

Embracing Shame for Glory

Study Questions: Week 1

[Matthew 1:1-17](#)

As another Christmas approaches, it can be tempting for us to try to rely on the sentiment of the season rather than the substance of who Jesus is. The reality is that God has come to us in Jesus, wrapped in a lineage filled with stories of shame. Although Jesus could have chosen any entry point into the world, he enters through the portal of shame, identifying with humanity so that we may know him.

Application

1. Although sentiment has nothing to do with the substance of what Christmas means for us as Christians, there are aspects of tradition that can help us reorient our hearts. What are some sentimental holiday traditions that you enjoy, and how might they either be healthy or become corrupted? In what ways might you rely on the sentiment of Christmas rather than the reality of Jesus?
2. In the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1, we notice that he chose his family lineage to include lives marked by brokenness and shame: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. In light of these stories, how do you see that Jesus has met you in your own shame and failure? How have you already seen him working in and redeeming your shame story? What are some ways that our church can become a place that welcomes the hurting and broken?
3. Bill identified two groups of people in our church: those of us needing to acknowledge and expose our shame, and those of us living on the surface of sentimentality.
 - a. To truly know Jesus as our prophet, priest, and king, we have to acknowledge our shame and brokenness and not hide it from God or others. What is a specific step you can take to move out of hiding and begin sharing your story with someone? How might you need to be exposed to bring about transformation in your life?
 - b. If you are living on the surface of sentimentality and everything is going well for you, you might be worshiping comfort and missing the reality of Jesus. What are some ways that you can add more substance to this Advent season that will help capture your imagination and lead you to worship and celebrate Immanuel—God with us—in a more meaningful way? How can you find Jesus to be real to you even while things are going well?

Key Points

- At the root of what he is doing in the world, God wraps his own glory in our shame.
- The story of Christmas is not lightweight sentimentality but instead real, substantial redemption that takes into account all of our brokenness.
- Yahweh is working through our most shame-filled failures to accomplish his purposes.
- As we encounter the brokenness and messy circumstances of this world, at some point, sentiment is not enough. When we are tested, we will want to have already cultivated and developed an imagination that is robust enough to lay hold of the substance of who God is. Only then will we be able to declare that he is our Immanuel and that hope has already come to us—the hope that is sufficient for every circumstance we will ever encounter, every loss that we will ever endure, every injustice and loss of reputation that will ever come our way, and every shame ever put on us.
- In these four stories of Tamar, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Rahab, God works through those who are outside, victimized, powerless, and broken to bring about his rule and reign on this earth. We do not have a romantic, heroic story in Jesus that is detached from reality; we have a gritty story that can stand up to robust scrutiny.
- "Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel." —*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

Scripture References

[Hebrews 2:14-18](#)

[Genesis 38:1-30](#)

[Joshua 2:1-24](#)

[Ruth 1-4:22](#)

[2 Samuel 11:1-12:25](#)

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