

Week One: *The Trap of Shame*
1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Do you ever feel out of place or unwanted, like you are deficient or missing something? Is that feeling a rare occurrence, or does it happen more frequently than you'd like?
2. What typically triggers you to feel this way?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:2-4. Can you relate to this feeling? Write in your own words how it feels when you experience shame.
4. The definition of shame is a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior. If one of the functions of God's law is to show us our sin and make us aware of how far we are from God's ideals, is the law intended to make us feel shame? Why or why not?
5. How does knowing that God has a heavenly dwelling to cover our shame impact your answer to question #4?
6. Finish your FIFTEEN by imagining yourself being covered with God's heavenly dwelling. Then end in a prayer of gratitude.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

7. Read the story of the woman at the well found in John 4:1-26. What time of day was the woman drawing water? What can we infer about this since she was the only one there?
8. The Samaritan woman was going out of her way in the heat of the day to avoid the gaze of the other women drawing from the well. Think back to a time you went to extraordinary lengths to avoid others. What caused you to do this?
9. The Samaritan woman had a carefully crafted response to Jesus' request to retrieve her husband, almost like she knew the best possible way to frame the situation in order to defuse it. Think about the last time you made a mistake. How did you react to it?
10. A request for water escalated to a personal conversation rather quickly. When Jesus laid out the sordid details of her past, what was her next response? Where did she turn the conversation?
11. When faced with our own sin, it's so easy to try to turn the focus on others, whether positive or negative. We attempt to compensate for our shortcomings or justify our actions. Notice when Jesus calls out her behavior, she turns the

conversation to worship. However, instead of saying “that’s not what we are discussing,” Jesus follows her lead in the conversation. Jesus was not about to let the woman devolve into shame nor deflect the truth of her story. What effect might that have had on the woman?

12. As you end your FIFTEEN in prayer, ask God to help you neither be crushed by feelings of shame nor hide from areas of potential growth.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

13. As we saw yesterday when we looked at the story of the woman at the well, shame causes people to isolate. Have you experienced this? What were the circumstances? Did hiding away from others help you feel better or worse?
14. Read Psalm 25:3. What reason does the Psalmist give us for not hiding in shame?
15. How easy is it for you to put your trust in God when it comes to shame? Try to rate your ease of trust in God from 1 to 10, with 1 being very hard and 10 being very easy.
16. Read Romans 1:16-17. What reason does this verse give you for trusting in God?
17. In Jesus, we have the ultimate answer to shame. Put your trust in him, not yourself! Is it easier to trust God or yourself? Explain your answer.
18. Spend the rest of your FIFTEEN focusing on God’s goodness. Think about all of the ways he provides for you, not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually as well. Then end in prayer. And remember, God chose you!

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

19. Reread 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 to begin your FIFTEEN. What does Paul say about the conventional wisdom of the world?
20. Reread verse 26 and put yourself in the place of the letter recipient. How does that make you feel? What’s your knee-jerk reaction?
21. If God followed the ways of the world, how would he treat us?
22. Luckily for us, Paul makes it very clear that salvation turns conventional wisdom on its head. God chose us not

because of anything we did, but because of his goodness. Why would God choose such imperfect people to be his children and to share his story?

23. What does it say about God that he intentionally chose the lowly things of this world to do his work?
24. If God had “weakness,” our strength wouldn’t come close to it. How do our worldly accomplishments look in comparison?
25. God is so powerful he completely defies basic human logic and understanding. Finish your FIFTEEN by worshipping God for just how powerful he is.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

26. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 again. Why do you suppose Paul publicly calls out the stumbling blocks and shortcomings of the letter recipients?
27. When you know that someone in your life has struggled with the same burden you have, how does that change your relationship?
28. Read Romans 3:23. Who has fallen short of the glory of God?
29. Do you think the message would have been received differently if Paul sent this letter to a single person rather than a group?
30. God did not intend for us to live a life of shame. He sent his Son, and now we are all covered by his grace. Should this alter how we see ourselves?
31. Spend the remaining time of your FIFTEEN thanking God for not leaving us in our sin and sending his Son to die for us.