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# Covered Glory

Audrey Frank

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All the incidents described in this book are true. Names, circumstances, descriptions, and details have been changed to render individuals unidentifiable.

### Covered Glory

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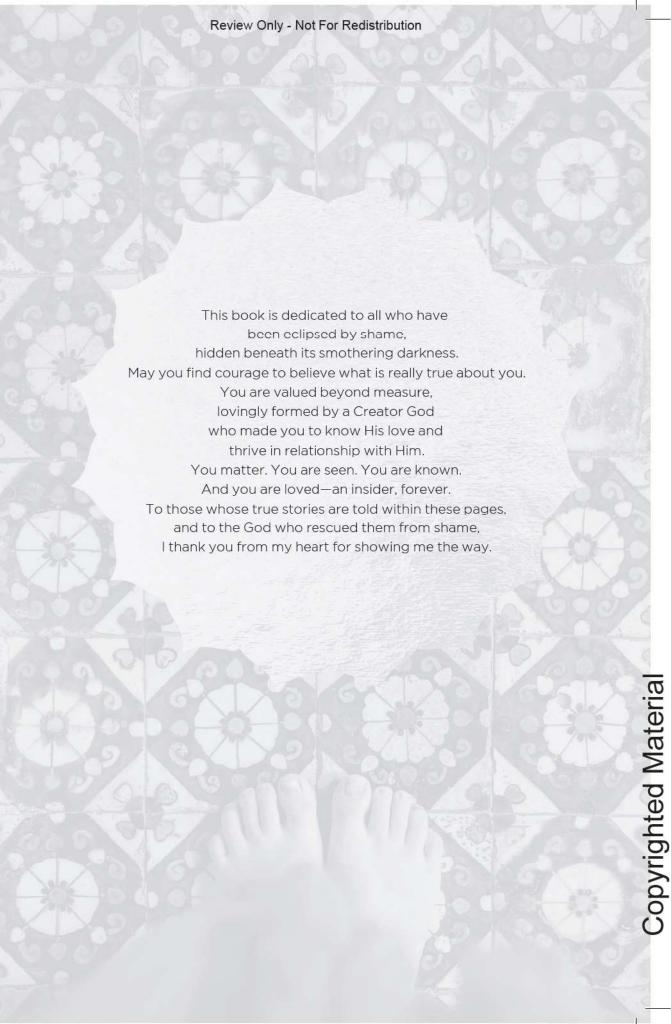
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# Foreword



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# Glossary of Arabic Terms



abaya: a full-length, robe-like outer garment worn by some Muslim women

'ayin: spring, well of water; colloquially, it can mean one's family of origin in some dialects

Al-Wadud: one of the ninety-nine names of God in Islam, meaning the Loving, the Kind One

burqa: the most concealing of all Islamic veils, a one-piece veil that covers the body and the face, sometimes leaving a mesh screen to see through.

bqiti fia: a colloquial Arabic expression of sympathy meaning, "I feel your pain; I understand what you are going through"

daw: light, typically manmade or artificial

ghairat: (Pashto, not Arabic), usually translated as "honor" in English, describing one's position of honor, a code of integrity, dignity and pride.

Hadith (pl. ahadith): traditions relating what was said or done by Muhammad or his companions, authenticated by a chain of oral transmitters

Hajar: the Arabic name for the biblical Hagar, the mother of Ishmael

hajj: annual pilgrimage to Mecca, culminating in the feast of sacrifice

haram: forbidden

hijab: a head covering worn in public by some Muslim women

hijrah: migration, particularly of early Muslims from Mecca to Medina in AD 622

hubb: love and affection

*Injil*: the Arabic name of the Gospel of Jesus, which Christians call the New Testament

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kufi: a brimless, round cap worn by Muslim men

lesso: a vast, sheet-like cloth worn over skirts by women in some parts of Africa

Masihi (fem. Masihia; pl. Masihin): Christian

*melhfa:*a voluminous rectangular cloth worn by Muslim women in some parts of the world; part is wrapped around the body forming a dress and part is placed over the head and shoulders.

*mut'a*: a private and verbal temporary marriage contract for the purpose of pleasure

nawafil: optional prayers believed to confer extra benefit on the person performing them

niqab: a veil worn by some Muslim women that covers the lower face, allowing only the eyes to be visible

nour: light that is natural or created by God, not by humans

qiblah: direction of Muslim prayer (toward Mecca)

Qur'an: the holy book of Islam

sabaya: young women captured in war by the enemy; in recent times this has come to mean young women captured and forced to become sex slaves by Islamic extremists

salah (salat in conjoined form): formal prayer

salat-al-maghrib: sunset time of prayer

saum: fasting

scimitar: a short sword with a curved blade

shahada: the Muslim profession of faith

souq: marketplace

tabib (fem. tabiba): a doctor

wudd: love, affection demonstrated by action

zakat: alms-giving, charity

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## Your Story, Her Story

Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so they you inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.

ISAIAH 61:7

It has been said that shame is put upon one by another. No one voluntarily takes it up and wears it proudly. Rather, like a heavy wool shroud saturated with the weight of humiliation and fear, it forces its wearer into hiding. The one cloaked in shame loses her voice...for a time. Shame is not unique to least-developed countries, the seemingly forsaken places. It is not merely the plight of women behind veils, young girls trafficked across borders. Shame is lurking in every culture and every land. Perhaps shame lurks in your own story too.

This book seeks to give a voice to the voiceless. In its pages you will observe firsthand the magnificent work of the *God of Instead*, He who gives beauty instead of ashes, gladness instead of mourning, and praise instead of despair. The Savior is moving in the world today, preaching good news to the poor, binding up the brokenhearted, and proclaiming freedom for the captives. He releases those imprisoned by shame, bestowing on them the favor of the Lord (Isaiah 61). This is the hope that beckons all who come to Jesus Christ.

Hope calls us forth from the darkness, singing songs of deliverance with a clear, resonant voice, promising an inheritance of joy. In these

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pages, may you find your own voice rising with the voices of women around the Muslim world who have been called out of shame and ushered forth into honor and hope, freedom and deliverance. May you discover that both your voice and their voices share the same cry for honor restored. We are much more alike than we realize.

I learned about our similarities firsthand. I could not have imagined as a child that my story was preparing me for the stories of the women in this book. I had no idea I was part of a greater, silent group of women who are loved and pursued by the same Rescuer, Jesus Christ. Now as I lay my pain, my healing, and my joy down alongside the Muslim women in my life, I can see so clearly that my story and theirs are part of the greater story of what God is doing in the world today. My own pain has become deep joy as I have sat across from women around the world, watching the light burst forth in their eyes as they realize for the first time that Jesus values them, honors them, and completes them.

As a young American Christian girl, I just wanted to be good. I listened to my parents and my pastor, and I went to church on Sunday. I loved God and tried very hard to be a good Christian. But in the privacy of my home, things were terribly wrong. Those who should have loved and protected me abused me instead. Shame suffocated me and choked my dreams. God did not seem to be answering my prayers. Why did God not rescue me? My confusion grew as the despair of my heart deepened.

One rainy afternoon when I was 13 years old I decided it must end. Trembling with fear, my eyes tightly shut, I wanted to die. Life had become too unbearable, the shame of abuse too heavy to endure. I could see no other way out to freedom than death. With all my might, I cried out to God to take my life. I knew He had the power to do it. And why shouldn't He? My life was of no value.

Suddenly the door to my room opened and my eyes grew wide with alarm. Standing in my doorway was Jesus, His hand outstretched. *I am the only way out of this. Follow Me.* An unexpected, shocking peace filled my heart as I tried to comprehend what I was seeing and hearing. *Yes! Yes, I will follow You!* The answer of my soul rose like a chorus

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of hope, its crescendo deafening the fear that had gripped me only moments before.

On that day, I began the long journey out of shame. I realized my God knew me. He knew me and cared enough to come to me in the place of my shame and confinement and rescue me. This was the moment the chrysalis of my old life cracked open, freeing me to fly into hope. I believed Jesus's words that afternoon, and I began following Him out of shame and into honor, restoration, and freedom. I am still making that journey.

I thought my experience was unique. I had no idea that in the Muslim world, girls like me were also encountering Jesus in visions and dreams and choosing to believe His life-giving words. I did not realize how much I was like them, trying to be good, following the religious rules of my parents, trying to win God's favor but fearing I never could.

As an adult, my journey with the Savior took me to the other side of the world, where I shared the love of Christ with all who would listen. One night in the inky darkness, a Muslim woman came to my door and quietly knocked. Her little daughter had fallen into the fire and was seriously burned. I brought them into my small front room and by the light of a kerosene lantern began to tend the little girl's wounds. As I gently applied medicine to the burns, I explained that I was doing this in the name of Jesus, the Messiah. I told the young mother that Jesus had been wounded for us, that He had taken our shame and fear away and given us honor and freedom instead. I was really sharing my own story, the story Jesus had written in my life as I had trusted His promises.

With a gasp, the woman exclaimed, "So His name is Jesus! He said you would come one day and tell me His name. *I have been waiting*." The joy in her eyes lit the dark room even as tears streamed forth, sparkling in the lamplight. I was flooded with confusion. She had been waiting for me? Her incredible story came tumbling out.

As a young girl, she had been quiet and shy. Her family was too poor to send her to school, and she never learned to read. Islam and animism blended together into Folk Islam, coloring her secluded life with fear and superstition. As a young man her father had accepted the teachings of a Muslim missionary who came through the village. He

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repeated the *shahada*, or Muslim profession of faith, and donned the traditional brimless cap and tunic. Nonetheless, he continued to rely upon the beliefs of his ancestors, seeking power over the spirit world through appearement. His children always wore charms to ward off sickness, and when the crops failed, he visited the local witch doctor to discover what he must do to make the spirits happy so they would bless his crops with rain and harvest.

His oldest daughter's days consisted of caring for her younger siblings and doing chores on her family's little plot of land. One day, as she handplowed the garden, her father came to her and announced she would soon be married. The man who was to be her husband was more than 30 years her senior, and her father was in debt to him. Her betrothed was a powerful witch doctor, famous for his strong and effective curses. Her father had sought his help for retribution against neighbors who had stubbornly encroached on the boundaries of his fields. The curse had apparently worked, and the neighbor's oldest son had died. Now she would be the payment that would settle her father's debt. She was 14 years old.

One night shortly after her marriage, the girl-bride had a dream. Her eyes danced as she explained to me, "A man dressed in light came to me and said, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Follow Me." He showed me the wounds on His hands and feet, but they were healed. He told me that He is God and promised to rescue me. He said one day someone would come and tell me His name. I have been patiently waiting for you. Now I know His name! *Jesus! Jesus!*"

I sat in silent astonishment. I had gone to seminary, studied Islam and its holy book, the Qur'an, and learned the local language. I had tried my best to adapt to the culture so the gospel would be welcome. But no training could have prepared me for the shock I was feeling in that moment as I realized the exquisite resemblance between this Muslim woman's story and my own. And to think that God allowed *me* to be the one to tell her His name, when He could have chosen any other means to do so! Her story and mine were eternally, inextricably bound together in His bigger story. We had no doubt as we sat there in silent communion that we were known and loved by the Messiah.

A quiet voice said to my heart, She knows what the pit looks like. She

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lived there too. And I came to rescue her like I rescued you. She mattered that much to Me. As a young girl, I was exploited by sinful people, and shame became my master. On that dark night in the flickering light of a kerosene lantern, a woman sat beside me who had also been bound by shame from girlhood. Her childhood cut short, she had become enslaved to another person's sin. And Jesus came to her and promised her hope like He had to me. As I listened to her story, I was ushered into a sisterhood of common experience, common suffering, and common need for a Savior. Jesus had rescued us both from shame.

Perhaps you do not identify with shame. Maybe your story seems far from the experience of the Muslim woman you see on the news, weeping alongside the rubble that was once her home before a bomb blast tore it apart. You want to understand and help, but her world seems beyond your reach.

Do you stand like an explorer on the edge of a great chasm, wondering if it is even possible for you to cross the deep divide that appears to exist between you and the veiled woman you see in the grocery store? As she ushers her children down the street in your city, do you wonder inside if she worries about them like you do your own?

Does the Muslim girl next to you on the bus have dreams like yours? Is she an enemy? Can she see that you are afraid of her? Have you ever wondered if she is afraid of you?

What makes her feel honored? For that matter, what is honor in the first place? What is the difference between honor in your culture and honor in the Islamic culture? What does the Bible say about honor and its role in the restoration of women? How can you practically cross the chasm and build a sincere, authentic relationship with her? How can you overcome your feelings of fear and mistrust?

This book seeks to answer these questions and many more as we explore the Islamic worldview of honor and shame and their vital functions in our perceptions of Muslim women. An understanding of the honor and shame worldview will open doors to friendship and respect. Through its lens, you will become a more effective communicator of the gospel of Christ.

There is a Rescuer who knows each person by name, a Savior who

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sees each one. His name is Jesus, and He is moving and working in cultures around the world today. God has been restoring the honor of people throughout history. Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, stripped shame of its power and secured our honor forever.

Our journey with Christ may be part of someone else's story. The challenges we have faced, the unique struggles and joys, the private triumphs and the cries of our hearts have all prepared us to come alongside Muslim women and live life with them. We have been equipped to share our common need for a Savior and the faithfulness of the One who rescues women from shame.

Nothing, in fact, separates us from our Muslim neighbors except for our experience of the redeeming power of Jesus Christ. We are not as different as we may think from the women we see behind the veil at the department store, at the soccer field, or on college campuses. Our needs and theirs are the same. Our solution and theirs are the same. The first step toward compassion, toward true comfort, is the realization of how much we are alike.

We serve a God who sees us. He sees every woman. He is the God who saw me, and the God who saw my Muslim friend. He came *Himself* to rescue each of us from shame, because we matter that much to Him.

Our desperation, our life's challenges, our dreams, and our hopes are exquisitely similar to those of Muslim women around the world. And our need for a Savior to rescue us from shame is identical. What is *not* identical, however, is how you both view the world. An understanding of her worldview will aid you greatly in sharing the love of the Messiah with her.

In the pages of this book, you will begin to learn exactly how to do that. You will hear stories of Muslim women from far and near, chronicles of their exceptional journeys from shame to honor. You will learn more about the predominant Islamic worldview of honor and shame and how it specifically impacts women. You will acquire tools to help you explain to your Muslim friend the way out of shame by using examples of honor from Scripture. Most of all, as your stories intertwine, you will be disarmed by the overwhelming love Jesus has for both of you.

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# FOR FURTHER STUDY

This book seeks to ignite the shame conversation by allowing readers to peer into gripping, true accounts of brave women across the globe who have taken the daunting journey from shame to honor in Christ. Some women in these pages are still on the journey. Others have fully embraced the honor Jesus gives and become His followers.

Where are you in the journey from shame to honor? The study questions at the end of each chapter are an opportunity for you deepen your understanding of what the Bible has to say about shame as you examine your own position before God. For all who are hiding, may you hear His voice calling you by name, inviting you to become an insider, forever.

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Part One

# Honor Understood



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# Identity Theft

All day long I feel humiliated and am overwhelmed with shame.

**PSALM 44:15 NET** 

### SHAME: A FEELING

In a small, rural American community, a teenage girl quietly climbed through her bedroom window and leaped to the ground, running to the designated meeting spot. Hidden around a curve in the narrow road, the getaway car waited, its lights turned off in the darkness. A shadowy figure stood by the open trunk. The girl scrambled inside, her small bag landing with a thump over her shoulder. The door slammed shut and she lay in the blackness, trembling as the engine started and the car began its descent down the steep mountain. In this place where no light shone, a second life was hidden. The young runaway carried a tiny baby in her womb, unseen, unplanned, and unwanted.

A suffocating, heavy-as-lead, immobilizing feeling accompanied the inky darkness on that unforgettable night as the 16-year-old escaped in the trunk of a car. It was the feeling of shame, and it would not only guide this mother-to-be's choices but would define her baby's life. This powerful feeling would cause deep agony, painful rejection, and even attempted suicide. But, in the glorious end, it would eventually lead its bearers to find God.

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### SHAME: A POSITION

One burning-hot day many years later on the other side of the world, a young Muslim woman groaned with the pains of labor. She crouched in the door of her rough-hewn stone house, a silent scream welling up in her chest. The baby would not wait for the midwife. Her nine-year-old sister frantically gathered linens, eyes wide with alarm as she shouted for help. In a distant field, an old woman heard the screams, dropped her wood bundle, and ran toward the house to help.

A newborn's cry pierced the bright afternoon sky as the exhausted mother collapsed on the floor. Then suddenly the room fell silent as everyone stared at the infant boy still kicking in his newborn warmth. His face was horribly disfigured, marred by a cleft lip and palate. The villagers acted swiftly, following an unwritten set of rules. The new mother, father, and baby were ushered away under cover of darkness that same night, never to be seen in the village again. Their names were not spoken from that day forward.

That small family lost their position of belonging, or honor, on that fateful day. According to the beliefs of their culture, the birth of a child with a disability brought shame on their family, their village, and their tribe. The little family found themselves in a new social category that would define the rest of their and their child's lives. They were in a position of shame. This undesirable status would plunge them into poverty, addiction, and prostitution. But in the magnificent end, it would lead them to find the God who delivers from all shame.

### SHAME: AN IDENTITY CRISIS

The experience of shame is much more than a devastating emotion or being ostracized by a group. In roughly one-third of the world, the part sometimes referred to as the "Western World," people tend to reduce shame to just one more negative emotion, a feeling they would prefer to avoid. In the other two-thirds of the world, also called the "Majority World," its eradication is pursued with vengeance.

In Western cultures, people often talk about overcoming *feelings* of shame. Shame is undesirable, to be avoided. It is a verdict, decided by uncompassionate people who pass judgment on others, sometimes

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without even knowing them personally. Twenty years after her infamous affair with Bill Clinton, Monica Lewinsky said, "Shame sticks to you like tar," describing her humiliating experience as being "like [having] every layer of my skin and my identity... ripped off." Shame changed Monica Lewinsky's identity. She who once was considered *good* became a symbol of *bad*.

Though the affair was consensual, Lewinsky bore the greater burden of shame. Enduring intense public scrutiny, Monica Lewinsky became a household name. Bill Clinton, on the other hand, went on to finish his second term as president of the United States and left the White House with strong public approval ratings. Monica was not allowed the privilege of public forgiveness and approval. Instead, she was further ostracized and mocked. At times she considered ending her life.

In the two decades since the famous Starr investigation into the relationship, Monica has been bravely taking one step at a time toward healing and rebuilding her life. Today she is an inspiring champion for others suffering from shame. She has learned that shame does not have to dictate the end of her story.<sup>2</sup> Monica Lewinsky has sadly been forced to work through her shame in front of a world audience. For many Westerners, however, shame is something secret and hidden, dealt with on a very private level, if at all.

In Western culture, shame typically focuses on the individual. People are responsible for themselves. Honor or shame directly affect the person, not necessarily the group. As a result, there are resources for the individual that make shame recovery more possible. Self-help books, counseling, and support groups are available. Lewinsky was ostracized and removed from the political arena where she once had the potential to expand her career and position in that group. However she been able to rebuild and repurpose her life despite what happened to her 20 years ago.

In the majority world, where belonging to the group is more important than individual uniqueness, honor and shame are actual positions in society. Those who follow all the rules of such a collectivist community maintain positions of honor, or belonging, in the group. In

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collectivist cultures, the group's health matters more than that of any independent person. A focus on what is best for the individual is often viewed as strange or greedy to those peering in through an honorshame worldview.

To remove shame from the group, the one shamed in that society may essentially disappear, never to reemerge. The 14-year-old village girl who obediently marries a man much older than her and bears him a son the following year holds a secure place of honor in her family and community. The 10-year-old boy who fasts during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan brings honor to his family and is deemed a faithful son who will one day grow up to be an honorable man. But those who break the rules, who do something separate or different, bring shame upon themselves, their families, and their communities. The girl who refuses a customary arranged marriage because she loves another is forced to flee from her family for fear of death. The woman who was wearing Western clothing instead of a burqa when she was sexually assaulted on the bus is blamed for the perpetrator's actions and later beaten by her mother for shaming the family.<sup>3</sup>

Honor is lost, and shame is the consequence. Sometimes the shift from honor to shame happens through no fault of one's own, as in the case of the young mother who gave birth to a child with a disability in a culture where deformity is deemed shameful and was forced to move away from her village. Whether someone's deed is intentional or not, the one who diverts from the prescribed route of honorable behavior is forced into a position of shame.

Shame changes one's very identity. The one who once was *accepted* is now *rejected*. The *insider* is now an *outsider*. Those operating from a Western worldview usually seek to avoid shame at all costs because of the discomfort and destruction it brings to one's self-esteem. Many people from an honor-shame worldview, on the other hand, seek to avoid shame at all costs because it casts one outside of society and brings dishonor to the family, the tribe, and the nation. An encounter with shame, no matter the individual's culture or worldview of origin, impacts what that person believes about him- or herself.

Shame whispers its ancient lie: You are without value. You are

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rejected. You are dirty. You are bad. Some linguists suggest that our English word *shame* derived from a term meaning to "cover one's self." Shame covers the truth about its bearer. Her value is no longer visible to her. Instead, she is covered in a lie about who she is.

### SHAME'S BEGINNING

God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27 NET).

Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame (Genesis 2:25).

There was a time when man and woman knew exactly who they were. They did not doubt, they were not confused, and they did not engage in comparison. Humanity was not on a quest for affirmation, for it needed none. Man and woman, created in God's image, walked with God and rested, satisfied in the deep assurance of their value. Shame did not exist. Their nakedness symbolized only their complete acceptance by God and each other.

This is the earliest picture of honor, the opposite of shame. Honor is essential to both relationship and belonging. Honor is unquestioned value. Honor is reciprocal. It is given and returned. Honor nurtures a sense of belonging, creating and facilitating deep, meaningful relationships. This is the rich and fulfilling environment into which man and woman were created, invited, and included in the circle of fellowship with God and each other. Honor was God's intention for humankind.

But when the first lie was whispered to the first woman, the honor of humanity was questioned.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?" (Genesis 3:1).

Man and woman began to scrutinize themselves. God's enemy challenged the very source of humanity's value. The serpent questioned

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the character of God and cast doubt on His character. "You will not certainly die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5). You will be like God. Man and woman were already complete, lacking nothing. Made in His image, they walked beside Him in fellowship and had all they needed for life. This was the essence of their identity. The lie hidden in the temptation was this: You are not complete. He is actually against you. You are missing out. God cannot be trusted.

When the man and the woman believed that lie, shame crept into the soul of humanity and began its insidious work of identity theft. Stealing woman's and man's identities, shame demanded they take their eyes off God and begin the long examination of themselves that would stretch through the ages, spreading its insecurity throughout all generations. Shame drew man and woman out of sacred fellowship and identification with God. They experienced the anguish of separation from the source of their identity. They found themselves outsiders in a lonely place. Many of their descendants would turn against God and each other.

Shame is a feeling of agonizing loneliness, a state of not belonging. Shame ostracizes its bearer and forces him away from relationship. He must rely upon himself. This leads to radical individualism and an impaired ability to form healthy relationships with others or with God. The one covered in shame has forgotten her created identity, the right given to her by the One who lovingly made her and instilled her with value. She has forgotten that she is made in the image of God, priceless and cherished. Shame has stolen her identity.

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# FOR FURTHER STUDY

- 1. Psalm 139 is a beautiful example of the intended relationship of belonging between God and people. Verse 1 reads, "You have searched me, LORD, and you know me." The Hebrew word here for "know" is *yada*, and one primary element of its rich meaning is to understand. A crucial element of any trusting relationship is understanding. God demonstrates our belonging to Him, and His belonging to us, through this intimate term in the very first verse of Psalm 139. He understands you and me better than we understand ourselves. Read the psalm and underline each word or phrase that illustrates God's intimate knowledge of us.
- 2. Reading this psalm may be new or painful for some. Perhaps you have never felt known by God, or you may have been hurt by those who claimed to understand you and now you do not trust God or people. Read the psalm once more and ask God to show you today that He indeed knows you and loves you. Find a follower of Christ you can trust and ask her or him to pray with you for increased hope and healing.

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