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Presentation Transcript
Shame #20070830
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The title of today's presentation is *Shame*. It's one in a series we're doing on mental health issues as pertaining to the Scriptures.

Good afternoon everybody. Nice to see all of you. In the recent past we've been talking about various aspects of mental health and how they relate to the Bible. The idea there is to help people become more mentally healthy and realize that you can't be *spiritually* healthy unless you're mentally healthy as well. You can't raise spiritually healthy children unless you're spiritually healthy yourself. So all this ties back to the purpose of LifeResource Ministries, which is taking care of our kids.

Mark Twain said that man is the only animal that blushes – or needs to. And that kind of connects to shame, which is the topic we're talking about today.

What is shame? Well, the encyclopedia says that it is a family of feelings that include humiliation, embarrassment, low self-esteem, belittlement and stigmatiation. I guess that would probably a good working description – or I'm sorry, definition – for shame.

How does shame differ from guilt? I want to try to get specific here, so that it isn't just a marshmallowy term, you know, that we confuse with guilt or embarrassment. Guilt comes when we do something that we think is wrong – like a sin. Something like that. And we say to ourselves, "You did something wrong." Shame comes when we see *ourselves* as bad. "*I'm* wrong." Guilt can *cause* shame. You can certainly feel bad when you do something wrong, but there's a distinction there.

Now how does shame differ from embarrassment? When we're embarrassed, it's because something we've done that is wrong or foolish comes to light. So, you know, it's quite possible to feel guilty about something we've done without anybody else knowing about it, right? But we only get embarrassed when other people find out. We also become ashamed at that point. So embarrassment can cause shame as well.

Shame doesn't only have to do with doing wrong. It can have to do with feeling inadequate, or ignorant or other things like that.

When I was fourteen, I was sitting in a math class waiting for it to start one day, and I was with two guys who were both really popular and really good athletes – both of which things I desperately craved at that time in my young life. I remember it was Monday morning, and one of them said to nobody in particular, “Did you see the Pro-Bowl yesterday?” I was preoccupied at that moment. I remember I was crafting a massive paper missile to shoot in my heavy-duty rubber band that I had. (We had an extremely boring math teacher and the air became thick with things flying back and forth in the back of the room.) And I was crafting this massive, heavy, tightly folded paper thing, and without really thinking about what I was saying, I said, “I don't follow bowling much.” You can imagine the reaction of my friends. They just came unglued. They were falling out of their chairs laughing at me. And I remember getting *really* embarrassed. I tried to lie my way out of it, but it wasn't believed, and I felt pretty small. That's shame. That's what shame is. I hadn't really done anything wrong. I tried to lie my way out of it. That was wrong. And I somehow didn't feel guilty at all about that, but I certainly felt very ashamed for not being able to tell bowling from the Pro-Bowl. I mean, what can you do when you're fourteen? Nobody does fourteen well, do they?

Another thing I want to mention just a little bit is, that shame is a social motivator for most of us. And in a lot of cultures, that's the primary social motivator. We said that guilt can be good because it's like a warning system that tells us when we're doing something wrong – if our conscience is educated properly. The same kind of thing can be said of shame.

Martha Stewart was put in a penthouse jail, but it was still *jail*, wasn't it? And it was shameful. Even when you're put in a penthouse jail, you still have a felony arrest record and all that. It's shaming, right? That's what shame is.

Let's take a look at shame in the Bible. Let's go to Genesis 2:25. This is the first place it's mentioned. And it says:

Gen. 2:25 – *Adam and Eve were both naked – the man and his wife – and they were not ashamed.* They weren't doing anything wrong. They didn't know that they were supposed to wear clothes yet. Maybe they *weren't* supposed to wear clothes – it was just the two of them. So, who cares? Right?

Anyway, then in Genesis 3:10, after they ate of the fruit of the tree, Adam, when God came looking for him said:

Gen. 3:10 – *I heard your voice in the Garden and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself.* Of course, he left out the part about eating from the fruit. That may have been the reason he was the most ashamed. But at any rate, he was ashamed and he hid himself.

One of the things that we see about people in counseling when they're ashamed is, they tend to look away or hide their faces – you know, like Adam did there when he hid. We just want to get small and out of sight, because we feel like people are looking at all of our faults.

So, in the Bible, shame can be caused by guilt, but, as in our modern day definition, that's not true in every case. Let's go to Psalm 25, verses 2 and 3.

Psa. 25:2-3 – *Oh, my God, I trust in you. Let me not be ashamed. Let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yes, let none that wait on You be ashamed. Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.*

So, to be defeated by enemies is humiliating and consequently shameful. But there doesn't necessarily have to be any sin involved there, right? It may not have anything to do with sins that have been committed.

Let's look in Proverbs 19:26.

Prov. 19:26 – *He that wasteth his father – I'm in the King James now – and chases away his mother is the son that causes shame and brings reproach.*

I know of a young girl who chased away her mother and wasted her father by disobeying them, and she got into a whole lot of trouble as a result of it. And her parents said that they felt like they were failures as parents. In other words, they were ashamed by what had happened. To her credit, she rightly said, "What I did doesn't mean that you were terrible parents. It just means that I made stupid choices." So she was ashamed. And that was her way of telling them that she felt ashamed and didn't think that they ought to feel that way. But somehow, parents always do feel that way when our children do the things that we told them not to do. It feels like we failed.

Here's another example of shame without sin in Matthew 1, verse 18.

Mt. 1:18 – *This is how the birth of Jesus came about. His mother, Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. But because Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man, and did not want to expose her to public disgrace – and it's translated *shame* in other translations – he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

See, Mary didn't do anything wrong. And he thought that she had – even though she kept telling this story that she hadn't had sex with anybody, and an angel had come to tell her..you know, that is a pretty far out story, isn't it? So, right after this, the angel clued him in, too, by the way. But anyway, he was not wanting to embarrass her. He *thought* she'd done something wrong, but she didn't.

Anybody seen the movie, *Nativity Story*? Did you see that? Ah, one taker in our cinematically challenged congregation. That's a pretty good movie about what life was

like. It was kind of Hollywoodized, and there was a story made up around it, but I think it was probably...it all could have happened. And it was pretty true, I think, to the historical context. Anyway, they were on their way out of town. She was sitting on the donkey, and he was leading it, and they were headed out of town. Of course, all the people in their village know that she's pregnant. And she was pregnant before she was supposed to be. They're headed out of town. All these people are glaring at them. And Joseph says, "Do you think they'll miss us?" Probably the only humorous thing in the entire film, right? He didn't want to shame her.

Hebrews 6:4. Another one.

Heb. 6:4 – *For in the case of those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have been partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.*

Jesus didn't do anything wrong, did He? He never committed a sin. But it was shameful to be crucified because that was a death reserved for criminals. There's another example in the Bible of how you don't necessarily have to commit a sin to experience shame.

Let's talk about how shame can be healthy. We said that it was a social motivator. Shame, also, is like guilt, in that it can be sort of a warning system. But because we're relational creatures, we want to be accepted in our group. So, when we do something that makes us feel small in front of the group, or less than, or incompetent, then we experience shame. Shame, a lot of times, is a stronger motivator than guilt is, actually. And in some cultures, you know, they're all about saving face, which means to avoid public scrutiny. And so shame, maybe, becomes the *prime* social motivator in some cultures. In those cultures, interestingly enough, there's a lot of suicide over things that are socially inappropriate. I think about the Japanese, back in feudal Japan, how there was the Samarai code. And a lot of times, if they didn't act honorably, that was so horrific to them that they had a ritual form of suicide.

I will say, though, that the shame that comes from committing sins – for people that are really committed to God – sometimes that's so strong that it motivates us to refrain from them.

In 1 Corinthians 4, and verse 5, we're told by Paul...he said:

1 Cor. 4:5 – *Therefore, do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness, and disclose the motives of men's hearts. Then each man's praise will come to him from God.* Those of us who believe that that's going to happen.... You know, we sit and think about... oooohhh! There are certain things that I've done in my past I don't want anybody to know about. We've all got our skeletons in the closet. Right? The shame that comes from that kind of guilt can be a powerful motivator for us.

It's not good, you know, to dwell on the past, but it's very helpful to think about the future in that regard, isn't it? And to allow that to help us not to do things that are wrong.

So we could call that healthy shame, couldn't we? The kind of shame that motivates us to live Godly. That's good! But there's another kind of shame, that I would call in my work, *pathological*. That's the kind of shame that a person feels when they haven't done anything to be ashamed of. What kind of shame would that be?

Shame is often experienced, by a lot of the people that I talk to, as the inner critical voice that judges whatever they do as wrong or worthless. You know, people that have that, it's really interesting for me to notice when I get to know people well in that environment, that a lot of times, the things that they say to themselves – you know, the shameful things that they say – are word-for-word repeats of the things their parents said to them. A lot of people have been told that they were naughty, selfish, ugly, stupid, on and on and on.

I think I told you that story about the man that I met in Arkansas, who was sixty-five when he told me this story. He told me one day his father called him a sorry, little rat. And it still brought tears to his eyes fifty-five years later. He was five when that happened.

It isn't just our parents that have done things like that. A lot of times peers at school put pressure on us. A lot of people have been humiliated by teachers, or treated with contempt by peers, or made fun of. Those are things that cause people to carry shame with them. They feel ashamed later in life when there's really nothing for them to be ashamed about.

There are also people who ought to be ashamed that *don't* feel ashamed, but I'm not going to talk about that today, because that's going to come up when we talk about another aspect of mental health in a few weeks.

I think I've also mentioned about one of my clients that came in, and she brought her daughter in. She kept referring to her daughter as an oppositional defiant child. And that's one of the terms they use to describe kids who oppose their parents, who don't feel remorse, don't have any impulse control. So she would sit there and talk to me and refer to this kid that way while her daughter was present. When we label kids with those kinds of labels – I mean, there isn't anything you can do about that as a kid – so it makes them feel sick, and worthless, and wrong, corrupt and flawed. The way we would rather talk about Mary is that she has some problems with her behavior. That's fixable, right? And it's something she can work on – something she's going to have control over when she gets older. And actually, that is the truth about that constellation of behaviors. She can stop doing that anytime she wants to. We don't like to talk about people that way.

Another way that people feel shame pathologically is that a lot of times others expect too much out of us. A lot of us have been criticized as children when our performance was less than perfect – the kid that got grounded because he didn't get a 4.0 average. And when things like that happen constantly, where we can't ever do anything to please our

parents or our teachers, then these criticisms become internalized so that becomes our own critical voice that meting out all these shaming messages – you know, “You idiot,” “Why did you do that?,” “Can’t you do anything right?,” or “You should be ashamed of yourself” – those kind of statements. The people that I work with have unrealistically high expectations of themselves because that’s all they met when they were a child.

Another source of this has to do with the expression of certain feelings. In many families, as well as in many cultures, the expression of such feelings as anger, fear, sadness, vulnerability may be met with shaming reproaches such as “Pull yourself together,” or “Don’t be such a baby,” or “Stop crying or I’ll give you something to cry about,” or “You don’t have anything to be afraid of. Shake it off. Suck it up.”

Another thing that causes inappropriate shame is pride. Kids get shamed a lot for being proud of what they’ve accomplished. “Who do you think you are, Mister Big Shot?” or “You’re getting too big for your britches now.” When I talk to kids, most of the time, when they’re telling me about what they have accomplished, it’s a celebration. It’s not “That makes me better than you.” They’re just enjoying what they can do. Nothing wrong with that. I think about David when he brought the ark back, and how he danced in the street, and got a little carried away, I guess. His skirt, or robe, or whatever it was, flew up. And of course, there was his wife there, too, to shame him for what he had done. A lot of people carry shameful feelings because they were put down for feeling good about what they’ve accomplished when they were little. The way they carry that today is that, when they do something good, they feel ashamed, or they try to control or hide the feelings of exultation that they feel, because they’ve been taught that they shouldn’t feel that way.

I saw somebody apologizing the other day for doing something good. They just couldn’t feel comfortable about receiving a compliment for doing something good. I think that’s where that comes from.

So, all these self-criticisms – “We’re stupid. We’re selfish. We’re a show-off...” One of the things about children is they tend to believe what they’re told. And they believe the things that we tell them about themselves. So that *becomes* them in varying degrees. For some of us, because of a negative upbringing, that inner, critical, judgmental voice is always providing a negative evaluation of what we’re doing moment by moment.

Life is hard enough without us being our own worst enemy. Right? We make plenty of mistakes, for which we can legitimately take ourselves to task, without taking ourselves to task for no good reason. So, how does one overcome inappropriate shame?

I had a little girl in my office recently, who vandalized seven classrooms at school. I was told that she asked for a male therapist when they did the intake, and so I got assigned to the case. I was really curious to find out why she wanted a male therapist. She came in, and the reason her mother brought her in was she expressed no remorse whatsoever when she got caught doing this vandalism. The other little girl that was with her melted down

when the police confronted her about it. And this one didn't shed a tear and acted as though nothing was wrong. I was really interested to see what was going on there.

Well, I found out from her that her father died when she was four months old. Her mother had raised her, and her sister and her brother. Her brother was twelve. Her older sister was seventeen. Both of her grandfathers had been dead for some time. She had one uncle on her mother's side, but he wouldn't really speak to any of them, so she had no older males in her life.

I asked her, "Why did you ask for a man therapist?" She said, "Well, they listen better." So she doesn't really know why she asked for a male therapist, but *I* do. She's a resilient child doing what she has to do to meet the needs that she has. She's going to be entering puberty soon. She's going to begin turning from a little girl into a woman. And girls get permission to be women from their fathers. And if they don't, then they can sometimes be ashamed and insecure about their femininity, and they go out trying to find a way to prove that they're feminine.

When we talk I look into her eyes, smile at her, I approve of her and I refrain from judging her – you know, pouring watercolor all over the keyboards of the computers, and dumping the trash out. They didn't set fire to anything, or break any windows, but they did the kind of things that third grade girls would do for vandalism.

It was also interesting to note that her older brother, who is twelve, has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and he gets a lot of attention from his mother, because he's always in trouble. She mentioned to me one day that he had gotten in trouble vandalizing the school. What works for one will work for another, right? So she's found a way to get the help and attention that she needs. Never had any trouble before. Good grades. No absenteeism. No problems with anybody. Very popular.

I was talking to a sixteen-year-old boy once, who was an underachiever at school – depressed. After checking me out for about six months – you know, he really was circumspect, didn't want to be there, sat with his arms folded a lot, didn't say much.... It's really boring to listen to somebody *talk* about video games. One day he made an off-hand remark in front of the teacher about how everybody would be better off if he were dead, and that's how he wound up referred to our clinic. And then, after all these months of just being present, he made the comment that he never knew his father, and his mother spent more time with her abusive boyfriend than she did with him. And he said, "Why would she rather be with someone who hits her than with me?" Her lack of attending to him sent him the message that he wasn't worth her attention. He was sort of acting out this sense of worthlessness every day by doing poorly at school and withdrawing from things he liked and from people in general. That feeling that he was feeling was a sense of inadequacy or shame. And he was just acting that out every day. That's the message he was sent all his life. His mother didn't really have any time for him and his dad he never knew, so he just figured that she was treating him the way he deserved to be treated.

So how does a person overcome this? Overcome feeling ashamed for things that we don't really need to be ashamed about. Well, I think the first thing is, that when we get older, when we start to move out of teenage toward adulthood, it's possible to think about what's happened to us in our childhood. We can think about the kind of things that we've been told when we were little that cause us to feel bad about ourselves, and to feel like we're incapable of pleasing, or succeeding or accomplishing anything. We can understand that what we needed we didn't get. The lacks that we suffered in our childhood – we can understand about that. We can realize that we need to honor and approve of ourselves in spite of mistakes that we make.

In the book that Elaine used to give her seminar on introverts, the author recommends taking a picture of oneself when we were small, and then asking ourselves, "What does this child need?" If you've been told that you're not worthwhile, either directly or indirectly, all of your life, I think looking at a picture of yourself when you were little is really a good thing to do. It really kind of helps us get in touch with what was going on back then.

So, we can understand where it came from. And we can understand what we needed and didn't get. And we can, also – and this is a big one for Christians, I think – is we can understand how God thinks about us.

The Bible makes references to foolishness being bound in the heart of a child. One way that this is true – that most parents don't think about – is that children will believe that they are worthless when they're not. It's not just kids that are foolish. There are really some foolish parents out there that don't know how to talk to their children. They sit and talk about them in the most derogatory terms with the children present. And then they think they aren't going to get anything out of that? See, kids only know what they're taught. And sometimes they're taught some pretty foolish things about themselves.

I had a young boy in my office. He was probably fifteen. And he came in because the Albuquerque Police Department...it took one of their SWAT guys three hours to talk the pistol out of his hands in his livingroom. So he was in therapy. And he kept telling me that nobody cared about him. And I kept pointing to the fact that his parents kept bringing him to therapy, and his grandmother would bring him, and that they were concerned about him. He kept telling me that the only reason they brought him was because they didn't want any big problems to come up. One day he ran away from home. They found him, and they brought him in, and I asked him how he was feeling, And he said, "Really bad." He said, "I've been thinking about killing myself again." And then I said, "Well, how much have you been thinking about that? On a scale of one to ten, how often?" And he said, "Thirty-five." So we sent him over to Casemen right away. So that was on a Wednesday. On Friday the family therapist, that was working with the family, called me and told me that they hadn't been to see him yet. And they told her that they were going to go out on their vacation over the weekend like they'd planned, because there wasn't anything they could do for him. So that's when I realized he'd been right all that time – that they really *didn't* care that much about him. I found out later that his mother had married a man who made no bones about it – he didn't want anything to do with her kids

after they got married. And the kids begged her not to marry him and she did anyway. So, what kind of message does that send about how much they're worth as human beings? Like I said, parents teach their kids some pretty foolish things.

Let's go to Matthew 5, and verse 43. One of the things that we can *do*, if we've been taught the wrong thing about ourselves as children, is we can start to understand what *God* thinks about us.

Mt. 5:43 – *You have heard that it was said – Jesus said – Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven – that you may be just like God! And what's He like? He causes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. Why does He do that? Why does God take care of everybody? Well, because He loves everybody, because He created everybody, because everybody is worth taking care of, because everybody can become God's son – can be born into God's eternal family and live forever with Him. How much is that worth? Everybody has that potential. And most of them are going to fulfill it. So that means that nobody, really, at base is worthless, doesn't it? So, we, as adults, can decide to begin thinking about ourselves in that way – if we had a bad time of it when we were kids.*

Most of our parents don't really *intend* to do those things to us. They were just raised that way themselves. Most of them just parent the way they were parented. That mother that has the daughter that can never do anything right? She probably was treated that way herself. And the way those chains get broken is, somewhere in that chain is somebody, when they become an adult, said, "I didn't like being treated that way, so I'm not going to treat my daughter that way either. I'm going to be different."

Jesus also told the disciples that it was a terrible thing to treat children disrespectfully, didn't He? He said, "If you offend one of them, you can take a millstone and hang it around your neck." And it wouldn't be too bad a thing to do – might be better than some other things coming your way.

So, it doesn't matter what kind of problems we have, God can see the worth and potential in all of us.

We might have gotten some bogus information, or some false ideas at home, we might have picked it up at school. I run into these little guys that have ADHD. Most of them that are diagnosed with ADHD don't really have it, but some of them do. Even the ones that *don't* have it, they still have the symptoms. And the symptoms are that it is practically impossible to sit still all day and pay attention. So, if you can't do that, what is school like for you? Bad! School is very hard when you can't sit still and pay attention all day long. So those kids get an awful lot of real negative reinforcement at school. They fail a lot. They get criticized a lot. They get disciplined a lot. They get in fights a lot. They are grouchy a lot. And they just can't seem to do what other kids seem to do naturally and easily.

Somebody told me one time that ADHD is like trying to read a book while somebody turns the radio up and down, up and down, and flicks the light up and down, up and down, and yells at you at the same time. *Very* hard to pay attention to things – too much stimulation from the environment.

Most of them turn out to be successful people when they grow up. They find jobs where they don't have to sit still and read all the time, though. But when you're growing up with that, it's really easy to get the message from the school system that you're not a good person. And you feel ashamed of yourself.

It doesn't matter what kind of problems we have. God can see through all that. And He knows our potential. ADHD goes away when we're changed.

One of the little boys that I first began working with in public school had ADHD. He was six. And I didn't have a place to work with him, so I took him to the library. We went in one of the reading rooms and he would draw pictures with crayons. One day he drew this red T-rex with big jagged teeth. It was amazing how he could put so much detail into this picture with a blunt crayon. And then he had a helicopter over here with people in it shooting at this T-rex. The bullet holes that he made in this thing looked *painful!* He was an excellent artist for six years old. After he drew the picture I asked him to explain it to me. And he said, "The T-rex's friends are in the helicopter and they're trying to kill him." So it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that he believes himself to be a monster, and that he can't get along with anybody, and the only solution his friends have is to try to kill him. There you go.

What does God say about kids like that? Well, let's go to Psalms 127, verse 3.

Psa. 127:3 – *Behold, children are a gift of the LORD. The fruit of the womb is a reward.* So the biblical picture of children is that they are to be *cherished* – that they're precious gifts from God. It doesn't matter what kind of wrapper, or what problems they come with. They are precious gifts from God. And it's okay to think of ourselves as exactly that.

When I think about what's important for *me* to know about how God feels about *me*, it's that He sacrificed His Son for *me*. But not just for me, but for everybody – for all the kids with ADHD, all the people that think they can't accomplish anything because they're not as good as other people. That stuff isn't important to God. When we know Christ died for us, then, if we'll let it, it can melt away inappropriate shame from our past.

What else? I think that we can practice thinking realistically. We've been brought up thinking *unrealistically*. So we can practice, as adults, thinking realistically. Certainly, nobody else is going to do it for us, are they? *We* can do that. We can figure things out. And we can change our view of ourselves and other people.

When I was studying attachment theory, I learned something that was *really* interesting. When they study children to see how they've attached to their parents, they find four

categories. One category of *secure* and three categories of *insecure*. And then, when they test adults to find out about their security status, they find *five* categories. They find the three categories of insecure. And they find *two* categories of secure. What they've found is, some people, after they become adults, migrate from insecure to secure – after they leave childhood. They do that by a number of things. One is they learn to tell a coherent story about their past – you know, why didn't we get what we lacked? How did that happen to me? Can we tell a story about it – telling both the good and the bad things that happened to us as a child? Or do we just gloss over the hard parts and say everything was great? Or do we obsess over the negative things and not have a clear picture of the good things that happened? They've discovered that one of the most important steps in overcoming bad treatment as a child, or lacks that we experienced, is to be able to understand *why* those things happened, and then be able to tell a realistic story about them. And the reason that's true is because people that can do that have gone back and made sense out of what's happened to them. They haven't been so afraid of it that they didn't look into it.

So those are some very simple things that we can think about – things that we have to do.

And lastly – there's one last thing I want to talk about here – and that is the aspect of parenting without shaming. How do we bring up children so they have a healthy view of themselves while they still accept responsibility for their mistakes? And at the same time can still see themselves as loved by us and being of worth to God?

It shouldn't even have to be said, but all abuse, all put-downs, all anger and punishment have to go away. These are the things that give children a false perception of themselves. Now I said the word *punishment*. Some of us have never understood the difference between consequences and punishment. When you think about how God deals with us, what we have called punishment, a lot of times, is consequences. Can you punish yourself? Well, you can, but we don't usually do that. We usually just try to get what we want and we go about it the wrong way, and then we *suffer* because of the consequences that come. That's how we need to treat our kids. We need to treat our kids with *respect*.

We also talked about anger. I mentioned before that the way God works with us is to let us learn from our own experience. And we always receive consequences for the things that we do – good or bad. It depends on what we're doing. And this is the kind of parenting that we teach in our clinic. We teach Godly parenting. One of the big benefits of this way is that there's no shaming. And when we do it with our kids, we don't need to be angry to drive the point home.

Have you ever been stopped by a policeman and given a ticket? How do they treat you? One of the things that they do is, they're very polite, aren't they? They call us, "Sir," or "M'am." And they ask for our license and registration, "please." And they smile when they hand us the ticket. Right? They do, don't they? Why are they trained to do that? Because they know that the ticket does the work. The ticket does the work.

Now, what happens – and I’ve never had this happen to me and I don’t know anybody that it’s happened to, but I’ve seen it in movies – where the cop stops the person and is disrespectful, rude and angry? What happens there? After he leaves, the person feels like they’ve been mistreated, like the cop’s a bad guy. They’re going to go complain and they’re going to take it to court. And they completely miss the point – the fact that they were speeding and got a ticket. The disrespect and the anger of the officer short circuits the entire consequence process. And if we, as parents, are always angry when we administer the consequences to our kids, the *very same thing* happens! They get upset with us, because they think that we’re bad, or they internalize that *they’re* bad. And so, either way, it doesn’t do any good. We want the *consequences* to do the work – you know, the *ticket* is what does the work.

If we discipline our kids – we lay a consequence on them – while we’re angry, it takes their mind off the fact for why they’re getting that – that is *is* a consequence. If we dish it out with compassion, and calmness, then they stop and think about why is happening to them and what they can do to avoid it next time. And then they start becoming responsible people.

Why is it so hard to discipline kids without getting angry with them? It’s because kids tend to trigger our kid stuff. If we find that we can’t discipline our children without anger, then it’s time to do some work on ourselves to understand why that’s true. And what we find, if we’re patient and courageous enough to do the work, is that it goes back to our own childhood and how we were treated. That’s what I mean when I say, “Kids trigger our kid stuff.”

I just see this over and over again. Many of the parents that come to us bring their kids in, thinking there’s something wrong with the child. And later they go into therapy because they’ve learned they’re the ones causing the problem with their own unresolved childhood issues.

There was a woman that brought a twelve-year-old girl in awhile back, and she...this girl was small. She was probably about this tall. She tore her bedroom door off the hinges! I don’t know if I could do that. I probably could if I really got with it. But this kid was small. She was light. She also kicked a hole in the drywall in their livingroom while she was having one of her tantrums. I asked her mother why she did that, and she said, “She can’t handle the word *no*. She doesn’t like to hear the word *no* at all.” I asked her some more questions about that, and she told me that both of *her* parents – the mother’s talking now – both of *her* parents were very controlling and punishing. She kind of felt like a robot as a child – you know, very constricted and having to just go and do. So she didn’t want her daughter to feel that way, and she didn’t want to be mean to her, so she just let her do whatever she wanted until she got to be twelve. And then she started doing things that were *dangerous*. So it was too late to start saying “No” then. Right? I explained to her that her daughter needed to hear the word *no* when she was old enough to crawl around and touch stuff that could hurt her, so that she could learn to put on her own brakes. But she didn’t have a brake system in her little brain, because she had never been

forced to develop one. So, her mother, by not providing what she needed, had delayed her daughter's ability to control her own impulses.

And why did she do that again? Because of her own kid stuff – how she was treated as a child. She was reacting against it. “I’m not going to treat my kid that way.” She just created a child that’s going to get in a lot of trouble unless something happens – all with the very best of intentions. This mother’s kid stuff hindered her ability to parent effectively. She also, by the way, grew up angry over how she was treated, so she would explode in anger when her child frustrated her. There’s another example, in the same person, of kid stuff getting in the way. This child didn’t feel worthwhile and was acting it out for all of us to see.

The encyclopedia says that shame is one of the most common emotions that humans feel. And it is helpful when it’s appropriate. And it is devastating when it’s inappropriate. God only wants us to feel shame for the things that we’re responsible for and things that are appropriately shameful. He