

Tuesday Evening

Ron Dunn

THE MINISTRY OF FAILURE
Overcoming its guilt and shame

Text: Deut. 8:1-3; 15,16

INTRO: "I REALLY FEEL GOOD ABOUT MYSELF."

GUILT AND SHAME

SHAME is the "sleeper" in psychopathology -- a key factor of irrational guilt that breeds neurotic and psychotic symptoms -- low self-esteem, hallmark of depression.

It is an impotence-making experience because it feels as though there is no way to relieve the matter, no way to restore the balance of things. Failed as a human being. There is nothing I can do to make up for it.

SHAME

"As a state of being, shame takes over one's whole identity. To have shame as an identity is to believe that one's being is flawed, that one is defective as a human being. This shame is unbearable and necessitates a cover-up, a false self. Since one feels his true self is defective and flawed, one needs a false self which is not defective or flawed." (Bradshaw)

"Shame is the affect which is the source of many complex and disturbing inner states: depression, alienation self-doubt, isolating loneliness, paranoid and schizoid phenomena, compulsive disorders, splitting of the self, perfectionism, a deep sense of inferiority, inadequacy or failure, the so-called borderline conditions and disorders of narcissism." (Kaufman, Shame).

TERMINOLOGICAL RIGIDITY -- Once a definition is laid down, it tends to straitjacket thought and to control what the self permits himself to observe; so that instead of the definition being allowed to evolve to take account of new facts, facts not covered by the original definition are rejected. (Bowlby, Loss).

INTEGRATIVE SPIRITUALITY: Where everything is seen to contribute to a person's spirituality, which is, maturity which brings us to --

THE MINISTRY OF FAILURE

Susanna Kaysen: "Every window on Alcatraz has a view of San Francisco." (Girl, Interrupted)

I. GOD USES FAILURE TO EMPTY US OF PRIDE.

II. GOD USES FAILURE TO EXPOSE WHAT'S IN OUR HEARTS.

III. GOD USES FAILURE TO EDUCATE US TO THE TRUE VALUES OF LIFE.

IV. GOD USES FAILURE TO ENRICH OUR LIVES.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How has failure ministered to you -- if it has?
2. Was the failure worth what God taught you through it?
3. Do you believe God wants us to feel guilty? Should we feel shame? Is there a healthy shame as well as an unhealthy shame?