

## Life Trails Small Group Study Guide

### Lesson 11 – Shame

From Sunday, December 5, 2021

#### Warm Up:

##### *The Shame Game*

This is a spin-off of the “Never Have I Ever” game, but each question is about a situation that might cause shame. Read the list below. Participants score one point for each item that they have never encountered or experienced:

Never have I ever...

1. Been rejected in a relationship
2. Had someone spread a rumor about me
3. Been told some version of “You’re not good enough”
4. Lost a job (or failed to “pass” the interview)
5. Been with a family member acting poorly in public
6. Had a “friend” share a secret with others
7. Had someone dismiss what I thought was a worthwhile idea/opinion
8. Experienced a public “dressing down” or “chewing out” of some kind
9. Been shunned by someone or by a group of people
10. Had someone judge me or criticize me for my appearance

All of the above scenarios can be shame-inducing, and are typically the result of someone else’s actions and not your own. Discuss the following...

- When you have experienced any of these scenarios, did it trigger any shame? Why or why not?
- Why does our “shame mechanism” seem to kick in when we are mistreated by others?

#### Debrief:

*The following were the suggested action steps from the corresponding week. Take some time to debrief on what everyone did, and on what was learned from the experience.*

From November 7

- Set aside some time to identify the shame in your life. Often we are unaware of it, or sometimes we just “tune it out” as we don’t find it helpful to go there. It might be helpful to write it down – but you can at least identify it mentally. Then, take a moment

to mentally picture it being covered, and you're not being able to read it any more.  
Take some time to reflect on and to thank Jesus for his dying for our shame.

From November 14

- Are there failures from your past that continue to bother you? Specifically identify them this week – and then “hold them up” to the robe, the ring and the sandals. What are the lies that you are being told or are telling yourself? And what is the truth? Write down a truth statement for each situation that is bothering you!

### **Share your Story:**

*Have you been “sharing your stories” in your small group? We really want to encourage everyone to engage in that activity!*

### **From the message:**

- Can you think of a time in your life when you were mistreated or humiliated and felt shame – that really was not of your making? How did you feel? And how did it affect you?
- What is the picture you get of God and shame?
- How much do you allow your past to influence your view of yourself or the future? In what ways?

### **From the passage: *Read Genesis 16:1-16***

- While we can only speculate, why do you think Sarah was motivated to make the proposal that she did? What was wrong with it?
- This story includes significant names. *Ishmael* means “the God who hears.” *El Roi* (when Hagar calls him Lord) means “the God who sees.” In Hebrew, the name *Hagar* actually means “forsaken.” How does that add to the story?
- Some scholars compare this chapter/passage to Genesis 3, and Abraham and Sarah to Adam and Eve. What similarities do you see?
- Why do you think God chose to bless Ismael (and Hagar), and make him a great nation?
- A very similar story appears in Genesis 21. How might shame have been a factor again?

**For discussion:**

- Have you ever had a “shame experience” (and can you share it?) when you were shamed for or felt shame concerning something over which you had no control?
- Why do we often take on shame when we have been mistreated or victimized?
- How does shame affect our view of ourselves and of our place in the world? What might be some of the lies shame encourages us to tell about ourselves?
- Not every shame issue involves a deep, dark secret. Sometimes it’s just a matter of experiencing some public humiliation in a situation where you have little to no control. Have you ever experienced shame in the following ways? How did it affect you?
  - False accusations made about you
  - Rejection
  - Being judged
  - Being the brunt of a joke
  - Bullied
  - Failure due to lack of ability (vs. lack of morals or character)
  - Mocked or ridiculed
  - Made a public example
- We often use the term “blame shifting.” What exactly does that mean? Do you think the term “shame shifting” might be better?
- Did you grow up in a culture/environment where shame was prevalent? How has it affected your approach to life?
- Some people think that shame is a major cause of bullying. Do you agree or disagree and why?
- How have you been able to push back against this type of shame in your life? Is there any counsel you might be able to share?
- If we are to overcome evil (mistreating others and/or throwing shame) with good, what might that look like practically?

**Activation:**

Take a few minutes to examine your past for any instances where you were mistreated – either by others or even by circumstances – and ask yourself these questions:

1. Have I dealt with this issue(s), or am I still wrestling with the fall-out? How so?
2. Am I allowing this person’s actions to continue to impact me – and how can I break that influence?

3. Am I trying to prove my worth in some way either to myself or others?
4. What steps can I take to move on? And what is the first one?
5. Do I need to include the help of someone else to deal with this?

If you have been able to deal with past issues of mistreatment, that is wonderful. But if not, you can start now.