

GOD'S WORDS FOR OUR SHAME

PSALM 3

Case Study:

David is a Christian man that (literally) everyone admired. You could hardly find anyone in his church or community who did not have ample good things to say about David. If he ran for mayor in his town, he would be a shoe in to win. He is active as a lead teacher at the church in addition to serving on several key committees. Within the community he is often consulted when important decisions are made.

David is the father of a blended family with several older children. Several years ago David's stepson, Aaron, convinced David's daughter, Tara, to experiment sexually. Aaron got carried away and even though Tara resisted, he raped her. Tara confided in her brother, Barry. They went to their father, but David did not know what to do so he did nothing.

David tried to explain all the legal consequences that existed for Aaron and that even if it was reported it wouldn't make Tara's pain go away. Barry saw this as pure weakness. He grew to despise both Aaron and his father. Aaron showed little remorse and tried to act like nothing happened. Barry was incensed and refused to be weak like his father David. Barry beat Aaron and left him unconscious in a neighbor's yard.

Once the police got involved Barry was arrested. David bailed Barry out and smoothed things, using his political influence to get Barry out of trouble. But again David didn't really do anything more about Barry's physical violence than he did Aaron's sexual violence.

Barry, sick of the whole situation, outed everything that was going on in their home. With a few descriptive liberties he was able to turn everyone in the church and community against David. Even David's wife was ashamed of him and asked for a separation. David was devastated and ashamed to show his face in public. The only person he had left to call was God, but he didn't think even God would listen.

[This case study attempts to mirror closely portions of the life of David, King of Israel. To read the biblical narrative of these events see II Samuel 13-17. It was after these events that David wrote Psalm 3.]

Pre-Questions:

This case study is meant to challenge you to think biblically about the real struggles of life. These questions will not be answered completely in the sections below. But they do represent the kind of struggles that are being wrestled with in Psalm 3. Use the question to both stir application and to give you new insight into the psalm.

- If David spoke to you about his sense of failure and shame, how would you respond?
- How would you help David sort through questions regarding his level of responsibility for these matters?
- What should David do to gain relational support since he is isolated from family and friends?
- How could you help David begin to shake the sense of God-forsakenness that overwhelms him?

Read Psalm 3 in your preferred Bible translation. The “rewrite” of Psalm 3 below is an attempt to capture the words that God would give a modern David to pray (Romans 8:26-27). This would be something David would need to pray many times as he struggled to surrender his shame to the Lord.

A re-write of Psalm 3

1. Lord, everyone I know has turned against me; my family, my friends, even those who just “know of me.” They are saying that I am an accomplice to rape and murder.
2. Even those who went to church with me are openly questioning my salvation. “How could a Christian father just do nothing?” they ask. They used to eagerly attend my Bible studies, now they wonder if I’m an apostate.
3. Lord, you are my only refuge; my only protection. I realize how much the only wisdom and righteousness I ever had was yours. If it was not for Your tender hand under my chin lifting my eyes to Your face for reassurance, I would sink into despair.
4. When I prayed I was desperate. I can’t really say that I expected You to hear me. I thought You might have abandoned me like everyone else. But You heard me! You were willing, even eager, to hear my prayer! In Your holiness you are still accessible. Thank You!
5. When I sleep these days it can only be a gift from You. My mind is too tormented for sleep to be natural. When I wake from each few hours of sleep I get, help me to be grateful for Your grace to sustain my weak body and mind.
6. If You are still with me, why am I so concerned about my reputation. Even if the whole town hates me, it is only faithfulness to You that can change their heart. The same is true for my family. You are the Great Heart-Changer and if You are for me, I will fear no rejection.
7. I want to believe that. I do believe. Help my unbelief. Arise! Keep showing Yourself to Me, Lord! Do not let me lose sight of You! You are my salvation. There are many rumors spreading and slanderous thing being spread about me. Even most of the things that are true are not being shared “in love” or “for my good.” Silence the mouths of those who are not cooperating with Your redemption in my life and the life of my family.
8. I have no choice but to trust You with my whole life. You saved me from eternal hell and only You can save me from this living hell. You are a God who loves His people. I am Your child. You are even sovereign over those who reject You. As my Father, I trust You to guide me and these circumstances.

Passages for Further Study:

Psalm 25; Isaiah 6:5-7; Luke 7:36-50 (especially verse 47); Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; I Peter 1:6-9

Post Questions:

Now that you have read Psalm 3, examined how David might rewrite it for his situation, and studied several other passages, consider the following questions:

- Are you surprised that the Bible would include this kind of information about David and that David would be willing to share his prayer to God as part of Israel's public worship (the psalms)?
- What does this Psalm and its inclusion in Scripture say about the degree we should allow others to be involved in the more painful and "private" struggles of our lives?
- How would your answers to the "pre-questions" have changed as a result of reflecting on Psalm 3?
- How has your view of God and His response to our "big" sins with dynamic consequences changed as result of reflecting on Psalm 3?
- For what instances of shame do you need to re-write your own version of Psalm 3?