

SERIES: I'M NOT ANGRY
PART 4B: I'M A LOSER

Last week Scottie taught how to identify thoughts and feelings of inferiority, and he introduced the first two of the most common shame-based characteristics:

Point I.B. 2) Identify any shame-based characteristics you grew up with.

- a) Verbal shaming
- b) Value comes through performance

This week we will begin with the third shame-based characteristic:

c) Unspoken rules dominate a shame-based environment

The rules that do the most damage in a shame-based family or organization are seldom if ever spoken out loud or written down. You only know that you have broken them when you break them. Two of the most damaging rules that exist in SHAME-BASED relationships are **The CAN'T TALK and CAN'T WIN Rules**. The CAN'T TALK Rule goes like this: "There aren't really any problems here. If you think there is a problem, you are the problem." Often times the reason that those who are in leadership can't tolerate the idea that there might be a problem is because they now feel they are being challenged. The Can't Talk Rule fosters lots of family secrets that carry a lot of shame in them. The Can't Talk Rule gives

power to the unspoken rules to have power over people's lives. This is why healthy communication is so important. It exposes any toxic rules that might be in the relationship.

The Can't Talk Rule is really two contradictory rules combined into one. Here are a few examples:

1) Always tell the truth; but, when we go to Grandma's, don't tell her you hate her bread stuffing. If she asks, just be polite, eat and say you like it.

2) Honesty is the best policy, but, if so-and so calls, tell them I'm not here.

3) Don't keep anything from your parents; but, Mother or Father would be so upset if they knew this, so please don't tell them.

The problem with the CAN'T WIN rule is that if a person acts on one rule, he or she is shamed for failing at the other. This is what is called a **DOUBLE BIND**—no performance is good enough, and since performance is the issue, shame is the result.

Here are a few other unspoken rules that drive shame based systems:

- **What's real doesn't matter, how things look is what matters**
- **What other people think is most important**
- **Adults are more important than children**

- **Adults always know what children need, feel, and want better than children**
- **People who feel sad are oversensitive**
- **Something is wrong with people who feel at all**
- **Feelings don't matter**
- **Not showing feelings is the same as not having them**
- **If parents are upset, the behavior of their kids is the cause**
- **If parents are upset, the behavior of the kids is the solution**
- **It's okay for parents to act inappropriately in order to get their kids to act appropriately**
- **We can solve all of our problems ourselves**
- **We don't have any problems**
- **God helps those who help themselves**
- **Peace at all costs**

It's not okay to have needs—needs are selfish.

d) Search for value and meaning outside of God

This is what is called idolatry. It might sound strange and even harsh, but understand what I'm saying. Idolatry simply means turning to a source other than God to meet your needs. Whenever we look to our performance or behavior as our source of identity and worth, it is idolatrous because your true sense of worth, value and meaning can only come from looking to God to meet those needs.

e) Preoccupied with fault and blame

An important way we learn in life is to experience the results of our actions. Some choices we make are wise and some are unwise. Some are right choices, and some choices we make are wrong. In a healthy family and church the members hold each other accountable and encourage and help each other learn from the results that they get from their choices. **But in a shame-based family or church they indict people and judge people in such a way that it sends the message that the person isn't good enough.** They don't measure up because they don't make perfect choices all the time.

Shame-based systems waste a lot of time fixing the blame on people and trying to defend themselves against being judged. The question, "Who's responsible," is asked so they know who to make feel bad and shamed, not to forgive and release them and help them learn from the experience.

f) Creates people who are experts at self-defense skills

People who grew up in a shaming producing family live their lives in a defensive mode. Because shame hurts it cuts straight to the heart. In order to learn to protect oneself from the pain of the shame they become "Self-Defense" experts to protect themselves from the shaming messages. Some of these skills include: **1) Denying that any problems exist, 2) Blaming others and learning how to never take responsibility, 3) Excel at debating.**

In shame-based relationships, people are constantly interrogated, but the questions have no answers. Questions like, “I just can’t understand why you did that! Is your head screwed on backwards?” “Whatever possessed you to say that?” “Why did you do that?” The only answer that is safe to give is, “I don’t know.” Any other answer would look foolish and the person would look foolish and again would feel like they can never do anything right.

g) Emotions are not acknowledged and accepted

In a shame-based perspective, emotions are not allowed to be felt—only thought and understood. If you can’t explain what you’re feeling then your feelings are wrong, because they are not allowed to exist. Feelings such as sadness, loneliness, hurt, anger, fear, or humiliation are seen and felt as a sign of weakness and defectiveness.

Feelings in a shame-based perspective are seen as bad. Therefore they are not allowed to be felt and experienced which keep people feeling stuck emotionally. They never resolve the emotions that become frozen inside of them. This creates a real need to have to defend themselves, and they are not comfortable getting very close to others because they fear that their feelings that they are not to have will surface and they will feel exposed, and it just reinforces the feelings of being defective and damaged. This creates a profound sense of shame, inferiority and it directly impacts a person feeling angry and threatened.

It's easy to see when someone is carrying all of this inside of them how they could easily feel disconnected and separated from God, isn't it? It begins to make sense why many of us struggle in our relationships with others, and why beginning and maintaining close, loving, life-giving relationships are so difficult.

We have looked at what a SHAME-BASED PERSPECTIVE LOOKS LIKE and looked at some of the shame-based characteristics that many of us possibly grew up feeling. Let's look at...

3) **Acknowledge any shame traits that influence you**

Before we look at: II. TWO STEPS TO TAKE TOWARDS WINNING OVER INFERIORITY, we're going to look at thoughts and behaviors that we might presently engage in that are indicators that shame and the feelings of **Inferiority and Insecurity** affect our anger, which is the feeling of having to preserve or protect ourselves from being attacked, threatened or challenged in the areas of our **Self-Worth, Basic Needs and Essential Convictions or Beliefs**.

a) **Do you think a lot of negative thoughts about yourself?**

The power of a Shame-Based Perspective is seen when people internalize the messages I'm a bad person, I'm defective, inadequate, unlovable, undeserving. You no longer need anyone criticizing and judging you because you do this to yourself a good portion of the time. When your

performance doesn't measure up to your standard you stick your own finger in your face and you let the accusations fly. What's wrong with me? How could I be so stupid? Nobody cares about what happens to me? I'm useless? It doesn't matter what I feel or think? These kinds of putdowns to yourself directly impact how much and how strong you feel anger. Remember, anger is a signal that you feel that you have to protect yourself because you are being put down, judged or criticized. Your self is being attacked.

b) Do you allow or admit mistakes when you make them?

When you have been taught that performance—how you act is the way to be valuable, accepted and loved—mistakes produce the feeling of shame. Mistakes prove that there is something radically wrong with you. So whatever behavior, attitude or feeling you might experience that doesn't measure up to your **STANDARD OF PERFECTION**—whatever that is to you—you must deny, explain, justify, minimize, rationalize or blame on someone else.

c) Do you have a hard time setting boundaries?

A Shame-Based Perspective so distorts how a person feels about themselves that they have a difficult time establishing appropriate boundaries in their lives. Concerning boundaries, the ability to define what you can and should not allow in your life can best be discovered in looking at two areas. **Can you say “yes” and “no” when it is appropriate? Do you allow people who are close to you to continue to hurt you**

but protect yourself from those who are safe? A person who struggles with shame and anger has a hard time knowing when to say yes or no, and who they are safe with and those they are not. See the example of Adam and Eve. After they sinned, they hid from God. He was the only One who could help them.

d) Do you have a hard time trusting people?

Do you have a hard time trusting God? Trust means you have to let down your guard and defenses. Trust means you allow people to get into your life. When a person feels shame as I have been defining it, it is incredibly hard to trust others, because there is this feeling of being defective, damaged and diminished. When you feel this way you don't want people to see you for how you feel you are.

e) Do you base your worth on your performance?

You're loveable and acceptable based upon how you perform instead of who you are.

Ephesians 2:8-10 says, **“God saved you by His special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.”**

f) Do you seek a false superiority?

Whenever a person is feeling the effects of a shame-based perspective and grid, they look for a way out. One of the most common ways to escape is to seek an edge of superiority. Whenever a person is feeling criticized, judged, blamed, or questioned concerning an idea they often attempt to gain an upper hand. To see if you do this, answer to yourself these following questions.

- 1) I can quickly dissect a person's logic, and point out his or her errors**
- 2) When someone wrongs me, I stew over how I can get even**
- 3) When someone speaks wrongly of me, I respond in the same way**
- 4) I have a hard time listening to someone who is frustrated with me; I want to defend myself**

Remember, gaining perspective and being honest with yourself concerning how **Shame and Inferiority** affect you and how you manage your anger is important in learning how to deal successfully with your anger.

Let's look at :

II. Two steps to take towards winning over inferiority

A. Internalize what God says it true about you right now

1) You are loved and accepted by God

Romans 5:16, “And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but we have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins.”

2) You have peace with God

Romans 5:1, “Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.”

3) You have been chosen by God

Ephesians 1:4, “Long, ago, even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes.”

4) You have been adopted by God

Ephesians 1:5a, “His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ.”

5) You bring God great pleasure

Ephesians 1:5b, “And this gave Him great pleasure.”

B. Identify with who God says you are

1) His child

Romans 8:16, “For His Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God’s children.”

2) A new person in Jesus

2 Corinthians 5:17-18, “What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun! ¹⁸All this newness of life is from God, who brought us back to Himself through what Christ did. And God has given us the task of reconciling people to Him.”

3) His masterpiece, and He has good things planned for you to participate in

Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.”

4) Without blame and fault in His eyes

Colossians 1:21-22, “This includes you who were once so far away from God. You were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions, ²²yet now He has brought you back as His friends. He has done this through His death on the cross in His own human body.

As a result, He has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before Him without a single fault.”

5) Born of God, which means you're eternal

1 Peter 1:23, “For you have been born again. Your new life did not come from your earthly parents because the life they gave you will end in death. But this new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God.”

COMMUNION

“Then He took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then He said, ‘Take this and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸For I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come.’ ¹⁹He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then He broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, ‘This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.’ After supper He took another cup of wine and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant between God and His people—an agreement confirmed with My blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.’” Luke 22:17-19