



chosen.

An online mindset journey
to walking in your worth

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Module Four

*Chosen out of
chains*

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Module Four – Chosen out of chains

My Story

I've known shame to cling close. I've felt stares when no one's even looking at me. I've *known* stares when people have been.

You see, although I've now been in church ministry for almost 10 years and am married to a pastor, I'm not what one would call a 'cookie cutter Christian' (but then again, who is, right?) I've made mistakes and have been far from God. That's where shame can be the darkest. Away from God. His love, His grace and His tender mercies which, no matter how bad the night before, are new every morning.

Because of His grace alone I no longer experience that kind of shame any more. But let's rewind 12 years... I had just turned 18, and before heading off to university, my sweet, sweet home church prayed for me. They prayed I'd find a church, Christian friends and everything in between. In truth, I could have found those things (and did eventually) but I found everything else first. By everything else, I mean all night parties, drunkenness, men and sex.

Even though I've since found freedom and those chains no longer bind me, I still find it so hard to write about.

At school and college, I was never the 'pretty girl'. I'd been the funny one, the one that was like 'one of the guys'. But I was never the pretty one. University was a whole new crazy world to me. All of a sudden there was a *huge* campus full of people and it was suddenly apparent that I might actually be attractive to the opposite sex after all. In truth, I didn't know what to do with that kind of attention and I fell for the first good looking guy who told me I was beautiful (although I don't think that was the word he used.) It turns out this guy lived on the floor below mine in my campus residence and my dorm and his soon became good friends. We'd all go out together, get drunk and party.

The memories of the prayers of my church family grew more and more dim as my new life drifted further and further away from God's standard for me. I ended up in an eighteen month relationship with the guy I mentioned and he was the man I lost my virginity to. When he ended the relationship, I was devastated. But now, I recognise it was a *huge* hit of God's unmerited grace.

Fast-forward a few years and I was in another relationship, but this time the guy was a Christian from back home. Despite knowing what my last two years had looked like, he was still keen to pursue me. **I was a baby Christian with battle wounds from the world which had taken me in with its glitz and glamour only for me to find it (and myself) empty and desperate for some kind of meaning.** It sounds bad, but, to me, this guy

was my wake up call to pay attention to God again. (I know now that this was grace, yet again. God wanted my attention and wasn't about to give up on me.)

The only problem with this, of course, was that I'd lived a life of such sin for the past two years and was about to walk back into my church and attempt some kind of relationship with God. And it was kind of because I wanted to impress yet another man.

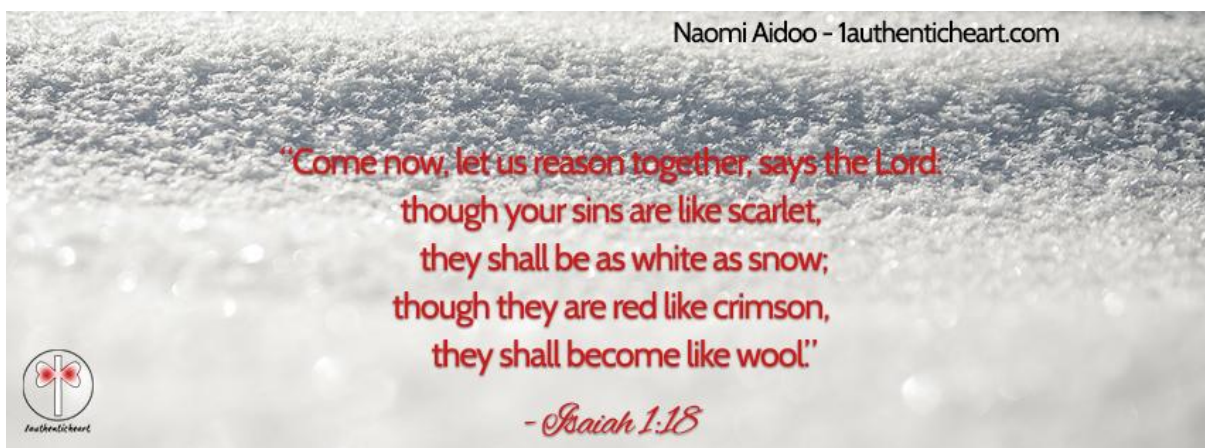
I felt like the embodiment of shame walking through those church doors for the first time. Like the prodigal daughter – although I wasn't sure I'd get the welcome feast. I was so ashamed of myself, of the life I'd so willingly chosen to live. I was a damaged and disappointed 21 year old with a lot of baggage and brokenness. Yet, here I was, about to walk back into church. And guess what? This sweet, sweet church family of mine who hadn't seen me for years welcomed me home as if I'd never left.

God's grace stepped in and left me face to face with Him. Oh, how He loved me!

Needless to say, the relationship with the guy didn't last despite me thinking this was the man I was going to marry. Yet, I found a love *so much better*. I signed up for the gap year the church was running because Jesus' love had so compelled me that I wanted to be and do all I could for Him.

That year out, aged 21 was *totally* transformational for me. It changed everything. I was prayed for, my broken heart was made whole again and my wounds were healed. My amazing church loved me back to life again as they played the part of His hands and feet.

It was then that I recognised the destructive power of shame. You see, I *knew* that Jesus had forgiven me. I can't explain it, but perhaps you've felt it for yourself too? That feeling of freedom. As soon as I acknowledged and repented over the fact that I'd lived a life which had offended a holy and perfect God, His healing power began to set me free from shame, slowly but surely.



I no longer recognise the life I used to live and every single ounce of that is because of God's grace. But here's the thing... Imagine if I'd have stayed that same broken 21 year

old and hadn't come back to church and therefore back to God? Would shame have held its grasp? Would I have listened to the lies which told me I was damaged goods? Thanks be to God for His redeeming love.

Lovely, if shame has ever clung closely - even if it does now, please know that the Saviour of the world paid the price for it on the cross. Taste and walk in His freedom and don't look back. You were made for more.

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." (Galatians 5:1)

Pause Point

Whatever your 'shame story', Christ has set you free from it. Spend some time reflecting on/writing about the shame Jesus has freed you from and thank Him for it!

(Use your favourite journal or a notebook to make a note of your response to this.)

His Story

We've spoken before on this course about how the enemies' plan for destruction is to rattle God's children regarding the root of their identity. Today we'll discover that this was the case from the very beginning.

Before looking at the destructive power of shame, let's look at the fact that it was never meant to be this way.



Shame didn't play a part in the initial creation of mankind. The verse above depicts the innocence of man and woman's first steps. It also alerts us to what might be to come. The deliberate mention of nakedness alongside being unashamed is what is directly juxtaposed later in this story. Unashamedness is the post-fall state for this first man and woman and shame, therefore, was not a part of the original plan of God for mankind.

In Genesis 3, we see the arrival of the enemy in the form of a serpent. His purpose here, as ever, is destruction. As soon as he entices Adam and Eve into eating the fruit, they recognise their nakedness and want to cover it. This is the first sign of shame we witness in the Bible. We know that it's shame because Adam and Eve take it upon themselves to hide from God (verse 8). **The enemy would love nothing more than for us to be hidden from God and therefore hidden from walking in the plans and purposes He has for us to live out.**

God calls them out of hiding and so another pattern begins. This time, it's one of confession. Notice verses 11-13. God is a God of relationship. Yes, He is all-loving and ever present, but just as Isaiah 1:18 (the verse I shared in my story) suggests, He wants to reason with us, to commune with us and ask us why. **God wants to lift us out of the pit of shame, but He also wants to help us to understand how we got down there in the first place.** Ownership really has a place in this too. Notice also in verses 11-13 of Genesis 3 that the blame gets shifted from one person to another. **Can we be bold enough to be honest with our sin before God so that He can rid us of our shame?** Passing the blame doesn't mean that we're off the hook, because as we know, shame runs deeper than what we see on the surface. Transparency and honesty really do go a long way.

It is important to note that although there is consequence to sin, the consequence is not us hiding from God (which is what the enemy would want – us out of relationship with the One who made us). God's hand of grace was seen even in these first days of rebellion. In His love and compassion, He clothes the man and the woman. (Genesis 3:21). They were no longer permitted to stay in and guard the garden of Eden (a consequence) but this didn't mean they were now 'good for nothing'! They were put to work (Genesis 3:23). However, work was not a punishment as a result of the fall. Work was a part of God's original design (see Genesis 2:15). The fall affected it, of course – making it less productive and more stressful. But work was not a punishment. **To hide ourselves in shame and believe that we're not good enough for anything after falling into sin is not the place where God wants us to remain. He still has plans and purposes for our lives, no matter what.**

Action Step

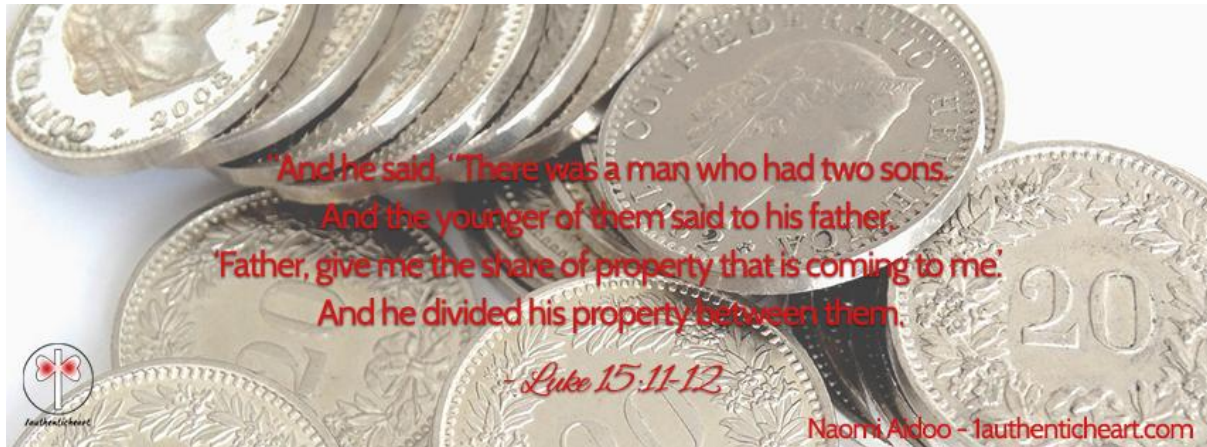
Sin, and therefore shame, can sometimes look obvious and deliberate. But sometimes, it's not as obvious. Sometimes we're holding onto something we feel guilty about which God actually wants us to share with Him so that He can cleanse and restore us.

Romans 3:23 tells us that *all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.* With that in mind, take some space to 'reason together' with God this week and come before Him in confession and repentance. He longs to take you out of hiding (whether physical or emotional) and restore you to wholeness.

(Use your favourite journal or a notebook to make a note of your response to this.)

The story of the prodigal son in a familiar one and it's where I want to spend the rest of our time today. We find this story in Luke 15:11-32.

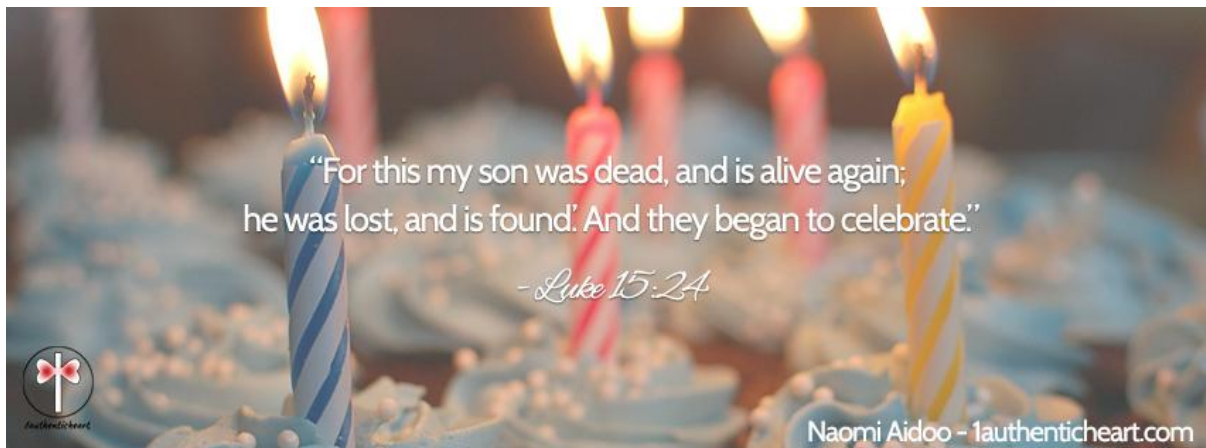
The story makes mention of shame in a number of ways. I summarise the story a little in today's audio and so here in the workbook, let's dive straight into the instances of shame which it is important to highlight here. The first is seen almost instantly.



This action of the younger son alone would have been cause for punishment and rejection from father to son. However, as this story beautifully paints the picture of God with us as His children, no such thing happens. The inheritance is given. This makes clear to us the importance of exercising our free will wisely. **Is what we're asking God for something which will benefit us in the long run? Or rather something with which we're looking for a 'quick fix'?**

Almost immediately (verse 13), we notice that the son leaves his father's house to go and 'enjoy' his new found freedom. However, it doesn't last for long. By the end of verse 16 the son is at the lowest point he has ever been and is craving after pigs food. So he hatches a plan. He figures that there is no way that his father will let him back in simply as a son. So instead, he decides to try and grovel his way back in as a servant. This young man knew the Jewish custom of the times and that even for him to do this would be a risk.

It was deeply shameful for a child to disobey their parents. To the point where, by Jewish law, it would have called for public humiliation and worse (look at the law listed in Deuteronomy 21:18-21). Yet the Father, again completely going against Jewish custom as an older man, not only accepts the son back in, but *runs towards* him as he sees him approaching. He doesn't simply let the son back in quietly, but instead he throws him a party. **In this wonderful parable, the father here is of course taking on a picture of our Heavenly Father who, in the face of repentance and recognition of sin, doesn't usher you through the back door quietly and just about let you in, but rather lavishes His loving kindness upon you and fully embraces you.**



This type of celebration in the face of such awful behaviour is so counter-cultural and it may even be difficult for us to understand now (it was for the older brother, for example – check out verses 25-32) however, that’s the love of God.

When we repent of our sin, we no longer have to be bound by chains of shame. This story paints this picture so beautifully. In our human state, like the youngest son, we can find ourselves almost wanting to be punished as a result of our sin. However, God’s love is vast and deep. We don’t have to understand it, but to live in it means to throw off the shame which can so easily cling in order to embrace the truth that in Him, we are free!

Pause Point

Have your actions ever left you feeling far from God? Have they left you feeling ashamed and, like the prodigal son, as though you’re not worthy of entering His presence as a daughter?

Take some time this week to acknowledge your *chosen* state in Him which means that you are His beloved child, no matter what.

(Use your favourite journal or a notebook to make a note of your response to this.)

Lovely, no matter what you’ve done, you are free to boldly approach God’s throne of grace.

I love this verse in Micah 7:19 – *“He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”*

You may feel you’ve let Him down, yet He will **again** have compassion on you. Once sin is confessed, He is able to deal with it. **Don’t hold onto shame, be loosed from its chains and**

embrace freedom. It may feel unmerited and undeserved – that’s because it is. Yet, it’s freely given any way. Rejoice in that truth and find His arms outstretched, ready to welcome you home.

Praise Break

As we close this module, It’s time for another praise break and so, as you soak in the goodness of God and your chosen state in His sight, close the door, raise your hands, dance around – whatever worship looks like to you – take a quick praise break and listen to [this wonderful song](#).

“I’m coming up out of all my shame. You lift me up and I am free.”

God longs to lift and free you from the burden of shame. Recognise your unashamed and chosen state in Him today.

Lovely, you are chosen.

See you on the next leg of the journey – I can’t wait!