



2026 VICTORY FAMILY CONFERENCE • DAY 4 • MEN'S SESSION

Breaking Free from the Power of Shame

You Are the Beloved, and You Are Not Your Worst Moment

Pastor Edwin Strickland

Friday, August 21, 2026 • 7:00 PM Session • At Sea

*"Guilt says I did something wrong. Conviction says I need to change. **Shame** says there is something wrong with me." Shame only has power because of secrecy. Put it in the light, and be healed.*

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The Pretext: God Wants You to Profit



The Text: 3 John 2



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Confront It, Confess It, Be Healed

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Key Quotes, Themes & Nuggets

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How This Applies to Us

Opening and Introduction

- ◆ Only six out of 100 Black men live to be 80. "Do you know six Black men that are 80? We don't." That is why these meetings matter: we have to come together and talk about real issues so you can make decisions to live long. **God desires for us to live long.**
- ◆ Introduced Pastor Edwin Strickland as "my son in the ministry."

Pastor Edwin Strickland

- ◆ Lives in Arkansas. On the Brazeltons: "I don't care how famous your spiritual father is, he ain't as cool as our dad." They took him in over 20 years ago. **He and his wife just celebrated 32 years of marriage: "If it wasn't for him, it would have been six."**
- ◆ Going last is a blessing and a curse: you hear all the teaching before you, and then you have to stay centered on what God gave you.
- ◆ Confirmation from the opening night: Apostle Tony talked about **legacy** ("legacy gives us the ability to live beyond ourselves") and then read **2 John 12**, an obscure verse already in Edwin's notes: "I have many things to write to you, but I will not with paper and ink; I trust to come to you and speak face to face, **that our joy may be full.**"
- ◆ The title, given early because there was no hour to preach: **Breaking Free from the Power of Shame.** "Don't turn me off because you think you have no shame."
- ◆ At his church in Arkansas the year's saying has been: **"This year, God is going to reintroduce us to ourselves."** Who we really are, not who we created through trauma. Some of you act like introverts, but that is a character you created to sustain yourself because the true you was injured. **If you let God show you who you are, you might be surprised how amazing you are.**

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**This year, God is going to reintroduce us to ourselves.
Who we really are, not who we created through
trauma.**

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

God Wants You to Profit

PROVERBS 4:7 • KJV, AS READ

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

- ◆ Prayer: hear this with your heart, not just your intellect.

ISAIAH 48:17 • KJV, AS READ

"Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go."

- ◆ "Profit" is not just money. Money is a good tool, but it does you no good to have money and no peace. The other translations prove it:
 - NIV (as read): "who teaches you what is best for you"
 - NLT (as read): "who teaches you what is good for you"
 - BSB (as read): "who teaches you for your benefit"
- ◆ "Tell your neighbor: God wants me to profit." He wants you better when you get off this cruise in New Jersey than when you got on.

3 John 2: Beloved First

3 JOHN 2 • KJV, AS READ

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

3 JOHN 2 • THE MESSAGE, AS READ

"I pray for good fortune in everything you do, and for your good health, that your everyday affairs prosper, as well as your soul."

- ◆ **Before John says anything else, he establishes their position: Beloved.** "I don't care what you've been through, are going through, or will go through. Your established position is that you are loved by God, and everything starts from there."
- ◆ **The Orlando story:** at a Pastor Dollar conference, sitting at a table with the Brazeltons, Edwin asked Pastor Tony, "Would you be my mentor?" Answer: "Nah." His wife had told him to ask Pastor Tony to be his spiritual father, but he didn't know what that meant and didn't want to be rejected. **"Because I didn't know I was loved, I didn't ask the question that was in my heart. Some of you don't ask God for the things in your heart because you don't realize you are the beloved."**
- ◆ God is concerned about everything that concerns you: your job, your family, your marriage, your career, even your extracurriculars. Edwin bowls every Thursday ("if it ain't fire or blood, don't call me"), asks God how to get six strikes in a row, and the Holy Spirit coaches him: two steps left, 15 miles an hour, use the heavy-oil ball. "I'm bowling 265, they're bowling 130. You need to listen to the Lord."
- ◆ Man is a tripartite being: spirit, soul (mind, will, emotions, imagination, intellect), and body. John is writing to Gaius, a man other believers testified was walking in the truth, faithful and hospitable. **John writes to a man doing everything right**

spiritually and says: I don't just care what you're doing for God; I care how you're doing personally.

- ◆ Men push through no matter what. Sick, we go to work. Hurting, we cut the grass. We take care of everything except ourselves. **"Your truck starts knocking on the expressway and it's in the shop the next day. You've had a knocking in your chest for six weeks, and when somebody asks how you're doing: 'I'm good.'"**
- ◆ God is concerned about you in totality: health, well-being, emotional state. John talks about prospering, health, and then **the condition of the soul. "That's where I want to stick a pin tonight."**
- ◆ Your spirit was born again of incorruptible seed and sealed until the day of redemption. **Your soul is being saved. You are a work in progress**, and there will be times you miss it and have to recalibrate. **"For many men, when we miss it, we fall into shame. And shame stops us from discovering everything else God wants to do."**
- ◆ Money doesn't get rid of misery, and being broke isn't holiness either. **"In proportion to the way your soul is developing, I want your money, your health, your relationships, everything to develop."**

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God is concerned about everything that concerns me.

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

What Shame Does to a Man

- ◆ You can have many accomplishments on your resume and still have accusations running through your mind. You can be surrounded by people who respect you and secretly struggle. **You can be applauded publicly while condemning yourself privately.**
- ◆ We assume this is about people outside the church. **Almost the same number of men inside the church struggle with pornography as outside it.**
- ◆ **His testimony:** introduced to pornography at nine years old, not looking for it, by a 17-year-old cousin with magazines (born in 1972, no internet). "It was dopamine to my brain." The cycle: knew it was wrong, stopped, got pulled back, felt bad; got saved, stopped, it crept back, now he felt bad because he was supposed to be saved. **"So now I'm hiding. And every time I try to witness to somebody, the devil says, 'Yeah, but you're watching porn.'"**
- ◆ **Shame comes for things you have done, things you are doing, and things that were done to you.** Many men carry shame from sexual abuse and nobody wants to talk about it; they would rather hear about money. Here you are at 50 or 60, and every time you go to the next level the devil reminds you of what happened when you were seven. "Today we get free of shame. We're sending it out into that ocean. It's not docking with us."
- ◆ **Shame from missed opportunities:** after adopting their first child, Edwin was accepted into Harvard's school superintendency program and didn't go because well-meaning family said, "You won't have anybody to watch the baby." **"They didn't help us watch the baby in Arkansas either."** For years, every time a job didn't come through, the devil said, "If you had taken that opportunity, look where you could have been."
- ◆ **Shame is physiological, not just emotional.** In his shame season he weighed 267 pounds, and not just from eating. Shame builds cortisol; you can work out all you want and still retain weight because your body is living in fight-or-flight. A deer runs when you clap, then stops, because the adrenaline has to subside or it would

kill the deer. "Men are living 10, 20, 30, 40 years with cortisol built up in their bodies because of shame."

- ◆ **The danger: carry shame long enough and you stop seeing it as something you feel and start believing it is who you are.**

Capture note: the recorder dropped for a moment here. Part 1 ends on "you don't just feel shame anymore," and part 2 picks up inside the next illustration. A few seconds of the message were not recorded.

- ◆ A bitter baby mama tells a child, "You're gonna be just like your stinking daddy," the child internalizes it, and we are surprised when he acts out exactly like his daddy. **Shame wants to reframe your identity. John called you beloved. Shame calls you unloved and unworthy.**
- ◆ If God wants us to prosper in every area, at some point we must confront everything living in our soul that keeps us from being the whole, healthy man God wants. **You cannot fully prosper in your soul while secretly living under the weight of an identity God never gave you.**
- ◆ Identity does not come from society. It gives you a title (CEO, CFO, Chief Technology Officer), and when the company downsizes your identity goes with the job. **"Your identity can't be in your title or your money. God loves you whether you have a billion dollars or nothing at all."**

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Carry shame long enough and you stop seeing it as something you feel and start believing it is who you are.

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

Guilt, Conviction, and Shame Are Different

- ◆ His college students mostly come from churches like the one he came from, where you couldn't do anything: in trouble for Monopoly ("y'all not gonna be shooting dice"), the deacons confiscated the Uno cards at Vacation Bible School, Sunday school 8 to 10, service until 3, back at 6 for YPWW ("Young People Willing and Working"), service 7 to 10, church Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday prayer. **Then the sheltered 16-year-old goes to college and gets buck wild, and because he was taught better, shame hits him harder than it hits anyone else.**
- ◆ **Guilt says: I did something wrong.** I knew what was right and didn't do it.
- ◆ **Conviction says: not only did I do something wrong, I need to change.** Guilt and conviction are good in a believer's life; without them you can be turned over to a reprobate mind that has no concern for the things of God.
- ◆ **Shame says: there is something wrong with me.** Not "I did something wrong" but "I am flawed. I am not good enough." Shame says when I mess up, instead of going to my spiritual father, I run and avoid him for six months. **Shame pushes you away from the people who have your best interests in mind, and it finds other people living in shame so you can ignore it together.** Offense works the same way: offended people find each other like they rang a bell.

CONVICTION ADDRESSES MY CONDUCT	SHAME ATTACKS MY IDENTITY
You lied.	You are a liar.
You failed.	You are a failure.
You made a bad decision.	You are a bad man.
You sinned.	That's all you will ever be.
You need to repent.	Just leave church.

- ◆ That is why men come into the church on fire for God and then disappear. Giving your life to Christ at the altar does not mean you automatically unlearn everything. **We do men a disservice when we don't tell them there is grace for them. Not an excuse to mess up, but if you mess up, God still loves you.** A baby learning to walk falls and we say, "Come on, you can do it, try again." We have to do that for other men instead of "that joker ain't never gonna change."

ROMANS 8:1 • KJV, AS READ

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

- ◆ **No condemnation does not mean no correction.** This generation feels every correction is a lack of love. Condemnation says you will never change and this is the best you are.
- ◆ No condemnation is not an excuse to forgo accountability or consequences: "You can rob a bank and the Lord will forgive you, and while you've got number 675 across your chest you can have an amazing jail ministry." **Don't let the enemy use your past to paint a picture of your future.**

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Guilt says I did something wrong. Conviction says I need to change. Shame says there is something wrong with me.

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

Shame Makes Me Hide What Needs to Be Healed

GENESIS 3:7, 9 • KJV, AS READ

"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons... And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?"

- ◆ **"The concealing of shame."** God wasn't asking for Adam's GPS. **"Where are you?"** was not a geographical question; it was a relational question. "Yesterday you met me here. Yesterday we walked hand in hand. I showed up the same way today. What happened?"
- ◆ **The shame cycle: sin produced covering. Covering produced hiding. Hiding produced fear. Fear pushed Adam into blame** ("the woman you gave me").
- ◆ Men follow the same cycle. We cover with money (acting like we have more than we do), or by acting like the marriage is fine ("I thought they had the perfect marriage"). Covering produces hiding: the people you used to spend time with don't see you anymore, because you don't want them to discover that the life you live over here is not the life you live over there.
- ◆ He is talking about men who love God and serve in the church: deacons, elders, leaders. You would be surprised at the alcohol bottles in their houses, and at how some men talk to their wives.
- ◆ His own check: "I have never been disrespectful to Pastor Tony. And the Lord said to me, **'How can you respect him and not respect your wife?'**" He and his wife used to cuss each other out, then get on the phone with Pastor Tony and Pastor Cynthia all sweetness, hang up, and pick right back up. Then every time he was around Pastor Tony he felt "some kind of way," could not receive the preaching, and shame

kept saying: **"You are fake. You're just putting on. How are you going to ask God to bless you acting like that?"**

- ◆ **We cover with work, money, success, titles, toughness, humor, anger, busyness, and, if we're honest, sex and alcohol. Why? The fear factor: What will they think of me? Will I be rejected? Will I still be honored? Will I still be loved?**
- ◆ **The turning point: "Even if they send me away, I refuse to sit at another conference feeling bad about the way I treat my wife while acting like I'm receiving something. I need help. I need to know how to be a good husband. I know how to be a good single, and that's where I'm headed if you don't teach me."** When he told the truth and they didn't throw him away, **it created a gateway for all the shame in his life to dissipate.**
- ◆ **Delivered from pornography at about 19; almost 30 before he ever told anyone publicly.** The first time was when another man came to him: "I need help. It's ruining my sex life with my wife. I'm scared every time she picks up my phone. I know you don't understand." "Brother, you have no idea." When that man got free because Edwin was free and willing to share, Edwin decided to share the testimony.
- ◆ **God wants to free you, not just for you. He wants to free you so you can help other people get free. That is why the enemy wants you quiet: if he keeps you silent, he keeps everyone connected to you in the same situation.** Sometimes the testimony is "Brother, I'm going through."
- ◆ **"When I grow up I won't be anything like my daddy,"** then the pressure of life comes and you go off on your kids exactly like he did, and shame doubles down so you won't ask for help.
- ◆ **Ask yourself: What am I hiding? What am I ashamed of? What am I terrified that somebody would find out?** Not every sin to everybody, but find a godly man, a counselor, an apostle, a pastor, somebody you trust: "I'm sick and tired of being ashamed of this." The bad financial decision and the eviction you were too proud to mention. The church you stopped attending because everyone else seemed to be doing so well. **God says: you belong.**

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God wants to free you, not just for you. He wants to free you so you can help other people get free.

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

POINT TWO

Shame Tries to Make My Worst Moment My Permanent Identity

DECLARE IT

"I am not my worst moment."

- ◆ Condemnation is destructive because it doesn't tell you what you did; it tells you who you are. **You are not what you did. You are not what was done to you.**
- ◆ Shame doesn't merely remind you of an event. Shame wants to rewrite your **name**. It wants you to live with it so long that you stop seeing it as a feeling and see it as an identity. That is why "God wants to reintroduce you to yourself."

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 • KJV, AS READ

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

- ◆ "Say: I'm new. You can be new tonight on this boat. You don't have to leave this room the way you got on in New Jersey."
- ◆ Shame doesn't forget. But God's mercies are new every morning, so every morning remind yourself: that is not who I am.

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Shame doesn't merely remind you of an event. Shame wants to rewrite your name.

POINT THREE

God Wants to Exchange My Shame for His Joy

- ◆ This is where many men get stuck. 2 John 12: "I want to come to you and speak face to face, **that your joy may be full.**"
- ◆ Jesus endured the cross, "despising the shame." **On Friday it looked shameful. On Sunday it looked glorious.** Some of you are living in a Friday moment. Your Sunday is here.
- ◆ You are not bringing Jesus something He has never experienced. The crucifixion was humiliating: they mocked Him, stripped Him, pulled out His beard, put a crown of thorns on His head, "Here is the King of the Jews." **He went through it so He could show you: shame may come, but shame can't keep you down.**
- ◆ Shame has already been defeated. The only reason shame has power is secrecy. If somebody is blackmailing you, the way to stop them is to tell what they know. "Me and my wife call it: **stalk the stalker.** The enemy is a stalker. If he's in the bushes watching me, I'm watching him."

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On Friday it looked shameful. On Sunday it looked glorious. Your Sunday is here.

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

POINT FOUR

Confront What Is Controlling You, and Confess It to Be Healed

- ◆ Shame thrives in secrecy, loves the darkness, and wants you isolated, because if it can keep a man isolated it can keep the lie unchallenged.
- ◆ That is why men have such superficial relationships. Women know each other a week and have deep conversations. Men know each other a year and talk about the Lakers and the zero-turn lawnmower. "Brother, how you doing?" "I'm good." So good we don't even talk about going to the doctor.
- ◆ His wife's insert, delivered as promised: **if you are a man over 40 and have heartburn for more than 48 hours, go to the doctor immediately; it is one of the signs of a minor heart attack.** "Don't be ashamed to say, my chest hurts, help me."

JAMES 5:16 • KJV, AS READ

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

- ◆ One of the things God wants you to discover this year is **who you really are**. Some of you have let shame change your personality and your disposition.
- ◆ "I'm not in another man's business"? **We ought to be in each other's business. Iron sharpens iron, and iron can't sharpen iron from across the room. It has to be in close proximity.**
- ◆ Whatever the struggle (health, emotions, finances, marriage, your kids, or the church you avoid because every time you go you get convicted by something from your past): **"God, I don't want to leave this boat keeping this secret anymore. I release it, in such a way that it never has the ability to control my life again."**
- ◆ **God is madly in love with you. There is nothing you have done or could do that would make Him throw you away. If you were the only person on the planet, Jesus**

would still have died for you. And if He sent His Son so we could have eternity, He is concerned about what we're going through here.

- ◆ If this message wasn't for you, somebody this week is going to come talk to you, and this is what you tell them: **God still loves you. Your worst days are not determining your future. There is so much more He wants you to discover.**

THE CONFESSION • STANDING

"Father, I thank You that right now every ounce of shame is being released, in Jesus' name."

Closing (Apostle Tony Brazelton)

- ◆ "Pastor Strickland, what a word."
- ◆ One step further: **find someone you can share your shame with.** Not anybody, but somebody. Maybe your spouse. Maybe something you have never talked about with anyone.
- ◆ **When you put it in the light, Satan has nothing to hold.** Jesus said, "The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me." "Tell somebody, because you're putting it in the light."

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Find someone you can share it with. When you put it in the light, Satan has nothing to hold.

APOSTLE TONY BRAZELTON

CAPTURE THIS

Key Quotes

"Only six out of 100 Black men will live to be 80. That is why we have these meetings. God desires for us to live long."

APOSTLE TONY BRAZELTON

"This year, God is going to reintroduce us to ourselves. Who we really are, not who we created through trauma."

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

"Before John says anything else, he establishes your position: Beloved. Everything has to start from there."

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"Because I didn't know I was loved, I didn't ask the question that was in my heart."

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"Your truck knocks and it's in the shop the next day. Your chest has been knocking for six weeks, and you say, 'I'm good.'"

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"You can be a man people applaud publicly while you condemn yourself privately."

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"Shame comes for what you have done, what you are doing, and what was done to you."

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"Men are living 10, 20, 30, 40 years with cortisol built up in their bodies because of shame."

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"Guilt says I did something wrong. Conviction says I need to change. Shame says there is something wrong with me."

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

"Conviction addresses my conduct. Shame attacks my identity. Conviction says repent. Shame says just leave church."

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

"No condemnation does not mean no correction."

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

"'Where are you?' was not a geographical question. It was a relational question."

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

"How can you respect him and not respect your wife?"

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND, QUOTING
THE LORD

"We cover with work, money, success, titles, toughness, humor, anger, busyness, sex, and alcohol."

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

"God wants to free you, not just for you. He wants to free you so you can help other people get free."

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"I am not my worst moment. You are not what you did. You are not what was done to you."

PASTOR EDWIN STRICKLAND

"Shame doesn't merely remind you of an event. Shame wants to rewrite your name."

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"On Friday it looked shameful. On Sunday it looked glorious. Your Sunday is here."

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"Shame has already been defeated. The only reason shame has power is secrecy."

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"Iron can't sharpen iron from across the room. It has to be in close proximity."

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"Your worst days are not determining your future."

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"Find someone you can share it with. When you put it in the light, Satan has nothing to hold."

APOSTLE TONY BRAZELTON

Themes

Position before performance: you are the beloved, and everything starts there

God wants you to profit: money, health, relationships, and soul, in proportion

Men fix the truck and ignore the chest: God is concerned about the whole man

Guilt and conviction heal; shame attacks identity

The shame cycle: sin, cover, hide, fear, blame

Shame is physiological: cortisol and fight-or-flight that never subsides

Secrecy is shame's only power; the light is its defeat

Freedom is for others too: a silenced man keeps everyone connected to him stuck

Friday looked shameful; Sunday
looked glorious

Iron sharpens iron only in proximity:
real relationships, not lawnmower talk

Nuggets

- ◆ Ask the question in your heart. "Nah" will not kill you; silence will.
- ◆ The Holy Spirit will coach your bowling. He cares about Thursdays.
- ◆ Six weeks of chest pain is not "I'm good."
- ◆ They didn't help watch the baby in Arkansas either. Stop grieving the opportunity; take the next one.
- ◆ The deer stops running. You haven't.
- ◆ "You can rob a bank and have a great jail ministry." Forgiveness is real; so are consequences.
- ◆ Offended people find each other. So do ashamed people. Pick better company.
- ◆ Heartburn over 48 hours after 40: go to the doctor. (From Mrs. Strickland.)
- ◆ Stalk the stalker: tell what the blackmailer knows.
- ◆ Be in each other's business.

Reflection Questions

1. What am I hiding? What am I terrified that somebody would find out about me?
2. Where have I been treating a feeling of shame as a fact about my identity?
3. Which cover do I use most: work, money, titles, toughness, humor, anger, busyness, sex, or alcohol?

4. Who do I respect in public while disrespecting my wife or kids in private?
5. What symptom have I been pushing through for weeks that I would never ignore in my truck?
6. Who is the one godly man I can tell this to before I get off this boat?

How This Applies to Us

- 1 **Start from Beloved.** Before the to-do list, settle your position: loved by God, no matter what you did or what was done to you.
- 2 **Rename the feeling.** When the accusation comes, label it: guilt ("I did wrong," so repent), conviction ("I need to change," so change), or shame ("I am wrong," so reject it). Only the first two are from God.
- 3 **Run the hide-and-heal audit.** Write down the one thing you are covering. That is the thing that needs healing.
- 4 **Tell one man.** This week, confess it to a trusted godly man, pastor, or counselor. Not everyone, one. Put it in the light and take its power.
- 5 **Go to the doctor.** Chest pain, heartburn over 48 hours, the thing you've been "pushing through": book it this week.
- 6 **Check the private man against the public one.** If you respect your pastor and not your wife, that gap is where shame lives. Close it.
- 7 **Declare it daily:** "I am not my worst moment. I am new in Christ. His mercies are new this morning."
- 8 **Free someone else.** Your testimony of getting free is the key for a man connected to you. Share it when God opens the door.
- 9 **Build proximity.** Trade one lawnmower conversation this month for a real one. Iron needs contact.
- 10 **Make the decision tonight:** "Father, every ounce of shame is released, in Jesus' name." Then walk lighter.



VICTORY CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

2026 Victory Family Conference · Day 4 Men's Session · August 21, 2026 · At Sea

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Notes compiled from the live session by Rick Pina. Scripture quotations noted by translation as read in the session.