

WHY WE HIDE

GOD'S PLAN TO **FREE YOU FROM**
GUILT & SHAME



**MARK
BRANDES**

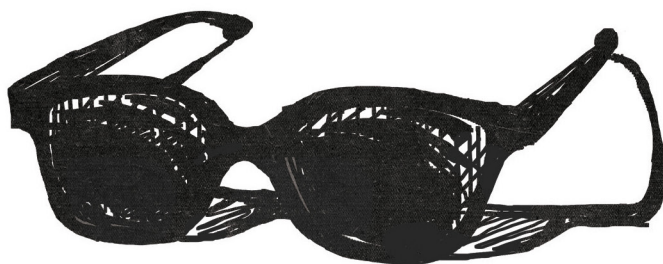
WHY WE HIDE

YOU'RE HIDING SOMETHING. YOU KNOW IT. I KNOW IT. AND OF COURSE, GOD KNOWS IT.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS. WHAT YOU'RE COVERING UP HAS YOU IN THE GRIP OF GUILT, SHAME, AND FEAR. THERE IS A WAY OUT. IN HIS LOVE, GOD PROVIDED A WAY, BUT YOU HAVE TO TRUST HIM. THIS WILL REQUIRE CHANGES IN HOW YOU THINK AND HOW YOU LIVE, BUT YOU CAN FIND FREEDOM.

SHAME IS SATAN'S MOST POWERFUL TOOL IN KEEPING CHRISTIANS AT A DISTANCE FROM GOD. GUILT AND SHAME CAUSE BELIEVERS TO HIDE THEIR WEAKNESSES FROM EACH OTHER, AND IN THEORY, AWAY FROM GOD. GOD'S DESIRE IS FOR BELIEVERS TO FIND REFUGE IN HIM, PARTNERING WITH HIM TO PURSUE THE GOOD WORKS HE HAS PLANNED FOR THEM.

WHY WE HIDE ENCOURAGES BELIEVERS TO DIG DEEP INTO THEIR SOUL TO FIND THEIR HIDDEN IDOLS AND WALK THROUGH THE PROCESS OF CONFES-
SIONAL STORYTELLING. THE BOOK IS A VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR BIBLICAL COUNSELING AND GROUP CONVERSATIONS. WANT TO LIVE A MORE EFFECTIVE LIFE FOR CHRIST? YOU WILL FIND THIS BOOK TO BE AN EXCELLENT STARTING PLACE FOR THAT JOURNEY.



MARK BRANDES MABC

MARK BRANDES' LIFE PATH REVEALS A MAN PASSIONATE ABOUT PEOPLE AS WELL AS THE ARTS. HE HAS B.A. DEGREES IN PSYCHOLOGY AND PHOTOGRAPHY, AND A M.A. IN BIBLICAL COUNSELING. THOUGH HE SPENT DECADES AS A PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER, HIS COMMITMENT IS TO COUNSELING COUPLES AND PEOPLE BURDENED BY GUILT AND SHAME. MARK LOVES LIFE IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WITH APRIL, HIS BRIDE OF OVER 40 YEARS. THEY ARE FOODIES WHO ARE AS COMFORTABLE WITH FOUR-STAR RESTAURANTS AS THEY ARE WITH FOOD TRUCKS. THEY HAVE ONE DAUGHTER IN SO CAL, AND TWO DAUGHTERS IN LOVE IN L.A., AND BOSTON. FIND MARK AT WWW.MARKBRANDES.COM.

**GOD'S PLAN TO
FREE YOU FROM
GUILT & SHAME**

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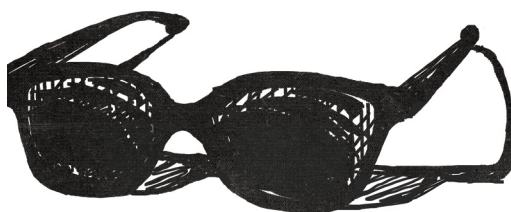
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**MARK
BRANDES**

Why We Hide: God's Plan to Free You from Guilt and Shame

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To April,
Thank you for loving me
through all of my hiding.
Love you always, B

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INTRODUCTION

Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

2 Timothy 2:21

YOU'RE HIDING SOMETHING. You know it. I know it. And of course, God knows it.

You don't have to do this. What you're covering up has you in the grip of guilt, shame, and fear. I know it's painful, but *there is a way out*. In His love, God provided a way, but you have to trust Him. This will require changes in how you think and how you live, but you can find freedom.

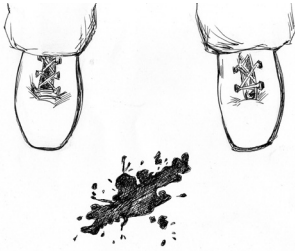
I know because I hide as well. I spent decades hiding in darkness before I found freedom in the place God provides...His refuge. God awakened me out of my secret life one Sunday afternoon:

Blood streamed down my forearm and onto the shiny white floor as I ran through the emergency room doors. The wad of paper towels

I grabbed just before I drove myself the four miles to the hospital wasn't enough to stem the flow from my left-hand fingers.

"I just cut my hand, and I need some help," I said to the receptionist, who looked first at me, and then down at the scarlet red trail I had left behind.

She waved at a chair and said, "You better sit down and take it easy. What did you do to yourself?"



"I ran my fingers through a table saw about 10 minutes ago."

"Let me take a look. Did you cut off your whole finger?"

"No, not the whole finger, but the top of my middle finger just got vaporized. I didn't have anything to pick up."

I felt so stupid. I'm sure in junior high wood shop, the teacher spent at least one entire class on table saw safety. I probably spent that class daydreaming about Leina, Carol, or some other junior high crush when I should have been taking notes about not putting my hand on the other side of the saw blade while it's moving at 7000 rpm.

"Wow," the receptionist said, "you kinda messed yourself up there."

"Yeah, I got carried away trimming my fingernails."

My feeble attempt at humor broke the tension, as I joined the reception nurse in examining my fingers. My middle finger had gotten the worst of the accident. The entire pad under my fingernail had disappeared, and I saw bits of white bone peeking out through all the raw flesh. My ring finger and little finger also had their issues, but they survived, for the most part.

As I lay back on the examining table, waiting for the doctor, I had a chance to reflect on the accident. The moment after I ran my fingers through that saw, I realized I had done much more damage than a Band Aid would fix. I remember thinking: *I'm surprised I haven't*

done something like this before. I've worked with power equipment for years, screwed down the roof of a 50-foot-tall metal barn with no safety line! Considering all the risky stuff I've done in my life, I've been pretty lucky.

To be honest, I'm not lucky. I've been protected by God for so many years, but today felt different. I believe God intended this as a wake-up call. He wanted my attention about concealing some major wrongdoings in my life, and He used a table saw to get it. Effective method of correction, don't you think?



I BELIEVE GOD
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A WAKE-UP CALL.
HE WANTED MY
ATTENTION ABOUT
CONCEALING SOME
MAJOR WRONGDOINGS
IN MY LIFE

That day changed *everything* for me. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me back up so you know why I might say this. It won't take too long, and you'll get the full picture.

SNEAKY TWERP

As a kid, I did things I knew I shouldn't...I was a sneaky twerp, I'd say. When it came to discipline and teaching character, my dad lacked the patience to weather those storms. He took the easy way out. He'd spank me until I'd cry and then felt he had taken care of his responsibility.

My dad served as a pastor of a Christian church. I think he and my mom assumed I had a strong moral compass because I went to church with them. Nope. Not so much. My compass just *pointed toward me*, toward what my appetites dictated. My universe surrounded me, and my parents didn't discourage that attitude.

Training up a child in godly character and discipline requires more than just a few swats on the backside. *A teacher/student*

relationship involving open, honest dialogue causes wisdom to move from adult to child. I'm not blaming my dad; I'm not a victim here. I've had plenty of years to straighten these patterns out myself.

COLLEGE DAZE

When I left home at 18, I began a lifestyle that would cost me dearly. I started drinking as a freshman in college—a cute little Christian college, I might add. I hung around with a bunch of upperclassmen and got swept up into their weekend parties. Miller's Malt Liquor was my DOC (Drug of Choice). Hosting my own drunken blowouts soon



followed. I became a walking illustration of a *hedonist*, treating the pursuit of pleasure as the most important thing in life. Comfort and self-gratification became my idols.

In college, I lived as a bigger version of the same kid who would sneak around his mom's kitchen looking for the hidden cookies. I enjoyed a distorted satisfaction in the pursuit of my self-focused life, but I despised the guilt and shame of my self-gratification, and my lack of integrity. Now, when I look back at those times, I shake my head in sorrow.

Do you look back on your life and wish for something different? I do. I wish I would have had more accountability. No one challenged my lifestyle. No one asked me if I thought my life honored God while I claimed to be a Christian. No one invited me into confession. No one handed me a book like this that drilled down to my core weaknesses.

In his book *You Can Change*, author Tim Chester sums up exactly what I needed: "I need people who regularly ask me about my walk with God, readily challenge my behavior, and know about my

temptations. I need my friend Samuel, who often asks, “What’s the question you don’t want me to ask you?”¹

THE SIN MANAGER

If a box existed holding all of my sin issues, the label on that messy space might read: “Lack of Self-Discipline.” Peeking inside the box, you would see a lack of self-control with my “comfort idols”: food, alcohol, money, and sex. For years, I ignored and hid these “pockets of sin” from other people, and at the same time I also ignored the promptings of God to change.

I buried my offenses pretty well. If you and I got together for a chat over coffee, you would walk away from our time together believing I controlled everything in my life.

You would be wrong. You would have experienced a conversation with a skilled “sin manager.”

You know, sin habits have a way of getting more serious and more deadly when they go unchecked. Some days, I would have my private happy hour while driving home with a 25-ounce Foster’s

Ale in my hand. I had become good at coddling and caressing my lack of self-control in drinking...up until the day I almost cut off three fingers. By the way, if you’re wondering, I hadn’t been drinking the day I had the “accident” with the saw.



YOU KNOW, SIN
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ENSLAVED

A verse written by the Apostle Peter summed up my life: “Whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved” (2 Peter 2:19b).

Enslaved. What a sad scene. A grown up “boy man” who worshipped comfort idols in his own little cell. Those worship services

focused on me...my desires...what made me feel good right now (and Satan's whispers of shame would make me feel like dirt later).

In hindsight, the Holy Spirit worked to reveal how comfortable I had become in keeping my faults covered. He would whisper in my



IN HINDSIGHT, THE
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ear how my lack of self-control and my drinking stood in the way of a closer walk with God. My habitual sin caused me to not pursue God's plan for the good works He wanted for me. I began using spiritual ear-plugs...ignoring those whispers for me to change.

(By the way, I don't hear whispers in my ears from Satan or from the Holy Spirit. I thought it might be comforting for you to know that. Throughout the book, when I talk about "whispers" I'm just referring to thoughts any of us might have that stem from good or bad sources).

MERCY AND HOPE

Back in the emergency room, as I looked at my hand which still had five fingers attached (though one seemed a bit shorter now), I became aware of how merciful God had been through this whole accident. This could have been a lot worse. Typing this sentence would be much more difficult if I didn't have all three of those fingers.

He [God] disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Hebrews 12:10b-11).

God’s discipline can be abrupt and painful, but worth it. “Don’t you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can’t you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?” (Romans 2:4 NLT).

God kindly allowed me to keep my fingers. That fact brought me to my knees and to a place of repentance over my rebelliousness in drinking.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship” (Romans 12:1 NIV).

If only I had practiced worship that way.

A VOW...BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

In the week following the accident, the word “vow” kept coming up in my thoughts. The time had arrived to make a vow, and so I did. I vowed to not drink again. Finished, for the rest of my life. Next to choosing to follow Jesus, and asking my wife, April, to marry me, this was the most important decision I’ve made.

The concept of this book, *Why We Hide*, hadn’t occurred to me before that day, but in hindsight, God lovingly yet effectively ripped a hole in my hiding place. His light had broken through into my dark



space. Together, God and I burned down the saloon in my heart. The vow I took was long overdue.

In so many ways, the torching of my saloon began a new life for me. Because of that decision, my “elephant sin” of undisciplined drinking no longer stands in the way of the good works God has planned for me while I’m still here on Earth.

Hindsight is so valuable. Looking back over the past 20 years, I can see how ignoring the conviction of the Holy Spirit caused me to miss out on so many of the good works God had planned for me. I trust God will redeem my remaining years and allow me the opportunity to share a few truths He has revealed.

The testimony of a transformed heart, desiring to be like Christ, should be shared with others. God receives glory when hearts grow in godliness. His glory must be the end game.

Your issue may not be drinking, but there’s something hiding in your life. *Only you know what you’re keeping secret, and only you know how uncomfortable that makes you. Whatever it is you’re working hard to cover up, there’s hope for freedom from hiding.*



GOD PROVIDES A
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HIDING PLACE FROM
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GOD’S LOVE FOR US
WHEN WE DISOBEY.

THE BEST NEWS

Good news exists here. God provides a way to remove the hiding place from our lives, but we have to trust in God’s love for us when we disobey. Our hope lies here. To find freedom, we need to partner with Him in tearing down the walls we have taken years to build. If you’re someone who has been covering up because of fear and shame, there’s hope you can break out of your self-imposed prison and experience the freedom God has for you.

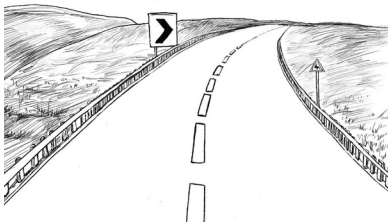
I'd like to introduce you to the God you may not have met yet... the loving God who desires to walk closely with you. Your attempt to conceal your wrongs from a trustworthy God because of fear is unnecessary, and that's what *Why We Hide* is all about. God wants to restore us to a whole relationship with Him, and He also wants our relationships in this world to be healthy. These changes won't happen overnight, but you have my word, they can happen.

WAKE-UP CALL

I don't want you running your hand through a table saw. There's no fun in it. But you need a wake-up call. You know it's true. Whatever you are hiding calls out of the darkness to be revealed, to find some daylight. You might be pushing away thoughts like this, but somewhere in the back of your mind, you want freedom. I kept my sin of undisciplined drinking a secret for over 40 years until I made the decision to pursue release from the prison of my self-induced guilt and shame.

Hopefully this book will be your wake-up call. I can only pray God uses it in your life as He used a 7000-rpm saw blade in mine.

FINDING FREEDOM



We all need to partner with God in finding freedom. *Why We Hide* will guide you through a process of coming out of your hiding place and drawing close to God, no longer living in fear, guilt, and shame, but enjoying the love, intimacy, joy, and celebration of freedom with Jesus. Let's venture out on the path together. You've got nothing to lose, and lots to gain. Great news lies ahead.

Throughout *Why We Hide*, I'm going to remind you of this:
You're not alone. Everyone has a hiding place.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. This chapter opens with the verse from 2 Timothy 2:21. This verse refers to cleansing oneself from “dishonorable things” so one might be useful to Christ in His Kingdom. Share how this has or has not been a priority for you.

2. Romans 2:4 says God’s kindness and patience lead us to repentance. Share your observations about how this has been true in your life.

- 3.** In 2 Peter 2:19, the Apostle Peter writes that people are enslaved by things that “overcome” them. If you are comfortable doing so, share about something you feel overcome by.



CHAPTER 1

GRACE AND MERCY

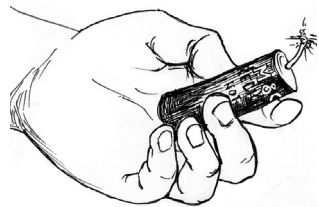
*“I am a God who is near,” says the LORD. “I am also a God who is far away.
No one can hide where I cannot see him,” says the LORD.
“I fill all of heaven and earth,” says the LORD.*

Jeremiah 23:23-24 NCV

FIREWORKS AND TESTOSTERONE. Nothing could go wrong with that combination, right? Why do boys (or men for that matter) often enjoy blowing up things? I’m no exception. When I got together with my cousins, Alfred and Charlie Sammann, on their family’s farm outside of Dimmitt, Texas, we found a lot of fun in watching something explode.

I held the title of the “City Slicker Kid” who spent every summer, and a few Christmas holidays, with the Sammann family, and those times make up some of my fondest childhood memories. At some point or another on every visit, fireworks played a role in our time together.

One summer, I brought along a surprise for my cousins. I had visited Mexico and brought back a bunch of M-80s. Rumor had it these



babies exploded with the equivalent power of an eighth of a stick of dynamite. I've since learned that rumor is not true, but I have to say, the blast of an M-80 ramped up our appreciation of powerful fireworks. We heard M-80s were a plastic explosive (also not true), and they exploded in water (True!!!). Of course, we had to give it a shot.

DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

My uncle had a pond in front of his house which served as a fishing hole and swimming pond. Uncle Ernest stocked it with rainbow trout, which he had flown in from Colorado. What better place to experiment with our firepower than Uncle Ernest's pond, we thought! What could it hurt?

We waited until sunset. My cousins and a couple of their friends gathered around to see what would happen. I lit up the first M-80 and tossed it into the middle of the pond. A moment later, after the M-80 sank below the surface, pyrotechnic ecstasy happened for five teenage boys as the entire pond lit up in a flash. I remember a geyser about 3 feet high shooting out of the water, and then huge ripples radiating in all directions from the center of the pond. One explosion seemed to require more, and so each of us followed up with our own deafening contribution.

By the decibel level of our yelping and hollering you would've thought our favorite football team had just won a bowl game. What a rush...until Uncle Ernest's prize trout began floating to the surface of the pond!

RIPPLES OF DEATH

In our excitement over the fireworks, we created ripples of death. I don't remember how many fish died; I just remember the flashes, the explosions, and the geysers...and then one ticked-off uncle.

Thousands of years ago, ripples of death affected all of us. Some of you might not believe the truth of God's Creation of the first

humans, but their story in Genesis explains so much of why our lives seem off the rails today.

A STORY FROM LONG AGO

As a young kid, I remember learning about Adam and Eve in Sunday School at my dad's church:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 1:27-28b;; 2:15-17).

God created Adam and Eve, made a wonderful garden for them to live in, gave them a purpose of tending His creation, and only asked them to follow one command. He told them not to eat the fruit of one special tree, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. At the same time, God gave Adam and Eve the free will to make choices. Adam and Eve possessed the ability to obey Him, but God allowed His creations the freedom to disobey as well.



GOD CREATED ADAM
AND EVE, MADE A
WONDERFUL GARDEN
FOR THEM TO LIVE
IN, GAVE THEM A
PURPOSE OF TENDING
HIS CREATION,
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ONE COMMAND.

THE INTIMACY OF A WALK WITH GOD

In the Garden of Eden, God, the Creator of the Universe, walked alongside these human beings. God brought Himself down to their level, so He could have an intimate relationship with them. God's presence and His love provided a blessing for these humans which they enjoyed daily.

We see this happen over and over again throughout the history of God's relationship with His people. The theme winds its way through the Bible, and it culminates with Christ's birth, His sharing of the Good News of the gospel, His death and resurrection, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter and our Counselor.

NOT ASHAMED

Genesis 2:25 tells us: "...the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

Adam and Eve's nakedness was symbolic of their innocence, and spoke volumes about transparency, vulnerability, and intimacy. God intends this for our relationship with Him, too.

When God placed a naked Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, there was no sin, no guilt, and no shame. The garden was the only perfect place...at least for a time. The close, intertwined relationship between God and Man could be illustrated like this:



In their nakedness, Adam and Eve had nothing to keep secret from each other, and nothing existed to hide from God. Unfortunately, for Adam and Eve (and for the rest of us), the original intimacy between God and His created children didn't last long.

WE HAVE A VISITOR, HONEY

Word to the wise...if you run across a talking snake, turn around and walk away. Don't engage, okay? Don't chit-chat. And stop smoking whatever you've been smoking.

Eve would have been wise to turn around and run:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 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 3:1-5).

The enemy of God and man appears in the Garden when Satan disguises himself as a beautiful snake. Apparently, he didn't seem disgusting to Eve, and Ezekiel 28:13 says he looked like a piece of jewelry.

BLURRING THE LINES

Before Satan showed up, Adam and Eve had been walking closely with God and obeying His commands. Their lives said: *I Worship*

God. They showed humility before God by their obedience, at least for a time.

Every day, we're faced with this decision: *Do we obey God? Or do we reconsider His commands in light of our desires?* Satan proposes an



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option to Eve. He suggests Eve think differently about God and the path He required. Author Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes: "The command (from God), suggests the Serpent, needs to be explained and interpreted. Man must decide for himself what is good by using his conscience and his knowledge of good and evil...Doubt

and reflection take the place of spontaneous obedience."² When God gives commands, He doesn't intend for us to weigh those commands, deciding how we feel about obeying.

Satan appeals to the pride of Eve. He deceives her by implying God has withheld something she needs. In doing so, Satan undermines her trust in God. Satan plants the thought into Eve's mind she should be equal to God. When Eve considers Satan's temptation, she begins to doubt God's goodness, and she starts to covet the fruit God told her she cannot have. Satan succeeded in deceiving Eve.

Pride works through comparison. We evaluate our circumstances, and our pride will tell us we need something more, or something different. By thinking that way, we show our lack of trust in God to supply our needs. *Satan specializes in planting seeds of doubt and mistrust.*

Pride pushes us to say, "I Worship Me" instead of "I Worship God." This is the pattern of life Satan loves. Satan wants a worship

distortion in every human's life. His greatest desire is to have more and more people live in the I Worship Me space.

SATAN'S LIE

How did Satan deceive Eve? The same way he does with you and me: a little truth and a huge lie. He told Eve this lie: *"You will not surely die."* Then he told the truth: *"If you eat of the Tree of Knowledge you will know good and evil."* Satan didn't tell Eve this truth: Knowing good and evil can be harmful in so many ways.

Today, Satan does the same with us: he tempts us with some sweet looking morsel of bait wrapped around a big and painful hook.

THE FALL

Check out what happens next:

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate (Genesis 3:6).

Elyse Fitzpatrick writes about Eve's fateful choice:

Why did Eve choose to disobey God? Look again at three words in the verse: *good, delight, desirable*. These are words that illustrate the motivation behind actions...The truth about our choices is that we always choose what we believe to be our best good. We always choose what we believe will bring us the most delight.³

Eve was deceived, but then, to make matters worse, Adam also ate the fruit. Instead of falling for Satan's deception, Adam

knowingly rebelled against God by his disobedience. Often, we call what Adam and Eve did “The Fall.” This falling away of Adam and Eve from God occurred not only because of Eve’s deception, but because of Adam’s disobedience.



Disobedience and the first human’s self-determination sent the world into a tailspin. Because of Adam and Eve’s wrongdoing, every descendant of this couple will be born with a predisposition to live in the I Worship Me place. Why should we be surprised the word “Mine” comes out of the mouth of a toddler so early in life?

SHAME AND DEATH COME INTO THE GARDEN

Adam and Eve got more than they bargained for when they disobeyed God. They became more enlightened about the reality of good and evil: “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths” (Genesis 3:7).

Something huge just happened...an explosive rippling in the cosmos that didn’t make a sound. *Adam and Eve’s eyes opened up to evil, and for the first time, they felt shame.* Disobedience of God caused guilt, shame, and fear to enter God’s perfect Creation. The first human’s poor choice to eat forbidden fruit caused a permanent gap between God and His creation, and everything God created began to die.

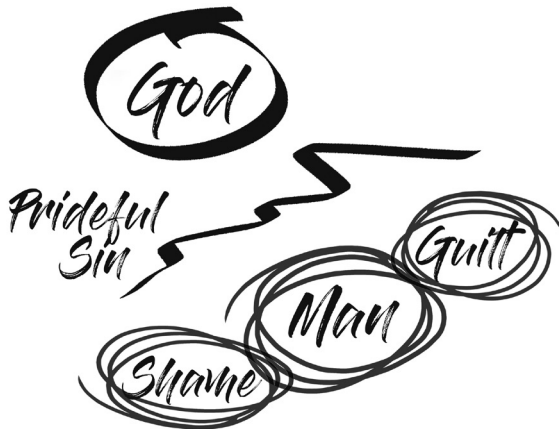
Two disobedient bites of fruit in the Garden. That’s all it took to cause ripples of death through all of history.

THE HIDING BEGINS

Satan loves this. Because Adam and Eve made the choice to worship their desires rather than God's, we see relationships broken. Adam and Eve no longer live in freedom and intimacy with God. After the Fall, they see their nakedness as wrong and shameful, and they no longer walk closely in the Garden with their Creator/Father. They begin to hide.

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:8-10).

In a moment, the intimacy God created disappears. Adam and Eve begin to cover up, revealing less of themselves, and they hide from God. When we pridefully place our desires above God, we bear this consequence: the price of making the I Worship Me choice. Sin causes separation, and guilt and shame cause confusion. To illustrate the new relationship between God and Man, it looks like this:



THE SEPARATION

Disobedience has consequences. When Adam and Eve experienced the guilt and the shame of their wrongs, they wanted to hide, because *they didn't trust God to love them through their brokenness*. A lack of trust made them afraid. We feel the same effects in our lives today.

Before Adam and Eve sinned, God's presence in the Garden did not cause fear, it caused joy. Everything changed because of how they responded to Satan's temptation. In our lives, Satan does the same thing to rob us of joy, power, and intimacy with God. We need to overcome this downward spiral.

After Adam and Eve rebelled against God, He *still* walked in the Garden in the cool of the day. *Their disobedient choices couldn't change God's love for them*. Where does it say God ran into the Garden to



SATAN DOESN'T
WANT US SEEKING
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HE WOULD HAVE US
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scream and shame His kids? But that's what Satan would have you believe. Satan doesn't want us seeking God's forgiveness. He would have us believe we should fear God coming to beat on us. This message contains both a truth and a lie. God pursues us daily, but He wants us to come out of our hiding place so He can show us

His love, and His protection.

Not only has our unrighteousness separated us from God, but also, when we sin, when we miss the mark, we hide and feel alone. God has given us the power to do something about our aloneness and our desire to cover up. We all need to get to work on pursuing the path out of hiding.

HIDING FROM GOD? REALLY?

After Adam and Eve fell for Satan's deception and temptation, God still called out for His children. He called out in love, not to shame them. "But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'" (Genesis 3:9).

Adam and Eve just caused the entirety of God's perfect Creation to begin dying. God doesn't send a lightning bolt down on their heads. He just calls for them. *Wow! Here's a God who shows how He loves His children with patience, love, grace, and mercy.*

May I just take a moment to define a couple of words here? In the context of our relationship with God, "grace" means God gives us what we don't deserve, and "mercy" means God doesn't give us what we do deserve.

You need to know this God of incredible grace and mercy. Yes, the Bible talks a lot about sin, but here's the deal: We've got to understand the depth of our messed-up lives to appreciate God's loving, merciful plan of redemption.

Adam and Eve's sin didn't surprise God. Before He created them, He already had a plan to cover their wrongs. But this plan required God's Son, Jesus, to die. He laid down His life to satisfy God's anger and wrath because of our wrongs. Jesus paid the ultimate price for Adam and Eve's errors, as well as yours and mine. Christ died to save us from the penalty of living a life of I Worship Me.



JESUS PAID THE
ULTIMATE PRICE FOR
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BRAINWASHED

We know we have given God a ton of reasons to be angry over our lifetime of brokenness. We feel the emotional ramifications of our actions and assume God has to be pretty ticked off at us.

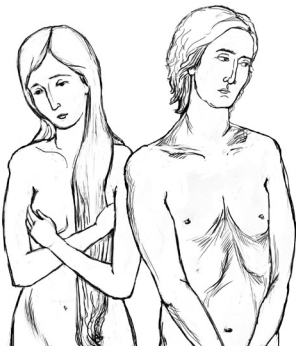
But we have underestimated how much patience God has, and how much love and forgiveness He has for us. Stories of God's patience and love fill the Bible. God can become righteously angry at times, but He shows so much more mercy and grace than we humans deserve.

Many people have been brainwashed to believe the anger of God focuses on them. Those people don't trust God's faithful love to care for them when they're doing sinful things, just like all of us. Those people believe God holds onto punishment and wrath, waiting to chastise them for all the wrongs they have done.

That's not true of the God we see in the Bible. In His actions toward broken people, God reveals His true character. God reaches out to us, ready to pursue a deeper relationship.

GOD HINTS AT PLAN A

God had every right to destroy Adam and Eve, but God chose mercy.



Because of the evil Adam and Eve initiated, God had to make Adam and Eve leave the Garden. If the story of Adam and Eve ended here, it would be pretty depressing for all of us. We would be left shouldering our guilt and our shame with no way back into a relationship with God. Fortunately, the story doesn't end here.

Before God puts Adam and Eve out of the Garden, He does something so loving and so symbolic. *He kneels down from*

heaven and crafts their clothes. “And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21).

That one verse says so much about the character of God, and it testifies to His love for us. This act of God paints such a loving picture: The God of the Universe stoops down and becomes a tailor for His disobedient children. He clothes them and covers their nakedness...their brokenness.

Where do you think God got the skins to craft these clothes? He had to kill one of the animals from His perfect Garden. God’s Plan A required this, and it’s prophetic. God shed blood to cover Adam and Eve’s nakedness, and God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to shed His blood for your sins and mine.

A coincidence? No. God’s act of making clothes for Adam and Eve is just the beginning of His redemption plan. “Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Hebrews 9:22).

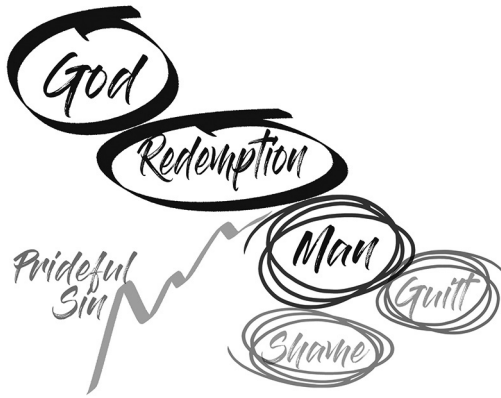
God’s redemptive story for us begins when He covers Adam and Eve by sacrificing an animal, and this points to how He covers your faults and mine. God shows His grace and mercy at work right here. When God covered Adam and Eve, He illustrated what the coming Messiah would do — shed His blood to cover the price for our guilt and shame.

Don’t miss the significance of what just happened. God’s children had no power to deal with their disobedience, their nakedness, and so God did it for them. He has done the same for us as well. God covers our broken lives through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ.

A God who becomes a tailor for pride-filled, self-determined kids. You gotta love that.

GOD'S PLAN TO FREE YOU FROM GUILT AND SHAME

God wants to restore us to the intimacy of the Garden, and He offers redemption and renewal to us every day. He wants His children (you and me) to feel this closeness. God's plan to deal with our sin for eternity shows His commitment to restoring the relationship He once had with Adam and Eve in the Garden. God looks forward to intimacy with all of us. Because of God's plan, one day, we will once more enjoy this kind of relationship with Him in Heaven.



A long time after Adam and Eve died, God revealed His plan for redemption through Jesus.

This redemption created a bridge between God and His Creation, and forever changed the grip of sin, shame and guilt. The couple who brought sin into the world wouldn't know how God would redeem their story, but through Scripture, we know the blessing of the storyline of salvation. Hope for eternity lies only in Jesus Christ. If you're reading this book and your hope lies in yourself or somewhere else than in Christ, you need to read on, because you're mistaken. There is no other hope.

HOW DO WE STOP HIDING?

So now you know the beginnings of why we hide our offenses. The question becomes, how do we leave behind a life of hiding our sin?

God's plan calls us out of our hiding and into His Light. We need to become comfortable shining a whole lot more light on our wrongdoing than we have before. This requires humility. The way out of your hiding begins with some soul searching:

- Where are you disobedient to what God desires of your life?
- What do you think or do that causes you to want to hide?

We're all in this together. We need to offer each other the same love, grace, and mercy God extends to us. Our best chance for leaving our hiding place behind and pursuing the good works God has planned for us begins here. Everyone in the world, including followers of Christ, do I Worship Me things, and we might as well accept the fact we will continually do this. But followers of Christ are people who have had their wrongs covered...covered for eternity.

Why don't we live in the joy of this truth? We don't live that way because we exist in a culture that doesn't encourage self-revelation or self-examination about wrongdoing. Why? Because our pride doesn't like the resulting feelings of sin, and pride doesn't embrace the cure, which is confession.

I've got bad news for you, and I've got some great news. The bad news is: God knows everything you hide. The great news is the same, but with an addition...*He knows everything you cover up, and He loves*



WE'RE ALL IN THIS
TOGETHER. WE NEED
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GOD EXTENDS TO US.

you anyway. God doesn't want you living this way because it causes pain in your life and separation from Him. He wants to wrap His arms around your shoulders, covering your shame with His love. This is where your hope for freedom lies.

God's Plan A is found in Jesus Christ. God covered Adam and Eve's guilt and shame with animal skins that required blood to be shed. His plan to cover our guilt and shame began with sending His Son, Jesus, to shed His blood.

God showed us mercy through His Son's sacrifice because we cannot pay for all of our wrongs. *Because of God's wrath poured out on Jesus, we can have salvation, and eternal life with Him. This is the best news for anyone who is hiding because of sin and shame.*

Remember:

You're not alone. Everyone has a hiding place.

FOR DISCUSSION

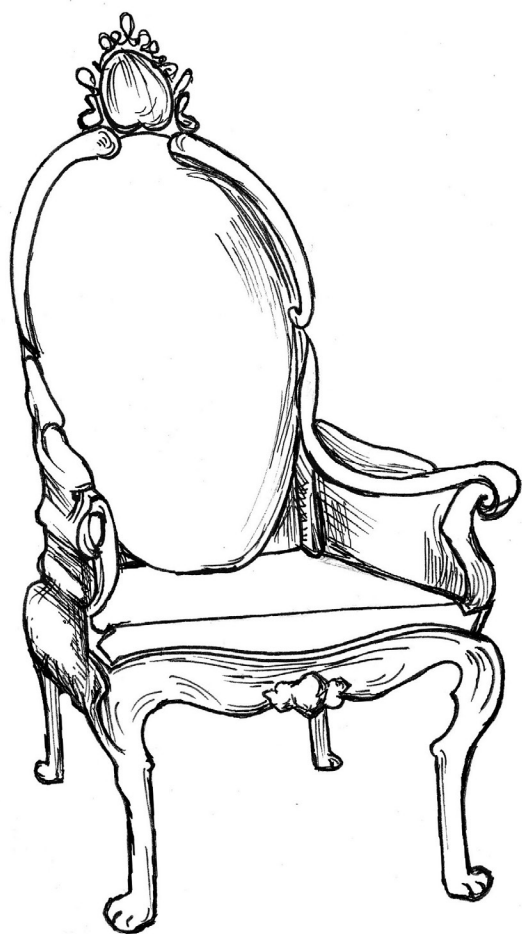
1. In Genesis 3:6, Eve saw the forbidden fruit as *good* for food, a *delight* to the eyes, and *desired* to make one wise. Share about an attraction you have to something you think might be forbidden, but you find it to be desirable anyway.

2. Satan asked Eve to *reconsider* God's command about the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3:4-5. Share why you believe we are tempted to reconsider God's commands.

- 3.** After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, “their eyes were opened” to good and evil, but they immediately wanted to hide. Why do you think that happened?

- 4.** Genesis 3:8-9 tells us that God was calmly walking in the Garden after “the Fall.” What does this say about the character of God, and about His desire for a relationship with humans?

- 5.** Hebrews 9:22 reveals that our sins are not forgiven without blood being shed. Why do you think this is true? What does this say about God's view of sin?



CHAPTER 2

DISTORTED WORSHIP

Pride is the mother hen under which all other sins are hatched.

C.S. Lewis

1. There is a God.

2. You ain't Him.

Dan Phillips

THE DINNER HOUR brought pain for 6-year-old Katherine. By that time of day, her father, well into his usual drunken state, lashed out at the family with constant criticism, and his wife offered little help to protect the children. The home didn't know love.

As far back as second grade, Katherine remembers a craving for connection and attention, and she became skilled at forming close friendships with other girls. Those friendships turned dark in junior high when the peer pressure of Southern California pushed many young girls into habits of anorexia and bulimia. Those junior high friends became Katherine's "skinny posse."

Many days, Katherine would only eat mustard on bread. She found starving herself helped to accentuate her developing figure, which attracted the boys at school. A wonderful, ear-to-ear smile and huge eyes were two of Katherine's most striking features, and they were exaggerated by her anorexic condition.

The difficulty of family life caused Katherine to attempt suicide twice by age 15, surviving both attempts before making a decision to leave home. She bounced through several living situations while working at a local coffee shop to support her \$500 monthly rent. At the coffee shop, Katherine met a new friend, Katie, who invited her to join her local church youth group.

Katie knew a couple from the church who recently moved to a large new house with lots of bedrooms, even though their only daughter had just headed off to college. Katie boldly asked the couple if they could consider having Katherine live with them, and they thought it would be a great idea. Katherine met the couple at a Christmas service, and over the winter holiday in 1998, they invited her to live with them in their new home.

A caring, peace-filled life wrapped its arms around Katherine, and she began attending the youth group at her friend's church. With Katie by her side, Katherine found the loving connections she had desired for so many years. In this environment, she came to know Jesus, and His message of love and forgiveness consumed her.

For once in her life, Katherine's "love-tank" seemed to fill. She began making deeper friendships which weren't focused on appearances. For the first time in her life, Katherine had parental figures who cared for her needs and for her future, both spiritually and physically. Soon, Katherine felt a strong desire to be cared for as a daughter.

A teen-age boy took an interest in Katherine, and they began dating. The intimacy of a boy's attention, and his hugs and kisses, drew Katherine closer and closer to a sexual relationship. Knowing

this, Katherine's new "foster parents" encouraged the teens to "put the brakes on."

Katherine found herself torn between her all-consuming desire to be loved and obeying the couple who had opened their home to her. Friction developed, and tensions ran high. Katherine began exploring moving in with an aunt who lived on the East Coast. In the summer of 2000, Katherine left Southern California to begin a new life with her aunt in upstate New York.

Katherine had no idea the transition would be so hard. Unable to find a church group as she had grown to love in California, Katherine cried almost daily, missing the life she had left. But she did find comfort in the arms of a man, and, at 18, three months after she left California, Katherine became pregnant.

The young man and his family pressured Katherine to "deal with the problem." Broken-hearted and guilt-ridden, she reached out to the couple she had lived with in California. More than anything, Katherine wanted them to jump on a plane, fly to New York, and walk her through her decisions. Katherine recalls the couple merely saying: "We'll pray for you."

My wife, April and I, were that couple who shared our home with Katherine for almost two years, and then turned away when she needed us at a much deeper level. *If April and I had to do it all over, we would be there for Katherine in a heartbeat.*

Katherine chose to have the abortion, knowing God hated her decision. Afterward, in her words, Katherine's life "went black." She



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wandered far from her faith, feeling rejected both by God as well as His “ambassadors.”

Years of self-destructive behaviors involving sex, drugs, and alcohol followed the abortion. Five years after her first pregnancy, Katherine became pregnant again. This time, she had the courage to keep the baby. Her first-born son became her reason to live.

Motherhood didn’t fulfill Katherine’s craving for love and connection. She still pursued casual relationships which seemed to fill



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the gaping void in her life, at least for the moment. Five years after the birth of her first child, Katherine became pregnant again and had a second child, this time a daughter.

In 2010, Katherine’s only brother James died, just short of his twenty-fifth birthday. His death left Katherine a broken woman, and a deep anger began rising in her heart. This anger caused her to lash out at

April with a couple of bitter, vindictive letters, holding her responsible for much of the pain Katherine had experienced. April grieved over the rejection for years.

But a bright spot appeared in Katherine’s life. At the encouragement of a friend, she went on a blind date with a man she met online. Eric and his daughter joined Katherine and her two kids for a “play-date,” and Katherine fell in love overnight.

One Sunday, Eric and Katherine visited the Free Christian Church in Andover, Massachusetts. Pastor David Midwood had chosen “Prostitutes and Drug Addicts” as his sermon theme, and he embedded in the teaching his testimony of past failures. Eric and

Katherine were stunned at the pastor's confessional transparency, and both said: "If this is what Christianity looks like here, we want in."

I believe the Holy Spirit convicted both Katherine and Eric that day, turning their lives around. Within two weeks, Eric and Katherine were married, and began attending church together. During a study of Jonah, Katherine came to know the true, loving God of second chances. Her heart softened, and she reached out to April, seeking reconciliation.

Not long after, April and I met Katherine at a Starbucks back in California. I had to fight back tears as I watched Katherine and April love on each other in a whole new way. Both women confessed how they had failed each other and shared their joy in this reunion. Great healing occurred that morning in a wonderful God-moment.



THRONES

Everyone worships something. I worshipped my desire for comfort and ease through alcohol. Katherine worshipped the love and care of other people, and given her background, that shouldn't be a surprise. Both Katherine and I came to realize the distortion of our values. We had created idols, and in doing so, we were both living out patterns of distorted worship. In our own way, we both worshipped before altars of our making. Both of our lives said: I Worship Me.

Only one throne exists in a person's life, but we act as if this throne can be shared. Often, followers of Christ might say they have "turned their lives over to Jesus." If we believe this to be true of us, then it would mean Jesus sits on the throne of our lives, right?

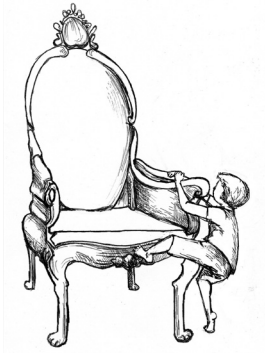
If we only lived that way!

Every single day, we make choices which cause us to climb up on the throne of our life. We do that when we rebel against God and we

say “I Worship Me.” *Our disobedience of God’s commands indicates we believe we belong on the throne of our lives, not Jesus. After Adam and Eve’s fall, throne climbing became part of our nature.*

God created man with free choice, but free choice can be dangerous because no boundaries exist. Everything is an option. Everything is possible.

THE PRICE OF INTIMACY



Pride lives within a disobedient heart. A prideful heart desires the role of God, to be climbing up on His throne. When options abound, we can be tempted to fall into prideful self-determination, just like Adam and Eve. We make choices serving our desires, not God’s.

God created Adam and Eve to have intimacy with Him, but He also wanted their obedience. That’s the price of intimacy with God. Instead of obeying God’s commandment regarding “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” they chose instead the path offered to them by Satan. They chose to follow their desires for themselves over God’s desires for them.

Satan opposes God, and all God stands for. Yes, he’s ticked off he couldn’t overthrow all of Heaven so he could sit on God’s throne, and now he’s attempting to defeat God’s children here on Earth.

Satan’s no match for the God who created him. For a time, God will allow Satan to exert his power on Earth, but it won’t last forever. Trust me, when God finally deals with Satan, it will make all those apocalyptic movie special effects look silly.

THE SIN DISEASE

When Satan brought prideful disobedience to our world, he “infected” everyone with the disease of pride-based behavior, which distorts

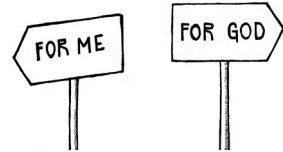
our worship of God. A self-focused nature, stemming from a heart of pride, lives within us from birth. We all have the disease of prideful sin.



For the purpose of this book, let's define pride like this: *Any thought or action which places oneself or one's desires above or apart from God's commands or directions.* In case you disagree with this definition of pride, let's take a look at some pretty common issues:

TRUST ME, WHEN
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LOOK SILLY.

- **Gossip**...makes YOU feel *better* about YOU.
- **Porn and Lust**...make YOU feel *desired*...make YOU feel *in control*.
- **Abortion**...relieves YOU of the evidence and inconvenience of YOUR wrong.
- **Money and Possessions**...make YOU feel *better* about YOU, and *better* than others.
- **Drunkenness and Addictions**...make YOU feel *temporarily comforted*.
- **Gluttony**...makes YOU feel *fulfilled* and *comforted*.
- **Anger and Judgment of Others**...make YOU feel *better* about YOU.
- **Lying**...makes YOU look *better* to others.



By the way: Notice how so many of these pride issues revolve around comparing ourselves to others? Our pride causes us to pursue

broken things when we feel as if we don't measure up, and we feel the need for something more. In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis writes: "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man." ⁴

I think it's only right to tell you, I am guilty of all of the issues I mentioned above. Yes, every one of them, including abortion. Before my marriage, I dated a young woman who became pregnant with a child I had fathered. In the fear of what others might think, and *only considering the inconvenience of this pregnancy*, we made the decision to abort the child.

I have faced all of the temptations and struggles many of you have faced, and I've fallen down in so many ways. Thankfully, I serve a loving God who helps me up, dusts me off, forgives me, and sends me out with the same words He said to the woman caught in adultery: "Go, and from now on, sin no more" (John 8:11b). Doesn't that sound like a wonderful Father full of grace and mercy?

DENIAL

When you're caught in wrongdoing, what's your go-to response? Would it surprise you if I guessed denial? I do exactly the same.



IF WE FOCUS ON
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SHAME, THEN WE DENY,
WE RUN, WE COVER UP.

We deny our faults because our pride is hurt (somehow, we delude ourselves into thinking we have the ability to be perfect). We're ashamed, and we're afraid of judgment.

We should be led to godly sorrow by our guilt, but most often, we become ashamed for all the

wrong reasons. We feel shame because our pride hurts, and because we feel we look bad in someone else's eyes.

Let's be honest: We should be ashamed because we have offended a Holy God. If we focus on our pride that's been hurt, and our shame, then we deny, we run, we cover up. *We begin to build our hiding place where we can keep our secret sins.*

And Satan wins again. Just like Adam and Eve, he wants us to run and hide from God. The more he can do to push us away from God, the better. But that's not God's desire.

God loves you. He wants you to come out of your hiding place. God wants to be your refuge, your hiding place. He wants an intimate relationship with you. I'm not being inappropriate here, but He wants you to walk through life with Him naked...transparent about the real you.

IDOL WORSHIP

In Cuba, you will find people who follow a religion called "Santeria," a combination of Roman Catholicism and the Yoruba religion from West Africa, similar to voodoo. The people who practice Santeria will often have a small altar in their home where they have a number of symbolic items, and usually a doll, thought to have special powers.



On one of our church's mission trips to Cuba, a friend of mine met a man making these dolls, and he asked whether the man worshipped them as well. The doll maker's response was pretty simple: "No, why would I worship something I made with my own hands?"

Wow, a Cuban idol maker who virtually quotes Scripture: "*Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed*" (Isaiah 37:18-19).

We might chuckle at the wisdom of an idol maker who doesn't bow down to the idols he makes, but we should be so wise. Our



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brokenness reveals what we value in our lives. We can worship money, sex, food, drugs, alcohol, or more simple things like lying, cheating, or gossip. Those idols might look different from one person to another, but they have one thing in common: they all take our focus off obeying God, and they put our focus on ourselves, and our de-

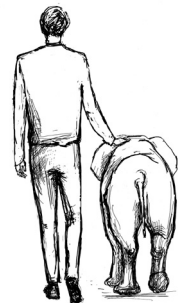
sires. *Idols cause a worship disorder in our lives.*

Paul David Tripp writes: "The deepest issues of the human struggle are not issues of pain and suffering, but the issue of worship, because what rules our hearts will control the way we respond to both suffering and blessing."⁵

When we believe we should be in charge of our pursuits, we live out the same rebellion pattern of Adam and Eve. *We live as if our desires and our pleasures are gods. Every once in a while, we might give some brief consideration to "following God," but for the most part, we live as if our highest priority is our comfort and pleasure. Living that way reveals our worship disorder.*

THE ELEPHANT SIN

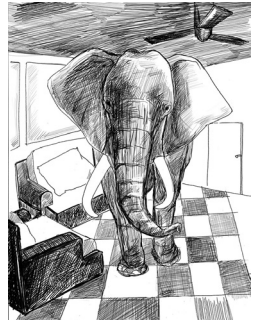
Sinful habits begin to grow early in our lives, and they rarely get smaller on their own. What might seem like a minor issue has the ability to grow into a major problem if you don't take care of it quickly. Building a hiding place around your brokenness is like raising a pet elephant inside your home.



Let's suppose you decide you want to raise an elephant as a pet, but you want to keep it a secret from your neighbors. The best idea would be to get an elephant when he's young, right? Baby elephants only weigh 200 pounds when they're born, and they're just 3 feet tall. Sure, you could hide that size elephant.

Maybe you have a friend at the local zoo who sneaks a newborn elephant out of the zoo for you to take home. At night, you back a trailer up to your house and lead your new pet elephant, who you named Tiny, in through the patio door.

You've got the living room all set up as Tiny's bedroom with a bunch of straw on the floor. Little do you know you're committing to provide Tiny with about 300 pounds of food *every* day as he grows to be over 12 feet tall and tips the scales at 10,000 pounds! BTW, at some point, 300 pounds of "processed" food will need to be cleaned up, if you know what I mean.



One day, Tiny will get a bit restless, and you're going to have to deal with his desire to roam around. You didn't think about getting Tiny *out* of the house. You just thought about getting Tiny *into* the house.

Like Tiny, the sin that starts small can take over your life. Covering up wrongdoing can become a pattern which encourages more hiding...concealing bigger stuff.

I doubt anyone who begins walking down the road of habitual sin considers how their life will look when their distorted worship begins to control them. I didn't! By the time I considered changing my unrighteous patterns, they were settled in place. My life had become wrapped around those habits, and my relationship with God suffered the effects of those behaviors.

Why? Because I had shoved Jesus over on the throne of my life to make room for my hidden pursuits. Alcohol became an idol for

me. Remember: God has every right to be a jealous God because His ways are best. In the life of a follower of Jesus, there will be no other gods. If one appears, God knows how to correct His kids through gracious and loving discipline. As our heavenly Father, God concerns Himself with our character, and He will wake us up to areas we need to change. Table saws get your attention...trust me.

WHAT'S YOUR NICHE?

If you had a key to the door of the place you've created to push away your distorted worship habits, one side of the key will be engraved



with the word "Pride," since all sin originates there. The other side might have another word engraved, which would describe your specific personal weakness. Mine would say

"Self-Control." We need to talk about the word that describes your habits.

Don't get defensive now. We've got a long way to go in our conversation about all of this, and if you shut down now and bail out, you'll miss the good stuff. You have to remember, God's not yelling at you. He's just saying, "*Where are you?*" Please, trust God with your weaknesses.

So what's your niche? Have any idea?

If not, I have two exercises for us to do together. But before we start, let's lay this before God and ask for His help. King David wrote a prayer which can help us focus on the messy, ugly stuff of our lives. This prayer should be on our lips daily because it helps clear out our hiding places: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends You, and lead me along the path of everlasting life" (Psalm 139:23-24 NLT).

Set this book down, clear your mind as best you can, and start with a prayer of humility. Your pride will want to push away from

what we are about to do. Ask the Holy Spirit for a humble heart to ask this question: “What do I think or do that offends my God?”

Now wait. Just sit there for 5-10 minutes and push any thought out of your mind that seems to be unrelated to that question you just asked. Jot down what you sensed the Holy Spirit revealed to you.

Now, let’s explore a more emotional side.

Close your eyes and imagine you’re in a stadium, surrounded by everyone you’ve ever met, all the people who have known you since you were born. There’s a Jumbotron video screen at the end of the field the size of the one in Cowboy Stadium, 72x160 feet, and a movie of your life begins to roll.

The film shows all the good, the bad, and the ugly of your life. The movie goes super fast until it reaches the ugly stuff, and then it slows to a crawl. All those things you regret having done, said, or thought in your life. The movie reveals everything; nothing’s left out, and it’s so painful. A hush falls over the stadium because they all know their story will come up soon.

Oh, I forgot to mention. Jesus is standing right next to you, and He has wrapped His arm around your shoulder. He already knows your movie. He’s seen it all before.

PAINFUL MOMENTS

What do you see? What’s the pattern of your life? What embarrassing, shame-filled moments make you want to run and hide? What scenes would you most like to fast-forward through so no one can see that part of your life? Okay, now stop and do this exercise before we move on, just for a few moments.

Those scenes reveal what you would like to keep secret, and they also show what idol(s) you’re worshipping. When you imagine seeing all of your messy life on the screen, and having Jesus’s hand on your

shoulder, it seems awkward, right? You have difficulty looking at the huge gap between Jesus's holiness and your Jumbotron mess. Jesus



wouldn't be standing next to you with His hand on your shoulder if He didn't love you. Your next step is to trust His love.

As awful as your movie might feel, you should know Jesus doesn't want you to feel shame over your movie. He has intimate knowledge of your broken life because He Himself paid the price God demanded for your wrongs. When soldiers hung Christ on the cross, He dealt with your Jumbotron story.

PRIDE VS. HUMILITY

God *hates* pride, and He also *hates the rebellion it generates*. He hates pride and rebellion because it forced Christ to die on that cross.

“The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate” (Proverbs 8:13).

“Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; Assuredly, he will not be unpunished” (Proverbs 16:5 NASB).

God knows pride will draw us away from Him and from our proper posture of a worshipping servant. He knows pride will cause us to disobey His will and this creates a distance from Him. Pride causes all kinds of things to become “gods” in our lives, and we can *make ourselves* the “god” of our life too.

Over 100 times, the Bible mentions the word “pride,” or “proud,” or my favorite, “haughty,” and almost every time, it's in a negative

context. There are about 83 mentions of “humble” or “humility,” and most are in a positive light.

The LORD lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground (Psalm 147:6).

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5).

Every day we face this battle. Metaphorically, we were born with a prideful DNA strain of I Worship Me. God seeks out those people willing to exchange their prideful living to return to the humble relationship humans had with Him in the Garden of Eden.



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God loves humility, and He hates pride. Jesus illustrated humility when He walked on this Earth. Is it any surprise humility represents the antithesis of what Satan values? If you want to stand in the way of Satan’s work in this world, then, just as Jesus did, obey the Lord God, pursue humility, and encourage others to do the same.

God knows a humble heart desires to please Him. *Open to confession, a malleable heart bravely steps out of the elephant sin hiding place.*

MOVING AWAY FROM DISTORTED WORSHIP

We begin to build our hiding place because our pride refuses to own up to our disobedience. The secret places we create weigh us down, become uncomfortable and painful, and steal any joy we might have. Here's what Tim Chester wrote:

One of the main ways in which pride wrecks the process of change occurs when we hide our sin from others...We want our good reputation. So we hide, we pretend, we don't seek help...We want to avoid exposure, so we tell ourselves we can manage on our own. But here's what's really happening: We love our reputation more than we hate our sin.⁶

Pride stands as the source of the idols of your life...your distorted value system. Are you thinking you have no idols? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal them and then look and listen for the answer, which might surprise you. Knowing where your idols live begins the first step out of hiding.

Katherine and I both pursued a distorted worship, but God called us both out of that place. He can do the same thing for you. In love, God wants to lead you away from the idols you worship now, and He wants you to know His love and the refuge He promises.

Freedom and joy wait for you in God's hiding place. If distorted worship drives you into hiding, you need to pursue true worship, focused on God. He desires you to hide in the refuge He offers. *Freedom and joy don't exist inside our secret place...only outside of it.*

Let's head in that direction.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Proverbs 8:13 tells us that God hates pride, arrogance, and evil, and that we should do the same. Why do you think it is difficult to share God's hatred of these three things?

2. We know from 1 Peter 5:5 that God “opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Have you ever felt as if God either opposed you because of your pride, or gave you grace because of humility?

3. In what way does your pride cause you to compare your life to others? Reflect on comparing yourself to others and God's provision for your life. (Check out Hebrews 13:5.)

4. Has it ever occurred to you that you worshipped an idol of some sort? (See Isaiah 37:18-19.) Share some of those thoughts.

- 5.** After reading about how an elephant sin develops in a person's life, share about a small sin that has grown much larger in your life than you ever expected it would. (See Ephesians 5:15-16.)
