

A Christian Counseling Perspective on the Restoration of Shame  
and Guilt Emotions

– focused on Biblical Self-Esteem and Church Community –

by

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## Introduction

Human beings are the living organic beings to think, to have beliefs, to have high level thoughts and functions. God created people as higher beings so that they different from other organic beings might live with various beliefs as well thoughts.

As a human being is born and grows up, he or she directly or indirectly gets countless diverse experiences and stimuli, imaginable and sometimes unimaginable events. The various stimuli in an individual's life provide the cause of the emotions that a person can experience in a variety of ways. Without emotions human beings have lived a life that is not inferior to robots.

However, the emotions that humans experience are the realities of human life to enrich and sometimes give a sense of frustration while providing various kinds of joy in life. The emotions that human beings experience throughout their life may simply not only be positive emotions such as joy and happiness, but also be negative emotions such as sadness and anger.

Because excessively feeling any one emotion is classified as a disease (e.g., excessive joy and excitement as mania, excessive sadness and frustration as depression), it is also God-given to humans in this world that they feel a variety of emotions at appropriate levels.

The study and explanation of various phenomena of human emotions as well as thoughts corresponds to psychology in general science, but Christian counseling in theology. The psychological understanding and the biblical understanding of

humans have fundamentally different premises.

The main task of psychology is to provide humanistic assistance by studying people while the purpose of Christian counseling is to restore and care for people through the Bible based on the Christian understanding of human beings. The origin of psychology has been traced back to 300 BC by Aristotle's theorizing about learning and memory, motivation and emotion, perception and personality (David G. Myers, *Psychology*, 2013). On the other hand, the documentary origins of Christian counseling must be rooted in the Bible, which records the beginning and end of humankind. Despite the long history of caring work to begin in the Old Testament, most of humankind have a constant inner thirst and endure this world in a state of inner exhaustion.

Human beings are obsessed with negative emotions in a constant vortex of emotions, and sometimes they are immersed in excessively positive emotions. In particular, negative emotions resulting from excessive shame or guilt can greatly damage an individual's psychological health.

Furthermore, if one cannot get out of excessive shame or guilt in the past, the negative emotions that an individual feels are intertwined with events and negatively affect "self"- health.

Although it is necessary and positive for Christians to feel guilty for something wrong in life and to feel sorrow for their sins because those can help them come to God's grace and throne and makes them feel the seriousness of the cost of sin, but sometimes there are many cases when they suffer from excessive and immoderate guilt for what they have done wrong(Kim Younghee, *Gospel and Counseling*, 2007, 38).

Because of such an excessive sense of guilt, they show a self-torture attitude, and as a result, they cannot fully enjoy God's unconditional love as well as God's forgiveness. Sometimes they may suffer from even greater guilt and shame rather than non-believers.

The feelings of shame and guilt are the first negative emotions recorded in the Bible, experienced shortly after the birth of humankind through Adam, the first counselee who suffered from shame and guilt. As such, the origins of shame and guilt are almost identical to those of humankind.

Although the origin of shame, a negative emotion that almost coincides with the beginning of humankind, is recorded in the Bible, in psychology, finding the origin of shame and guilt in the Bible is considered mysterious, reckless, and illogical. Accordingly each major psychologist proposes slightly different psychological origins.

The main origins of shame or guilt claimed by psychology are mainly focused on the conflicts over the wrong discipline or nurture of the primary caregiver (parents) or the operation of various psychological mechanisms of himself or

herself. It is the view that this study has validity on the psychological position on the origins of shame and guilt, but there are certain limitations suggested by each theory.

Psychological studies of shame and guilt fail to pinpoint the root cause. For this reason, there is not one theory but are several mechanisms for the causes of shame and guilt. The solution is also vague. The reason is that the key issues of the origin and solution of shame and guilt are not found in the Bible.

Considering that the Bible was the beginning of recording feelings of shame and guilt, alternatives to recovering from shame and guilt must also be found in the Bible. This is because the Bible records the phenomena as well as the solutions.

1 Corinthians 12:26 says, "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."(NIV) Similarly, in African proverb, "If there is an unhappy person in a village, it is the responsibility of the entire village, and it takes a village to raise a child."<http://news.kmib.co.kr/article>, 03/14/2018). A village can be said to refer to a community to which an individual belongs. For Christians, the Christian church community to which they belong is a village. After all, it can be expressed as the responsibility of the entire Christian church community if there is an unhappy person in one Christian church community.

Furthermore, it also implies that if there is an unhappy person in the Christian church community, the whole Christian church community should make an effort to improve each other's misery.

True self-healing and restoration from shame and guilt lies in 'Christian counseling self-recovery' based on the Christian view of humanity. This is because the vertical axis of restoring the image of God exists in the establishment of 'Christian positive self-esteem' through the process of self-forgiveness.

In addition, the Christian church community, which forms a horizontal axis and establishes Christian self-esteem through self-forgiveness in God, can be fully achieved the restoration of God's image as they practice each other genuinely patient, forgiving, and reconciling love through listening and empathy.

Because the biblical view of man describes the process of human salvation changing from a sinner to a righteous person, the practical ministry in Christian counseling is 'justification-centered', but oriented toward sanctification, at the same time, 'sanctification-centered' but includes the content related to justification(Ahn Kyungseung, Gospel and Counseling, 2015, 196). The practical ministry of Christian counseling is carried out in parallel with the 'justification-centered' ministry of confirming salvation and the 'sanctification-centered' of helping people grow and transform into the righteous.

Thus, the purpose of Christian counseling as well as pastoral counseling is to shape and encourage faith in the formation of the "image of Christ" (Galatians 4:19) in the life and personality(Kim Younghee, 59). It is the responsibility not only of the Christian counselor to shape one's faith and encourage each other's faith, but of the faith community to which the individual belongs. We have to use God's positive and

constructive perspective to care for ourselves and others in the world, and desperately need delicate consideration, attention, and support for those around us(Kim Younghee, 60).

In this way, we must move forward in order to restore the image of God each other. Just as a wise man transforms other members, people will be changed through fellowship and relationships within the community, and being renewed through relationships is an inherent attribute of God's image(Ahn Kyungseung, 213-214). The characteristics of the Christian life are revealed in our relationship with God as well as with others, and they testify God through the relationship(Lee Jaehyun, *Ministry and Counseling*, 2014, 208). A vertical relationship with God is important, but a horizontal relationship with each other can also be a measure of the relationship with God. Therefore, it can also be said that "The image of God is not an attribute of an individual, but the interrelationship between individuals."(Lee Jaehyun, 208).

Shame and guilt are feelings that are mainly mentioned not only in Christian counseling, but also in the field of general counseling and psychology. Distortion of shame and guilt produces a number of pathological phenomena that many people suffer from. Thus, the study of shame and guilt is a topic that is not left out in the field of studying people to try to help.

Of course, it can be said that the study of shame and guilt is the main research in psychology to study the psychological mechanisms of people. This study does

not neglect the contribution of psychology and uses the study of psychology on shame and guilt from the perspective of Christian counseling, but it is based on literature research on the fundamental answers and countermeasures for the origin of shame and guilt that psychology cannot suggest. It is intended to be presented from a theological point of view.

In this study, the difference between the 'ego' and the 'self' is also clearly distinguished, because there is a clear difference in the roles of the 'ego' and the 'self' in understanding the study of shame and guilt psychologically.

Starting with the terminology of ego and self, psychoanalytic interpretation of shame and guilt, self-psychology rooted in psychoanalysis, and social psychology based on other methodologies of psychoanalysis. Based on the cognitive dissonance theory and self-incongruity theory, this study looks back on the psychological history of shame and guilt.

The fundamental alternative that cannot provide an answer in psychological history should be presented by biblical counseling, a field of Christian counseling. Biblical counseling is the core and foundation of Christian counseling because it has the sole purpose of Christian counseling.

Starting with understanding the psychological history and analysis of shame and guilt, the validity of biblical counseling should be further strengthened by examining the history and core content of biblical counseling, which is the final answer and core of this study. In other words, this study presents a basic

framework for the recovery of biblical self-esteem through the basic premise of the Christian view of humanity and the most fundamental premise of biblical counseling.

The core of the Christian view of humankind, which is the basic framework of biblical self-esteem, is that he or she, the image of God for His original purpose, has fallen because of sin. However, God did not condone the frustrations of humankind, and sent Jesus Christ, the prototype of humankind's hope and the Image of God, to this world, and achieved reconciliation with humankind through Him as a mediator.

In this background, the Christian anthropology is the basic premise of biblical counseling and further Christian counseling, and is the basic mechanism of this study. Based on this, the answer of this study is being designed. The reconciliation of Christ is achieved through the vertical as well as horizontal relationship.

The vertical and horizontal reconciliation of Christ is presented as an answer that can urge recovery from personal shame and excessive guilt. This is ultimately a process of restoration to God's image originally intended by God. The answer from shame and guilt is to recover at the individual as well as at the community level. These must go hand in hand, and work together rather than focus their importance on either side.

At the individual level, self-esteem can be restored through a process of self-forgiveness that takes place in the spiritual life of the community and individual from a biblical perspective. This study suggests that humankind can be freed from shame and a healthy sense of guilt can be cultivated.

This study, based on literature research, integrates and analyzes the empirical research and literature research of existing psychologists and Christian counselors, attaches it to this study, and proposes a Christian solution that can recover from shame and guilt.

The end point and ultimate goal of the process of complete recovery from shame and guilt is to achieve the restoration of the image of God. Positive self-esteem must be established through the process of self-forgiveness. At the same time, in the Christian church community, confession of sin along with compassionate love and enduring listening and compassionate love through the process of forgiveness and reconciliation of the community for it is the result of human recovery from shame and guilt and the direction of recovery of God's image.

The core principle of this study lies in the Christian view of human. This study proceeds based on the Christian understanding of humankind as the image of God, the fall of human beings, and the premise of God's answer to the fallen man.

Under such premise, this study, makes clear the distinction between **self** and **ego**, which is essential to unravel the psychological theories of **shame** and **guilt**. Also, based on this, we examine the psychological history and understanding of the study of shame and guilt. The concepts of self and ego are distinct and classified from the psychological background of the study of shame and guilt, and are essential concepts in explaining the psychological origins of shame and guilt.

We examine the psychological research history of shame and guilt through the analysis of them as well as the distinction between self and ego. The psychological

research history of shame and guilt has existed on psychoanalysis and self-psychology derived from psychoanalysis or psychology based on experiences and cases within psychology, and two theories of social psychology with experiments(cognitive dissonance theory and self-discordance theory) on different axes.

In the broad framework of God's providence, wisdom and discernment are clearly needed to refer to studies that do not belong to the category of Christian counseling, and we try to take a neutral attitude that acknowledges the contributions as contributions, errors as errors.

With such concerns in mind, we would like to psychologically organize previous studies on shame and guilt. In addition, empirical studies and literature studies on shame and guilt are examined, and research in the field of psychology related to shame and guilt and research in the field of Christian counseling are explored separately. In particular, we will present a literature study as well as an empirical study related to shame and guilt, which is being studied in Christian counseling.