

Hide And Seek

When my kids were young, we played a lot of hide-and-seek. They loved it! The kids would shrill with glee as I counted and they scampered to their respective hiding cubbies. Then, on the prowl, I set out searching, announcing my approach with songs, chants and threats of tickles. Inevitably, as I neared, I would hear giggles. With no interest in throwing me off course, they would give way their hiding place. They squealed with delight. The delight that rises not from remaining hidden, but from being found.

Young children welcome reception and shun isolation. But as we grow older, we learn to welcome the secret. Isolation is a strange comfort and we become very good at finding cubbies to hide in.

Hide-and-seek is an ancient game. Very early in the biblical narrative Adam and Eve played hide and seek. They went hiding, God went seeking and they did not want to be found.

Why do we do this? Why do we want to keep out of sight? Why do we avoid at all costs the exposure of ourselves to others? The answer is summed up in one word – shame. Shame is the belief you are so flawed that if people knew that flaw you would be rightly rejected. It is easier to hide than to be found.

It is important to note that shame was not part of God's perfect creation. In *Genesis 2:25* we read "*And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*" Prior to the fall Adam and Eve lived lives of complete openness, but that soon changed. With sin, Satan saddles humankind with the propensity to hide from God's sight and the sight of others. He re-writes the declaration that God pronounced over his created mankind, "these created ones are very good" to altogether another narrative, "these created ones are very bad." Shame strikes at the heart of our worth.

Welcome, then, is the good news of Jesus. He took on shame and defeated it. In *Hebrews 12:1* we read "*who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God...*". The work of Christ on our behalf does the deep-cleaning shame requires. Christ took our shame. Wonderfully the Gospel unties the shame knot. Through repentance and confession, we give up the hiding place and welcome the seeker to find us. That seeker is God. After all, God is not the God that drives us into hiding; He is the God that draws us out from hiding. Christ's action towards us confirms our worth. He announces over us again, "these created ones are valuable."

One would think that because of Christ, Christians would not hide anymore. But this is not true. Believers hide with the best in the game and sometimes are the best at the game. Fearing condemnation from people, the believer who struggles tugs the line and hides behind the pleasantries that win acceptance. Meanwhile, our struggles make a meal of our spiritual, emotional, and relational wellbeing.

While Jesus is the answer to our shame, He employs the church in scrubbing the shame from our lives. Remember, shame is the belief you are so flawed that if people knew that flaw, you would and should be rejected. Thus, untying this knot requires people know our flaw and confirm their love and acceptance of us. This requires an environment of safety. This requires an environment of love. This requires an environment of care and such an environment lies at the heart of what it means to be family. Family lies at the heart of what it means to be a church.

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Watch a mother or a father care for their children. Parents receive their children and sniff out shame wherever it rears. Consider the following places the church receives its own and scrubs out shame:

- Loss: We lament together over the losses we incur.
- Fears: We encourage one another at the point of our fears.
- Lies: We speak truth to one another, upsetting the lies we believe.
- Hurts: We walk with each other to shed the hurt that with time turns to bitterness.
- Sin: We correct one another by supporting God's loving guilt while dismissing Satan's hateful shame.

Yet for many, these areas of our lives remain hidden - skillfully stowed away. An art mastered from years of playing hide-and-seek. But for any who are willing to receive the other as Christ received us, a different end is in store. The joy of a child, who is glad to be found and set free.