

## Christian Counseling Study on Shame and Guilt

The study of psychology can be said to be a literature study in which phenomenological research is mainly conducted and the theories and results are organized and published. On the other hand, research on Christian counseling takes a larger proportion in literature research that develops theories based on existing empirical studies or studies that develop the opinions of scholars through other documents including the Bible. Nevertheless, in Christian counseling studies, empirical research is also being actively conducted, if not as much as in the field of psychology. Although there are studies to see both shame and guilt in the empirical studies of Christian counseling, there is a tendency to study shame with a specific phenomenon as shame itself and guilt with a specific phenomenon as guilt itself. This is because of, in the empirical studies of Christian counseling, the majority of studies examining the difference about the effects of shame and guilt.

In “A study on the difference between shame and guilt according to religious orientation of Christians”, what is phenomenologically revealed is the difference in the realm of shame and guilt that Christians who have an extrinsic religious phenomenon (a phenomenon in which faith is not applied to life because they think of religion as a means) and Christians who have an intrinsic religious phenomenon (a phenomenon in which religious life is life itself) have.

For Christians living in Korea with intrinsic religious phenomena, guilt was clearly correlated, but not shame. In other words, the higher the intrinsic religious phenomenon, the higher the degree of guilt felt by Korean Christians who showed an intrinsic religious phenomenon. It had nothing to do with the realm of shame. In contrast, Christians who exhibited extrinsic religious phenomena were deeply associated with shame and not with guilt.

It can be said that Korean Christians who show an external religious phenomenon felt more shame than guilt as the external religious phenomenon increased. The results of this study are that when faith is a means of life rather than a part of life, Christians feel more shame than guilt. In view of the psychological studies of shame and guilt, Christians in the case where faith is a means of life have a great potential for psychological problems. This has implications for Christian counselors.

In a study similar to this, Hwa-Ja Kim “The Effect of God Image and Shame on Psychological Functions”, she investigated the image of God and the degree of shame among the youth of the American white Christian school as well as the youth of the Korean Christian school and the Korean church. As a result, white Christian young adults showed that the aspect of ‘acceptance of God (a scale that included items such as “Am I fit for God to love”) on the scale of God’s image was a higher result than the aspect of ‘God’s presence (“God exists for me”). However, Korean Christian youth showed the same results in terms of ‘acceptance of God’ and ‘presence of God’ on the scale of God’s image.

In the results related to shame, the contribution of shame to emotional distress was significant in both cultures. In particular, the impact of shame was contributing to negative emotional distress in both cultures. However, breaking the hypotheses and results of previous studies, Koreans did not have a higher level of shame than whites. White female Christian students had specifically the highest level of shame. It is usually reported that Asians experience more shame, but this was not the case here.

Although not described in Kim Hwa-ja’s research, it is believed that the results of the study are related to the maturity of faith. For example, since the degree of ‘intrinsic belief phenomena’ and ‘extrinsic belief phenomena’ were not

measured, white female Christian students may have shown the highest degree of shame.

Actually, in the study of Katheryn H. Keller, Debra Mollen, Lisa H. Rosen, among American Christians, Christians who showed a high tendency on the spiritual maturity scale did not feel more shame than those who showed a high tendency for Christian fundamentalism but not on the spiritual maturity scale. Christian fundamentalists with high spiritual maturity felt low shame, whereas Christian fundamentalists with low spiritual maturity felt high shame. In the end, it might be seen that the maturity of faith can be a measure of whether believers feel more shame or guilt. Furthermore, when combined with studies of psychology, due to the difference in the degree of shame, the group with low faith maturity is more likely to experience psychological problems than the group with high faith maturity.

In the Study of Laura Barnard Crosskey, John F. Curry, and Mark R. Leary on ministers, the influence of shame was proved by examining the relationship between shame and the burnout of the ministers. In the study of **“Role Transgressions, Shame, and Guilt among Clergy”**, the existing scale of shame and guilt was converted into a scale of shame and guilt that can be experienced in the field of ministry. As a result of examining ministers and prospective ministers using the converted scale, shame was correlated with burnout and negative emotions of the minister, regardless of whether the situation causing shame was common or in the field of ministry.

That is, regardless of whether the event causing shame is in the field of ministry or in the general field, high shame reflects a higher degree of burnout as well as higher negative emotional experiences for the minister. But importantly, guilt was not significantly associated with burnout or emotional components. As suggested by previous studies, shame is also associated with

burnout and negative emotions, but guilt is not. Thus, preventing burnout for ministers will make them feel less shame. After all, shame affects exhaustion as well as psychological problems.

There are also empirical studies examining the purely influence of guilt as well as studies in which a negative effect of shame was found by studying both shame and guilt. First, Donn L. Kaiser studied the relationship between feelings of guilt and how individuals religiously deal with problems when they encounter. The Religious Problem-solving scale divides such as self-directing style (reliance on individual resources to solve problems when faced with problems), collaborative style (working with God when problems arise) and deferring style (solving by submitting to God).

The higher the tendency of 'self-conversion style', the lower the feeling of guilt. The higher the tendency of the types of 'collaborative style' and 'deferring style', the higher the sense of guilt. Among them, the tendency of 'collaborative style' showed a higher level of guilt than the group with 'deferring style' and was also related to the belief that forgiveness was possible. It is concluded that this is because the 'collaborative style' views guilt from a positive perspective and sees it as an experience that can make a spiritual leap.

The 'collaborative style' sees oneself as liberating from sin by resolving problems with God by reconfirming that they are sinners by looking at themselves in the light of God's standards when problems arise. Here, guilt works positively, not negatively.

In a similar vein, there is a study by Michelle A. Hale and David A. Clark. Here, Christian students with high religious orientation showed higher obsessive-compulsive tendencies than the non-religious group, but there was no clear distinction on the anxiety and depression scales. This means that Christian students with a high religious orientation may have obsessive-compulsive

tendencies, but these symptoms are not psychotic. This study suggests that guilt for intrusive thoughts may increase obsessive thoughts in a group with a high religious orientation. The phenomenon to have various thoughts and feeling guilty about them is more evident in the group with a high religious orientation. What is important in this study, however, is that the group with high religious orientation generated more positive cognitive thinking in response to guilt instead of having high guilt. Therefore, the researchers suggested that students in the high religious group experienced intrusive thoughts related to beliefs or moral standards rather than other thoughts.

Another study on religious orientation and guilt, "Religious Orientation, Guilt, Confession, and Forgiveness," found that the group of intrinsically religious people (The phenomenon that the religious life is life itself) are more easily exposed to guilt compared to the group of extrinsically religious people (A phenomenon in which faith is not applied to life by thinking of religion as a means). And it was also reported that self-blaming thoughts or beliefs made them more distressed. However, the guilt is used as an instrument to show empathy towards others as well as compensatory and benevolent attitudes toward others. Even if guilt is induced, people who are intrinsically religious are emotionally healthy because they have a stronger belief that they can forgive themselves and that God can forgive them, compared to people who are externally religious. People with intrinsic religious orientation were more likely to confess their mistakes than those with extrinsic religious orientation. These results suggest that guilt can have a positive effect on Christians with normal and desirable beliefs.

There is also research on whether guilt motivates people to pray. In the results of this study, it was found that guilt-inducing circumstances motivate most people to pray. However, especially in people with low narcissistic

tendencies, reminders of guilt-inducing situations motivated them to pray, whereas in people with high narcissism, guilt-provoking situations did not motivate them to pray. Feeling guilty is a motivating factor for most people to pray, but there are exceptions. These are people with excessive narcissism.

There is also research on guilt and forgiveness. Blake M. Riek conducted a study to build a model of forgiveness. In this study, the scales of 'sin seriousness', 'relational intimacy', and 'consideration' made the perpetrator more likely to ask for forgiveness from the victim. And in this result, the presence or absence of guilt was acting as a motive for asking for forgiveness. After all, the task of asking for forgiveness is more likely to happen through whether the perpetrator is close to the victim, whether the crime is serious, whether he feels responsible for the perpetrator, or whether the case has undergone a deliberation process.

Among the factors leading to forgiveness, the most important mechanism was found to be guilt. Another factor that adjusts the major factors in forgiveness is guilt. According to this study, the situation in which the perpetrator does not feel any wrong to the victim and does not ask for forgiveness can also be interpreted as that the perpetrator does not feel guilty about the incident at all.

Comprehensive analysis of empirical studies shows that from the results of simultaneous studies on shame and guilt, shame usually reveals a relationship between negative influence and measures, and guilt does not reveal a negative relationship. Shame is also related to the maturity of faith, and as faith matures, people experience more guilt than shame.

However, the high sense of guilt that Christians experience is unusually resulting in sublimated emotional experiences. Therefore, there are many studies showing that guilt is associated with positive measures such as high religiosity

and influence. This suggests that shame and guilt clearly operate as different mechanisms, and that there is a clear difference in their results and influences. Since self-deprecation or self-abuse, which is thought to be caused by guilt, is not under the influence of guilt but rather the influence of shame, the encouraging effect of guilt would have been studied more than the negative effect of guilt. The empirical studies conducted in Christian counseling are revealing that guilt acts as an important mechanism in the realm of forgiveness as well.