



## Teaching Guide: Breaking Free from the Idol of Shame

### Opening Thought

*“Until we bear the image of Christ, the enemy will continue to mess with us.”*

- Many of us cannot see ourselves as God sees us.
- Because of this, we fall into traps that the enemy sets: self-focus, comparison, perfectionism, and self-judgment.
- But God’s Word reminds us:

*“They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed.”* (Psalm 34:5)

### 1. Understanding Shame as an Idol

#### What is an idol?

- Anything we give power to that rules our thoughts, emotions, and actions above God.
- Shame becomes an idol when we carry what Jesus already carried for us.

#### Characteristics of the Idol of Shame

It's low self-esteem, low self-confidence, low self-worth, and self-focus that can lead to self-debasing. So it's all the things that revolve around self.

- It's perfectionism, achievement, performance, striving, drivenness, and feelings of failure, with the underlying notion that failure is unacceptable.
- It's never enough, never satisfied, always needing to be more.
- There's no rest in the self, and there's no ability to rest, which means there's always fatigue.
- There's safety for that person in performing and achieving, but then that can also cause anxiety and depression and stress, and obviously, people-pleasing.
- And then we're also body-conscious because shame is often also connected to the body and the nervous system.
- Obsessing over food, exercise, and appearance.
- There's comparison and envy, internal conflict, pride, anger, and guilt.
- Sometimes we cannot apologise either because it might be shameful for us or reveal that we are wrong or defective.
- There's often self-righteousness that we can't see, unforgiveness, resentment, guilt, condemnation, self-judgment, self-accusation, a negative inner critic, because there's always this self-talk centred around how we feel about ourselves. Then we've got this distorted lens.

In short:

- **Self-focused:** low self-esteem, self-criticism, perfectionism, performance-driven life.

- **Never enough:** constant striving, inability to rest, feelings of failure.
- **Mask-wearing:** hiding the “real self,” fearing rejection.
- **Body-consciousness:** obsessing over food, exercise, and appearance.
- **Emotional traps include** people-pleasing, comparison, envy, resentment, and unforgiveness.
- **Distorted lens:** you hear love but cannot internalise it, because your core says, *“I am not enough.” “I cannot be loved this way”*.

### Scriptures

- *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand.”*(Ephesians 2:10)
- *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 8:1)

## 2. The Difference Between Healthy & Toxic Shame

- **Healthy shame:** Motivates change and repentance (like conviction from the Holy Spirit).
- **Toxic shame:** Motivates dysfunction, self-hatred, hiding, and striving.

### Scriptures

- *“Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”* (2 Corinthians 7:10)

**Key Thought:** Toxic shame whispers, *“You are flawed beyond repair.”*

Healthy shame whispers, *“This choice was wrong, but you can change because you are loved.”* Or *“that thing that happened to you is not your fault”*. It is hard to accept that others love you for who you are, and even if they say nice things, you don't believe it. It's empty to you - you cannot internalise it because your core says that you are not enough - I cannot be loved that way.

## 3. The Psychological Perspective

- Shame is often **rooted in childhood voices:** parents, teachers, peers, or authority figures who demanded perfection or withheld acceptance.
- The nervous system encodes shame in the body, triggering fight, flight, freeze, or fawn responses. Those go to places we respond from.
- To survive, the child learns to cover with **masks:** achievement, silence, anger, control, or people-pleasing.
- As adults, we continue the same pattern unless it is broken.

Psychology tells us:

- Shame is one of the most painful emotions because it attacks *who we are*, not just *what we did*.
- Brene Brown describes shame as “*the intensely painful feeling that we are unworthy of love and belonging.*”

#### 4. The Spiritual Cost of Shame

Behaviours that cause shame or hide shame shift focus away from God — they rely on something else. They imply I must handle it myself, which makes you feel as if others need more of you to accept you. Sometimes we don’t view help as positive or see feedback from safe and well-intentioned people as helpful; instead, we interpret it as criticism because it again arouses the feeling that more is required from you. You can’t see it as help or support.

Shame leads to more shameful behaviours because of the pain involved—almost as if you need to cover it with more shame—this is the sacrifice required, isn't it? An idol demands a sacrifice. That idol carries you—yet it also undermines you.

- The idol of shame demands **constant sacrifice**:
  - Exhaustion, drivenness, anxiety, depression, self-hatred, etc.
- It undermines:
  - Your **voice**
  - Your **movement and freedom**
  - Your **independence and uniqueness**
  - Your **purpose, gifts, and destiny**
- Ultimately, it places you on a **counterfeit timeline**—not the one God designed.

#### Scriptures

- “*Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; and do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced.*” (Isaiah 54:4)
- “*For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame.’*” (Romans 10:11)
- “*Instead of your shame you shall have double honour.*” (Isaiah 61:7)

#### 5. Renouncing the Idol of Shame

- Recognise that Jesus already carried your shame on the cross.
- To continue carrying it is to say, “*Jesus, what You did was not enough.*”
- Renounce shame and its behaviours:

- Perfectionism, drivenness, people-pleasing, negative self-talk, anger, etc.
- Receive God's truth:
  - You are chosen, loved, redeemed, and set apart.

### **Scripture for Freedom**

- *“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2)*

## **6. Reflection & Ministry Time**

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Where have you seen shame influencing your life?
2. What “mask” do you most often wear to cover your shame?
3. How does the idea of shame as an idol challenge your thinking?

### **Prayer Exercise:**

- Close their eyes.
- Ask Holy Spirit to reveal:
  - A moment where shame first entered your life.
  - The lies you believed in that moment.
  - The truth God wants to speak over you now.

### **Declare out loud:**

“Jesus carried my shame. I will not serve the idol of shame. I receive His truth, His love, and His freedom.”

### **Closing Scripture & Blessing**

*“They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed.” (Psalm 34:5)*

I pray that my faces will shine with His radiance, free from shame, rooted in His love.

Thank you for reading. If this resource has helped you, please share it with others.  
Join us on Facebook and Instagram.  
[www.lionsarise.org](http://www.lionsarise.org)