

# Dealing with Shame & Guilt

## Dealing with Shame & Guilt

### **Shame & Guilt: Key Problems for Us, But Why?**

1. Existential Reasons
2. Social Reasons
3. Theological Reasons
4. Terminological Reasons

### **How Do we Deal with Shame & Guilt?**

1. Unravel the Confusion & Clarify the Concepts
2. Examine the Bible's Use of Shame and Guilt
3. Align Our Understanding (& Experience) with the Bible

**Guilt, Shame & the Glory of God in the Gospel of Jesus**

## Dealing with Shame & Guilt

The Big Idea:

We deal with shame and guilt by receiving, then reflecting, and returning God's honour:

His glorious love and faithfulness to us in Jesus.

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‘Sin produces in us two awful tumors: guilt, and shame.’

‘[Guilt and shame are] the children of humanity. They cling tightly to our side. They will not easily be shooed away...We would love to part with them. But they won’t leave us alone.’

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‘Shame is a focus on self, guilt is a focus on behavior. Shame is “I am bad.” Guilt is “I did something bad.” Shame is highly correlated with addiction, depression, violence...[etc.] Guilt is inversely correlated with those things. It’s incredibly adaptive.’

*Brené Brown*

‘In an increasingly violent society where external controls are breaking down, shame may be the best hope...because it is the ultimate internal control.’

*Joe Roberts*

‘No audience is needed for feelings of guilt...not so for shame. Shame requires disapproval or ridicule by others.’

*Paul Ekman*

‘One can certainly feel shame when alone – that is, shame does not require an actual observer or audience.’

*Dan Zahavi*

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In Psychology:

Guilt occurs whenever an internalized moral boundary is touched or transgressed, and is accompanied by the fear of punishment.

Shame occurs when an ideal sense of self fails to be reached, and is accompanied by the fear of exclusion or rejection

‘Guilt: I’m sorry, I made a mistake. Shame: I’m sorry, I am a mistake.’

*Brené Brown*

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In Anthropology:

A guilt culture relies on an internalized [individual] conviction of sin.

A shame culture relies on external sanctions, for good behavior.

*Ruth Benedict*

GUILT CULTURE	Other people believe I didn't do it:	Other people believe I did do it:
believe I didn't do it:	No problem	I protest my innocence and fight the accusation
believe I did it:	I am guilty even though I'm not punished	I am guilty and am punished
SHAME CULTURE (honour-shame culture)	Other people believe I didn't do it:	Other people believe I did do it:
believe I didn't do it:	No problem	I am shamed and dishonoured by their belief
believe I did it:	No-one knows, so I am not shamed	I am shamed and dishonoured by their belief

## Dealing with Shame & Guilt

### The Bible as a Shame Culture Document?

‘[Jesus] endured the cross, scorning its shame.’     *Heb 12:2*

‘So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for  
the honour [glory] of God.’     *1 Cor 10:31*

## Dealing with Shame & Guilt

### **Gains in Psychology**

- Emotions are complex, powerful, but neglected
- Distinction between act & being can be helpful

### **Dangers in Psychology**

- Definitions are confused
- Leads to contradictions, logical gaps & unusability

### **More Gains in Psychology**

- Shame is morally neutral
- Whether it is good or bad/helpful or detrimental depends on the reasons/values behind the shaming

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'[Shame can be seen as] as a full-blown virtue, *as long as we endorse...the values that sustain it.*' *Deonna et al.*

BUT...

It's the same with guilt

And honour



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### Gains in Anthropology

- Honour is very important for people across the world
- Concern for social relns in honour cultures matches Bible
- Helps with cross-cultural engagement with honour cultures

### Dangers in Anthropology

- Definitions are confused & prove the opposite point!
- / shouldn't have done that vs I shouldn't have done *that*

### More Gains in Anthropology

- PCR is helpful for knowing what honour is in different contexts
- ALL cultures are both shame & guilt cultures, including us!

## Anglo-EU Translation Guide

What the British say	What the British mean	What others understand
I hear what you say	I disagree and do not want to discuss it further	He accepts my point of view
With the greatest respect...	I think you are an idiot	He is listening to me
That's not bad	That's good	That's poor
That is a very brave proposal	You are insane	He thinks I have courage
Quite good	A bit disappointing	Quite good
I would suggest...	Do it or be prepared to justify yourself	Think about the idea, but do what you like
Oh, incidentally/ by the way	The primary purpose of our discussion is...	That is not very important
I was a bit disappointed that	I am annoyed that	It doesn't really matter
Very interesting	That is clearly nonsense	They are impressed
I'll bear it in mind	I've forgotten it already	They will probably do it
I'm sure it's my fault	It's your fault	Why do they think it was their fault?
You must come for dinner	It's not an invitation, I'm just being polite	I will get an invitation soon
I almost agree	I don't agree at all	He's not far from agreement
I only have a few minor comments	Please re-write completely	He has found a few typos
Could we consider some other options	I don't like your idea	They have not yet decided

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### Putting Things Back Together: A More Consistent Model

- Honour = the ideal value in a situation
- Shame = the failure of an ideal
- Guilt = the concrete things that signal a breach of ideal circumstances

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‘So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the honour [glory] of God.’ *1 Cor 10:31*

‘The Word became flesh and dwelt among us; we have seen his glory, glory as of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.’ *John 1:14*

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  - b. The Goal of Creation: Receiving, Reflecting, Returning
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‘Moses said, “Now show me your **glory**.”’ *Exod 33:18*

‘I will cause all my **goodness** to pass by you.’ *Exod 33:19*

‘The Lord, the Lord, the gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in **love and faithfulness**.’ *Exod 34:6*

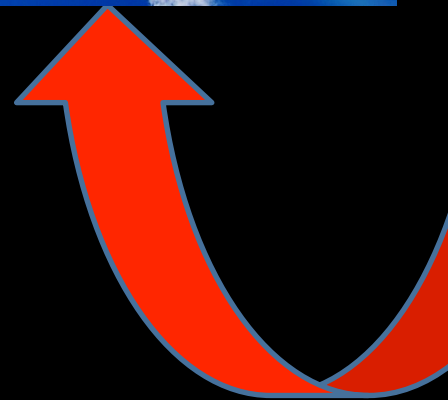
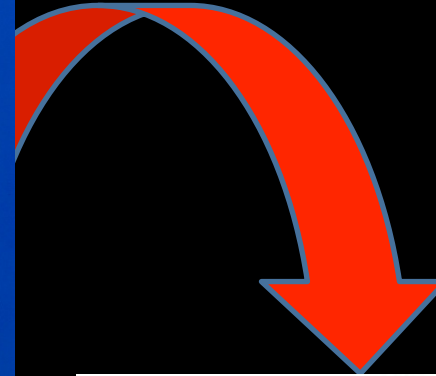
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‘For all have sinned [transgressed] and fallen short of the glory of God.’  
*Rom 3:23*

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‘So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do...They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God...

‘As for you...you were taught...to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.’ *Eph 4:17ff.*

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### **Guilt, Shame & the Glory of God in the Gospel of Jesus**

- 1. From the Psychological (Individual) Perspective**
2. From the Anthropological (Cultural) Perspective
3. Living in the Honour of God

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