

A Legacy of Shame

Based on Exodus 20 and Leviticus 4

The first people, Adam and Eve, brought shame on themselves and God through their disobedience. After that, life was no longer easy. Adam and Eve had to work hard; they got sick, they suffered, and sometimes they were sad. Over time, they had children, then grandchildren, then great-grandchildren. But eventually, they died. God loved Adam, Eve, and all their descendants. He wanted them to live rightly and honorably. He didn't want them to bring shame to themselves, but He could no longer "walk among them" because they had sin in their lives. So God gave Adam and Eve's descendants some commands to help them know how to live honorably. There were ten main commands and many lesser laws that gave explanations or details about the ten. Those Ten Commandments included things like: do not worship other gods, honor your parents, do not kill people, and do not lie. Even so—even with all the commands written out and all the laws to help them—people could not obey God. Every person brought shame on herself and her family by failing to meet God's expectations for holiness. In fact, the laws only highlighted how far away from God people actually were.

Do you know what it feels like to disappoint someone? Don't you think every woman feels shame about something she did or said to another person? Sometimes, it doesn't matter how many nice things you do for someone, she will never forgive you for the one terrible thing you did, even if it was a long time ago. So how can you fix that relationship? Often, there is nothing that you can do. You must wait for the other person to forgive you. In the same way, you cannot repair your relationship with God. He must forgive you.

In addition to giving the people commands and laws, God set up a system of repayment so that people's shame could be removed. It was like what he did to cover Adam and Eve's shame: the sacrifice of an animal. Every year, each person had to bring a completely clean and perfect, first-born male animal to sacrifice to God. God would accept this pure animal's life as payment for the shame that the person had brought on herself, her family, and God. In this way, God forgave her, and her relationship with God was restored. At first the people were faithful and sincere in their sacrifices, and the system worked as a beautiful way to bring people back to God. But it had to be repeated every year, and evil ran thick in the blood of the people. Over time, the sacrifices became nothing more than an empty ritual in which the people didn't truly repent and didn't offer animals that met God's regulations.

Have you ever gone through a religious ritual without thinking about it or without paying attention to what you were doing? How do you think that made God feel?

"Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Hebrews 9:22



