

OVERCOMING HIDDEN SHAME TO MORE EFFECTIVELY
CONNECT WITH GOD AND HIS PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

This research project was designed to help Christians identify and overcome hidden shame so that they would be able to enjoy a more authentic connection with God and as an extension, to His people. I chose this topic because Christians are often seen by non-Christians as being judgmental, critical and unloving. This behavior does not reflect the transformation and behavior mandated in Romans 12 and other similar scriptures. Because these behaviors are sinful, the investigation began with a review of mankind's first sin in the garden of Eden. Out of that review, I discovered that shame is commonly found alongside sin. As I researched the concepts of sin and shame, it became clear that there are some common shame producing doctrinal misunderstandings held by many Christians. Those misunderstandings led me to the further investigation of salvation by grace, surrender to God's will, and the post salvation sanctification process. The results show that sin and shame ultimately result in separation from God. God's plan was for connection with His people, which he reenacted through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Still, Christians find it difficult to acknowledge their hidden shame and begin healing. However by understanding Romans 12, engaging in prayer, selecting intentional worship songs and the use of cognitive behavioral therapeutic methods Christians can realize the fullness of their salvation as they connect in new and meaningful ways with God and His people.

Keywords: Romans 12, sin, shame, separation from God, surrender, salvation, sanctification

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Problem of Shame, Sin and Relational Disconnect

Feelings of shame are part of being human, and the vast majority of people will experience this emotion periodically throughout their lifetime. However, many Christians live continually with internalized shame, unaware of its presence and the negative effect on their relationships with God and with one another.¹ Shame happens in community and is a potential response to negative behavior. For instance, when a person feels they have sinned so greatly that they cannot be forgiven it is shame producing. When a person has been sinned against physically, emotionally, or spiritually they feel the shame of the person who harmed them, and then internalize it. Finally, people can experience feelings of shame when a person with whom they are associated engages in behavior that is considered to be shameful.² If shame is left unresolved, it will hinder the Christian's relationship with God, and as an extension, their relationships with people.

So, the question for this project is: How can a Christian overcome hidden fear and shame to realize the fullness of their salvation in close relationship with God and people? This topic is relevant because the disconnection from God that results when shame goes unresolved is damaging to the person experiencing it, and their relationship with God and with others.

The first mention of fear and shame in the Bible occurs in Genesis Chapter 2, right after God had breathed the entire Creation into existence, and the woman has joined the man in the beautiful, peaceful garden. The account states: "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."³ In this statement, God is showing how being vulnerable and unashamed is

¹ John Bradshaw, *Healing the Shame that Binds You*. (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications Inc. 2005), xvii-xviii.

² Edward Welch, *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection*. (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2012), 11.

³ Gen. 2:25 NASB (*all scripture cited in this work will be from the NASB unless otherwise noted*).

desirable, and in fact, is what He intended for His people (spiritually and relationally speaking). Ironically, this verse is the segue to Chapter 3, where the serpent tempted the woman with a lie (“you surely will not die!”),⁴ and goes on to persuade her that God was depriving them of knowledge to which they were entitled (“For God knows...your eyes will be opened...and you will be like God...”⁵ The pair then succumbed to the deception, and the first sin was committed. In that moment, they went from being unaware of their nakedness and completely unashamed, to being acutely aware of it.⁶

This newfound self-awareness drove them to hide from God. They didn’t want Him to discover what they had done because they feared His reaction. So, they covered themselves with fig leaves, and hid themselves in the trees of the garden.⁷ They were experiencing shame because they sensed their disobedience somehow changed their relationship with God. Subsequently, He expelled them from the garden. The man and the woman were separated from God for the first time, and they began to experience the harsh reality of the consequences of their sin.⁸

Beyond the example of the garden, this pattern of worldly deception, sin, shame, spiritual disconnection and broken relationship with God and people, is a common thread throughout the Old Testament. Besides the sin of Adam and Eve, the people of God repeatedly challenged Him and His chosen leadership.⁹ They were faithless in the face of God’s promises,¹⁰ and more than

⁴ Gen., 3: 4.

⁵ Gen., 3: 5.

⁶ Gen., 3: 7.

⁷ Gen., 3: 8-10.

⁸ Gen., 3: 11-24.

⁹ Num. 21: 4-9

¹⁰ Num., 13: 25-33

once, Abraham lied to save himself and his family instead of trusting God to guide and protect them.¹¹ When God's people choose sin over obedience it creates disconnection and separation. God knew from the beginning that this would happen, and that people could never regain the perfection of relationship with Him that began and ended in the garden. So, His plan included a way for people to reconnect with Him. When the time was just right, God sent His son, Jesus, to redeem the hearts of people and restore the potential for them to once again come close to Him.¹²

The Advent of Jesus and the Opportunity to Reconnect

Jesus entered the world as a tiny baby, born of a virgin into very humble circumstances. He lived a quiet life until He began His ministry of salvation at around age 33. His way of being with God while He was on earth was revolutionary compared to the legalism of Judaism and the Pharisees. Thus, He was not well received by those who held positions of religious authority. He came to show people God's unwavering loving kindness, exemplify God's justice, and embody God's desire for His people to draw near to Him again. The religious leaders sent him to die on a cross as a criminal, and when He had been buried in the grave for three days, He rose from the dead and enacted the gift of salvation through His shed blood. In this redemptive act, He literally embodied all the sin and shame of mankind from the beginning of time, until the end. He will come again to fulfill His promise of eternal deliverance from evil, but until then, He left His people with the Holy Spirit to be a comfort and guide for generations to come as they navigate the world.

¹¹ Gen. 12: 10-20; Gen. 20: 1-12.

¹² Gal. 4: 4

Shame is Persistent

Jesus obliterated the bonds of sin and shame, yet still, Satan continues to use the same tactics of deception as he did in the garden ('God didn't really say that, did He?' 'He's just depriving you of what you want...'),¹³ and people, including Christians are still being distracted and drawn away by his lies.¹⁴ When they sin, they feel fearful, experience shame and hide from God, just like the first couple.

As a professional counselor, I often encounter Christians, who even after being raised to new life in Christ, suffer under a weight of shame and broken relationship. In addition to my own observational experience in the counseling room, there is no lack in the literature for articles that address the nature of shame and its effect upon humanity. A number of Christian authors and counselors have written on the problem of shame in Christians, including Larry Crabb,¹⁵ Edward Welch,¹⁶ and Neil Pembroke.¹⁷ Shame has also had a strong presence in secular literature both in the past through James Bradshaw,¹⁸ and more currently, Brene Brown¹⁹.

¹³ Gen. 3.

¹⁴ Rom. 1; 25.

¹⁵ Larry Crabb, *The Pressure's Off: Breaking Free from Rules and Performance*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2012). bk.

¹⁶ Edward Welch, *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection*, bk.

¹⁷ Neil Pembroke, "Pastoral Care for Shame Based Perfectionism". *Pastoral Psychology* 61 January 2012): 245-258. Accessed June 10, 2017. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11089-011-0414-z>; Pembroke, "Witnessing to Hope in the Christian Community through Irony." *Pastoral Psychology* 58, no. 4 (August 2009): 433-443. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11089-008-0192-4>.search.

¹⁸ John Bradshaw, *Healing the Shame that Binds You*, bk.

¹⁹ Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead*. (Center City MN: Hazelden, 2015), bk.

Romans 12 Worship

In the church, the worship leader can help facilitate the resolution of fear and shame in the body of Christ by using strategic placement of liturgy and music that will inspire people to live in the security and joy of their salvation. Romans 12 describes a lifestyle of worship in which it is entirely possible to experience the transformation of salvation and live the life God intends for His people. This scripture advocates for fostering a closer relationship with God through surrender of the mind and will; it speaks to the continual transformation and renewing of the mind that is part of new life in Christ; and finally, it shows the impact of a transformed life and healthy relationship with God in the church, and to a world full of people in grave need of the love and grace of a Savior.²⁰

The Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to understand the nature of fear and shame in Christians, and to discover how it can be overcome. The following review of the literature will focus on defining and describing the constructs of sin, shame, salvation through grace, surrendering to God and sanctification. A review of the literature will give a thorough understanding of these essential tenets of the Christian faith, and should make clear the degree to which the Christian's understanding of these doctrines might promote feelings of shame. The information gleaned through the literature will give direction to worship leaders regarding the type of change needed to mitigate shameful feelings in their congregants. It will also give insight regarding the ways in which careful selection of the liturgy, music and spoken word can help the Christian people to

²⁰ Romans 12.

whom they minister overcome fear and shame so they can experience a closer relationship with God and with His people.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In my experience as a Christian who has many family members who do not share my beliefs, I have encountered a lot of opposition to my faith. Most of the time the problem lies in the way Christian people live in the world. God says that the world will reject Jesus and those who believe in Him,²¹ so it is only natural that I would experience rejection of my beliefs, but this goes beyond the mere perception of Christians by non-believers. Christians are perceived as judgmental, self-righteous and our behavior often falls far short of what the world would consider to be loving and Christ-like; we are perceived this way because this is how we often behave. I wanted to understand why this is, and exactly what is missing from the lives of Christians that causes us to fall so short of exemplifying a loving, secure connection with God that extends to our relationships with the people around us.

Based on my experience and research, there appears to be a misunderstanding among some Christians regarding the true nature and consequences of sin, the presence of unresolved shame in their lives, what salvation means and how the process of sanctification works (growing in grace). If we, as Christians, could attain a greater understanding of these doctrines and apply them to how we follow Jesus, perhaps we could be more effective at living life His way. My literature review then is to define and clarify the constructs of sin, shame, salvation and the ongoing process of sanctification. This information will help answer the question of how Christians can overcome the sin and shame that interferes with their ability to engage in meaningful connection with God and one another.

²¹ 1 Pet. 2: 6-8.

Sin

Eastman's Bible dictionary describes sin as a state mind or being where there is a lack of conformity to, or a trespass against the law of God.²² This opposition to God is present in the soul and in the behavior manifested, and could be either intentional or unintentional. Sin is also described as deserving of punishment, and as bringing forth the righteous wrath of God.²³ The Bible does teach that sin is a condition in which the heart is deceitful and wicked,²⁴ and of course, sin is an offense to God.²⁵ However, it is also an offense to people and shows a lack of love toward them, as well as God, and self. The behavior of sin manifests in many ways, but the principal effect of sin is separation from God, others, self, and even from creation.²⁶

Joy Ann McDougall writes about David Kelsey's essay on the doctrine of sin. She says Kelsey points to three different behaviors a person may exhibit that would keep them separated from God. First, there are people who deny that they need forgiveness and reconciliation. Second, there are people who see the need for reconciliation, but they focus on temporal things such as the redemption of social, political or cultural constructs in the context of human history. Finally, there are those who recognize the call to forgiveness and reconciliation to God, but deny His gift and seek to earn their salvation by good moral behavior.²⁷

²² 1 John 3: 4; Rom. 4:15.

²³ Eastman's Bible Dictionary Online, Accessed July 15, 2017 from <http://www.biblestudytools.com>.

²⁴ Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17: 9.

²⁵ Rom. 4:25; 5:15-18.

²⁶ Baker's Bible dictionary Online, Accessed July 15, 2017 from <http://www.biblestudytools.com>

²⁷ McDougall, "Trinitarian Grammar of Sin," *Modern Theology* 27, no. 1 (January 2011): 55–71. Accessed June 10, 2017. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0025.2010.01654>.

McDougall also describes Kelsey's thoughts regarding how God relates to people out of the complexity of His own nature, and so when people sin, it is their failure to respond appropriately to Him. People struggle to believe that the redemptive work of Christ is sufficient for their salvation, because they are continually confronted with their moral failures (sin). They cannot respond properly to God's loving outreach because their sinful behavior causes them to feel unworthy of His unconditional love, forgiveness and grace. The proper response to God is simply to accept His offering of loving relationship, extend love to Him in prayerful communion, and to love His people through acts of service. He stresses the importance of balance between these two relational acts (loving God and loving people).²⁸ Jason Lepojarvi writes of the beautiful expression C. S. Lewis gave to this idea of engaging both love for God and for people. He says Lewis suggested that since God is the initiator and giver of love, when a person increases their love for God, it naturally increases the Christian's love of His people.²⁹

According to R. R. Reno, a common distortion of the concept of 'love of God and love for people' is an excessive love of self. Reno discusses Augustine's assertion that this kind of self-love is unstable and results in the pursuit and love of material goods in place of love for God and people. This self-love is a form of idolatry because it exchanges the truth of God for the lie that one can find satisfaction in material goods. This type of idolatry leads to "corruption of the body of our humanity" and flows out into every aspect of society, family and community.³⁰

²⁸ McDougal, "Trinitarian Grammar of Sin."

²⁹ Lepojarvi, Jason. "Worship, Veneration, and Idolatry: Observations from C. S. Lewis." *Religious Studies* 51, no. 4 (December 2015): 543-562. Accessed June 10, 2017. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1727367146?accountid=12085>.

³⁰ R. R. Reno, "Pride and idolatry". *Interpretation* 60, no. 2 (April 2006): 166-180. Accessed May 25, 2017, [ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu](http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu).

The above literature reveals that the behavior of sin manifests in a variety of ways, and scholars hold a broad diversity of opinions on the nature of sin. However, the one thing they can agree upon is the result of sin: It alienates and separates people from God and from each other.

Shame

John Bradshaw has been writing about shame for more than 30 years. In his writing and from his personal experiences, he concluded that shame has a direct connection to evil, and that evil is a tangible part of human nature. He states that people often deny the presence of evil in themselves and in the world, and that this denial of evil is a learned behavior and coping mechanism. When shame becomes internalized, the person feels that they are somehow flawed or defective. This feeling is so painful that it causes the person to develop strategies to hide the pain. He contends that this self-protection is the root of all evil: hatred of self and others, violent acts, prejudice, addictions, and so on.³¹

In her book, *Shame-Less Lives, Grace-full Congregations*, Karen McClintock discusses how she believes shame begins during the early years as children listen to the voices of parents, teachers and others. For instance, they may hear and internalize the idea that they are bad, wrong, stupid, worthless, a mistake, fat, ugly, skinny, a nerd, not worthy of love, and so on. During adolescence, the voices of their peers increase or magnify this internal dialogue that will continue to shape them as they grow into adulthood. People tend to pass their own unresolved shame onto those around them, and children may also internalize those voices, which then become built-in “self-shaming messengers”.³²

³¹ John Bradshaw. *Healing the Shame that Binds You*, xvii-xix.

³² Karen McClintock, *Shame-less Lives, Grace-full Congregations*, (Herndon: VA: Alban Institute, 2012), 3.

The church carries its own special messages of shame. Religious leaders can have great impact here, as they often shape a person's core self-esteem, and define for others what they believe about God.³³ Christians are sometimes seen by the world as judgmental, self-righteous and not very Christ-like.³⁴ This may stem from the teaching of some churches who depict God as one whose love depends the good behavior of His people, and who is quick to condemn them for their many sins.³⁵ This is the god the world sees, instead of the God of the Bible who is certainly just, but who is also all-benevolent and loves unconditionally.

The scriptures say that God loved the world so much that He gave up His son Jesus so that the world would be saved and no longer condemned,³⁶ and that people are saved by grace through faith so no one can claim they deserve it more than another.³⁷ Jesus covered the problem of sin and shame for all time and eternity when He graciously poured out His life on the cross. However, very often in the church “the message of grace gets buried under the obligations of moralism”.³⁸ When church leadership mitigates the message of grace, then moralism, legalism and shame take its place.³⁹

³³ Karen McClintock, *Shame-less Lives, Grace-ful Congregations*, 7.

³⁴ Darren Whitehead and Jon Tyson, *Rumors of God: Experiencing the Kind of Faith You've only Heard About*, 74. (Nashville, TN: Thomas-Nelson, Inc., 2011).

³⁵ Larry Crabb, 11-12; Darren Whitehead and Jon Tyson, *Rumors of God: Experiencing the Kind of Faith You've Only Head About*, 73-74.

³⁶ John 3: 16-17.

³⁷ Eph 2: 8-9.

³⁸ Darren Whitehead and Jon Tyson, 75.

³⁹ Kathryn Keller, Debra Mollen and Lisa Rosen, “Spiritual Maturity as a Moderator of the Relationship between Christian Fundamentalism and Shame”. *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 34. Accessed June 10, 2017. <https://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu>.

Keller, Mollen and Rosen have researched other means by which religion can cause shame in Christians. They studied how religious fundamentalism relates both to feelings of shame and spiritual maturity. For the purposes of their study, they define Christian fundamentalism as a form of Evangelical Protestantism that is resistant to changing cultural principles, and which places a greater weight on conservative values, authoritarian leadership and the desire to remain separate from the world.⁴⁰ The researchers go on to define shame by differentiating it from guilt: While Guilt is feeling bad about a behavior; shame is an overall bad feeling about oneself. Finally, they define spiritual maturity as a belief that God is a benevolent ruler who oversees a broad, transformational process in His people. A spiritually mature person is not selfish or fearful and has healthy relationships with God and others.⁴¹

In their study, Keller, Mollen and Rosen administered several surveys to a group of 164 women who identified as Christian. The measures of Christian fundamentalism, shame and spiritual maturity given to the group indicated that the women who scored high on the fundamentalism scale and low on spiritual maturity scale had high scores on the shame inventory, and vice-versa. These authors also note that some fundamentalist Christian churches seem to expect a level of perfectionism that is unrealistic and can be shame producing. Conversely, they found that feelings of shame may be comforted and even mitigated by the sense of belonging and meaning that happens in the context of church communities in general.⁴²

This kind of unrealistic expectation can cause Christians to experience shame of an even greater intensity than non-Christians. In his book, *The Pressure's Off: Breaking Free from Rules*

⁴⁰ Kathryn Keller, Debra Mollen and Lisa Rosen, "Spiritual Maturity as a Moderator of the Relationship between Christian Fundamentalism and Shame".

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

and Performance, Larry Crabb explains that this heavier load of shame can also happen when Christians believe there is a direct correlation between their (good) behavior and receiving God's favor and blessing. When a Christian obeys God and things don't work out the way they expected, this mindset suggests that they have done something wrong and displeased God, or that there is something wrong with them as a Christian.⁴³

Edward Welch writes extensively about shame in his book *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection*. He points out that in the Bible, the word shame appears 10 times more often than guilt. He explains guilt as a concept that "lives in the courtroom" and is felt when a person has done something wrong, is held to account, and expects to be punished for their actions. Shame is different: Shame "lives in the community", although it can feel like a courtroom and it transcends mere sinful behavior. Shame gives rise to the perception that there is something terribly wrong with the person, not merely behavior that can be resolved through atonement.⁴⁴

Shame can result from a number of situations and can manifest in people as feelings of unworthiness, or of being unacceptable and disgraced because of sinful behavior. It is common in people who have been sinned against by another. People can even feel shame when they associate with someone who behaves in a shameful way, or who is acting outside the expected norms of society (i.e. criminals, addicts, physically or mentally disabled persons and so on). Abuse often becomes a shameful secret, as does sexual experimentation. Divorce, or a marriage

⁴³ Larry Crabb, chap. 1.

⁴⁴ Edward Welch, 11.

in which it is necessary to keep secrets can also create feelings of shame. These are just a few of many shame-producing circumstances that can occur in the lives of people.⁴⁵

It is important to understand that people often have difficulty acknowledging and/or identifying their shameful feelings. Welch provides many examples to educate and enlighten others on the reality of hidden shame, but brings his thoughts regarding shame to this focal point: He asks, “What do you want to hide? That is a shortcut to identifying the shame in your life”.⁴⁶ Donald Capps’ philosophy adds depth to Welch’s observations. In his book *Life Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care*, He says that when Christians will not acknowledge their shameful feelings, they reject the shame of the cross. However, when people will engage and accept their shameful side, they enter a space where God is more accessible.⁴⁷

Another aspect of the cycle of sin and shame is the vulnerability that Christians need to foster a meaningful connection to God and each other. Humans were made for connection, and the first humans had unfettered connection with God in the garden of Eden.⁴⁸ However, when the man and the woman sinned they felt shame for the first time, and the shame created disconnection from God.

Brene Brown has researched this human need for meaningful connection. In her best-selling book, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead*, she relates a common theme she discovered as she pored over the responses of her research participants: When they were asked to tell about their experiences in

⁴⁵ Edward Welch, 20.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁷ Donald Capps, *Life cycle theory and pastoral care*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 92.

⁴⁸ Vernon Whaley, *Called to Worship: From the Dawn of Creation to the Final Amen*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2009). 4.

intimate relationships, they recounted feelings of “heartbreak, betrayal and shame” and “the fear of not being worthy of real connection”.⁴⁹ As she considered these responses, she decided to make a small change in the application of her research by extending it to include the impact of shame on the ability of people to have meaningful connection with others. Brown states that “shame is the most powerful master emotion. It is the fear that we’re not good enough”,⁵⁰ and that we are “...not worthy of love and belonging. She goes on to say that vulnerability in sharing oneself with trusted others plays a large role in the ability to overcome shame and develop authentic relational connection.⁵¹

In his research on the power of vulnerability in Christian soul care, Kyubo Kim points out that the word ‘vulnerability’ means a person is “capable of (experiencing) physical or emotional wounding, hurt or exposure”.⁵² This view of vulnerability suggests that it is a strong and courageous way of being, which is in stark contrast to how it is actually perceived by society. People often think of vulnerability as a weakness and so they avoid it. Kim also discovered that the current culture judges people by the quality of their material goods, their family’s image, and their ability to earn money and so on. The perception is that these people are weak and vulnerable because they fall short of this ideal of worldly strength and power. This causes feelings of shame, which perpetuates an intense need for the person to attain perfection.⁵³

⁴⁹ Brene Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 8.

⁵⁰ Cathy Taughinbaugh, Helping Parents Find Peace website. Guilt, Shame and Vulnerability: 25 quotes from Dr. Brene Brown. Accessed August 9, 2017. <https://cathytaughinbaugh.com/guilt-shame-and-vulnerability-25-quotes-from-dr-brene-brown>.

⁵¹ Brene Brown, 8.

⁵² Kyubo Kim, “The Power of being Vulnerable in Christian Soul Care: Common Humanity and Humility”. *Journal of Religious Health* 56 (August 2016): 355-369. <http://dx.doi:10.1007/s10943-016-0294-8>.

⁵³ Ibid.

Neil Pembroke refers to the above as “shame based perfectionism”.⁵⁴ This is a state where a person feels so inadequate that they cannot stop trying to attain perfection. They never feel satisfied because their expectations for themselves, and often of others, are unattainable. This creates a misguided sense of self where people come to believe that their self-worth lies only in what they can achieve. This is a faulty belief system because achievements are a poor substitute for the essential need of human beings; the need to be loved and valued for who they are at their core rather than for what they can achieve. To deconstruct the façade of shame-based perfectionism, a person must first acknowledge its existence. When shameful feelings are exposed to the light of Christ’s love and mercy, they lose their power and can eventually be accepted and healed. Pembroke notes that this is difficult for Christians, and that if a Christian is to effectively conform to Christ, their dark, shameful side must be redeemed.⁵⁵

Per the literature, shame is pervasive, yet elusive, and it has been present since the beginning of time. It causes people to feel that there is something inherently wrong with them as a person. Shame has its roots in evil, and it perpetuates evil. It is prevalent in some types of Christian practice, and when shame is found in the church, it is especially damaging. When people feel shame, it causes them to become physically and emotionally isolated. When people isolate themselves, they interrupt their relational connection with God and others. This pattern of shame, isolation and disconnection began with the first sin in the garden of Eden. Though even then, God already had a plan in place for the restoration and re-connection of mankind to Himself.

⁵⁴ Neil Pembroke, “Pastoral Care for Shame Based Perfectionism”.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Salvation through Grace

If, in the beginning, there was perfect connection between God and the first couple in the garden, and if their sin and shame led to humanity's disconnection from Him, it makes sense that God's original master plan of creation included reconnection between Himself and His people. The Bible makes it clear that His chosen pathway of reconnection with humankind comes only through salvation in Christ Jesus. What exactly then, is Salvation?

The American Heritage Dictionary defines salvation as “the deliverance from destruction, difficulty or evil”. As applied to Christians, it is “deliverance from the power or penalty of sin; redemption”.⁵⁶ In Baker's Bible Dictionary, William T. Arnold describes Christian salvation as occurring across the realms of the past (redemption from sin and spiritual death/reconciliation with God), the present (the ongoing sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit), and the future (when the Christian experiences Jesus face to face in a new form where sin no longer hinders them).⁵⁷ There would be little disagreement in the church that being saved means to be delivered from death and danger (sin), and subsequently reconnected to the source of life and safety (God in Christ). Why then, do Christians still struggle so with feelings of shame that interfere with their ability to live in close connection with God and one another?

In his book, *The divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard says that he believes part of the problem is people who have accepted Jesus do not take His words as reality or as a necessary guide to living effectively as Christian. Often, it is a matter of ignorance because new Christians are not typically taught that they are actually expected to live by the teachings of Jesus. Willard states that “We lead (people) to profess allegiance to Him (Jesus)...and leave them there,

⁵⁶ American Heritage Dictionary, Accessed July 20, 2017, <https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=salvation>

⁵⁷ Baker's Bible Dictionary.

devoting our remaining efforts to ‘attracting’ them to this or that (ministry)”.⁵⁸ People may also construe obedience to the teachings of Christ as somehow legalistic. In his observations of C. S. Lewis’ writings, Lepojarvi noticed that Lewis had an alternative to viewing obedience to God as pure legalism. Instead, he said Christians can see obedience as the supreme expression of their love for God. Lewis goes on to say that to love God is to be obedient to him. Obedience then, “is, or will become, sweet and hardly recognizable from pleasure”.⁵⁹

It also could be that Christians struggle with following the teachings of Jesus because they do not understand the true nature of salvation and grace.⁶⁰ Roger Bufford, et. al., give clarity to this construct in their research on grace. They say most Christians would acknowledge that grace is God’s unmerited favor towards His people because while we were still sinners He sent Jesus to die for our sins.⁶¹ Thus, when Christians truly understand God’s gift of grace, they will naturally be gracious to others.⁶² In his research on shame, grace and spirituality, J. D. Spradlin found grace to be relational. She says it is preferable to legalism, which “demands perfection and is doomed to failure”. Her research showed that people who behave graciously tend to have positive religious coping skills and spiritual well-being.⁶³ Conversely, people who have

⁵⁸ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), p. xiv-xv.

⁵⁹Jason Lepojarvi, "Worship, Veneration, and Idolatry: Observations from C. S. Lewis."

⁶⁰ Rodger Bufford, et. al., “Preliminary Analyses of Three Measures of Grace: Can they be Unified?”. *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 86-97. Accessed May 25, 2017. <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1735314491?accountid=12085>.

⁶¹ Rom. 5: 8.

⁶² Rodger Bufford, et. al., “Preliminary Analyses of Three Measures of Grace: Can they be Unified?”.

⁶³ Jill. D. Spradlin, “Shame, grace, and spirituality: A comparison of Measures” (PhD diss. George Fox University, 2001), Accessed May 25, 2017, http://www.worldcat.org/title/shame-grace-and-spirituality-a-comparison-of-measures/oclc/53881677&referer=brief_results.

internalized shame and who have had negative life and spiritual experiences are not as able to give or receive grace. Even though a person is saved, their shame and perfectionism can hinder meaningful connection to God and others.⁶⁴

To foster such a meaningful connection with God, it is important for Christians to acknowledge and even explore their darker, shameful parts. Robert Dykstra affirms this stance when in his work on shame and suffering he says that people can only truly find Jesus when they are willing to embrace their own shame and sorrows. When they enter the dark parts of the self with Him, they will see “a Jesus who matters, a Jesus of brother and mentor, of neighbor and friend”.⁶⁵ The acknowledgment of human woundedness seen through the lens of the woundedness of Jesus is the pathway to knowing God in His fullness.⁶⁶

Another important way to experience a deeper connection with God is contemplative prayer and worship. Sonia Waters has observed that when Christians engage in communal prayer, they are more open to acknowledge their sadness and suffering, which results in a stance of vulnerability and surrender to God. These people can experience healing from God through the care of their prayer community.⁶⁷ Clark Olson-Smith states that engaging in this practice helps people draw nearer to God, and to discern His voice over the distracting voices of the self and the world.⁶⁸ Prayer can also help Christians surrender their circumstances to God’s will

⁶⁴ Rodger Bufford, Blackburn, et. al.

⁶⁵ Robert Dykstra, “Meet the Terrible Resistance: Childhood Suffering and the Christian Body”. *Pastoral Psychology* 65 (October 2016): 657-668. Accessed May 25, 2017. <http://dx.doi.10.1007/s11089-016-0705-5>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Sonia Waters, "I Surrender all: Subverting the Cruelty of Capitalist Optimism with Affective Expressions of Worship". *Pastoral Psychology* 63, no. 5-6 (December 2014): 749-761. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1566749444?accountid=12085>.

⁶⁸ Clark Olson-Smith, "Becoming contemplative worshipers: attending to our communal heart". *Currents in Theology and Mission* 38, no. 4 (August 2011): 272-283. Accessed May 25, 2017.

during times of stress.⁶⁹ The research of Ana Wong-McDonald and Richard Gorsuch showed that through prayer, in times of stress, people who had a high commitment to God could accept and unconditionally surrender to His will regardless of their circumstances. The opposite was found in people with a low commitment to God. This group resorted to superficial, self-serving prayers and religious coping strategies during times of stress and disappointment.⁷⁰

Vulnerability, the acknowledgement of shame, and surrender to the will of God appear to be the antidote for overcoming feelings of shame and for reaching the fullness of their salvation and having a deeper, more satisfying relationship with God and others. The literature reveals that when people acknowledge their true, wounded selves and submit it all to God and safe others, the healing of the soul can begin. How, then, can that be accomplished?

Sanctification

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines sanctification in the way that most Christians would: “growing in divine grace as a result of Christian commitment after Baptism or conversion”.⁷¹ Scripture teaches that Christians should avoid being conformed to the world, but rather seek to be transformed by the renewing of their minds.⁷² The Bible also teaches that

http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=ITOF&sw=w&u=vic_liberty&v=2.1&id=GALE%7CA264678906&it=r&asid=5e7ff2d8f70f11f20bd1f9970c8b7b15.

⁶⁹ T. Frederick and K. M. White, Mindfulness, Christian Devotion Meditation, Surrender, and Worry. *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 18, no. 10 (November 2011): 850-858. Accessed May 25, 2017. <https://dx.doi.10.1080/13674676.2015.1107892>.

⁷⁰ Ana Wong-McDonald and Richard Gorsuch. "Surrender to God: An Additional Coping Style?". *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 28, no. 2 (Summer, 2000): 149-161. <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/223676354?accountid=12085>.

⁷¹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, Accessed 8/25.2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sanctification>.

⁷² Rom. 12:2.

Christians will be sanctified by the washing of the water of the word,⁷³ and that they are being transformed into the Lord's image.⁷⁴ The wording in the scriptures suggests that Christians will certainly struggle with the process of their sanctification. This shows that centuries ago, in an ancient culture, God knew He would need to prepare Christians for the difficult task of intentionally conditioning their behavior and thoughts in the process of their sanctification. He knew that this would be the only way they would be able to reject the ways of the world and embrace His process of transformation.

In my many years of study in the disciplines of psychology and professional counseling, I found it interesting to note that the secular world of behavioral science has unwittingly championed God's wisdom for personal transformation. I am referring to "Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)" which teaches that thoughts have a strong influence on emotions and behavior, and behavior has a strong effect on thought patterns and emotions.⁷⁵ Therefore, if people wish to transform the way they think and feel, they need to pay attention to how their thoughts dictate their behavior and emotions. In this way, they can effectively change their thoughts, behavior and emotions. This is especially true in the transformational process of Christian sanctification.

However, there is a major obstacle to enacting this type of scriptural and cognitive transformational thinking. Humans tend to have a negative bias when it comes to thought processes. In their research on the topic, Lakey and Tanner found that some types of negative thoughts, such as worry and dysfunctional attitudes, are driven by innate character traits. They also found that the 'automatic negative thoughts' found in the science of CBT are activated

⁷³ Eph. 5:26.

⁷⁴ 2 Cor. 3:18.

⁷⁵ Jesse H. Wright, Monica R. Basco, and Michael E. Thase, *Learning Cognitive Behavior Therapy: An Illustrated Guide* (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2006), 1.

equally by character traits and social influence.⁷⁶ In their study, Zheng, Plomin and von Stumm discovered that both positive and negative affect fluctuate over time; and that negative affect is largely inherited, while positive affect is most heavily influenced by the environment of a person.⁷⁷

So, negative bias in people is shown to be innate, although it can also be affected by a person's environment; and positive affect is learned largely via the environment alone. This research supports why it is so difficult for people, including Christians, to transform their thoughts and behavior. A propensity toward negative thinking most likely accounts for why Christians seem to linger at the sin and shame of the cross (negative affect; naturally occurring), instead of embracing the great reward of their salvation (positive affect; needs to be learned). The Christian must learn how to overcome the inborn negative bias, and recondition their mind and spirit to embody the truth. This can be done using CBT methods coupled with a strong biblical foundation.⁷⁸ It should be emphasized that this is a transformational process and should not be confused with a falsely positive expectation that life will be only joyful feelings and freedom from trouble. Rather, it is an intentional, positive hope that permeates even the most difficult circumstances.⁷⁹

CBT coupled with a foundation of scripture is a powerful tool for the Christian. It gives specific instruction for overcoming persistent negative thought processes and teaches how to

⁷⁶ Brian Lakey and Shawna M. Tanner. "Social Influences in Thinking and Affect". *Cognitive Therapy Res.* 37 (2013): 160-172. Accessed August 9, 2017. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10608-012-9444-9>.

⁷⁷ Yao Zheng, Robert Plomin, and Sophie von Stumm. "Heritability of Positive and Negative Affect: Genetic Analysis of Daily Affect Ratings over a Month". *Psychological Science* 27 (December, 2016): 1611-1619. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0956797616669994>.

⁷⁸ Neil Pembroke.

⁷⁹ Larry Crabb, chap. 12.

replace them with a more realistic, positive frame of mind. In his research, Pembroke discusses the typical thought distortions of CBT, which perpetuate the negative mindset. These include ‘all or nothing’ thinking, discounting the positive, letting emotions guide thoughts/behavior, negative labeling of self/others, magnifying the bad/minimizing the good, and ‘should’, ‘ought’ or ‘must’ statements, to name a few.⁸⁰ I regularly see these thought distortions in the automatic negative thoughts of my counseling clients. These thoughts form and perpetuate a set of core beliefs regarding self, others and the world. which can lead to the “Shame Based Perfectionism” addressed earlier in this chapter.⁸¹

Overcoming shame based perfectionism and other types of thought distortions happens only through a reconditioning process. The goal of CBT is to change thoughts, thereby changing feelings and behaviors. This corresponds with the process of transformation spoken of in scripture.⁸² In Christians, the process of change would go beyond the generalized reframing of thoughts based in emotion, to arrive at a logical, more accurate thought process. The Christian reframe would need to involve reconditioning thoughts and feelings to transcend the guilt and shame of their pre-Christian state. Then they can rise to the relational freedom in their new standing as a saint. Pembroke emphasizes that the Christian is not to seek perfection in their transformation, but rather wholeness in relationship with God, self and the people in their lives. The idea is to grow in the ability to reflect God’s impartial, universal love.⁸³

This reframing is accomplished through the process of identifying automatic negative thought processes. A person often thinks self-destructive thoughts (I’m so stupid, I never do

⁸⁰ Neil Pembroke.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:26; 2 Cor. 3:18.

⁸³ Neil Pembroke.

anything right, I'm just a sinner and will never meet God's standards, I'll never be good enough, I'm a horrible person, etc...). These thoughts usually develop in childhood and so it will be necessary to determine (if possible) from whence they came (a parent, other caregiver, sibling, teacher, etc...). Once the source is discovered, then it becomes a process of undoing the errant, irrational thought processes through the CBT process of reframing the core beliefs that drive the thoughts/behaviors.

Through the power and comfort of the Holy Spirit (and professional help if indicated), the Christian can undertake a careful examination of the content of their thoughts to identify the irrational, negative and potentially shameful things they are telling themselves. After looking at the content of their thoughts and examining the evidence against the validity of negative and/or shaming thoughts, the person will need to construct arguments against those thoughts. Christians have an advantage in this process because they can access more realistic and truthful arguments through scripture. As they refute the negative and embrace the truth according to both scriptural and common-sense evidence, the result will be the eventual transformation of their thoughts and behaviors.⁸⁴

The most fascinating part of this scriptural/CBT process is that it not only transforms thoughts and behaviors, it actually transforms the structure of the brain! Dr. Caroline Leaf has studied extensively the impact of thoughts on the physical structure of the brain. Her research and that of many other scientists shows how brain cells form neuronal networks in response to a person's thought processes.⁸⁵ For better or for worse, these neuronal networks become embedded

⁸⁴ Neil Pembroke

⁸⁵ Leaf, Caroline PhD. *Who Switched off my Brain: Controlling Toxic Thoughts and Emotions*. (Southlake, TX: Improv, Ltd, 2009), 70-71; Amen, Daniel G. MD. *Change your Brain, Change your Life: The Breakthrough Program for Conquering Anxiety, Depression, Obsessiveness, Lack of Focus, Anger and Memory Problems* (New York: Harmony Books, 2015), chap.1; Gerald May, *Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addictions* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), chap. 4; Joe Dispenza, *Evolve your Brain: The Science of*

in the brain and are the basis from which habitual thoughts are formed.⁸⁶ This is why it is so difficult for people to change their thoughts; a habitual thought is a literal structure in the brain that needs to be undone and restructured, and then continually attended to so it does not revert back to its former negative state.⁸⁷

Enacting these concepts of transformation involves uncovering and embracing the shameful parts of the self, which as discussed above can be quite difficult for the Christian. As the Christian encounters and overcomes their hidden shame, they advance to new ways of thinking and behaving. Those changes then become embedded in the structure of their brain. As these changes progress, the Christian can grow nearer to God, embrace His unconditional love, and more accurately reflect that love to the people they encounter. This is the embodiment of sanctification.

In 2 Corinthians Paul gives instruction on what is needed to transform the mind of the Christian. The Message bible paraphrase is stunning: “We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ”.⁸⁸ This is the idea that I want to stress in my lecture recital: People have misconceptions about sin and salvation. They have a bias toward the negative, which causes internalized, shameful feelings. These feelings diminish the gift of salvation and hinder the Christian’s relationship with God and

Changing your Mind (Deerfield Beach: FL. Health communications, 2007), chap. 3; Norman Doige, *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* (New York: Penguin Group, 2007), chap. 3; ⁸⁵ Joseph Le Doux, *Synaptic Self: How our Brains Become Who we are* (New York: Penguin Group, 2002), chap.4.

⁸⁶ Leaf, Caroline PhD. *Who Switched off my Brain: Controlling Toxic Thoughts and Emotions*, 70-71.

⁸⁷ Gerald May, *Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addictions*, 153-154.

⁸⁸ 2 Cor. 10:5, MSG.

others. However, transformation is entirely possible because it is part of God's plan for His people!

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The Character of the Lyric: God's Nature and the Efficacy of the Cross

My goal in the process of researching and choosing the music for this lecture recital is to help Christians to overcome the misunderstandings, fears and shameful feelings that might keep them from a deeper, more authentic connection with God. The words in the songs and lecture are a critical part of the process. They need to accurately affirm Christian doctrine regarding the character of God, the result of sin, Christ's finished work on the cross and the meaning of salvation. The words sung and spoken will also need to acknowledge the Christian's fallen past, but the primarily focus should be on their new identity in the risen Christ.

My hope would be to help Christians see a path from the shame based behavioral patterns of their past to real freedom in Christ; freedom that can only come as they surrender to God and fully engage His plan of salvation. Finally, the music and message should culminate with an affirmation of God's great love for all of humanity, and His sufficiency to meet all the needs of each person as they surrender to His will.

The music will need to be descriptive of the nature of God as set forth in scripture. For instance, it would address his overarching traits of omnipotence,⁸⁹ omnipresence,⁹⁰ and omniscience,⁹¹ as well as His love⁹² and mercy.⁹³

Music that highlights the true nature of what Christ accomplished on the cross will also be an important component. It will be essential to choose songs that stress the new life in

⁸⁹ Gen. 19:29; Job 42:2.

⁹⁰ Jer. 23:23-24; Ps. 139: 7-12; Prov. 15:3.

⁹¹ Job 37: 16; Ps. 147:5; John 3:20; Rom. 11:33.

⁹² John 1:4.

⁹³ Deut. 4:31; Ps. 103:8; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:4.

Christ,⁹⁴ and God's vast, unconditional love.⁹⁵ Since sin continues to be a part of the Christian's life in the world even after they are saved, the music chosen should include reference to this topic. However, a strong emphasis on sin and judgment should be avoided because the primary focus of salvation should be freedom from the condemnation that characterizes the state of the unsaved.⁹⁶ This is particularly important because it may help enlighten the Christian to the fact that although salvation is a one-time event,⁹⁷ it is also a continuing process of sanctification by the power and presence of God in the person's life.⁹⁸ This is a transformational process where the Christian would be intentional in learning and internalizing a new way of thinking and being.⁹⁹ Songs that describe the nature of God in Christ and the salvation experience could be used to highlight what Christians profess to believe, yet sometimes fail to enact in their daily lives.

Vulnerability and Surrender

Another aspect of the Christian life that the music would need to highlight is the necessity of believers to become humble and vulnerable so they might draw nearer to God.¹⁰⁰ This call for surrender to God's will, no matter the earthly consequences, is another very significant section of the musical literature. It should show the angst and confusion of the

⁹⁴ Rom 7: 4-6.

⁹⁵ Rom. 8:39.

⁹⁶ Rom. 8: 1-2.

⁹⁷ Heb. 9:28.

⁹⁸ Phil. 2:12-13.

⁹⁹ Romans 12:2.

¹⁰⁰ Matthew 5: 3, 5; 18: 4; Romans 12:16; James 4: 6, 10

Christian when their expectations for life fail to materialize, and how they can finally come to a place of peace and contentment in God regardless of their circumstances.¹⁰¹ Also, it will be important to emphasize the Christian's need for complete dependence upon God as they submit to His will for their lives.¹⁰² The desire to be teachable and to remain vulnerable and connected to God are the essence of this section.

Trust and Transformation

The need to abandon temporal satisfaction in favor of leaning into God for strength to live as He directs should drive the final segment of the recital. The music should again concentrate on the character of God: His power and sufficiency to follow through on His promises, and His loving kindness as He brings people along in the process of sanctification. This should expand the message of first set of songs where the focus was on God's character and Christ's work on the cross. The songs will need to convey a deeper understanding of God's never ending, unconditional love for humanity; a love that transcends sinful behavior, fear and feelings of shame. Through their relationship with Christ, the Christian can live in freedom from the felt need to behave perfectly. Jesus is the only perfect One to have lived in the flesh. He has done the hard work of redemption for the sole purpose of drawing people close to the Father. People *cannot be perfect* in their human flesh, but *they are perfect*, when they are reconciled to God through Christ Jesus.¹⁰³ Once a person receives the gift of salvation they can rest in this knowledge and be free to live the way Romans 12 describes:

¹⁰¹ Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:8; Heb. 13:5.

¹⁰² Is. 30:15; 2 Chr. 34:27; Dan. 10:12.

¹⁰³ Matt. 5:48; John 17:23; Rom. 5:10; 1 Cor. 7:11; 2 Cor. 5:18, 20; Col 1: 19-20

Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it...Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle...Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality. Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath...Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do...Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.¹⁰⁴

In my lecture recital, I want people to understand that closeness to God is essential to leading the Christian life *God's way*. Reconciliation to God is the reason Christ died. Every sin, every good deed, every other *thing* we can think, say or do in this life is secondary to attaining intimacy with God. Life in Christ is an ongoing reconciliation to God and transformation into Christ-likeness made possible by His finished work on the cross. It is God's desire for all people to draw close to him and engage this fantastic transformation, so they can overcome their hidden shame and learn to live and love as Jesus did.

¹⁰⁴ Rom. 12: 9-10; 13-14; 17; 21, MSG.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS: DESCRIPTION OF LECTURE RECITAL

In the methods section, the parameters and scriptural foundations were established for the music needed to help Christians internalize the concept of identifying fears and shameful feelings, and learning to surrender to God and overcome those feelings so they can have a deeper, more authentic connection with Him, and as an extension, to others. This section will review the music selections for the lecture recital and describe their relevance to the given parameters.

Chris Tomlin's "Sing, Sing, Sing"¹⁰⁵ will be played as people gather together in the worship center. I chose this song because it is enjoyable to sing and is up tempo. The joyful lyrics bring a sense of celebration and anticipation for the beginning of the program and are a reminder of the love of Jesus for His people and His guiding presence in their lives. The congregation is making "music with the heavens", and expressing their gratitude for God's presence and that He hears us when we sing. The people "shout their praise" to God as they "lift high the name of Jesus". The first verse clearly states the nature of God and what He has done, and is doing, in the world: "...heaven and earth adore you...kings and kingdoms bow down... You are the One we're living for". The second verse tells of Jesus as "the love that frees us", "the light that leads us" and that He is "like a fire burning" within us. This song is the perfect segue to the theme of God's love and redemption through Jesus the Son, and His passion for humanity to truly see Him and know Him.

¹⁰⁵ Chris Tomlin, et. al. "Sing, Sing, Sing" © 2008 sixsteps Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing). Vamos Publishing (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing). worshiptogether.com songs (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing). Ryan House Music (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.). Accessed August 9, 2017. [https:// www.ccli.com](https://www.ccli.com).

The opening song is followed by a set of two songs that were chosen to describe the nature of God and tell the story of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. "A Mighty Fortress"¹⁰⁶ is a contemporary anthem that communicates the age-old aspects of God's character. It contrasts His holiness, glory and sovereignty (consuming fire, righteous judge) with His lovingkindness, compassion and mercy (jealous for His own, incomprehensible love and mercy). The song further describes Him as being exalted on His throne, with an unshakable kingdom where Christians will reign with Him forever. This view of the Father's unwavering holiness, strength, and justice is an important part of understanding the complementary role of God the Son with his exemplar as the ultimate in love and humility.

In the next piece, I want to convey the story of Jesus and what His sacrifice means to humanity. Because a Christian is already under the covering of the blood of Christ, I chose a song that reminds the worshiper of the sinful state of humanity, but makes a definite contrast as it stresses the gratitude and joy of salvation. It is essential that people be aware of why they need to be saved, but even more so, they need to know what it means to be saved. The power of God needs to be acknowledged and respected, but then balanced with the truth of His unconditional love, and His approachability in Christ.

"How Deep the Father's Love for us"¹⁰⁷ has exactly the right words and sentiment to embody those concepts. This song is musically pensive, with lyrics that show the sorrow of the sin of humanity without characterizing the Christian as being unworthy of God's love and

¹⁰⁶ Christy Nockels and Nathan Nockels. "A Mighty Fortress". © 2009 Christy Nockels Publishing Designee (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing), sixsteps Music (Admin. By CapitolCMG Publishing), worshiptogether.com songs (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) Accessed August 9, 2017. <https://www.ccli.com>.

¹⁰⁷ Stuart Townend, "How Deep the Father's Love". © 1995 Thankyou Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing). Accessed August 9, 2017. <https://www.ccli.com>.

acceptance. It then contrasts the weighty sorrow of sin with the mystery and blessing of deliverance in Christ Jesus. The lyric states that God loves people so much, He changed the ‘wretch’ into his ‘treasure’. Instinctively, I perceived the word ‘wretch’ as negative because it carries the potential of being a shameful message. However, in this song, it is immediately redeemed and transformed by the words ‘His treasure’. The second verse talks about the passion of Christ on the cross and the last phrase says, “His dying breath has brought me life; I know that it is finished”. In the third verse the lyric asks, “why should I gain from His reward? I cannot give an answer; but this I know with all my heart; His wounds have paid my ransom”. Again, the subtle reminder of sinful humanity contrasted with redemption through the power and love of God in Christ. Because of the cross, the Christian can confidently and permanently turn their thoughts from the weight and negativity of fleshly sinfulness, to the humble and joyful realization that they are God’s beloved treasure. He paid it all. It is finished. I want people to understand that we are free to live into God’s great gift of salvation.

The next song set will further highlight the true nature of what Christ accomplished on the cross. “This is Amazing Grace”¹⁰⁸ focuses on God’s power to overcome sin and darkness. It goes on to tell of His awesome, brilliant, earth shaking, grave conquering power, and *His worthiness to save and transform* the lost orphans of the world into His sons and daughters. This is the perfect lyric for the purposes of this project!

“Made New”¹⁰⁹ is also well suited for this program because of how the lyrics describe the way God is calling to people and drawing them into His love. This song speaks of salvation,

¹⁰⁸ Jeremy Riddle, Josh Farro and Phil Wickham. “This is Amazing Grace”. © 2012 Phil Wickham Music (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.), Seems Like Music (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.), Sing My Songs (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.), WB Music Corp. (Admin. by Word Music Group, Inc.), Bethel Music Publishing. Accessed August 9, 2017. <https://www.ccli.com>

¹⁰⁹ Colby Wedgeworth, Josiah James and Lincoln Brewster. “Made New”. 2014 © Integrity Worship Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing (IMI), Integrity's Praise! Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing

restoration, wholeness, and continued transformation as God gives the strength to live the life to which He has called His people. It goes on to say how Jesus is there to hold up the heads of His people and remind them of who they are and that they need not fear anything. This solidifies the fact that although salvation is a one-time event, it is also a continuing process of transformation over the lifetime.

As the program continues, the focus of the music will turn to the need for the Christian to surrender their life to God. I wanted these songs to stress that even when a person cannot see or feel God, He is there. This is especially true when a person is feeling frustrated because God doesn't appear to be present in times of trouble. This section will also address the vulnerability that it takes to question and be real with God, and the act of will it takes to surrender to Him no matter the consequences. The description of the three songs in this set are as follows.

“Thy Will”¹¹⁰ is a pop ballad that tells the story of a person’s shattered hopes in their walk with God. God’s goodness and omniscience are acknowledged and accepted with childlike surrender. The lyric says, “I know you see me, I know you hear me Lord; Your plans are for me, goodness You have in store”. What I hear in the melody and the lyric at that point is “*I hope You see me...I need You to hear me...*”. This is the place of vulnerability where a person’s spirit knows the truth of what God says, yet their human flesh is emotional and doubting because they can’t understand God’s reasoning or see the outcome.

(IMI)), Worldwide Echoes (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing (IMI)), Colby Wedgeworth Music (Admin. by Fair Trade Music Publishing [c/o Essential Music Publishing LLC]). Accessed August 9, 2017. <https://www.ccli.com>.

¹¹⁰ Bernie Herms, Emily Lynn Weisband and Hillary Scott. “Thy Will”. © nd. Songs of Universal, Inc. (Admin. by Universal Music Corp.), W. B. M. Music (Admin. by Word Music Group, Inc.), Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp. (Admin. by Word Music Group, Inc.), WB Music Corp. (Admin. by Word Music Group, Inc.). Accessed August 9, 2017, <https://www.ccli.com>.

“I will lift my Eyes”¹¹¹ was popular in 2006 and is a great follow-up to the defeat that some might feel in surrendering to God’s will. This song lifts the person’s head out of despair and into the realization of God’s love, kindness and power to heal. The writer refers to himself as God’s “beloved” and cries out to God as the lover who saves him. This is exactly what I want Christians to internalize regarding their standing with God in Christ. His people are His beloved and He has delivered them from eternal separation from Himself. He is ready and willing to help when they cry out to Him, no matter the circumstances and no matter the sinful behavior in which they have engaged.

The last song in this set is “Lord I Need You”,¹¹² a contemporary arrangement that includes a section of the old Hymn in the chorus. This is a song that epitomizes surrender in a way that when sung, feels as if a person is face down before the Lord. All of the lyrics are very appropriate to end this section of the program; particularly those in the bridge: “So teach my song to rise to You, when temptation comes my way...”. Intentionality is essential to the process of transformation that characterizes salvation. The above lyric is a great example of exactly what that means; people must be vulnerable and teachable (surrendered) to God, so that when they are tried and tempted, they will know and remember to reach out for help from their great and all-powerful God. People often struggle with the act of surrender because it seems unnatural and gives the feeling of powerlessness. However, God’s deepest desire is for all people to draw close

¹¹¹ Bebo Norman and Jason Ingram. “I will Lift my Eyes”. © 2006 Appstreet Music (Admin. by Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc.), New Spring (Admin. by Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc.) Peertunes, Ltd. (Admin. by Peermusic III, Ltd.), Windsor Way Music (Admin. by Peermusic III, Ltd.). Accessed August 9, 2017. <https://ccli.com>.

¹¹² Christy Nockels, et.al. “Lord I Need You”. © 2011 sixsteps Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing), Sweater Weather Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing), Thankyou Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing), Valley Of Songs Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing), worshiptogether.com songs (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing). <https://www.ccli.com>.

to Him; it is the very reason for the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. If people will allow Him to, He stands ready and completely able to help whenever they cry out.

At this point, the congregation may be feeling the pain and angst of learning to surrender and let God take control of their lives. They will need to hear more about God's character, and I want to remind them of his power and sufficiency to do all that He has said He will do. Also, it will be important to balance the reality of His power with truth of His tenderness toward His beloved in their ongoing process of transformation.

The music in this set was chosen to bring more detail than in the beginning of the program. "Your Great Name"¹¹³ and "What a Beautiful Name"¹¹⁴ will come together in a medley that speaks of the God who delivers people from shame, fear, and from the enemy of their souls. 'Your Great Name' speaks of the weak finding their strength, and hungry souls receiving grace. It has a solid theme of redemption and healing in the worthiness and power of His name. 'What a Beautiful Name' is a statement of his strong and powerful character mingled with His beauty love, mercy and grace.

The final song of the recital is a contemporary arrangement of "The Love of God"¹¹⁵. The lyrics to this song are old fashioned, and give a poignant description of the depth of God's love for His people. For example: "The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen could ever tell. It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest Hell... The love of God how rich and pure,

¹¹³ Krissy Nordhoff and Michael Neale. "Your Great Name". © 2008 Integrity's Praise! Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing (IMI)), TwoNords Music (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.). Accessed August 9, 2017. <https://www.ccli.com>.

¹¹⁴ Ben Fielding and Brooke Ligertwood. "What a Beautiful Name". © 2016 Hillsong Music Publishing (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing). Accessed August 9, 2017. <https://www.ccli.com>.

¹¹⁵ Bart Millard, et.al. "The Love of God". © Words: Public Domain Music: 2002 Wordspring Music, LLC (a div. of Word Music Group, Inc.), Simpleville Music (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.), Songs From The Indigo Room (Admin. by Word Music Group, Inc.). Accessed August 9, 2017. <https://www.ccli.com>.

how measureless and strong. It shall forever more endure the saints and angel's song". This seemed like the perfect statement of truth with which to end the program.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Review of the Research

My goal for this project was to understand why Christians experience shame, and how they can overcome it so they can have a deeper connection with God and with people. My motivation to write about this topic was the countless times I have witnessed the judgmental, critical and unloving attitudes that Christians have toward others and even themselves. Another impetus was my exposure to the pain of those who have experienced those attitudes through my work as a professional counselor. To begin the process of discovery, I considered the nature of the behavior and attitudes I was witnessing and experiencing. These were clearly sinful, and as a counselor, I knew that where sin is found, shame is likely to be present.

Since sin and shame are so closely connected, I began by investigating those concepts. The discovery process led to the garden of Eden and the first sin of humankind. When the man and the woman sinned, it led to feelings of fear and shame, and ultimately their separation from God. Even though God's intention for His creation was a loving, close connection to Him, He knew sin would interrupt that connection. So, God provided a way to reconnect with His people through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This example of God's love, mercy and grace for humanity was for the sole purpose of reconnecting sinful people with their God. While this doctrine is one that Christians agree with as truth, they continue to behave in ways that are sinful, harmful and destructive to themselves and others.

Sin is typically thought of in terms of bad behavior, but the research suggests that the behavior of sin is merely a tragic manifestation of the actual problem, which is separation from God. Through salvation, God enacts his plan to establish and maintain permanent connection with His people. Considering this, it makes sense for Christians to focus more on the

separation/disconnection rather than criticize and judge the sinful behavior of themselves and others. This new focus will help the Christian circumvent shame and learn to recognize their sinful behavior as a prompt to reconnect with God. They can boldly approach the throne of His grace by surrendering their sinful behavior and their will to Jesus.¹¹⁶

Surrender of the will is difficult for all human beings, and Christians are no exception. In fact, it may be even more challenging for Christians because of real and perceived expectations for perfection in their lives. The thought of encountering sin and the resultant shameful feelings creates fear and avoidance. Consequently, many Christians hide their shameful feelings for fear of being rejected by God and/or people.¹¹⁷ The fact is, God cannot heal feelings and attitudes which the Christian denies or keeps hidden. The ultimate result of hidden shame is relational disconnection, both from God and people. The process of revealing hidden shame begins with the person learning to bring their shame into the light of God's redeeming love. Only then can they learn to surrender the fear that accompanies hidden shame and step onto the pathway of staying connected to God and knowing Him more fully.¹¹⁸ The person must also engage the help of a trusted counselor or mature Christian friend. This is a great risk because they are opening themselves to potential judgment and criticism. However, this kind of vulnerability is the only way to actualize the kind of emotional intimacy that can break through the shame and restore relational connection with God and people.

Prayer and worship are forms of surrender and are a good place to begin in overcoming fear and shame, and forming a deeper connection with God and His people. When Christians

¹¹⁶ Heb. 4: 14-16

¹¹⁷ Larry Crabb, 46-47.

¹¹⁸ Robert Dykstra, "Meet the Terrible Resistance: Childhood Suffering and the Christian Body.

engage in communal prayer, they are more open and vulnerable. They can experience healing from God through the care of their prayer community.¹¹⁹ Engaging in contemplative prayer helps people strengthen their relational connection to God and others.¹²⁰ and prayer can help Christians surrender their circumstances to God's will during times of stress.¹²¹

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) methods are a good adjunct to prayer, worship and other Christian spiritual practices. CBT is practical, and works to reverse the thought distortions that are behind the negative feelings people experience. It can help people change their thoughts, and as a result, change their feelings and behavior. The work is challenging because people are predisposed to negative thoughts and attitudes about themselves and others. However, change is entirely possible when the Christian perseveres in the process and depends on God for help.

When the inevitable failure happens, the person learns from it and keeps engaging the process of change. This is a lifelong process for Christians as they grow and change into the image of Jesus. The beginning of Romans 12 urges the Christian to present themselves for service to God, and to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. It goes on to say that in this way, they will know the perfect will of God for their lives. The balance of the chapter gives instruction on how to serve God and His people. In the literature review, I quoted a Scripture from 1 Corinthians that fits well with the Romans 12 mandate: "We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ".¹²².

¹¹⁹ Sonia Waters, "I Surrender all: Subverting the Cruelty of Capitalist Optimism with Affective Expressions of Worship".

¹²⁰ Clark Olson-Smith, "Becoming contemplative worshipers: attending to our communal heart".

¹²¹ Frederick, T. & White, K.M. "Mindfulness, Christian Devotion Meditation, Surrender, and Worry"; Ana Wong-McDonald and Richard L. Gorsuch. "Surrender to God: An Additional Coping Style?".

¹²² 1 Cor. 10:5 MSG

Christians must fight against an infinite number of warped philosophies, barriers, thoughts, emotions and impulses so they can grow into the Christ-likeness to which their salvation calls them. However, for the purposes of this project, I have named fear and shame as the primary culprits. According to the above scripture, Christians are to fight against those barriers. This is exactly what happens when they surrender to God and experience His process of transformation/sanctification.

In her time-honored work on death and dying, the renowned psychiatrist Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross wrote: “there are only two emotions: Love and fear. All positive emotions come from love, all negative emotions, from fear...we cannot feel these two emotions together... if we're in fear, we are not in a place of love. When we're in a place of love, we cannot be in a place of fear”.¹²³ The Bible expands on her idea from a Christian point of view: “God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us...our standing in the world is identical with Christ’s standing. There is no room in love for fear...a fearful life...is one not yet fully formed in love”. A traditional version says it like this: “...Perfect love casts out all fear” (NKJV).¹²⁴ I would add that when the fear is gone, shame leaves with it. Through the power of the Love of God in Christ, people can truly be set free from fear and shame.

The worship leader is called to help God’s people develop and maintain a deeper, more authentic connection with God through worship; the kind of worship that motivates the Christian to love and serve both God and His people. Worship leaders shepherd God’s people as they unearth and overcome their fears and shameful feelings so they can be transformed into the

¹²³ Good Reads. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross quotes. Accessed October 5, 2017. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/700111-there-are-only-two-emotions-love-and-fear-all-positive>.

¹²⁴ 1 John 4: 17-18, MSG; NKJV.

likeness of Jesus. As the people grow and change, they can enact the Romans 12 directive more effectively out of love for God and a heart for His people. Their stronger connection to God and gratitude for their salvation is a driving force as they serve their churches and communities.

As the worship leader speaks the truth of the Christian's identity in Christ Jesus, they facilitate transformation in both the individual and in the body of Christ as a whole. Part of Christian leadership, in general, is to exemplify and teach the people how to stand firm in the knowledge of their salvation, through the love of God the Father and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The music, liturgy and the spoken word used in worship services should be carefully chosen to focus on the Christian's freedom in Christ, God's character, His unfailing love, and the process of transformation. Christians need to understand and internalize the fact that their sin, all of it, has been forgiven. There is no more need for self-protection and hiding in shame because there is absolutely nothing they can say or do that would cause God stop loving them. The worship leader's courage and conviction to live in vulnerability and surrender to God and to His people will be an inspiration and encouragement to the body of Christ to engage the process of transformation that leads to a closer, more authentic connection to God and His people.

Potential Limitations of the Research

A possible limitation of implementing and understanding the research herein would be the potential for people to misunderstand the concept of taking the focus off the behavior of sin and placing it on ultimate result of the sin (separation from God and people). If taken out of context, this could be misperceived as a license to sin freely. Likewise, Christians may fear that they will forget themselves and backslide if they relax into the freedom afforded by their salvation. Finally, it will take a great deal of teaching and repetition before people will really

begin to grasp the subtle nuance of the way this research characterizes the meaning of sin. It will also be challenging for Christians to acknowledge the presence of shame in their lives and to embrace the level of vulnerability needed for healing to begin. Also, the freedom to fully express both the joy and pain of their salvation may be difficult to embrace, as may the reality of worship and transformation as Romans 12 has directed.

Recommendations for Further Study

The information discovered in this research project has the potential to strengthen the most basic of the foundational doctrines of the Christian church. The ideas expressed through this research serve to reduce those doctrines to this: Allowing God's love to connect people to Him so they can live their lives fully without shame; living in Him, for Him and for His people. For future research, I would like to see how these simple truths apply to some of the non-essential doctrines of the various denominations. For instance, the necessity of complete immersion for baptism, the ordination of women for pastoral ministry and other church leadership positions, or speaking in tongues as evidence of the Christian's 'full' apprehension of the Holy Spirit. It would be interesting to see how relevant the non-essentials are to Christianity when considering the simplicity of the unadulterated gospel message.

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Appendix A

(The Layout of the program is a letter sized page folded in half)

Front Page:



***Worship Recital and Lecture
by Colleen Worrell***

October 25, 2017 at 7:00 pm
Gateway Church, The Dalles, Oregon

*Welcome to Gateway, and thank you so much for joining me for
my worship recital this evening. I pray that you will be as enriched by listening and participating
as I have been in its creation and presentation.*

Middle Sections:

The Thesis Topic:

Overcoming Hidden Shame to More Effectively

Connect with God and His People

Gathering Song: *Sing, Sing, Sing*

(Chris Tomlin, Daniel Carson, Jesse Reeves, Matt Gilder, Travis Nunn)

Call to Worship (Responsive)/Opening Prayer

Opening Remarks

Section One: *The Basis for our Christian Faith:*

The Character of God and the Work of Christ on the Cross

A Mighty Fortress

(Christy Nockels, Nathan Nockels)

How Deep the Father's Love for Us

(Stuart Townend)

Section Two: *Taking a closer look at Sin, Shame and Salvation*

This is Amazing Grace

(Jeremy Riddle, Josh Farro, Phil Wickham)

Made New

(Colby Wedgeworth, Josiah James, Lincoln Brewster)

Section Three: *Surrender as an essential component of close relationship with God and His people*

Corporate Prayer of Confession

Thy Will

(Bernie Herms, Emily Lynn Weisband, Hillary Scott)

I will Lift my Eyes

(Bebo Norman, Jason Ingram)

Lord, I Need You

(Christy Nockels, Daniel Carson, Jesse Reeves, Kristian Stanfill, Matt Maher; excerpts of original hymn lyric and tune by Robert Lowry, 1826-1899)

Section Four: *God's Sufficiency to Meet the Growth Needs of His Surrendered Children Through Christ Jesus*

Medley: *Your Great Name* (Krissy Nordhoff | Michael Neale)

What a Beautiful Name (Ben Fielding, Brooke Ligertwood)

Closing Song: *The Love of God*

(Arr. by Bart Millard, Frederick Martin Lehman, Jim Bryson, Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai, Mike Scheuchzer, Nathan Cochran, Pete Kipley, Robby Shaffer;

Original hymn lyric and tune by Frederick Martin Lehmen, 1868-1953)

Back Page:

Acknowledgements

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Professor of Music and Worship

Dr. Mark Greenawalt
Chair, Department of Applied Music
Associate Professor of Voice

Dr. Rodney Whaley
Assistant Professor of Worship Studies

Gateway Church and the Gateway Church Praise Band

Piano: Mark Kendrick

Background vocals: Mark Kendrick and Melody Meier-Hudson

Rhythm Guitar: Merrie Akita

Bass Guitar: Jake Keizur

Drums: Rick Cowart

Sound: Verbatim Productions, The Dalles, Or.

Videography: Immense Imagery, The Dalles, Or.

Program: Thompson Graphics and Design, The Dalles, Or.

This presentation is given in partial fulfilment for the degree
Master of Music and Worship at Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia