

Am I Worthy? The origins of shame and God's solution.

By Caroline Zuniga

There's a nagging sense of inadequacy that haunts the recesses of our hearts, surreptitiously sabotaging our beliefs and entangling our thoughts and feelings into a sticky, muddled web of fear, hurt, and frustration. Hopelessly incarcerated by our own self-doubt and self-consciousness, we misdirect our angst, trying to get our needs met through performance, relationships, social status, and other people's opinions. We react to life and those around us out of our thwarted longings and inner desperation.

Ironically, this nagging sense of inadequacy serves a righteous purpose, exposing a longing woven into our spiritual DNA, embedded into the very core of our human nature by the loving Creator himself. It is a longing to be reunited with Him, a longing for Jesus and the restoration to our true self that only He can bring. Our inadequacy bears witness to what we know to be true...we are broken, incomplete, and unfulfilled without Him – a mere, faint shadow of who we were created to be.

God bestowed undeniable dignity and honor upon Adam and Eve when He created them in His image and appointed them to live in perfect harmony, enjoying intimate fellowship with Him and each other in a world without sin. All their needs were met as their value and worth were continuously affirmed by the adoring attention and unconditional love of their Heavenly Father. They lived free of self-consciousness in an environment of total acceptance. They delighted in meaningful work, stewarding over all of creation. They were complete – lacking nothing.

Yet in one swift act of defiance, Adam and Eve ate fruit from the forbidden tree and died spiritually. Disconnected from God, they lost the source of their spiritual, mental, emotional, and relational well-being and felt the debilitating weight of sin for the first time. No longer right with God, “man” was no longer right with himself and certainly not right in relationship with others. Adam and Eve's once abundant sense of significance and worth was replaced with an inner sense of deficiency or to use the latest “buzzword,” shame.

Much has been written about shame in recent years, but God was the first and its origin is in the Garden. The first emotion recorded after Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is fear and shame. When Adam heard God in the Garden, he was afraid because he was naked and so he hid himself (Genesis 3:10). The evil effects of shame always cause us to hide from ourselves, God, and each other.

Fast forward six thousand years and we still long for connection to our Heavenly Father and the love, acceptance, and significance for which we were created even though we often do not

feel worthy of it. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and we know we need a Savior. And it's this primitive longing intertwined with our shame that drives us back into the hands of a loving, merciful God. *However, this time around we do not meet God in a garden, we meet Him at the Cross where we are reconciled to our Father through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.*

So let me introduce you to God's antidote for shame...his name is Jesus. Adam and Eve (and as a result, all humankind) fell from grace when they sinned, yet we are individually restored to grace as we make the personal decision to accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. He is the source of the spiritual life that was lost in the Garden and he secures our eternity in heaven with God. We are transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's son. We become a child of God and a member of His family. Every sin we have ever committed or will commit in the future is completely forgiven. We are a new creation known by our spiritual identity, which is that of a holy saint.

Our longings for love, acceptance, and significance are now fully met in Christ. Once again, we can bask in the unconditional love and acceptance of our Heavenly Father like teens bask in the sun on Spring Break. And we receive the glorious opportunity to join God in the meaningful work of establishing His kingdom here on earth. *Sister, there is nothing wrong with you that the Cross of Christ hasn't fixed!* All that has been lost is restored. We can now embark on the exciting journey of becoming the person that God created us to be – the most authentic and healthy version of our self – in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Christ, we have everything that we need to overcome the world and the devil and break free from the bondage of sin and shame.

I would like to share with you how God recently spoke to me regarding my worthiness. After a particularly challenging season in my life, I heard God say lovingly, "Daughter, you are worthy of me. You are worthy of all my time and my full attention. You are worthy of my perfect love and all my devotion. You are worthy of my security and my divine protection. You are worthy of my best plans. You are worthy of my dreams for your life. You are worthy of my life. There is no good thing I withhold from you because you are worthy of it all."

It is hard to comprehend but I am worthy of God's life and you are worthy of God's life, too. The study of economics tells us that we know what something is worth based on what someone is willing to pay for it. The Creator of the Universe was willing to pay for you with the life of His perfect son, securing your worth and freedom for all of eternity. And there you have it, the greatest love story ever told. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life" (John 3:16).

When God spoke to me in this profound and personal way, I stopped seeing Him as taking things away and I started seeing Him as giving me everything. The Christian life is not about sacrifice, it is about fulfillment. Letting go of what we cannot attain to receive that which no

one and nothing can ever take away from us. It is not about surrendering rights, but rather, gaining a birthright. It is not about wallowing through an obstacle but embracing an opportunity – the opportunity to become the person God created us to be in any situation and to join Him in his eternal glory forever and ever.

Sister, you are worthy of the Lord and the amazing plans He has for your life!