



Do you know the feeling of shame?

**God has some important things to say to our feelings of unworthiness, rejection and disgrace!
The Gospel addresses this shame and promises God can gift us honour!**

In this 7-day devotional reading plan from Compassion Canada, you will learn how God's honour transformed not only people in the Bible, but also the lives of people today! These are real photos and stories, names have been changed.

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DAY 1 | THAT SHAME FEELING

- John 4:1-29
- Romans 10:10-12

DEVOTIONAL:

Have you ever felt shame?

Most of us have, although the feeling can be hard to describe. To some, it can be the feeling of being too much, being not enough, being broken or being wrong or unclean.

We feel shame for our weaknesses, failures and the secret things we can't speak out loud. Shame can make us feel like we are rejected, disqualified, broken or unworthy. This feeling is imposed on us by others, but also something we feel when we believe we just can't fit in or have failed.

Rather than acknowledging that we have *done* a bad thing that could be forgiven, shame tells us that we are bad. It can be difficult to know what to do with our shame!



A silhouette of a woman on her balcony at home in Brazil.

A woman in the Bible shows us what shame looked like in her life (John 4:1-29). She walked to a well to draw water alone. She seemed distrustful and without hope.

As we read her story, we discover it is a story that Jesus already knew. Today, we might put labels on a woman with five previous marriages, but in first century Israel and Samaria, women couldn't initiate divorce. She may have been partly at fault for where she was in life, but it's just as likely that she faced rejection for things beyond her control. She may have been trafficked, traded, used and abandoned. Her choices were limited, and she did what she could to survive. Not only this, but she was a woman, a Samaritan, maybe even childless—all sources of shame in that time.

She didn't have a solution for these things. They were daily struggles, just like her daily thirst. But Jesus had something unlimited to offer her.

Jesus, who knew the secrets of her heart, chose to trust her with His secret.

He tells her that *He* is the Rescuer that her people have been waiting for. He has come to remove sin

completely, even for her! She is the very first to hear of His true identity and has the double honour of taking this message to her people.

Why wouldn't Jesus have chosen someone with power, popularity and a picture-perfect life for such an important job? Because this is why Jesus came.

To give the shamed honour, the unloved a home, the forgotten a name, the discarded a purpose. *To solve our sin problem but also our shame problem.* That's how powerful the work of Jesus is!

Read Romans 10:10-12 slowly. Do you see what it says? The rescue that Jesus offers us, which is ours through faith in Jesus, results in shame being *shattered*. We will explore this more in the coming days.

PRAYER:

Pray and ask God to show you how shame affects the world and that you would understand the rescue Jesus offers.

DAY 2 | WHY DO WE FEEL SHAME?

- Genesis 3:1-13
- 1 Samuel 2:6-8
- Isaiah 53 :3

DEVOTIONAL:

Brenda moved like a shadow between the hospital beds holding her infant daughter in her arms. She pocketed bread crusts and scraped up remnants of porridge with her fingers. She lived here now, as ill as the patients, but without any money for treatment. Without money for school fees she left home young, hoping a job in the city would change her life. Instead, she become pregnant and abandoned by the child's father, and discovered months later she was HIV positive. For this, her family forbid her from returning to them. Shame became her home.



Brenda holding Rebecca, wearing yellow, in front of their house.

Where did shame first come from? Before sin, people experienced a perfect relationship with their creator. After sin, suddenly they experienced uncomfortable realities that were totally new. Adam and Eve tried to rid themselves of these bad feelings. The first was fear — to solve their fear, the people hid to protect themselves. The second was guilt — they shifted blame to one another. The last was shame — they covered their bodies with leaves.

This was the start of shame, that feeling of needing to cover up the flaw to be accepted. Shame still whispers to us that we are unworthy, incapable of being loved.

So we try to construct honour to cover ourselves, fragile as fig leaves.

But God didn't leave his children with frail coverings. With his own hand He sewed them clothing to wear when leaving paradise. Because they were his children, He gave them a gift out of love!

God offers us a covering too! Through what Jesus accomplished, our guilt, fear and shame can be erased! Not partially or temporarily, but fully and for all time. When we accept God's offer of forgiveness, He chooses to see us as though we are worthy of all honour, as if we are beautiful, beloved and blessed, just like He sees Jesus.

Honour happened for Brenda when a local church and Compassion centre reached out with love. Not only did they provide for her needs and medications, they welcomed her into their community. Church staff paid for an apartment out of their own pockets while they built her a multi-room furnished house. The shame became invisible because a community treated her as worthy to be loved.

That is the way that God has called the church to respond to people living in shame. This is the response that tells the truth about the honour that God offers each of us, a lasting covering.

What do you most need to have 'covered' in your life? What have you been doing to cover it yourself?

PRAYER:

Pray and tell God the areas of your life where you experience shame. Picture God creating coverings for each one of them out of his love for you. Ask God to forgive failures, cover shame and restore you.

DAY 3 | HONOUR FOR THE OUTCAST

- Acts 8:26-40
- 1 Peter 2:6-10
- Mark 2 :17

DEVOTIONAL:

On his chariot ride home from Jerusalem, the blinding sun made reading the scrolls difficult. So did the tears. He had travelled for days to worship the God of the Hebrew people, only to be turned away from entrance to the temple. It wasn't just that he was a foreigner, from Ethiopia. It wasn't any sin he had committed — he would make sacrifices. It was that he was a eunuch, possessing a physical deformity that prevented him from fathering children. Whether he had this condition from birth or from his masters in the royal palace we don't know — all we do know is he was excluded from people of God by their laws. Until he met a man named Philip.

The man was reading scriptures about someone who faced shame like he did, but Philip offered him so much more than just a sermon! No, Philip's offer was greater – baptism, a sign of total inclusion into the people of God!

How could Philip offer inclusion to a man the temple had rejected? Simple – he had been a disciple of Jesus, and Jesus had rewritten the lines of who was included in the people of God. No shame of ours can contaminate Jesus because his honour is *infinite*. The extraordinary Ethiopian man became the first to bring the Gospel of Jesus to the continent of Africa!

Once you begin to look for it, it's impossible not to see God has a heart for outsiders. Think of how Jesus lived – spending days with tax collectors, prostitutes, foreigners. Healing the rejected. Did you know even Mary, Martha and Lazarus were among the forgotten? As residents of a leper town they were too unclean to be seen, yet Jesus stayed in their home!

Have you ever been an outsider? Many children born with physical disabilities around the world experience this rejection. Though she was abandoned by her parents when she was born without hands, 11-year-old Cleidy in Guatemala has been raised with love and confidence. Her grandmother didn't give up on her, and her local Compassion centre taught her to write with her wrists where she has won awards for her writing. The community of faith accepted her, loved her and believed in her bright future. Why? Because they had experienced God's unconditional acceptance for themselves.



Cleidy is standing outside her house in front of a wooden fence.

Shame is a response to being excluded by a community, but honour needs an audience too. Look for a community who will do as Jesus did and welcome the outsider. Let your story be known and keep your eyes open for those who welcome you anyway.

Are you able to see God's love and acceptance of you? Are you able to offer this honour to others?

PRAYER:

Pray and talk to God about the ways you have felt outcast and alone. Pray that you would experience his love and a community of people who see God's image in you.

DAY 4 | FAMILY FOR THE FATHERLESS

- 2 Samuel 9
- Romans 8:14-17

DEVOTIONAL:

What does your name mean? A man we read about in 2 Samuel had a mouthful of a name, one that meant 'shameful'. Do you know what it feels like to bear a bad name? Or worse, have no name at all?

For two young girls in Uganda, hearing their name spoken was a rarity. Instead they were called sub-human, cursed, shameful. These girls were born with the condition of albinism. Even though they were born to dark skinned parents, their skin lacked ability to create pigment

At birth, their parents abandoned them. A kind uncle chose to care for them, but as a result his wife left him and he could no longer find work. He had become desperate and depressed, this choice caused his community to fear and reject him also. This is how shame works – people fear it will spread to them. But because God has not forgotten us, honour spreads too.

In the Bible, King David had promised Jonathan he would always look after his family. When Jonathan's father lost his throne, the only one left alive was Jonathan's son Mephibosheth. When just a child, he was smuggled out of the royal home to preserve his life. While he was once a prince, Mephibosheth had been living in utter shame since then. No name, no home. Until David decided he would extend his honour to this forgotten child.

Mephibosheth was welcomed to the palace, given an inheritance, offered a permanent seat at the table. He had nothing but was gifted everything! This is a biblical picture of what God does for each of us. God invites us into His family, but we must be willing—like Mephibosheth was—to go with him to the place He will lead us. The choice to receive the honour of adoption from God gives us covering for shame. And what is more – God calls us heirs, inheritors of great honour that is to come! Even though we haven't received all that God has promised us yet, we bear God's name. That means the honour that belongs to God, belongs to us also!



Petra and Beatrice were abandoned by their mother because they have albinism, but embraced by their church as they are.

Where are the two precious girls now? Petra and Bianca were invited into a new home by the pastor of a local church. The pastor and his wife called the girls by their names and gave them a place of complete belonging among a family of other fostered and adopted children. In this new home they say they feel loved. They are healing and learning they are not a mistake, not cursed, not hopeless. They see themselves as beautiful children of God.

PRAYER:

Pray and talk to God about your feelings of family and belonging. Picture yourself as Mephibosheth. Consider the ways God has already come to your rescue. Ask God to rescue you from your shame and show you his love for you.

DAY 5 | WHAT WE ACHIEVE, WHAT WE RECEIVE

- Hebrews 1
- Titus 3:5

DEVOTIONAL:

The entire Bible is remarkably unified when it comes to honour. In every narrative account of a person's life who chooses to follow God, a change occurs. Though shame is a part of their story, God works to change the trajectory. They are raised to honour. Can you see it in the lives of Joseph, Hannah, Esther, the Apostles? Paul?

Yves is a young man living in Togo who experienced a dramatic redirection of the course of his life. As a child he experienced the shame of extreme poverty and family violence. Before he was even five, he would sweep food stalls, hoping to find crumbs. People began to call him "leftovers". His mother, desperate, heard that a church was willing to help children. Once registered at the Compassion centre there, Yves received gifts he never dreamed of – food baskets, job skills training for his mom, a home with a solid roof. He encountered the love of God in action by people who treated him as if he had worth. This is when Yves found hope. At age 11 he preached his first sermon in front of hundreds. Today Yves is graduating from school and his peers call him 'Pastor'. He teaches children and youth about God's love, and serves his church as a speaker, musician and advocate for the poor.



Yves, in a blue and white shirt, is standing outside with some of the young people he leads.

So how does our story change direction?

Honour comes from two places—what we achieve and what we receive. If we are the best at something, we gain honour, don't we? The same happens when we receive a tremendous gift or are chosen to belong to something. Read the first chapter of Hebrews carefully and you'll see Jesus has gained both kinds of honour. He has made the universe – what achievement could be greater? What greater honour could someone receive from God than to hear “this is my Son, let the angels all worship Him!”

Jesus has honour and He offers it to us too –not because of our worthiness, but rather because of his worthiness. Before we do anything to earn it, God reaches out to us with an invitation to belong to him.

The world tells us that we just need to believe in ourselves, know our worth. The Bible never actually asks that of us--instead it points us to know GOD'S worth. Why is that important? Because if our worth is based on who we are, it is very fragile. One wrong step on our part and the shame returns and the disconnection begins its destruction once again. But if our worth is based instead on whose we are, and we belong to a never-changing God of all honour THAT makes a difference.

PRAYER:

Ask God to change your story and lead you honour, for his name's sake. Thank God that Jesus has all honour and that we are invited to share in it.

DAY 6 | TWO SOURCES OF HONOUR

- Mark 9:33-35
- John 5:44
- John 12:42-43

DEVOTIONAL:

Is honour something we actually need? Jesus thought so!

One day the disciples of Jesus argued about who had the most honour. They were competing for status, boasting about greatness and Jesus confronted them about it (Mark 9:33-35). He doesn't tell them they are sinful or silly – in fact, he takes the matter seriously without rebuke. Instead he told them how to achieve honour in the Kingdom of God. Jesus fought with the leaders of his day who used shame to control people. Jesus never did. Instead Jesus gave honour away like there was no shortage.

Jesus is rewriting everything we ever knew about honour.

We look for honour at work, at home, in politics, arts, economics. No one can really acquire honour in all of them. Neither can someone perfectly achieve honour in the world and honour in the Kingdom of God. Jesus treats these as opposing sources of honour and in John 5:44 He says it's evident if someone truly believes in him because they are looking for honour in the right place! John 12:42-43 shows us that some of the religious leaders made a clear choice about whose honour they were looking for, just like many of us do today. Jesus calls us to chase after something even better.

Jean was not even old enough to go to school yet when a tragedy happened in his home. His younger sister became sick and died. A leader in his village felt the shame of this event should fall to someone and falsely accused the small child of witchcraft. Jean was abused and expelled from his home. His family chose to preserve their worldly honour, even at the expense of their child. The village church

and a Compassion centre there made a choice also, a different choice, a choice to welcome little Jean and provide an adoptive home for him.

Jean experienced shame because of what someone else said about him. Can you relate? But he also learned that God knew the truth and had not abandoned him. Jean chose to believe God's love, and is beginning to heal in a community that is showing him the honour of belonging.



**Jean is a pseudonym*

God hates what shame does to his creation, and what it has done to you. Shame doesn't tell the truth about who we are or why we were made! It separates, deteriorates, it can even take a life. But a greater honour is possible! The honour of being God's beloved child, an heir with Christ, a servant who achieves greatness in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Does it surprise you to know that God cares about your honour too? Consider that almost a third of the references to honour and glory in the Bible refer to the people of God. It's written in every promise of God, every story, every invitation into relationship with Him.

Where have you been looking for honour and has it provided satisfaction?

PRAYER:

Pray and ask God to show you where you have been chasing false or temporary honour in the world.

DAY 7 | LIVING AND GIVING HONOUR

- Psalm 34
- Romans 12 :9-13

DEVOTIONAL:

We have reached the last day of this devotional. You may still wonder—what if you still feel shame? How does God ask that we live in response to it?

The undoing of our own feeling so shame may take time, but we are welcomed by God into a relationship with him that both restores our honour and the honour of others. God invites us to do these things:

1. **Entrust God with Your Story**

Jesus healed a man who was blind from birth and like others we have read about, this man faced incredible shame (John 9:1-41). After his encounter with Jesus, He spoke about his healing, he testified about the power of Jesus and the truth he could now see. For this, the man was expelled from the temple. He suffered shame at the hands of religious leaders.

When feelings of shame cause us to seek God they can actually be helpful, but shame was never meant to be used by people to control one another. God established his Kingdom for all to find forgiveness, transformation and belonging. Jesus demonstrated this by giving the man who was blind an invitation into relationship with Him. This was a new and better way to find belonging with God than the temple ever was!

God may not choose to change all of your circumstances, but He will change the direction of your story and the honour you find within it as you walk with Him. When we stop hiding our shame and allow God and others into it, there can be restoration.

2. **Honour God**

How did Hannah respond when God removed the shame of childlessness? (1 Samuel 1). How did King David respond when after repentance for his shameful sin He was forgiven and restored? How did Hagar, a forgotten slave rejected by her master, respond when she found honour in God's eyes? Each of them gave honour to God when their own honour was restored. This is a reminder for us of where true honour resides and a signpost to others looking for restoration.

3. **Honour Others**

Scripture isn't shy about God's intention that we show honour to others—both inside the church and without! Romans 12:10 is very clear—show honour to others! Some versions even say, “outdo one another in showing honour”. That is one of the missions of the Church! It is one way we embody the gospel and tell the truth about who God is. It is our privilege as well as an act of obedience. The act of giving honour away is counter cultural, where people compete for top spot. Because of this, it puts the generosity and abundance of God on display! Our time, money, and actions can all build honour as we reach out to tell someone ‘you are God's child’, ‘you are worthy’. How can you show honour and love to those inside and outside the church, at home and around the world? What step is next for you?

PRAYER:

Pray and ask God to allow you to find a place of honour in his Kingdom, and guide you as you seek to honour others.



WHAT IS COMPASSION?

As one of the world's leading child development organizations, Compassion partners with the local church around the world to end poverty in the lives of children and their families.

Today, more than two million children and their families are discovering lives full of promise and purpose as they develop in all aspects of their lives—minds, bodies and relationships—while discovering God's love for them in the gospel of Jesus Christ.



COMPASSION CANADA
BOX 5591, LONDON, ON N6A 5G8
TOLL FREE: 1-800-563-5437
compassion.ca