



# GOING DEEPER

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

January 15, 2017

### Discussion Guide

#### THE GIFT OF RECEIVING

##### CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

##### GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- DO YOU FIND THAT IT IS EASIER TO SHOW LOVE THAN TO RECEIVE LOVE? WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?

##### DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, DISCUSS THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF HONOR AND SHAME IN THE WORLD IN WHICH JESUS LIVED?
- READ LUKE 7.36-47 OUT LOUD. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, THIS TIME SEEKING TO PUT YOURSELF IN JESUS' SHOES. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, SEEKING TO EXPERIENCE THE SCENE AS JESUS.
- AS YOU EXPERIENCE THIS SCENE AS JESUS, WHAT FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS, IF ANY, ARE EVOKED IN YOU? WHERE MIGHT THESE COME FROM?
- READ JOHN 13.1-8 OUT LOUD. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, THIS TIME SEEKING TO PUT YOURSELF IN PETER'S SHOES. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, SEEKING TO EXPERIENCE THE SCENE AS PETER.
- AS YOU EXPERIENCE THIS SCENE, WHAT FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS, IF ANY, ARE EVOKED IN YOU?
- CONSIDERING THE DIFFERENT SCENES, IN WHAT WAYS DO PETER AND JESUS RECEIVE LOVE? WHAT ARE THE SIMILARITIES AND THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM?
- AS YOU CONSIDER THE DIFFERENT WAYS PETER AND JESUS RECEIVED LOVE, WITH WHOM DO YOU RESONATE MORE? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- READ JOHN 13.34-35 ALOUD. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE.
- IN WHAT WAYS, DOES CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY REQUIRE BOTH THE GIVING AND RECEIVING OF LOVE?
- TO WHICH CATEGORY DO PEOPLE TEND TO BEND, GIVING OR RECEIVING? WHY MIGHT THIS BE? WHAT EFFECT DOES THIS HAVE ON THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH? THE PERSON OF FAITH?

- WHAT MIGHT IT TAKE TO FREELY GIVE AND RECEIVE LOVE? WHAT STEPS, IF ANY, MIGHT YOU BE WILLING TO TAKE TO MOVE TO THIS STATE? WHAT ROLE, IF ANY, MIGHT THIS COMMUNITY PLAY IN HELPING YOU TAKE THOSE STEPS?

## CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

### HONOR AND SHAME IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

HONOR WAS A CORE VALUE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD. IT WAS SOUGHT AFTER WHILE ITS NEGATIVE COROLLARY, SHAME, WAS FASTIDIOUSLY AVOIDED. THIS IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE WESTERN CULTURE IN WHICH WE LIVE. IN OUR CULTURE, PERFORMANCE IS VALUED WHILE MAKING A MISTAKE OR FAILURE IS AVOIDED. ONE MIGHT SAY THAT WHILE THE ANCIENT WORLD FOCUSED ON SHAME AVOIDANCE OUR MODERN WESTERN CULTURE FOCUSES ON GUILT (DOING SOMETHING WRONG) AVOIDANCE.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HONOR IS SEEN THROUGHOUT THE WRITINGS OF THE ANCIENT WORLD, INCLUDING THE WRITINGS OF JEWISH THINKERS AND THE AUTHORS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. IN FACT, MANY POINTS MADE BY THE AUTHORS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT COME INTO FULLER LIGHT WHEN ONE READS SCRIPTURE THROUGH THE LENS OF AN HONOR-SHAME SOCIETY. PHILO, THE ALEXANDRIAN JEWISH PHILOSOPHER WROTE THAT "FAME AND HONOR ARE THE MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION" (ABRAHAM 264), WHILE PAUL SPOKE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF HEAPING HONOR UPON ONE ANOTHER (ROMANS 12.10). AT ITS ROOT, HONOR WAS ABOUT ONE'S PUBLIC REPUTATION. A PERSON'S HONOR CONSISTED OF HIS STATUS AND THE RECOGNITION OF THAT STATUS BY OTHERS; THAT IS, HONOR COULD ONLY COME WHEN IT WAS RECOGNIZED AS SUCH BY OTHERS. HONOR WAS TIED TO THINGS LIKE POWER, WEALTH, LOYALTY OF OTHERS AND EXCELLENCE, AND FUNCTIONED MUCH LIKE CURRENCY. IT COULD BE USED TO GAIN MANY OF THESE ITEMS. FURTHER, HONOR DETERMINED THE COURSE OF ONE'S LIFE. IT WAS ONE'S HONOR WHICH DETERMINED ONE'S COMMUNITY, ROLE, AND SPOUSE.

THE ANCIENT WORLD UNDERSTOOD HONOR TO BE A LIMITED GOOD, A PRECIOUS COMMODITY FOR WHICH THERE WAS ONLY A CERTAIN AMOUNT AND THAT AMOUNT WAS ALREADY FULLY DISTRIBUTED AMONG PEOPLE. THAT MEANT THAT IN ORDER FOR A PERSON TO GAIN GREATER HONOR, SOMEONE ELSE HAD TO LOSE HONOR (EXPERIENCE SHAME). HONOR COULD BE GAINED THROUGH THE ACQUISITION OF HONOR OR THE ASCRIBING OF HONOR BY OTHERS. ASCRIBED HONOR WAS FOUND IN THINGS LIKE THE FAMILY INTO WHICH A PERSON WAS BORN OR THE POSITION WHICH ONE HELD. HONOR COULD BE ACQUIRED THROUGH ONE'S VALIANT ACTIONS OR THROUGH A PROCESS REFERRED TO AS CHALLENGE AND RIPOSTE. IN A CHALLENGE AND RIPOSTE SCENARIO, ONE PERSON CHALLENGED THE HONOR OF ANOTHER. WHEN THIS HAPPENED, CULTURAL RULES DEMANDED THAT THE OFFENDED/CHALLENGED PERSON DEFEND HIMSELF. IF HE DID

NOT RESPOND OR IF HE FAILED TO DEFEND HIS HONOR EFFECTIVELY, THEN HIS HONOR WAS SHIFTED TO THE STATUS OF THE ONE WHO CHALLENGED HIM. THE PROCESS OF CHALLENGE AND RIPOSTE IS FOUNDATIONAL TO THE ARGUMENTS BETWEEN JESUS AND THE RELIGIOUS ELITE. IN THEIR ARGUMENTS, THEY WERE SEEKING TO ROB JESUS OF HIS HONOR SO THAT THE RELIGIOUS ELITE COULD RETAIN THEIR STATUS AMONG THE PEOPLE (MATTHEW 21.23-27; JOHN 12.18-19).

## THE TEXT

### LUKE 7.36-47: RECEIVING LOVE

IN LUKE 7, WE FIND JESUS IN THE MIDST OF HIS MINISTRY IN GALILEE, A MINISTRY WHICH WILL CONTINUE UNTIL JESUS BEGINS HIS FINAL JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM (LUKE 9.51). LUKE RECORDS THAT SOMETIME DURING THIS MINISTRY, JESUS WAS INVITED TO THE HOME OF A PHARISEE FOR DINNER. TYPICALLY, AN INVITATION TO DINNER INDICATED THAT ONE WAS BEING WELCOMED INTO INTIMATE COMMUNITY. HOWEVER, THROUGHOUT JESUS' MINISTRY, THE PHARISEES OFTEN WERE DUPLICITOUS WITH THEIR DINNER INVITATIONS, USING THEM TO EVALUATE AND JUDGE JESUS RATHER TO RECEIVE HIM AS A FRIEND OR COMPANION. THIS DUPLICITY OFTEN CREATED A TENSION WHICH PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR JESUS TO ADDRESS AREAS OF THE HEARTS OF HIS HOSTS. SUCH IS THE CASE IN THE PRESENT SETTING.

FURTHER, MANY DINNERS HOSTED BY PUBLIC FIGURES ALSO FUNCTIONED AS SOCIAL GATHERINGS; THAT IS, OUTSIDERS WERE INVITED TO "ATTEND" SO LONG AS THEY DID NOT APPROACH THE TABLE AS AN INVITED GUEST. THEY WERE PERMITTED TO SIT ALONG THE WALL AND LISTEN TO THE CONVERSATION BEING HELD AT THE TABLE. THESE DINNERS WERE THE ANCIENT WAY OF INTRODUCING SOMEONE LIKE JESUS TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY. MANY OF THE DINNERS JESUS ATTENDED, HOSTED BY THE PHARISEES, SHOULD BE CLASSIFIED AS THIS SORT OF SOCIAL DINNER. THIS CLASSIFICATION EXPLAINS WHY A WIDE RANGE OF PEOPLE ARE FOUND TO BE PRESENT IN THE HOME OF A RELIGIOUS ELITE, PEOPLE WHO WOULD NOT NORMALLY BE WELCOME.

AT THIS DINNER, A CERTAIN WOMAN OF ILL REPUTE HAS HEARD THAT JESUS IS IN TOWN AND HAS ENTERED THE DINING ROOM AS JESUS AND THE PHARISEE CONVERSE. THE NATURE OF HER SIN IS NOT STATED. SOME HAVE ARGUED THAT SHE WAS A PROSTITUTE WHICH IS VERY LIKELY GIVEN THE COSTLY PERFUME WHICH SHE BEARS. THIS PERFUME AND ITS BOTTLE WERE PROBABLY THE GIFT OF A WEALTHY CLIENT. HOWEVER, THE CLASSIFICATION OF PROSTITUTION IS NOT CERTAIN. THIS WOMAN COULD BE RELIGIOUSLY UNCLEAN, A WOMAN WHO OWED MONEY, OR SIMPLY THE WIFE OF A SINFUL MAN IN THE COMMUNITY. IT DID NOT TAKE MUCH TO BE CLASSIFIED AS "SINFUL" BY THE PHARISEES. MOST COMMON PEOPLE WERE CLASSIFIED AS SUCH BECAUSE THEY DID NOT NOR COULD NOT KEEP THE ENTIRETY OF THE JEWISH LAW WHICH DREW THE LABEL OF "SINFUL."

AT SOME POINT DURING THE DINNER, THE WOMAN IS OVERCOME WITH EMOTION AND APPROACHES THE TABLE, STANDING BEHIND JESUS. AS SHE APPROACHES, SHE BEGINS TO CRY PROFUSELY, HER TEARS FALLING UPON JESUS' FEET. AS HER TEARS FALL, SHE UNDOES HER HAIR (A SCANDALOUS PUBLIC BEHAVIOR FOR A WOMAN) AND WIPES JESUS' FEET AND KISSES THEM (ANOTHER SCANDALOUS BEHAVIOR, THAT OF A WOMAN PUBLICLY TOUCHING A MAN). HAVING WIPED JESUS' FEET, THE WOMAN THEN ANOINTS HIS FEET WITH THE MOST PRECIOUS OF PERFUMES MYRRH. THE SCENE IS UNUSUAL ON SEVERAL POINTS. FIRST, JESUS NEVER ADDRESSES THE WOMAN OR ACKNOWLEDGES HER PRESENCE. HE SIMPLY ALLOWS HER TO TOUCH AND ANOINT HIM. SECOND, THE WOMAN PERFORMS ACTIONS, ALBEIT IN A STRANGE FASHION, WHICH A HOST NORMALLY HAD PERFORMED FOR A GUEST. IT WAS THE HOST'S DUTY TO HAVE A GUEST'S FEET WASHED TO CLEANSE THE GRIME AND EXCREMENT WHICH COATED THE FEET OF ANYONE WHO WALKED THE STREETS AND TO ANOINT A GUEST WITH SCENTED OIL TO ELIMINATE BODY ODOR. AT THIS POINT IN THE STORY, THE WOMAN'S ACTIONS ARE UNUSUAL BECAUSE THE READER EXPECTS THESE ACTIONS TO HAVE ALREADY BEEN PERFORMED.

THE PHARISEE SEES THE EVENTS UNFOLDING AND IS ALARMED. HE IS ALARMED BECAUSE A "SINFUL" WOMAN HAS APPROACHED HIS "CLEAN" TABLE AND BEGUN TO ACT IN CULTURALLY-DEFINED SHAMEFUL WAYS. HOWEVER, HE IS MORE ALARMED BY JESUS' RESPONSE. HE IS UNSURE AS TO WHY JESUS DOES NOT ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SOMEONE, MUCH LESS A WOMAN IS TOUCHING HIM AND THAT JESUS DOES NOT SEEM TO RECOGNIZE THAT THIS WOMAN IS SINFUL. HE CONCLUDES THAT JESUS IS NOT A PROPHET BECAUSE IF HE WAS, HE WOULD KNOW THESE THINGS. FURTHER, IN CULTURAL TERMS, JESUS HAS NOW BEEN SHAMED BY THIS WOMAN, HER SINFULNESS BEING TRANSMITTED TO JESUS THROUGH HER TOUCH. JESUS HAS BEHAVED POORLY IN CULTURAL TERMS BECAUSE HE HAS NOT DEFENDED HIS HONOR AND REFUSED THIS WOMAN.

IN A MOVE OF DELICIOUS IRONY, JESUS DEMONSTRATES HIS ROLE AS A PROPHET BECAUSE HE "HEARS" THE INNER DIALOGUE OF THIS PHARISEE, SOMETHING WHICH INDICATES THAT HE DOES KNOW IT IS A WOMAN WHO IS TOUCHING HIM AND THAT SHE IS LABELED AS "SINFUL" BY OTHERS. JESUS ENGAGES THE PHARISEE, WHOSE NAME IS SIMON, ASKING HIM TO STATE WHICH PERSON WOULD LOVE MORE, ONE WHO WAS FORGIVEN MUCH OR LITTLE. SIMON ANSWERS CORRECTLY, THAT ONE WHO IS FORGIVEN MUCH WOULD LOVE MUCH. JESUS THEN ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THIS WOMAN IS DEMONSTRATING GREAT LOVE BECAUSE SHE HAS BEEN FORGIVEN MUCH. HERE, JESUS CHALLENGES THE WOMAN'S LABEL AS SINNER BY GIVING HER A NEW MORE HONORABLE LABEL OF "FORGIVEN." SECOND, JESUS INDICATES THAT THE WOMAN HAS ONLY DONE WHAT THE PHARISEE HIMSELF HAS NOT DONE. THIS "SINFUL" WOMAN HAS BEEN A BETTER HOST IN A HOME WHICH IS NOT HER OWN THAT THE FOUNDER OF THE FEAST.

FINALLY, JESUS SETS THE WOMAN FREE TO GO IN PEACE, BEARING HER HONORABLE LABEL OF FORGIVEN.

IN THIS SCENE, JESUS CHALLENGES THE WAY LABELS ARE GIVEN AND DEMONSTRATES HOW GOD RECEIVES PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN LABELED AS SINFUL. THIS IS A DIRECT CHALLENGE TO THE WAY THE PHARISEES UNDERSTOOD THE WORLD AROUND THEM. HOWEVER, IN THIS STORY, WE ALSO SEE THE WAY JESUS WAS WILLING TO RECEIVE LOVE. JESUS WAS IN NEED OF COMMON SERVICE, THE WASHING OF HIS FEET AND THE ANOINTING OF HIS BODY WITH OIL. WHEN HE FOUND HIMSELF IN NEED, JESUS WILLINGLY ALLOWED ANOTHER TO SERVE HIM WITH ACTIONS ROOTED IN LOVE. HE DID NOT REFUSE THEM OR GUIDE THEM, BUT RECEIVED THEM WILLINGLY, EVEN FROM ONE CLASSIFIED AS "SINFUL" BY HER CULTURE. FOR THESE EVENTS TO TRANSPIRE, JESUS HAD TO BE FREE FROM A SENSE OF SHAME. THEREFORE, HE DID NOT FEAR THE TOUCH OF THIS WOMAN AS SHE SERVED HIM IN LOVE.

### **JOHN 13.1-17, 34-35: REFUSING LOVE**

IN JOHN 13, JESUS SHARES A PASSOVER-THEMED MEAL WITH HIS DISCIPLES ON THE NIGHT OF HIS ARREST. JESUS WILL USE THIS MEAL WITH ITS PASSOVER THEME AND HIS ACTIONS TO INTERPRET THE EVENTS WHICH ARE ABOUT TO UNFOLD. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT JOHN INDICATES THAT EVERYTHING WHICH IS ABOUT TO TRANSPIRE AT THIS MEAL UP TO THE CROSS IS ROOTED IN LOVE.

IN THE MIDST OF THIS MEAL, JESUS GETS UP FROM THE TABLE, CLOTHES HIMSELF LIKE A SERVANT AND BEGINS TO WASH THE FEET OF HIS DISCIPLES. THIS IS A HIGHLY UNUSUAL ACTION BECAUSE THE TIME FOR THE WASHING OF FEET HAS PASSED. THAT THE DISCIPLES ARE ALREADY AT THE TABLE AND SHARING A MEAL INDICATES THAT THEIR FEET HAVE ALREADY BEEN WASHED. THEREFORE, JESUS' ACTIONS TAKE ON SYMBOLIC MEANING WHICH JESUS DECLARES HE WILL EXPLAIN. AS JESUS MOVES FROM ONE DISCIPLE TO THE NEXT, HE COMES TO PETER. PETER IS MORE THAN RELUCTANT TO HAVE JESUS WASH HIS FEET. PETER'S RELUCTANCE HAS MORE TO DO WITH HIS UNDERSTANDING OF HONOR AND SHAME THAN IT DOES WITH JESUS TOUCHING HIS FEET. IN HIS UNDERSTANDING, AND THAT OF EVERYONE ELSE, IT WAS DISHONORABLE (SHAMEFUL) FOR JESUS, THE TEACHER, TO TAKE THE ROLE OF SERVANT AMONG HIS DISCIPLES. CULTURALLY, THE RELATIONSHIP WAS TO RUN THE OTHER WAY. THEREFORE, PETER'S REFUSAL IS HIS ARDENT ATTEMPT TO DEFEND HIS MASTER'S HONOR BY KEEPING HIM FROM SHAMEFUL BEHAVIOR. HOWEVER, JESUS INDICATES THAT IT IS THE ACT OF RECEIVING THIS LOVING ACT OF SERVICE WHICH MAKES PETER PART OF WHAT JESUS IS DOING. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT STATEMENT BECAUSE IT HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF SERVICE IN JESUS' COMMUNITY, SOMETHING JESUS WILL EMPHASIZE AS HE COMMANDS HIS DISCIPLES TO IMITATE HIS ACTIONS. HOWEVER, IT ALSO IMPLIES THE NECESSITY OF RECEIVING THIS LOVING SERVICE TO BE PART OF JESUS' COMMUNITY.

WE SEE THIS IMPLICATION ARISE ONCE AGAIN IN VERSES 34-35. JESUS TURNS ASIDE TO ADDRESS THE BETRAYAL OF JUDAH, BUT THEN HE RETURNS ONCE MORE TO THE EXHORTATION TO SERVICE WITH A COMMAND TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS HE HAD LOVED THEM. THE CONTEXT REFERS TO THE WASHING OF FEET. THE DISCIPLES WERE TO NOT ALLOW SHAME TO KEEP THEM FROM SERVING ONE ANOTHER. HOWEVER, IMPLIED IS THAT IN THIS SCENARIO, OTHER DISCIPLES MUST REJECT SHAME AND ALLOW THEMSELVES TO RECEIVE THIS LOVING SERVICE.

## REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

SHAME. IT IS A PART OF EVERY ONE OF OUR LIVES, INCLUDING MINE. PERHAPS, I SENSE IT NOWHERE GREATER THAN WHEN SOMEONE TRIES TO SERVE ME. THIS POINT HAS COME HOME OVER THE PAST NUMBER OF MONTHS AS I HAVE STRUGGLED TO FILL THE ROLE OF A SINGLE-PARENT AS RACHEL HAS HAD TWO BACK SURGERIES IN TWO MONTHS. IN PERFECT, CHRIST-LIKE LOVE, PEOPLE HAVE JUMPED IN TO HELP WITH MEALS, THE CLEANING OF OUR HOME, AND THE SHUTTLING OF OUR CHILDREN. I SUPPOSE I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL AND GRACIOUSLY RECEIVE THESE LOVING ACTS OF KINDNESS. MOSTLY, I REFUSE THEM. I KNOW, IT MAKES NO SENSE. I KNOW THAT IN MY MIND, BUT WHEN SOMEONE SAYS, "WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP," WHAT COMES OUT IS "I DON'T NEED ANYTHING." I DON'T WANT TO SAY IT. IT JUST COMES OUT. I HAVE TRIED TO FIGHT THIS AUTOMATIC RESPONSE, BUT EVERY TIME I DO, I HAVE A TERRIBLE PHYSICAL PAIN IN MY GUT. MY BODY SIMPLY WON'T ALLOW ME TO ADMIT AND RECEIVE HELP.

I HAVE DONE A GREAT DEAL OF THINKING ABOUT WHAT I HAVE WITNESSED IN MY WORDS AND IN MY BODY. I AM CONVINCED THAT WHAT I AM EXPERIENCING IS NOTHING OTHER THAN SHAME, A SHAME WHICH WILL NOT ALLOW ME TO RECEIVE WHAT I NEED. DEEP INSIDE IS THIS SENSE THAT I SHOULDN'T NEED HELP. I SHOULD BE STRONG. I SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO IT ALL. I SHOULD NOT FAIL. I DON'T THINK I SAY THESE THINGS. THEY ARE JUST DEEP INSIDE AND THEY WORK THEIR WAY OUT. SOMEHOW, I HAVE THE IDEA THAT IF I RECEIVE HELP, EVEN THAT GIVEN FREELY IN LOVE, I AM SAYING THAT I AM NOT ENOUGH. THAT IS SHAME. SO, WHAT DO I DO ABOUT IT?

I HAVE BEEN WRESTLING WITH THIS QUESTION. I HAVE BEEN SEEKING TO FOCUS UPON JESUS, ALLOWING HIS EXAMPLE OF RECEIVING LOVE TO GIVE ME PERMISSION TO RECEIVE LOVE. I HAVE BEEN PONDERING HOW CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY REQUIRES THE RECEIPT OF LOVE, BY SOMEONE. . .EVEN IF THAT SOMEONE IS ME. THESE ARE HELPFUL, BUT WHAT I HAVE FOUND MOST HELPFUL IS TO TELL PEOPLE HOW I FEEL. I ADMIT MY SHAME. I STEP INTO COMMUNITY AND GIVE THEM PERMISSION TO SERVE ME, WITHOUT MY PERMISSION. HOWEVER, IN ADMITTING MY SHAME, I HAVE FOUND THAT THIS LOVING SERVICE IS COUPLED WITH WORDS WHICH ACKNOWLEDGE AND DISARM MY SHAME. I CAN'T SAY THAT MY SHAME HAS DISAPPEARED, BUT WITH EACH LOVING

ACT AND WORD I FEEL ITS PAIN LESSEN AND I BEGIN TO BELIEVE THAT MAYBE, JUST MAYBE I AM ENOUGH.

## REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

SHAME. IT IS PART OF ALL OF OUR LIVES, DRIVING US TO LIVE OUTSIDE THE LINES FOR LIFE WHICH GOD HAS DRAWN. PERHAPS WE CAN SEE THIS MOST CLEARLY IN OUR REFUSAL OF THE LOVING SERVICE OF OTHERS. CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY IS BASED UPON OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER. THAT MEANS THAT SOMEONE LOVES AND SOMEONE RECEIVES. WE ARE FINE WITH THE FIRST PART. NO ONE WANTS TO BE CLASSIFIED WITH THE LATER. IT BRINGS UP TOO MANY FEELINGS OF SHAME. WE FEEL WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE THE GIVER, NOT THE RECEIVER, THAT SOMEHOW IN OUR RECEIVING WE ARE DECLARING OUR LACK OF WORTH AND VALUE. ACTUALLY, NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. WHEN WE RECEIVE THE LOVE OF OTHERS WILLINGLY AND FREELY, WE ARE SAYING THAT WE ARE PEOPLE OF INFINITE WORTH. WE ARE WORTHY OF CARE. WE ARE WORTHY TO ADMIT OUR NEED. WE ARE WORTHY OF BEING SEEN.

NOW, SAYING THIS AND ACTING UPON IT ARE TWO VERY DIFFERENT THINGS. TAKING UP THE LIFE THAT JESUS LIVED REQUIRED BOTH. SO, HOW DO WE ACT AND RECEIVE PEOPLE'S LOVE? IT TAKES PRACTICE AND MUCH GRACE, BUT IT BEGINS WITH ACKNOWLEDGING THE PRESENCE OF SHAME. WHEN WE SPEAK HOW WE FEEL TO OTHERS, WE DISARM OUR SHAME BY BRINGING IT OUT INTO THE OPEN. THIS ALLOWS PEOPLE TO STEP AROUND OUR SHAME, MEET OUR NEED AND TURN BACK TO OUR SHAME AND SPEAK LOVING WORDS OF TRUTH AGAINST IT. THIS WEEK, YOU MIGHT CONSIDER THE MANY WAYS YOU SEEK TO BE THE GIVER AND NOT THE RECEIVER. WHY MIGHT THIS BE? WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO SPEAK YOUR SHAME TO THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING TO LOVE YOU? CONSIDER TRYING THIS WITH A SAFE PERSON AND WATCHING WHAT HAPPENS. YOU MIGHT JOURNAL ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE.



SENIOR  
PASTOR  
**BLAKE**  
SHIPP

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