

HOW TO DEAL WITH PUBLIC SHAME

Public shame is sadly a real thing. It is something that is so easy to do, and sometimes it is done unintentionally. A lot of times, however, it is something people use to cover up something that they don't want to see, hear, or believe because it will hurt their pride or beliefs. Have you ever been bullied before? Bullying seems to be raiding through schools, deteriorating young people's minds, and lowering their self-esteem to dangerous levels. Have you ever been ridiculed for what you believe in? How did you handle yourself? Was it difficult to stand your ground in who you are and what you believe in, or did you give in to the potential shame/discomfort that you may have felt? There are so many ways to attack a person and bring shame upon them; there are also ways to create a perception of someone and their situation and bring it to other's attention without providing the reality and truth in its fullness. However, if we were put into such a situation, how would we deal with it?



I have had the privilege of dealing with public shame and being hurt by many people. Hold up. *“What did she just say”*, you may ask? Did she just say *privilege*? Yes, I sure did! The way that I look at it is this: being put to shame isn't always a bad thing. It's more of an opportunity to fine-tune your beliefs, grow and mature, and be true to what God has called you to be. If I am being pressed, I should consider it joy because I know Who is on my side and Who will stick up for me. I will have the knowledge of what God says and promises, and I won't have to stop for a minute to believe what people say. I will need to have the understanding that people will always be capable of hurting, shaming, and putting me down, but my God is there to protect, honor, and bring me to my fullest potential. And guess what? He does the same for you too.

Now, I say all of this and you're probably like, *“Yeah, well that is all easier said than done.”* You're right! When you're in the moment, it's not so easy to be like, “Okay, God. This is awesome, I'm going to just keep walking forward and count this as joy. Because what this person said about me publicly or what this person did to hurt me isn't going to affect me at all. Life is great, and I know what You say, so that's all that matters.” That's definitely not reality. When we are hurt or shamed, we review the situation over and over in our head, and the hurtful words are repeated and become ingrained into our minds. Sometimes we even believe what people are saying but we would never admit to it. In contrast, we may never believe what people say about us, thus creating a defense wall. The enemy is very smart in using different mind tricks to get us to give in to the pressures of the outside world. We become so overcome by what people think and say about us, that we forget who we are and what we stand for. It's not easy standing out and being different. It's extremely hard, but it's extremely rewarding.

In my past experiences, when I was hurt or shamed by others, I felt the need to put up a defense wall and explain my reasoning. Do you think this would be a good way to handle things? Think about it. When you get into a heated discussion or argument with someone, do you not feel the need to defend yourself by explaining the “whys” and “hows” of things in order to help the other person understand? It seems like a logical explanation to me! Another response that people use when they are hurt or shamed by others is to just avoid the situation and not make an appearance or voice. They could remain silent and choose not to speak for themselves at all and just let people think what they want to think about them. Adam and Eve were the first to use this kind of response in the garden. When their eyes were opened to their sin, they felt shame and became afraid. Therefore, they tried to hide from God and later place the blame and accusations on one another and satan himself (Gen. 3:7-13).

So the question is ... What is the right response behavior to have when you are being attacked by shame, bullying, verbal abuse, etc.? Well, I can tell you that I certainly do not know all of the answers, but I can say that there is a time for everything as recorded in Ecclesiastes 3. In whatever situations we may be in, it is important to have the *proper discernment* and *wisdom* to know what to do. We often speak or act in haste without thinking and then later regret our actions. God wants us to think before we act or speak (Ecc. 5:2, Pr. 13:16). Sometimes there is a time to be silent, and sometimes there is a time to speak. Other times there is a time to go directly to a person to speak about offenses (Matt. 18), and there are times when you may need to be vulnerable for the truth to be exposed. Whatever the case may be, seek to strengthen your wisdom and discernment, because those traits are very important to have and use for the glory of God. Don't ever make a decision based upon your flesh. Always pray and tune in to the spirit.

Remember that everything happens for a reason. They are not always comfortable reasons. Our job is to stay obedient, follow His path, and stay humble. Next time you are being shamed or put down for something, stop and think about the situation. Be sensitive to the example that you are setting for those around you.

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