



OVERCOMING SHAME



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Plan Description:

This reading plan guides you on a journey of healing from the grip of shame. In this plan you will find some redundancy, it's on purpose. It takes time and reminding to invite Jesus to meet you in your brokenness, offer restoration, identity, and freedom. With each day, you'll confront the lies of shame and be encouraged again to embrace the transformative love of God, breaking shames hold of old agreements and breaking new ground by stepping into your true self. Let this time with God bring you a power that leads to wholeness and peace.

Adapted from
the "Overcoming Shame" series on the Exploring More Podcast



Day 1: When Shame Calls You Back to the Boat

Scripture:

John 21:17 Jesus said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved... and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 61:7 Instead of your shame, you will receive a double portion... and everlasting joy will be yours.

Psalms 34:5 Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.

Devotional:

Shame, in a moment, doesn't just whisper insults or shout accusations—it echoes.

Shame flashes onto our timelines, opportunistic, unwelcome, and it stays. It is determined to hijack future moments, with a power to distort memories, and while in the present, shame pulls us backward into old wounds, stunting our ability to see and feel clearly, halting any way in which to move forward. Shame reaches through time, grabs us by the heart, and drags us into haunting places of pain, trauma, and regret. And like Adam and Eve in the Garden, the first of our kind to be ashamed, we too are forced to hide. Then we attempt to cover up and shame forces us to isolate.

Shame's power lies in separation—convincing us to pull away from others, and ultimately, its worst symptom, to pull away from the love and light of God.

Peter knew this well.

After his bitter betrayal—three denials, a rooster's crow, and tears of regret—Peter did what many of us do: he went back to what was familiar. He went fishing. Because when shame speaks, we tend to shrink. We retreat to old habits, old places, and smaller stories. But the love of Jesus? It meets us on the shore.

In *John 20*, we're told Peter witnessed everything: the cross, the empty tomb, and the risen Christ. He was there by the fire, until he heard dawn's crow—just like Jesus said. He also witnessed the grave clothes lying folded. He heard the testimony of his friends that Jesus had risen from the dead. Yet, in those first days after, there's no record of a personal conversation between Peter and Jesus. No resolution. No closure.

Can you imagine how heavy those days must have felt for Peter?

You've probably felt something like it. That sinking moment when you've hurt someone—

said or done something you swore you never would—and then bumped into them days later at church, or school, or a family event. The ache in your stomach. The need to avoid their eyes. The weight in your chest. That's shame. And its ability to achingly linger. Thankfully, John 21 continues the story.

Still feeling the heaviness, Peter says, "I'm going fishing." And the other disciples choose to go too. My guess? Not because they were eager to fish—but because they knew their friend was really hurting, and they didn't want him to be alone.

While out on the water, something familiar happens. A voice calls out from the shore: "Catch anything?" "No," they reply.

It's a typical exchange for fishermen, curious folks on the shore asking, "How's it going?" But this man on the shore continues: "Try the other side."

Maybe it was at that moment that Peter felt something stir. Maybe it was the moment later when there was a big tug on the nets. Maybe it all came crashing in like *déjà vu*, reminding him of the first time he met Jesus. And suddenly, John shouts, "It is the Lord."

Without hesitation, Peter grabs his robe, throws himself into the sea, and swims. He had walked on water before—maybe he thought he could this time, but alas, this time he swims... hard. He overcomes shame for a moment, often that is all it takes, the need to be close again, outweighs the command to hide.

When he reaches shore, Jesus is already there. And he's built a fire.

Not just any fire, the same kind Peter stood around a few days earlier when he denied Jesus. Jesus wasn't avoiding the scene of Peter's failure. He had gone ahead and prepared for it.

This is the beautiful paradox of grace: Jesus doesn't erase the moment of shame—he transforms it.

Jesus looks at Peter and asks, "Do you love me?" Not once, but three times—mirroring Peter's denials.

This isn't punishment. It's restoration.

The fire and words that once symbolized Peter's greatest failure becomes the place of his deepest healing. A moment of bitter regret is met with tender compassion and purposeful redemption. Jesus isn't scolding Peter. He's loving him—again. Fully. Personally.

Shame thrives in secrecy, silence, and judgment. It tells us we're disqualified. That our

failures define us. That we'll never be more than what we did—or what was done to us.

But Jesus doesn't just forgive. He restores.

He calls us to the shore. He invites us to the fire. He draws us close.

In Christ, shame doesn't get the final word.

Instead, we're invited back into love... back into purpose... back into the life we were made for—this time a little wiser, and a lot freer.

That's often how wisdom grows—learning what not to do, then getting back up and moving forward in the experiential lesson of grace.

If you're carrying shame—especially the hidden kind, the kind rooted in failure, or addictions, or sexual wounds—hear this:

Jesus is already on the shore.

He's already built the fire.

He's made breakfast.

He knows your story.

He knows the mistakes and the wounds.

And he wants you.

Yes, you.

He made that clear on the cross. But now, He wants to make it intimately personal.

Will you meet Him there?

To do so, you'll need to courageously leave the boat. Leave that place of coping, hiding, and attempting to control the powerful waves of shame—let it go by abandoning the boat. Step out. Swim hard. Come to the fire.

And then standing there wet and cold, let Love's fire warm you, dry you, and begin to rewrite your story.

Peter's story didn't end in shame. He went on, went on to become a pillar of the early Church, proclaiming the Gospel with boldness. The same man who denied Jesus became a man entrusted to lead His people. Not despite his failure—but because Jesus met him in his failures, redeemed him, and sent him back into the world with a fire of his own for an even larger Gospel of More.

And so, it is with you.

You don't have to carry shame any longer. You don't have to live under a false name or a story shaped by regret. Jesus is calling.

Look up.
Find Him.
Step out of the boat.
Swim hard.
Come to the fire.
Let Love rewrite your story.

As you reflect with God today, consider asking him:

Father, where have I gone back to the boat in my life?

Jesus, where are you inviting me to restoration?

Holy Spirit, what shame am I still carrying—and what truth are you offering me instead?

Day 2: From Shame to Unashamed--A Better Story

Scripture:

Romans 10:11 As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame."

Hebrews 12:2 For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame...

Isaiah 54:4 Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated.

2 Corinthians 7:10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

Devotional:

One of the more humiliating and shaming moments in my life happened in 7th grade during basketball tryouts. It came down to the final two players, me and another guy. The coach had the bright idea to have us play one-on-one—in front of the entire group—and the winner would make the team. The loser would go home.

With each shot made or missed, the pressure grew. The boys surrounding the half-court began to cheer for their pick. It came down to the final possessions. He won. Cheers erupted for him. I got a few awkward pats on the back.

In our lowest moments, we often make hidden agreements: *"I'll never lose again."* *"I'll never be weak."* *"I'll prove them wrong."* And maybe the most dangerous one: *"I'll keep this hidden forever."*

These are more than mere thoughts. They're enforcing vows—impactful contracts we sign in the dark.

Shame isn't just a feeling. It's an experience—one that opens the door for infectious agreements and vows, the kinds that lead to a type of spiritual cancer. Like an undetected disease, it spreads in silence. It burrows deep into our identity, distorts how we see ourselves, and sabotages how we relate to others. It doesn't always shout. More often, it whispers: *"You're not enough. You're unworthy. You're too broken."*

Left unaddressed, shame keeps us small. It convinces us that love is conditional and therefore must be earned, or worse, that we don't deserve it at all.

We've all been infected. Whether it's childhood wounds, cultural lies, or religious systems

built on performance, shame creeps in. It convinces us not just that we've done something wrong, but that we are something wrong. And it demands that we pay.

For many of us, those wounds trace back to relationships: a father's silence, a mother's criticism, a coach or teacher's negative comments, a friend or spouse's anger. Even well-meaning church environments can reinforce the lie: You're not enough. And when boys or girls hear that message enough, it doesn't just hurt—it forms, and we co-build with the enemy of our hearts a false self to attempt to survive.

But here's the good news: Jesus didn't just come to forgive sin—He came to scorn its shame. He didn't only die for us—He paid for us. And He did so not just to cleanse us, but to lift off the weights of shame and the false self it helps construct and over time, experiencing Jesus's love overcomes shame and sets us free.

Romans 8:1–2 in *The Message* puts it like this:

“With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.”

The Gospel doesn't just wash us clean—it restores who we are. Shame doesn't break by effort; it breaks by love. And it breaks most powerfully when we experience that we are seen, known, and embraced.

Like the scene in *Good Will Hunting*, we all need someone to look us in the eye and say, “It's not your fault.” Again and again, “It's not your fault,” until the dam breaks.

That's what Jesus does. He meets us in our shame—whether it's from something we've done or something that was done to us—and says, “You are My beloved.”

Remember yesterday with Peter? After Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus didn't corner him with guilt. He cooked him breakfast. He met him on the beach and gently restored him. He didn't scold Peter—He reinstated him. That's what love does.

Shame wants to keep us hiding, isolated, and alone. But Jesus brings freedom by being with us in it. He's not scared off by sin or disgusted by failure. He draws near. He shows us His wounds, and He invites us to come with Him with ours—into a safe place where we can be known, cared for, and healed.

Sometimes Jesus sends a counselor, a mentor, or a safe friend. And when we walk with Him and His friends, shame starts to lose its grip. Because in the light, shame can't survive. Your story of shame isn't the end of your story.

It wasn't for me. It wasn't for Peter. It doesn't have to be for you.

Jesus offers something new: a new story, even a new name, a new way to live—
unashamed.

So, here's the invitation:

Let go of the vow to hide.

Bring it into the light.

Let love rewrite your story.

As you reflect on all this with God today, consider asking him:

Father, where has shame distorted how I see myself?

Jesus, how do you want to meet me in the place of shame?

Holy Spirit, show me what I've believed that isn't true—and lead me into freedom.

Day 3: The Cycle of Shame and The Healing Love of God

Scripture:

Genesis 3:7–8 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... and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

Devotional:

Shame was never the plan. And when even the best laid plan goes wrong, it has to be redeemed.

We weren't made to live in shame. And yet, for so many of us, shame becomes the silent undertow of our stories—relentlessly pulling us down to drown quietly, subtly, and painfully.

As we have explored, it often starts with a wound. Maybe in childhood. A moment of embarrassment, exposure, guilt, or confusion. And then a dangerous interpretation forms: *There must be something wrong with me.* That's the beginning of the cycle of shame.

Shame is rarely loud. More often, it's quiet and persistent. A smell, a sound, a scene can trigger it. Suddenly, we're aching again. We try to shake it off, but somehow it creeps into our reactions, our rhythms, and our relationships. One moment we're fine, the next we're back in a memory, back in fear, back in the lie.

That's the deceptive power of shame—it lives in us. Sometimes it lies dormant, hidden under layers of performance, control, or even confidence. But it's there, waiting. And when triggered, it doesn't just impact us—it uses us. It infects those around us. That's how the cycle continues.

It might begin with something that goes wrong—something said or done, something real or perceived—and then a dark, sinking feeling turns inward. We freeze or we run. Either way, we hide. We obsessively play it all back whether we want to or not. Our bodies react, even years later, to moments we thought we'd buried but actually they have buried us.

And in trying to manage it, we develop strategies: overachieving, people-pleasing,

numbing, isolating. These behaviors aren't the problem; they're the symptoms of a soul trying to survive under the weight of something it was never meant to carry. This is especially true when it comes to our sexuality.

From early exposure to experiences we couldn't process, many of us stepped into sexual encounters before we were mature enough to interpret them. The innocence of boys and girls has gone largely unguarded. No one taught us how to think about desire, or intimacy, or boundaries. So the wounds came—and shame followed.

Our culture hasn't helped. From peer pressure to porn to the media's distorted picture of love, we've been handed scripts that tell us we're either not enough or too much. Boys are told they must pursue and perform. Girls are told they must attract and please. And when real life doesn't play out like a fantasy—when things go wrong or feel wrong—the enemy whispers: You're disgusting. You're broken. You're beyond redemption.

But hear this clearly: Shame is not the voice of God.

In Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve sinned, they hid in shame. But God didn't abandon them. He came looking. "Where are you?" He asked—not because He didn't know, but because He wanted to woo them out of hiding.

That has always been God's heart.

He still comes into the garden.

He still asks where we are.

He still invites us to step out of the shadows and into the light—not to be exposed in judgment, but to be embraced in love.

When we stop hiding, stop running, stop coping, and start inviting Jesus and safe people into the places of our pain—that's when the tide begins to turn.

That's when shame loses its grip.

And here's where it gets holy: Jesus took it all. Every mistake, every memory, every wound. He bore our shame so we wouldn't have to.

There is no condemnation in Christ (Romans 8:28).

No more hiding.

No more false self.

No more silent suffering.

Only invitation.

To be seen.

To be known.

To be healed.

So today, let this be your first step: acknowledge that shame has shaped some of your story—but it doesn't have to write the ending. The voice of Love is calling. Not with disappointment, but with deep affection.

Jesus is saying, "Come out of hiding. Let Me heal that ache. Let's write a new story, a new plan... together—one where you live free, whole, and unashamed."

As you reflect with God today, consider asking him:

Father, where has shame distorted my story or my view of myself?

Jesus, will you walk with me into the places I've hidden in fear?

Holy Spirit, show me what's true. Replace shame with your love and light.

Day 4: From Shame to Holy Regret

Scripture:

Psalms 34:5 Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.

2 Corinthians 7:10 Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

Isaiah 61:3 To bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Devotional:

There's an often-undiscovered crossroads in the soul—a place every heart comes to eventually. One path is familiar, worn down by hiding and pretending. The other is less traveled, but it leads to healing. This is the intersection between shame and holy regret. Shame will do everything it can to keep you from that second path. It urges you to turn left or right, to look back, to run in any direction except forward. It whispers: *Clench your jaw. Keep quiet. Act like it never happened.* But here's the thing about wounds—they don't just disappear. And the lies attached to them? They echo.

So you find yourself at the crossroads again, carrying a wound and its message. What if, this time, you didn't run? What if you stopped, looked forward, and saw God, inviting Him into that moment with you? What if, together, you faced shame and walked upstream—toward its source?

That's the invitation: not just to manage shame's symptoms, but to follow its trail back to the places where it first crept in in order to go forward with God. To ask, *Where did this begin? How is this still shaping me?*

Recently, a close friend shared a powerful story. He had begun digitizing old VHS and 8MM family videos—tapes from nearly 30 years ago. Watching his younger self, his wife, and his son in those early days brought a surprising wave of emotion. He told me that for much of his adult life, he had believed he was a bad husband, a bad father, and just not a good man.

But as he watched those videos, something shifted. Though he had spent years recognizing and repenting for harmful behavior, he had never really felt compassion for his younger self—only regret. But this time, something was different. As he watched, *with God*, grace came too. God gently reached back through time and touched those memories, redeeming

them—not by excusing the pain, but by offering compassion and reframing.

In his words: *“That moment felt like holy ground.”*

That’s what holy regret does. It doesn’t erase the truth or deny the damage. It allows us to see what happened and then walk with God through it. Shame says, *“That was who you are.”* But holy regret, paired with grace, says, *“That’s not your whole story.”*

There’s a sacred tenderness in that process. It’s healing—not by pretending the pain didn’t matter, but by bringing the pain to the One who does. It’s handing over the scene to Jesus and letting Him speak into it.

It takes courage to let God revisit those moments with you—trauma, failure, rejection. Some of those memories live deep in the body. They show up in your stomach, your shoulders, your nervous system, long before your heart or head can even name them. That’s why this kind of healing isn’t meant to be walked alone. God may send wise counselors, trusted friends, or trained guides to walk beside you.

And it takes grace—not just undeserved kindness, or some unmerited favor, but the empowering presence of God. Grace is more than pardon; it’s power. It’s God-with-you, in the middle of the wound, transforming what was broken and setting your heart free. Grace sees the younger you, the hurting you, the hiding you—and doesn’t flinch. It embraces you. And it brings the power to move forward.

Grace doesn’t minimize the past. It doesn’t pretend everything is fine. It meets you there and gently says, *“Yes, that happened. But that’s not the end. Let Me show you what I see. Let Me show you who you really are.”*

What if today you took a step toward that kind of healing?

What if you paused, just long enough to remember—and then invited God into that very space in your story? What if regret could become holy ground? What if shame could be exchanged for a settled heart?

You don’t have to walk it alone. There are others—guides, brothers, sisters—who are walking it too. And more importantly, God is with you. He isn’t ashamed of your story. He’s proud to be your Redeemer. And He’s ready to meet you at the crossroads—not to scold or shame you—but to take your hand, walk you forward, and heal what shame has tried to hide.

You are not your past.

You are not the wound.

You are loved.

You are being healed.

And your story isn’t over.

As you reflect with God today, consider asking him:

*Father, would you show me the places in my story where I've been hidden by shame?
What moments do you want to gently uncover and hold with me today?*

*Jesus, how do you see the part of me that still carries regret? Will you walk with me into that
memory and speak truth over the lies I believed?*

*Holy Spirit, where are you inviting me to receive grace that empowers, not just forgives?
Will you teach me how to re-see my past and reclaim moments I wish didn't happen?
Would you move me forward with a holy regret by going with me to places I have tried to
hide from you? Would you lead me into deeper freedom?*

Day 5: Tearing Up Old Contracts

Scripture:

John 8:32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 10:5 We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Isaiah 61:7 Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance.

Devotional:

Shame is one of the most deeply wounding forces in the human experience, especially sexual shame. It doesn't simply whisper, "*You did something wrong.*" It hisses, "*You are something wrong.*" That's how the enemy works—not just accusing your behavior, but attacking your identity at its core.

Sexual shame often runs deeper than a single decision or action. It's not just about sin; it's about a story. A moment of exposure. A lack of nurture. A desperate longing for connection that was never met, or worse, was twisted. Like the man or woman who turns to pornography not out of lust but out of loneliness, these behaviors often have roots in deeper wounds. We didn't wake up one day and choose shame. It crept in—tethered to unmet needs, childhood confusion, and unspoken pain caused by predators, opportunists, or even dangerous family members or caregivers.

But hear this, beloved: contrary to what shame is telling you, you are not beyond healing. The enemy may have forged contracts in your past—agreements you didn't even know you were signing. And vows those agreements caused you to make, like, "*I'll never be enough,*" or "*I have to hide who I am.*" But Jesus came to tear them up. That's the power of the cross—not only to forgive what's been done, but to restore who you are. To make this transaction occur, the greatest exchange, we have to play a part, we have to courageously do something.

You know when you smell smoke, it's an indication, a warning, that something is on fire, and to either go investigate or get the heck out of there. You know when you feel cold, really cold, and you begin to shiver, it's your body kicking into a gear of survival and telling you to move. How about when you get hurt, maybe even cut, and you're bleeding, do you know how many reactive things are happening in your body to help you live while at the same time sending impulses for you to get to a place where you can be tended to? Last one, you know when you're in the water, underwater, like in a lake, or a pool, or at the ocean, and you're under for too long, maybe your being held under, maybe the waves toppled

you and are sweeping you around, maybe you misjudged your lung capacity and dove too deep, and now you're in trouble, in a moment like that, the only thing you can do, is push yourself harder to the surface for relief.

If shame had one job, if it exists for one thing, if there was even the smallest redeeming quality that we should know about shame, it would be this... it invites us to love. To have the wounds of our hearts tended to and to have the breath of life fill our beings, relieving shames suffocating ways, that is what pain invites us to, away from the hurt and toward the care, loving care.

Sexual shame is arguably the most powerful version of shame because it takes one of the most powerful expressions of love and perverts it with hatred. Hatred of self, hatred toward others And of course, hatred finds its way into our hearts, into our souls, into our minds and emotions., when we are lured into something so dark, betrayed by someone who should be trustworthy, taken advantage of in the worst of all ways, sexually, there is betrayal, and when there is betrayal, "hate" is going to come.

Healing begins by naming what happened, how it is making us feel, and in doing so, we are doing our part to bring it into the light. That's when and where shame begins to lose its grip. Whether through journaling, therapy, a trusted friend, or a spiritual guide, when we speak the story, we've long tried to silence, we start to reclaim our voice—and recover parts of our heart, and as painful as reliving any of the shameful moments, that's how we start the journey of living without shame.

This process takes courage. Vulnerability always does. It also takes discernment—knowing who is safe to trust with what feels like the darkest files of our story. But it requires movement, too. God's grace isn't passive. It's the empowering presence of God, meeting you and me right where we are and gently inviting you to open the files, show God the pain, and slowly walk, maybe even be carried, from the shame and hate into freedom.

Along this way, you'll learn to breathe again—to ground yourself in truth, to pray through the ache, and to hear another voice, your Father's voice, lovingly calling you beloved.

So, here's the invitation once again: Ask God to help you find the old files. Bring them to Him. Together, tear up the old contracts by rejecting the agreements and vows you made rooted in the presence of fear and shame. And then take the pen and write a new agreement—one grounded in grace (the empowering presence of God to transform you), then, in your true identity, and in the relentless love of a God who knows you, sees you, and is proud to call you His. Then open the door fear has always told you to keep closed. Open the door and take a vulnerable and courageous step. Away from shame's previous dark hold, and toward... toward the arms of the one that deeply wants to hold you.

As you ponder all this today, consider asking God:

Father, where have I made silent agreements with shame—contracts that still shape my view of myself? Will you show me the places you long to bring truth instead?

Jesus, what do you say about my story, especially the parts I've tried to keep hidden? Help me see my past through your eyes of compassion and redemption.

Holy Spirit, what truth do you want to speak over the lies I've believed about my identity, my sexuality, and my worth? Help me tear up the old contracts and walk in grace toward freedom.

IF YOU ENJOYED THIS READING PLAN...



Check out the **Overcoming Shame** series on the podcast.
(season 4, episodes 20-25)



We invite you to continue your healing journey in ***King Me*** and ***The Heart of a Warrior***, both by Michael Thompson.