**Melissa:  
I am thrilled to have Dr. Curt Thompson with us today, and I am so excited to talk about shame and about beauty with Dr. Thompson. This is a topic that he has I think spent I could certainly say years researching and interacting with people around.**  
**Curt:**  
Living.   
  
**Melissa:  
Yeah. So, Dr. Thompson, do you mind saying a bit about your work? You have so many pieces to you work like interpersonal neurobiology, your work as a psychiatrist. I like to hand it over to my guests to say a few words about the work that they do in the world because it's hard for me sometimes to summarize.**  
**Curt:**  
Well, first of all, Melissa, thank you ever so much for inviting me to be here. It's an honor, and I'm humbled to be invited to come and hang out with you. I tell people it's always meaningful for me to be in the presence of someone who's working really hard because life is really hard to do, and following Jesus is... I mean, I think we can't put too fine a point on it.

Following Jesus could be the hardest thing that we ever do, and it's the most beautiful thing that we ever do. I liken it to the Grand Canyon, that particular geological formation. You can't find words to describe the beauty. But if you have to imagine how much hard work the Colorado River has had to do to carve that out, I think it's an example of what it means for us to follow Jesus in some respect. So, I'm just really grateful to be here. So, thank you so much for the invitation.  
  
I think that the way that I usually try to describe what I do as succinctly as possible comes out of the sense, first of all, that we as human beings are storytellers. As soon as we start to have language, even as little two, and three, and four-year-olds, we can't not tell our story. We're doing this all the time, and we would suggest that we who are believers would say that we believe that we are living in the middle of this epic story. It is one of great promise, one of great beauty, one of great trauma, and one of great suffering, and grief, and longing, but one that we really believe is also one of consummation where new heaven and earth has come.  
  
***So one of the key elements for us as human beings is in what story do we believe we're living?***

So, I understand my work to be the work in which we help people tell their stories more truly. That's what we do. Any time, if you're going to write a children's book to tell a story, you use lots of pictures. Yes, you use words, but you use lots of pictures. In the same way that we tell stories using all kinds of mechanisms, we tell story with operas. We tell stories in a whole range different ways. So, for me, in my little corner of the world, we use the language of neuroscience, the language of this interpersonal neurobiology, this science that looks at the interplay between relationships and the central nervous system, and how those things shape one another, and how all of that is to be understood and integrated through the lens of the story of the Biblical narrative, like this story that we read about from Genesis through Revelation. We believe that we're in the middle.  
  
So I think that when we... Saint Paul writes and when we read about Saint Paul's conversation with Lycaonian folks in chapter 14 of Acts, this sense that he says like, "God never leaves himself without a witness." So, at this particular time in our world's history, it turns out that neuroscience is a thing that people pay a lot of attention to. So, this is part of God's creation, and we really do believe that God is using this interpersonal neurobiology as a way to talk about the gospel, to talk about how God is trying to help us tell our story and live more truly into our story, and to do so using these different tools that we use in psychotherapy, and neuroscience, and so forth. I said I will be succinct, and that wasn't very succinct at all, but that's... Gosh, imagine if I were to be verbose. I mean, goodness. Yeah.  
  
**Melissa:  
So I absolutely love what you just did there too. I think oftentimes, if you're at a party or something, you ask someone about the work you do in the world, and so often, we label ourselves as whatever, like a doctor or teacher. But what you did there is you started with this grand narrative, and then you narrowed it down to “And my role in that at this time, this is how I see it.” If we could... I think and that is a gift to even take that step back and think about, "Where am I today invited into that grand narrative, that invitation?"  
  
Curt:**  
Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).  
  
**Melissa:  
So thank you. You joke about it being long-winded, and I thought it was beautiful. Thank you for starting where you did and for narrowing it down then to your work in neuroscience.  
  
Curt:**  
Yeah.  
  
**Melissa:  
So to be honest with you, I don't even know where to start. There are so many questions I have for you. So, what I'm going to do is I have some general questions I like to ask people about beauty. I'm just going to start there, and we may rabbit trail somewhere.**  
**Curt:**  
Sure. Yeah.  
  
**Melissa:  
Okay.**  
**Curt:**  
That would be beautiful.  
  
**Melissa:  
One of the main questions I like to ask people is just how do you define beauty?  
  
Curt:**  
As I mentioned before we started the recording, I've just finished a manuscript on a third book that contains within it one of its pillar elements has to do with this notion of beauty. In writing about it, I've had the opportunity to do more research and reading on it. Of course, this is a topic that has... There are libraries that are written about this and for which people far smarter than me and far more immersed exclusively in the field of artistic expression, and in philosophy, and so forth have many more informed and lovely things to say about it.  
  
I don't so much define beauty as much as I describe it and invite people to consider these things. Again, other people have other really helpful things to say about it. I would say the first thing that strikes me about beauty is... These three words all begin with the letter W.

***The first is wonder that we are captivated, that we are drawn in, that we become aware of something that is beyond us. We wonder at things.***

We often see this in children. There are so many different ways and layers at which Jesus' comment to the disciples, "Unless you become like little children, you can't enter the kingdom of heaven." I think one of those ways is the wonder of children that they are open to and receptive to wonder.   
  
So, beauty I think is a matter of wonder, but I don't think... I mean, some things are just overpowering, like there are some things that we... If you had 10 people and you showed them a beautiful sunset, nine of them would be overwhelmed with it, and the 10th just would have their eyes closed. I mean, right? There's a sense in which this would happen, but I think it's also important to know that beauty and its wonder is quite capable of being missed. That it is the case that the average stay at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon is less than 20 minutes is almost hard to fathom. I mean, it would take me that long just to get my eyes acclimated to what I was looking at.  
  
So wonder, like that we are just, "Oh my goodness," but recognize wonder, it requires sometimes effort for us to pursue beauty. When you look at a Mark Rothko painting, at first glance, for me, it's like I knew of this guy's work before I knew this guy's work, right? I was aware that there are these paintings out there with three bands of color and like, "What the heck? This is me in kindergarten." Yet, there is... When a particular kind of effort that sometimes we have to be trained to know how to do is offered, then there are layers of wonder that you begin to see that are much more subtle. So wonder is the first thing.  
  
***The second thing is welcome. The beauty is not something that hoards itself. Beauty is something that longs to be seen, longs to be encountered.***

I think of the nature of how beauty shows up often in some of the most traumatic moments and situations and changes those situations forever.

***So, it welcomes us in such a way that beauty itself is often quite vulnerable.***

So, for us to welcome people into our home requires that it's possible that they're going to mess up our kitchen when they're cooking or whatever is going to happen, right? There's a certain vulnerability to welcoming anyone into any part of our life.  
  
***The third element I would say is worship, that beauty... eventually, it lets me know, “My goodness. Whatever this thing is, it could not possibly have gotten here by itself,” and so it's drawing me. In some respects, real beauty pulls me almost through itself, inviting me to look beyond, inviting me to look over its shoulder at and to whoever that creator was.***

Sometimes we look at Mark Rothko himself, and we would look at his life. We would say, "Gosh, there's real trauma and tragedy there," for those who might know of him. But we look at others, and we would say, "It's even beyond their lives that God waits and is looking to rescue and redeem."

***One of the most powerful ways that God is even today, I believe, drawing us into redemption is through our encounters with beauty.***  
**Melissa:  
So that brings me to one of the next pieces that I like to talk about is this interaction between brokenness and beauty in the world because we have trauma, we have shame. Just so many glaring examples of brokenness. So how do you see the interaction between beauty and brokenness? I mean, interacting with each other or even co-existing with one another.**  
**Curt:**I would say that... Again, this gets back to the question of, "In what story do I believe that I'm living?" If I don't imagine that the story has anything to do with God, that God is not involved in any of this, then I really don't have an explanation for you quite frankly. I mean, there are all kinds of hodgepodges of things that happen, to happen, to be in the universe with ultimately no explanation other than ones that I'm going to fancifully make up, and my explanation might be just as good as the next person as far as that goes.

But we who are followers of Jesus... I would say that the way I am first drawn to and understand the world, I don't first really think about God. I, first, am introduced to Jesus, and Jesus is the thing that both... as Paul writes, right? The whole thing about crucifixion is foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews. This sense of if we look at Good Friday, there's nothing about it, when understood on its own terms and alone in the world, we wouldn't even know about it because that form of execution was so horrific.

***But because of Easter, we look through Easter back at Good Friday, and through that lens, my eye is trained to look for things where it typically would absolutely never imagine that I would find it.***  
So with that story in mind, I wake up to the reality... I wake up to the training, right?

***Christian spiritual formation necessarily trains us to say, "Wherever the worst trauma is, this is where we go to look for beauty. This is where we go to find God already at work long before we get to the train wreck where we see passengers everywhere, and bent steel, and all the trauma of our lives."***

But this is God from the beginning, right? This is God walking in the garden with Adam and Eve. God is coming for them even in the middle of this rupture.  
  
Jesus is coming for us. He's always coming for us, and even as the Scriptures write that in his death through the end of Good Friday and through Holy Saturday, Jesus literally travels to the dead to save those, to preach to them that even in the worst space, death even, Jesus is coming for us.

So, it's not just a matter of, "I'm going to happen to see beauty on my own in tragic things because I'm magically able to do this." ***We are trained to look for these things, and it is through the lens of this larger story that this notion of beauty being discovered and actually emerging out of the worst places is something that the Christian story teaches us that this is what the God of the universe is about.***

So, we have the story of Vedran Smailović, right? The Cellist of Sarajevo who for 21 days played his instrument in the middle of a bomb crater. He's preaching the Gospel whether he knows it or not because this is what the God of the Bible does. He comes to find us in the worst places and creates an outpost of beauty. Yeah, that's what I think.  
  
**Melissa:  
Thank you for that. Honestly, that feels so sacred to me. I feel like it just deserves silence for a little bit. That's beautiful, and it feels like it shifts the whole thing. What I mean by that is often, on this podcast, I talk all about cultural ideas of beauty, especially for women, how they're shame-inducing. I think when we think about this story and the love that you just spoke about, everything else pales in comparison, and you really just painted that beautifully. Like how could any of those lies about beauty we're given, how could they even stand in that story that's that profound and that beautiful, and a God that's that loving?**  
**So I do want to shift our conversation a little bit, and it's actually not shifting it because it's basically everything we've been talking about. Something that you talked about a lot is shame, and you have your book, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves*. I really think that your ideas around shame are unique in how you integrate spirituality. I think a lot of our cultural ideas are this feeling that we're not enough, and I think that that's a piece of it, for sure. I think that your understanding of it and your understanding of an embodied shame is really profound. If you wouldn't mind sharing a bit about your perspectives on shame as we think about brokenness, and I think how brokenness so often shows up in our lives in very real ways.**  
  
**Curt:**  
Yeah. Well, again, my life has been heavily influenced by the first four chapters of Genesis, and what we read there is that "And the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the earth, and he breathed the breath of life in the man's nostrils. The man became a living being, a living soul." This notion that we are mud, that we are dirt, and we are spirit, and that if you take either one of those things away, we stop being human. He begins, the text begins with mud. He begins with our soma. He begins with our bodies. This, I think, is important not just from an anthropological standpoint like from a... what does it mean for us to be human, but actually, neuroscience I think mirrors this.  
  
I tell people until and/or unless we are aware of and understand something to be true in a felt physical way, it's not fully real yet to us, and shame is the same thing, right? When we introduce the topic, we want talk about shame, or you write a book about it, and people read about it. We're going to talk about shame as if it is this abstract thing, and the first thing we have to disabuse ourselves of is that notion that it is an abstract thing. We can talk about it like that, but that's not what it is. It is first and foremost a neurophysiologic event that we begin to experience when we're 15 to 18 months of age, long before we have language to understand it or make sense of it, or to somehow cope with it by having better ideas about what it is that we're experiencing.  
  
I think that part of our challenge is that so much of our life in the West, in the world, and particularly, in the Christian community is lived out of our logical, linear, perceptual left hemisphere, right? The part of our brain that thinks that or understands truth to be a positive thing that's an abstraction, and once we say, "Oh, yes. I affirm that one plus one is two," that somehow I got it. But we all know that one plus one is two or three times two is six isn't fully real until I have to go on a hike and there are three of us, and we each want two apples, and I have to get six apples. I feel those apples in my hand, and I put them in my bag, and I feel the weight of how math is life.  
  
In the same way, this is shame, right? Until we recognize that when we start to talk about it, we want to ask the question... Yes. I mean, yeah. There is, eventually, the cognition of, "Shame means I'm not enough. I'm not okay." All those things are true, but before we get to the thinking part of it, we are feeling it in my body. I'm feeling it in my body. You're feeling it in your body. We have this sense of what we call disintegration, right? The very sense of like, I want to turn my gaze down. I want to turn my face away from you. I want to turn my shoulders in, and down, and away, not unlike a dog does when a dog feels ashamed. Right? This is what we first are doing.  
  
Now, the reality is we humans are pretty good at hiding these things, and so we don't all necessarily at first pay that much attention to our bodies, if that makes sense. We aren't paying... and because we don't pay attention to our bodies, we often miss what our bodies are trying to say to us. But when we pay attention to our bodies, we then learn that shame is housed there.

So one of the first things that we do when we are working with patients and we want them to become more familiar with what this is long before we understand it in terms of, "Oh, this is what it meant for my dad to treat me this way," or, "This is what I felt when I was talking to my boss, or my children, or whatever," we ask them, "What do you sense, and where do you sense it?" We want to know where that is, and then we give them literally physical exercises for them to begin to mitigate, to begin to change, those kinds of things.  
  
That's important for us to recognize that. As we like to see, the brain operates bottom to top and right to left. The spinal cord run into my brainstem, run into my right hemisphere, and then over to my left hemisphere. First, we sense, and then we make sense of what we sense. Of course, we're doing this pretty lickety-split in brain time, but all that is to say is that when we first become aware of what it's like in our body to experience shame, the good news about this is that we can recognize that, "Oh, this is a thing that has happened between me and someone else." Then, eventually, because I repeat this in my own mind between me and myself, and I say or do things or repeat things in my mind, that reinforces the physical expression and experience of this.  
  
Why is that good news? Because once I know that, I begin to work with the body itself to change the nature of what might shame feels like. If I can begin to change the nature of what my shame feels like, I can begin to change the nature of the story that I tell about it, which is why the work that we do in what we call our confessional communities, our group therapy interventions are so important. Here's the metaphor that I use. If you're standing on a sidewalk and you're being approached by an empty, little, red wagon at three miles an hour, at walking pace, you could put your foot out and stop it with no problem. You could do that. If you were standing on a railroad track and a locomotive were approaching you at three miles an hour, walking pace, you couldn't stop it, but it's not because of the speed. It's the mass effect.  
  
***We carry in our bodies the mass effect of shame that is equivalent to a locomotive, and so in order for that to be pushed back against, to be healed, it requires the presence of a cloud of witnesses. Not just one, a cloud of witnesses, that I am repeatedly willing to expose my story to over, and over, and over again to create a different mass effect that countermands the locomotive that is in my head.***

So, there are lots of other characteristics about shame; its condemnation, its separation, its causing hiding, the way it shears of creativity.  
  
***One of the most important features of it, I think, is that evil uses shame not just to make us feel bad, not just to ruin relationships, but primarily as a way to keep us from creating beauty.***

***This is where shame is ruinous to beauty because I think beauty is anathema to evil, but I also believe that beauty is one of the most important and potent answers that God brings to the world to heal shame primarily because we first experience beauty in our physicality.***   
  
That whole notion of wonder that we talked about, that wonder, I experience it literally in my... I remember when we went…I mentioned the Grand Canyon before, when we took our family there several years ago, and we arrived in it around... it was in the summer about 5:00 or 6:00 PM. The light was low in the sky, and I remember it almost feeling too painful. It was so overwhelming to take it in, and I could feel it in my chest. The Grand Canyon, it's just sitting there minding its own business. It's just being itself, and it has that kind of an impact on us.

***I think this is God's answer in many respects to our trauma and to our shame.***  
  
**Melissa:  
So beauty, in some way, has a transforming effect on trauma and shame?**  
**Curt:**I think it absolutely does primarily because... I mean, just to give you an example. We've watched this happen dozens of times in these confessional communities where someone shares their story, and you have two or three other members in this group that are able to receive that story. Of course, it’s a story that the person is really quite perhaps uncomfortable and worried about talking about, and that shame in which that story is clothed, all that has been held in the privacy of their own light for who knows how long.   
  
Of course, they reveal this, and in their revelation and in it being received by others who instead of condemnation offer mercy, and offer welcome, and offer validation and wonder at the person's willingness to be vulnerable in and of itself, if you're sitting in the group and you watch this moment unfold, and you watch this storyteller. You watch everything about their countenance has change.

***You watch the tears begin because they couldn't imagine that their story in all of its Good-Fridayness could ever find Easter morning, and Easter has come to find them.***  
If you're watching this, you say to yourself, "I can't believe I saw what I just saw." There is unimaginable beauty in that moment of transformation for everyone, not just to the person who's sharing, but the people who are receiving it.

***It's in the very crux of the expression of the trauma that beauty shows up in a way that we would never predict. But in the biblical narrative, we would say, "This is the kind of thing that God is up to all the time."***  
**Melissa:  
I mean, in that example too, I'm just thinking about how when we show up as that compassionate, loving presence to one another, we can very much embody the mercy and goodness of God to one another, which is incredibly profound to think about, and it makes me feel very responsible too.**  
**Curt:**I also think the other thing too that beauty just so profoundly does... I mean, I don't know, and perhaps you have seen the film *Babette's Feast*. I commend it. *Star Wars*, it is not, but it is this story of a French chef who leaves France somewhat in a hard place, the nature of which we don't know at the beginning of the movie, and travels to a foreign country. I don't know if it's in Denmark or wherever it happens to be and finds herself in this very small village with any number of these odd characters. They don't know who she is, but she gets to know them. Over time, she decides she wants to prepare for them a feast.  
  
As you watch the progression of this, and then you see the feast unfold and these people who gather around the dinner table. Some of whom are young. Some of whom are old. Some of whom are longtime friends. Some of whom, as it turns out, are great enemies with one another. We see that the feast itself brings such amazement to the people around the table that they can't help but want to be kind to their neighbor who's sitting next to them, even if it's my enemy. Only then toward the end you discover that this is a woman who herself has her own trauma, and her response to her wounding is to give, to create beauty and goodness in this space of this village where beauty had become so barren, so absent.  
  
I think what beauty does is we have all of these plot lines in our head that we sense an image and felt, and then we tell them, right? We use words to tell these stories, and then beauty walks in the room and completely circumvents my left brain, right? It shows up in a way that I would never expect. Just in the same way that the disciples in John 20 were locked behind closed doors just like our hearts and minds are locked down in the stories that we believe, right?   
  
The disciples believe they are in a story of despair and of disappointment, and the beauty of Jesus circumvents it. But he doesn't circumvent it as some raised Greek God in Greek mythology. He circumvents it by coming in with his wounded side, with the scars in his hands, someone who's going to eat the fish, someone who's going to say to Thomas, "Come and be present in wounds." The whole time, of course, I'm still thinking like, "Touch your wounds. How the heck did you get in the room?" Right? I'm wondering how like... We're wondering like, "What's the physics behind this? I want to explain all of this." Right? Beauty doesn't really give us that option. It's not interested in explaining things. It's interested in wonder, welcome, and worship.  
  
**Melissa:  
So you've painted this really profound and deep moving picture of beauty, and one of the things I like to talk about on this podcast are some of the lies about beauty that we see or hear about in our culture. So, I'd be interested to know, what are lies about beauty that you've observed?**  
**Curt:**  
Well, I will tell you... Mostly, I can answer that by just telling you the lies that I've lived and that I lived out, right? Here, again, I'm struck by what we read in the third chapter of Genesis that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil bore fruit that was beautiful. There's no question that beauty is there. At the same time, God was telling the first couple “no” to that particular tree and its fruit. But as we read about in Genesis 2, every fruit, every seed, plant was given to the man and the woman for food. It's a gift.  
  
***The tree to which they were told “no,” about which they were told no was something that she took. It wasn't a gift. She took it, and so one of the first things I think that I... what my shame will want to do. I will see beauty, and I will want to take it. I will want to hoard it. I will want to clutch it.***

I would say, "I have particular..." and I think the beauty shows up in an infinite array of ways, right? Not just with a painting or artwork or so forth. It shows up... Somebody has a beautiful... A career, right? Somebody has a beautiful career, and you're doing something with this career. So, I have certain things, and I have had to learn in the last several years. Oh, I didn't ever set out to write a book or to be a speaker. Those weren't things that I was setting out to do. But once you do it, and you have people who are finding the work to be meaningful and saying, "This is really beautiful work."

***I can be really grateful, but it is a short-step for me to want to clutch this, to want to make this mine, to say, "This is mine, and nobody else can have it. This is mine, and I want to be in charge, and I, I, I," because once I recognize that the fruit is beautiful for the sight, and great for wisdom and for... It is what it wants to do. It begins to speak to the part of me that feels in my body, but that I imagine in my mind, in my life that I'm inadequate. I'm not enough.***  
***I have this wound that I walk around with, and so beauty, as we said, it's this wonder. The wonder that strikes us feels really powerful. It feels beyond us. It feels God-like. If I can have that I want to make it mine so that I can become like God because this is, of course, exactly what was going on in Eden.***

Because somewhere along the line, someone has told me as the serpent told the woman, "As it turns out, God is really not that interested in you becoming like him after all because, if he was, if he really loved you, he wouldn't be restricting this fruit from you." In the same way that he told Jesus, "If you really are God's son, if you really are his delight as this baptism thing you just did seems to be telling you. If you're really that much of a delight to your God, he would let you do whatever you want to do. Look at your gifts. Take them. Hoard them. Clutch them. Do for yourself, and for your people, and for the world what you can do." So the lie that I tell myself about anything where beauty lives is that it only reinforces the lie that's in my head about myself.

***So, the lie that I tell about beauty is a direct extension, first and foremost, about the shame that I carry within, right?***

We talk about shame telling the story about ourselves. It's not just the thing that I feel. It is that. It begins with that neurophysiologic event, but at some point, I eventually begin to tell a story about that. Now, I might tell the story, "I'm not a good enough son. I'm not a good enough pianist. I'm not enough in this, or in that, or whatever. I'm broken. I'm eternally broken. I'm not..." Whatever those stories are.  
  
It's not the story of, "Oh, I'm actually experiencing shame because of this, and this, and this, and because, Curt, as it turns out, you also continue to buy into the lie that you're not God's son, that you're not his delight. Join the chorus of your experiences. You're as much a collaborator as anybody else, and so you're not just wanting to forgive your parents, or your enemies, or your friends for what they've done to you. You also have to repent what you've done to yourself by agreeing with them."  
  
This is the work of Dan Allender. I think it's really powerful in this regard, this whole sense that I also have to take responsibility for the way in which I've colluded with evil. In so doing, I will want to hoard beauty as a way to help me cope with all that.

But if I'm willing to allow beauty to speak on its own terms and not hoard, not clutch, simply receive, it gives me breathing space to both receive God's mercy and in that mercy, as we read about in the 16th chapter of Ezekiel when God comes and he has all this shaming language for Israel like, "You've hoard yourself." Right? "You've harloted yourself over and over," and then he says, "And you must bear your disgrace."  
  
You read that and like, "I didn't think shame was something I had to bear." But the point is, is that God is saying, "You must own it long enough to acknowledge that this is the truth about your life and when you do, in my presence, you and I, we then are going to go to a very different direction.” Just like Jesus does with Peter on the beach in John 21. "Do you love me?" Like "Of course, like no. I don't. If I did, I would've thrown you under the bus six weeks ago. Are you happy now?" Jesus is like, "No. Are you happy now? Are you ready to stop paying attention to your shame and start paying attention to me just so that we all know that all know?" in front of all the disciples that like, "We all know what the truth is here now. Now, we don't have to worry about like you having to hide behind your mistake because I have sheep for you to tend. I have work for you to do. I have beauty for you to create." I'm not sure if I answered your question.  
  
**Melissa:  
You definitely did. Yeah, about lies. You certainly did. Thank you. So, I want to respect your time. So, we need to move toward wrapping up. So far, I've definitely led us with questions. Obviously, you just wrote a book about beauty. So, you have a lot of thoughts on it. As we move toward wrapping up, is there anything you haven't said that you think would be helpful for listeners to hear?**  
**Curt:**  
I'll just say this real quickly. So, I turned 58 a couple of weeks ago, and I... It's taken me five years to write this book, and there were periods of those five years that were fraught with my wrestling with my own story, my own shame in such a way that it really kept me from getting traction. So, you write a book on shame, and then you have to deal with what you've written, which is a pain in the butt, which is why this is happening. But all that to say that I'm 58, and part of the work that... Now that the book is done, I've got more time, and freedom, and space to be reflecting and doing work on what was so hard about the last five years.  
  
What's emerging are some things that are just true about my unfinished business from the first two decades of my life. One of the temptations is to say, "This is really not very fun to discover at age 58 the things about your life that you might have sensed, but not until now are you really taking responsibility for." Shame just wants to circle back around and say, "Yeah, Curt. Think of what you're not going to get done. Think of the mistakes that you've made. Think of like if you'd only done this, if you'd only done... if you'd only known these things when you were four, when you were eight, six..."  
  
So the work for me now is even as a 58-year-old, as one of my very best friends, Neil Smith, sitting on my porch yesterday morning said to me, he said, "It's tempting for us to look back as I can do and say like, 'Here's all my regrets for...' now that I'm learning these things is to think like, 'Why the heck did I not take care of this stuff,' and be really wrapped around the axle about that," which I can get. He said, "Or we can imagine that God is saying, 'This is what I've given and put before you now. Let's do this. This is not about what you haven't gotten done right in the first six decades of your life. This is about, what can we do now?'"  
  
So I want to say to our listeners that as we said at the top of our time, like this life of just living life is hard enough, but following Jesus, it's harder. It's hard to do, and I also want to say that there is great hope, and it doesn't matter how old we are when we wake up to the fact that that's the story that we’re living in... Abraham was 75, Moses was 80 when these guys get tapped in the shoulder and God says, "Let's go." Who knows how long God had been trying to get Abraham to go? I mean, he might have been talking to Abraham for 30 years. Hebrew scholars would say that that bush was burning in the desert for years before Moses finally went over to see why the bush was not consumed.  
  
I want to say all of us that it takes a long time for many of us to eventually take the steps that we really long to take, but have been afraid to take to do the healing work, afraid of what we're going to find, afraid that once we do the work, we're going to be just overwhelmed with regret because we're now going to be reminded of not only the stuff that we're encountering, but why we haven't done the work for so long.

***I want to say that God never runs out of time, and he never runs out of options. Beauty is one of his most powerful ways of reminding us of both of those things.*Melissa:  
Thank you.**  
**Curt:**  
You're welcome.  
  
**Melissa:  
I just so enjoyed our time together, and this has been so wonderful. I know I'm going to certainly love listening back several times, and I know this will be really helpful for everyone who listens, so thank you so much for your work.**  
**Curt:**You're welcome.  
  
**Melissa:  
For those listening, again, *The Soul of Shame* is one Dr. Thompson's books and the one about beauty. It sounds like it's coming out in 2021 likely?**  
**Curt:**  
Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).  
  
**Melissa:  
And your first book?**  
  
**Curt:**  
Yeah, yeah.  
  
**Melissa:  
Oh, sorry. You were going to say something? Go ahead.  
  
Curt:**Oh, I was just going to say if... people who aren't familiar with *The Soul of Shame*, you can go to my website, curtthompsonmd.com, and you can download a chapter of that for free. If you want to get a taste of what the book is like, you can do that.  
  
**Melissa:  
Just for people listening, I guess it wasn't part of the recording, but *The Soul of Shame* has been a profoundly formational book for me in my own life, and I would just recommend it to everyone. In my perspective, I believe this is the story we're all living in, and so it's incredibly helpful to be aware of the dynamics of shame and how shame... how you can heal from shame. So, this book has been hugely influential for me, and then your first book as well. Do you mind? I don't remember the subtitle for that one.**  
**Curt:**  
Yeah, *Anatomy of the Soul*, and it's 10 years old. The subtitle is long enough that I can't remember it, but *Anatomy of the Soul* is really the introduction of the notions of this interface of spiritual, Christian spiritual formation and interpersonal neurobiology, the neuroscience of the brain, and relationships... how they both reflect the Gospel. But also, as we apply those concepts that we talk about, they renew our experience of the Gospel in our day-to-day lives, in our relationships. So, it's more particularly science-oriented, but it's for the thoughtful lay-reader that... Any of your listeners need not to be afraid of it. We're not trying to turn people into neuroscientists with that, but just to get people yet another language with which we can allow God to encounter us in the way that he wants to through his own creation.  
  
**Melissa:  
Right, and yeah. As someone who has read it and who certainly isn't a neuroscientist, I found it to be quite accessible. I think it's profound, and so I would highly recommend that one as well. Well, thank you so much, Dr. Thompson. This has been a true pleasure and thank you for the work that you do.**  
**Curt:**  
Melissa, it has been a pleasure for me, and I would love to do this again sometime.