby was appointed the Chief of the Mental Health Section of the World Health Organization

⁸⁵ Johnson, viii.

⁸⁶ Alan S. Gurman and Neil S. Jacobson, eds., *Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2002), 157.

⁸⁷ Bowlby, 20-21.

and spent six months in 1950 reading all the literature, discussing with authors and people with field experience in Europe and America. He published his report, entitled *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, in 1951. Bowlby theorized that “the first relationships in infancy set the tone for all later love relationships. He believed that disruption to these first relationships or poor quality in these relationships accounted for trauma and troubling behavior in adolescence and adult life.”⁸⁸

Another prominent voice was Mary Ainsworth, whose research was prompted by her own insecurities. The personal experience launched her into a noted career, understanding how secure attachment is formed. Both Bowlby and Ainsworth believed their research could improve the human condition. After decades of research from many diverse sources, Jeffrey Simpson and Steven Rholes state, “the major principles of attachment theory rank among the most important achievements in the psychological sciences today.”⁸⁹ Susan Johnson writes, “Attachment is fundamentally an interpersonal theory that places the individual in the context of his or her closest relationships with others; it views mankind as not only essentially social but also as *Homo Vinculum*—the one who bonds.”⁹⁰

Specific patterns of behavior were observed that extended beyond infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood; those findings led to the basis of what is now called Attachment Theory. Bowlby situates it like this,

Attachment Theory emphasizes (a) the primary status and biological function of intimate emotional bonds between individuals... (b) the powerful influence on a child’s development of the ways he is treated by his parents, especially

⁸⁸ Carol Garhart Mooney, *Theories of Attachment: An Introduction to Bowlby, Ainsworth, Gerber, Brazelton, Kennell, and Klaus*, 1st ed., Redleaf professional library (St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press, 2010), 18.

⁸⁹ Jeffrey A. Simpson and W. Steven Rholes, eds., *Attachment Theory and Research: New Directions and Emerging Themes* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2015), 1.

⁹⁰ Johnson, 6.

his mother figure, and (c) that present knowledge of infant and child development requires that a theory of developmental pathways should replace theories that invoke specific phases of development in which it is held a person may become fixated and/or to which he may regress.⁹¹

Infants and children look to their parents or parent figures for protection, comfort, and support. If the child experiences those needs met by their parents, secure attachments form. Bowlby believes the ability to create intimate emotional bonds with others and good mental health largely depends on the quality of those early attachments. The more secure a child is in their attachment, the more likely they are to venture beyond that relationship and explore their world. As we typically see with toddlers, they seek out the figure to whom they are attached when they are startled, become anxious, tired, or do not feel well. This action demonstrates a healthy bond and the child's expectation of protection and support. Bowlby acknowledged wide acceptance among clinicians that one's mental state "is deeply influenced by whether his intimate personal relationships are warm and harmonious; or tense, angry, and anxious; or else emotionally remote; or possibly non-existent."⁹² These early experiences impact an individual's ability to make intimate emotional connections with others. His concluding hypothesis is "that each person's resilience or vulnerability to stressful life events is determined to a very significant degree by the pattern of attachment he or she develops during the early years and, more especially, to clarify to what degrees and in what ways the early-development patterns influence subsequent development."⁹³

b. Role of attachment in personality development

⁹¹ Bowlby, 120.

⁹² Bowlby, 160.

⁹³ Bowlby, 177.

Mary Ainsworth's most well-known work is called *Strange Situation*. It involved observing an infant play in a strange setting where both adults are known to the child and an unknown adult coming into the room and leaving. Through a sequence of events, the researchers noted the amount of exploration and the child's reactions to the leaving and return of the parent. Conclusions led to the identification of three patterns of attachment behavior. 1) Secure attachment – Feeling comfortable and confident, these children explore their world, returning periodically to the source of their security. 2) Anxious-ambivalent insecure attachment – These children express distress with the unfamiliar whether the parents are present or not, and when the parent returns, they resist reconnecting. 3) Anxious-avoidant insecure attachment – Noted as the most challenging pattern, this child avoids all the adults in the room. They show little emotional response whether parents or strangers are nearby. They lack affect.⁹⁴ Bowlby states of this pattern that the child expects to be refused if support is sought, “without love and support of others, he tries to become emotionally self-sufficient and may later be diagnosed as narcissistic or as having a false self.”⁹⁵ Later, I will substantiate narcissism as an ultimate expression of shame. These patterns tend to reinforce themselves. The securely attached child is less demanding and a more content child. An anxious-ambivalent child tends to be more needy and whiny, whereas the anxious-avoidant child is more likely to engage in bullying. The first pattern may be described as an easy, enjoyable child, whereas the second and third patterns are often stuck in a cyclical pattern of behaving in undesirable ways and receiving an unfavored response from their parent.

⁹⁴ Mooney, 31.

⁹⁵ Bowlby, 124.

Bowlby identifies “Attachment behavior is any form of behavior that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified individual who is conceived as better able to cope with the world.”⁹⁶ The limitations of this project do not allow for the space to trace the development of Emotional Focused Therapy (EFT) as attachment-driven psychotherapy. Susan Johnson is known for understanding the healing power in emotional connection. Her work, *Attachment Theory in Practice*, contributes to the development over the decades in attachment theory research and how it informs and aligns with EFT in the therapeutic process, “Bowlby noted that the main function of emotion was to communicate one’s needs, motives, and priorities to oneself and others.”⁹⁷ Emotion is common to all human experience though identifying and regulating it is more readily accessible to some than others based on their relational attachments. Here is the thumbnail summary of the function of emotions.

- 1) Emotion orients and engages.
- 2) Emotion shapes meaning-making.
- 3) Emotion motivates us.
- 4) Emotion communicates with others and sets up their response.⁹⁸

Most theorists and researchers across the psychological disciplines identify six to eight emotional responses that seem to transcend culture and follow the same patterns in brain mapping. While there is much more that could be said, the following illustrates how Johnson categorizes her description of emotional responses:

- a) Approach Emotions
Joy, evoking relaxed engagement, and openness
Surprise, evoking curiosity
Anger, evoking assertion, and moving towards goals
- b) Avoidance emotions

⁹⁶ Bowlby, 26-27.

⁹⁷ Johnson, 35.

⁹⁸ Johnson, 34-35.

Shame, evoking withdrawal, and hiding
Fear, evoking fleeing, or freezing
Sadness, evoking withdrawal, or comfort⁹⁹

Concerning the origin of shame, it is pertinent to note she views shame as an avoidance emotion that causes one to hide or withdraw. Shame is an emotion stemming from an insecure attachment.

c. Contributions to Competence and Confidence

Carol Mooney identifies the child with secure attachments as displaying more confidence and well-being.¹⁰⁰ Secure attachment has been connected, through the social sciences, to almost every positive index for mental health. It is nearly impossible to overstate the positive formational outcomes of secure attachment. Johnson writes,

These indices include resilience in the face of stress, optimism, high self-esteem, confidence and curiosity, tolerance for human differences, a sense of belonging and the ability to self—disclose and be assertive, to tolerate ambiguity, to regulate difficult emotions, to engage in reflective metacognition and to grasp difference perspectives.¹⁰¹

Additionally, an individual can maintain emotional equilibrium and appropriate affect, process and integrate information, take decisive actions, and even negotiate and learn from traumatic events. They have a greater capacity for compassion and self-giving. Research has indicated that one is better able to perceive the needs of others and appropriately respond when one is in a place of emotional balance. Relationships are comprised of a healthy sense of give and take. Johnson states, “When we have a safe haven and secure base with loved ones, we are also better at dealing with differences and

⁹⁹ Johnson, 36.

¹⁰⁰ Mooney, 32.

¹⁰¹ Johnson, 10.

conflict . . . it is important to note the impact of secure attachment on emotion regulation, social adjustment, and mental health.”¹⁰² Secure attachment allows one to weather difficulties and recover more quickly from the experience of negative feelings.

II. Restoration Therapy

Restoration Therapy was born out of the practice and research of therapists who emerged from identification with contextual therapist Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy. While not leaving the influence of contextual psychotherapy and its concepts of “trustworthiness, justice, entitlement, destructive entitlement, and multidirected partiality,” Hargrave and Pfitzer focused on individual identity and the potential bearing love has on one’s identity.¹⁰³ They advanced the thinking on trustworthiness and its impact to shape one’s understanding of safety in a relationship. Love and trustworthiness emerge for Restoration therapists as what they call the “twin pillars of relationships;” necessary to the relational health and providing context for dysfunction.¹⁰⁴ Restoration Therapy considers what interventions could restore love and trust and then assists the client to grasp those insights and learn to repetitively practice skills that will reprogram the brain processes.¹⁰⁵ The introduction of what they have termed the pain-and-peace cycles frame these brain-altering skills into a four-step cycle. Hargrave classifies “Restoration therapy

¹⁰² Johnson, 10.

¹⁰³ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, ix.

¹⁰⁴ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 15.

¹⁰⁵ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, ix-x.

is about restoring love and trustworthiness to the human condition.”¹⁰⁶ First, we will introduce more concerning the pillars of Love and Trustworthiness with their reactive emotions of blame/shame and controller/chaos. Part two unveils the Cycles of Pain and Peace. Finally, part three will consider forgiveness as restoration.

a. Love and Trustworthiness

Beyond love as a mere sentiment, Hargrave defines love as something that “would include the ideas of giving adoration and acknowledgment, engaging in active companionship and intimacy, and sacrificing for the good of the beloved.”¹⁰⁷ The originators of Restoration Therapy, Hargrave and Pfitzer, identify love and trustworthiness as the common elements binding together all human relationships and essential to life as water and air.¹⁰⁸ Hargrave expresses the significance of human relationships, noting that without them one is not even able to have a relationship with oneself.¹⁰⁹ For the procuring of a healthy identity, he suggests three facets of love as essential at the developmentally appropriate times: 1) companionate, 2) romantic (passionate), and 3) altruistic love. One aspect of love may be more necessary at specific points in one’s growth; however, Hargrave views each type as indispensable in “helping the individual answer the question of, ‘Who am I?’”¹¹⁰ Trustworthiness is the other essential element in the formation of self-concept. Three essentials needed for safety and trustworthiness in a relationship are a sense of 1) predictability – offers stability, 2)

¹⁰⁶ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 5.

¹⁰⁷ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 3.

¹¹⁰ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 12.

justice – a deep sense of security and hope, and 3) openness – sincerity and truthfulness. Trustworthiness answers the question, “‘Am I safe?’ in the context of this relationship.”¹¹¹

i. Companionate Love

First, companionate love is expressed in deep communication and mutuality, allowing one to feel cared for and supported. One of my close friends moved to Texas a couple of years ago. Our proximity and frequency of correspondence have changed, but it is as if little time has passed when we talk. Following my mom’s recent passing, she offered to board a plane to be with me. Love expressed in sacrifice for the other’s good expresses worth and a sense of being loved and valued. The innate sense of not being alone, Hargrave and Pfitzer call companionate love. It is a love between friends, family members, or caregivers creating a sense of belonging and worth. Later a lack of belonging and value will be connected to the concept of shame.

ii. Romantic/Passionate Love.

It would be incorrect to equate romantic, passionate love only with sexual or mating relationships. This aspect of love may also describe the relationship between a caregiver a child (not sexual in this case). Hargrave defines “It is as if the love longs for gratification in terms of time, emotion, and interaction with the beloved, and no other person or object will meet or can meet that particular longing.”¹¹² This kind of love makes one feel valued and as if they are the one and only. The lover’s gaze deeply affirms or the parental eye

¹¹¹ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 16-17.

¹¹² Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 13

contact that comforts and communicates the child's worth. For Hargrave passionate love is the "essential element of formation in the sense of self. This type of love often carries with it the elements of excitement, fascination, passion, and even obsession."¹¹³

iii. Altruistic Love

Altruistic love is a love that gives on the other's behalf; it is a sacrificial love without regard for meeting one's own needs. It could be described in terms of putting the other first. An example may be the parent who puts their infant's needs above their own need for sleep. It is giving what one saved for self to someone in need. In *The Essential Humility of Marriage*, Hargrave tells a story of a Holocaust survivor who said he was alive because his father gave his son his ration of food, eventually dying of starvation so his son could live.¹¹⁴ This type of love validates and communicates that the other is of great value, worthy of love. Hargrave is heavily influenced by Martin Buber concerning his understanding of intimacy as a revelation of oneself. He says self-awareness becomes more acute in relationship with another. Relationships help one to grow up and become a complete person.

After introducing the typologies of love relationships that nurture and validate the expression of worth and value, we must reflect on what restoration therapy considers the pillars of relationships, the essentials on which relationships are built. Hargrave writes, "The clear emphasis of the attachment literature is on loving relationships, and the emphasis of the contextual approach is more on trustworthiness."¹¹⁵ Hargrave sees the necessity of combining both attachment and contextual approaches and claims love and

¹¹³ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 13

¹¹⁴ Terry D. Hargrave. *The Essential Humility of Marriage* (Phoenix, AZ: Zeig, Tucker & Theisen, Inc. 2000), 15.

¹¹⁵ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 4.

trustworthiness are the two elements that hold human relationships together. Healthy relationships in these foundational areas will produce peace and comfort that allows an individual to feel loved and safe. Consequently, the individual feels valued and able to nurture others while experiencing an equilibrium in the give and take of the relationship with each one's needs generally satisfied.¹¹⁶ Most people who are seeking counseling or therapy come because they have experienced significant violations of love and/or trust. These violations disrupt their sense of identity, relationship with the *offender*, and usually with others.

The social cognitive theorist, Albert Bandura, believes people can use what is available to them to produce positive outcomes from which they can benefit and produce good for others. He calls this *human agency*.¹¹⁷ So in loving, trustworthy relationships, one experiences a greater level of peace and security which empowers them to be an agent of the same for others and the further forming of one's own identity. Hargrave states, "Our belief is that human agency is a good way to describe what takes place when one is active and positive in shaping his or her identity and the identity of others."¹¹⁸

1. Violations of Love and/or Trust

It is reasonably safe to say that one typically does not seek therapy unless experiencing pain or brokenness. Restoration Therapists would contextualize the disruption causing pain as a violation of love, trust, or both. So, what happens when those pillars of relationship are violated? Such a violation disrupts peace and safety, causing one to experience pain and confusion. The pain of a love violation causes the primary

¹¹⁶ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 38.

¹¹⁷ Albert Bandura, "Human Agency in Social Cognitive Theory.," *American Psychologist* 44, no. 9 (1989): 1175–1184.

¹¹⁸ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 37.

emotion of feeling unloved. A violation of trust results in the individual feeling unsafe. That pain and confusion then cause one to react in blaming, shaming, controlling, or escaping. The diagram below creates a helpful image.

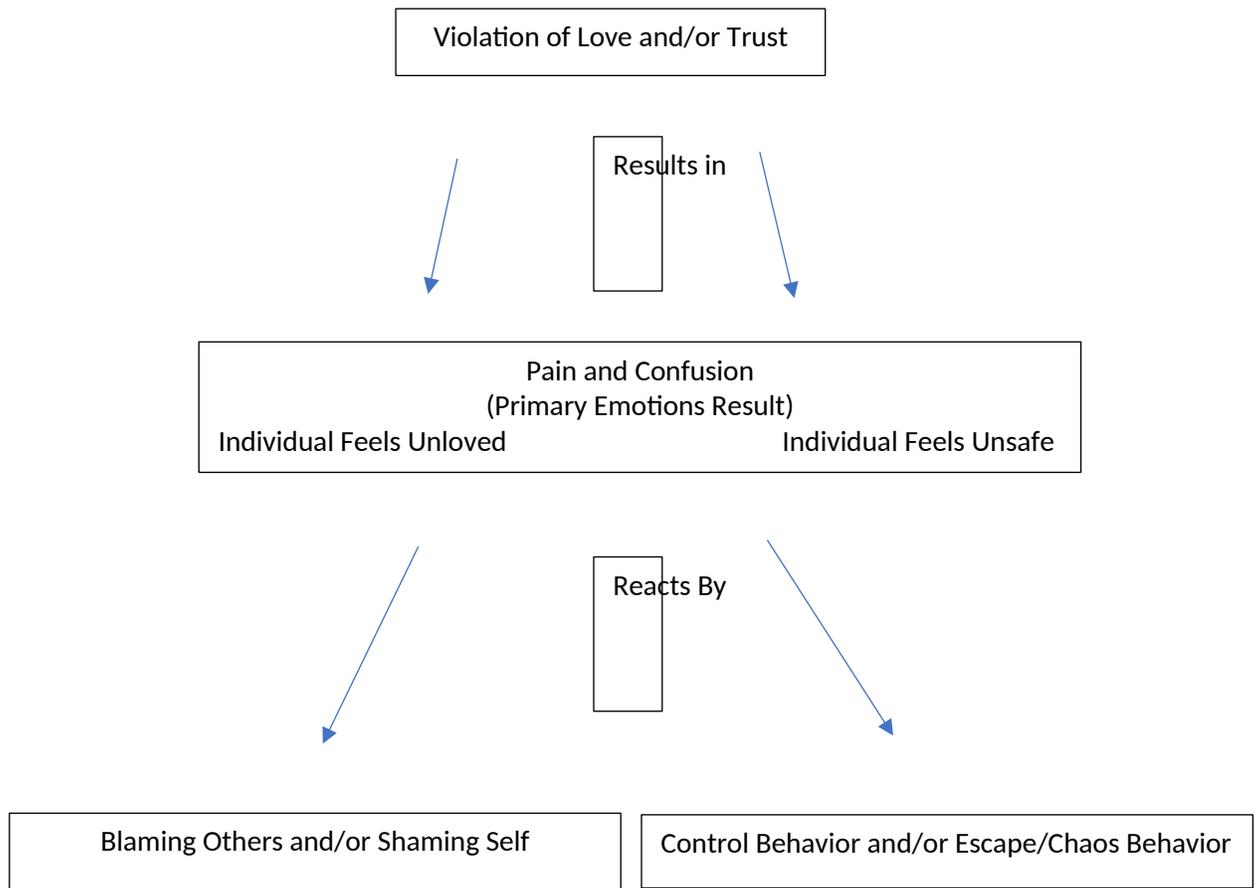


Figure 1 ¹¹⁹

To better clarify, Hargrave terms the way one reacts as self-reactivity. Let us consider each violation individually.

2. Violation of Love causing Blame or Shame

First, let us consider a violation of love. A person experiencing this type of pain will either blame others for the resulting hurt or will experience shame, feeling unworthy of

¹¹⁹ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 41.

love. The blamer feels entitled to love, whereas the shamed feels unworthy to receive love. It is helpful to present the diagram mapping of a violation of love.

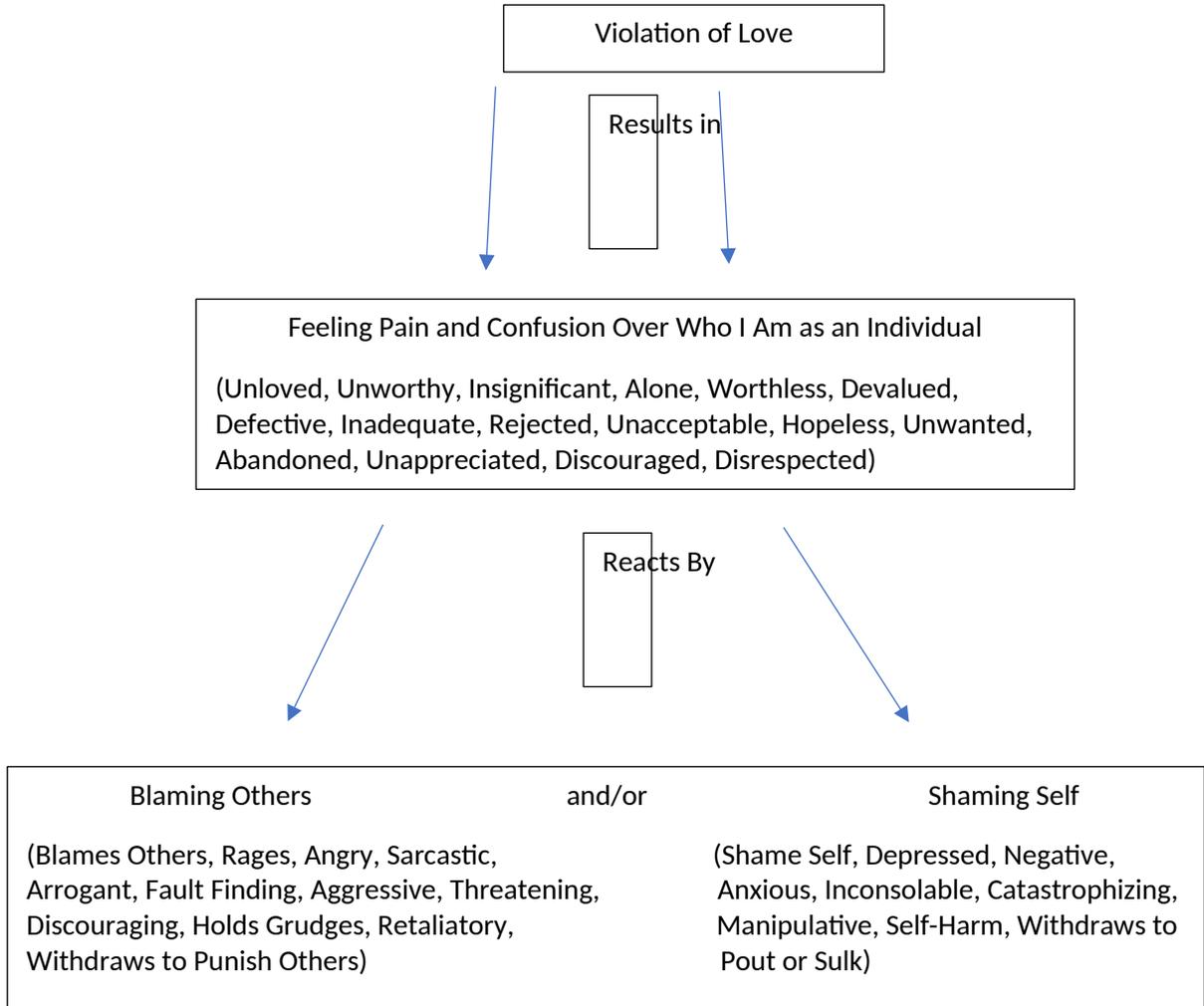


Figure 2¹²⁰

Pain from a violation of love will cause one to blame another for their agony or shame themselves. One might even move back and forth from shame to blame. Answers are sought by the one feeling unloved who asks questions of “Why?” The blamer determines it is the other’s fault because they are entitled to be loved and often demean the other to feel

¹²⁰ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 44.

better about themselves. Blaming is significantly more destructive and can result in aggressive behaviors and even violence. Hargrave offers,

These types of blamers are seen as particularly heinous in our society; legal systems, relational members, and even the therapeutic community often want to punish them...It is a sad thing to know about yourself that you are capable and guilty of damaging innocent people, and it takes the most persistent denial not to hate oneself for this action.¹²¹

If one were to stay with the emotion of loathing oneself, self-shaming could result.

People who experience shame due to a love violation believe they are not worthy of love or somehow are at fault. Sadly, they believe they deserve to be treated poorly or disregarded. Instead of blaming someone else, they blame and loath themselves. Both the blamer and shamed ultimately turn on themselves, which reveals that violations of love are a root cause of shame.

3. Violation of Trust causing Controlling Behaviors or Chaos

Trust is a crucial component in one's sense of safety and identity. Hargrave reminds us "that the individual is not choosing these reactions per se but rather is adapting to the natural reactions from the repetition of fight-or-flight responses."¹²² As the diagram that follows shows, a violation of trust is a significant upset to equilibrium, leaving one feeling unsafe, insecure, or powerless, to name a few. Self-reactivity to this pain causes an individual to take control and avoid being vulnerable or dependent on another. The restoration process for controllers is hindered by the praise they receive as overachievers and perfectionists. Controlling behaviors are the protective shield offering a false sense of safety. Hargrave recognizes "Often, people who are performance driven not only are

¹²¹ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 46.

¹²² Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 49.

seeking safety but also are driven because of the lack of identity that accompanies shaming oneself.”¹²³

Chaos or escape behaviors often cause one to be secretive and prone to acting without thinking. Due to the tendency to avoid or escape this, person lacks the contemplation to gain self-understanding. While controllers are demanding and expect much from others and themselves, those who are escapers/chaos reactors often create challenges for others to straighten out. Their impulsivity often comes at a cost for themselves and others.

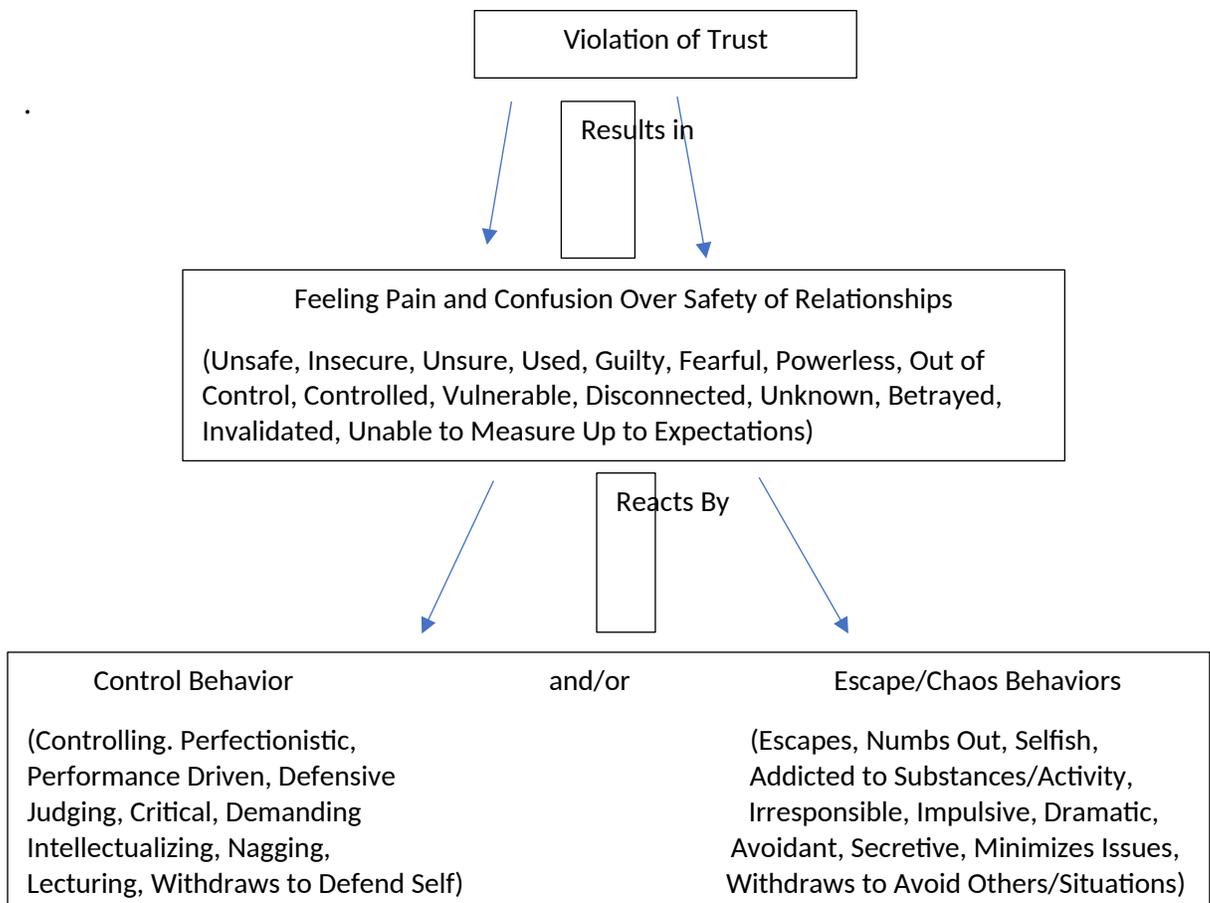


Figure 3¹²⁴

I have spent a good bit of effort summarizing Restoration Therapy’s insight into the origin of shame as reactivity to a violation of love. While the degree of reactivity varies,

¹²³ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 53.

¹²⁴ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 50.

it is justly logical to say that most humans at one point or another in life have experienced pain from such violations.

b. Pain Cycle and Peace Cycle

The Pain Cycle and Peace Cycle are models or cognitive maps to help people understand how primary emotions drive destructive behaviors.¹²⁵ Conversely, by focusing on the truth of who one is, the Pain Cycle can be disrupted and bring peace, “When I focus myself emotionally on the truth about my identity and safety, I know I am deeply loved by my family and God.”¹²⁶ Restoration Therapy promotes understanding one’s Pain Cycle and then choosing to disrupt the negative with the truth of one’s identity in Christ. As the Peace Cycle is practiced repeatedly, it helps retrain the brain over time. Though triggered emotions may continue, one can more quickly make better choices in response to the triggered emotion. Hargrave proposes, “Neuroscience has demonstrated that well-ingrained thoughts – even very positive ones – are hard to make stick.”¹²⁷ Keeping up the conscious choice to believe the truth about oneself will reflect in his or her self-reactivity. This transformation restores marriages and other relationships shaping identity and safety for good. The strength in these cycles is not just identifying the problem but in the transformation that is possible as one sees the potential for the “new self” and consciously chooses to believe they are deeply loved and safe. Fight or flight reactivity cannot dominate one who knows their identity as loved and feels safe in the context of their relationships.¹²⁸

Restoration Therapy has developed a “Four Steps” mindfulness practice.

¹²⁵ Hargrave, *Vital Tools*, 40.

¹²⁶ Hargrave, *Vital Tools*, 45.

¹²⁷ Hargrave, *Vital Tools*, 46.

¹²⁸ Hargrave, *Vital Tools*, 43.

Step 1. Say what you feel. Speaking one’s feelings is meant to slow down the brain when emotionally triggered so one can focus on what is being felt.

Step 2. Say what you normally do. Name the typically destructive reactivities to violations of love and trust. Instead of blame, shame, control or escape the brain can be slowed down so as not to react in one of these ways.

Step 3. Say the truth. This creates a cognitive dissonance that offers the brain two alternative choices and allows the emotionally regulating truths as an alternative to the emotions that have been triggered.

Step 4. Say what you will do differently. Here the Peace Cycle helps to connect with the emotionally regulating truth (I am loved and safe) allowing the best self to present itself.¹²⁹ Choosing steps that reinforce the truth just spoken allows one’s spouse to see the “new self” increasing receptivity to working their Peace Cycle.¹³⁰

Both theologically and psychologically grounded, the Boone Center for the Family, out of Pepperdine University, strives to strengthen the family and relationships.¹³¹ Through clinical observations, their staff has noted that couples usually memorize their Pain Cycle, Peace Cycle, and the Four Steps when they practice them ten out of twelve days. Practicing the Four Steps eighteen out of twenty-two days, they could look back and identify when they should have used the Four Steps. If people practiced the Four Steps for twenty-six days, they would encounter a significant day where they were emotionally

¹²⁹ Hargrave, *Vital Tools*, 49.

¹³⁰ Hargrave, *Vital Tools*, 48.

¹³¹ Sharon Hargrave is the founder of Relate Strong, a program of the Boone Center. Fuller professor and spouse, Terry Hargrave is a guest lecturer. [Mission and History | Boone Center for the Family | Pepperdine University](#).

triggered but followed the process instead of allowing the deregulating emotions to influence them. Hargrave discovers, “Two-year follow-up studies show that couples who continue to practice their Four Steps when they are emotionally triggered engage in fewer and less volatile conflicts, trust one another more, and experience higher rates of relational satisfaction.”¹³² Restoration Therapy believes understanding one’s Pain Cycle, Peace Cycle, and practicing the Four Steps offers hope and healing at the primary emotional level. Noting this is of particular importance for its potential benefit to those suffering from shame.

c. Forgiveness as Restoration

First, the identified source of most emotional pain and brokenness has its locus in violations of love and trust. Second, the above introduction to the Pain and Peace Cycles demonstrates that if the cycle is not interrupted, allowing for restoration, the same pattern will continue to repeat. This third segment introduces forgiveness as key in the journey to restoration. Forgiveness once believed to be only a religious concept, gained validity as an accepted intervention in psychology after the 1980s. In their work called *Families and Forgiveness*, Terry Hargrave and Nicole Zasowski write, “Forgiveness is not only accepted as a therapeutic methodology, it is a stalwart of predictive correlates for positives in relationships, individual health, marital success, and family strength.”¹³³ Traditional Restoration Therapy focuses on individuals regulating their own emotions through mindfulness, imagery, and practice. The work of forgiveness involves reconciliation with the victimizer when possible. Reparation or redress may come through the victim setting new boundaries, the victimizer honestly sharing his or her past,

¹³² Hargrave, *Vital Tools*, 50.

¹³³ Terry D. Hargrave and Nicole E. Zasowski, *Families and Forgiveness: Healing Wounds in the Intergenerational Family*, Second edition. (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), x.

or by a framework from which to assist the individual in self-regulating their own primary emotions and taking responsibility for connecting in relationship with others.

Hargrave and Zasowski offer that the work of forgiveness must foremost be one of integrity where no further harm is to come to the victim. They have adopted Paul Tillich's construct that Love, Justice (trustworthiness), and Power must be in equal balance and fairness for the process to have integrity in the work of forgiveness. They write,

If one only has power, then he or she can use his or her power only for gratification of self without any concern for other human beings or relationships. If a person is only concerned with power and justice, then actions would likely be based on retribution or revenge as victimizers would be subject to similar or even worse violating acts from their victims in retaliation.¹³⁴

Power enables the victim to stop the victimizer from further violation and power for the victim to avoid the potential of violations of love and trust in their other relationships. Further they recognize that forgiveness can “stabilize these three forces where the forces have been misused in the past.”¹³⁵ So, stability for the individual comes through an equal balance of love, trustworthiness, and power. Forgiveness is necessary. It may aid the victim on the road to restoration with a remorseful victimizer committed to restoration. Alternatively, if the journey is not seeking to re-establish the relationship, insight may be gained to block the victimizer from future opportunities to violate. Also, to prevent the victim from the potential of destructive proclivities in future relationships, Hargrave and Pfitzer warn, “no forgiveness is ever possible when love and trustworthiness continue to be violated.”¹³⁶ A second violation makes the potential for restoration highly improbable.

¹³⁴ Hargrave, *Families and Forgiveness*, 24.

¹³⁵ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 198.

¹³⁶ Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 199.

Forgiveness is never a cheap pass for the offender, but it is necessary for the restoration process and in helping one to find emotional equilibrium.

The Restoration Therapy model would recognize that the actions recorded in Genesis 3 that followed Adam and Eve eating the fruit were the human's reactions to their perceived violation of love and trust. They supposed the bond between God and them had somehow been violated. Their initial action is a classic shame response; they hid. When God asks, "Where are you?" and "Who told you were naked?" they begin to blame another. It was the serpent. It was the woman. It was whom you (God) gave me. Additionally, we might say the humans perceived there had been a violation of trust that we can identify in their reactivity of defensiveness, impulsivity, secrecy, and avoidant behaviors.

Attachment Theory would say the shame the first couple experienced was an avoidance emotion that caused them to withdraw and hide. Perhaps it is not too much of a stretch to apply attachment theory to these new humans (infant figures of creation) who knew God as their attachment figure. We might say that their secure attachment figure (God) left them longer than they could endure.

Because a violation of love can result in feelings of being unloved, worthless, and abandoned, one is vulnerable to react by experiencing shame. A person may exhibit an avoidant behavior of shame out of an insecure attachment to one who is supposed to make them feel protected and supported. We know from the biblical narrative that all that God created was good. The signs of shame did not appear until the humans believed that God would not withhold anything from them if God loved them. Therefore, shame may be rooted in an inaccurate perception of reality.

III. Sociological look at Shame

Leading expert and ground researcher Brené Brown embarked on her research to understand empathy and connection. Soon into her quest, it became evident how quickly shame blocked connection and vulnerability. Brown understands shame as a barrier to all things important in life.¹³⁷ Shame research and discovery fill the pages of her books and frequently is present in her Ted Talks. Shame has taken center stage in her work as she discloses the sociological disruption and harm it causes. Neuroscience research has shown that pain from shame is as real as physical pain.¹³⁸ Because shame occurs between people, she identifies it as a social concept, one best healed between persons.¹³⁹ In Chapter 1, I offered Brown's definition of shame reduced to its most basic form, "Guilt = I did something bad. Shame = I am bad."¹⁴⁰ She identifies the force behind unethical behavior as shame and fear and identifies it as the catalyst for narcissistic behavior. Brown writes, "I define narcissism as the shame-based fear of being ordinary."¹⁴¹ She further describes the problem of shame as something likely to provoke "destructive, hurtful, immoral, and self-aggrandizing behavior."¹⁴² Earlier, I introduced shame as originating from insecure attachment and broken trust and/or love. Brown's research indicates that people also experience a high percentage of institutional shaming. Of all the people she interviewed there were 85 percent that could recount a school incident so shaming that it impacted how they thought of themselves.¹⁴³ There is a belief system that sets oneself up for shame, and that is the belief that if we do everything perfectly, we do

¹³⁷ Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 7.

¹³⁸ Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 127.

¹³⁹ Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 136.

¹⁴⁰ Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 128.

¹⁴¹ Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 128-129.

¹⁴² Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 129.

¹⁴³ Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 132.

not have to experience shame and judgment. As a recovering perfectionist, this rings true for me. Brown calls perfectionism a “self-destructive and addictive belief system.”¹⁴⁴ Brown’s extensive research and personal experiences of shame have pointed to empathy as the great shame buster. She believes empathy and shame to be opposite experiences.¹⁴⁵ Shame feeds on secrecy and judgment but loses its grip when it is called out and encounters an empathic presence of another. Chapter 3 will identify solutions to the problem of shame. In that context, Brown reveals ways to combat the universal problem of shame.

IV. Reciprocating Self

Most human developmental models in psychology, sociology, physiology, and anthropology lack a purpose or telos for existence. Jack Balswick, in *The Reciprocating Self*, makes a case for the significance of the Trinity and the *imago Dei* in human development. Balswick understand this as a telos that moves one from the present systems and therapeutic practices that “promote a sense of self with an insatiable need to consume in the interminable human quest for self-fulfillment and for self-realization.”¹⁴⁶ Stanley Grenz also writes of the *imago Dei*, “At the heart of the Christian conception of the soul is a theological anthropology that speaks about humankind in toto and the human person in particular as a creation of God destined to be the *imago dei*.”¹⁴⁷ Humanity, as created by and for God, offers a telos whose basis for self is not confined to self.

Balswick defines theological anthropology as “The theological inquiry of the likeness of

¹⁴⁴ Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 130.

¹⁴⁵ Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 129.

¹⁴⁶ Jack O. Balswick, Pamela Ebstyn King, and Kevin S. Reimer, *The Reciprocating Self: Human Development in Theological Perspective*, 2nd Edition., Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS) (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2016), 20.

¹⁴⁷ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 3.

God found in human nature.”¹⁴⁸ And so he contends that self does not have to be empty. Instead, theology and social science theory suggests the reciprocating self as an alternate view to the empty self. Colin Gunton offers that self disappears if individual self-contemplation becomes its basis of self and not its relation to God and others.¹⁴⁹ Self, in relational paradigms, Balswick sees as “persons embeddedness in relationships.”¹⁵⁰ The mutuality and relationality of the *persons* of the Trinity serve as more than a model; the Trinity invites humanity into the community of the Trinity. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit cannot be known apart from their relationship in and with one another. Similarly, relationality that constitutes Trinity’s existence is the reciprocal relationship in which the Creator speaks humanity into being. The creature can only know and be known in relationship with the Creator. To live as image-bearers of God is to live as unique individuals in reciprocating relationships with God and others. God is a relational God who exists in mutual, reciprocating relationships. God invites and never coerces humanity into relationship. God’s love, David Busic writes, is “By its nature, reciprocal love (the basis of true relationship) requires the freedom to accept or reject offered love.”¹⁵¹ Since God created humanity in the *imago Dei*, it can be understood that we are also more fully human in reciprocating, authentic relationships with God and others.¹⁵² Next, we will briefly explore being and becoming.

i. Being and Becoming

¹⁴⁸ Balswick, 35.

¹⁴⁹ Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 118.

¹⁵⁰ Balswick, 24.

¹⁵¹ David A. Busic, *Way, Truth, Life: Discipleship as a Journey of Grace* (Kansas City, MO: The Foundry Publishing, 2021), 43.

¹⁵² Balswick, 41.

To commune in the divine presence and allow God to heal our union with God is to move toward the restoration of the divine image in us shadowed in the fall. Humanity is not now, after the fall, any less created in the image of God. Humanity's understanding of their identity was marred in the fall. Perhaps more adequately said, our true identity has been ontologically disrupted and distorted. In relationship with the One who made us, we can discover who we are and, preliminarily more important, whose we are. The key to being and becoming is to commune in the divine presence and allow God to reform what it means to be created in the *imago Dei*. Value and identity emanate from this relationship, from knowing ourselves as the beloved of God. Balswick reminds us that God's intention is for humanity to become like the One Perfect Human, Jesus, who is also the perfect image of God. Through mutual, reciprocal relations with God, humans, and creation, the *imago Dei* can be restored.¹⁵³ Becoming flows out of being. What we have been referring to as the reciprocating self can best be formed in unconditional love relationships. Grenz suggests the scriptures link the relationship between humans and the divine image, which is the underpinning for the origin and forming the conception of self.¹⁵⁴ The accessible example comes to us through the incarnate Son of God. What it means to be created in the *imago Dei* is wholly and completely epitomized in Jesus. Balswick wrote, "we recognize that Jesus Christ is the perfect image (Col 1:15 NIV) and acknowledge that God's goal or purpose for humankind is to become conformed to Christ."¹⁵⁵ The telos of human nature is to become like the perfect Human One (2 Cor. 3:18). Barry referred to this telos similarly when he wrote of our participation in the community life of Trinity. He described the bond of relational love that binds together the

¹⁵³ Balswick, 31.

¹⁵⁴ Grenz, 183.

¹⁵⁵ Balswick, 34.

persons of the Trinity and identifies it as the community in which humanity is welcome to participate.¹⁵⁶ Rohr penned that vulnerability is the key to ongoing growth or what I am calling becoming,

This, then, seems to be the work of the Spirit: to keep you growing is to keep you vulnerable to life and love itself. Notice that the major metaphors for the Spirit are always dynamic, energetic, and moving: elusive wind, descending dove, falling fire, and flowing water. Spirit-led people never stop growing and changing and recognizing the new moment of opportunity.¹⁵⁷

Rohr acknowledged that surrendering to this flow is more complex than taking a moral stance or believing doctrines. The telos of existence is to dwell in trustful vulnerability, which he describes as the river of life.¹⁵⁸ Thompson offered that the healing of shame necessitates being vulnerable with others in embodied actions.¹⁵⁹ Vulnerability and surrender to the God who created and unfathomably loves is the river of life to wholeness and redemption. So why are we so slow to walk in this way? Rohr suggests, “When you even skim the edges of relationship, you submit to mystery and lose control.”¹⁶⁰ Perhaps it is not just the loss of control but a lack of faith in the trustworthiness of God that keeps one from surrendering.

ii Reciprocating Relationships

“Without at least one ‘You’ with whom ‘I’ am in personal relation, ‘I’ do not exist as a person, since persons are constituted by their mutual relations.”¹⁶¹

We briefly contemplated the trinitarian model as that of reciprocating relationships.

So too are humans, who bear the image of God, engaging in reciprocal relationships. “We

¹⁵⁶ William A. Barry, *Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God: A Theological Inquiry*, Rev. ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004), 46.

¹⁵⁷ Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2016), 58.

¹⁵⁸ Rohr, 59.

¹⁵⁹ Thompson, 14.

¹⁶⁰ Rohr, 21.

¹⁶¹ Barry, 43.

love each other because he loved us first” (I John 4:19). God lives before humanity, an example of love, and then, in turn, welcomes humanity into this flow of love. Balswick writes of the reciprocal nature of this flow, “human relationships are meant to be reciprocal *unconditional commitments* characterized by reciprocal *gracing, empowering* and *intimacy*.”¹⁶² Balswick submits that the infant is not initially but has the “*capacity* to become a reciprocating self.”¹⁶³ The parent-child relationship is vital in developing this capacity. Initially, the relationship between parent and infant is a unilateral commitment of love. From that relationship, the capacity for the love relationship to become bilateral or reciprocal occurs through socialization. Balswick notes that the “depth of bonding in primary relationships nurtures the reciprocating self and equips it to enter into empowering relationships with persons in the wider human community.”¹⁶⁴ He suggests four conditions under which reciprocating relationships are best formed.

(1) personal relationships are characterized by a *covenant* (unconditional love) commitment rather than a conditional commitment, (2) when the response to failure in relationship is characterized by *gracing* rather than shaming, (3) when persons in relationship use their power, giftedness and resources to *empower* rather than to control the other, and (4) when the relationship is characterized by an openness that can lead to *intimacy* rather than isolation.¹⁶⁵

The Gospels offer essential insight into the incarnational life of Christ, who gave all in the divine act of love and redemption. The unconditional love of God is the source and outflow of love for others. Balswick offers,

The opposite of *gracing* is *shaming*. In a community of law where perfection is demanded, the person who disappoints and fails to live up to the standard will be *shamed* . . . It is noteworthy that the less a relationship is based on trust and commitment, the more it needs legal definitions of what is expected in the relationship.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Balswick, 56.

¹⁶³ Balswick, 58.

¹⁶⁴ Balswick, 59.

¹⁶⁵ Balswick, 57.

¹⁶⁶ Balswick, 65.

Human relationships are plagued with a corrupt human nature that is susceptible to everything from misunderstanding, violated trust, and absolute brokenness. Our human tendency is then to retreat, hide, or deny, as was the response of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:7. Balswick offers this insight into the restoration of damaged relationships, “We firmly believe that the two types of healing—inner and relational—go together. We are healed through our relationships, and our relationships are healed as we confess our mutual failings and ask for forgiveness.”¹⁶⁷ The giving and receiving of confession and forgiveness are crucial to restoration and require involvement on both person’s parts. Balswick identifies sin as a relational condition that is less than a reciprocating self.¹⁶⁸ As we looked at the trinitarian model earlier in this section, Balswick offers it is important to note “that the reciprocal self needs to be embedded in the *reciprocal community*. The true church—as the body of Christ—is to be unbounded in showing care and love.”¹⁶⁹ To that subject, we will now turn.

iii Reciprocating Communities

God is a divine community of love and mutuality between the unique persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The trinitarian community is the source and foundation of all that it means to be human. God created humankind for relationship with God and one another. So, as was said earlier, no one person reflects the image of God. Walter Brueggemann offers, “Only in community of humankind is God reflected. God is, according to this bold affirmation, not mirrored as an individual but as a community.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Balswick, 71.

¹⁶⁸ Balswick, 75.

¹⁶⁹ Balswick, 59.

¹⁷⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 34.

Webber describes it this way, “So also the mystery of God as triune—eternally dwelling in the community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is mystery in which our desire for relationship in community is situated.”¹⁷¹ Relationships in community challenge our Western individualistic and consumeristic practices reorienting them in connective, interdependent ways. We need one another to live to our divine potential. Brueggemann proposes:

First, the creator has a purpose and will for creation. The creation exists only because of that will. The creator continues to address the creation, calling it to faithful response and glad obedience to his will. Second, the creation, which exists only because of and for the sake of the creator’s purpose, has freedom to respond to the creator in various ways.¹⁷²

The reciprocal nature of lives lived in relationship to God mirrors and reflects the welcoming, beautiful dance of interrelatedness, *perichoresis*. It is a call to the community of faith to live in radical hospitality that offers a sacred space to belong and know the embrace of God. An invitation into life with God is a recognition of, as Keating describes it, a place you wish you never left.¹⁷³ It is a place of wholeness, completeness, and restoration of the *imago Dei*.

In Orthodox theology, icons are not objects of worship but considered windows into the divine. Volf proposes that the local church should live as a window into the trinitarian community, an icon of sorts.¹⁷⁴ One has only to sit with and contemplatively gaze at an icon to sense being drawn into it. For example, take Andrei Rublev’s icon of the Holy Trinity. There is an open space at their table, beckoning participation.

¹⁷¹ Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life*, Ancient-future series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 19.

¹⁷² Brueggemann, 13.

¹⁷³ Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel*, New ed. with updates. (New York, NY: Continuum, 2006), 130.

¹⁷⁴ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, Sacra Doctrina (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 25.



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The social model of Trinity that Grenz presents has engendered a “rethinking of the idea of *person*.” He suggests:

The most innovative result of this conversation not only for theology proper but also for anthropology has been the coalescing of theology with the widely accepted philosophical conclusion that “person” has more to do with relationality than with substantiality and that the term stands closer to the idea of communion or community than to the conception of the individual in isolation or abstracted from communal embeddedness.¹⁷⁶

Barry offers a discussion on *love* and *fear*, some of which I resonate with, yet I feel he fails to articulate that we have to know love to give love. He suggests that the preferred or ideal is the subordination of fear to love.¹⁷⁷ One who fears for themselves will engage in behavior that is defensive and egocentric. As we have discussed with shame, one will withdraw into oneself or engage in anger to mask their sense of unworthiness. Barry writes, “When fear predominates, I withdraw from love of the other into myself.”¹⁷⁸ It is important to recognize the harm this brings to the individual and the community. The Holy Spirit can quiet the fear and allow the love of God to permeate every part of one’s being and relationships. The epistle of John declares, “There is no fear in love, but

¹⁷⁵ [Holy Trinity Rublev Orthodox Icon | Legacy Icons](#), Accessed August 27, 2021

¹⁷⁶ Grenz, 4.

¹⁷⁷ Barry, 48.

¹⁷⁸ Barry, 48.

perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love” (I John 4:18).

The strength of a loving community comes as each receives the love of God and continues to embody and remind one another that they are deeply loved and valued. The scriptures reveal the love of God. The Apostle John writes, “Since God loved us that much, (that he sent his Son Jesus) we surely ought to love each other” (I John 4:11). Knowing God’s love for us makes it possible for us to heed Jesus’s words to “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31). We love out of the love we first received from the One who created us and called us beloved.

Peter Block writes that the quality of relationships directly impacts the community’s well-being.¹⁷⁹ So reciprocating communities are those who strive, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to mirror and embody the beautiful *perichoresis* of Trinity. Reciprocating communities live lives that nurture and care for one another as they participate in Christ’s ministry of redeeming and restoring all of creation. The nature of the Christian community, following the example of the Community of Trinity, is necessarily reciprocal and holds a place at the table for others.

Conclusion

“Creation is God’s decision not to look after himself but to focus his energies and purposes on the creation.”¹⁸⁰

Section one offered an introduction to Attachment Theory and demonstrated that secure attachments from infancy are foundational in healthy development and a sense of self. Research has shown secure attachments significantly contribute to a person’s ability to regulate their own emotions and affect, possess a capacity for the vulnerability that

¹⁷⁹ Block, 5.

¹⁸⁰ Brueggemann, 34.

allows for intimacy, and a healthy exchange of give and take in a relationship. Shame is identified as an “avoidance emotion” resulting from an insecure attachment.

Section two showcased Restoration Therapy and its belief that love and trust are the pillars of any relationship. It isolates the cause of shame to a violation of love or trust, calling it self-reactivity to the primary emotions of feeling unloved, unwanted, and unworthy. They offer the cognitive maps of the Pain Cycle and the Peace Cycle as a therapeutic process to work through violations of love and trust. Additionally, Restoration Therapy recognizes forgiveness as restorative.

Section three offers a brief synopsis of years of research from sociologist Brené Brown. She paints a broad and attainable understanding of the problem of shame and locates both perfectionism and narcissism in shame. She points to Neuroscience’s research proving the pain from shame is as genuine and legitimate as physical pain. Empathic exchange provides a path out of shame.

Finally, presented was Balswick’s model of the reciprocating self that demonstrates one who is unconditionally loved reciprocates in kind to others. We looked at being and becoming, reciprocating relationships, and reciprocating communities. God’s very nature is the picture of what Balswick calls the *Reciprocating Self*. The sheer beauty of the Trinity and how the interrelatedness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the perfect expression of community. Block identified the quality of relationships as having a direct impact on community. Shame is problematic because it breaks down and even severs relationships disrupting community life.

CHAPTER 3

Exploring Theoretical Solutions to the Problem of Shame

Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the conceptional framework and methodology of this undertaking. It also presented an understanding of shame and why it is a problem that deserves the attention of this dissertation. Chapter 2 offers a literature review of Attachment Theory, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), Restoration Therapy, a sociological look at shame, and finally, the reciprocating self, relationships, and communities. With a more thorough understanding of the problem of shame and its effects, Chapter 3 offers insight into facing the problem and pain that shame engenders. The thesis of this paper is to propose that the Holy Trinity offers a life-giving avenue for the mitigation of destructive identities that are juxtaposed to the *imago Dei* in which all of humanity is created. The incarnation of Christ reveals the love of the Father, and through the Spirit, the divine mystery is made known to human beings. Perceiving and receiving the divine welcome into the *perichoresis* is the process that begins to restore our understanding of *imago Dei* from its fallen, damaged state to its original divine intent. Life in relationship with God, who calls us beloved and welcomes us into the community of mutual, reciprocal love with the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, validates our worth and belonging. From there, one can reciprocate and reflect that perfect love to others. Formed and transformed by the Holy Spirit, we become more fully human. Jesus is the representation of what it means to be fully human as the Perfect Human One. Perfect in this case is not perfectionism that equates worth with performance. Instead, perfect from the Greek, “*teleiosis* (τελείωσις), denotes a fulfillment, completion, an end accomplished.”¹⁸¹ To become all God has created humanity to be.

¹⁸¹ W.E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, unabridged ed. (Iowa Falls, IA: Riverside Book and Bible House, N/A), 857.

Part 1 will consider the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and suggest that the Holy Trinity offers more than an example for humanity. From a relationship with the triune God flows a model of ontology that validates our worth as human beings. First is a consideration of how the shared relationships of the persons of the Godhead propose the perfect expression of community in other-centered existence. Second, we will undertake an exploration, with the help of Walter Bruggeman and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as to the meaning of Genesis 1:26 divine proclamation, “Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us.’” What is the *imago Dei*? What happened to it, and how important is restoring this divine image to our identity?

Part II of this work will further advance the discussion of community, after the example of Trinity, as creating a hospitable space. In this space, the love and mutual respect we witness in the community of Trinity is the litmus test to which we hold up all other relationships. When the Christian community is a hospitable place, one is better able to love oneself and others as modeled in the community of Trinity. In such a community of mutuality, all are valued and find belonging. “We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect” (I John 4:16-17a). William Barry emphasizes how other-centered love creates a hospitable space for restorative and transforming community.¹⁸² He fails to specifically acknowledge the importance of knowing oneself to be loved and valued by God, which in turn frees them to reciprocate that love to God and others. As all participants in the community experience love and mutuality, it becomes a safe space where wholeness, healing, and restoration of the *imago Dei* can occur and Spirit-empowered transformation into

¹⁸² Barry, 48.

Christlikeness. In this space, fear ceases to exist as the Apostle John writes, “such love has no fear” (I John 4:18a). The Apostle Paul describes interconnectedness and mutuality in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, offering a body metaphor. Every member is an important, necessary part of the body.

Part III will further the discussion of the Greek term *perichoresis* as an expression of the love and mutuality of the Trinity. The Creator’s design for humanity reflects and mirrors this choreograph of divine love. Having considered reciprocating relationships that follow the trinitarian expression in part I and the impact of incarnational living in a Christian community in part II, we move into part III. This section will show that radical hospitality naturally emanates from living as the beloved of God, personally and communally. This radical hospitality invites others to join the *perichoresis*. To mirror and reflect the image of Christ is to create space for others also to find a place to belong. Through radical hospitality and belonging, it is possible to know the divine embrace and live more fully as the beloved of God, valued and cherished.

I. Holy Trinity as a Model of Validated Existence

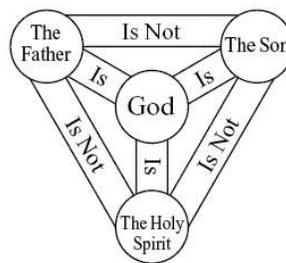


Diagram ¹⁸³

Above is a model that attempts to capture the vast mystery of the Trinity and the relatedness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three distinct persons are co-equal and co-eternal. Richard Rohr writes, “Mystery isn’t something that you *cannot* understand—it is

¹⁸³ [Shield of the Trinity – How It Originated - Symbol Sage](https://symbolsage.com/shield-of-the-trinity). <https://symbolsage.com/shield-of-the-trinity>. Accessed April 23, 2021.

something that you can *endlessly* understand!”¹⁸⁴ The diagram above is *Scutum Fidei*, Latin for a shield of faith; it dates back to the twelfth century. Genesis opens with “*in the beginning God created.*” The three persons of the Trinity participated in speaking all else into being. Bonhoeffer writes, “We cannot speak of the beginning; where the beginning begins our thinking stops, it comes to an end. And yet the fact that we ask about the beginning is the innermost impulse of our thinking; for in the last resort it is this that gives validity to every true question we ask.”¹⁸⁵ As Divine Creator, Trinity’s relationship and interrelatedness validate creation’s existence. Richard writes, “There no one is greater than another, no one is less than another; there no one is before another; no one is after another. And so, it is established that in that Trinity all persons are coequal and coeternal together.”¹⁸⁶ Part I will address A) the Trinity as the perfect expression of community and B) humanity as created in the image of God (*imago Dei*).

a. Trinity as the Perfect Expression of Community

*That a sharing of love cannot exist at all among less than three persons.*¹⁸⁷

In *Book Three of the Trinity*, Richard of St. Victor argues for Trinity’s mutuality, equality, and plurality, “In order for charity to be true, it demands a plurality of persons; in order for charity to be perfected, it requires a Trinity of persons.”¹⁸⁸ To follow Richard’s argument, two can mutually love one another, but it is only shared love if there is a third person, “Shared love is properly said to exist when a third person is loved by two persons harmoniously and in community, and the affection of the two persons is

¹⁸⁴ Rohr, 27.

¹⁸⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: Temptation: Two Biblical Studies* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1959), 13.

¹⁸⁶ Richard, of St. Victor, *The Twelve Patriarchs; The Mystical Ark; Book Three of The Trinity*, The Classics of Western spirituality (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979), 394.

¹⁸⁷ Richard of St. Victor, 387.

¹⁸⁸ Richard of St. Victor, 387.

fused into one affection by the flame of love for the third.”¹⁸⁹ This exchange of mutual love is described by Rohr, “Whatever is going on in God is a flow, a radical relatedness, a perfect *communion* between Three—a circle dance of love.”¹⁹⁰ Additionally, Tom Noble describes the plurality of person, the interrelatedness of the Trinity, and its accessibility to humanity in this manner,

The Father gives himself in love in his Spirit to the Son, and the Son gives himself in love in his Spirit—the same Spirit—to the Father. Here is “perfect love” indeed, for within the Trinity, in the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son in the Spirit, God is love— “perfect love” (I John 4:8 16ff.). When the Son became human, that divine and eternal but intimate relationship of “perfect love” became grounded in our humanity and so open to us. It became possible for us to share in it.¹⁹¹

He helps us understand God’s relational design for creation. If the God of all creation desires a relationship of mutual love with us, then our value and worth are validated through that relationship. The Church must welcome to the table all who respond if it is to mirror Trinity. The Church also joins God in longing for all to come into fellowship. Noble later writes, “The doctrine of the Trinity as a community of interpersonal love suggests then that we are going to have to think of the church as corporate, modeled on the family, rather than as ‘collective’ modeled on the business organization or the state.”¹⁹² Many churches have lost sight of this essential distinction. They seek to create a well-organized institution, catering to the needs and desires of their constituents. Stanley Grenz traces what he calls a return to the Social Trinity. None of the various significant developments in theology over the last hundred years has more far-reaching implications for anthropology than the renewal of Trinitarian theology. Grenz suggests, along with

¹⁸⁹ Richard of St. Victor, 392.

¹⁹⁰ Rohr, 27.

¹⁹¹ T. A. Noble, *Holy Trinity: Holy People: The Historic Doctrine of Christian Perfecting*, The Didsbury lectures series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 187.

¹⁹² Noble, 220.

other scholars, that this renewal dates to Karl Barth and his classic work, *Church Dogmatics*. To this social model of the Trinity, Grenz writes,

The most innovative result of this conversation not only for theology proper but also for anthropology has been the coalescing of theology with the widely accepted philosophical conclusion that “person” has more to do with relationality than with substantiality and that the term stands closer to the idea of communion or community than to the conception of the individual in isolation or abstracted from communal embeddedness.¹⁹³

This social model of Trinity with its relationality has gained the attention of feminist theologians like Anne Carr. She believes feminist ideations emerge out of the mystery of the perfect community of Trinity. Validation and belonging are core in mitigating shame and creating a community of inclusivity. Carr writes,

The mystery of God as Trinity, as final and perfect sociality, embodies those qualities of mutuality, reciprocity, cooperation, unity, peace in genuine diversity that are feminist ideals and goals derived from the inclusivity of the gospel message. The final symbol of the God as Trinity thus provides women with an image and concept of God that entails qualities that make God truly worthy of imitation, worthy of the call to radical discipleship that is inherent in Jesus’ message.¹⁹⁴

James Torrance suggests we need an analogical understanding, a shift in the meaning that words like father and son have meant to us. Instead of coming to theology with our preconceived understanding of father and son from our experience in a hierarchical, male-dominated culture, we should be informed by God’s self-interpretation through Christ (John 1:12).¹⁹⁵ A better understanding of who we are as persons flows from the interrelatedness of the persons of the Trinity. Torrance states,

What we need today is a better understanding of the person not just as an individual but as someone who finds his or her true being-in-communion with

¹⁹³ Grenz, 4.

¹⁹⁴ Anne E. Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women’s Experience*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988), 156–7.

¹⁹⁵ James B. Torrance, *The Doctrine of the Trinity in Our Contemporary Situation*, ed. Alasdair I.C. Heron., A Selection of Papers Presented to the BBC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today (London: British Council of Churches BCC/CCBI Inter-Church House, 1989), 5.

God and with others, the counterpart of a Trinitarian doctrine of God. The God of the New Testament is the God who has his true being as the Father of the Son, and as the Son of the Father in the Spirit. God is love, and has his true being in communion in the mutual indwelling of Father, Son and Holy Spirit—perichoresis, to use the patristic word. This is the God who has created us male and female to find our true humanity in “perichoretic unity” with him and one another, and who renews us in his image in Christ.¹⁹⁶

Jürgen Moltmann describes the relatedness of the Trinity as with, for, and in one another, “They exist in one another because they mutually give each other space for full unfolding. By existing mutually in each other, they form their unique trinitarian fellowship.”¹⁹⁷ The Trinity is the perfect expression of community. Each person of the Trinity knows they are mutually loved and worthy of belonging. This belovedness reciprocates to the other. Vulnerability, transparency, love, and mutuality choreograph a place of deep belonging and embrace that extends a welcome to join the never-ending beauty of the *perichoresis*, divine dance. Barry writes of encountering the Triune God who calls us into community and friendship. He offers that the Trinity is a perfect community absent of any deficiency.¹⁹⁸ In God, humanity can be complete and whole.

b. Humanity Created in the *Imago Dei*

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image to be like us”...So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26a, 27).

The opening section introduced a relational God, three persons in perfect union and communion: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Beginning here lends a more profound understanding to what it looks like for humankind to be created in God's image. Joseph Coleson offers,

¹⁹⁶ Torrance, 15.

¹⁹⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London, England: SCM Press Ltd, 1996), 298.

¹⁹⁸ Barry, 44.

The use of the plural verb, **let us make**, and the two plural pronouns, **in our image, in our likeness**, has led to much discussion. Almost all Jewish, and many Christian, exegetes have taken these as plurals of divine majesty for the one, the only, transcendent God...the title for God used throughout this chapter also is a plural form, Elohim, and certainly is used as a plural of divine majesty for the one, the only transcendent God.¹⁹⁹

Coleson's further exegesis of this passage reveals "make" as a singular verb in Hebrew. He also suggests some scholars' alternate view that the "our" may refer to the heavenly council of angels or a plural self-exhortation such as "let's go." Angels are created beings without the ability to create, which I believe presents a challenge to this line of thinking. He poses that many of the early church fathers would hold to this passage as the first reference in the bible to the Trinity. The first-person plural refers to the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.²⁰⁰ As far as this being the first trinitarian reference for God, Coleson believes that pushes the exegetical evidence too far. He would maintain integrity demands that we can, at best, view this as a hint or "foreshadowing" of God's Trinitarian nature.²⁰¹ While I recognize his hesitancy to push it that far, I believe that to speak of God is to acknowledge God's full expression of God in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Coleson notes parallelism, a Semitic literary device, between image (selem) and likeness (demut). He describes it in the following manner, "both terms mean that God created the 'adam like God, or reflecting God, as a mirror reflects the image of the one looking into it, as a fine sculpture is the likeness of the one it was made to represent or, even better, perhaps, as a child is the likeness of the parent."²⁰² As a further description of the *imago Dei*, Coleson writes, "God's image as spiritual beings, as possessing the powers of love, reason, and wisdom, of imagination and creativity, and real emotions,

¹⁹⁹ Joseph E. Coleson, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, New Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2012), 71.

²⁰⁰ Coleson, 66.

²⁰¹ Coleson, 71.

²⁰² Coleson, 67.

among other attributes or characteristics.”²⁰³ Walter Brueggemann makes an important delineation concerning power as it pertains to the image of God,

The image of God in the human person is a mandate of power and responsibility. But it is power exercised as God exercises power. The image images the creative use of power which invites, evokes, and permits. There is nothing here of coercive or tyrannical power, either for God or for humankind.²⁰⁴

Damaged in the fall was not only our relationship with God but the oneness God intended for creation. So much has divided more than united humanity throughout time. When social-economic status, ethnicity, race, gender, or the like, separate us rather than create an appreciation of the beauty of diversity, the oneness God intended is lost. The oneness of humanity is to be mirrored after Trinity. Brueggemann offers that humanity is to stand as one, even in its diversity.

But it is worth noting that humankind is spoken of as *singular* (‘he created him’) and *plural* (‘he created them’). This peculiar formula makes an important affirmation. On the one hand, humankind is a single entity. All human persons stand in solidarity before God. But on the other hand, humankind is a community, male and female. And none is the full image of God alone. Only in community of humankind is God reflected. God is, according to this bold affirmation, not mirrored as an individual but as a community.²⁰⁵

In light of humankind encompassing male and female, Coleson further clarifies, “Female, too, is specially created; female, too, is *adam*, female, too, is in the image of God! This line can mean nothing less than that God’s creation intention is human gender equality.”²⁰⁶ Perhaps better said is that being created in the image of God necessitates a collective of the sexes. It is the collective, male, and female, that is created in the image of God, not either one alone.²⁰⁷ God appears to speak only to humans and the angelic

²⁰³ Coleson, 67.

²⁰⁴ Brueggemann, 32.

²⁰⁵ Brueggemann, 33-34.

²⁰⁶ Coleson, 68.

²⁰⁷ Coleson, 70.

host. Brueggemann points out that humanity's God-given identity is grounded in God who calls them into existence, honors, respects, and enjoys them.²⁰⁸ Humanity's identity is established in relation to its Creator, God. Brueggemann also writes, "There is one way in which God is imaged in the world and only one: humanness! This is the only creature, the only part of creation, which discloses to us something about the reality of God."²⁰⁹ Thus, we recognize Jesus as the One Perfect Human. In the incarnate Jesus is embodied all that it means to be human. Jesus fully participates in Trinity while wholly revealing what it is to be fully human.

Brokenness comes to this union through the humans' disobedience to God's command to refrain from eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Theologically termed, Adam and Eve's act is known as *the fall* or *original sin*. Genesis 3:10 records this initial result, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked." Sin causes humans to fear and hide, or as Jack Balswick states, sin blocks our relation to God, whom he calls the source of goodness.²¹⁰ We look to Jesus for a relatable picture of what God intended for all humanity. Webber writes, "In Jesus God shows us what humanity should look like, for he reversed the disobedience of the first Adam, who rebelled against God's purposes for life, and gave us in his life the true image of a restored humanity."²¹¹ Through the perfect Human One, God makes a way for the restoration of the *imago Dei*. Webber suggests, "God reversed the human condition, broke the hold of sin and death—which separates us from God, and restored us to the original vision of *becoming the person God created us to be* and *making the world the*

²⁰⁸ Brueggemann, 31.

²⁰⁹ Brueggemann, 32.

²¹⁰ Balswick, 74.

²¹¹ Webber, 22.

place of God's glory."²¹² Why does God go to such great lengths to restore what has been damaged? According to Barry, "God creates the universe for no other motive than God's own gratuitous and unfathomable love."²¹³

Out of God's gratuitous love, the true identity of humanity (*imago Dei*) is that of being loved and valued by God. The Covenant of Christian Conduct in the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* acknowledges humanity's value and worth as coming from God. The *Manual* states, "because all humans are beings created in the image of God they are of inestimable value and worth."²¹⁴ Richard Rohr reveals the beauty and hope of a Trinitarian spirituality. The bond of guilt and shame is broken, and lives find their re-centering in the God of love. Gratitude becomes the motivation in spiritual life and not fear.²¹⁵ John O'Donnell and Michael Christensen each write that the locus of relationship with Trinity is to make us partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).²¹⁶ Jesus as the Perfect Human is the expression of the God who has become as we are that we might become what he is. O'Donnell offers, "What Christ is by nature, we are by grace."²¹⁷ Barry writes, "But we also believe that we are divinized (A favorite term of the Greek Fathers), brought into the community of the Trinity by the Holy Spirit who dwells in our hearts."²¹⁸ *Partakers of the Divine Nature* looks at deification, *theosis* across time and cultures. *Theosis* is a doctrine that seeks to explain God's purpose to restore creation to union with God and God's purposes.²¹⁹ Frank Viola expressed it like this,

²¹² Webber, 16.

²¹³ Barry, 44.

²¹⁴ Church of the Nazarene *Manual 2017-2021* (Kansas City, MO.: Nazarene Pub. House, 1997), 54–55.

²¹⁵ Rohr, 173.

²¹⁶ John J. O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1989), 88; Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung, eds., *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, Pbk. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 23.

²¹⁷ O'Donnell, 88.

²¹⁸ Barry, 45.

²¹⁹ Christensen, 36.

Within the triune God we discover mutual love, mutual fellowship, mutual dependence, mutual honor, mutual submission, mutual dwelling, and authentic community. In the Godhead there exists an eternal, complementary, and reciprocal interchange of divine life, divine love and divine fellowship.²²⁰

According to Grenz, this is the *telos* for which we were created: “Glorifying the Father in the Son together with all creation is the ultimate expression of the *imago Dei* and therefore marks the *telos* for which humans were created in the beginning.”²²¹ The following by Thomas Keating so beautifully expresses this place to which God calls us to return more fully. A place we should never have left. Keating writes,

This Presence is immense, yet so humble; awe-inspiring, yet so gentle; limitless, yet so intimate, tender, and personal. I know that I am known. Everything about me—all my weakness, brokenness, sinfulness—and still loves me infinitely. This Presence is healing, strengthening, refreshing—just by its Presence. It is nonjudgmental, self-giving, seeking no reward, boundless in compassion. It is like coming home to a place I should never have left, to an awareness that was somehow always there, but which I did not recognize.²²²

II. Christian Community as a Hospitable Space

In *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, Miroslav Volf discusses two highly influential figures and their view of the Trinity. First, he presents from the Western Church Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger’s view (who later became Pope Benedict XVI, 2005-2013), and from the Eastern Orthodox Church, John D. Zizioulas (titular bishop of Pergamon). Both gentlemen present a hierarchical Trinity which leads to an episcopacy of hierarchy in the Church’s leadership. On the other hand, Volf argues for the co-equal, mutuality, and unity of the persons of the Trinity. He also states his *ecclesiality*²²³ is founded on Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three gather together as

²²⁰ Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), 35.

²²¹ Grenz, 327.

²²² Keating, 130.

²²³ Volf, 128, 147 uses this term to describe an eschatological ecclesiology, anticipating the gathering of the entire people of God. Two conditions 1) faith of those assembled (*communio fidelium*) and 2) assembled to allow their lives to be determined by Christ.

my followers, I am there among them.” Christ’s presence comes through the congregation, not directly to the individual who believes. Therefore, faith is not received or embodied individually, but through the community of faith.²²⁴ The communal character of the Church is modeled after the community of Trinity.

A closer look at the relationality of the persons of the Trinity has offered a dynamic representation of God's design for creation. The lies that shame perpetrates on humanity must be scrutinized against the truth of what God says. By recalling the interrelatedness, love, and mutuality of the Trinity, in which no deficiency exists, and God's hospitable welcome, the shadows on our identity diminish in light of the truth. Now we turn to God's restorative and transformational design for Christian Community.

a. Restorative Community

Earlier, we observed the role of gracing and unconditional love in reciprocal relationships. Relationships are disrupted, injured, and even broken when guilt and shame have undue influence. It is necessary to readdress guilt and shame at this point. Guilt comes from doing wrong. Shame is grounded in feeling one is wrong or not enough. Balswick contributes this understanding to the shame the first couple felt, “Adam and Eve, who felt shame—that they were not good enough—before God after they sought wisdom apart from God.”²²⁵ What is needed for restoration from guilt and shame? Barry suggests authentic and open communication, will enable the community to know God’s love and to love as God loves.²²⁶ Brown also writes much of vulnerability and lifting secrecy as the key to healing and growth.²²⁷ A restorative community offers hospitable

²²⁴ Volf, 72,78, 162-163.

²²⁵ Balswick, 66.

²²⁶ Barry, 93.

²²⁷ Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 33-56.

space for the injured member to safely become vulnerable and speak of their brokenness or failure. This community then prays with, encourages, equips, and holds one another accountable, all while loving and extending God's grace. It affirms that the belovedness of God is not based on what one has done or not done but on the gratuitous nature of the Creator, God. Balswick and Hargrave write on the healing nature of confession, seeking forgiveness, authentically sharing of brokenness, and mutual failings as healing in relationships.²²⁸ Healing happens in relationships.

b. Transforming Community

And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires (II Peter 1:4).

The Apostle Paul writes to remind the churches what he taught them about living as Christ's body in the world. In the letter to the Ephesians, he writes, "Instead let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God - truly righteous and holy (Ephesians 4:23-24)." In the high priestly prayer of John chapter 17, Jesus prays for those who believe to be one as he and the Father are one, "and may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me (John 17:21b)." Embodying the mutuality and love of God, cooperating with the transforming power of the Spirit, and holding one another up in prayer is the work of transforming communities. Barry also suggests that we move more toward the community God intends by telling our stories and sharing our experiences with God. He says in doing such, "fear is subordinated to love and . . . in principle, inclusive of every human being in the world."²²⁹

²²⁸ Balswick, 71; Hargrave, *Restoration Therapy*, 195ff.

²²⁹ Barry, 103.

Like many congregations, the local congregation I am a part of could no longer meet in person during the initial outbreak of the worldwide health pandemic of 2020-21. We met Sundays on Zoom, making congregational singing impossible with the time delays and individuals struggling with unstable networks. Responsive liturgies (though muted) and sharing our “God at Work” stories was our attempt to engage an online congregation tuning in from their homes. In response to the disorienting and disruptive nature of what we were thrust into, we prayed for ways to encourage, connect, and remind people that God is with us. We created space in worship for people to share where they saw God at work this past week. This element of worship became identified as “God At Work Stories.” In returning to in-person worship, those present are invited to the microphone to share their stories of God at work. We invite those joining online to share their stories in the comments on Facebook Live, and then they are shared with the congregation. Incorporating the sharing of “God at Work Stories” in weekly worship has increased participation, amplified our sensitivity to God’s activity, and nurtured hope. Intentionally noticing and encouraging one another that God is at work has been life-giving and transforming in our faith community. The contributions from children on up have been so rich that we continue this practice in returning to in-person worship and maintaining an online presence. Reminding the online congregation early in the service allows for their stories to bless us all.

Transforming communities impact unbelievers by their love for one another and their hearts that beat in rhythm with the One who created them. Webber offers the following insight into transforming communities, “for true spiritual life is not an escape from life but a passionate embrace of life itself, which, it turns out, is an embrace of God and

God's purposes for our life here in this world and in the eternal praise of God in the new heavens and the new earth."²³⁰ Transforming communities seek to live out of their belovedness, and as Webber suggests, "Because God embraces us, *we embrace God* and God's vision for our lives and the world."²³¹ God invites humanity to join in his grand story. We are to participate in Christ's ministry of reconciliation and restoration as the fullness of God's Kingdom is realized. The story opens with love, belonging, and unhindered communion with Adam and Eve's Maker. The rest of the saga tells of humanity's rejection of the gracious love of God and the many pericopes whose drama leads to the climax of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of the perfect Human Jesus. Webber writes, "To participate in God's story is to live a transformed life, a life that brings glimpses of the ultimate union with God's purposes and heaven and earth breaks forth in praise of its Creator and Redeemer."²³² Transforming communities understand themselves as participating in God's mission of bringing about the fullness of the Kingdom of Heaven, where all of creation is restored and made whole.

I started a new small group study at church following a year and a half of not being able to gather in person due to the pandemic; this exemplified the transforming power of community. To the purpose of a study, it might be deemed a miserable failure, but these ladies poured out their grief and listened to one another's journey of pain, grief, and loss. Their pain had been so intense that they opened up to one another and shared at a deeply intimate level in our first gathering. The rest of the group was fully engaged, listening intently and compassionately. To speak their pain and shame out loud in a loving

²³⁰ Webber, 28.

²³¹ Webber, 25.

²³² Webber, 22.

Christian community created an intimacy that usually takes much longer to build. It was a precious restorative time that brought consolation and transformed their sense of isolation and aloneness.

III. Mirroring and Reflecting the *Perichoresis*

Earlier, I introduced the term from our Orthodox branch of the family, *perichoresis*, representing the beautiful flow of interrelatedness, love, and mystical union of the persons of the Trinity. Balswick proposes this definition, “the theological concept of *perichoresis* refers to the mutual indwelling within the Godhead, meaning that the three persons of the Trinity dwell with and within each other.”²³³ Also, previously asserted, was the telos of humanity to mirror and reflect the God in whose image we are created. Buxton says, “the Spirit of God draws us into the perichoretic life of the Trinity.”²³⁴ Noble offers the following regarding the Church, “The communion of fellowship (koinonia) of the church is then understood to be in fact the communion or fellowship of the Holy Trinity.”²³⁵ At a couple’s wedding or the birth of a child, I have often heard it said that “his or her facing is glowing.” When Moses came down the mountain from meeting with God, he had to cover with a veil because his face shone so bright.

Carla Sunberg writes of this visible light from time spent in the presence of God, “He is the Light. We are the mirrors. If we are facing toward him, drawing near to him, then the reflection of his light will shine into the dark corners of our world.”²³⁶ Participating in the divine dance of the lover of our soul not only makes us whole but holy, and that is a reflection needed in this world. Listening is a vital spiritual practice that enables

²³³ Balswick, 37.

²³⁴ Graham Buxton, *Dancing in the Dark the Privilege of Participation in the Ministry of Christ* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 20.

²³⁵ Noble, 220.

²³⁶ Carla D. Sunberg, *Reflecting the Image: Our Call to Mirror Christ to the World* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2015), 107.

mirroring and reflecting God. It is always a communal practice, whether in solitude or the company of others. The nature of our triune God serves to remind us that we are never alone. Thomas Keating, a Trappist Monk, calls this contemplative prayer, “Contemplative prayer is a process of interior transformation, a conversion initiated by God and leading, if we consent, to a divine union.”²³⁷ This form of prayer is a path to affirmation and remembrance that we are the beloved of God, created for relationship and to reflect the *perichoresis*. James K. A. Smith describes it this way, “Our ultimate love moves and motivates us because we are lured by this picture of human flourishing. Rather than being pushed by beliefs, we are pulled by a telos that we desire.”²³⁸

a. Radical Hospitality

*“How do we embody news that is so good it draws the attention and longing of our neighbors?”*²³⁹

Most consider hospitality entertaining others in a space comfortable to the host and typically involving food, beverages, and some exchange of pleasantries. The guests are typically friends or neighbors with some level of familiarity. When I was a Connections Pastor, I watched for unfamiliar people or those who looked around a bit as they came through the doors. I would introduce myself, learn their names, and ask to show them around or offer them some coffee before the service. Learning something about our guests helped me introduce and connect them to another person. Joshua Jipp would refer to this behavior as hospitality that transforms a stranger into a guest. Offering a welcoming, safe space further creates an environment for the stranger to move from guest

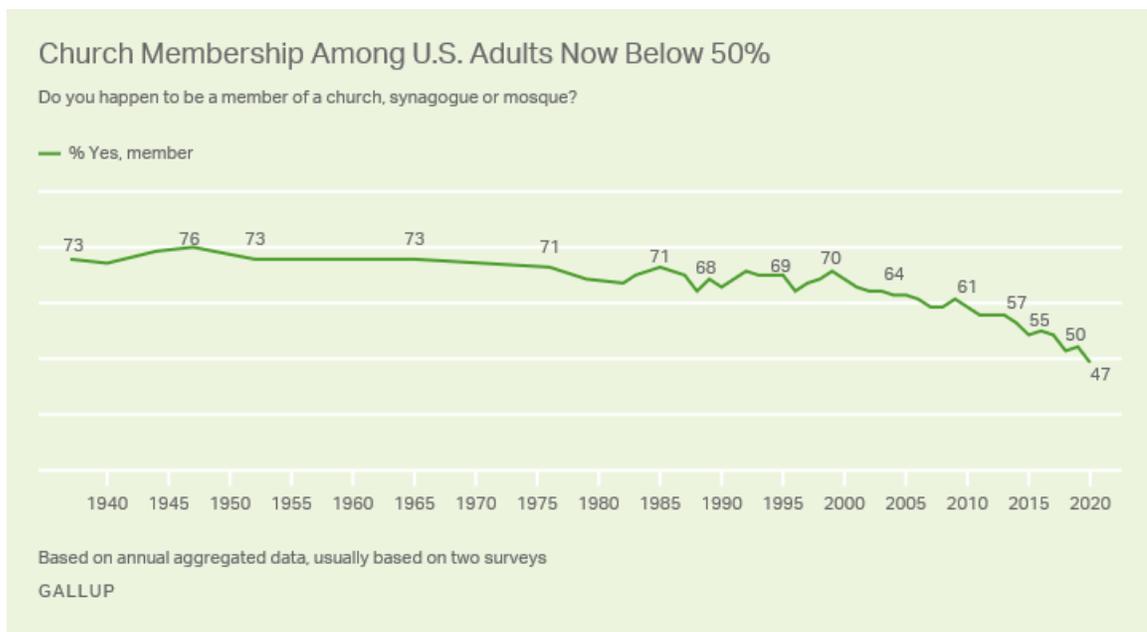
²³⁷ Keating, 1.

²³⁸ James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Volume 1 of Cultural liturgies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 180.

²³⁹ Tim Soerens, *Everywhere You Look: Discovering the Church Right Where You Are* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 8.

to friend.²⁴⁰ The beginning of hospitality is paying attention. We need to pay better attention to what God is doing.

Today, many people claim to like Jesus but want nothing to do with the church. America's churches have largely become programmatically focused operating in what is called an attractional model. People will come if they have the best facilities, the largest staff, and diverse programs offering something for everyone. They seek God's blessing on what the church is doing. So how do we account for the continuing decline in church attendance? Gallup published the following chart that shows a steady decline in church membership.



What would happen if we listened and watched for where God is already at work and joined him in that? Sunberg admonishes us to do just that, “We are not a people in need

²⁴⁰ Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 2.

²⁴¹ Jeffrey M. Jones, “US Church Membership Falls Below Majority For the First Time,” *Politics, Gallup*, Accessed April 29, 2021, last modified March 29, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/341963/church-membership-falls-below-majority-first-time.aspx>.

of new strategies for bringing people to Christ; we are a people who need to seek the face of God. It is his radiant glory that will attract people, not to us, but to him.”²⁴² Alan Kreider explores what contributed to the rapid growth in the early church and suggests a typical attitude we might also adopt. Patience is the common attitude he presents in his work. It is patience that flows from God’s character. Across the centuries, God has been working to fulfill the mission of restoration. In the fullness of time, through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God is further and more intimately known.²⁴³

Radical hospitality is not seeking the fastest road to church growth. It is the patient building of relationships wherever we encounter another. The Spirit empowers and leads communities participating in the *perichoresis*, divine dance, to create a hospitable space for others to experience the love of God and community. Jipp clarifies that the gift of hospitality has nothing to do with one’s social value, “God’s hospitality, the saving welcome that reconciles us to God and heals us, is the *singular answer* to our fractured relationship with God and with others.”²⁴⁴ Noble equates selflessness with persons of compassion, “Wherever we may encounter the reality of a genuinely holy Christian, a genuinely selfless person whose life is centered on God and so lives with compassion for others, then that is because that person has learned what it means in his or her own experience to die with Christ to self-centered living”²⁴⁵

Tim Soerens offers a powerful contrast between seeing humanity from Genesis 2 place of the goodness of creation, with their gifts and skills and that of Genesis 3. The second orients humanity according to the fall, sin, and brokenness. Sin’s orientation

²⁴² Sunberg, 57.

²⁴³ Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 35.

²⁴⁴ Jipp, 36.

²⁴⁵ Noble, 180.

causes people to see themselves as *less than* or lacking. It clothes perception in terms of sinners and judgment instead of those valued and loved by God.²⁴⁶ Perhaps we need to start where God does and recognize all of God’s creation as good, embodying intrinsic worth. Assuming a listening posture, asking open-ended questions, and genuinely hearing their response conveys value to others. Soerens imagines a different future, “just imagine how the tide could turn if we were known for our gratitude and curiosity instead of judgment and certainty.”²⁴⁷ Smith recognizing hospitality as a spiritual practice, suggests its formative value alongside other spiritual practices in Christian discipleship.²⁴⁸

Displaying hospitality reflects the image of our hospitable, welcoming God. Jipp writes,

The God of the Christian Scriptures is a God of hospitality, a God who extends hospitality to his people and who requires that his people embody hospitality to others. We are God’s guests and friends. And it is because of God’s extension of hospitality and friendship to us that the church can offer hospitality to one another and to those seemingly outside the reach of our faith communities.²⁴⁹

b. Belonging and Embrace

I have a sketch by Katherine Brown of Jesus holding a lamb close to his chest. The nail scars are evident in his hands. Hours gazing at that sketch and imagining myself as that lamb helped me experience God’s presence, embrace, and tender love through a devastating time in life. Robert Webber wrote of how the ancient church understood God’s embrace. Through the embrace of Jesus, God is restoring our flawed concept of God’s image in us. He calls true Christian spirituality the embrace of Jesus.²⁵⁰ Webber offers this, “So out of the Father’s all-encompassing love for his creation, God became one of us ‘dwelt among us’ in the incarnational embrace, and in union with us in Jesus,

²⁴⁶ Soerens, 104–105.

²⁴⁷ Soerens, 108.

²⁴⁸ Smith, 212.

²⁴⁹ Jipp, 2.

²⁵⁰ Webber, 127.

God restored the union of humanity with himself and modeled the purpose of life.”²⁵¹

There is a responsibility personally and communally to pursue this place of belonging and embrace, yet God’s gracious Spirit does for us what we can only cooperate with.

Nouwen suggests that even as we know ourselves as the Beloved, we have a responsibility to live fully into becoming who we are.²⁵² The necessary element of being and becoming is communion and union with God and the community of faith. Nouwen explains how this is possible, “Becoming the Beloved means letting the truth of our Belovedness become enfolded in everything we think, say, or do.”²⁵³ This is not an arrival point we seek but a flowing rhythm into more profound and complete healing of the *imago Dei* in us. Barry affirms this ongoing nature of restoration and that it is God’s desire for us that makes us desirable.²⁵⁴ God’s desire for us speaks directly to the problem of shame, exposing it as a lie, for God has already demonstrated our worth in sending Jesus. Webber describes participating in God’s embrace like this, “The biblical key is baptism—immersion into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the pattern of spirituality—putting off the old person who has been buried with Christ in his death; putting on the new person raised to the new life of the Spirit.”²⁵⁵ So to bear the image of God is to live into who we are and whose we are as God’s beloved.

Brueggemann describes it this way, “It is an explicit call to form a new kind of human community in which the members, after the manner of the gracious God, are attentive in calling each other to full being in fellowship.”²⁵⁶ Embrace and belonging can be trusted

²⁵¹ Webber, 126.

²⁵² Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1992), 43.

²⁵³ Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*, 45.

²⁵⁴ Barry, 34.

²⁵⁵ Webber, 26.

²⁵⁶ Brueggemann, 35.

when held in the mystery of an immanent relational God who is at the same time transcendent and holy other. Richard writes,

In divine nature there is unity of substance; in human nature, unity of person...So they are mutually related and should be mutually contrasted: created nature and uncreated nature; time and eternity; corruptible and incorruptible; changeable and unchangeable; the small and the immense; the bounded and the infinite.²⁵⁷

Coming back again to the reciprocating self, experiencing the unconditional, grace-filled love of God allows for the reciprocating self to develop and reflect the image of the God who first loves. Smith explains this sacred space that recalibrates our understanding, “our brokenness and violence are met by the grace of God, who suffered violence for our sake and in turn graces and empowers us to reorder our desires, to recalibrate our ultimate aims, and to take up once again our vocation as humans, to be his image bearers to and for the world.”²⁵⁸ Balswick rightly points out that to bear the *imago Dei* is not just something within a person. Trinity is a community of relatedness, mutuality, and unity even in the uniqueness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Accordingly, our understanding of the *imago Dei* should be relational, reflecting the divine and represented among ourselves.²⁵⁹ Becoming a community of belonging and embrace involves deep friendships. Nouwen writes, “Deep friendship is a calling forth of each other’s closeness and a mutual affirmation of being precious in God’s eyes...Our lives are unique stones in the mosaic of human existence—priceless and irreplaceable.”²⁶⁰ Lesslie Newbigin describes the community of faith as a sacred space where the story of God’s people unfolds:

²⁵⁷ Richard of St. Victor, 382.

²⁵⁸ Smith, 180.

²⁵⁹ Balswick, 45.

²⁶⁰ Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*, 65.

The whole core of biblical history is the story of a visible community to be God's own people, His royal priesthood on earth, the bearer of His light to the nations. It is surely a fact of inexhaustible significance that what our Lord left behind Him was not a book, nor a creed, nor a system of thought, nor a rule of life, but a visible community.²⁶¹

Mirroring and reflecting the inclusive, unconditional love and mutuality, as experienced in the *perichoresis*, is what it means to bear the *imago Dei*. Relationship with Trinity and one another creates a gracious, hospitable space of embrace and belonging that restores and makes us more fully human. As is God's nature, this is not just for our benefit but as beautifully written by Graham Buxton, "Caught up in the love of Trinity, we are privileged to dance with God in the darkness of this world."²⁶² Communities of faith are called to reflect and embody the love of God, making it known to one another and taking that light into the darkness. Life-giving communities share their stories, deeply listen, affirm, and hold one another in prayer. Communities that tell better stories represent whom God says we are as the goodness of God's creation.

From a sociological perspective, Brown presents empathy and vulnerability as paramount in addressing shame and developing resilience to shame. Empathy is to feel with someone experiencing shame and the path to the vulnerability she describes like this:

Vulnerability is possible only when one has a sense of worthiness. Knowing oneself to be loved and have value fosters openness, courage, and allows one to risk sharing their talents and gifts. She warns that our self-worth should not be connected to what we produce. If what you have produced is not affirmed and your self-worth is tied to what you do rather than who you are, shame has been potentially given control.²⁶³

²⁶¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 27.

²⁶² Buxton, 4.

²⁶³ Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 64.

Her research has been extremely vital and has significant merit concerning battling shame. Where I believe it falls short is in grounding one's belonging in God. Since only God is perfect, God is the One with whom we will never experience a broken love, trust relationship. Much of Brown's plan for shame resilience relies on trusted others she has identified as her husband, sisters, and girlfriends. Brown offers some beneficial healing practices that would be even more effective within God and a faith community.

Peter Block suggests some strategies to consider for community transformation.

1) Choose a group and care for one another. Out of intentional caring, one becomes accountable to the others. 2) Build connections based on shared connections, which he calls "associational life." 3) Rather than focusing on problem-solving, begin to imagine an alternative future. 4) While transformation can happen in large gatherings, Block suggests that small groups are more conducive because an individual's uniqueness can be valued. 5) Transformation in community flows from a change in conversation.²⁶⁴

Wimberly writes of these conversations telling stories as an avenue to growth and formation.²⁶⁵ Brown, Block, and Wimberly each agree on significant relationships that care for one another, encourage vulnerability, and accountability cultivate the soil for transformation. Perhaps the following is an important question to ask. How might an understanding of shame contribute to the cohesiveness of the community? Later more attention will be afforded to this inquiry.

Wimberly writes, "People in congregations and in pastoral counseling bring well-formed personal narratives fashioned and shaped by their experiences of shame."²⁶⁶

Holding one's narrative up to the light of God's grand meta-narrative enables personal

²⁶⁴ Block, 30-31.

²⁶⁵ Wimberly, 13.

²⁶⁶ Wimberly, 17.

narratives to be rewritten in light of God who loves us (John 3:16; I John 4:7-11). God created humanity for relationship with the Godhead and one another (I John 4:11, 16). As the beloved of God, so we are to love God, ourselves, and one another. Muller identifies God as the one who can raise humanity from shame, restoring them to a place of honor.²⁶⁷ Jesus as the perfect Human One is our example, and the Spirit enables transformation and restoration. While many tried to shame Jesus, he does not experience shame (Luke 7:44; John 19:17-18), Jesus knows he is the beloved of his Father, God (Matthew 3:17; 17:5).

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

The Artifact

Devon Aire Community Church of the Nazarene is a small church plant whose vision is to *reach the unchurched, dechurched, and non-practicing Catholics with the love of Jesus*. About four years ago, we began to create a discipleship plan to nurture the forming of Christ in all who would come. The artifact created will become part of the plan, specifically for women. *Who Do You Say That I Am?* is a seven-week small group experience for women to address the problem of shame through nurturing the restoration of the *imago Dei*. It will be implemented through the discipleship ministry (Appendix 2). The artifact becomes a catalyst for nurturing the Christian Community by learning to mirror the love and mutuality of the community of Trinity. This community will covenant together to create a safe space where each one's narratives can be shared. The group will work together to cultivate a place where they can be vulnerable, practice empathy and

²⁶⁷ Müller, 58.

love while engaging in formative spiritual practices that will nurture the restoration of their true identity as the Beloved of God.

This chapter will also present the standards and practices used to create the artifact. Next, some research methodologies will be discussed that flowed from a small focus group of women within my context. As a work in Practical Theology, the artifact is designed to reach my local context with the hope that it may have a broader use with further research and possible media additions. “Who Do You Say I Am?” is designed as a community group experience that takes a Thematic Approach to the problem of shame. The confines of time limitations have not allowed the focus group to engage in the whole small-group experience. A small portion of the artifact was presented to a couple of small focus groups to create a feedback loop that informs reflexively inviting future broader and fuller engagement.

I. Standards and Practices

There are many options for curriculum on the market. The intent from its inception is for this artifact to facilitate a women’s small community group experience. A small group environment allows for establishing a safe space where participants can practice empathy and love in sharing and receiving one another’s stories. The group will covenant together to keep personal stories confidential and pray for one another, inviting the Holy Spirit to empower transformative narratives that move toward the *imago Dei*.

Block writes about a shift in community context necessary to become an authentic community. For example, a telos of possibilities over problem-solving and belonging that embraces gifts rather than defined by the participants’ fears. He offers these principles as

a catalyst for community transformation 1) A caring fabric that becomes accountable to one another, 2) strong association, 3) the community structure that can enable members to create an alternative future, 4) a vehicle of transformation, and 5) transformation involves conversations.²⁶⁸ His transformation strategy is woven throughout the fabric of the curriculum artifact. With this in mind, it is why the artifact addresses shame, but its purpose is to nurture the restoration of the imago Dei

The artifact is loosely modeled after some small group studies from The Foundry Publishing Company. Notably, the “Breathe Series” by Shawna Songer Gaines influences this artifact. Its simple format invites the building of authentic community among participants.²⁶⁹ The publishing company adopted its name from the Foundry Church in London, England that is known as the birthplace of Wesleyan-Holiness Theology. The mission of the Foundry is to “empower people with life-changing ways to engage in the mission of God.”²⁷⁰ The Foundry understands that it is in doing life together that discipleship is forged. Following their example, the artifact is a practical resource to engage the community group in formative ways in the Wesleyan Tradition.

“Who Do You Say That I Am?” will include a participants’ and facilitator’s guide. It might be advantageous to add a short video introduction to each lesson, but at this point, I am not sure if it would help or detract from the time needed for community life. Perhaps a digital or downloadable video might encourage a more tentative facilitator. Each week the community group will engage with a scripture passage and questions. The questions

²⁶⁸ Block, 30-32.

²⁶⁹ Published under the former name of The Foundry Publishing Company, Beacon Hill Press. The Breathe Series includes three 7-week small group experiences meant to generate meaningful discussion. 1. Created (explores God’s creative activity), 2. Wilderness (you are not alone), and 3. Babylon (the seductive spirit of Babylon).

²⁷⁰ The Foundry Publishing Company, website, accessed October 15, 2021. <https://www.thefoundrypublishing.com/our-story.html>.

are designed to be answered at home for those who desire advanced exposure. This design intentionally gives introverted people who need time to process the material the opportunity to do so. Having the questions ahead of time levels the playing field between internal and external processors when the group discusses the questions. Weekly sessions will introduce a spiritual practice that may or may not be familiar to the participants. They are to experientially educate the participants in paths that help them experience God. Some questions invite members to share their narratives with a telos of reorienting them into the meta-narrative of God. Prayer is encouraged as the gathering ends. Encourage group members to pray for one another throughout the week.

a. Elements of the Participants' Guide

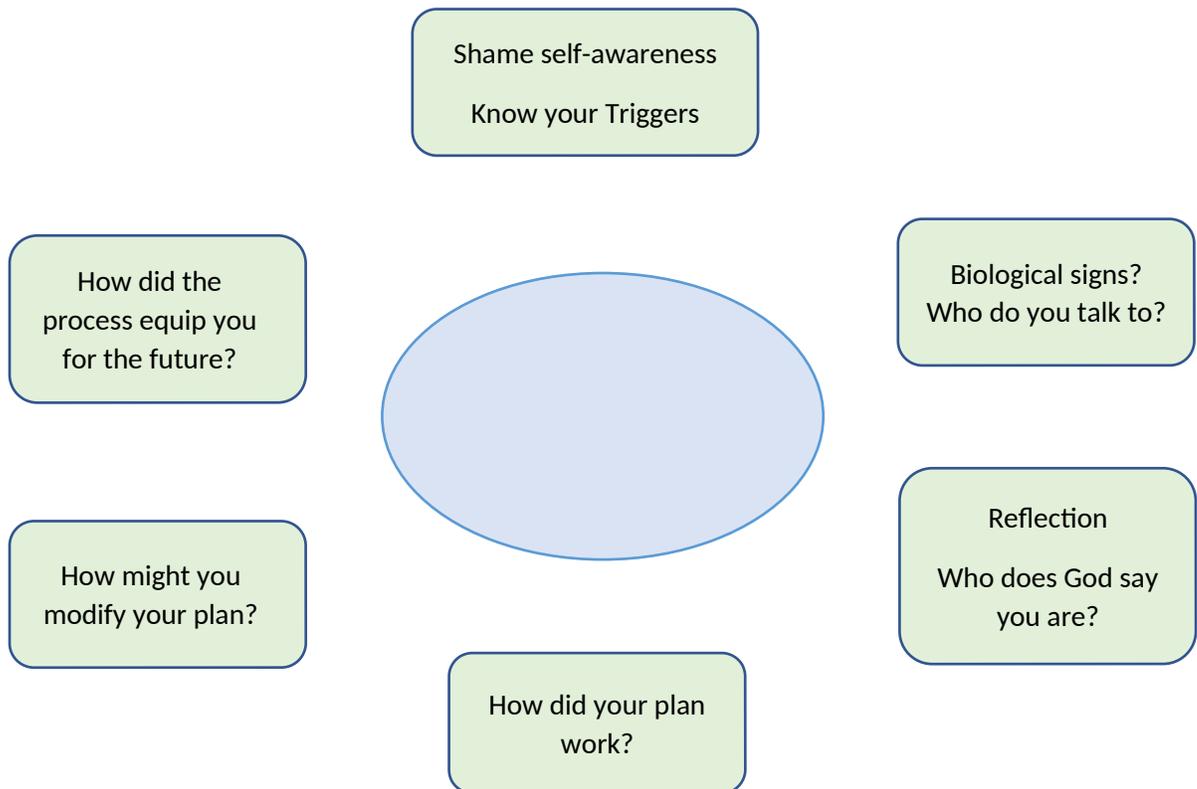
The general duration of each session in the artifact is 75 to 90 minutes. The plan for each session follows:

- **Check-in.** Ask if anyone would like to share their experience with the Daily Spiritual Practice encouraged for the week.
- **Opening.** The openings are to engage the group with one another. A more familiar term is an icebreaker or hook.
- **Scripture.** Encountering the living Word through the written word will help the community re-imagine God's fantastic design, offering a more accurate understanding of the imago Dei (image of God) in them.
- **Dialogue.** The discussion questions are a guide to group exchange. It is not as essential to get through all the questions as it is to build communion and help one another see themselves as God sees them.
- **Spiritual Practice.** There is a "new" spiritual practice introduced each week. Some will be more familiar to participants than others. They are means by which Christ being formed in us and require time and nurturing. Encourage the group to try the practices each week and then ask them how it went the following week.
- **Prayer.** Allow time to share requests and where they have seen God at work. Encourage those who would like to pray to do so.

In the first session, participants are asked to share an experience with shame and participate in a mind-mapping exercise. A flip chart, whiteboard, or like medium will be

needed to record the words that flow from the thematic development of shame. The final session seeks feedback from participants. What, if anything, did they gain from the time together? How has the group prepared them to handle future shame experiences? What was helpful or not helpful in this experience? The dynamic process of reflexivity appears in the sixth session. It is a tool to assist participants in creating a plan for facing shame that iteratively nurtures personal growth. I introduced a portion of the artifact with a small focus group that allowed for a feedback loop of conversations, inventories, and reports from those who engaged in some spiritual practices. That feedback led to amendments in the material. Reflexive understanding incorporates self-reflection and self-awareness. The Model of Reflexivity, presented on page 12, has been modified for the artifact to help participants move through their shaming experience. It is included both here and in the Participant's Guide.

How to move through a shaming experience.



- 1) Self-awareness of shame, recognizing one's triggers
- 2) Biological signs of shame, speaking it out loud to another
- 3) Reflecting on thoughts and feelings, who does God say you are?
- 4) What difference did the plan to address shame make?
- 5) How effective was your plan, and what might you need to change?
- 6) What did you learn working through this cycle that will help you better cope with future shaming?

Shame is not something we can usually anticipate, but we can be equipped with a plan for moving through it and protecting ourselves and others from the damage we might inflict

out of our shamed state. I remember a Thanksgiving meal that I put a lot of time and effort into and then had to transport it to another location, along with a table, chairs, and place settings, while keeping it all hot. Rather than enjoying the celebration, I received a list of what I could have done better or at least “differently.” Though I had expected it might happen, I repeatedly hoped to please this person, but instead immediately felt small and once again not valued. The research I had started on shame helped me know not to comment but remain quiet until I could do a reality check of the situation. Once again, I set myself up for disappointment, thinking I might brighten a day. My husband went with me to get beverage refills and helped me process the shaming experience. Shame will lose its grip when there is a plan to address it and a trusted other who will empathically listen and remind us of our true identity.

The artifact’s session titles are as follows:

Who Do You Say That I Am?
Week 1 - Recognizing the Shadows
Week 2 - Encounter with Compassion
Week 3 - Shadowed by the Fall
Week 4 - True Identity
Week 5 - Shadows Hold Back
Week 6 - Shadow Proves the Sunshine
Week 7 - Made for Connection

Psychology, Restoration Therapy, Attachment Theory, and Sociology contribute widely to understanding the origin, nature, and damage of shame. They also contribute helpful tools for confronting shame. The research confirms that a vital piece is missing from any tool or process if we do not ontologically understand that we belong to God. God has demonstrated just how valued we are through Jesus. To cooperate with the Holy Spirit

will change the trajectory of our understanding of our true identity. To be created in the *imago Dei* is to be created for connection, belonging, and love. We cannot reciprocate that which we do not know, but to know the love of God is to naturally reciprocate not just to God but to others, including self. I wonder if the failure to truly grasp this is why the church has not impacted the world that one might expect? To join the mission of God will not make sense without a heart like God that receives and gives love without discrimination. God loves all of God's creation. Wesleyan Theology acknowledges so through the doctrine of prevenient grace. The Spirit of God forever is wooing humanity into relationship with the Creator and Lover of their souls. Shame must be exposed for the falsehood it is. God's love not only transforms but is the only trustworthy hope that will never disappoint or fail. For that reason, spiritual practices are part of every session.

Some spiritual practices are communally used during the session, and others will be encouraged to try at home. Something practiced for a week should give a person sufficient exposure to its value for deepening their intimacy with God. Some will connect more than others simply because of their personality type. The artifact introduces the following spiritual practices: Visio Divina, examen, listening, confession, testimony, solitude, silence, Lectio Divina, gospel stories, meditation, hospitality, and contemplative prayer. The value of this addition was driven home to me through our shared practices during our degree coursework and something we do in our church. As we were thrust into figuring out how to offer worship from our lockdown status of the pandemic of 2020-21, our standard order of worship was turned upside down. Overnight we had no music and a desperate need to figure out how to engage worshippers over Zoom. We began sharing what we call "God At Work" stories. It is a spiritual practice that teaches our people to be

aware of God’s movements through their everyday activities. With all the grief and loss our church was suffering, these weekly reminders not only instilled hope, but this practice continues to promote the noticing of God’s love and care for us. These two experiences confirmed the importance of incorporating spiritual practices into the artifact.

b. Facilitator Guide

The facilitator’s guide includes an introduction to the structure of the sessions and tips to foster an authentic community that understands itself as mirrored after the perichoresis. The leader will help the group covenant to hold personal stories confidential and nurture a loving, inclusive atmosphere attentive to the Holy Spirit’s work. The facilitator is asked to pray daily for group members by name. The community group will experience spiritual practices and discern which practices create sacred rhythms that form and shape members in Christlikeness. These sacred rhythms help order our lives for spiritual transformation and living out of our true identity rather than the shadowed, “less than” one many of us have functioned within this broken world. The telos of Christlikeness, living after the example of the One Perfect Human, express to the community how to live as their true self. Each lesson has a section called Supplemental Information to offer some additional help.

c. HBLT Approach

Years ago, while studying Christian Education at Taylor University, I was introduced to a basic pattern for creating a curriculum. It is now referred to as the HBLT approach.²⁷¹ The name sounds more professional and less unsophisticated than the traditional Hook, Book, Look, Took method to which I was introduced.

²⁷¹ Larry Richards and Gary J Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1998), 152.

Hook – As it sounds, this section intends to capture the audience’s attention. What might engage their interest in the content the teacher or facilitator is about to present? It is something relatable that identifies with a need. It may call attention to something a person had not yet articulated as a need. A good hook also sets the telos for the session, and it leads into the scripture.

Book – This is as it sounds; actually, delving into the scripture. It may include vocabulary meanings in the original language of the text. Contextual analysis comes into play here. Understanding the context in which the passage was written historically, culturally, and as part of the grand meta-narrative of God is key to the hermeneutical unfolding. The Holy Spirit’s presence is essential in every part of the session, but none more palpable than the understanding of the Word of God.

Look – This is often a natural flow when viewing scripture in its context. The community group begins to notice implications for their current context surfacing. More than an ancient text, the Living Word of God reveals the heart and design of the Creator for creation. Here personal stories are shared as they interact with the scripture. This part of the structure relates the revelation of God in scripture to life. Again, the participation of the Spirit of God is significant in the formation, transformation, and reforming of personal narratives that more clearly understand ourselves as loved and enfolded in the community of Trinity.

Took – As this descriptive word indicates, this is the application section. The audience discerns what difference this journey in learning makes in communal and personal life. What might one take from this lesson? The T (took) section motivates formation and transformation.

II. Proposed Artifact

The women in my local church setting are the artifact's target group. Most range in age from 30 – 80 years old. Both men and women experience shame, but their triggers and reactions to it are largely influenced by gender.²⁷² Due to this, I believe the target group for the artifact will benefit from the specificity of a gender-focused group. I considered each lesson's overall telos and aim in developing the artifact. The simple structure intends to create an environment that nurtures and encourages authentic community, listening deeply to one another, demonstrating empathy, and sharing vulnerability. Ruth Haley Barton describes the space I imagine as spiritual friendship, "Spiritual friendship is not for advice giving, problem solving and fixing. It's not even about Bible study. Rather it is to assist one another in paying attention to the movements of God in our lives through the spiritual disciplines and to support another in responding faithfully to God's presence."²⁷³ Pedagogically, the weekly structure purposely offers sufficient space for dialogue and not as much for didactic learning. That is why I chose to name the supplemental material a "Facilitator's Guide."

III. Contextual Framework

The problem of shame surfaces in everyone's life at one time or another. Some struggle more extensively than others but all of us experience shame. Approaching this project as a work in Practical Theology is intended to move beyond the epistemological presentation of the problem as expressed through different disciplines. With the benefit of

²⁷² Brown, *Daring Greatly*. 83.

²⁷³ Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 167.

this knowledge, the artifact is intended to help create a safe, authentic community that can allow for vulnerable and emphatic exchange. As the group shares their own story and listens to one another, the leader should facilitate narrative development through engagement with scripture, the questions, and the weekly spiritual practice. The telos of this structure is to point toward mirroring the faithful community of the Trinity. Guided by the Holy Spirit, with the help of one another and the artifact, participants will be encouraged to imagine and adopt transformed narratives more consistent with their true identity as beloved of God. The State Shame and Guilt Scale (SSGS, Appendix 1) will be available, and participants will be encouraged to self-administer and score at the beginning and after the final session for their edification. Analyzing a feedback loop of a few women in my church does not convince me how beneficial the SSGS results are, but it was quite effective as a conversation starter. The inventory has led to deeper discussions about experiences with shame from the first gathering.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, the artifact is not a study on shame. It recognizes and addresses the problem of shame, but its purpose is to restore a proper understanding of *imago Dei* through authentic community. As quoted earlier, Block describes a community that mirrors Trinity's love, mutuality, and belonging. A community that prays together holds one another's stories with empathy and grace. The prayer is that as community bonds grow, they will help one another see themselves as the beloved of God, worthy of belonging and connection. The facilitator must remember that she is nurturing a community, not leading a study. The questions will enable transformative conversations that will help in the creative imagining of a future in ever-deepening intimate communion

with God and one another. As the community of Trinity, it will be radically hospitable to others.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

I. Artifact Development

The women's community group material described in the previous chapter, *Who Do You Say That I Am?* has been designed as an additional step in Devon Aire's discipleship plan. The telos of the whole discipleship plan is to be faithful to Jesus's words in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples of all nations and love with the love we first received from God (I John 4:7-21). We pray for our church's ontological nature to embody Christ in our community. To fully participate in Christ's ministry of reconciliation and bringing about of the fullness of the Kingdom of Heaven. Hearing people's stories continue to shape my understanding, imagination, and passion for supporting others as together we live into our true selves as the Beloved of God. This seven-week experience will likely not dramatically transform our context, but hopefully, it will spark the imagination for restoring our understanding of being created in the *imago Dei*.

The desire to write this artifact came from the personal experience of not feeling valued together with many counseling appointments and conversations of others believing they were unworthy, unloved, or had no place at the table. Through experience and the narratives of others, I have witnessed that perceiving one's identity as "less than" or "not good enough" adversely affects other relationships in their life. I have found ethnographic research to be one of the most valuable means of understanding the

experience of shame. Listening to stories of identities shadowed by shame, I see this as one of the most debilitating experiences. Shame is a universal experience due to our innate need for connection. Brown states that “we are physically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually hardwired for connection, love, and belonging.”²⁷⁴ A perceived lack of value and worth leaves people powerless to change. As a staff psychologist at Menninger Clinic for two decades, Harriet Lerner writes that without self-worth, we are ill-equipped for change.²⁷⁵ While I agree with Brown and Lerner, I would take it further to say that humanity’s self-worth is grounded in God who loves and longs for relationship offering a trustworthy place of belonging and connection. A certain amount of growth and change may occur outside of one’s purview of this, but our trustworthy platform of self-worth must be grounded in God. In relationship with the Creator, God, a deeper understanding of the *imago Dei* is possible. One can only know their true self as they know the One who created them.

This journey started with the belief that shame is a pervasive problem, and through research, I have discovered it is more prevalent than imagined. It took on different forms than were known to me. Also, I set out to discover healing from shame, believing a shame-free existence was possible. I discovered that all humanity would continue to encounter intentional and unintentional situations and experiences of shame. As Brown has pointed out, due to our innate need for connection, the fear of losing that will always be possible. My pursuit shifted from eliminating shame to how to journey through shame experiences causing little to no damage to other relationships, including ourselves.

²⁷⁴ Brown, *Dare to Lead*. 126.

²⁷⁵ Harriet Lerner, *The Dance of Connection: How to Talk to Someone When You’re Mad, Hurt, Scared, Frustrated, Insulted, Betrayed, or Desperate*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2001), 197.

The artifact itself needs additional work to reflect a more professional publication fit for distribution. It perhaps could use some better graphics and a different format. I struggled with adding a media component such as a recording for each session that could be on DVD or YouTube. Since I believe the strength in this experience will be in the relational connections, I did not want to take any more time away from the participants' interaction. Considering the pros and cons, perhaps a media component would increase a facilitator's willingness to take up this mantle.

In developing the artifact, I benefited from my weekly women's group. We only began to meet in person again in September of 2021. The first week we spent the whole time processing the grief and loss we were all experiencing (all but one had lost one or both parents during the pandemic). I began to weave some of my work with the study we were using. The feedback I received was so positive that they asked if we could keep meeting and go through the whole group experience. A pilot group is being launched to honor that request. I hoped to hold that group sooner to add to the research findings, but COVID challenged that while confirming our need for community and connection. All of us need to be reminded of whose and who we are. Future pilot groups will reflexively suggest adjustments to the artifact.

The research has led to a stronger belief that shadows of things like shame only further distort our understanding of the Divine Image in which we were formed from the very beginning. When infused by the Holy Spirit, spiritual practices and life lived in authentic community are tools that move us out of hiding into the fuller light of Divine presence. The light and life of Christ heals and restores our shattered understanding of the *imago Dei*. In the light of Christ's presence, shadows dissolve into a more explicit acceptance of

one's true self. In silence, we learn to contemplate and find our belonging in the community of the Holy Trinity. In the community of faith, we learn to practice the presence of God, reminding one another of our beloved status and learning together how to mirror the community of Trinity. A community that is inclusive, hospitable, a fallow ground where humanity's understanding of the *imago Dei* may be recalibrated to the likeness of Christ. As partakers of the Divine image, our telos for this life is to participate in Christ's ministry of bringing about the fullness of God's Kingdom. The problem of shame needs to be recognized and a plan created to counteract the lies it perpetrates. However, focusing only on shame does not get to the root of the problem it represents. Shame's power to destroy locates in its propensity to keep people in hiding and isolated from the very community that can be a catalyst for healing their distorted understanding of the *imago Dei*. Personal and communal spiritual practices, such as those presented in the artifact, nurture cooperation with the Spirit of God that regenerates our understanding of being created in the *imago Dei*.

II. Limitations

This work only begins to address the universality of the problem of shame. Implications for outward expressions of shame may differ on the lifespan continuum, with gender understanding and cross-cultural differences. For example, a professor in one of our state universities spoke to me of the extreme pressure placed on his Asian students to perform. If they could not stay at the top of their class, suicide was considered an honorable action. Sam Louie is a psychotherapist, Emmy Award-winning former television journalist, and author. In one of his books, he addresses Asian shame and

addiction. In an article for *Psychology Today*, he writes of suicide as a way to preserve honor in the Asian culture.²⁷⁶

An additional limitation is that more research and writing on the interrelatedness of the persons of the Trinity would be helpful. Humanity is to reflect and imitate how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to one another and creation. Trinity's perfect expression of love and interdependence not only mirrors for humanity its desired telos but, empowered by the Spirit of God, forms humanity into Christlikeness. *Theosis*, Christlikeness, draws humanity into deeper intimacy with God, one another, and the grand scheme of salvation.

III. Future Possibilities

Further expansion of this project would be beneficial for men's groups. While we all experience shame, the triggers and responses are very different between genders. These distinctions appear to suggest gender-specific groups may be most valuable for honest and authentic sharing. I recognize that identifying groups by gender carries additional problematic considerations in our culture. This will also require more research, prayer, and sensitive conversations to receive all of humanity as created in the *imago Dei*.

Addressing shame with its isolating and relational woundedness is a strategic first step to feeling heard and not alone. Theologically strategic and necessary is recovering our identity. Humans are not just sinners with nothing at all good in us. Here Wesleyan Theology offers an optimistic view that through Christ, we can recover the understanding of our identity that we essentially lost in the fall. Failing to accept that humanity is created out of the goodness of God for relationship and connection orients us in a

²⁷⁶ Sam Louie, "Asian Honor and Suicide," *Psychology Today* (June 30, 2014), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/minority-report/201406/asian-honor-and-suicide>.

“never/rarely good enough” hopeless existence. Again, Lerner reminds us of the need for a platform of self-worth to experience transformation. My final suggestion for future work is to develop more materials from a Wesleyan perspective that takes a formational approach to recover our understanding of the *imago Dei*. To truly know ourselves as God intends would radically impact the embodiment of Christ in the world. For Devon Aire Church to share the love of Jesus with the unchurched and the dechurched would reach farther than transforming our neighborhood. May we witness the greater unfolding of the Kingdom of God as the church is active, “growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church” (Ephesians 4:15).

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STATE SHAME AND GUILT SCALE (SSGS)

Directions: Take a few minutes to take and score the following inventory. Do not look at which questions score which experiences ahead of taking the inventory (Directions are my addition).

	Not feeling this way at all	Feeling this way somewhat	Feeling this way very strongly
1. I feel good about myself.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
2. I want to sink into the floor and disappear.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
3. I feel remorse, regret.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
4. I feel worthwhile, valuable.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
5. I feel small.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
6. I feel tension.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
7. I feel capable, useful	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
8. I feel like I am a bad person.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
9. I cannot stop thinking about something bad I have done.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
10. I feel proud	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
11. I feel humiliated, disgraced.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
12. I feel like apologizing, confessing.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
13. I feel pleased about something I have done.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
14. I feel worthless, powerless.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
15. I feel bad about something I have done.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		

Scoring for the SSGS: Each scale consists of 5 items:

- Shame –Items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14
- Guilt – Items 3, 6, 9, 12, 15
- Pride—Items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13

All items are scored in a positive direction ²⁷⁷

Appendix 2

²⁷⁷ Tangney, 239-240.

Who Do
You
Say
That I Am?



Out of the
Shadows
Responding to
Shame

Participant's Contents

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Welcome and How to Use the Participant's Guide

Greetings, Beloved of God, and welcome to a small community life experience. We will covenant together to create a safe space where the stories shared, of a personal nature, will stay in the group. We may laugh and shed a tear, but our group goal will be to mirror the loving, mutuality shared by the persons of the Trinity. This is an expedition that will unearth and expose the problem of shame. While we need to understand it and its insidious nature, we invite the Holy Spirit to help this be much more than a study on shame. The title of this journey is Who Do You Say That I Am? It comes from the synoptic (similar) Gospels when Jesus asks Peter and the disciples this question (Matthew 16:15, Mark 8:29, Luke 9:20). Shame diminishes our value. God wants to nurture and restore our True Identity as created, loved, and valued by God.

Each week a Spiritual Practice will be introduced, and its daily practice encouraged throughout the week. Some people like time to process material and their responses to questions (internal processors), and others process best out loud with others (external

processors). Having the material ahead of time allows all participants to be active, thus enriching the community life of the group.

Please pray for your fellow group members. Perhaps you want to choose prayer partners for the journey. God's heart's desire is for you to become all he has created you to be as a person and as a community of faith. Knowing and living from our true identity as Beloved of God will not only impact your life but the world. Jesus has chosen the church to be his body in the world. The community of faith is the embodied Jesus whose privilege it is to partner with God in bringing about the fullness of the Kingdom of Heaven. I pray that somehow this experience might draw you more deeply into the love of God, and as a community, you more brightly reflect that same love and belonging the world so desperately needs.

About the Author:

Linda Bynum is a Pastor and District Secretary on the Eastern Michigan District of the Church of the Nazarene. Married to her husband of twenty-eight years, they have three children and twelve grandchildren. Linda has a BA in Christian Education from Taylor University, an MA in Pastoral Care and Counseling from Ashland Theological Seminary, an MDiv from Nazarene Theological Seminary, and will soon complete a DMin in Spiritual Formation and Discipleship, also from Nazarene Theological Seminary.

Understanding and mitigating shame is a particular passion and is a subject she is personally acquainted with and has often encountered through pastoral counseling. Henri Nouwen is an author who has had a profound influence through the years and especially in addressing shame. Created out of the goodness of God, in God's divine image, and for relationship is the understanding we must recover. It is not a fast five-step approach but a journey in relationship with the community of the Trinity. As we come to know God, we also know ourselves as those created in the image of God (*imago Dei*).

The following is not a study on shame but addresses shame as we recover the truth that we are loved, valued, and worthy of relationship because God says that is so.

Recognizing the Shadow

Week 1

Introduction

Opening: Exercise in Mind Mapping

What words come to mind when I say SHAME?

You are walking through the woods on a warm, sunny spring day, and suddenly you are startled. Your solitude is interrupted by something you could not identify? Was it another person? A creature? And if a creature, what kind? Does it pose a threat or a moment of appreciation? The shadows of the stately trees conceal the unknown in the darkness. The shadows obscure the true identity of the source. As the object of unsettledness steps out of the shadows into the fullness of light, its true identity becomes known. Shadows can distort, hide, and conceal the truth of what is.

You are about to embark on an experience that addresses shame, but that is not the focus. True, we must recognize and define a problem to discover ways to manage it, lessen its effects, or find healing. God’s intention was not for creation to live in trauma, brokenness, and isolation. Our Triune God created humanity to join the beautiful community of love and mutuality shared between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While we acknowledge the Holy Otherness of God, we must also recognize God’s love is so great that Jesus became as we are so we can become like him (2 Peter 1:4; Phil. 2:5-11). Walking with Jesus can help us intimately know the God who created us for relationship. We are built for connection and belonging with God and others including ourselves. Tim Soerens describes what he calls God’s dream for us, “God’s passionate desire to be in relationship with individuals and to break down all barriers that stand between us and our beloved Creator.”²⁷⁸

Shame is a barrier to believing that we are loved, valued, and worthy of connection. One of my favorite authors, Henri Nouwen, helps us understand the value of journeying together in community, especially for those who are hurting. “Shared pain is no longer paralyzing but mobilizing, when understood as a way to liberation.”²⁷⁹ Authentic Christian community creates a safe space where confession of the state of our being is brought lovingly into the light of our hope in Christ. That is not to say that we would never suffer again, but community creates connection for this life's journey that paradoxically holds both joy and brokenness. “Community arises where the sharing of pain takes place, not as a stifling form of self-complaint, but as a recognition of God’s saving promises.”²⁸⁰ God’s gracious, hospitable love is an archetypal picture of mutuality, empathy, authenticity, and vulnerability. A love that meets us in our woundedness and empowers us to be a source of life to one another.

Our true identity has been masked, at best, or distorted by the shadow of brokenness, sin, and shame. My prayer for you and your fellow sojourners is that this material may help lead you to richer depths of community and a deeper intimacy with the One who loves you with a perfect and everlasting love.

The Word:

Genesis 3:7-10. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

The humans enjoyed beautiful, intimate communion with God. They walked together among creation. There was trust, transparency, and vulnerability. Adam and Eve knew

²⁷⁸ Tim Soerens, *Everywhere You Look: Discovering the Church Right Where You Are* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 31.

²⁷⁹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York, N.Y.: Image Books, Doubleday, 1979), 93.

²⁸⁰ Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 94.

the love of their Creator. The “crafty serpent” entered the scene and attempted to poke holes at their wholeness, their understanding of who they knew themselves to be. The serpent convinced the humans that they were deficient; somehow, they were not enough the way they were created. They were told to eat from the forbidden tree, and a whole new world would open up. God was holding back something that would make them better. Whatever it was, having this thing would make them more than they already were.

They could have refuted the lie with a confident assertion that God is trustworthy. Instead, they traded their identity as created in the image of God (*imago Dei*) with love and a place of belonging, for the possibility there might be something more. Because they believed that God might be holding out on them, they risked taking the challenge only for the couple to discover all was now compromised. They knew immediately that disobedience and believing that they were not enough was a horrible mistake that damaged their relationship with God and one another. The couple who knew no shame now hid and tried to cover their shame both figuratively and literally. They sewed together leaves to hide their nakedness and hid in the shadows when they heard God approaching. This couple that once enjoyed strolling in the cool of the evening with God now hid in the shadows. This is what I mean by shadow. A shadow is anything that distorts our understanding of what God declared about humanity. Humanity was created out of love and for relationship with God and one another. This shadow over our identity impacts our own vision of who we are and our view of the world. We can understand that their partaking of the fruit produced guilt; they were disobedient. Something happened that motivated the act of disobedience, born out of believing they were not enough. Shame also entered the scene, causing a belief they were not enough, not valuable. Shame makes us feel unloved, not valued, or worthy of relationship. Based on all my research on shame, allow me to offer my definition of this shadow that blocks and distorts who God says we are.

Shame is the disorienting state of not knowing one is the beloved of God and worthy of belonging, whether it is the result of insecure attachment, a violation of love, or misperception. It binds us to the untruths that we are unloved, flawed, and underserving of relationships. Shame alienates and isolates.

Can you think of a time you experienced shame?

What triggered it? Was it something someone said? A historical or current event?

How did you handle it?

Take a few minutes to take and score the following inventory. Do not look at which questions score which experiences ahead of taking the inventory. This State Shame and Guilt Scale comes from Shame and Guilt by Tangney and Dearing.

STATE SHAME AND GUILT SCALE (SSGS)

	Not feeling this way at all	Feeling this way somewhat	Feeling this way very strongly
1. I feel good about myself.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5		
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Scoring for the SSGS Each scale consists of 5 items:

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- Pride—Items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13 ²⁸¹

Spiritual Practices:

Each week I introduce a different spiritual practice. Possibly some may be new to you. There is nothing magical about the spiritual practices in which you engage. They do not

²⁸¹ June Price Tangney and Ronda L. Dearing, *Shame and Guilt*, Emotions and social behavior (New York: Guilford Press, 2002), 239-240.

somehow earn you favor with God or a place in his heart that you did not already have. Coming from my tendency toward perfectionism, I believed I could please God if I spent the “right” amount of time in prayer or in the Word. If I studied or meditated enough. If I only fasted regularly, served faithfully, or led enough people to Jesus or sanctification, I would certainly know a deeper intimacy with God. The problem is taking a works-based approach to God instead of a relational one. Relationally, we want a growing awareness of God’s presence. The first leaves us asking how much is the “right” amount of time? How do I know if it is “working,” making a difference? When we act as if it all depends on us, we place a stumbling block to an authentic relationship with God and others? It is not about doing enough. It is about being with and enjoying God’s presence. God’s prevenient grace (God’s wooing grace before we enter a relationship with Jesus) invites us into an authentic relationship with the community of Trinity. Grace is not merely a thing or theological concept; it is the person of Jesus. The Trinity is the perfect community of mutuality, love, and affirmation. The Father never speaks a disparaging word about the Son or the Spirit. The same is true about Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

So Spiritual Practices are not about my performance but avenues to experiencing deeper intimacy and connection with God. They help us draw nearer to the heart of God. To “hear” when God speaks. We can discover we are who God says we are through Spiritual Practices. Beloved, cherished, and created in the image of the One Perfect (whole complete) Human, Jesus. Created for relationship with God and one another.

Invitation to Share:

This introductory lesson may have stirred up something in you. If you are ready, share with the group and have them pray for you before you leave. Perhaps you are not yet prepared for that, so our first Spiritual Practice invites you to talk to God about what is stirring in you.

Daily Spiritual Practice: Daily Examen (pronounced examine)

Ignatius of Loyola was a Spanish theologian and mystic from the 16th century during the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation. He was the founder of the Jesuits. Ignatius and his companions believed to find God, you should notice where God was active. He created the following 5-point Spiritual Exercise he called Examen.

The first step is gratitude.

The second step is asking for the grace to know my sins.

The third part of examen is the heart of the prayer, a review of your day. Thoughts, words, and deeds. Each moment offers a window into where God has been in your day.

The fourth is to for forgiveness from God.

The fifth is to ask for the grace of God's help during the next day. Close with the Lord's prayer.²⁸²

Each close of the day this week, walk through the five steps before you retire for the night. (If that is not possible, you can try this in the morning, looking back on the day before.) This might be an opportunity to couple it with another spiritual practice – journaling. You could make notes on each of the steps daily.

Close in prayer.

Encounter with Compassion

Week 2

Check-in: Does anyone want to share their experience with the Spiritual Practice of Examen last week? How was it helpful or not?

Opening with a Spiritual Practice: Visio Divina

- Spend a few minutes gazing at this rendering of the Woman at the Well
- After several minutes have someone slowly read the passage below.
- Spend a few more minutes in silence, looking at the rendering and listening for what God might be saying. If no one gets anything, that is fine. The silence should remain until one feels prompted to speak. The leader is silently praying alongside you.

²⁸² James Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: A Spirituality for Real Life*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), 88–95.



The Word: John 4:5-30

⁵ Jesus arrived at the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶⁻⁸ Wearing by his long journey, he sat on the edge of Jacob's well, and sent his disciples into the village to buy food, for it was already afternoon. Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁹ She replied, "Why would a Jewish man ask a Samaritan woman for a drink of water?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)¹⁰ Jesus replied, "If you only knew who I am and the gift that God wants to give you, you'd ask me for a drink, and I would give you living water."

¹¹ The woman replied, "But sir, you don't even have a bucket, and the well is very deep. So where do you find this 'living water'?" ¹² Do you really think that you are greater than our ancestor Jacob who dug this well and drank from it himself, along with his children and livestock?"¹³ Jesus answered, "If you drink from Jacob's well, you'll be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but if anyone drinks the living water I give them, they will never be thirsty again. For when you drink the water I give you, it becomes a gushing fountain of the

²⁸³ Christ and the Samaritan Woman, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=57300> [retrieved September 24, 2021]. Original source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/frted/8186047331> - Ted.

Holy Spirit, flooding you with endless life.”¹⁵ The woman replied, “Let me drink that water so I’ll never be thirsty again and won’t have to come back here to draw water.”¹⁶ Jesus said, “Go get your husband and bring him back here.”¹⁷ “But I’m not married,” the woman answered. “That’s true,” Jesus said,¹⁸ “for you’ve been married five times, and now you’re living with a man who is not your husband. You have told the truth.”

¹⁹ The woman changed the subject. “You must be a prophet!²⁰ So tell me this: Why do our fathers worship God on this nearby mountain, but your people teach that Jerusalem is the place where we must worship. Who is right?” Jesus responded,²¹ “Believe me, dear woman, the time has come when you will worship the Father neither on a mountain nor in Jerusalem, but in your heart.²² Your people don’t really know the One they worship, but we Jews worship out of our experience, for it’s from the Jews that salvation is available.²³⁻²⁴ From now on, worshiping the Father will not be a matter of the right place but with a right heart. For God is a Spirit, and he longs to have sincere worshipers who adore him in the realm of the Spirit and in truth.”

²⁵ The woman said, “This is all so confusing, but I do know that the Anointed One is coming—the true Messiah. And when he comes, he will tell us everything we need to know.”²⁶ Jesus said to her, “You don’t have to wait any longer, the Anointed One is here speaking with you—I am the One you’re looking for.”²⁷ At that moment, his disciples returned and were stunned to see Jesus speaking with a Samaritan woman, yet none of them dared ask him why or what they were discussing.²⁸ All at once, the woman left her water jar and ran off to her village and told everyone,²⁹ “Come and meet a man at the well who told me everything I’ve ever done! He could be the One we’ve been waiting for.”³⁰ Hearing this, the people came streaming out of the village to go see Jesus.²⁸⁴

What, if anything, did you sense God saying or revealing to you?

Why did the woman go to the well in the heat of the day rather than early like the rest of the town’s women?

How would you describe the way the town’s people treated the woman?

This woman was ostracized from joining the town's women at the well. The chore of retrieving water from the well and carrying it for their household's needs was most wisely done in the cool of the morning. It also provided time to catch up on the town's news. The woman was shamed by her past and hid from the community. She performed the commonly social task in isolation.

Was it unusual for a Jewish man to speak to a Samaritan woman? Why?

How would you describe the manner in which Jesus addressed her shame?

How would you describe what Jesus did for her?

Discuss how Jesus' acceptance of the woman allowed her to reconnect with her community?

Describe what difference receiving Jesus' welcome and reminder that you are loved and belong to God would make in your life.

Accept Your Identity as a Child of God

Your true identity is as a child of God. This is the identity you have to accept. Once you have claimed it and settled in it, you can live in a world that gives you much joy as well as pain. You can receive the praise as well as the blame that comes to you as an opportunity for strengthening your basic identity, because identity that makes you free is anchored beyond all human praise and blame. You belong to God, and it is as a child of God that you are sent into the world.²⁸⁵

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Henri Nouwen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

We started this lesson with Visio Divina, which means “divine seeing.” Many things can help us encounter God. Visio Divina is a spiritual practice of gazing at a picture or icon (not an idol) and being receptive to God. Icons are known as windows to the Divine. When I was going through a particularly traumatic time in my life, it was hard to pray through the tears. I spent hours staring at Kathrine Brown’s print of the scarred Jesus holding a little lamb to his chest. I would imagine myself as that lamb. Prayer is not only about an exchange of words but communing in the presence of the One who created and intimately knows and loves us. Some of my most meaningful prayer times occur when I listen, notice, and just spend time with God. Even in times of solitude, we are never alone. We join Father, Son, Spirit, and the whole company of saints who have entered the fullness of life eternal.

Daily Spiritual Practice: Choose a piece of art, sculpture, or something in creation and gaze attentively for some time. Ask God what He may want to show. Appreciate the window into the Divine

Close in prayer. Hear God saying you are beloved, know my love. Perhaps repeat together: “We are loved and of great value to God.” Say it again like you mean it.

²⁸⁵ Nouwen, “Daily Meditation,” October 4, 2021. [Henri Nouwen Society | Join Our Community | Henri Nouwen Society](#). Accessed October 4, 2021.

Shadowed by the Fall

Week 3

Opening: If someone asked, “Who are you,” how might you respond?

Who am I? Most of us have asked this question throughout our lifetime. In relation to family, I am a daughter, sister, wife, stepmom, aunt, and grandma. I am a pastor, district secretary, teacher, counselor, and mentor in the working world. I am also a friend, neighbor, resident of my city, and citizen of my country. But who am I? Who are you?

As a teenager, I was introduced to Jesus through the commonly used evangelistic tool of the Romans’ Road. Paul’s letter to the Romans is often referred to as encapsulating the Gospel, the good news of Jesus. The following scriptures are linked together to describe our identity as sinners, deserving death, with Jesus being the solution to the problem of living in sin and separation. I confess to using these same passages to teach children their need for Jesus and the gift of salvation. Allow me to walk us down that Roman Road together.

The Word: The Romans’ Road

The Greeks gave much of the known world a common language. The Romans built roads making travel by land possible and providing the means to move military and supplies across the empire. The first of these great roads was the Via Appia (Appian Way), dating to 312 BCE. It originally went southeast of Rome for approximately 162 miles.

Romans 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

What does this verse communicate about your identity?

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* According to this verse, what do I deserve?

What gift is God offering?

Romans 8:1 *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,*
Describe what this verse communicates to you?

Romans 5:5 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. What, if any, hope do you see here?

Romans 10:9-10 *If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.*

What does it mean to be saved? How does that come about? What difference does it make?

Greek word:

soteria from soter = Savior and sozo form save, rescue, deliver, restore, made whole.

What did the journey down the Romans’ Road say about my identity? Who Am I?

Much of Western Christianity has been oriented around fallen humanity, sinners in desperate need of saving. Jesus came, died, and in his victory over sin and death through the resurrection offers new life. Jesus is the way to heaven and the means to be saved from the fiery, tortured existence of hell. The Church in the West has essentially been birthed out of this Genesis chapter 3, original sin story. We need a Savior to pay the debt of our sin. It gives us a rather dismal view of creation. I do not deny original sin and the

damage caused to creation by it and personal sin. But if this is our starting point, we fail to see ourselves as the apple of God's eye, the beloved, created in God's image. We instead accept an identity of guilt and shame.

The Word: Genesis 3:1 – 13

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

When we begin with a Genesis 3 view of creation, guilt, shame, fear, and brokenness are our starting place. The first humans believed a lie. The cagey serpent told them they could be more. As if somehow, they were deficient, lacking. They could be like God if they ate the forbidden fruit. The result of partaking left them acutely aware of their disobedience, but more devastating, they did not believe themselves to be who God said they were. Humanity's identity is shadowed by the fall.

What are the first things that happened after they ate from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?

Why did they hide? How did that impact their fellowship with God?

Let's take a moment to look back on what God declared about humanity.

Genesis 1:26, 27; 2:25

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

²⁷ So God created human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.

²⁵ Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

Where does shame enter the picture?

If we begin understanding who we are in relationship to Genesis 3, we believe ourselves to be sinners in a desperate state of brokenness. This is what I call the Shadow that distorts our identity. Instead of living as bearers of the image of God (*imago Dei*) we live in fear, feeling unloved or not valued. We still believe the serpent's lie who argued the humans were missing out. The snake dangled the low-hanging fruit in front of them as if God was hiding something that could make them better than they already were. The offer of something more was really a Pandora's box that unleashed doubt, fear, guilt, and shame. It hurts our relationship with God and impacts our understanding of ourselves and our relationship with others.

Let's take a moment and define the difference between guilt and shame. We feel guilty if we have done something wrong. If I were to get pulled over for driving 50 mph in a 40 zone, I might apologize to the officer and receive the consequences of my action. I did something wrong. I broke the law, and now I need to take steps to rectify my shortcoming. I am guilty. However, if I do the same thing, I respond, "I am so stupid." "I can't do anything right." "I am such a loser." That is shame. Guilt says I did something wrong. Shame says I am bad.

The regret for the first humans was immediate, and the consequences still plague humanity today. How do we move out of the shadow of shame? Are we just desperate sinners, broken and lost?

What do you believe you are lacking? If only....then....

2 Peter 1:3-4 *His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature.*

Daily Spiritual Practice: For the next week, spend 15 minutes a day listening to God. Find a quiet place where you will be uninterrupted for the time. Take a comfortable posture and simply begin to be with Jesus. Perhaps start with the simple Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ Son of God have mercy on me.”

Should you find your mind beginning to wander, you can simply repeat the prayer. Other things popping into your mind while trying to listen to God are expected, especially at first, and it will take time to become used to. I suggest you keep paper and pen handy so if something you need to remember surfaces, jot it down, and return to listening. Perhaps God is reminding you of someone to pray for; breathe a prayer and return. Much of the prayer we have traditionally engaged in is intercessory prayer. Making requests of God on behalf of ourselves or others. Listening prayer is an intimate communing and enjoying God's presence. The Celtic Christians encouraged noticing God in all of God's creation. Perhaps the variety of size, shapes, colors, and characteristics of the many birds that dine at your feeder, or the way the waves break over the rocks or the sound of a thunderstorm rumbling through the night draw your attention to the One who will never leave or forsake you.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, is the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them.They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking.”²⁸⁶

Deuteronomy 31:6

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Note: If you are interested, there are apps to help with this time, such as the Centering Prayer App. You can set your listening duration, and it will give you a beginning and ending sound of your choice. There are also opening and closing prayer choices.

Come Back next week to see what a difference a chapter makes.

Closing:

²⁸⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965). 97.

Ask God to remind you who you are as an individual and a community of faith. Take a couple of minutes just to listen to God. When someone feels led to pray, they can break the silence, and others join in as the Spirit leads.

True Identity

Week 4

Check-in: What did you gain from your time listening to God last week?

Opening: What role does loving yourself play in loving others?

Last week, I introduced Western Christianity's traditional view of "self" in Western Christianity. We have been taught that we are sinners in need of saving. Some faiths go as far as to say there is nothing good in us. We acknowledge that by the grace of God through faith believing we can be saved from eternal separation from God through Jesus. So much of the missional focus of Christianity has been to introduce people to Jesus that they might have eternal life and be spared the torment of hell. I do not deny that this is true but let me suggest more to this truth than we typically live into. Christianity, known to most of us, emphasizes our broken and fallen nature, proclaiming our need for a Savior to pay the debt we owe. This is Genesis 3's view of creation.

What happens if perhaps we go back to the very beginning? Does it change anything for us if our view of creation comes from Genesis 1-2?

The Word:

If you are new to bible study, read all of Genesis chapter 1. If the creation narrative is very familiar to you, read slowly Genesis 1: 24 - 2:4.

²⁴ God said, "Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife." And that's what happened. ²⁵ God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."

*²⁷ God created humanity in God's own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.*

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground." ²⁹ Then God said, "I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. ³⁰ To

all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food.” And that’s what happened. ³¹ God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

2 The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. ² On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. ³ God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation ⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Describe the identity with which humanity was created.

What did God declare when creation was complete? Do you agree?

What do you notice about the full expression of humanity?

Read Genesis 2:15 - 25

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”¹⁸ The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” ¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s rib and then

closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Describe the nature of the human’s relationship with God?

What difference does it make to understand yourself as the goodness of God’s creation? One created for relationship instead of first identifying yourself as a sinner. ²⁸⁷

It is important to note there was a time when shame was not known or experienced by the humans. Shame is contrary to who God says we are. God calls humanity God’s beloved. Even in our fallen state, God says we are worthy of God’s love. Worthiness is not defined from our own merit but through Jesus, who came to show God’s love for us.

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10b)

Nothing can separate us from the love of God. (Rom 8:35-39)

Philip Yancy, in his book *What is so Amazing About Grace* writes, “There is nothing we can do to make God love us more and nothing we can do to make God love us less than he already does.”²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Tim Soerens, *Everywhere You Look: Discovering the Church Right Where You Are* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 104. Tim Gaines taught on the difference of understanding humanity from the orientation of the goodness of creation (Genesis 2) instead of fallen humanity (Genesis 3) during The Eastern Michigan District Camp Meeting Bible Study of July 2021.

²⁸⁸ Philip Yancey, ed., *What’s so Amazing about Grace?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 70.

David Busic writes, “God doesn’t love us because we are good, and God doesn’t hate us because we are bad. God’s essential nature is holy love, which means God’s characteristic action is divinely self-giving, poured-out grace.”²⁸⁹

Spiritual Practice: Hospitality

Much could be said about what it means to be radically hospitable. Joshua Jipps puts it this way, “God’s hospitality, the saving welcome that reconciles us to God and heals us, is the singular answer to our fractured relationship with God and with others.”²⁹⁰ God has extended to us his divine welcome into the loving community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In turn, as a community of faith, we embody Christ in the world, extending the same welcome as all are created in the image of God even if they do not yet know it.

The pandemic of 2020-2021 has served to polarize people more than unite them through trial. Fear is running rampant and used to draw lines and shame people, into taking sides. The fear of scarcity, already prevalent in our culture, exponentially increased. One of the greatest threats to hospitality is a mindset of scarcity. This consumeristic, throw-away society demands the latest and greatest despite the functioning nature of what is currently possessed. The next version released promotes its advantages over what is now owned and valuable. Want trumps need. In bowing to consumerism, we trade the abundance of God’s Kingdom economy for a scarcity mindset that has us grasping for more before sharing in the needs around us. Let’s look for ways to move from insatiability and greed to demonstrating acts of mercy and generosity. May your prayer this week center around opportunities to show hospitality. Ask the Spirit to give you eyes to see and a heart like God’s to welcome the stranger in your midst.

Closing Prayer:

Close this small group time slowly, read aloud the following verse three times, and then take a few moments to listen. When God moves you to speak, share with the group. When everyone has had the opportunity, close in prayer.

Jeremiah 31:3 I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. I will build you up again,

²⁸⁹ David A. Busic, *Way, Truth, Life: Discipleship as a Journey of Grace* (Kansas City, MO: The Foundry Publishing, 2021), 26.

²⁹⁰ Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 36.

Shadows Hold Back

Week 5

Opening: Share how it feels to be caught in the conflict between doing the right thing and one that conflicts with who you are because you feel indebted to another?

The Word: Exodus 3:1 – 4:17

This is a bit of a long passage, but it is important to set the whole scene of Moses' call from God. Though born a Hebrew, Moses was raised in the Pharaoh's palace by the Pharaoh's daughter. He was afforded the best education and privileges the land of Egypt offered. As he matured, he became conflicted over the way he was living and the torturous plight of his people. One day he took the life of an Egyptian to protect a Hebrew slave. This act caused him to flee the land of Egypt for Midian. He thought he was safely removed from the conflict he felt between the treatment of his people and loyalty to the Pharaoh's household. In effect, Moses fled from Egypt and tried to hide from God.

Note how does God appears to Moses? What does this scene communicate to you?

How do you think Moses felt?

What do you think was holding back Moses when God was communicating so clearly and offered him signs?

How might you describe Moses's shame?

Has God asked you to do something difficult? Did you do it? What happened? If you didn't, why not?

How did you know it was God speaking to you?

When God calls us, we can be confident that he will equip us for the task. God gave Moses many tools, assured that God would be with him and that the way was prepared. Moses, still reluctant, only agrees if his brother Aaron can be his mouthpiece. Shame says I am a failure, a mistake, not good enough. Moses strings together excuses why he could not do as God asked but was essentially not feeling he was good enough for the mission.

Shame breeds secrecy and hiding. Shame's chokehold is lessened as it comes out of the shadows and is given voice. To not talk about shame is to allow it to keep us prisoner. It impedes our ability to live out who God has created us to be. It's the source of perfectionism, feeling defective and unworthy. For men, shame happens when they are perceived to be weak. It affects connection, belonging, and authenticity for everyone. Shame causes us to hide, to retreat to the shadows where we can lurk unnoticed. It was running to Midian for Moses and not wanting to return to Egypt.

The problem with shame is it causes pain. It hijacks the limbic system and causes the same biological reactions as trauma. It is a source of addiction, violence, depression, eating disorders, and suicide. No one in a shame spiral is in a place to interact well with others. We need to be aware of what triggers shame and have a plan to address it to keep its toxicity from damaging relationships.

What triggers feelings of shame for you?

What physical symptoms do you notice when you experience shame?

Begin to talk about a plan to address shame when it happens. Who can you call? How do you remind yourself that shame is blocking your true identity as Beloved of God?

Have two different people read the following by Thomas Keating and allow it to settle in.

This Presence is immense, yet so humble; awe-inspiring, yet so gentle; limitless, yet so intimate, tender, and personal. I know that I am known. Everything in my life is transparent in this Presence. It knows everything about me—all my weakness, brokenness, sinfulness—and still loves me infinitely. This Presence is healing, strengthening, refreshing—just by its Presence. It is non-judgmental, self-giving, seeking no reward, boundless in compassion. It is like coming home to a place I should never have left, to an awareness that was somehow always there but I did not recognize. I cannot force this awareness or bring it about. A door opens within me but from the other side. I seem to have tasted before the mysterious sweetness of this enveloping, permeating Presence. It is both emptiness and fullness at once. We wait patiently, in silence, openness, and quiet attentiveness; motionless within and without. We surrender to the attraction to be still to be loved, just to be.²⁹¹

“Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship, for they will walk in the light of your presence, Lord.” Psalm 89:15

Spiritual Practice: Listening With Others. This spiritual practice offers deep meaning and connection when it is part of a worship experience, a gathering of believers, or with a friend, mentor, or Spiritual Director. To listen with others is to truly experience the gift of community. It also helps us to better listen to one another. This might be a silent listening together for what God might say, or God may move through a reading, scripture, or song. My Spiritual Director often reads a scripture or short reading three times, and then we listen together. She prays silently and invites me to speak if God impresses something upon me.

Closing: Listen to this song together. Anyone can share as they feel led.

[SENDING YOU LIGHT by Melanie DeMore performed with Julie Wolf - Bing video](#)

Let this be your closing prayer.

²⁹¹ Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*. (London, England: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2006) 120.

Shadow Proves the Sunshine

Week 6 Introducing Lectio Divina



Opening: Watch this YouTube video
Father James Martin SJ, a Jesuit priest, presents a
form of Contemplative prayer that engages the
scripture
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i27FqIyk2qY>

Lectio: Read

Read Luke 7:36-50 2 times out loud

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat. ³⁷ When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. ³⁸ Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them. ³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She’s a sinner!”

⁴⁰ Then Jesus answered his thoughts. “Simon,” he said to the Pharisee, “I have something to say to you.” “Go ahead, Teacher,” Simon replied. ⁴¹ Then Jesus told him this story: “A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. ⁴² But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?” ⁴³ Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt.” “That’s right,”

Jesus said. ⁴⁴ Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn’t offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You didn’t greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. ⁴⁷ “I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little

shows only little love.”⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.”⁴⁹ The men at the table said among themselves, “Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?”⁵⁰ And Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

What verses or phrases stood out to you?

What do you know about the background (context) of this passage?

What does the text say?

Meditatio: Meditate

Meditate on the passage for a few moments

What does the text say to you?

Imagine being a witness to this event. What do you notice?

Oratio: Pray

Dialogue with God about this passage. Thank God for his word and ask God to give you wisdom.

What do you want to say to God?

Contemplatio: Contemplate

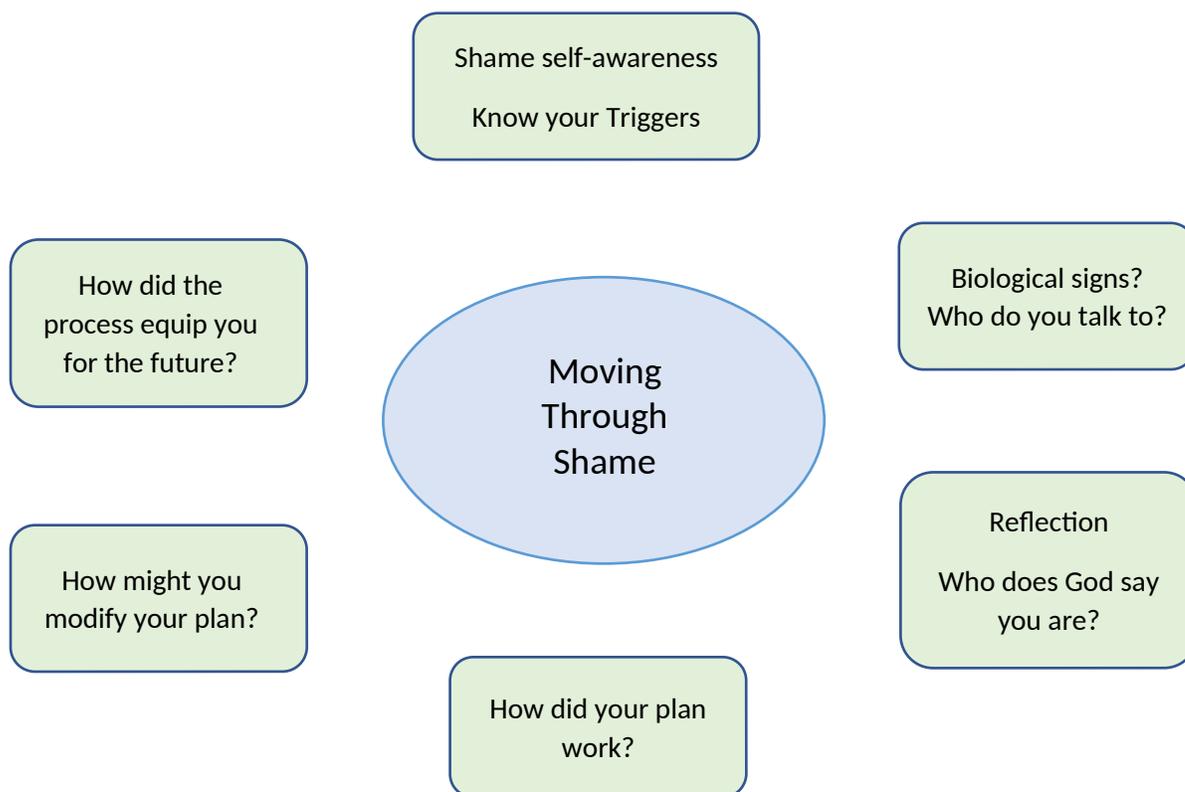
Note what God is telling you. What difference will this text make in your life?

Did you notice the Pharisee's attempt to shame Jesus? He did not greet Jesus with a kiss or anoint his head with oil, as was the custom upon entering the host's home. Then the host said, "if this man were a prophet, he would know the woman touching him was a sinner." Publicly taunting him for the compassion, he showed to the woman. The Pharisee was essentially saying, "if you are who you say you are, you would address this sinful woman for what she is and certainly not let her touch you."

How did Jesus react to this attempt to shame him in front of many others?

Why do you suppose Jesus was not shamed by this Pharisee's attempt to shame him?

How to move through a shaming experience.



- 1) Self-awareness of shame, recognizing one's triggers
- 2) Biological signs of shame, speaking it out loud to another
- 3) Reflecting on thoughts and feelings, who does God say you are?
- 4) Is your plan to address shame helpful?
- 5) How effective was your plan, and what might you need to change?
- 6) What did you learn working through this cycle that will help you better cope with future shaming?

This is known as a reflexive model, which means each time you work through this cycle, you potentially find yourself a step or several steps toward more readily recognizing and processing shame. When we are in shame, we are not our best selves, and potentially we may take it out on others. The recipient may not even be the source of our shaming.

When I experience shame, my face flushes, I feel lightheaded, my pulse quickens, a hot flash bubbles up from inside, and time becomes distorted. Shame shares the same

symptoms as trauma. It takes over the limbic system, which is the seat of the emotions. Bessel Van Der Kolk writes that the limbic system “is also the central command post for coping with the challenges of living within our complex social networks.”²⁹² When this happens, it knocks the prefrontal cortex offline. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for planning and decision-making. So, when we are experiencing shame, we will not make good decisions. We should refrain from interaction with others (aside from those who might help us process the experience) until we emotionally recover. We avoid compounding shame by limiting interacting with others until we can pull our prefrontal cortex back online through addressing the pain of shame. We are not our best selves in shame. A shaming experience typically evokes one of three responses, similar to trauma: withdrawal, try to please, or fight shame with shame (anger). Often, the recipient of our anger is not the source of the shaming.

Talk about what you observed about the way Jesus handled the Pharisee’s attempt to shame him.

Why, in Jesus, do we not see the typical responses to shaming?

What can we learn from Jesus to help us face shame?

Who does God say you are? Do you believe it?

²⁹² Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014), 56.

How might reminding yourself or having a trusted friend remind you of your True Identity keep you from wearing the cloak of shame another is trying to drape over you?

Giving in Friendship

When we truly love God and share in his glory, our relationships lose their compulsive character. We reach out to people not just to receive their affirmations but also to allow them to participate in the love we have come to know through Jesus. Thus true friendship becomes an expression of a greater love.

It is hard work to remind each other constantly of the truth, but it is worth the effort. Constant mutual forgiveness and a continual openness to the love of God are the disciplines that allow us to grow together in friendship.²⁹³



Spiritual Practice: Try Lectio Divina at home this week.

Closing Prayer

Made for Connection

Week 7

Opening: What is your self-talk when you drop a jar of pickles on the floor, and it smashes?

²⁹³ Henri Nouwen. “Daily Meditation”, October 24, 2021. [Henri Nouwen Society | Join Our Community | Henri Nouwen Society](#). Accessed October 24, 2021.

The Word:

John 13:23 *One of them, the **disciple whom Jesus loved**, was reclining next to him.*

John 19:26 *When Jesus saw his mother there, and the **disciple whom he loved** standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,”*

John 21:7 *Then the **disciple whom Jesus loved** said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.*

John 21:20 *Peter turned and saw that the **disciple whom Jesus loved** was following them. This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”*

Who is this disciple Jesus loved?

Do you think he was arrogant or something else?

Do you think this disciple may offer a key to what is shadowing our identity?

Who do you know yourself to be?

Shame Resilience

When I started this project, I was looking for a way to heal shame as if we could reach a point of restoration that would eliminate shaming experiences. There is no such thing as impenetrable armor to protect us from shame. As discussed earlier in this study, God created us for belonging and connection. God models that mutuality and belonging within the Trinity and invites us into that deep space of connection. What I discovered, as long as there are imperfect humans, we will encounter shaming experiences. We cannot avoid shame, but we can learn how to better recognize and process the experience so as not to

cause further brokenness and disconnection. Brene' Brown calls this Shame Resilience and offers four steps to practicing it.

1) Recognizing shame and knowing your triggers

You are confronted with shame when an experience makes you feel devalued, unloved, or unworthy. Identify what triggers shame for you. Is having your integrity or parenting called into question? Perhaps someone is critical of your appearance. Be aware of what makes you want to hide in the shadows.

2) Practicing critical awareness, fact check

Practicing critical awareness is beginning to determine the validity of the accuser's comments. What is really true, or where has a shame trigger been activated.

3) Reaching Out – tell your story to a trusted friend

You can also fact-check as you share the experience with a trusted friend or loved one who can empathetically listen and remind you of your value.

4) Speaking shame – call shame, shame

And finally, call shame what it is. Shame is diminished as it is called out of the hiding that gives it power. Just calling shame, shame begins to lessen its power and destruction.²⁹⁴

Empathy

How do I be that trusted friend to another? Empathy diminishes shame. Empathy doesn't have to fix it. It is not feeling sorry; it is feeling with another. It knows how to be present to listen and care. Theresa Wiseman is a nursing scholar who offers these four attributes of empathy

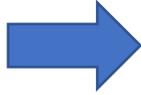
- 1) To be able to see the world as others see it
- 2) To be non-judgmental
- 3) To understand another person's feelings.
4. To communicate the understanding of that person's feelings.²⁹⁵

Can you describe the difference between empathy and sympathy?

²⁹⁴ Brene' Brown. *Men, Women & Worthiness*. (eAudioBook), (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2012). To the fact-checking step, I would add a reminder that we are the beloved child of God. Even our bad behavior cannot change that truth.

²⁹⁵ Theresa Wiseman. "[The Four Attributes of Empathy.](http://habitsforwellbeing.com)" habitsforwellbeing.com. Accessed October 29, 2021

Sympathy



Empathy



How has this small group experience helped you in confronting shame? Or has it?

Is there a Spiritual Practice that helps you experience God's love for you?

What difference does truly knowing that you are loved and valued by God make in your day-to-day life?

Take the State of Shame and Guilt Scale again. Did anything change for you over these 7 weeks?

Hopefully, you have gained some utensils for your drawer to deal with the experience of shame.

Spiritual Practice: Intercessory Prayer – In groups of 2 or 3, pray for one another. Say to one another, “You are God’s Beloved.”

Closing Prayer: Facilitator - pray over the group and offer a Benediction

Appendix 3

Who Do
You

Say That I Am?



Out of the
Shadows
Responding to
Shame

Facilitator's Welcome

Thank you for answering the call to lead a women's small group. You are setting the tone and creating a safe space for women to tell their stories, be heard, and receive gifts

of vulnerability and trust. While this study will address shame, the intended telos is to discover how to transform the narratives of unworthiness and live life as the beloved of God created for relationship and belonging. This experience is about helping one another rediscover their True Identity as the Beloved of God.

You will want to announce this journey far enough in advance that group members can obtain the Participant's Guide and have completed the first lesson before you meet. Doing lessons in advance of meetings is not required. However, the materials are available to those who desire to process their responses before sharing them in the group. Everyone will need a bible, a guide, a writing utensil, and an open heart to God.

Before Gathering

Please pray for your group inviting the Holy Spirit to teach and transform. You will want to work your way through the material in advance. Take special note of the Spiritual Practice for each week. You are encouraged to take part in the daily practice each week to better engage in discussing the group's experience.

During Group

So much more important than just working through the material is creating an environment for community life to thrive. Help participants to become acquainted if they do not already know one another.

- **Check-in.** Ask if anyone would like to share their experience with the Daily Spiritual Practice encouraged for the week.
- **Opening.** The openings are to engage the group with one another. A more familiar term is an icebreaker or hook.
- **Scripture.** Encountering the living Word through the written word will help the community re-imagine God's fantastic design, offering a more accurate understanding of the imago Dei (image of God) in them.
- **Dialogue.** The discussion questions are a guide to group exchange. It is not as essential to get through all the questions as it is to build communion and help one another see themselves as God sees them.
- **Spiritual Practice.** There is a "new" spiritual practice introduced each week. Some will be more familiar to participants than others. They are means by which Christ is being formed in us and require time and nurturing. Encourage the group to try the practices each week and then ask how it went the following week.
- **Prayer.** Allow time to share requests and where they have seen God at work. Encourage those who would like to pray to do so.

Following Gathering

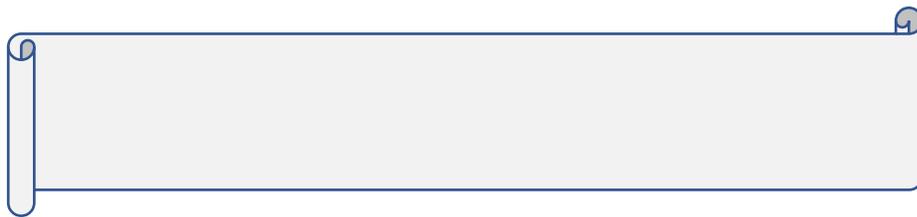
Encourage your group to try the Spiritual Practice presented for the week. Pray for your group throughout the week.

Using the Facilitator’s Guide.

There are 7 group sessions, and this guide is meant to be used along with the participant’s guide, offering some additional help. Developing a caring community that fosters empathy and vulnerability is crucial for an enriching experience. The suggested length of each meeting is 75 – 90 minutes.

- **Check-in and Opening.** 10-15 minutes
- **Scripture.** 15 minutes
- **Dialogue.** 30 - 45 minutes
- **Spiritual Practice.** 10 minutes
- **Prayer.** 10 minutes

This timeline is merely a suggestion. A couple of lessons require adjusting the time schedule as an element will receive more attention one week than another. The key is to engage with the material before gathering and establishing a guide that works for you. Stay sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading. It is not as essential to get through all the material as it is to build a community of love and mutuality that mirrors the community of Trinity. One need not look far to see the profound brokenness of our world. The circle of love you help create can be a place of shared pain and shared hope. Henri Nouwen offers this insight, “We can only love because we are born out of love, that we can only give because our life is a gift, and that we can only make others free because we are set free by Him whose heart is greater than ours.”²⁹⁶



WEEK: 1

Opening: Mind Mapping

Use a flip chart or a whiteboard and write SHAME in the middle. Invite a free flow of words that come to the participants’ minds when they hear this word. The following is an example of my experience with a group I asked to do this.

Mind Mapping Shame

²⁹⁶ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York, N.Y.: Image Books, Doubleday, 1979), 91.



Supplemental Information:

The introductory lesson is designed to define shame.

Sharing experiences of shame will shape the forming of community.

Have the group take and score their own State Shame and Guilt Scale. They will retake it at the end. This is for their own information unless someone decides to share.

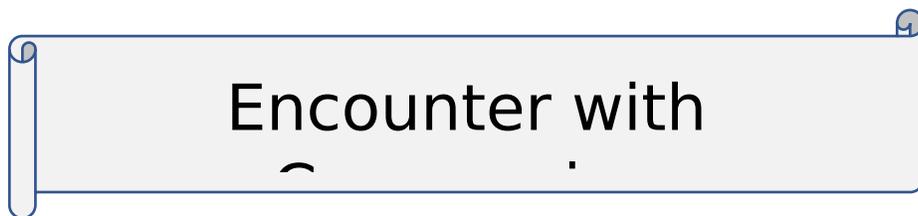
Spiritual Practices:

Read this explanation in the group.

Spiritual Practice:

Each lesson has a practice that the group is asked to try daily. The first week is Daily Examen.

Closing Prayer: Praying together is essential in building community.



Encounter with

Week 2

Check-in: How did the Spiritual Practice of Daily Examen go?

Opening: Visio Divina. You will pray silently for the group as they gaze at and notice what God is saying through this artistic rendering.

Supplemental Information:

The woman was shamed and shunned by the town's people. The women would draw water in the cool of the morning. It was a gathering time when they connected with one another. The Samaritans were despised and avoided by the Jews. Jews traveling from Galilee to Judea would cross the Jordan instead of traveling through Samaria. So, the fact that Jesus was a Jew and male made it highly irregular for him to speak with her. Jesus begins by asking her for something and offers something even more valuable. He does not cover up her past, but as he extended grace, she was restored. She couldn't wait to tell even those who rejected her of the good news of Jesus.

Spiritual Practice: Spend time daily looking intensely at a piece of art or something in creation.

Closing Prayer



Shadowed by the Fall

Week 3

Check-in:

Opening: Allow people time to respond.

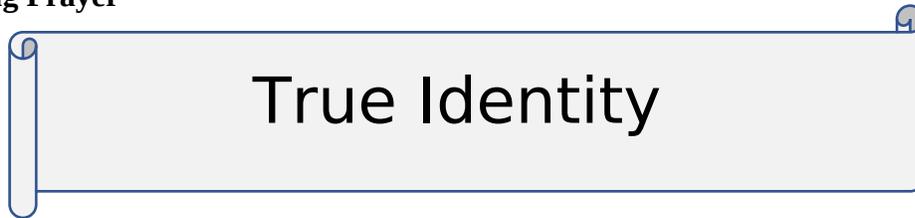
Supplemental Information:

As you work through familiar scriptures note what they say about one's identity.

After the first couple ate from the tree, guilt, shame, and fear became a part of their experience. By believing the serpent's lie that they were somehow not enough, Adam and Eve opened Pandora's box. The reaction was to hide and cover. How do you see these breakdowns in relationships today?

Spiritual Practice: Listening 15 minutes a day.

Closing Prayer



Week 4

Check-in:

Opening: Allow people time to respond.

Supplemental Information:

When God created humanity, he declared all of creation very good. Our true identity is that of being made out of the goodness of God for relationship and connection. Our understanding was marred in the fall, causing us to see ourselves first as sinners instead of Beloved of God. The full expression of humanity is male and female. Without both male and female, we have a less accurate picture of the image in which we are created.

Spiritual Practice: Hospitality – To know ourselves as the beloved of God is to have love to reciprocate to God and others. As we have received a hospitable welcome into the fellowship of Trinity, we are also to be radically hospitable, helping others know they are loved. That love is not based on anything they have done or not done, but because God loves those, he has stamped with his image, whether they know that or not. God's love is a pursuing love that goes after the lost sheep. We call that prevenient grace. The grace that goes before one enters a relationship with Jesus.

Closing Prayer



Week 5

Check-in: Does anyone care to share an experience of hospitality?

Opening: Allow people time to respond.

Supplemental Information:

Moses did not feel he was good enough for the mission God was asking him to do. The questions at the end of the lesson are designed to increase self-awareness.

Spiritual Practice: Listening with others

Closing: Have a device ready to play Sending You Light



Shadow Proves

Week 6

Check-in: Does anyone have a story of intentionally listening with someone this week?

Opening: Have Youtube.com video ready to play

Supplemental Information:

The scripture reading is of a Pharisee, a religious leader, who tries to shame Jesus. Notice the difference in Jesus' response and the lack of debilitating effect it has on Jesus. If the group doesn't get there, help them see that shame does not stick on or affect the way Jesus treats people because he knows who he is. His True Identity is beloved of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

A tool, called a reflexive model, is included to help participants create a plan to face the disequilibrium shame creates and allow us to get back on our emotional feet.

Important to note: Shame triggers responses that are like those experienced in trauma.

Spiritual Practice: Try Lectio Divina at home this week.

Closing Prayer



Made for

Week 7

Check-in: Did anyone try Lectio Divina this week? What was your experience?

Opening: Allow people time to respond.

Supplemental Information:

The writer of the Gospel, Letters of John, and Revelation, refers to himself as the disciple Jesus loved. This is an important practice for us to develop.

We cannot avoid or never experience shame again. Being hardwired by God for connection leaves us vulnerable to the fear of not belonging. The tools from Brene' Brown and Theresa Wiseman are beneficial in dealing with shame. I believe that even though practicing those things is very helpful, John shows us the key to facing any shadow that tries to diminish or hide our true self. Relationship with God and a faithful community help restore and deepen our understanding of our true identity and beloved and valued by God.

Spiritual Practice: Familiar to all is the practice of intercessory prayer.

Closing Prayer