

Cleansed and Honored by Christ

A Storying Approach by S. L. Enjer

“Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.

“I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” (Luke 5:12-13)

Cleansing

Many presentations of the Gospel of Jesus Christ center on forgiveness from the guilt of sin. While that is an essential part of the work that Jesus did, there are other aspects which may be relevant to people who live in cultures which place a high value on shame and honor. In establishing the new covenant, Jesus was the fulfilment of the old covenant – the Law. Jesus said he did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfil it. (Matthew 5:17) His death fulfilled the sacrificial laws which prescribe what must be done to atone for wrongdoing. But what of the many laws regarding what must be done to cleanse humans from all that defiles them?

When Moses was instructed by God to record the Law, many restrictions were put in place to keep people from entering the Temple for worship while they were unclean. God outlined ways for people to ritually wash and present the required sacrifices so that He could pronounce them holy and accept them into the Temple. Their defilement would be cleansed as they responded to God’s Law in faith. Their actions of washing and presenting the sacrifices required would demonstrate their faith in and desire to please the one true God.

Then Jesus, the Word of God, became flesh and lived among unholy people. Jesus in his holiness was not made unclean by taking on flesh or by touching that which should have defiled him. Instead, by his touch the lepers were healed, the woman’s bleeding ceased and the dead were made alive! Jesus cleansed the unclean. He declared them holy and they drew near to him – he who was holy and undefiled.

Jesus came to fulfil all God’s Law. In his life and teaching he showed that the Law was put in place to show people their need for cleansing. By his death, Jesus provided the ultimate sacrifice so that those who believe can come into God’s presence. After the resurrection, on the Emmaus road, Jesus explained his birth, life and death, by beginning with God’s Law: “Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:27)

Shame

Jesus understood that those with an understanding of their uncleanness feel ashamed. While guilt has to do with deeds one has done or left undone, shame has to do with the essence of a person. Out of shame, we hide or cover the parts of ourselves that are deficient or unacceptable. According to the Bible, after the Fall men and women became unclean and unholy. Only God is pure and holy.

When Jesus took on flesh, he cleansed it by his holiness. By his willingness to suffer death on the cross he submitted to the shame in place of the people who deserve to bear that shame. As he cleansed people from defilement, Jesus also took away the shame of this defilement. "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." (Romans 10:11) Just as promised in the Old Testament, shame can be replaced with honor. "...I will give them praise and honor in every land where they were put to shame." (Zephaniah 3:19b) Instead of the shame of uncleanness, God promises that there will be honor for those who put their faith in Jesus.

Using Stories

Jesus used stories when he spoke to the people. In fact, he did not tell them anything without using stories. So God's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "I will use stories to speak my message and to explain things that have been hidden since the creation of the world." (Matthew 13:34-35)

As we communicate the Word of God by means of stories, we allow the Word to speak to the hearts of the listeners. Storying is also a reproducible method of teaching.

On the next 15 pages, I suggest a sequence of Bible passages to be told as stories which highlight the truth of Jesus bringing cleansing from shame. When telling a series of Bible stories: review the previous stories' themes, ask the listeners to look for themes as they listen, use questions at the end of the story to bring out understanding, and ask listeners to tell someone else the story.

In the following sequence of 15 passages the five themes listed above will be in focus. Some brief notes are provided to clarify aspects of these themes in the passages. You will shape the passages into story form and create questions, in the blank space provided, for your listeners.

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 1: In the Beginning

Scriptures: Gen. 1; Gen. 2:15-25; Gen. 3:1-7

Theme to draw out: (A)

Notes: In the beginning, God created everything good and pure. God honored the first couple above all of creation (Genesis 1:28; Psalm 8:3-8). Adam and Eve’s disobedience broke their fellowship with God and caused them to become unclean before Him. Adam and his wife were ashamed and tried to hide from God. God expelled them from the garden as He cannot live with impurity. God covered their shame.

Story 1:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 2: Abraham and the Promise

Scriptures: Genesis 15:1-6; Genesis 22:1-18

Theme to draw out: (B)

Notes: Abraham’s right standing before God was by faith alone. “Abraham believed God and it was counted as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6) God promised Abraham his descendants would be as many as the stars, and, through them “all nations on earth will be blessed.” (Genesis 12:3) Abraham and Sarah’s son would be born solely because of God’s promise. His birth would take away Sarah’s shame due to barrenness.

Story 2:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 3: Moses and the Law

Scriptures: Leviticus 15:31; Deuteronomy 4: 39-40, 44-45; Leviticus 11:42-43, 47; Numbers 19:11; Leviticus 15:16, 19-22, 25; Leviticus 13:14-15; Leviticus 19:31; Numbers 19:22; Leviticus 5:2-7, 10; Leviticus 15:27; Numbers 19:20

Theme to draw out: (B)

Notes: God gave Moses laws about being pure in His sight. God is holy and so His people must be holy. Those who disobey God’s Law become defiled. There are serious consequences for those who do not carry out the cleansing prescribed after being defiled. God provided a means for people to be cleansed from their defilement and shame in order that they might draw near to Him.

Story 3:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 4: The Birth of Jesus

Scriptures: Luke 2:1-17, 22-24

Theme to draw out: (B,C)

Notes: Jesus was honored, even while he was in the lowly position of a new-born babe, by both the angels giving their announcement to shepherds and the Magi visiting with gifts for a king. After Mary had given birth to Jesus, at the time of the required purification for Mary, Simeon praised God for Jesus being the “light of revelation.” (Luke 2:32) This was the incarnation, in which the holy God took on human flesh and cleansed it.

Story 4:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 5: Washing: John Baptises

Scriptures: Matthew 3: 1-6, 11-17; {priest's washing: Leviticus 16:4}

Theme to draw out: (C)

Notes: John was sent by God to provide a ritual washing for people who admitted they had been defiled by their own sins. Washing in baptism was essential to indicate cleansing from all uncleanness. Jesus fulfilled the laws requiring washing.

Story 5:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 6: Good Samaritan

Scriptures: Luke 10:30-37; Leviticus 22:4-6

Theme to draw out: (A, B)

Notes: Piety is measured by mercy. Emphasize the fact that the priest and the Levite would become unclean if they touched blood or a corpse.

Story 6:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 7: Cleansing from Unclean Spirits

Scriptures: Mark 1:21-28

Theme to draw out: (C)

Notes: Jesus had the power to cleanse and heal people from all defilement, including unclean (evil, unholy) spirits. The miracles he did demonstrated that power.

Story 7:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 8: A Leper Cleansed

Scriptures: Leviticus 22:4-6; Luke 5:12-13; Luke 17:11-19

Theme to draw out: (C)

Notes: ‘Leprosy’ can indicate any unclean skin disease. Jesus, while coming into contact with lepers, showed his power to cleanse. He directed the cleansed men to show themselves to the priest as a testimony.

Story 8:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 9: The Widow's Son Raised to Life

Scriptures: Luke 7:11-17

Theme to draw out: (C)

Notes: Jesus gave life to the dead and restored honor to widow.

Story 9:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 10: The Question of Unwashed Hands

Scriptures: Mark 7:1-23

Themes to draw out: (A, B, and C)

Notes: When Jesus was questioned about his disciples not following the traditions of washings required before eating, he challenged the teachers of the Law about the meaning of these purity laws. Jesus showed that the Law – specifying rituals of washings and sacrifices – intended to reveal to humans the depth of their inner defilement in God’s sight. Man is unholy and can only come to God by faith in the Savior whom God has sent. In verse 15, Jesus said a very radical thing, namely that now that Jesus had come among them, the requirement of cleansing from defilement had been fulfilled.

Story 10:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 11: A Woman with Persistent Bleeding & Girl Restored to Life

Scriptures: Luke 8:40-56

Theme to draw out: (C)

Notes: The woman with a problem of bleeding (which made her unclean) touched the edge of Jesus' robe -- the tassels that represented his ritual purity. She wanted to be clean, healed. Jesus was not defiled by her touch. Jesus' purity was given to her. Jesus goes on to restore life to a girl by his touch. He is not defiled but rather gives life to the dead.

Story 11:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 12: Jesus' Trial and Death

Scriptures: Matthew 27:11-60; Hebrews 12:2

Theme to draw out: (D)

Notes: While being falsely accused at trial, Jesus accrued honor through his responses to the accusations. Jesus' mother and disciples witnessed the crucifixion and knew that it was Jesus himself who was crucified. Emphasize the shame of crucifixion: it is shameful for a prophet to be seen naked and to be punished. This was not Jesus' shame (he had done no wrong), it was ours – on the cross he took on the shame of humanity.

Story 12:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 13: Resurrection

Scriptures: Luke 24:1-35

Themes to draw out: (D)

Notes: Jesus was victorious over death and Satan on the cross. God raised him from death to the position of highest honor. “Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” (Luke 24:26)

Story 13:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 14: The Holy Spirit

Scriptures: {Acts 2:1-18;} John 20:19-22

Theme to draw out: (E)

Notes: Those who believed were changed from defiled persons to those in whom God's Spirit was pleased to dwell. The Holy Spirit empowered the believers. God gave the believers honor and the right to share in Jesus' glory.

Story 14:

A. God created man and honored him. Humans became defiled and need to be cleansed.	B. God promised to provide this cleansing.	C. Jesus has power to purify us.	D. Jesus takes our shame on the cross. The resurrection restored his honor.	E. Jesus restored our honor. The Holy Spirit is given to fill us.
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Story 15: Peter's Vision:

Scriptures: Acts 10:1-48

Theme to draw out: (C and E)

Notes: As Peter and others who obeyed the Laws of Moses (Jews) came to faith in Jesus, they needed to understand how God would accept the non-Jewish followers of Jesus. From this point, faith in Christ would not be associated with adherence to the ceremonial law because Jesus had cleansed everyone, regardless of background, through faith. "...What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy." (Acts 10:15b)

Story 15:

The Birth of Jesus

4.01

Many years after the Prophet Isaiah,

4.02

Came the birth of Jesus the Messiah. And the meaning of Messiah is “the Chosen One.”

4.03

Mary was engaged to Joseph, the son of David.

4.04

But before they did the wedding, she found out that she was pregnant by the power of the God’s Spirit.

4.05

Joseph was a good man. And when he found out that she was pregnant,

4.06

He was thinking of a way to divorce her without shaming her.

4.07

And at night, as he slept, an angel from God came and said to him, “Oh, Joseph, son of David!

4.08

“Don’t be afraid! Take Mary to your house to be your wife, because she’s pregnant by the power of God’s Spirit.

4.09

“And she will give birth to a son. Name him ‘Jesus’ because he will save the people from their sins.”

4.10

And after Joseph woke up, he took Mary to his house,

4.11

And he did not go in to her until she gave birth.

4.12

And 8 days after she gave birth, they circumcised him and named him Jesus.

4.13

And after the 40 days of uncleanness, they took him to the place of worship,

4.14

In order to offer the sacrifice according to the Law that God gave Moses.

4.15

And instead of a sheep, they sacrificed two doves, because they were poor.

4.16

And there was a good man, who believed in God, whose name is Simeon.

4.17

And God told him that he wasn’t going to die until he saw the Saviour.

4.21

And Simeon saw them at the place of worship, picked up Jesus, and said,

4.22

“Oh, my Lord! Now I can die and I’m at rest, because I have seen with my own eyes the Saviour,

4.23

“The man that You chose in front of all the people. And he is the light of the whole world.”

4.24

And Joseph and Mary were amazed by the words that Simeon said to them.

[from “One Story”, http://www.onestory-media.org/story_sets/transcript/948/english/birth]