

# MIGHTY OAK MINISTRIES



*They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. (Isaiah 61:3)*

Pat J. Sikora

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## Guilt vs. Shame

*Do you know the difference between guilt and shame?*

Understanding this critical distinction can revolutionize your life, your relationships, and your leadership.

*"Shame is the soul-deep belief that something is horribly wrong with me that is not wrong with anyone else in the entire world. If I am bound by shame, I feel hopelessly, disgustingly different and worthless. I mean literally worth less than other people.... Shame is rooted in the lie that human beings can and should be perfect."*

*Wilson, Sandra D., Ph.D.  
Hurt People Hurt People*

### Guilt

Guilt deals with what a person *does*—the behavior. Paul tells us in Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We're all sinners. Every one of us. James adds to the verdict, "We all stumble in many ways" (James 3:2).

But the key in true moral guilt is that the sin is something we've *done*. The usual and appropriate remedy for guilt is repentance and forgiveness.

Romans 3:24 reminds us that we "are justified freely by his grace" The (continued on page 2)

### Why Didn't You Warn Me?

#### How to Deal With Challenging Group Members

Have you got your copy of *Why Didn't You Warn Me? How to Deal with Challenging Group Members* yet?

You can order online at [Mighty Oak Ministries](http://Mighty Oak Ministries). You can also order the other three books in the series. Want to read a sample? Go [here](#).

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(continued from page 1) same should be true when we offend another person. A sincere apology, restitution as necessary, and it's done.

### Not so with Shame...

Shame deals with who the person *is*—their very essence. There's no way to remedy shame because it cuts to the core of the person. In guilt, you do something wrong. In shame, you are something wrong. Totally, irretrievably wrong.

In the NIV, the Hebrew and Greek words sometimes translated “shame” are also translated “disgrace” or “humiliation.” While there are certainly sins that we commit that bring shame, disgrace, and humiliation upon our souls and spirits, more often it's the sins of others—either their actions or words—that make us feel shameful. When this happens, we become victimized. In the vernacular, we're slimed.

So how do we as Christians avoid shaming others? The key here is to watch your language. Be careful that when dealing with the offense of another person, you stick with the wrongdoing and not the character.

For example, if a child is running through the house and breaks a vase, he has true moral guilt. He disobeyed and the result was a broken vase. A good mom or dad would take the child aside and deal with the issue: “Johnny, you were running in the house and broke Mom's vase. You disobeyed our rules and now we have a problem. You need to apologize to Mom and find an appropriate way to pay for the vase.”

The parent would then make sure that the apology was sincere and that the restitution or punishment was reasonable given the child's age and understanding. And the issue would be dropped.

But what often happens is that rather than dealing with the action, the sin, Mom or Dad yells and heaps a word curse on the child, “Johnny, you *are* a bad boy! You broke Mom's vase! Shame on you!”

The parent may still require punishment and restitution for the action, but in addition, the child's spirit is stained with shame. Yes, Johnny can apologize and pay for the vase, but how does he clear the shame, the disgrace? Unfortunately, it's usually ignored, stuffed, until the next offense, when he's reminded, “See, you did it again! *What a naughty boy you are!*”

*“Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.”*

Isaiah 61:7

As Johnny grows up, he may be shamed--disgraced and humiliated--a hundred times. And he may have apologized and made restitution a hundred times, but the stain on his spirit reminds him daily that at his very core, he's bad. Irredeemable. Lost. Worthless.

By the time Johnny reaches adulthood, he's covering his shame with any fig leaf he can find. By now he probably won't bother to apologize for true moral guilt because really, at the core, it didn't do any good. So he hides. Justifies. Rationalizes. And we who are (or think we are) just a little healthier get disgusted and heap on more shame.

This is often the condition we find people in when they come to Christ. Sadly, it's also the condition of many who've been Christians for a long time. We in the Body of (continued on page 3)

*If you didn't receive the FREE PDF download “Making Time for Prayer” when you signed up for the newsletter, you can get it [here](#).*

Christ have the privilege and responsibility to help one another heal shame and become whole persons again. Here are some ways we can do this:

- Be very conscious of the words and attitudes we use with one another.
- Always confront the behavior, not the person.
- Model quickly apologizing and seeking forgiveness for our own errors.
- Be quick to extend forgiveness for the behavior and practice forgetting.
- When appropriate, pray for healing and a release of shame, replacing it with forgiveness and joy.

Be sure to visit the *Why Didn't You Warn Me?* blog at <http://whydidntyouwarnme.com/blog/>



### Beauty for Ashes

If you're suffering from shame, or know someone who is, you might want to listen to our *Beauty for*

*Ashes: A Biblical Model for Healing* CD. This CD offers an understanding of Isaiah 61 as a promise for healing from deep hurts. While

the context for this recording is healing from sexual abuse, in reality, God's promises are true for any healing of the spirit or soul you might need. It's available from [Mighty Oak Ministries](#).

### Train your Leaders

Are your small group leaders ready for a mid-year shot in the arm? Could they benefit from additional training or encouragement? I'm available for an hour, a day, or a weekend. You can see a sample of topics [here](#). Or [contact me](#) and we can tailor something for your group.

**Pat J. Sikora** has been encouraging Christians for over 30 years. Her most recent book, *Why Didn't You Warn Me? How to Deal With Challenging Group Members*, gives small group leaders strategies for effectively serving the most challenging people in their groups. She ministers through Mighty Oak Ministries at [www.mightyoakministries.com](http://www.mightyoakministries.com) and *Why Didn't You Warn Me* at [www.whydidntyouwarnme.com](http://www.whydidntyouwarnme.com).

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