

## **Secularism**

Shame and conviction are two powerful emotional experiences that play significant roles in the moral and spiritual lives of individuals. While they share certain similarities, their origins, focuses, and outcomes differ markedly. While shame can sometimes lead to positive change, it often does so in a more destructive manner. Conviction, however, more directly encourages positive change and growth through acknowledgment of wrongdoing and the desire to improve.

Shame is a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by the consciousness of wrong or foolish behavior. It involves a negative evaluation of oneself and can lead to feelings of worthlessness or being fundamentally flawed.

Conviction is a firmly held belief or a state of being convinced about a particular truth. In a moral or spiritual context, it refers to the feeling of being convinced that one has done something wrong, prompting a desire to change or repent.

## **Biblical Foundations**

### **Shame**

In the Bible, shame often appears as a result of sin and disobedience against God. For instance:

Genesis 3:7-10 (HCSB) "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves... And they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden."

Adam and Eve's shame resulted from their disobedience to God's command. This passage underscores that even in their fallen state, God's control is evident. He knew their actions and addressed their sin, indicating His sovereignty in managing the consequences of human behavior.

Psalms 44:15 (HCSB) "My disgrace is before me all day long, and shame has covered my face."



The psalmist expresses a deep sense of shame and disgrace. This verse highlights God's awareness of human emotions and moral failures. Despite the psalmist's feelings, God remains in control, using these experiences to bring individuals back to Him.

Conviction in the Bible is often the work of the Holy Spirit, leading individuals to recognize their sins and turn back to God:

John 16:8 (HCSB) "When He comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment."

Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit's role in convicting the world of sin. This demonstrates God's control and active involvement in guiding humanity toward righteousness. The Holy Spirit's conviction is a divine intervention, affirming God's sovereignty in leading people to repentance.

Acts 2:37 (HCSB) "When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: 'Brothers, what must we do?'"

The crowd's response to Peter's sermon shows the powerful conviction brought by the Holy Spirit. This conviction leads to repentance and transformation, highlighting God's control in orchestrating every Negative Emotional Experience

Both shame and conviction involve negative emotions related to one's actions or perceived self-worth. Both experiences highlight a response to sin or moral failure, necessitating a confrontation with one's actions (Psalm 44:15; John 16:8). These negative emotions are under God's control, serving His purpose to bring individuals to an awareness of their sin and need for His grace.

### Moral or Ethical Dimension

Both can be related to moral or ethical standards, whether personal, societal, or spiritual.

The recognition of sin and the call to repentance are central to both shame and conviction (Genesis 3:7-10; Acts 2:37). God uses these experiences to reinforce His moral and ethical standards, drawing individuals to a deeper understanding of His holiness and their need for redemption.



## Potential for Change

While shame can sometimes lead to positive change, it often does so in a more destructive manner. Conviction, however, more directly encourages positive change and growth through acknowledgment of wrongdoing and the desire to improve. Conviction leads to a proactive response and transformation, aligning one's actions with God's will (John 16:8; Acts 2:37).

God's control ensures that both shame and conviction can be used for His purposes. Conviction, guided by the Holy Spirit, leads directly to repentance and transformation, fulfilling God's plan for spiritual growth and maturity.

Understanding the differences and similarities between shame and conviction is crucial for personal growth and spiritual development. While both experiences arise from a recognition of moral failure, shame tends to focus on the self's flaws, leading to feelings of worthlessness, whereas conviction targets specific actions and inspires repentance and positive change. By examining biblical foundations and examples, we see that God uses conviction to lead His people to righteousness, while shame can often be a more human response to sin and social judgment. Recognizing these distinctions helps believers respond to moral failures in ways that align with God's redemptive purposes and demonstrate His sovereign control in guiding them toward His ultimate plan for their lives.

Running from all shame and conviction and attempting to replace them with non-biblical justification is profoundly misguided and spiritually dangerous. By evading these feelings, individuals reject the opportunity for genuine repentance and transformation that God intends through His moral and spiritual guidance. Shame and conviction, when rightly understood and addressed, serve as divine tools to bring us closer to God's righteousness, revealing our need for His grace and forgiveness. Justifying sin through secular rationalizations undermines the fundamental truth of God's Word, leading to a hardened heart and a life estranged from His will. Instead of seeking worldly comfort in false justifications, embracing the biblical response to shame and conviction is essential for true spiritual growth and reconciliation with God.



Through the secularization of our society, we have increasingly encouraged people to run from shame and conviction, promoting a culture that prioritizes personal comfort and subjective truth over moral accountability and spiritual growth. As secular values permeate our institutions and media, the emphasis shifts towards self-justification and the avoidance of discomfort, often at the expense of acknowledging moral failures and the need for repentance. This cultural shift fosters an environment where individuals are more inclined to rationalize their actions through relativistic thinking, rather than confronting the constructive role that shame and conviction play in personal development. By sidelining these crucial aspects of the human conscience, secularization undermines the transformative power of recognizing one's shortcomings and seeking alignment with divine principles, ultimately leading to a society that is less attuned to the moral and spiritual dimensions of life.

### The Division of Social Justice and the Unity of Christianity

In recent years, the rise of social justice movements has become a dominant force in shaping societal attitudes and policies. While often presented as efforts to rectify historical and systemic inequalities, these movements frequently employ methods that result in further division and conflict. Social justice, as a form of secularization, tends to group certain people and label them as oppressed, while pointing fingers at other groups as oppressors. This binary categorization does little to foster genuine understanding and reconciliation; instead, it deepens the rifts within our country and society. In contrast, Christianity offers a path to true unity, grounded in the belief that all lives are equally valuable because we are all made in the image of God, and that our differences should be respected and embraced in love.

### The Division of Social Justice

Social justice, in its contemporary form, emphasizes categorizing individuals based on race, gender, sexuality, and other identity markers, and then assigning them roles as either oppressors or oppressed. This framework inadvertently promotes an adversarial mindset, encouraging people to see themselves primarily through the lens of their group identity rather than as individuals with unique qualities and experiences.



By highlighting differences and encouraging people to see themselves primarily through the lens of their group identity, social justice fosters an environment of resentment and blame. This can lead to a cycle of hostility, where individuals are judged not by their character or actions but by their affiliation with a particular group. The resulting polarization weakens the social fabric, as people retreat into their respective camps, viewing others with suspicion and animosity.

## The Unity of Christianity

In stark contrast to the divisive nature of social justice, Christianity offers a message of universal dignity and value. According to Christian teaching, all humans are created in the image of God (Imago Dei), which bestows inherent worth and equality upon every individual, regardless of their background or social status. This belief is foundational to the Christian understanding of human relationships and community.

Genesis 1:27 (HCSB) "So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female."

This scriptural assertion underscores the intrinsic value of every person, which transcends any societal divisions. By recognizing that every individual reflects the image of God, Christianity promotes a sense of unity and mutual respect. This perspective challenges the divisive narrative of social justice by affirming that our worth is not derived from our group identity but from our shared humanity as God's creation.

## A Path to True Unity

Christianity calls for reconciliation and love, even towards those we may perceive as enemies. Jesus' teachings emphasize forgiveness, compassion, and the breaking down of barriers that separate us. The Apostle Paul articulates this vision of unity in his letters to the early Christian communities:

Galatians 3:28 (HCSB) "There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus."



This radical inclusivity is a powerful antidote to the divisive tendencies of social justice. By embracing the Christian view that all lives are equally valuable, we can move beyond the grievances and resentments that social justice often perpetuates. Instead of fostering division, Christianity encourages us to see each other as brothers and sisters, united by our common origin and purpose.

## True Christian Tolerance

True Christian tolerance means that even though we are very different and don't agree on everything, we should love and respect one another. This concept goes beyond mere acceptance of differences to actively loving and serving those who are different from us, as Jesus commanded:

John 13:34-35 (HCSB) "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Christian tolerance does not require us to agree on every issue, but it does require us to treat each person with dignity and respect, recognizing their value as God's creation. This approach fosters genuine unity and peace, contrasting sharply with the divisiveness of secular social justice.

The contemporary social justice movement often promotes division by categorizing individuals into groups of oppressors and oppressed, leading to resentment and conflict. In contrast, Christianity offers a path to true unity based on the belief that all lives are equally valuable because we are all made in the image of God. By embracing Christian tolerance, which emphasizes love and respect for all people despite our differences, we can overcome societal divisions and build a community characterized by mutual understanding and compassion. True unity is found not in secular notions of equality but in the biblical principle of loving one another as God's unique and valuable creations.

## The Erosion of Our Christian Nation: Understanding the Impact of Secularization

In recent years, the secularization of our society has profoundly influenced how we perceive concepts like shame, conviction, equality, and social justice. This shift has led many to view shame as inherently negative and



to run from the conviction that can lead to genuine repentance and moral growth. Instead, secular ideals often use these concepts to foster division rather than unity. As we build awareness of this erosion of our Christian nation, it is crucial to recognize these trends and the pitfalls they present, and to reaffirm the foundational Christian values that promote true unity and moral integrity.

### The Mischaracterization of Shame and Conviction

Secularization has taught us to see shame as always harmful and to avoid conviction at all costs. In a society that prioritizes personal comfort and subjective truth, the natural and necessary feelings of shame and conviction are often dismissed or vilified.

Shame - Traditionally, shame can serve as a moral compass, alerting individuals to behavior that deviates from ethical or societal norms. While excessive shame can be damaging, appropriate shame can lead to introspection and moral realignment. The secular view, however, treats all shame as detrimental, leading people to avoid it rather than learn from it.

Conviction - Conviction, particularly of sin, is a cornerstone of Christian belief, guiding individuals toward repentance and spiritual growth. Secular culture, however, often portrays conviction as oppressive or judgmental, discouraging individuals from acknowledging their moral failings and seeking forgiveness.

### The Misuse of Equality and Social Justice

Secular ideologies have co-opted the concepts of equality and social justice, using them to create division rather than fostering genuine unity.

Equality - While Christianity teaches that all lives are equally valuable because we are all made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), secular interpretations often push for an unrealistic and homogenizing notion of equality. This view disregards the inherent differences among individuals and promotes resentment when absolute parity is unattainable. Instead of valuing each person's unique contributions and worth, secular equality demands uniformity, leading to frustration and division.



Social Justice - Originally rooted in biblical principles of justice and compassion, the modern social justice movement often emphasizes identity politics and group victimization. By categorizing individuals into oppressed and oppressor groups, it fosters an adversarial mindset. This approach undermines the Christian call to love and serve one another regardless of our differences (Galatians 3:28), and instead perpetuates division and hostility.

### Other Pitfalls of Secularization

In addition to the mischaracterization of shame and conviction and the divisive use of equality and social justice, there are other pitfalls of secularization that threaten our Christian nation:

#### Moral Relativism

Secular culture promotes the idea that truth is subjective and morality is relative. This undermines the absolute moral standards set forth in the Bible, leading to a society where personal preferences override ethical imperatives.

Scriptural Reference - Proverbs 14:12 (HCSB) "There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death."

#### Erosion of Family Values

Secularization often devalues traditional family structures, promoting alternative lifestyles and undermining the biblical model of the family. This weakens the foundation of society and destabilizes communities.

Scriptural Reference - Ephesians 6:1-4 (HCSB): "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right... Fathers, don't stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

#### Consumerism and Materialism

A secular focus on material success and consumerism distracts from spiritual growth and the pursuit of eternal values. It fosters a sense of dissatisfaction and a relentless quest for more, often at the expense of spiritual well-being.



Scriptural Reference - Matthew 6:19-21 (HCSB): "Don't collect for yourselves treasures on earth... But collect for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

## Reaffirming Christian Values

To counteract the negative impact of secularization, it is essential to reaffirm the Christian values that promote true unity, moral integrity, and spiritual growth. This involves:

### Embracing Biblical Shame and Conviction

Recognize that appropriate shame and conviction are tools for moral and spiritual growth. Embrace these feelings as opportunities for repentance and transformation, rather than avoiding them.

### Promoting True Equality and Justice

Uphold the Christian belief that all lives are equally valuable because we are all made in the image of God. Advocate for justice that transcends identity politics and focuses on genuine compassion and service to others.

### Rejecting Moral Relativism

Stand firm in the absolute moral standards set forth in the Bible. Encourage others to seek truth and morality grounded in God's Word.

### Strengthening Family Values

Support and promote traditional family structures and values. Encourage strong family relationships rooted in biblical principles.

### Prioritizing Spiritual Growth Over Materialism

Focus on spiritual growth and the pursuit of eternal values. Resist the lure of consumerism and materialism, and prioritize treasures in heaven.



The secularization of our society has led to a harmful redefinition of shame, conviction, equality, and social justice, fostering division and undermining our Christian foundation. By recognizing these pitfalls and reaffirming our commitment to biblical principles, we can work towards rebuilding a nation that values true unity, moral integrity, and spiritual growth. Let us embrace the teachings of Christianity, which promote love, respect, and genuine equality, and stand firm against the erosion of our Christian values.