

STUDY GUIDE
GROUPS / INDIVIDUALS

EIGHT SESSIONS

The Storm Inside

Trade *the* Chaos of How You Feel *for the*
Truth *of* Who You Are



SHEILA WALSH

SESSION 1

FROM SHAME
TO LOVE

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN



For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38–39



SHAME IS ONE OF THE MOST HUMILIATING, weighty burdens that a woman can carry. Just thinking about the things that have shamed us can send us into a corner to hide. Don't worry—I'm not asking you to share your deepest secrets here. Instead, in this first session you'll hear about the shame I carried for years, and you'll see how an encounter with Jesus transformed a woman whose shameful past made her an outcast in her hometown. We don't even know her name, but the woman from Samaria became a compelling witness after she experienced the life-changing power of Jesus' love.

WELCOME (5 minutes)

Welcome to Session 1 of *The Storm Inside*. If this is your first time together as a group, take a moment to introduce yourselves to each other before watching the video. As you give your name, also share the following:

What is one word, emotion, or picture that comes to mind when you hear the word *shame*? (Examples: heavy, rejection, someone covering their face, hiding in the dark, crashing my parents' car when I was a teen.)

VIDEO: FROM SHAME TO LOVE (20 minutes)

Play the video segment for Session 1. As you watch, use the outline provided to follow along or to take notes on anything that stands out to you.

NOTES

“Shame is life dominating and stubborn. Once entrenched in your heart and mind, it is a squatter that refuses to leave.” —Edward T. Welsh

Guilt tells us we have *done* something wrong. Shame tells us we *are* something wrong.

Shame is not what you did but who you are.

Only Jesus can address the life-threatening weight of shame.

God's love is greater than any shame that has found us.

Christ offers us a new wardrobe: clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

The Samaritan woman became the first evangelist.

We are never freer than when we tell Christ the truth about the things that have weighed us down and exchange those for His overwhelming love.

GROUP DISCUSSION

VIDEO DEBRIEF (5 minutes)

*If your group meets for two hours,
allow 10 minutes for this discussion.*

1. What brought you the most encouragement in Sheila's teaching?

SHAME (20 minutes)

*If your group meets for two hours,
allow 35 minutes for this discussion.*

2. What are the differences between shame and guilt? Give an example of shame and an example of guilt.
3. Read John 4:4–30. What does the woman at the well have to be ashamed of? What shame does she carry as an individual? As a woman? As a Samaritan?

STUDY NOTES

Samaria (John 4:4). After the Israelites of Samaria had flagrantly disobeyed God for centuries, God allowed the Assyrians to conquer their country and send many of their people into exile. The Assyrians moved conquered people from various other countries into Samaria to resettle the land. These people intermarried with the remaining Israelites and created a religion that was a mix of Israelite and foreign traditions. This is one of the primary reasons Samaritans were so hated by the Jews. They were viewed as a polluted people. See 2 Kings 17:24–41 for details.

Sixth hour (4:6). Noon. Drawing water and hauling gallons of it home was hard work, so women normally did it in the coolest morning hours. Only someone excluded from the company of other women would do it at noon in that hot climate.

Woman (4:7). At that time, no respectable Jewish man would talk with even a virtuous Jewish woman in public, not even his wife. A rabbi certainly would not discuss theology with a woman. This was in keeping with practices throughout the Middle East, where women were supposed to be as unnoticeable as possible in public and were discouraged from leaving the house except when necessary.

4. How does Jesus expose the woman's shame at various points in their conversation?

5. How would you describe Jesus' attitude toward her shame? For instance, does He suggest that she's fine and has nothing to be ashamed of? That she's unworthy of His notice?

As Edward T. Welsh says, "Shame is a squatter, staying with an unwillingness to leave." We hide our shame, embarrassed about who we are. We might share our guilt, but shame stays tucked away in the dark places of our life.

6. If you feel comfortable doing so, share about a time when shame invaded your life. Take a few minutes and have a couple of people share their story.

OPTIONAL GROUP DISCUSSION (20 minutes)

NOTICED

- After Jesus first speaks to the Samaritan woman, what thoughts and emotions do you sense behind her words in John 4:9? For instance, does she seem shocked, offended, friendly, hostile, bored, honored? Explain.
- Why do you think she continues to resist Jesus in verse 11?
- After what Jesus says to her in verse 18, why do you think she changes the subject to theology in verses 19–20?
- What are some things people do when their shame is exposed? What are some things they do when they're afraid their shame will be exposed?
- Have you ever had someone extend a hand to you in spite of your shame? If so, how did it affect you?

No SEPARATION (10 minutes)

*If your group meets for two hours,
allow 25 minutes for this discussion.*

7. In John 4:4–26, where do you see Jesus treating the Samaritan woman with love? List each instance, and tell how it reflects love.
8. In Romans 8:38–39, the apostle Paul makes a list of things that can't separate us from the love of God. What would you add to Paul's list? What are some things you sometimes fear could separate you from God's love?
9. It is impossible to get beyond God's loving reach. What comfort does this give you in knowing that God's love through Christ transcends any shame that you may feel?

As Paul says in Romans 8:38–39, nothing—not even shame—separates us from the love of God. Jesus pursues us, loves us, and steps across cultural lines to offer the gift of eternal life. As you close this session, bring your heart before God in prayer, using either the prayer provided here or your own.

Dear God, Your love is abundant and eternal, transcending all shame. You know everything I've ever done and everything others have done to me, and You sent Your Son to remove the shame of those things. In You I am clean and pure, with nothing to hide. Please help me to come out of hiding and trust Your love, and to treat others with that same shame-cleansing love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT SESSION

Each session in *The Storm Inside* includes a week's worth of personal studies to encourage you and help you to make progress between meetings. In the studies this week, you'll look more closely at the Samaritan woman's story to see how she became a person who gave up her shame for Jesus' love. Will you consider setting aside 20 to 30 minutes a day for grace-based personal study? It's an investment that promises to yield significant returns. Don't miss out!

SESSION 1

PERSONAL STUDIES

DAY I

PERSISTENT LOVE

God's love is greater than any shame that has found us.

Sheila Walsh

In Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well, He broke three Jewish customs: first, He spoke to a woman; second, He associated with a Samaritan, a group the Jews traditionally despised; and third, He likely drank from her water jar, which would have made Him ceremonially unclean. This persistent love startled even His disciples. Jesus persists with love that has no bounds.

1. When was the first time Jesus initiated His love toward you? How did He persist in order for you to hear? Check the boxes that relate to your love story.

☐ Emotional need

☐ Moral corruption

☐ Relational crisis

☐ Passivity

☐ Culture

☐ Health crisis

☐ Shame

☐ Intellectual pride

☐ Addiction

☐ Loneliness

☐ Religious tradition

☐ Other (name it): _____

2. How did you respond to His love when it was first offered?

3. Read John 4:4–30 again. How does Jesus initiate with the Samaritan woman? How does He pursue her?

STUDY NOTES

Jesus *had to* pass through Samaria (John 4:4). The region of Samaria lay between Judea in the south (where Jerusalem was) and Galilee in the north (where Jesus and His disciples came from). In Jesus' day, Jews traveling from Judea to Galilee did not pass through Samaria but went around the region on the east side of the Jordan. This took longer, but the Jews hated Samaritans. The Greek tense used here implies that Jesus was under compulsion from His Father to go through Samaria. He was on a divine mission.

Give me a drink (4:7). A Jew would become ceremonially unclean by using a drinking vessel given to him by a Samaritan. Anything a Samaritan had touched imparted uncleanness. He would have to perform purifying rituals before he could enter the temple.

4. Jesus crosses cultural boundaries to extend relationship to a woman. What does this tell you about His heart?

5. What does it tell you about the message of the gospel?

6. Jesus says, “Go, call your husband” (4:16), even though He knows the woman has no husband. How is it an act of love to expose her shame like that? Why not just treat her with kindness instead of throwing her sin in her face?

7. Has Jesus ever exposed your shame? If so, how did you respond? Did you take it as an act of love?

8. What evidence do you have that Jesus continues to love you, no matter what? (If you feel He doesn’t love you, what causes you to feel that?)

Read Ephesians 3:14–21, where the apostle Paul prays that his readers will truly know the extent of Jesus’ love. Use Paul’s prayer as the basis of your own prayer, asking God to ground you in a solid awareness of His love.

God loves us because of who he is, not because of who we are.

Phillip Yancey

DAY 2

SHAME

The bending of the mind by the powers of this world has twisted the gospel of grace into religious bondage and distorted the image of God into an eternal small-minded bookkeeper.

Brennan Manning

1. Is there any thread of shame deeply embedded in your life? Anything you believe God is keeping track of in His bookkeeping? If so, what is it?

2. In a few brief words, describe your identity. Be honest: As you wake up in the morning and look in the mirror, how do you see yourself? What is your primary identity? Some examples:

My family defines me. I am my husband’s wife, my children’s mother.

Or, I am childless, divorced, never married, widowed, etc.

My job defines me. I am what I do for a living, which is . . .

My worst trauma or most shameful act defines me. I am an abused child, an adulterer, a thief, etc.

My illness defines me. I have cancer, MS, bipolar disorder, etc.

I am a child of God, created as God's workmanship, created for good works that only I can do.

I am a broken woman, struggling to walk in my identity as a child of God.

I am an addict, struggling through life every day.

I am a woman with faith, but not that valuable to God.

I am a woman God loves.

3. When you define yourself, is shame part of the definition? If so, how?

4. Based on John 4:4–26, how does the Samaritan woman perceive herself?

5. How does Jesus seem to perceive her?

THE STORM INSIDE

6. When we place our faith in Christ, what does Jesus do with our past and the sin and shame we carry around? Read the verses below and ask God to impress these truths upon you.

Isaiah 43:25

Isaiah 44:22

Psalms 103:12

Micah 7:19

Acts 10:15

Hebrews 10:17

Take some time to pray, releasing any shame and receiving the forgiveness that Jesus offers. Don't be ashamed to tell God exactly what you've been through and what you're feeling. If you have trouble believing you're forgiven or cleansed, tell Him so, and ask Him to help you know for certain that what is past is past.

Jesus did not identify the person with his sin, but rather saw in this sin something alien, something that really did not belong to him, something that merely chained and mastered him and from which he would free him and bring him back to his real self. Jesus was able to love men because he loved them right through the layer of mud.

Helmut Thielicke

DAY 3

LIVING WATER

Jesus wants to give the Samaritan woman a gift that is beyond her comprehension. He offers satisfaction that goes beyond physical need to the heart of her spiritual need. Yet she has trouble understanding what He's talking about.

1. Read John 4:10–15 again. When you imagine “living water,” what pictures or ideas come to mind?
2. How is “living water” a fitting picture of the Holy Spirit and what He gives us? What does this term tell you about the Spirit?

STUDY NOTES

Living water (John 4:10). This was the normal figure of speech for flowing water—as in a stream, river, or ocean—as opposed to still water in a lake or bath. That’s what the woman thinks Jesus means in 4:10–11. But He invests the expression with deeper meaning.

In John 7:37–39, Jesus speaks of living water again, and John says it refers to the Holy Spirit. Living water points to the Spirit and everything He does in our lives.

Gift (4:10). The Greek here emphasizes God’s grace through Christ. Jesus gives life freely, as a gift.

Our father Jacob (4:5, 12). The grandson of Abraham. God gave Jacob the name “Israel,” and Jacob became the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. He was thus an extremely important ancestor claimed by both Jews and Samaritans. “Respect for the past prevented [the woman] from seeing the great opportunity of the present.”¹ Also, she may have been trying to increase Jesus’ respect for her by showing her knowledge of Jacob.

3. In verse 14, Jesus calls the Spirit “a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” How is “living water” a fitting picture of a source of eternal life?

4. Why do you think it's hard for the woman to understand what Jesus is offering? Where is her focus?

5. How do you interact with Jesus? Do you tend to relate with Him primarily about your physical needs (finances, food, etc.)? Do you ever ask Him to satisfy the deep needs of your soul?

6. If a person has a spring of life welling up inside her, do you think that should mean she will always feel good? What do you think the experience of living water should be?

7. In Jeremiah 2:13, God rebukes His people for ignoring Him, the fountain of living water, and instead trying (and failing) to make their own cisterns to hold water. Do you tend to rely on your own resources rather than seeking the Holy Spirit to quench your thirst? If so, how do you do that?

Spend some time thanking Jesus for His living water. If you're thirsty, seek Him to quench your thirst. If there are other things you do to quench your inner thirst, confess those.

Jesus, Your Holy Spirit is living water — a source of life that is abundant and overflowing. I look to so many other things to fulfill me rather than going to You. I come to You, the well of living water, and I ask You to fill me and satisfy my thirst. All forgiveness and satisfaction are in You. In Your holy name, Amen.

DAY 4

THE MESSIAH

At the end of her conversation with Jesus, the Samaritan woman learns that she is talking to the Messiah. Let's look at the conversation that leads up to this realization.

1. Jesus knows that in order for this woman to place her faith in Him, she has to acknowledge her need for a Savior. In John 4:15–26, how does He help her face her need for a Savior?

STUDY NOTES

This mountain ... Jerusalem (John 4:20). The law of Moses emphasized that sacrifices and religious observances must be done “in the place that the LORD your God will choose” (Deuteronomy 12:18). The temple in Jerusalem became that place. But after the death of King Solomon, the northern tribes of Israel rejected worship in Jerusalem and set up alternate places, first at Dan and Bethel and later at Mount Gerizim. The site of true worship became a bone of contention between Jews and Samaritans, and the Samaritan woman uses it to change the subject when Jesus addresses her marital history.

In the Spirit and in truth (4:23). Jesus declares that under the new covenant, neither Samaria nor Jerusalem will be the focus of worship. Genuine worship will be inspired by and submitted to the Holy Spirit and to Christ, who is Truth and the source of truth (John 14:6, 15–17).

2. How do you think we can tell if our worship is in the Holy Spirit and in truth? Or how can we tell if it isn't?

STUDY NOTE

Messiah (4:25). The woman has no idea what worship in the Spirit and in truth means, so she deflects the conversation again, to the vague future when the Messiah will come. The Samaritans were looking for an anointed prophet like Moses, but because they rejected all of the Old Testament books after Deuteronomy, they did not accept any of the predictions about the Messiah in the books of the Old Testament prophets. Nor did they accept the common view among some Jews that the Messiah would be a warrior king who would overthrow Rome.

3. The woman doesn't know much about the Messiah, but what does she know (4:25)?

4. Jesus has prevented both demons and His own followers from telling people that He is the Messiah (Mark 1:21–25, 34, 40–44; 8:27–30). He has done so because He knows people have wrongheaded assumptions about what it means to be the Messiah. But here He acknowledges His

identity to this obscure woman. Read Mark 8:27–30 and John 4:26–29. Why do you suppose Jesus reveals His identity to this woman so plainly while hiding it from the crowds who follow Him?

5. Why do you think she doesn't dismiss His claim as crazy?

6. What is the disciples' reaction to seeing Jesus talking with the woman (John 4:27)? What is their main concern? What other concerns do they have (verses 31–33)?

7. In verses 34–38, Jesus states His priorities as Messiah. What are they?

From the beginning of His journey to Samaria, Jesus was compelled to a mission: an opportunity to share the gospel with a sinner, a time to reveal that He is the Messiah. Nothing got in the way of His mission.

8. Cultural barriers, religious traditions, geographic inconveniences—none of these mattered to Christ as much as “doing the will of him who sent me” and accomplishing His work. What keeps you from doing the will of the Father?

9. What helps you do the will of the Father?

10. Think about the people in your life who need to know Jesus. Make a list of those people, and spend some time praying for an opportunity to share the love of God with them.

DAY 5

LOVE SHARED

Once we deeply trust that we ourselves are precious in God’s eyes, we are able to recognize the preciousness of others and their unique places in God’s heart.

Henri J. M. Nouwen

The Samaritan woman begins this story in isolation, fetching water at the worst time of day in order to avoid her neighbors. Her encounter with Jesus

cleanses her from shame and clothes her in love and righteousness. Her actions then demonstrate that her faith is real.

1. Read John 4:25–42. After Jesus tells the woman He is the Messiah, what does she do?
2. How do her actions show that she's changed from the way she was at the beginning of the story?
3. What has changed her? Why isn't she acting like a woman full of shame?
4. What happens because of her actions?
5. Jesus met with rulers and authorities, yet some of His most powerful messengers are people we would never expect, such as the Samaritan woman. How do you typically relate to those who need a Savior? Do you talk about Jesus? Do you feel embarrassed (ashamed) to do so?

6. Why do you suppose we so often fear rejection by people even though we have experienced acceptance by God?

Read Colossians 4:2–6, and make this your prayer. Ask God to guide you as you persistently show the love of Christ.

Lord Jesus, I come to You devoted, praying that I would see more opportunities to speak about the mystery of who You are. I pray that love would invade every conversation I have. Help me to be alert, looking for people who are precious to You. Help me to not be put off by any stigmas or baggage they carry. I pray that my words would be like salt, perfectly seasoned, so that I would know how to speak to each individual.

God, I pray that Your love would invade the hearts of those who need you. Make me Your messenger. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You are the heir to the kingdom. Prosperity is your birthright and you hold the key to more abundance in every area of your life than you can possibly imagine.

Henri J. M. Nouwen