



Part 11

**Called to be Healed and
Freed of Our Legitimate
and Illegitimate Guilt
and Shame**

Genesis 3:1

The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

Genesis 3:2

**“Of course we may eat fruit
from the trees in the garden,”
the woman replied.**

Genesis 3:3

“It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

Genesis 3:4

**“You won’t die!” the serpent
replied to the woman.**

Genesis 3:5

“God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

Genesis 3:6a

The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her.

Genesis 3:6b

So she took some of the fruit
and ate it. Then she gave some
to her husband, who was with her,
and he ate it, too.

Genesis 3:7

At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

Genesis 3:8

When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees.

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Principle #1

There is a grand canyon sized difference between legitimate guilt and legitimate shame versus illegitimate guilt and illegitimate shame.

Legitimate Guilt *Defined*

Legitimate objective guilt is the fact of having committed an offense or crime.

Legitimate subjective guilt or a legitimate guilty feeling is the result of being convicted that you did something wrong.

Legitimate Shame *Defined*

A painful emotion of humiliation, embarrassment, or distress that is the result of having your sinful heart exposed to you.

Guilt and Shame

Legitimate guilt and legitimate shame are the fruits of sin. And when they are not dealt with appropriately, they become catalysts for even more sin.

Illegitimate Guilt *Defined*

Illegitimate guilt is often accusatory and imposed by others (and sometimes by ourselves) over something that is beyond our control, over something we did not know, or over something we did not do.

Illegitimate Shame *Defined*

Illegitimate shame appears when we fail to live up to our own unrealistic expectations or the expectations of others. It tells us that we are no good or that we are worthless. When we fail, it tells us we are a failure.

Principle #1

There is a grand canyon sized difference between legitimate guilt and legitimate shame versus illegitimate guilt and illegitimate shame.

Legitimate or Illegitimate?

- You feel guilty and ashamed but do not know why. There is no reason.
- Leads you towards self condemnation or self-hatred instead of conviction.
- Rooted in a deep seeded insecurity.

Legitimate or Illegitimate?

- **Leads to spiritual cataracts; it hinders you from seeing yourself and your relationship with God and others clearly.**
- **Cannot be solved through forgiveness or repentance.**

Legitimate or Illegitimate?

- Is the result of overly critical, and particularly harsh self-judgement.
- Prevents you from giving others a healthy doses of Vitamin N – “No.”
- Causes you to carry around unbearable burdens that no one can carry.

Principle #1

There is a grand canyon sized difference between legitimate guilt and legitimate shame versus illegitimate guilt and illegitimate shame.

Principle #2

Legitimate guilt and legitimate shame are gifts from God to help us return to Him, to help us find our way back toward what is right, and they help motivate us towards permanent change.

Principle #3

If our response to legitimate guilt and legitimate shame is something other than legitimate confession and repentance, we will be forever tormented emotionally and spiritually.

Wrong Responses

- **Trying to hide our guilt and shame through sewed together fig leaves.**
- **Trying to heal our guilt and shame by rejecting the very existence of guilt and shame.**

The Fig Leaves Approach

**We go about life trying to cover up
our guilt and our shame through
our works and accomplishments.
We attempt to cover who we are
with what we do.**

The Fig Leaves Problem

The first problem – fig leaves wither and die very quickly. So the solution is temporary, always leaving us needing more and more leaves. Fig leaves are a limited resource so eventually they run out and our shame is exposed.

The Fig Leaves Problem

The second problem – fig leaves feel like sandpaper. So while we are trying to use them to cover our shame, ultimately they will irritate us and we will come to hate them, because they were never made to cover our shame.

The Fig Leaves Result

Whatever you are using in your attempt to try to hide your shame, whatever you're using to mask the reality that you're "not right," be sure that it won't last and that ultimately, you'll hate it.

The Rejection Approach

Another approach is to pretend that there is no such thing as legitimate guilt or shame. This approach tries to deny or pretend that we aren't naked, that our sinful actions, which reveal our sinful hearts, are just not real.

The Rejection Problem

Even when we deny that guilt or shame are legitimate, we are still subject to their effects. We can pretend all we want that we are not naked, but when we go outside in the rain, snow, or blazing heat we will suffer the consequences.

Principle #3

If our response to legitimate guilt and legitimate shame is something other than legitimate confession and repentance, we will be forever tormented emotionally and spiritually.

Wrong Responses

- Undealt with legitimate guilt and shame cause us to hide in ridiculous places.
- Undealt with legitimate guilt and shame cause us to run from the One we should be running to.

Wrong Responses

- **Undealt with legitimate guilt and shame cause us to only hear the voice of the Enemy who tells us that we are dirty, dishonorable, unlovable, and without hope.**

Principle #3

If our response to legitimate guilt and legitimate shame is something other than legitimate confession and repentance, we will be forever tormented emotionally and spiritually.

Principle #4

Illegitimate guilt and illegitimate shame will always reign when we are more aware of and more focused on our sin than we are aware of or focused on God's amazing love, grace, mercy, kindness, and forgiveness.

Principle #5

We must learn to stand naked before God in the reality of our guilt and shame; not hiding it, not denying it, but confessing it and turning away from it. Only then will God provide a permanent covering for them.

Genesis 3:20

Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live.

Genesis 3:21

**And the Lord God made clothing from
animal skins for Adam and his wife.**

Principle #5

We must learn to stand naked before God, in the reality of our guilt and shame; not hiding it, not denying it, but confessing it and turning away from it. Only then will God provide a permanent covering for them.

Principle #6

The only cure for legitimate guilt, legitimate shame, illegitimate guilt, and illegitimate shame is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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