

# ON Broadway

Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church Newsletter

February 2016

## Book Review

Pastor John

*The Soul of Shame* by Curt Thompson  
IVP Books, 2015  
ISBN 978-0-8308-4433-3

This is a deeply rewarding book. I came across an eight-page review the book by Bryan Borger in early September, 2015. I got it, read it, and recommend it to all. In this article I will lean heavily on Borger's review which, having read the book, I found to be insightful.

Joy, writes Thompson, is found in pleasing our Creator God. There is nothing more pleasing for us than to hear God saying to us, "Well done!" We are created for joy, a joy that comes from close connection to God who delights in us and other people who affirm us as creatures loved by God and whom we can affirm as loved by God. We were created for joy. There is no greater joy than to take delight in the Creator and to discover our Creator's delight in us.

What is most often the case however is that we hear the voice or voices telling us that we are "Not Good Enough." Voices telling us where we fall short, where we are inadequate, where we have missed the mark and hence we ought to be ashamed. Shame, as Thompson describes it, is anti-creational.

Borger writes,

"It is a key insight in *The Soul of Shame* that for evil to win the day, to bring ruination to God's good creation, it must

disrupt the humans, those called to "tend and keep" and develop the garden. It is a central point of Thompson's book that our human wiring, literally our brains and chemicals and instincts, causing us to want to be known ("naked and unashamed") has been re-configured in ways that enhance our proclivities to be ashamed. He makes this clear, blending Biblical exegesis and theological wisdom and brain science and psychological insight—and with this fascinating blend, he really helps readers understand our human condition in fresh ways. He explains it, over and over, deepening our awareness of how human alienation and brokenness can be understood through the lens of shame, with an assist from neuroscience."

He then adds that in Thompson's book

We read of a God of intention, a God who has begun a story with a particular intended outcome. It is a story that has direction and meaning given to it by the storyteller. But in this same story there are other voices, and we are interested in one voice in particular. A voice of evil who has a very different intention than God does. Its intention is to twist and sully the story of joy and creativity that God is working so hard to tell.

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## Loving God, Serving People

Building a community loved and changed by Jesus,  
loving and changing the world for him.

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And then, he (Thompson) offers this significant statement:

And I suggest that evil's maleficent intent is wielded no more forcefully (yet subtly) as part of it's the vulnerability of nakedness is the antithesis of shame. We are maximally creative when we are simultaneously maximally vulnerable and intimately connected, and evil knows this. To twist goodness into the seven deadliest versions of its opposite, shame is necessary and effective, and its virulence (extreme poison) explicitly exploits our vulnerability.

Thompson knows much about the human brain and he brings this knowledge to bear in his writing on shame, alerting us to how our brains and minds can be coerced into bending our lives away from God's original purpose for human life. This is a coercion in which we also bear much responsibility, we are willing participants in our bending away from God's purpose and the source of our ultimate joy.

We hide from God because we are ashamed. We hide from each other because we are ashamed. Creatures created for close connection with God and others find themselves alone, hiding, fearful of each other, and as a result we attempt to find joy and acceptance in all the wrong places.

How much disapproval have we expressed to others this week already? With a frown, a mumbled grunt of disapproval, an outright expression of one kind or another in which we express that someone has dipped below the approved human being category, we let others know that they are not good enough. In so doing we add the sum total of misery for the week. We can't feel good about that. Yet, somehow we find justification for our expressed disapproval.

Thompson, a psychiatrist, with a Ph.D. in Neurology, gives us story after story of people with whom he has worked and how shame has told them they are unworthy, are failures, are guilty, are pointless and perverted. In his work he shows how these perceptions can be changed in light of the Gospel where we discover that we are worthy of God's ultimate attention and God's ultimate action to restore us to wholeness. Allow me to quote Berger here,

We hardly need reminding, but *The Soul of Shame* is clear: this is radical, counter-cultural, hard stuff. In a section about how shame can be healed within various institutions and vocations,

and pondering the potential of education and schooling to help us root out our shame by adopting a way of knowing that is less confident, that doesn't insist on easy answers, he riffs on how learning itself can be a "declaration of vulnerability."

To admit in our culture that we do not have our lives neatly packaged and wrapped, that we are a mess, that we need help from someone else is tantamount to blasphemy. To admit that we do not know something, are not good at something, to have made a mistake - to be vulnerably known - is not one of our best skill sets.

There are books on shame that suggest that being "gospel-centered" is the answer, and while I am sure they are right, some seem overly simplistic to me. We are told to "preach the gospel to ourselves" and to remember that we are worthy because Christ has declared us so. If we repeat that, recall that, embrace that, our toxic feelings will be replaced by the pleasures and delight of God. Meditation on Christ's work on the cross will transform our attitudes and remind us that we are loved, these books insist.

Thompson would not disagree. His psychiatric practice and his perspective on his science is decidedly Christ-centered and grace-based. Yet, this book is more profound than the others, or so it seems to me, **because of his training in brain studies, in how he so naturally teaches us about brain stems and neurotransmitters, and how he understand how "the shearing effect of shame" works its way into our very bodies and reinforces our habits and practices.** This is no gnostic exercise in disembodied religious abstractions, but works with the only reality we've got: real bodies, with real brains, and real neurobiology. With these diagnostic tools Thompson offers us theologically sound but practical resources for moving forward towards hope and healing. This book is not the fad called "neuro-linguistic programming" as some call it, but it is working a somewhat similar territory. Thompson writes about our posture of "emotional dysregulation and relational disintegration under the guidance of shame" and helps us learn what to do about it.

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Reading *The Soul of Shame* will not be easy. It will poke at you, demand emotional energy as you examine your life and how you might overcome the shame that keeps you from being all that God created you to be. It is a book that should be discussed with others.

I learned much from Thompson. Applying what I've learned to my life is a worthy goal, worthy of the hard work needed to implement. I will read it again and anticipate the continuation of the joy I received in reading it the first time.

Thompson wrote an earlier book entitled *Anatomy of the Soul* which I'm also reading and learning much from. As with *The Soul of Shame*, the first book is more than just worth while reading, it is worthy of deep reflection, and ultimately liberating as the

Gospel is understood in fresh Biblical ways.

Bryan Berger's blog is found at <http://www.heartsandmindsbooks.com/>. He is the owner of "Heart's and Minds" bookstore. You can find his review of *The Soul of Shame* on his blog.



## **Olympic Trials Qualifier**

*Nicole Michmerhuizen*

I qualified for the Olympic trials in November by running 2:41:37 in the Indianapolis Marathon. This was my second marathon (the first was the Bayshore Marathon in May 2014, which Megan Boes and Rachel Bush also ran!). The Olympic trials are on February 13 in LA. The top three runners will compete in Brazil in August. While I am not in any way expecting to qualify, I am excited to have this opportunity. I feel so blessed by God, family, and friends and hope to reflect that in my experience next month!





Our Lenten journey this year begins on Ash Wednesday with our Sunday services focusing on chapters 13-17 of John's Gospel. Then during Holy Week morning devotions we expand into other portions of John's Gospel. We have entitled the series **"With Jesus in the Upper Room."**

**February 10: Ash Wednesday**

We invite you to join us on Ash Wednesday for a time of fellowship, reflection and worship. We will have a soup supper at 5:45 pm, followed by a worship service at 6:30 pm. The service will include imposition of ashes, scripture and meditation, as well as Holy Communion. This is a great service for the whole family. Come worship with us as we begin our shared Lenten journey together.

**February 14: Lent 1, John 14:15-31**

**February 21: Lent 2, John 15:1-8**

**February 28: Lent 3, John 15:9-17**

**March 6: Lent 4, John 15:18-16:15**

**March 13: Lent 5, John 16:16-33**

**March 20: Lent 6, Palm Sunday, John 17:1-19**

**March 20:** 6:00 pm evening worship

**March 21-25, Holy Week Morning Devotions**

Daily 30-minute service, beginning at 6:30 am followed by a light breakfast

Monday: John 2:13-35, Jesus clears the temple

Tuesday: John 3:1-17, Jesus' meeting with Nicodemus

Wednesday: John 4:5-42, the woman at the well

Thursday: John 12:1-11, Jesus is anointed by Mary

Friday: John 12:20-36, Jesus predicts his death

**March 24: 7:30 pm, Maundy Thursday with communion**

**March 25: 7:30 pm, Good Friday, John 19:1-19**

**March 27: Easter, John 20**



## International Ministry Trip Costa Rica Fundraising Dinner

Are you hungry for an amazing dinner, served by our amazing teens? Mark your calendars for the evening of March 5th as the eight students headed to Costa Rica help prepare and serve a sit down dinner for you. You will have the choice between two seatings (5:00 & 7:00 PM) and three main dishes. A reservation is required for both seatings, and there will be childcare provided at the 5:00 seating. You certainly won't want to miss this time to interact with our students, enjoy a wonderful meal, and support our students' desire to partner with our church's missionaries in Costa Rica.

Sign-up will begin January 31st in the Fellowship Hall or by emailing Ross Weener ([rweener@aacrc.org](mailto:rweener@aacrc.org)) to reserve your spot. At the end of the night you will have the opportunity to support the students with a check or cash donation. If you have any questions, please contact Natalie Henke ([nataliehenke@hotmail.com](mailto:nataliehenke@hotmail.com)) or Ross Weener.

## Hope Clinic Volunteer Opportunity

Over a year ago we joined the many volunteers who serve at Hope Clinic. Our job is to serve a dinner on the fourth Saturday of each month to about a hundred or more guests. Other volunteers prepare the meal and the meal is served cafeteria style so, while the experience is very positive, the work is not demanding. Serving the dinner and cleanup of the kitchen and dining area takes about two hours late on a Saturday afternoon. We have a very fine core group of volunteers who have faithfully scheduled their time to be there. Of course, we can always use more. If you would like to join in this particular ministry, or just learn a little more about how it works, please contact Ron or Sharon Reimink (734-995-1710 or [rreimink@comcast.net](mailto:rreimink@comcast.net)). We'd love to answer your questions and invite you to plug in. As is so often true, the giver experiences as much a blessing as does the receiver.



**Valentine's Day is a day to say,  
"I love you."**

*Marilyn Cummins*

It's for letting out the truth of what you feel.  
Yet, every day is a day for love that's shown  
in being kind and gentle  
and patient when things go wrong  
or someone is slow to understand or get it done.

Love shows when  
the best you have is shared;  
an angry tongue is tamed,  
but thanks and praise are spoken;  
wrongs are forgiven and forgotten,  
laughs and joys are shared  
and so are hurts and tears.

Love? Who knows how?  
The Lord of Life and Love  
who longs to teach each heart  
the ways of peace and love.

