

Free-be

Too good to be true?

4. Unashamed!

Introduction:

Guilt says, *"I have done something wrong!"*

Shame says, *"I am wrong!"*

While healthy shame is really important to us as the foundation of our conscience, when shame becomes distorted because of our bad choices or by our being 'shamed' by others, it is a powerful and damaging force. Jesus' radical acceptance neutralises shame, rather than letting it to define us. Living in relationship with Him we can genuinely be "Unashamed!"

Questions:

- Talking about shame is difficult because, by its very nature, it wants to remain hidden. But can you think of times when you've heard some say, "They should be ashamed of themselves?" What was there to be ashamed of?
- Why is shame so powerful an experience?
- Gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, poverty, implied lack of intelligence and ability can all be used as shaming strategies to manipulate others. Can you think of examples from your experience? Can you think of other strategies people use to manipulate others by shame?
- If 'healthy shame' acts as an internal police force that protects and serves all we hold important at the core of who we are, what might be examples of 'healthy shame'?
- In the talk Roger spoke about how some see the #metoo movement, the BBC gender pay gap controversy and Oxfam's Haiti scandal as suggesting 'a new puritanism' with 'public shaming' as its weapon of choice. Do you think that this is a positive development?
- In the story of Jesus meeting the woman at the well in John 4, race, bad moral choices and gender are identified as shame-points in her life. Why might it be that his engaging her in meaningful conversation is so surprising?
- Having named the woman's difficult relational history and got it into the light, why does Jesus not pursue it further?
- What are the life choices in twenty-first century Finchampstead that might be viewed as shameful?
- What in her encounter with Jesus led the woman who was avoiding being with people to return to the village saying, *"Come see a man who knew all about the things I did, who knows me inside and out. Do you think this could be the Messiah?"*
- Read Psalm 34, especially verses 4-5, 8 & 18.

Moving Forward:

Jesus accepts us and loves us irrespective of who we are, what we are or the bad choices we have made in life. Nothing can alter His love for us and His desire for us to live in relationship with Him, "unashamed!"