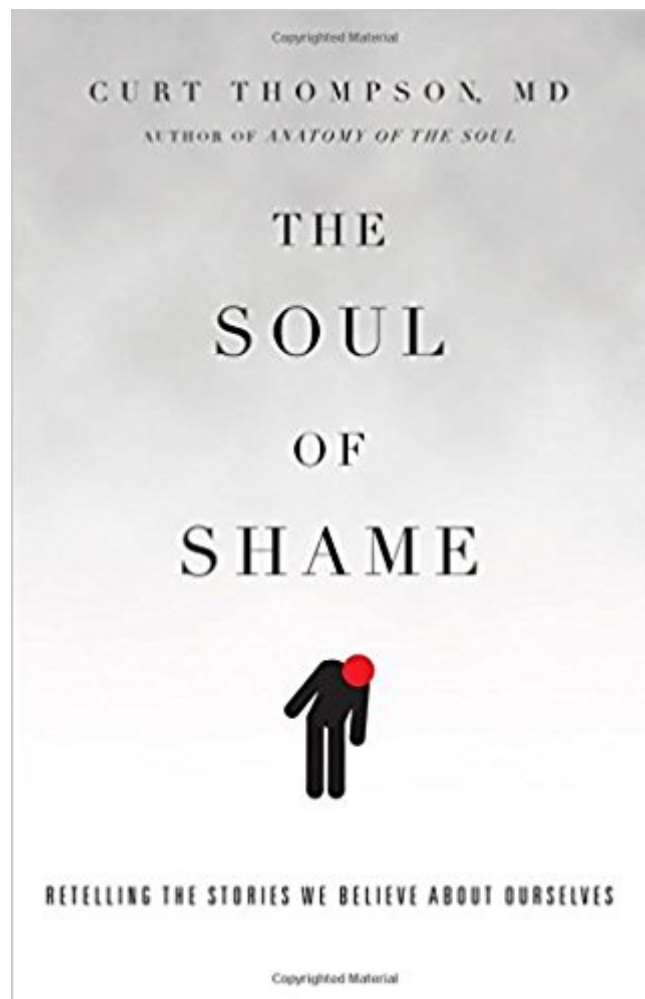




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# **The Soul Of Shame: Retelling The Stories We Believe About Ourselves**



## Synopsis

The Gospel Coalition Top Books of 2015 in Faith and Work Hearts & Minds Bookstore's Best Books of 2015, Applied Theology, Basic Christian Living, Whole Life Discipleship We're all infected with a spiritual disease. Its name is shame. Whether we realize it or not, shame affects every aspect of our personal lives and vocational endeavors. It seeks to destroy our identity in Christ, replacing it with a damaged version of ourselves that results in unhealed pain and brokenness. But God is telling a different story for your life. Psychiatrist Curt Thompson unpacks the soul of shame, revealing its ubiquitous nature and neurobiological roots. He also provides the theological and practical tools necessary to dismantle shame, based on years of researching its damaging effects and counseling people to overcome those wounds. Thompson's expertise and compassion will help you identify your own pains and struggles and find freedom from the lifelong negative messages that bind you. Rewrite the story of your life and embrace healing and wholeness as you discover and defeat shame's insidious agenda.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Who would want to embark on an expedition into the unknown and painful regions of our own soul where evil has caused disharmony and disintegration in body, brain and heart? But this is what Curt Thompson invites us to do. Like a skillful surgeon encouraging us through a difficult but necessary procedure, he works to set us free from our old stories in which shame holds us captive to the common, core fear of having our inadequacies exposed. Naming that fear is the road to healing and

hope, not only in our own soul but also in our marriages, families, communities, churches and places of work. This is a challenging but profoundly life-giving book that teaches us how to relate our inner world of thoughts, emotions and body sensations to the intriguing findings of contemporary brain science, and above all to the biblical story of God's longing that we live openly in the light of his love, delight and grace. Thus new stories are told." (Richard Winter, psychotherapist, professor of practical theology, director of counseling, Covenant Theological Seminary)"Curt Thompson critiques shame as an elusive phenomenon, hiding in the shadows. In *The Soul of Shame*, using a theological lens, he drives shame into the light by framing it as a ubiquitous and intrusive force that creates chaos in the mind, isolation in relationships and suffering in the soul. Since shame is relational, he locates healing in nurturing communities rather than the isolated self. Everyone will be enlightened by this illuminating analysis, entranced by the elegant language and filled with hope by the availability of communal healing." (Harville Hendrix and Helen LaKelly Hunt, authors of *Making Marriage Simple and Getting the Love You Want*)"First and foremost, Curt Thompson is a wise, kind and generous guide through the foul thicket of shame. No word or topic sends people hiding more readily than shame, yet it is the brooding, merciless killer of joy in all our lives. Curt weaves biblical wisdom, neuroscience research and powerful stories into a covering that doesn't hide our shame but enables us to name what is keeping us from freedom and wonder. This is a magisterial work—thoughtful, compelling and transformative." (Dan B. Allender, professor of counseling psychology and founding president, The Seattle School of Theology and Psychology)"There is a beautiful freedom in moving without fear into the science of the mind and soul. To assume that God is good, that his word and work in the world are real, and then to assume that there is much to know about the physical science behind his work is, to me, a thing of honest beauty. I am blown away by Dr. Thompson's ability to so completely integrate the narratives of science, faith, the ever-raging battle between good and evil and the human experience. In addition to my own struggles, I can think of several close friends whose shame-filled narratives cause much heaviness and sadness. I am inspired by this book to continue to carry my 'stuff' into the light, and to help others do the same." (Sara Groves, singer-songwriter)"Fans of Brene Brown's work will find in *The Soul Of Shame* an intelligent, complementary (but not identical) companion to their reading. This book would also be helpful to pastors, spiritual directors, and anyone who finds themselves longing to understand why they do the things they don't want to do—and how to move toward joy instead. . . . 'Every minute of every day we choose between shame and love,' Thompson writes. It takes intention to combat shame, but, as he reminds us, it is not a battle we fight alone. Our God fights for and with

us." (Michelle Van Loon, Patheos, November 5, 2015)"The Soul of Shame provides an in-depth examination of shame and how it affects every aspect of our lives. It is an incredible resource for every pastor who provides pastoral care and counseling. We readily recognize the effects of sin upon the physical body but fail to recognize its impact on the brain that cause neurological changes in the brain which then affects our emotions and thinking. The Soul of Shame will empower pastors and counselors to see that shame is a root issue to most challenges we face in our fallen world. It's a must-read if one wants to be serious about caring pastorally for the Lord's people." (Brad Hoefs, Outreach Magazine's Resources of the Year, March/April 2016)"We need to talk about shame. Curt Thompson's recent book *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves* (InterVarsity Press, 2015) does just that and is, in my opinion, one of the most important books written this past year. . . . I don't say this lightly, for there are few books I have read that could ever make this list: this should be a book that every Christian pastor needs to know intimately, every parent should read cautiously for the sake of their children, and most Christians should have access to. It is a book that is applicable to everyone on some level, whether you yourself are dealing with shame or you know someone who is." (Randy Hardman, Seedbed, December 31, 2015)"Under the rapid-fire pace of modern life, Dr. Curt Thompson provides laser focus to the dynamics of the human soul and especially the crushing weight of untreated shame. With the heart of a pastor and the training of a surgeon, Dr. Thompson excavates layers of shame and then demonstrates their life-destroying aspects when left untreated. His training in psychiatry and medicine and his love and commitment to the life and spirit of Jesus uniquely qualify him both to diagnose and treat the ailment while pointing us to the one and only source of true life. Every individual who suffers under the weight of shame will benefit from this important book." (Gayle D. Beebe, president, Westmont College)"Though shame often exerts hidden, destructive power over us, *The Soul of Shame* invites us to find freedom with each other and in God's story of love for us. Curt Thompson weaves together experience, insightful stories, science and Scripture to invite us into a story of healing and flourishing together. This excellent book will help to guide my thoughts and relationships for a long time." (Kent Annan, author of *After Shock and Following Jesus Through the Eye of the Needle*)"Curt Thompson has written a book that is both truthful and honest: honest about our self-diminishment and truthful about alternatives. He is a shrewd observer of human reality and reads the Bible in knowing and compelling ways. The result of these qualities is a book that is potentially transformative and emancipatory for many readers. An important byproduct, in my reading, is the recognition that the church has spent much too much time on the issue of guilt. The move from guilt to shame is a move from rules that may smother to relationships that may hurt but

that also have the capacity to heal. This is a wise book that knows about our present tense and our possible future." (Walter Brueggemann, Columbia Theological Seminary)"This book is timely, unique and relevant. It is well researched and logically structured. Curt Thompson's wisdom, professionalism and experience as a preeminent psychiatrist and neuroscientist shine through new material and pertinent real-life stories. The book is unique because it doesn't just propose theory and questions but offers answers, explanations and solutions. This is a theological work

— the very premise of the book is about the 'soul' of shame, and this makes it exceptional. But above all else this is a human book — it is about every one of us and what we see and feel and how we react. It will change the lives of all who read it...It is destined to become a benchmark in the discussion on shame." (Scott Milne, businessman, marriage coach, New Zealand)"I wish The Soul of Shame had been available when I first started my career in education twenty years ago. This book offers tremendous implications for those of us who work in schools. As all of us were once students, we can all attest to the ways in which shame lurks in classrooms, sowing seeds of discord, doubt and discouragement. In The Soul of Shame Curt Thompson deftly combines the emerging field of interpersonal neurobiology with Christian theology, shaped and understood by his own practice as a therapist and his multiple roles as husband, father, son, brother, friend and follower of Jesus. Thompson's mix of stories and science serves to make the particulars of neurobiology accessible and invites the reader to explore the harmful effects of shame in his or her own story. As an educator seeking to serve children living amidst the grim realities of urban poverty, I often discuss our desire to cultivate the ideal conditions for human flourishing and shalom, and Curt Thompson has provided me with the language to name and better understand one of our greatest enemies — shame. But more importantly, The Soul of Shame provides a framework for scorning shame and allowing vulnerability, joy and community to thrive." (Bentley Craft, head of school, West Dallas Community School)"This is a challenging but profoundly life-giving book that teaches us, using many fascinating stories from Thompson's work as a psychiatrist, how to relate to our inner world of thoughts, emotions, and body sensations to the intriguing findings of contemporary brain science, and above all to the biblical story of God's longing that we live openly in the light of his love, delight, and grace. Thus new stories are told." (Richard Winter, Presbyterian, Fall 2015)"Through a masterfully woven blend of psychology, neurobiology, theology and real-life stories of patients he's known, Thompson charts a path through the shadowy territory of shame and leads us out the other side to hope and healing. The message here is a dose of good news for all of us who are thirsty for freedom from shame's insistent voice telling us that we are not enough. It turns out that the path to that freedom is paradoxical — as we trust enough

in God's love to face the very vulnerability we fear, shame is cut off at the knees. Read this book and discover a story about who you really are that will lead you to increasing freedom and wholeness." (David A. Schrader, Full Circle Group)"Thompson not only provides tremendous insight into these important matters, but also some hopeful practices for a ministry of reconciliation. For those leading spiritual formation and for those teaching others to do so, *The Soul of Shame* is a worthy addition to the library." (Drew Poppleton, *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care*, Spring 2016, Vol. 9, No. 1)"As a wise man once testified, 'The worst moment in life is when you get everything you ever wanted and discover that it's not enough.' As Curt Thompson so clearly and compassionately demonstrates, it is this insidious not-enough-ness that embodies the very soul of shame. Anyone who longs to break free from the shackles of shame will find a wide array of valuable tools within the pages of this book." (David Williams, general superintendent, Evangelical Friends Church)"It took me a month of foraging before my heart finally yielded the courage I needed to open this book on shame. After all, I've spent most of my life trying to flee from shame, crouching pathetically as its shadows drew near, surrendering helplessly to its merciless story of who I am. Why in the world would I nowÃ¢â¬âÃ¢â¬â don purpose!Ã¢â¬âÃ¢â¬â turn and face the central menace of my entire life? Why would any of us? Here's why: because God loves us. And because God loves us, he follows us in our fleeing, finds us in our shadows and fashions for us a new storyÃ¢â¬âÃ¢â¬â the true storyÃ¢â¬âÃ¢â¬â of ourselves, a story in which we are not finally hated and cast away, but loved and welcomed in. This is what Curt Thompson taught me in this book. Yes, I opened it with fear of the darkness. But with each chapter, I felt like someone had opened a new window in my soul, taming my fears with new shafts of warm light. I read it with hope. I marked it with tears. I finished it with gratitude. And I commend it to anyone burdened by shame with something like pleading: Come out from hiding; it is not shame but Love that you will find!" (Gregory Thompson, senior pastor, Trinity Church, Charlottesville, VA, executive director, New City Commons)"In *The Soul of Shame*, Dr. Curt Thompson reveals how the repressed origins of fear lead to feelings of vulnerability that direct human behavior, often unconsciously. He illustrates how experiences, often from childhood, are transformed into seeds of shame that shape human behavior for a lifetime, influence decision-making and form the stimulus for unconscious responses in our day-to-day personal and professional lives for decades. This is an important read for many audiences seeking advanced insight into human behavior: individuals on a journey toward self-discovery, parents striving to lay a strong foundation for emotional health and maturity in their children, as well as business leaders seeking to provide the safety needed to achieve breakthrough innovation in the workplace." (Janey Price Nodeen, president, Burke Consortium, Inc.)"Of the multiple manifestations of the brokenness

within the human condition, none is more insidious and yet dominant than shame. In *The Soul of Shame*, Curt Thompson has provided an important contribution to the conversation about this difficult topic. In it he guides the reader into an awareness of shame's neurobiological, relational and spiritual underpinnings, revealing its darker purpose, which is to undermine the story of beauty and goodness that God desires us to live. But Thompson does not leave us there. Indeed, he invites us into paths of healing and creativity, opening our minds to the possibilities of renewal not merely for our souls but for our families, churches, schools and businesses. If you are looking for hope in the face of shame, this is a life-breathing place to start." (Jeffrey M. Schwartz, author of *You Are Not Your Brain and Brain Lock*) "This is a psychiatrist's version of *The Screwtape Letters*, exposing the most insidious, destructive tool used against humanity since creation. Never has a book so clearly revealed to me that our struggle is not against flesh and blood. Using his background in interpersonal neurobiology, Dr. Thompson shines a bright light of love on the domains of darkness in the layers of our minds to expose and expel the power of shame. This is a life-changing book." (Nicole Johnson, dramatist with *Women of Faith*, author of *Fresh Brewed Life*) "There may be 'no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,' but many of us don't behave that way. Read this excellent guide for unearthing the things in your own life that are preventing you from being set free." (Rob Moll, editor at large, *Christianity Today*, author of *What Your Body Knows About God*) "I've been waiting for Curt's book for fifteen years. As a pastor, professor and clinician, I see shame's devastation firsthand, particularly in the destructive coping mechanisms that accompany it. Curt doesn't offer quick fixes but instead provides a biblically wise, scientifically sound vision for a life lived in God's grand story, a story that renarrates our shame stories and enables us to experience healing and engage in mission. I'll be recommending this book often!" (Chuck DeGroat, associate professor of pastoral care and counseling, Western Theological Seminary, cofounder and senior fellow, Newbigin House of Studies) "Where does our shame originate? And how can we loosen its oppressive hold on our lives? Thompson . . . looks to Scripture and the field of interpersonal neurobiology for insights. 'Shame,' he proposes, 'is not just a consequence of something our parents did in the Garden of Eden. It is the emotional weapon that evil uses to (1) corrupt our relationships with God and each other, and (2) disintegrate any and all gifts of vocational vision and creativity,' including 'any area of endeavor that promotes goodness, beauty, and joy in and for the lives of others.' *The Soul of Shame* gets inside how this process happens and how it can be reversed." (*Christianity Today*, September 2015) "I believe (especially after having read through to the very end of this remarkable work) that these insights from a psychiatrist and neuroscientist is just what we need to help us see the exceptional relevance of Biblical truth for daily

living. In Thompson's hands, Bible verses come alive, the over-arching redemptive drama makes palpable sense and frames our experience, and God's well-ordered structure of creation is demystified so we can actually learn to manage what seem like instincts or default reactions." (Byron Borger, Book Notes, September 14, 2015)"You might not expect this to be a faith and work book, but it's amazing how much shame plays a part in our work. It's the emotional weapon that evil uses to (a) corrupt our relationship with God and with each other, and (2) disintegrate any and all gifts of vocational vision and creativity.' Thompson's stories, which range from the personal to the professional, illuminate how shame causes us to isolate and alienate ourselves from one another. Yet his stories also have the power to expose shame in our hearts and in our relationships. This is a beautiful and hopeful book that's both intellectually and emotionally moving." (Bethany Jenkins, The Gospel Coalition, "TGC Editors' Picks: Top Books of 2015," December 2015)"With the discerning eye of a wise therapist, Curt Thompson shows that shame is not just a consequence of human sin but also a toxic 'emotional weapon' that stands at the root of sin, distancing us from God, from others and from our own place in God's beautiful and good creation. But Thompson reminds us that in Christ, God wants to heal our shame. Shame tells us that we are unworthy and unloved and that we should retreat and protect ourselves. But the gospel frees us to be vulnerable and therefore to be rescued from shame, because we are known and loved by the one who assumed our shame that we might enter into his joy. If you experience shame—which is to say, if you are a human being—then this book bears good news for you." (Warren Kinghorn, Duke University Medical Center and Duke Divinity School)

Curt Thompson (MD, Wright State University) is a psychiatrist in private practice in Falls Church, Virginia. He is also the founder of the Center for Being Known, a nonprofit organization that develops resources to educate and train leaders within the fields of mental health, education, business and the church about the intersection between interpersonal neurobiology and Christian spiritual formation. He is the author of *Anatomy of the Soul*. Thompson is board certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and his main focus of clinical and research interest has been the integration of psychiatry, its associated disciplines and Christian spiritual formation. He is actively engaged in learning and teaching as he supervises clinical employees and facilitates ongoing education groups for patients and colleagues. He also speaks frequently on the topic at workshops, conferences and retreats. Serving as an elder at Washington Community Fellowship in Washington, DC, his duties have included preaching, teaching and participation in the fellowship's healing prayer ministry. He and his wife Phyllis, a licensed clinical social worker, are the



parents of two children and reside in Arlington, Virginia.

I cannot recommend *The Soul of Shame* highly enough. The author takes complex neuroscience, scripture and psychology and blends them together in an easy to understand narrative. His insights into shame brought new meanings to the Genesis story of Adam and Eve that make sense to us today in ways that I had not considered. It seems that, since shame is so pervasive and deeply embedded within us that we take it as something that is normal and simply to be tolerated, or even enhanced. It is not, but he also offers the cure! We can change our stories and drain away the toxicity of shame-based beliefs and behaviors.

I only gave it 5 stars because I couldn't check 6! Thompson has unusual qualifications ... a neuroscientist, a psychiatrist and a Christian. What he has to say in the book applies to EVERY PERSON living on this earth ... believers and unbelievers. Christians and Non-Christians. Theists and atheists. For me, the real weight in this book is that he backs up what he has to say with 1) science; 2) scripture and 3) personal experience (both his and those of his clients). This book will stir you to reconsider a LOT of your present world view ... whatever that may be.

This should be read - probably twice - as I've shared the content with others they are struck by the importance for their lives and work. Thompson's description of how shame functions in human lives and the life of society makes me stop and think over and over again. Imagine being told that you're good enough, that you are beloved, that you can engage with your vulnerabilities and stand with grace and humility and a solid understanding of who you are without shame. Yes, this is a book about shame and how it works and how we can stand against its relationship destroying ways. There's a lot more to be said, but nothing as important as recommending that you read the book and have a writing instrument ready to underline and write notes. Powerful! Timely!

My friend Curt Thompson's sophomore release, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves* (IVP, 2015) does not disappoint. He is a Christian psychiatrist deeply influenced by the field of interpersonal neurobiology and particularly the work of Dan Siegel. My initial exposure to Curt was when I was asked to be a respondent to his first book, *Anatomy of the Soul*. I read his book with an analytic eye, prepared to offer my critique. Prior to our talk, though, I was blessed to have a three hour dinner with him and another friend. Although I was still left with questions about his ideas, I felt a connection with the man. I have often joked that he is the only

person I have ever presented at a conference with whom I hugged when we parted. I have since read his book four times. Quite some time ago, he told me that he was working on a book on shame and I could not wait. In recent years, I have done quite a bit of reading about shame including Ed Welch's fine book *Shame Interrupted* as well as the works of Brene Brown. These works have been professionally rewarding and personally helpful. *The Soul of Shame* is a particular gift to me, however. As a Christian, a neuropsychologist, and someone interested in shame, this book provides a unique intersection. He weaves his personal and professional experiences together with his discussions of vulnerability and developing an integrated mind, particularly in the context of a body of believers. Though written by a psychiatrist specializing in interpersonal neurobiology, it is accessible, interesting, and wise.

Great book on the subject of personal shame. Written by a Christian psychiatrist who blends the right amount of scientific medical information and spiritual information. Not preachy, but also does not shy away from discussing the influence of unseen spiritual forces that accuse and condemn, and these forces impact shame. I normally don't read books more than once, but I've already read it twice and continue to think about what was written.

This book helped me put words to feelings and thoughts during a difficult and depressing time in my life. Dr. Thompson lays out shame in both neurological and spiritual terms that really made sense. There are some deep concepts for both areas in this book, but it's worth it. I gained new insights on shame, fears, love, and how it all blends in the mind.

Great book for people looking for a guide for working through multiple issues. You still won't be able to do it on your own. You need other people to help you with the process the book guides you through.

An insightful and compelling read on the wide, vast and divisive impact of shame on our families and communities. I loved the examples given and the 'pictures painted' from both a neurobiological and Biblical viewpoint, encouraging us into deep relationships where we might become vulnerable and learn to retell our stories in a way that brings creativity, beauty and goodness into the world around us.

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