

## “Healing from Shame: Renewing our Minds”

**Date:** January 28, 2018      **Place:** Lakewood UMC      **Occasion:** Unashamed Series;  
**Texts:** 2 Cor. 10:5; John 8:31-32; Romans 12:1-2  
**Themes:** Healing, Thoughts

Christine Caine begins the eighth chapter of her book *Unashamed* by telling the story of a time when she was a college student in Australia. She got to her classes by taking a train. She lived in the suburbs of Sydney and took the train to the center of Sydney, a 45 minute commute to class.

One morning she was in a rush and inadvertently got on the wrong train, heading in the wrong direction. She ended up on the express train to Katoomba in the beautiful Blue Mountains. When she got off the train, she mumbled to herself, “How did I get here?”

The stationmaster happened to be standing nearby. With a friendly but compassionate grin on his face he said, “Well, young lady, you got on the wrong train, didn’t you?” She reflects back upon that experience and says, “It was that simple. I had gotten on the wrong train and ended up at the wrong place.” She goes on to say:

“Our thoughts, like a train, take us somewhere. And if we don’t manage our thoughts on a daily basis, we may end up jumping on any old train of thought, often ending up where we don’t want to be.” That can be especially true if you are trying to recover from shame.

How quickly we can go from shame-free thinking to shame-filled thinking. It can happen in an instant. It can for me, and I imagine it happens to a lot of you as well. In my home, growing up, we were told to do our best. That sounds like a reasonable thing to tell a young child. But I heard it this way – “Be the best. Be perfect. Never make a mistake.”

My rational mind knows that’s not realistic. We’re all human, we all make mistakes. But as a person who has struggled with shame throughout

his life, I can tell you that my thoughts can put me on the train to Shameville in an instant. If I make a mistake, or if someone criticizes me, my brain jumps on the shame-train and I start thinking, “I’m no good. How could I be so stupid to do that?! What’s wrong with me?”

If I jump on the shame-train, my thoughts will take me to a very negative place. My mood changes. My interactions with other people change. I can either withdraw to lick my wounds. Or, I can get defensive and try to justify myself to the other person. At times I can get loud, and it can look ugly. And then I’m ashamed of how I behaved.

Our mind is like a train, it can take us to places we may not want to go. And so we have to choose which train of thought we’re going to get on. You see, nothing is as powerful as a mind made up. A mind made up ahead of time has the power to control the way our day goes, and the way our life goes.

You and I have the power to control who we become, because we are literally what we think. Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as a person thinks in his or her heart, so she or he is.” How crucial then, for us to manage our minds. It’s been an ongoing challenge for me, over the years, to learn to take control of my thoughts, and not let them ruin my day or my life.

Healing from shame involves managing our thoughts. Unlike the express train that Christine got on, in Sydney, we can push the emergency stop button on our thoughts, and choose to get on board a different train of thought. We can literally re-train our brains by managing our thoughts, or renewing our minds, as it says in Romans 12:1-2: “Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

Negative, shame-filled thoughts can crop up in our thinking at a moment’s notice: “You can’t, you won’t, you’ll never be.” Or “you’ll always

be....” Maybe you’re like me, and criticism can trigger your shame button. And you start believing these lies that your mind tells you. Maybe you can hear yourself say: “You’re stupid. Why did you do that?” “What’s wrong with you?” “You’re a failure.”

Hear me – those are all lies. Don’t believe them. Don’t get on that train of negative thinking. Pull the emergency stop cord immediately. And change trains. Yes, you can change your thinking by interrupting those negative, shame-filled thoughts, and replacing them with truth from God’s Word. Stop the train, and get on another one.

Yes, I’m telling you to talk to yourself. You do it already, just change the train of thought. Encourage yourself. Build yourself up in the truth of God’s Word. Tell yourself the opposite of those lies you’ve been hearing. “I’m smart. I can do this. I’m strong.”

When the past screams: *You are hopeless*, tell yourself the truth, “I am a new creation in Christ.” (2 Cor. 5:17) When the past says: *you’re a failure*, tell yourself the truth, “I am greatly loved by God.” (Romans 1:7) When the shame-critic inside tells you *you’re not good enough*, talk back and say, “I can do all things through Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:13)

When your inner critic says: *you’ll never measure up*, talk back to that critic and say, “I am more than a conqueror through him who loves me.” (Romans 8:37) When that critic says: *you’re not enough*, tell yourself the truth: “Greater is he who is in me than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)

It is by reprogramming our thoughts with the Word of God that we begin to renew our minds, allowing God’s truth to counteract all those shame-filled lies we’ve been telling ourselves for years. It is possible to heal from shame. But you’re going to have to start thinking about what you’re thinking. Make sure you get on board the *right* train of thought at the

start of every day. Make conscious choices and put forth the effort to reprogram your mind.

In Philippians 4:8 it says, “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.” We begin to heal from our shame, when we allow God’s Word to renew our minds. Stop the negative self-talk and replace it with God’s truth.

In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 5 he writes: “We demolish arguments and every pretention that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

That’s the work we have to do, to be healed from our shame-filled thinking. Take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ. As it says in John 8: 31-32, if we hold to Christ’s teachings, and not to the lies which shame wants to fill our heads with, then the truth will set us free.

Friends, we can’t change the past. But we don’t have to keep repeating it over and over again in our heads. We can choose to get on another train and go in a different direction. Choose the train of thought that you will get on. Stop the train of shame when you realize you’ve gotten on the wrong line, and get on a different one.

God does not want us to live shame-filled lives. God wants us to live shame-free lives. Get on the right train. Renew your minds, and allow God to set you free. Amen? Amen!

This sermon borrows heavily from the book entitled *Unashamed* by Christine Caine, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Press, 2016, pp. 133-147.