

# A WELCOME STRONGER THAN SHAME

## VIDEO TWO

Shame is hard to shake – reasoning and logic can't beat it. Neither can self-love: if shame says we're unacceptable, we're the problem. We can't be the solution.

What we need is to be truly seen, yet welcomed and wanted. And that is exactly what the woman in our story experiences.

She hears that Jesus is nearby. She can't bear the thought of approaching him face to face. Her uncleanness means she shouldn't touch him. But she thinks – if I could just touch the edge of his cloak, I might be healed. So she weaves through the crowd. Gets close enough to touch his cloak.

And she's healed.

[PAUSE]

But then time freezes.

Jesus stops.

So do the crowd.

Then the dreaded words come out of Jesus' mouth 'who touched me?'. No one owns up But Jesus knows. *Someone* has touched him. The woman knows too.

Eventually she's forced out of hiding.

Shaking from shame, the eyes of the crowd on her, the woman confesses. She must have expected to be shamed once more, made to look stupid and weak.

Instead, she hears these words:

'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.'

What's going on?

As Jesus brings the woman before the crowd, he's calling her out of hiding, to be *seen* as she is. Seen by the community that shamed her. Seen by him. Then, dismantling the stories of shame that she'd been defined by: Jesus publicly calls her, *daughter*. Beloved.

So Jesus not only takes away the woman's bleeding. He publicly removes her shame, calling her out of a story where she is unclean and unwanted, into a story where she is welcomed and loved.

It's what Jesus offers us today too.

Jesus sees us in our shame. Shame that we rightly feel because of what we've done wrong. And the false shame we wrongly experience because of the actions and judgements of others.

And like he did with the woman, over both kinds of shame, Jesus says: your story need not be one of hiding, worthlessness and failure. By dying and taking our shame, by being abandoned by God in our place, Jesus invites us into a new story. Now we are welcomed and valued. No matter what we think of ourselves, or what others say of us, we are called: daughter. Son.

It's tempting to hide our shame in the wrong places: suppressing it, distracting ourselves, over-compensating. But hear the invitation of Jesus. Allow him to *see you* and hide your shame in him instead. Only he can take it away. Only he can welcome you into a new story.

Though some of us may have been hurt by the church, one of the most powerful ongoing ways to fight shame is to experience the welcome of a community shaped by Jesus' love. Slowly, amongst Jesus' people, we can allow ourselves to be *seen*. And as we experience the welcome of others in Jesus' name, even in our failure, the grip of shame is gradually released. And on the day we experience Jesus' gaze in its fullness, our shame will be gone forever.

In the meantime, as your group comes out of hiding, and you share yourselves and express the welcome of Jesus to each other, you can be one of the most attractive groups in your university.