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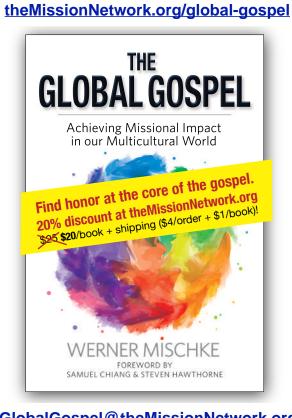
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# THE GLOBAL GOSPEL

# Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World

# WERNER MISCHKE

FOREWORDS BY SAMUEL CHIANG & STEVEN HAWTHORNE



"Thorough, touching, timely ... required reading." –**Tom Steffen, D.Miss.,** Professor Emeritus, Cook School of Intercultural Studies, Biola University

"A landmark contribution to global missiology and theology." –**Emmanuel Ogunyemi, Ph.D.,** President, Life Builders Ministries Int'l., Lagos, Nigeria

"Wise and instructive." – **Richard J. Mouw, Ph.D.,** Professor of Faith and Public Life, Fuller Theological Seminary

# Setting the gospel free from Western contextualization

*The Global Gospel* will stretch your understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ by uncovering a major blind spot in Western theology, namely, *honor and shame.* You'll be led on a journey beyond a legal framework of the gospel—to one that is "legal plus regal." How you communicate the gospel and live out the gospel—locally and globally—may well be transformed.

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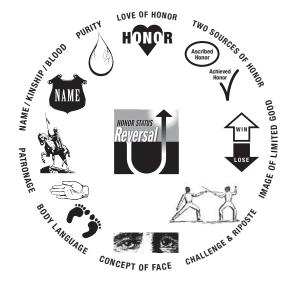
Founded by Bob Schindler in 1991, Mission ONE trains and mobilizes the Church, focusing on cross-cultural partnerships to engage the unreached and serve the poor and oppressed.



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# **Ouick Guide to Honor/Shame Dynamics in the Bible**



"The honor/shame wheel"-nine dynamics and one motif

How can the honor/shame dynamics common to the Bible and many Majority World societies be used to contextualize the gospel of Christ in order to make it more widely understood and accepted?

The Global Gospel demonstrates how each dynamic in the "honor/shame wheel" scripturally

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overlaps with the atonement and salvation through Jesus Christ.

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FOOTNOTES

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9	Honor/ shame dynamic	Description	Comment / representative Scriptures
AGE OF LIMITED GOOD	HONOR Love of honor	<ul> <li>Love of honor can motivate the worst and best of behaviors.</li> <li>"The ancients name love of honor and praise as their premier value."<sup>1</sup></li> <li>The Greeks even had a word for it—<i>philotimia</i>.<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul> <li>OT: Ex 33:17–20; Ps 57:8</li> <li>NT: Mk 9:33–34; 10:35–45; Jn 5:44; 12:42–43; Rom 2:6–8</li> </ul>
	Ascribed Honor Achieved Honor Two Sources of honor	<ul> <li>"Worth and value are either <i>ascribed</i> to individuals by others, or they are <i>achieved</i> by them."<sup>3</sup></li> <li>Ascribed honor "refers to the granting of respect and given to a person from members of the basic institutions of antiquity, namely: family/kinship or state/politics."<sup>4</sup></li> <li>Achieved honor refers to honor gained by competition, aggression, warfare, or envy.</li> </ul>	Regarding the ascribed and achieved honor of Jesus Christ: • Ascribed honor: Mt 1:1–17; 3:17 • Achieved honor: Phil 2:6–11 • Ascribed and achieved: Heb 1
	Image of limited good	"The belief that everything in the social, economic, natural universe everything desired in life: land, wealth, respect and status, power and influence exist in finite quantity and are in short supply." <sup>5</sup> If you gain, I lose; it's a "zero-sum game."	<ul> <li>1 Sam 18:6–9 shows the <i>image of limited good</i> and win-lose thinking.</li> <li>Phil 1:18–24 reveals the antithesis of the <i>image of limited good;</i> win-win thinking</li> </ul>
	Challenge & riposte	<ul> <li>"Riposte" is a term used in the sport of fencing, meaning</li> <li>"a quick return thrust." Socially it means, "a clever reply</li> <li>to an insult." There are four steps to <i>challenge and riposte</i>:</li> <li>Claim of worth or value</li> <li>Challenge to that claim or refusal to acknowledge claim</li> <li>Riposte or defense of the claim</li> <li>Public verdict of success awarded to claimant or challenger<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Many of the exchanges between Jesus and the Pharisees were characterized by honor competition—<i>challenge and riposte:</i> Mat 12:8–16, 23; Luke 13:10–17</li> <li>Phil 2:6–11 may also be seen as a cosmic example of <i>challenge and riposte</i></li> </ul>
pel. .org pookji	Concept of face	<ul> <li>"Face" is a "metaphor representing a type of interpersonal social honor and identity projection."7</li> <li>The concept of "face" in Scripture has two parts. First, humanity's shame before God is the result of sin and is expressed by turning away and hiding from the face of God. Second, humanity's redemption and healing from shame comes when people turn to, and are given peace before, the face of God.<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>	<ul> <li>OT: Gn 3:8; 4:4–16; ls 59:2; Nm 6:22–27; Ps 34:5; 67:1</li> <li>NT: 2 Cor 3:18; 4:6; Rv 22:34–5</li> </ul>
	Body language	In the social world of the Old and New Testaments, the most honorable parts of the body were considered to be the head, face and hands. One of the most shameful body parts was considered to be the feet. <sup>9</sup>	Ps 110:1 (cf. Ps 8:6)—perhaps the most-quoted verses in the NT: Mt 22:43–44; 26:64; Mk 12:36; 16:19; Lk 20:41–44: Acts 2:33–35; 1 Cor 15:24–27; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13
	Patronage	"Patronage was the distinctive relationship in ancient Roman society between the'patron' and his 'client.' The relationship was hierarchical, but obligations were mutual. The [patron] was the protector, sponsor, and benefactor of the client." <sup>10</sup> The client repaid this with loyalty and honor.	<ul> <li>Patrons (benefactors) specifically referenced (Lk 7:25; 22:5)</li> <li>Phoebe is a patron to Paul (Rom 16:1–2)</li> </ul>
; alter	NAME Name/ kinship /blood	In the ancient world, people are not just taken on their "merits." Honor "begins with the merits (or debits) of their lineage, the reputation of their ancestral house. Greeks and Romans receive a basic identity from their larger family: for Romans this takes the form of including the clan name in the name of each individual." <sup>11</sup>	<ul> <li>OT: Gn 12:2; Ps 79:9; 96:8; 102:15; Is 42:8; 43:7; Mal 1:16</li> <li>NT: Jn 5;43; 12:27–28; 1 Jn 2:12</li> </ul>
ıry	Purity	"Purity is the condition or perception that one is acceptable before a holy God according to a specific system of codes. These codes define boundaries for what is holy, common, clean, unclean, and abomination." <sup>12</sup>	<ul> <li>OT: All of Leviticus, especially chapters 11–18; Ez 46:20; 44:19</li> <li>NT: Mt 9:18–26; Lk 5:12–14; Mk 5:1–20; 1 Jn 1:8–9; Heb 9:13–14</li> </ul>
ned: dle r: uss 58. in	Honor- status reversal	<ul> <li>Is a motif of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation</li> <li>When a person, family, or people have whatever degree of esteem, respect, privilege, power, or authority before a community turned the other way around.</li> <li>Honor-status reversal can be classified by ending status: <ol> <li><i>Ending in honor</i>: Honor-to-shame-to-honor, or simply, shame-to-honor.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Ending in shame: Shame-to-honor-to-shame, or simply, honor-to-shame 13</li> </ul>	Prime example is Christ—pre-incarnate glory, incarnation, death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension to exalted honor (Phil 2:5–11). OT accounts of honor-status reversal include Adam & Eve, Joseph, Job, David, Daniel, Esther, and numerous passages in the prophets. NT examples include many passages in the Gospels. Paul. Peter, and Revelation

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the Gospels, Paul, Peter, and Revelation.

simply, honor-to-shame.<sup>13</sup>





# THE GLOBAL GOSPEL





"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." *–Romans 1:16* 

# THE GLOBAL GOSPEL

Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World



# WERNER MISCHKE

"Biblically based and well researched, *The Global Gospel* is a compelling read that helps frame the gospel in the unique social dynamics of honor and shame—something we in the West so often miss. This is more than a book. It is a full-fledged course on biblically based cross-cultural communication containing graphics, charts and diagrams which forcefully illustrate Mischke's insightful principles of sharing the gospel cross culturally."

> Marvin J. Newell, D.Miss. Senior Vice President Missio Nexus



The Global Gospel: Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World by Werner Mischke

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"With magnificent, dominant, life changing themes invisible to Western eyes, *The Global Gospel* will enrich our understanding of who God is and change the way we do cross cultural mission forever."

Terry Dalrymple, Coordinator, Global CHE Network

"The first word that comes to my mind is *incredible*. Werner has reviewed a broad array of literature and a multitude of Scripture passages to establish this premise: Western theology has given the world a presentation of the gospel unwittingly influenced by its own Western values; in so doing, the culture of the Bible and the culture of the recipient peoples have often both been marginalized, resulting in unnecessary obstacles to faith in Christ. The value of the material and paradigm contained in *The Global Gospel* is immeasurable."

Paul R. Gupta, Ph.D., President, Hindustan Bible Institute & College, India

"We have much to learn from our brothers and sisters in honor-and-shame cultures, and in this wise and instructive book, Werner Mischke guides us along on that necessary journey of spiritual learning!"

**Richard J. Mouw, Ph.D.,** Professor of Faith and Public Life, Fuller Theological Seminary

"Thorough, targeted, touching, timely, theologically sound while demanding some theological turns, and teeming with applications, therefore it becomes required reading."

**Tom Steffen, D.Miss.,** Professor Emeritus, Cook School of Intercultural Studies, Biola University

"It will be crucial that we allow this 'aha' wisdom to shape the way we reach the last and the least within the Majority World."

Pat Murdock, Executive Director, Issachar Initiative

*"The Global Gospel* provides an in-depth yet eminently practical analysis of the crucial topic of honor and shame that makes it indispensable reading for both biblical scholars and cross-cultural practitioners."

**Mwana Hadisi, Ph.D.,** Assistant Professor of Intercultural Studies, Phoenix Seminary

*"The Global Gospel* is an essential contribution to missiology. Werner's understanding and experience of the dynamic of honor and shame should be read by anyone who truly wants to understand missions."

Dr. Bobby Brewer, Pastor of Spiritual Formation, City of Grace Church

"In our small church representing 21 nations, getting to grips with honor/ shame dynamics has been so important. Through *The Global Gospel*, I began to grasp God's Word with the honor/shame lens and my mind was blown with really how big the grace of God is."

Pastor Andy Moyle, The Gateway Church, King's Lynn, United Kingdom

"This is a much needed resource for the global church. Werner Mischke provides a road map for anyone doing ministry in an honor/shame culture. I expect *The Global Gospel* will spur the kind of theological conversations that lead to practical solutions for many missiological challenges."

Jackson Wu, Ph.D., author of Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame

*"The Global Gospel* is a much needed book that provides deep insight into cultures of honor and shame and how this impacts the gospel and our mission. After reading this book I can't but read the Scriptures through a different lens. Werner helps us understand God's grace and our mission all the better."

Michelle Tessendorf, Executive Director, Orchard: Africa

*"The Global Gospel* demonstrates conclusively that understanding honor and shame is critical to a proper biblical hermeneutic. More than a book to be read once and then discarded, *The Global Gospel* is a manual for church leaders and missionaries to use as a reference for understanding honor and shame in the biblical context and how to apply the principles of honor and shame in cross-cultural engagement today."

**Philip Bustrum, Ph.D.,** Former Chair Bible, Religion, Ministry Division, Professor of Intercultural Studies, Cornerstone University

"Werner Mischke offers an invaluable tool to better understand our Bible and most people. *The Global Gospel* shows how biblical writers communicated in an honor/shame culture, presenting Jesus as the one who took our shame to restore humanity's honor. From this scholarly grounding, he offers practical, specific ways to increase our missional impact in the global village."

John DelHousaye, Ph.D., Associate Professor, New Testament, Phoenix Seminary

"What Werner has done is this: He has gathered Scripture, missiology and biblical scholarship on shame and honor, he has offered it to us in a clear and cogent book, and, in this, he has blessed the church."

**Edward T. Welch, Ph.D.,** Faculty and Counselor, CCEF, author of *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection* 

"We live in rapidly changing times where our audience for the gospel is growing in its diversity both where we live and in missions. This requires a better grasp of the world view of those we interact with, and *The Global Gospel* addresses this in a very helpful manner. The concepts of honor and shame are central to that understanding. I highly recommend this volume to all who have a passion to reach those who don't know Jesus."

T.J. Addington, Senior Vice President, EFCA, Leader, ReachGlobal

*"The Global Gospel* teaches us to see the world through the lens of honor and shame—so that our Great Commission ministry might be transformed." **Ben McGinnis,** Mission mobilizer, Nashville, Tennessee *"The Global Gospel* fills a significant hole in Western missiology and theology. Werner's insights and lucid diagrams will tremendously bless all those serving the global church."

Jayson Georges, Missionary and author of The 3D Gospel

"Werner does a superb job in peeling back the blinders that hinder our effectiveness in communicating the gospel. The insights he presents are crucial to avoid cultural collisions. Do yourself a favor—devour this book!"

Edward M. Smith, Ph.D., President, Williamson College

"In *The Global Gospel*, Werner Mischke has punched through to a world of honor and shame from a world that rarely talks in those terms much less thinks in those ways. In doing so he opens up not only the opportunity to understand each other better but the Scriptures as well. *The Global Gospel* is a fresh perspective of what it means to be citizens of heaven on earth."

Daniel Rickett, Ph.D., Executive Vice President, She Is Safe

*"The Global Gospel* feels like fresh cool wind in the desert. Millennial hybrid-cultures—present in every metro-urban region—require new biblical insight from the ancient biblical revelation. *The Global Gospel* gives us both wisdom and ways to deal with these emerging millennial realities that will see God honored and our shame covered. This book is a must read for these days."

Rev. Dr. Byron Spradlin, President, Artists in Christian Testimony Int'l.

*"The Global Gospel* is a thorough treatise and hands-on workbook for understanding the gospel's power to transform shame into honor. I am eager to see its impact in the lives of women we serve in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East as they gain insight into their infinite value in the eyes of God."

Kim Kerr, Executive Director, Women in the Window International

"We in the West have much to learn about honor and shame, which the New Testament world (and Majority World today), lived with on a daily basis. This book has influenced my understanding of the gospel and missions."

J. D. Payne, Ph.D., Pastor of Church Multiplication, The Church at Brook Hills

"You cannot read *The Global Gospel* and not develop a better appreciation of God's rich wisdom in creating diversity and the challenges we face as we engage people of other cultures. It is a landmark contribution to global missiology and theology."

**Emmanuel Ogunyemi, Ph.D.,** President, Life Builders Ministries Int'l., Lagos, Nigeria

"I have been teaching the Bible as a pastor and professor for over 50 years, and I am seeing things in the Bible I never saw until I read *The Global Gospel.*" **Joe Martin, Ph.D.,** Professor of Christian Ministries, Belhaven University *"The Global Gospel* is an easy-to-read scholarly rendition of the importance of 'honor and shame' for a large segment of the world's population ... a must-read book for every Christian concerned to be an effective witness for the gospel."

Dr. Ravi I. Jayakaran, Vice President, Global Programs, MAP International

*"The Global Gospel* will give you a new lens in reading the Bible and new insights for the practice of missions."

Joel L. Hogan, Director of International Ministries, Christian Reformed World Missions

*"The Global Gospel* points the way for all readers to encounter in Scripture a gospel that is better news than they had been taught. This book makes a significant and practical contribution to the global mission conversation."

**David Bochman, Ph.D.,** International–Organizational Development, Aphesis Group Ministries, Paraclete Mission Group

*"The Global Gospel* addresses what could be the greatest blind spot in the theology and missiology of Western and Western-influenced Christians around the world—namely, that a deep understanding of honor/shame is not only essential for effective mission work, but also for understanding the Bible."

**Chris Clayman,** Director, Global Gates Network, author of *ethNYcity: The Nations, Tongues, and Faiths of Metropolitan New York* 

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Rev. Dr. John A. Forrester, Author of Grace for Shame: The Forgotten Gospel

"Drawing on scholarship from across the globe, the reader is given the theological implications of honor and shame, and practical applications for more effective ministry. This is a much needed book."

Andrew & Sandra Freeman, Missionaries, Botswana, Africa

*"The Global Gospel* will expand your mind, heal your soul, and empower your witness for Jesus Christ."

**Donald Mills,** Financial Adviser, Associate Vice President, Ameriprise Financial, Inc., M. Div. and D. Min., Fuller Theological Seminary

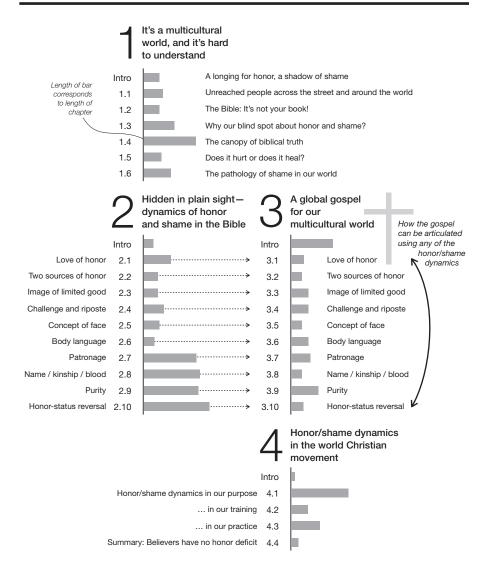
*"The Global Gospel* serves as a primer; it introduces the subject and reviews much of the previous conversation. Werner also creatively links together several motifs (for example, the connection of purity with shame and honor) that will provoke the review of scholarship for some time to come. Also he aptly shows the importance of shame and honor for understanding the setting and culture of the Bible and the mission field. Take and read."

**R. L. Hatchett, Ph.D.,** Professor of Theology and Philosophy, Houston Baptist University

To my father, Guenther Mischke, who gave me the gift only he could give—his blessing.

And to my wife, Daphne, whose friendship has been immovable in our long journey together and whose love has been a treasure.

# Your journey through this book-in four sections



# Highlighted chapters are included in this preview.

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The members of the Mission ONE board of directors graciously empowered me to do this work. They have honored me by their trust. *Thank you, Mission ONE board members.* 

My ministry with Mission ONE has been made possible by many through regular financial support as well as special project investments. I am indebted to the faithful giving and prayers of several churches and many individuals. *Thank you, all, for your support.* 

Missionaries Philip and Bonnie Bustrum invited Bob Schindler to visit Kenya in 1988 to teach on the subject of evangelism to students at Moffat Bible College. Philip's advice to Bob was this: *Yes, you've come to be a blessing. But also, listen ... and learn what it is like to be an African.* When Bob founded Mission ONE in 1991, this listening ethic was a core value. Philip, now a professor at Cornerstone University, has been a friend to Mission ONE for many years. He was one of the first to read a partial manuscript of this book and offered valuable counsel at that early stage of the project. Philip has been a wise, gracious, encouraging friend. *Thank you, Philip.* 

This book was built on the foundational work of numerous scholars. The phrase, "Standing on the shoulders of giants," certainly applies here. The most influential scholars for this book were David deSilva, Dean Flemming, Jerome Neyrey, Timothy Tennent, and Jackson Wu. *Thank you, Drs. deSilva, Flemming, Neyrey, Tennent, and Wu.* 

Dr. Steven Hawthorne is the scholar whose ministry, writings, friendship, and passion for God's glory among the nations has meant so much to me since the mid-1990s. His influence is deeply felt in this book. *Thank you, Steve.* 

Dan Wright served as the publishing advisor for this book. His patient and wise counsel, based on decades in the Christian publishing industry, was invaluable for creating a professionally published book. Dan provided frequent encouragement.

He gave us crucial advice on the title as well as all other aspects of the publishing process. *Thank you, Dan.* 

Jill Maher volunteered numerous hours over a span of more than a year to conduct valuable research. This has added nuance and richness to the book. *Thank you, Jill.* 

Robby Butler provided nuanced editorial work as well as expert proofreading in the final stage of preprint production. Robby also effectively promoted the book among his network of mission professionals. His collaboration and encouragement was invaluable. *Thank you, Robby.* 

Pauly Heller created the Scripture index and provided an added round of expert editing and proofreading at the final stage. *Thank you, Pauly.* 

Marilyn Nasman was perhaps my biggest cheerleader for this project. Marilyn read my work all along the way, sponsored an honor/shame training event in her local church in Friday Harbor, Washington, and shared the material through her network of relationships. Many times Marilyn lifted my spirit and encouraged me to press on in this long writing journey. *Thank you, Marilyn*.

Samuel Chiang recognized the potential of the book long before it was done. He encouraged me to "keep writing." The addition of Part 4 is largely due to his influence. *Thank you, Samuel.* 

Pastor Issam leads a ministry with his wife in the Middle East; their ministry organization is one of Mission ONE's partners. I learned so much through Issam's wisdom and relationship-building skills. His brotherly love and his passion to bless others through Jesus Christ was an inspiration. My ministry experiences with Issam in the Middle East—more than any other single thing— launched me on this learning journey about honor and shame. *Thank you, habibi.* 

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights ... –James 1:17

# FOREWORD BY SAMUEL CHIANG (Q&A)

# How will this book help believers communicate the gospel of Christ across the street and around the world?

Our neighborhoods, communities and cities are rapidly increasing in cultural diversity. With the arrival of immigrants, international students, refugees, expats, imported laborers, tourists, and sadly even with those who are trafficked, this generation of *people on the move* has morphed cities and societies into an unprecedented cultural mix. I believe that the basic social values, the worldview, of this generation is different from the dominant Western worldview of the previous five centuries. This presents an enormous challenge to the Church. How must we adjust in living out and presenting the gospel in this cultural melting pot?

The content of the gospel of Jesus Christ is timeless, but the way we communicate the gospel requires a deep reset. For generations we have counted on a legal framework for the gospel; this generally works when the worldview of our neighbors and colleagues is that of *guilt and innocence*—with a binary thinking process of "yes and no" or "right and wrong." But what happens when the worldview is more concerned with *honor and shame?* 

*The Global Gospel* helps us to thoroughly examine and even redeem the cultural value of honor and shame, which we see both in Scripture and more and more in our own cities and communities.

### Why should Christian leaders read The Global Gospel?

Christianity is no longer predominately in the West. The majority of Christians are now in the Majority World—Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In fact, within a few short years, by 2020, 65 percent of the global Christian community will be outside of North America and Europe. Plus, the vast majority of unreached and unengaged peoples are in the Majority World. *Should we not better understand how the gospel speaks within the honor/shame values of these cultures?* 

### What would you tell a pastor about why this book is important?

Your audience is changing! Drastically! The new generation, the *postmoderns*, receive, process, and pass on gospel messages differently. They generally do not belong to the *rule-centered* generation. They are a *relationship-centered* generation. This places them into an honor/shame worldview—with all the behaviors that go along with that. *The Global Gospel* helps you understand the values of this generation in order to better connect with and serve them.

### Why would teachers and professors of intercultural studies use this book?

For a long time, we have had excellent material about honor and shame from the studies and writings of cultural anthropology. However, we have been massively underserved by the dearth of biblical and theological writings concerning honor and shame. *The Global Gospel* plays a small but a significant and catalytic role toward diminishing that vacuum. It will be an enduring resource to help students develop a biblically sound worldview. It will help students better understand the Majority World and many unreached peoples for whom honor and shame is vital.

### Why would a missionary team read The Global Gospel?

A missionary team may suspect that their methods are not working well. What can be done? *The Global Gospel* provides a license to experiment. This book can be that field manual to stimulate conversations about new approaches, to reflect on how to do things differently—and trust God for the resulting, multiplying, and lasting fruit.

# At one point in the writing process, Werner thought he was nearly finished with the manuscript. But you encouraged him to keep writing. Why?

When I first read this wonderful manuscript, I was left thinking of the implications. When I stepped back, I thought, *The reader must be encouraged to move from reflection to action*. So I encouraged Werner to expand the material for application and practice. Furthermore, since little exists in Christian literature that deals with honor and shame from a biblical and theological perspective, I thought that with additional material, this could truly be a survey book with a shelf life beyond just a few years. In fact, I believe the richness in this book will journey with the postmodern generation.

### How might The Global Gospel influence the world Christian movement?

*The Global Gospel* is a necessary torch on our learning and practices. If we can glean just some of the many nuggets of gold that this book offers, and put them into practice, we might just become much more relevant as living servants of the gospel. This book is rich in dimensions to help us share the gospel across many cultures—from the colleague in the next cubicle, to the campuses across the world, to the unreached people group among whom we are serving, and into the megacities that are upon us in this century.

I believe this book is a *tour de force*. I surmise that many practitioners of various aspects of the Christian faith—whether discipleship, pastoral ministry, hermeneutics and preaching, missions, counseling, and other domains—will find great value in *The Global Gospel*, and for many years to come!

### **Samuel Chiang**

Executive Director, International Orality Network Hong Kong, April 2014

# FOREWORD BY STEVEN C. HAWTHORNE

This book is welcome at this juncture of Mission History. It has become obvious that the world is changing. The tectonic plates of political alliance and culture affinity have been colliding, setting off tsunamis of migration and marketing, so that every city is now a globalized soup of different ethnicities and economies. Instead of being dissolved into a homogenized Internet sameness, the ethnic compression has brought an unprecedented yearning for identity—for a kind of collective respect—among the scattered peoples. Perhaps we shouldn't say that this yearning is unprecedented. Ever since the uniculture of Babel, we have sought to "make a name for ourselves" (Gen 11:4).

In this cauldron of competing identities, we are now seeing God's people becoming the long-promised fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, a people of blessing amidst all peoples, with a God-granted name (Genesis 12:2–3). This is God's answer to Babel. Like never before in history, we are seeing God's people sent and positioned to bring blessing. To serve this purpose, we must have wisdom in his ways. This book—about honor and shame in Scripture and culture—will help form that needed wisdom. Here is why we need this book:

- **To see new movements flourish.** Almost all of the remaining unreached peoples—those lacking a Christ-following movement—have sturdy family bonds that make it seem impossible for individuals to follow Christ without bringing great disgrace on themselves and their families. Missionaries who work alongside such incipient movements must be conversant with the struggle to sustain family honor.
- **To endure persecution.** More people suffer for the name of Christ than at any other time, and the persecution is increasing. Many who have endured well speak of identifying with Christ in his suffering, and of finding joy in anticipating honor with Christ. To find the resources to remain vulnerable and to embrace a fellowship in Christ's sufferings, our eyes must be open to God's ways of reversing shame and rewarding faithfulness in suffering with lasting glory.
- **To sustain fruitful partnerships.** The global church is learning to walk and work together. Of course, understanding honor/shame dynamics can help anyone to mind one's manners and avoid embarrassing cultural blunders. But we must do more than avoid embarrassment. Our best partnerships

flourish where there is steady willingness to serve with honor, creating an environment of reciprocal respect that is deepened with celebration.

- **To contextualize the gospel message.** Don't underestimate the significance of articulating the great story that is culminated by Christ and for Christ. It is a story of God reversing the shame of the nations to bring us near to him in celebratory honor. The hermeneutic of honor reversing shame with Christ may do more than give you new lenses to read the Bible. It could well trigger your imagination to find fresh ways to present the message so that it is retold easily and effectively.
- **To mobilize in hope.** The world may be as evangelized as it will ever get if we attempt to complete the remaining task with a motivation built around the fleeting feelings of compassion. Mercy can strike a match, but we need emissaries from many lands who are ablaze with the inexhaustible fuel of jealousy for God's glory.

The reason this book has value in so many different ways is that Werner identifies the core of the drama that impels all things: God's great honor reverses deep shame. This story will and must culminate in God's reception—with honor—of the beautified worship of every people. This global glory is God's love accomplished. This is certainly the story of *His* glory. And yet it is also the story of *our* glory in and with Christ. The fulfillment of all things is Christ exalted and loved amidst the nations, the hope of *their* glory (Colossians 1:27). Only an announcement of the fulfillment of the all-encompassing drama of God's love can be called the *gospel*.

Werner may be audacious to title this book as *The Global Gospel*, but he is not wrong to do so.

### Steven C. Hawthorne, Ph.D.

Austin, Texas April 2014

# **AUTHOR'S PREFACE**

This book is about the good news of Jesus Christ. It speaks to how followers of Christ *contextualize* and make known this magnificent and glorious gospel.

The book is also about the *pivotal cultural value of honor and shame* in Bible societies. You'll gain new "tools" to better understand the ancient Scriptures—and discover ways that honor/shame dynamics can enhance your ministry in today's globalized world.

You'll soon realize this material is widely applicable. Not only is this book about blessing your neighbors across the street, it is also about blessing unreached and unengaged peoples—whether they are in distant lands or close by in your own community.

You may also be surprised how this Christ-centered material can help that person you know who has struggled with toxic shame for years and can't seem to get past it.

So the singular issue that this book addresses may be defined by posing this question:

### How can the honor/shame dynamics common to the Bible and many Majority World societies be used to contextualize the Christian faith in order to make it more widely understood and accepted?

May countless conversations be started and new creative efforts launched to make known the good news of Jesus. May the gospel be understood in fresh ways that resonate deeply in your own heart—and that better resonate with many peoples, tribes, and nations.

God bless you in your learning journey through *The Global Gospel: Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World.* 

# INTRODUCTION

## A longing for honor, a shadow of shame

The longing for honor and the struggle to avoid shame are universal. Individuals and families, kinship groups and communities, peoples and nations—all endure the pathologies of shame and the struggle for honor. Whether the issue is sexual abuse and trafficking, HIV-AIDS, racism or slavery, mental illness, disabilities of various kinds, ethnic cleansing, the identity challenges of refugees and immigrants, the perpetual passions of tribalism or nationalism, or simply the ubiquitous competitive pursuit for greater social status... honor and shame are central to the human condition. Below is the author's own story of a longing for honor and a shadow of shame.

**"G**O FOR IT, SON; YOU HAVE MY BLESSING." These were the words I wanted to hear. A son always looks for the approval and blessing of his father, and I was no different. But this is not what happened to me when I tried to earn a place on our high school baseball team.

I remember as a boy going to bed at night and secretly listening to the radio broadcasts of the Rochester "Red Wings" baseball team. The announcers painted a picture of the game, the players, the drama. *Would he get the big hit? Would my team win? Winning feels wonderful.* I did not want my parents to know that I was doing things like this. My affection for baseball was a secret. My parents didn't care about the American sport of baseball. They were German.

When I was in tenth grade, I decided to go out for my high school baseball team. I wanted *to go for it*, and try to make the team.

The process was to stay after school and meet somewhere outside. It was called "tryouts." You would practice and you would do your best. If you were good enough, you made the team.

Of course, I had to have my baseball glove along for tryouts. But I remember on the first day of tryouts, I forgot my glove! How could I do that? It was so new bringing my glove to school. This glove that I nurtured had always represented a non-school activity. Now I was connecting love for a game with school. Plus bringing my glove to school meant explaining to my mom or pop, German-born Americans with no appreciation for baseball, that I was bringing the equivalent of a toy to school. That was an obstacle right there—bringing my glove to school. What would I tell them? Something like, *This is what I'm doing—and I don't much care what you think*. It feels a little dangerous, risky, unsettling—even today.

I don't remember exactly what I told them. In any case, I was out there. I was trying. I had my baseball glove. I felt unsure of myself; this was all so new, but I was asserting myself to prove I could do it.

My dream was to play and score and be on a winning team. *Would I succeed? Would I make the team? Would other guys want me on their team? Would I be good enough?* My little manhood was at stake.

# My "Pop"—German father with an illness

My father, Guenther Mischke, was born in Germany in 1925. He died in January 1992 at age 67. I called him *Papi* as a little boy, and *Pop* as I became a teenager.

Pop was tall, about 6-feet 2-inches tall. He was warm and had a good sense of humor. I remember him laughing, and I loved it when he laughed. He deeply loved my mom and his three children. He loved me and I loved him. With his family, he attended Latta Road Baptist Church. He and my mom took us to church every Sunday.

I believe that one of the defining things about Pop was that he saw himself as a failure. Although I loved him, as a teenager I saw him as a failure, too.

As a little boy, until I was in my early teens, Papi gave me affection and discipline. When I needed to be spanked, he occasionally did so. He kissed me once in a while, maybe every night at bedtime. He pretended to be Santa Claus at Christmastime. Sometimes, he was fun and laughed very hard.

Pop became mentally ill when I was 14 years old or so. He lost his job taking care of the tools at a tool-and-die company where he had worked all the years that I remember. He never had another full-time job.

I remember my mother gathering my two sisters and me in a little sharing time. Mom said something like this: "Pop is sick. He has *manic depressive psychosis.*" This disease is now sometimes called by another name: bipolar disorder.

This is why he lost his job. This is why my mother had a nervous breakdown. This is why there were so many heated arguments between my mom and pop in our home. This is why I would go to bed at night and pray, *Lord, please give me wisdom to say the right things so that there isn't so much anger and conflict and yelling.* I felt this crazy responsibility to behave in such a way that I could bring a modicum of healing to my family.

This is why Pop embarrassed me and made me feel ashamed.

# The hurtful event—embarrassed and ashamed

It was springtime, probably March of 1971. I remember going out for the baseball team at Greece Olympia High School. I was in tenth grade. I had not yet made a growth spurt because I entered puberty later in my teen years. I think of myself as being skinny with moderate height. Nothing impressive physically.

We were outside on the front grounds of the school—not on a baseball diamond. The varsity high school team was out on the real baseball diamonds in the back of the high school.

The drills were simple. The coach would hit a ground ball and I would gather it in my glove and throw it back. We had begun doing this drill. I remember I was not fielding the ball very well, always hoping to do better the next time.

Then I saw my father nearby.

I'm thinking: Oh no! What is Pop doing here? My mentally ill father showing up here? Why? This is so embarrassing.

Pop said to me in strong words, with his German accent, "Werner, let's go. Come home."

I don't want to.

"You must come home." Pop was looking angry. I could see he was not going to lose this showdown with his son. He was emotionally intense with a dogmatic sternness. He tilted his head a little, "Come home!"

"Why?"

"We have spring cleaning to do. Mom wants you to come home."

I knew all the other guys were watching what I would do. I imagine the coach saw it all, as well. I didn't want to look at any of them.

My heart sank. Here was sickness personified in my father bringing sickness and shame into my life. Reflecting on it now, I wonder: *Was Pop being sadistic? Was his behavior involuntary? Did my mother tell him to go and get me? Why would he do this?* I didn't know.

Reluctantly, I walked off the field with Pop following me into the boy's locker room where I had my regular clothes and school stuff. Even that was weird—that he would follow me into the locker room. Maybe he was afraid I would run away and hide. Looking back, I feel like I was controlled by a force that was unkind, strange, and diseased.

I gathered my stuff and walked back out with Pop to the parking lot. *Get me outta here before anyone else sees me.* We got in our car and drove home. It was a ten-minute drive from Greece Olympia High School to 194 Rosecroft Drive.

While riding home, what was I thinking? What did I say to Pop, if anything? I probably just looked out the window. *Unbelievable*. Did I cry? I don't think so. Maybe I just felt numb. Like, *Did this really just happen*?

The next day, I loathed going back to school. Walking down the school hallway, I was asked by one or two boys, "How was spring cleaning?"

If, because of prior weirdnesses in Pop's behavior, there was the onset of a shame-sickness in my soul, then this event (on the baseball practice field) lodged that shadow of shame firmly inside of me. I, along with my sisters and mother, was destined to live with feelings of shame concerning the man who was supposed to love me, but at times, just couldn't.

The father who supposedly loved me made me look like an idiot. Instead of encouraging me to take up a challenge and pursue my dream, he extracted me from my dream and joy. He yanked it from me in front of my friends—other teenage boys who were trying to make the team.

I looked like a weak mama's boy from a weird family, whose weird old man without a job comes out on the practice field and calls his only son home. *And for what*? To do spring cleaning.

Are you kidding me? It was awful. In this event he was deeply unloving and uncaring. The exact opposite of what a father was supposed to be.

No other moment in my youth had the depth of shame that this moment had. Looking back now, I remember it painfully. But I also laugh about it because it was so irrational, so weird. It created a *shadow of shame* which affected my life in many ways.

# The healing event—he gave me his blessing

Fast-forward to 1991. I had been married for fourteen years. My wife Daphne and I along with our two sons were living in Lee, Massachusetts, serving as members of a small Baptist church. And I was *in transition*—from being a small business owner to taking a step of faith into the world of global missions.

I wanted to leave my graphic design business and work with evangelist Bob Schindler, who had just founded a cross-cultural partnership ministry called Mission ONE. I had to tell my parents what I was planning to do. My decision required moving from Massachusetts to Tennessee—1500 miles away—with Daphne and two boys. A drastic move like this meant I would not see my parents as often.

In the fall of '91, Daphne and I were visiting my parents in Rochester, New York. My dad was still mentally disabled, and he had begun kidney dialysis treatments. I knew I had to share my plans with him individually. He was proud of me for owning my own business, and he loved the periodic visits we made to see them, so I honestly did not know how he would react to my announcement. Would he be disappointed? Mad? Confused?

Daphne had gone shopping with my mother. So there we were, just Pop and me, in the small living room in their apartment. I presented my plans and why I wanted to make such a radical change in our lives. The financial outlook was uncertain. I wasn't completely sure how I would support my family. But I was undeterred. I said something like this, "This is my desire—to serve with Bob Schindler in the ministry of Mission ONE—and I think somehow it will all work out. We are trusting God."

I explained the big move my family and I were planning to make. Then I asked, "So Pop, what do you think?" I waited for his response.

"Werner, we are behind you 100 percent, whatever you do."

Immediately, my eyes filled with tears. I got up from the couch and hugged him. Pop kissed me. We embraced. My tears took me by surprise.

Despite Pop's bipolar illness, he loved me. Despite my constant need to compensate for his weaknesses, he gave me his blessing.

A few months later, in January of 1992, Pop passed away. I was honored to give his eulogy at his memorial service.

There is much that I wish I could have received from Pop—counsel, friendship, financial assistance, spiritual encouragement. I had decided not to ask for what I knew he was unable to give.

But the one thing I needed most I did receive—the honor of *his blessing*. I am grateful.

# Hurt and healing

In thinking about, on the one hand, my shame-trauma as a teenager, and on the other hand, my emotional response of deep joy and tears when my father gave

me his blessing—I ask myself what ties these two events together? There are two things.

The first is obvious. Both of these events are between my father and me. The first event was hurtful; the second event was healing.

The second thing that ties these events together is less obvious. It is that both events were disconnected from my faith. My "umbrella of belief" in Jesus Christ was not nearly broad enough to provide answers to the deep emotional impact that these events had on my life. In response to the traumatic first event, the teachings and social dynamics of the church failed to address the hurtful shame I had experienced. And in the healing event, I never expected to experience the joy and honor of my father's blessing. I never heard about the power of *blessing* (until much later in my Christian life).

What I didn't know then but do know today is this: Concerning the hurtful event, the Bible speaks volumes to the shame that people experience both as agents and victims of sin. Concerning the healing event, the Bible gives many examples of the love, honor and power of *blessing*. In this book I am addressing both of these issues, as well as a host of other things.

# A long journey for learning about honor and shame

When I was a boy, my family went to church every Sunday. So I heard a weekly sermon—many on Jesus forgiving our *sin and guilt*. I received Jesus as my Savior as a ten-year-old boy, wanting to have my sins forgiven after watching Billy Graham on TV with my parents.

But I remember almost nothing about Jesus cleansing our *sin and shame*. In fact, to this day (I am 58), having heard hundreds of sermons, I can only recall one time when the preacher's message touched on the cure for one's sin and *shame*. I think the year was 1979. It was a message about Jesus healing the man with the withered hand (Luke 6:6–11).

In the spring of 2009, I traveled to Lebanon to visit our Mission ONE ministry partner. We had agreed to conduct a one-day Bible "conference" for a small group of first-generation believers from the Druze religious background.<sup>1</sup> The pastor and I had agreed on going through Philippians, and to do so through the lens of honor and shame. It was a study that had a profound impact on one young lady, Maya, a mature believer. She told me a few days later how this study about honor and shame in Philippians had freed her from fear.

My experience in Lebanon was a watershed moment. I returned home and started reading everything I could concerning honor and shame in the Bible and in cross-cultural ministry. To this day, in my own regular personal Bible readings, I find that being alert to the honor/shame dynamics in Scripture is a great help in making the Word of God *come alive*.

Since 2009, I have been on a journey of reading, writing, training, and speaking about the dynamics of honor and shame in Scripture and in cultures. I've discovered a treasure trove of grace and truth in Jesus Christ that has helped bring healing for my shame.

<sup>1.</sup> The Druze are a religious and social community located in Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan.

Perhaps more importantly, I've become convinced that the cultural dynamic of *honor and shame*—in understanding, communicating, and living out the gospel of Christ—is an important strategic issue for world missions. Hence, *The Global Gospel: Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World*.

"So the honor is for you who believe ... " (1 Pet 2:7). "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen" (Rom 11:36).

Werner Mischke

Scottsdale, Arizona May 2014



# It's a Multicultural World and It's Hard to Understand

# Unreached People Across the Street and Around the World

POSTED THIS ON MY FACEBOOK PAGE, July 20, 2013:

Well, I missed my nonstop flight to Tampa. (Forgot to bring my backpack with my laptop.) Went into crisis mode. Where's that bag? Did I leave it on the SuperShuttle? Nope. Did I leave it outside the office door? Nope. So I called a cab that took me back to our office ... About a 40-mile roundtrip. Of course, the cab driver was from Somalia via Kenya ... his name ... Abdullah. We had the best conversation about family and stuff, and laughed together. Knowing a tiny bit of Arabic helps ("habibi" means friend). So I am planning to meet him at the Juba Restaurant (a gathering place for Somali men) on McDowell Rd in Phoenix next Thursday night. I told him I want to hear his story, and then I said I want to tell him the best story Isa (Jesus) ever told.

Unfortunately, I didn't return home in time for that Thursday evening gettogether at the Juba Red Sea Restaurant. But I *did* show up the following Thursday evening, and the Thursday evening after that. Although Abdullah wasn't there, I did end up talking with Bashir, the owner of the restaurant. It was a friendly, positive connection. Bashir told me that about fifteen thousand Somalis live in the Phoenix area. *Amazing*, I thought. A huge number of people from an unreached Muslim people group live just a short drive from my home in Arizona. My friendship with Bashir has continued.

# Ours is a multicultural world

The world has always been comprised of thousands of ethnicities, languages, and cultures. But "the world" of our own lives—our own cities, communities, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods—is vastly more multicultural than a generation ago. Plus, through the Internet and social media, our connections internationally and multiculturally have also multiplied.

In one recent 24-hour period: I had an extensive chat session on Facebook with our ministry partner, Pastor Severino, in Torit, South Sudan ... I chatted on Skype with Pastor Issam, my dear friend in Lebanon ... I did a video call over the Internet with Bishop Bhatti in Karachi, Pakistan ... my wife and I enjoyed an afternoon getting to know a young Chinese woman who is studying architecture

at a university nearby ... and I had a wonderful conversation over the Internet with my aunt and uncle in Germany.

The world *really is* right next door.

- *The New York Times* reported, "While there is no precise count, some experts believe New York is home to as many as 800 languages—far more than the 176 spoken by students in the city's public schools or the 138 that residents of Queens, New York's most diverse borough, listed on their 2000 census forms."<sup>1</sup>
- "Los Angeles' population consists 57% of multilingual residents. The city has some of the nation's largest cultural enclaves including Historic Filipinotown, Koreatown, Little Armenia, Little Ethiopia, Tehrangeles, and Thai Town."<sup>2</sup>
- Increasing cultural and ethnic diversity also characterizes smaller cities and communities. In the city in which I was born, Rochester, New York (population about 210,000), a local non-profit organization provides English instruction for immigrants: "The Maplewood Library ESL program has met every Saturday since June 2008. Over 400 students, including refugees and immigrants from Burma, Nepal, Bhutan, Burundi, Somalia, Sudan, the Congo, Cuba, Colombia, Peru, Russia, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, China, Korea, Vietnam, and Laos have attended."<sup>3</sup>
- Patrick Johnstone states, "By 2050, Caucasians will probably be a minority in North America."<sup>4</sup>
- The Brookings Institution reported that, based on the 2010 U.S. Census, there were stunning demographic changes in America's child population between 2000 and 2010:<sup>5</sup>
  - "New minorities—Hispanics, Asians, and other groups apart from whites, blacks, and American Indians—account for all of the growth among the nation's child population. From 2000 to 2010, the population of white children nationwide declined by 4.3 million, while the population of Hispanic and Asian children grew by 5.5 million.
  - **"In almost half of states and nearly one-third of large metro areas, child populations declined in the 2000s.** White child populations dropped in 46 states and 86 of the 100 largest metro areas, but gains of new minority children forestalled more widespread overall declines in youth.

<sup>1.</sup> Sam Roberts, "Listening to (and Saving) the World's Languages," *The New York Times, 28* April 2010, accessed 18 September 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/29/nyregion/29lost.html?\_r=0.

<sup>2.</sup> Daniel Echevarria, "Top Multilingual U. S. Cities," *Beyond Words—Language Blog*, 3 March 2010, accessed 18 September 2013, http://www.altalang.com/beyond-words/2010/03/03/top-multilingual-u-s-cities/. Alta's website has a good overview of the most diverse cities in the United States.

<sup>3. &</sup>quot;Learn English as a Second Language," *ESOL Associates of Rochester, NY*, accessed 18 September 2013, http://www.livingonweekends.com/EAR.html#.

<sup>4.</sup> Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends and Possibilities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>5.</sup> William H. Frey, "America's Diverse Future: Initial Glimpses at the U.S. Child Population from the 2010 Census," *The Brookings Institution*, 6 April 2011, accessed 18 September 2013, http://www.brookings.edu/ research/papers/2011/04/06-census-diversity-frey.

- **"In areas of the country gaining children, Hispanics accounted for most of that growth.** Fully 95 percent of Texas's child population growth occurred among Hispanics. Los Angeles was the only major metropolitan area to witness a decline in Hispanic children from 2000 to 2010.
- **"Ten states and 35 large metro areas now have minority white child populations.** Child populations in the Atlanta, Dallas, Orlando, and Phoenix metro areas flipped to 'majority minority' by 2010."

J. D. Payne's book, *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission*, is an excellent resource for getting our minds and hearts around the mega-trend of peoples on the move in our world. Payne introduced me to a new term—*diaspora missiology*—which is defined by the Lausanne Movement as "a missiological framework for understanding and participating in God's redemptive mission among people living outside their place of origin."<sup>6</sup>

Below is a tiny sampling of highlights from Payne's rich resource book.

- As of 2006, "Toronto is the country's largest migrant-receiving area, with the 2006 census noting 2,320,200 foreign-born people. The foreign-born population is now at 45.7% of the census metropolitan area's total population of 5,072,100, with India and the People's Republic of China as the two major-source countries for recent immigrants."<sup>7</sup>
- From 2000 to 2007, the number of international students more than doubled to over 2 million. The main destination countries were the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Australia. The greatest percentage increases occurred in New Zealand, Korea, the Netherlands, Greece, Spain, Italy, and Ireland.
- In 2010, migrants comprised 14.2 percent of the total population in North America, 12.4 percent in Western Europe, 22 percent in Australia, 21.3 percent in Canada, 13.5 percent in the United States, and 10.4 percent in the United Kingdom.

Robert Schreiter is a widely respected expert in the area of intercultural understanding and what it means for the church. He writes of the *unprecedented* migration of peoples and the resulting clash of cultures.

The spread of global market capitalism, creating new centers of wealth and communication in the world, has also fostered a worldwide migration of peoples, either seeking some share in the wealth in the burgeoning cities or fleeing the poverty created by the widening gap between rich and poor. In some areas this has led to conflicts as cultures clash and peoples compete for the same scarce resources. ... This churning of peoples and

<sup>6.</sup> Sadiri Joy Tira, "Diaspora Missiology," *The Lausanne Movement* (blog), 6 October 2010, accessed 20 September 2013, http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/conversations/detail/11103#.UjuI9hbM7o4.

<sup>7.</sup> J. D. Payne, *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), Kindle edition. Payne cites as his source, "Census snapshot—Immigration in Canada: A portrait of the foreign-born population, 2006 Census," *Government of Canada,* accessed 19 September 2013, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2008001/article/10556-eng.pdf.

cultures is unprecedented in world history. Frequently in the past, regions of the world would experience such demographic flow. But never has it been on such a worldwide scale.<sup>8</sup>

How is the church responding? Soong-Chan Ray is an Asian American Christian leader who is Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago. Born into a Korean family and raised in America, he has written about the ethnic changes that the American evangelical church is undergoing:

The American church needs to face the inevitable and prepare for the next stage of her history—we are looking at a nonwhite majority, multiethnic American Christianity in the immediate future. Unfortunately, despite these drastic demographic changes, American evangelicalism remains enamored with an ecclesiology and a value system that reflect a dated and increasingly irrelevant cultural captivity and are disconnected from both a global and a local reality.<sup>9</sup>

# Multicultural world, multi-ethnic global church

In the literature of Christian world missions over the last ten years, it has been clearly stated again and again that Westerners no longer live in a world of missions that is from "the West to the rest."<sup>10</sup> The gospel is now, more than ever, going "from everywhere to everyone," as Samuel Escobar says.<sup>11</sup>

The *Atlas of Global Christianity* has a remarkable study on the change of the location of "Christianity's centre of gravity."

Sometime after 1980, Christians from the Global South outnumbered Northern Christians for the first time since the 10th century. The most vigorous growth was in Africa, exploding from 10 million Christians in 1900 to 360 million in 2000. In the second half of the century, however, the fastest-growing portion of the global church was in Asia. For the first time in over 1,300 years the centre of global Christianity was again moving towards the east.<sup>12</sup>

In his book *The Next Christendom*, Philip Jenkins reflects on the massive demographic changes which the global church is undergoing. "If we are to live in a world where only one Christian in five is a non-Hispanic White, then the views of that small minority are ever less likely to claim mainstream status, however

<sup>8.</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, "Reconciliation as a Model of Mission," in *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*, eds. Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), Kindle edition locations 1458–64.

<sup>9.</sup> Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), Kindle edition locations 114–17.

<sup>10.</sup> See for example: Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds., Atlas of Global Christianity (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 2011); Mark Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

<sup>11.</sup> Samuel Escobar, The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

<sup>12.</sup> Johnson and Ross, 52.

desperately the Old World Order clings to its hegemony over the control of information and opinion."<sup>13</sup>

Citing the scholarship of Philip Jenkins and speaking from his own extensive career in serving the world Christian movement, Paul Borthwick states, "Even though the Western world has dominated Christianity for much of Christian history, Christianity is now primarily a nonwhite, non-western, non-wealthy religion."<sup>14</sup>

Scottish missiologist Andrew Walls has written much about major trends in world Christianity:

What has changed most over the course of my lifetime is the demography of the Christian church, the southward movement of its center. Europe and, to a lesser extent, North America have seen recession, while Latin America, some parts of Asia-Pacific, and especially Africa have seen growth, and all present evidence suggests that these trends will continue. The corollary is that African, Asian, and Latin American Christianity will become more and more important within the church as a whole and Western Christianity less and less so. Neither the churches of the North nor those of the South have yet taken in the full implications of this major movement of the Christian heartland, the theological academy perhaps least of all.<sup>15</sup>

The southward movement of the Christian faith into such a broad myriad of languages, cultures and ethnicities contributes mightily to the credibility of the gospel in those cultures, where Western values are viewed with suspicion. Tite Tiénou rightly says, "The shift of Christianity's center of gravity is good news because it means that, as a global reality, the Christian faith is increasingly at home in many cultures and will not be imprisoned by any single culture."<sup>16</sup>

Having given examples of outstanding mission efforts from people in Majority World nations, Samuel Escobar writes, "There is an element of mystery when the dynamism of mission does not come from people in positions of power or privilege, or from the extensive dynamism of a superior civilization, but from below—from the little ones, those who have few material, financial or technical resources but who are open to the prompting of the Spirit."<sup>17</sup>

Yes, the growth of the number of Christ-followers in the past one hundred years is amazing. But there is still *so much* unfinished work to fulfill our Lord's Great Commission.

# The persistence of large numbers of unreached and unengaged peoples

What is an unreached people group? What is an unengaged people group? According to the Joshua Project website:

17. Escobar, 19.

<sup>13.</sup> Jenkins, 108.

<sup>14.</sup> Paul Borthwick, Western Christians in Global Mission: What's the Role of the North American Church? (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), Kindle edition locations 355–56.

<sup>15.</sup> Andrew Walls, "Globalization and the Study of Christian History" in *Globalizing Theology: Belief* and Practice in an Era of World Christianity, eds. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), Kindle edition locations 1410–15.

<sup>16.</sup> Tite Tiénou, "Christian Theology in an Era of World Christianity" in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, Kindle edition locations 692–93.

**An unreached or least-reached people** is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group. The original Joshua Project editorial committee selected the criteria less than 2 percent Evangelical Christian and less than 5 percent Christian Adherents.<sup>18</sup>

**An unengaged people group** is one that has no active church planting underway. According to the IMB Global Research Office, "A people group is engaged when a church planting strategy, consistent with evangelical faith and practice, is under implementation. In this respect, a people group is not engaged when it has been merely adopted, is the object of focused prayer, or is part of an advocacy strategy."

At least four essential elements constitute effective engagement:

- (1) apostolic effort in residence;
- (2) commitment to work in the local language and culture;
- (3) commitment to long-term ministry;
- (4) sowing in a manner consistent with the goal of seeing a Church Planting Movement (CPM) emerge.<sup>19</sup>

The Joshua Project website has a searchable database. I did four searches. My variables were unengaged, religious bloc (Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, tribal), and population greater than 100,000. Here are the results:

- There are 17 unengaged Buddhist people groups, each with a population of over 100,000. Together these peoples comprise 19,032,000 individuals.
- There are 272 unengaged Hindu people groups over 100,000 with a population totaling 246,557,000.
- There are 285 unengaged Muslim people groups over 100,000 with a population totaling 372,513,000.
- There are 35 unengaged tribal people groups over 100,000 with a population totaling 23,651,000.
- When the population of the group is not a factor, there are a total of 4,793 people groups who are unengaged, with a total population of 735,046,000 individuals.

These numbers are hard to grasp. My friend Mike Latsko has a special passion for mobilizing the church for the unengaged peoples of the world. "The term 'unengaged," he says, "is the most offensive in missionary terminology. … It is offensive to the LORD of hosts. … It is offensive to Christ Himself. … It is offensive to the Holy Spirit. … It is offensive to the church. … It is offensive to the missionary community." … As of 2013, "34% of all unreached Hindu peoples … are also

<sup>18. &</sup>quot;Definitions," *Joshua Project*, accessed 19 September 2013, http://www.joshuaproject.net/definitions. php?term=26.

<sup>19.</sup> Ibid.

unengaged, as are 43% of all Buddhist unreached and 59% of all Muslim unreached. Enough. No more."<sup>20</sup>

We can also recognize that the thousands of unreached and unengaged Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and tribal peoples are very non-Western in their culture. Our Western culture, characterized by individualism and pluralism, is culturally distant from the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, or tribal world. Non-Western societies are usually *collectivistic*—group-oriented—rather than *individualistic*; thus, they are much more motivated by honor/shame dynamics than Western peoples. We will thoroughly explain what this means as we go forward.

### Do we have good news for our multicultural world?

Of course we do. We have the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ. But what if ...

- *What if* ... the gospel as we know it contained some Western assumptions that make the good news of Jesus less appealing to peoples from Majority World cultures?
- *What if* ... we could read the Bible in a new light—the light of the cultural values in which the Scriptures were originally written?
- *What if* ... we could overcome certain theological blind spots? What if we could shift from a gospel articulated exclusively through a legal framework?
- *What if* ... we could share a more comprehensive *global* gospel which, by God's grace, would better resonate with our multicultural neighbors— across the street and around the world?
- *What if* ... we discovered that the societies of the Old and New Testament had the pivotal cultural value of *honor and shame*, and found that this is a lot closer to the values of our multicultural neighbors than we as Westerners ever realized?

That's what the next chapter is all about.

<sup>20.</sup> Mike Latsko, "The Most Abominable Word," *Mission Frontiers* 35, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2013): 12. This entire edition of *Mission Frontiers* is devoted to the issue of the unengaged peoples and has a variety of experienced voices contributing to the discussion. Alas, not one word is devoted to the significance of contextualizing the gospel.

#### Section 1 • Chapter 2

### The Bible: It's Not Your Book!

"We can easily forget that Scripture is a foreign land and that reading the Bible is a cross-cultural experience."<sup>1</sup>

#### Discomfort and "otherness"

The BIBLE IS FULL OF STRANGE CUSTOMS, strange names, strange lands. You can use a Bible dictionary or a concordance to gain insight on the significance of these customs, names and lands.

The Bible is also full of *values* that are strange to Westerners—the cultural values of the ancient Middle East: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, Syria, the Roman Empire, the Mediterranean basin. But the meaning and significance of these cultural values are largely hidden. Like the 90 percent of an iceberg that is underwater, *values are below the surface*. Values are implicit rather than explicit. The "otherness" of Bible cultures is located in the 90 percent that's hidden underwater.

Bruce Malina is known for his classic work, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology.* He writes, "The words we use to say and speak do in fact embody meaning, but the meaning does not come from the words. Meaning inevitably derives from the general social system of the speakers of the language."<sup>2</sup>

In the book, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible,* authors Randolph Richards and Brandon O'Brien help us understand how easy it is to misinterpret and misunderstand Scripture—simply because the societies we read about in the Bible have cultural values vastly different from those of modern-day Western Christians.

Many pastors interpret the Bible and then preach sermons through their Western cultural mindset. Richards and O'Brien write, "... it is a better method to speak of what the passage meant to the original hearers, and *then* to ask how that applies to us."<sup>3</sup> Plus, the challenge of knowing what *the passage meant to the original hearers* is made worse when ...

<sup>1.</sup> E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), Kindle edition locations 74–75.

<sup>2.</sup> Bruce J. Malina, The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology, rev. ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 2.

<sup>3.</sup> Richards and O'Brien, Kindle edition locations 80-81.

... the most powerful cultural values are those that go without being said. It is very hard to know what goes without being said in another culture. But often we are not even aware of what goes without being said in our own culture. This is why misunderstanding and misinterpretation happen. When a passage of Scripture appears to leave out a piece of the puzzle because something went without being said, we instinctively fill in the gap with a piece from our own culture—usually a piece that goes without being said. When we miss what went without being said for them and substitute what goes without being said for us, we are at risk of misreading Scripture.<sup>4</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

If we are to take seriously the cultural component for interpreting the New Testament, then would not the study of the social dynamics of the Roman Empire be essential? One book that explains the social and political dynamics of the Roman Empire—and thus reveals the degree to which honor and shame was woven into every aspect of its social and political life—is J. E. Lendon's *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World.* It is a work of scholarship that demonstrates how honor and shame affected every aspect of the Empire. Of course, the Roman Empire is the sociopolitical reality into which Jesus Christ was born and inside of which the New Testament was written.

Commenting on the way *honor* trumped *obedience* in the Empire, Lendon states:

The marked perception, therefore, is not of subjects, officials, and emperor dealing with each other in terms of obedience. Rather, the subject paid "honour" to his rulers as individuals deserving of it in themselves, and, in turn, the rulers are seen to relate to their subjects by "honouring" them. Subject and official were linked by a great network of honouring, and obedience was an aspect of that honouring. Moreover, it was very largely in terms of honour that relations between individuals in the government were described. ... And at the very centre of this network stood the Roman emperor, relentlessly honoured by the men and cities of his world, and busily honouring them in return, or augmenting the honours they had bestowed upon others. This focus on the business of honouring in no way set the relations of subject and official, or official and official, apart from relations within society at large. ... [T]here was nothing specifically governmental in honouring people: it was an everyday social function, the constant expectation of a man in any respect distinguished.<sup>5</sup>

New Testament scholar Jerome Neyrey emphasizes that understanding the social system of an ancient culture is vital for interpreting its literature. This applies to the Bible, which is, of course, an ancient book. Neyrey says it this way:

Words take their meaning from a social system, not from a lexicon. Our dictionaries translate words such as father, mother and household, but they cannot tell us their meanings in Greco-Roman culture. Despite our

<sup>4.</sup> Ibid., 89–92.

<sup>5.</sup> J. E. Lendon, *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Kindle edition locations 312–17.

temptation to take the easy road and think that those words meant *then* what we mean by them *now*, social-science reading alerts us to the fact that proper reading requires that we learn the ancient cultural system that filled those words with distinctive meaning.<sup>6</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

The *English Standard Version Study Bible*, in its chapter on Scripture interpretation, sums up this point nicely: "Wise interpreters still locate every verse in its context and ask how the original audience understood it."<sup>7</sup> The problem is that the majority of "modern students of the Bible have not focused on the significantly different social world and dynamics of Bible times."<sup>8</sup>

This challenge is a big part of what this book is about.

# Is it helpful to apply social science to the interpretation of the Bible?

The application of honor/shame dynamics for interpreting the Bible falls into the category of "social-scientific approaches to Scripture." But many followers of Jesus Christ and students of the Bible are not familiar with social science as a tool for interpreting Scripture. They are right to be cautious as they endeavor to be "rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15).

According to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, "... social-scientific studies fall into two broad categories: (1) research that illuminates the social history of the biblical world and (2) the application of modern theories of human behavior to scriptural texts."<sup>9</sup>

This book is written with the understanding of primarily the first category— "research that illuminates the social history of the biblical world"—thus, a tool for faithful *exegesis* of God's Word. My goal is to interpret the Word of God according to its original cultural context.<sup>10</sup>

Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard ask, "What kind of 'meaning' ought to be the goal of interpretation?" I agree with their answer wholeheartedly:

<sup>6.</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart, eds., The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), xxi.

<sup>7.</sup> The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 2564.

<sup>8.</sup> William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert I. Hubbard Jr., Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, Revised ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 79.

<sup>9.</sup> Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard, 78. This is one small part of their extensive treatment of the subject. 10. This author believes that the reader of this book will find that social science research into the ancient cultures of the Bible has a profoundly positive impact. It is positive for our understanding of the Bible—and thus, for our faithfulness to the God of the Bible. But it should be noted that sometimes, theological liberalism is associated with social science research relative to biblical studies. For example, an association of scholars called The Context Group is the forerunner for much of the material about honor/shame dynamics in biblical studies. Even though their contribution has been significant, The Context Group is considered liberal by some evangelicals because some participants in The Context Group do not hold to as high a view of Scripture. Nevertheless, a standard textbook on hermeneutics by Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (cited above) proclaims the use of social science as an important resource for faithful biblical interpretation. Moreover, it should be noted that two authors quoted in this book—Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey—were both founding members of The Context Group. The fact that Malina, Neyrey and others who have participated in The Context Group are quoted in this book does not imply that this author or Mission ONE agree with all that they say in their writings. There is obviously a certain tolerance for ambiguity necessary to learn from others with whom you may not agree in every respect. This author agrees with conservative theological scholars such as David deSilva, Timothy Tennent, and Jackson Wu whose writings demonstrate that social science research makes valuable contributions to our understanding and application of the Bible. For more information about The Context Group, see <http:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\_Context\_Group>, accessed 23 April 2014.

We believe God intended the Bible to function not as a mirror reflecting the readers and their meanings, but as a window into the worlds and meanings of the authors and the texts they produced. Therefore we posit the following: *the author-encoded historical meaning of these texts remains the central objective of hermeneutics.*<sup>11</sup> (Emphasis in original.)

In other words, Bible interpretation is the process to understand what the authors intended and what the original hearers understood. "It is the meaning those words would have conveyed to the readers at the time they were written by the author or editor."<sup>12</sup>

#### Benefits of this book

By reading this book you will discover:

#### The primary social value of the ancient Middle East in the Bible is *the pivotal cultural value of honor and shame*; knowing this will provide a new perspective to:

- enrich your personal relationship with Jesus Christ by discovering the God of honor revealed in Scripture,
- better understand and communicate God's story from Genesis to Revelation so that more lost and hurting people will respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ,
- give you new ways to understand and communicate the gospel of Christ, and
- enhance the impact of your church or mission team locally and globally.

Understanding the ancient dynamics of honor and shame in Scripture is a *catalyst* to help you and your church be more faithful to God's Word now for more effective ministry in our multi-ethnic, multicultural world.

#### **Definitions: Honor and Shame**

Our definitions come from expert researchers.

Our definition of *honor* comes from the aforementioned Jerome Neyrey, Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies at the University of Notre Dame. Our definition of *shame* comes from Brené Brown, a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work. She identifies herself as a "shame researcher."<sup>13</sup>

• **HONOR** is "the worth or value of persons both in their eyes and in the eyes of their village, neighborhood, or society." ... "The critical item is the public nature of respect and reputation."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11.</sup> Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard, 184.

<sup>12.</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>13.</sup> Brené Brown, Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead (New York: Gotham, 2012), 59. Later in this book we will explore some of Brown's concepts about "shame resilience" in relation to the Christian life and to cross-cultural ministry.

<sup>14.</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 15.

• **SHAME** is "the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging" ... "the fear of disconnection."<sup>15</sup>

What these two definitions reveal is the *social, relational,* or *public* aspect. J. E. Lendon references the first-century Roman philosopher Seneca (ca. 4 B.C.–A.D. 65); the public nature of honor in the ancient Roman world is obvious:

In Seneca's words, honour is "the favourable opinion of good men; for just as good reputation does not consist of one man's remarks, and bad of another's ill opinion, distinction is not simply a matter of pleasing a single individual." A man's honour was a *public verdict* on his qualities and standing, *established publicly*; and, among those who (in Cicero's words) "are in such a position of life ... that men will talk about us all the time", life was lived under the constant, withering gaze of opinion, everyone constantly reckoning up the honour of others. ... [T]he court of prestige met many times a day, wherever men gathered, in the baths or where wine flowed.<sup>16</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

Zeba Crook points out the distinction between shame as an emotion and shame as a social dynamic in the ancient cultures of the Bible:

[H]onour had to do with a public claim of worth, one's reputation; shame, on the other hand, was a demotion in one's reputation, or depreciation in the eyes of the public court of reputation. Shame among the males with honor, thus, was not an *emotion*, but a *demotion*.<sup>17</sup> (Emphasis in original.)

In cultures characterized by the pivotal cultural value of honor and shame, one's concept of the "self" is established primarily by one's family and community.<sup>18</sup> This is called the *dyadic personality*, and it is completely different from the individualistic personality by which Westerners view the world. Bruce Malina asks, "What sort of personality sees life nearly exclusively in terms of honor? For starters, such a person would always see himself or herself through the eyes of others."<sup>19</sup>

African theologian Andrew Mbuvi has used the dictum made famous by Descartes, "I think, therefore, I am" and modified it to describe people in honor/ shame cultures: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am."<sup>20</sup> This reveals a complete immersion—*the individual inside the group*—in honor/shame cultures. For the introspective, individualistic, self-reliant person of the Western world—this can be difficult to grasp.

<sup>15.</sup> Brown, 69.

<sup>16.</sup> Lendon, Kindle edition locations 477-82.

<sup>17.</sup> Zeba A. Crook, *Reconceptualizing Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 45.

<sup>18.</sup> This is in stark contrast to the Western value of the "self" which is much more self-determined. The question often asked of children in an American family, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" is unthinkable in many honor/shame cultures.

<sup>19.</sup> Malina, 63.

<sup>20.</sup> Jackson Wu, Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame in EMS Dissertation Series (Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2012), 190. Wu quotes Andrew M. Mbuvi, "African Theology from the Perspective of Honor and Shame," in *The Urban Face of Mission: Ministering the Gospel in a Diverse and Changing World*, eds. Manuel Ortiz and Susan S. Baker (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2002), 288–89.

**Individualism is related more to guilt than shame.** Guilt is a negative emotion often tied to the individual's conscience, thus it is more internally derived. One need not be in a social setting in order to feel guilt. Evangelical scholar Timothy Tennent writes that shame is different:

In contrast, shame leaves us with a sense of humiliation, defeat, and ridicule and is intricately tied to our exposure and loss of honor or status before our peers and those in authority within our social network. Shame is not inherently individualistic or private, but corporate and public; it cannot be experienced apart from the larger social context.<sup>21</sup>



Figure 1.01: A taxonomy of honor/shame words in the Bible

Moreover, we have to go way beyond the definitions of two words, *honor* and *shame*. Since a major purpose of this book is to explore *honor* and *shame* in the Bible, it is important to recognize that, in a large number of other words in Scripture, honor/shame dynamics are *implicit*, just below the surface. One cannot limit the dynamics of honor/shame merely to those places in the Bible where the words *honor* and *shame* are found. Figure 1.01: "A taxonomy of honor/ shame words in the Bible," helps to make this clear. This will sink in as we journey through this book.

<sup>21.</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church Is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 79.

### Geography and values: The West versus Majority World

In this book, we will frequently talk about "the West" (generally the culture of North America, Northern Europe, Australia and New Zealand) in contrast with "the East," or "Middle East." Sometimes we will contrast the Western World with the Majority World or Global South—which refers to Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. Below is a chart of broad generalizations between the guilt/innocence values of the Western World and the honor/shame values of the Majority World.

Guilt/Innocence World	Honor/Shame World		
(primarily the West)	(primarily Majority World)		
North America, Northern Europe,	Africa, Asia, Latin America,		
Australia, and New Zealand	Middle East, Southern and Eastern Europe		
Generalizations about culture: What societies tend to value			
More guilt-based	More shame-based		
<b>EQUALITY</b>	<b>HIERARCHY</b>		
More likely to measure worth of a person	More likely to measure worth of a person		
based on individual merits and performance	based on age, position, title, rank, or tradition		
DIRECT More likely to communicate in a direct manner, face to face—to "cut to the chase"	INDIRECT More likely to communicate indirectly (especially in conflicts) through stories or a mediator in order to "save face"		
INDIVIDUAL	<b>GROUP</b>		
More likely to value the uniqueness of each person,	More likely to value the opinion of the family,		
individual human rights, "my own destiny"	harmony in the community, welfare of the group		
TASK	<b>RELATIONSHIP</b>		
More likely to value work accomplished,	More likely to value personal relationships;		
efficiency in "getting the job done"	social harmony trumps efficiency		
<b>RISK</b>	CAUTION		
More likely to venture forth rapidly, experiment with	More likely to proceed cautiously, slowly, to keep		
new ideas, not knowing how things will work out	what one has gained, even though it may be small		

Figure 1.02: Guilt/Innocence World and Honor/Shame World generalizations about honor/shame and the "five basic culture scales"

These generalizations about culture are taken from what is called the "five basic culture scales."<sup>22</sup> They offer a glimpse at the dramatic, often unseen, differences that exist between cultures.

And because we are making broad generalizations, a few comments are in order:

• It's a matter of degree. All cultures, all societies are affected by shame and guilt, as well as fear. Tennent writes, "Virtually every culture in the world contains concepts of both guilt and shame, including the pressure to conform to certain group expectations as well as some kind of internalized

<sup>22.</sup> See Brooks Peterson, *Cultural Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures* (Boston: Intercultural Press, 2004).

ideas about what is right or wrong."<sup>23</sup> What differentiates one culture from another is not *whether* shame, guilt, or fear exist, but the *degree* to which they occur, the *degree* to which they influence behavior.<sup>24</sup>

• Still, honor/shame is king. The cultural value of honor and shame is nevertheless *paramount* in Scripture and in most Majority World societies. The basis and value of making this claim will become increasingly apparent as you journey through this book.

### Honor/shame, the Middle East, and the Bible

Since the pivotal cultural value of honor and shame is characteristic of the Middle East, and since the Bible grew out of Middle Eastern culture, then it follows that the pivotal cultural value of the Bible is also: *honor and shame*. It's a simple "equation":

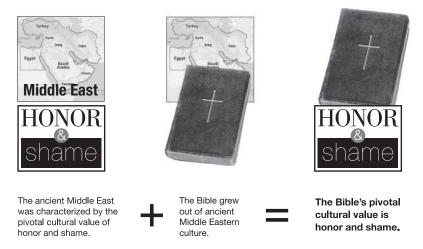


Figure 1.03: A simple equation—why the Bible is an honor/shame book

Why emphasize this? Here's why: If you are a Christian from North America (or Northern Europe and Australia or elsewhere)—and you consider yourself influenced primarily by Western values, please consider this:

## Culturally speaking, the Bible does not "belong" to you; it's not your book.

As we go forward on this journey together, would you kindly suspend your sense of familiarity with the Bible?

• It was the people of the ancient Middle East—characterized not by the

<sup>23.</sup> Tennent, 80.

<sup>24. &</sup>quot;Although assigning cultures to either a guilt or shame category remains a common practice in contemporary Christian writing, and particularly in missiological literature, it is now clear that such strong dichotomies are naïve and simplistic. Every culture experiences both shame and guilt. ... Granted, either shame or guilt may indeed predominate in certain cultural contexts, yet no culture requires or precludes either experience to the exclusion of the other. It is more helpful to learn how each culture has a particular integrative hierarchy that involves both these two internal controls." William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, eds., *Global Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 814.

individualistic guilt-based values of contemporary Northern Europe and North America, but by the group-oriented values of honor and shame—to whom this book was originally written.

- It was in the culture of the ancient Middle East—characterized not by the equality-oriented values of the West, but by the hierarchical values of honor and shame—that men inspired by the Holy Spirit authored the sixty-six books of the Bible.
- It was the ancient Middle East—characterized not by the direct communication style of the USA and Northern Europe, but by the indirect communication style of honor/shame cultures—where God chose to call out for himself a man named Abraham, so that through his descendants all the peoples of the earth would be blessed.
- It was into Greco-Roman culture at the height of the Roman Empire characterized not by the individualistic values of the West, but by the family-based, hierarchical values of honor and shame—that Jesus Christ was born and grew up, worked and lived, proclaimed the gospel of his kingdom, called and taught his disciples, suffered a humiliating death, and victoriously rose again.
- It was through the kingdom and story of Israel—characterized not by the fast-paced lifestyle and risk-oriented values of urban America, but by the slow lifestyle, the cautionary traditional values of honor and shame—that Christ called his newly formed people, the church, to extend his gospel of the kingdom to the ends of the earth.

Let's face it. *Honor* is largely alien to the modern mentality. J. E. Lendon describes our modern remoteness from the Roman Empire's (and I would add, the New Testament's) culture of honor this way:

That a government making broad and systematic use of appeals to honour seems odd and alien to us, that the concept of honour itself seems impossibly distant and romantic, is a consequence of the particular outlook of the late twentieth century; a sign of our removal from the ancient rhythms of rulership and subjection. ... Historically, government by honour is usual; it is we who are strange.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, if what I am saying is true, it would follow that:

- The dynamics of honor and shame would be woven into the entire fabric of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.
- It would make sense that many of Jesus' actions and teachings would be permeated with the dynamics of honor and shame.
- It would be evident that the books of the New Testament would have multiple messages specifically addressed to people and communities whose motivation was to (1) gain or maintain honor and (2) avoid shame.

<sup>25.</sup> Lendon, Kindle edition locations 360–63.

• It would be possible to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that harnesses the honor/shame dynamics in Scripture.

I believe you will discover that all these things are true.

#### Is it possible to remove our Western reading lenses?

People and *peoples* are dying to know how the Bible, and specifically the life and kingdom of Jesus Christ, speaks healing to their shame.

Our cities and communities are in the midst of cultural transformations, lifestyle clashes, and new stress points as a result of dramatic increases in ethnic diversity. (We'll be looking at this in more depth later on.) The majority of this diversity is a result of people living among us from societies, which, you guessed it, have *honor and shame* as their primary cultural value.

I will argue that Christian pastors, leaders, and cross-cultural workers who explore this *otherness*—the *strange honor/shame dynamics* in the Bible—will have more effective ministries in our world.

*Honor and shame.* Perhaps you've never encountered the phrase as it relates to the Bible. Or perhaps the phrase is brand new to you. If so, you're not alone! Truth is, there's a glaring blind spot about this in the Western church. That's what the next chapter is all about.

#### Section 1 • Chapter 3

## Why Our Blind Spot about Honor and Shame?

WILL EXPLORE THREE REASONS WHY it is so easy to miss the pivotal cultural value of honor and shame in the Scriptures. Why this blind spot? *Theologically ignored.* The first reason is that, compared to *innocence/guilt,* the matter of *honor/shame* has been largely ignored as a matter of theological inquiry.

*New area of study.* The second reason is related; it's a relatively new area of study. In the fields of anthropology, theology, and missiology, shame and honor have only recently been understood as significant for understanding peoples from the Majority World or for understanding and interpreting the Scriptures.

Blind spots are common. The third reason is that blind spots are common—they're a part of the human condition. Christians in every society and every culture, no matter how mature, have theological blind spots.<sup>1</sup>

Let's explore these three reasons one by one.

#### Honor/shame is ignored by pastors and theologians

John Forrester writes as a pastor about this blind spot:

We Western pastors have a blind spot. In a word, that blind spot is shame. We don't learn about shame in seminary. We don't find it in our theological reading. We don't recognize it on the pages of Scripture. We don't see it in our people. Shame is just not part of our pastoral perspective.<sup>2</sup>

But why do so many pastors have this blind spot? Because *shame* has not been a subject of theological inquiry.

One way to ascertain the degree of theological importance of a particular word is by looking at theological dictionaries. I went to Phoenix Seminary here in Arizona and did a little research at the library. My question was simple: In the available theological dictionaries, is there an entry for *guilt* and also an entry for *shame*? Here's what I found. The dictionaries are listed in order of the year they were published.

<sup>1.</sup> A fourth reason for this blind spot (but not one explored in this book) is that *shame is taboo*. This reason is more subjective. To study honor and shame implies a personal willingness to explore shame in one's own life and one's own church community. All too often, chronic shame is unintentionally promulgated in the church. It can be uncomfortable for Christian leaders to address these things—causing resistance in studying the matter. See Stephen Pattison, "Shame and the Unwanted Self" in *The Shame Factor: How Shame Shapes Society*, eds. Robert Jewett, Wayne L. Alloway, and John G. Lacey (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2010), 9–10.

<sup>2.</sup> John A. Forrester, Grace for Shame: The Forgotten Gospel (Toronto: Pastor's Attic Press, 2010), 9.

Title / Editor / Publisher	Year	Entry for	
The / Eartor / Publisher	Published	Guilt	Shame
<i>The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology,</i> Alan Richardson and John Bowden, eds. (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press).	1983	√	
<i>Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,</i> Walter A. Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House).	1984	√	
<i>Dictionary of Christian Theology,</i> Peter A. Angeles (San Francisco, CA: Harper).	1985	√	
<i>Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible,</i> Walter A. Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House).	1996	√	$\checkmark$
<i>New Dictionary of Biblical Theology, Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture</i> , T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, Graeme Goldsworthy, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press).	2000	~	
<i>The Theological Wordbook: The 200 Most Important Theological Terms and Their Relevance for Today,</i> Donald K. Campbell [et al.]; Charles R. Swindoll, general ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing).	2000	~	
<i>Global Dictionary of Theology,</i> William A. Dyrness, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press).	2008	Entry for "Guilt" under "Sin"	$\checkmark$

Figure 1.04: Entries for "guilt" and "shame" in theological dictionaries

This survey shows that it was 1996 when *shame* appeared as an entry in Elwell's redo of his 1984 version. Interestingly, neither of the dictionaries published in 2000 had an entry for shame. The massive *Global Dictionary of Theology* by Dyrness and Kärkkäinen has an extensive entry for *shame*. But (sadly) the vast majority of Western pastors would not likely use a theological dictionary with a global scope.

Perhaps a more profound reason for the blind spot about honor and shame has to do with the study of systematic theology. Most seminary students preparing for the pastorate study systematic theology. Take a look at whatever systematic theology book you may have: When one compares the amount of material concerning sin and *guilt* compared to sin and *shame*—one discovers that sin and *shame* is almost completely ignored.

Evangelical scholar Timothy Tennent has written about this blind spot in the Western church concerning honor and shame. I offer an extensive quote below:

Since Western systematic theology has been almost exclusively written by theologians from cultures framed primarily by the values of guilt and innocence, there has been a corresponding failure to fully appreciate the importance of the pivotal values of honor and shame in understanding Scripture and the doctrine of sin ....

Bruce Nicholls, the founder of the *Evangelical Review of Theology*, has acknowledged this problem, noting that Christian theologians have "rarely if ever stressed salvation as honoring God, exposure of sin as shame, and the need for acceptance as the restoration of honor."<sup>3</sup> In

<sup>3.</sup> Tennent cites Bruce Nicholls, "The Role of Shame and Guilt in a Theology of Cross-Cultural Mission," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 25, no. 3, (2001): 232.

fact, a survey of all of the leading textbooks used in teaching systematic theology across the major theological traditions reveals that although the indexes are filled with references to guilt, the word "shame" appears in the index of only one of these textbooks.<sup>4</sup> This omission continues to persist despite the fact that the term guilt and its various derivatives occur 145 times in the Old Testament and 10 times in the New Testament, whereas the term shame and its

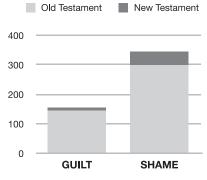


Figure 1.05: Words in the Bible derived from "guilt"—versus "shame"

derivatives occur nearly 300 times in the Old Testament and 45 times in the New Testament.

This is clearly an area where systematic theology must be challenged to reflect more adequately the testimony of Scripture. I am confident that a more biblical understanding of human identity outside of Christ that is framed by guilt, fear, and shame will, in turn, stimulate a more profound and comprehensive appreciation for the work of Christ on the cross. This approach will also greatly help peoples in the Majority World to understand the significance and power of Christ's work, which has heretofore been told primarily from only one perspective.<sup>5</sup>

#### Honor/shame is a relatively new field of exploration

The second reason for our blind spot has to do with the newness of this field of study. Our awareness of the fundamental differences between guilt-based and shame-based cultures is a recent phenomenon. According to Timothy Tennent, "Ruth Benedict was the first anthropologist to categorize Western cultures as guilt-based and Eastern cultures as a shame-based."<sup>6</sup> Benedict's book was written in 1946. In addition:

• Bruce Malina is credited with being a pioneer in understanding the pivotal cultural value of honor and shame as it applies to the interpretation of Scripture. His book *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* was first published in 1993.

<sup>4.</sup> Tennent includes the following citation: "See L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941); Henry Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977); Alan Gomes, ed., *Dogmatic Theology by William T. Shedd*, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2003); Helmut Thielicke, *The Evangelical Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vols. 1–3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991–1997); Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical and Evangelical*, 2 vols., (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical and Evangelical*, 2 vols., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–1995); Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994). The only systematic theology I found with a reference to shame is a single line in volume 3 of Norman Giesler's *Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2002), which acknowledges that Adam's sin 'brought on him guilt, as well as the shame he expressed in view of it' (Gen. 3:7)."

<sup>5.</sup> Tennent, 92–93.

<sup>6.</sup> Ibid., 79.

- Jerome Neyrey's *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew*<sup>7</sup> is a book that I consider a classic in describing both the honor/shame dynamics of ancient Greco-Roman culture—and in explaining how the various features of an honor/shame social system are woven into the structure and fabric of Matthew's Gospel. The book was published in 1998.
- Roland Muller is a cross-cultural church planter who has served extensively in the Middle East. His *Honor & Shame: Unlocking the Door* is a good introduction concerning the vital role of honor and shame in Middle Eastern culture. Muller wrote another book, *The Messenger, The Message, The Community: Three Critical Issues for the Cross-Cultural Church Planter,* which incorporates the former book and provides a comparison of three worldviews: *guilt/innocence, honor/shame,* and *fear/power.* It is a useful handbook for missionaries. These two books were published in 2000 and 2013 respectively.<sup>8</sup>
- David A. deSilva has made major contributions in using social science scholarship to understand the New Testament. His books on the subject include *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture*, published in 2000.<sup>9</sup>
- Robert Jewett's massive commentary on the book of Romans, which includes extensive references to the pivotal cultural value of honor and shame, was published in 2007.<sup>10</sup>
- John A. Forrester's *Grace for Shame: The Forgotten Gospel* is both scholarly and useful, especially for pastors.<sup>11</sup> It was published in 2010.
- Robin Stockitt's *Restoring the Shamed: Towards a Theology of Shame* was published in 2012.<sup>12</sup> He writes from a European pastor's perspective.
- Edward Welch's *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection* is written from the perspective of the Christian counselor. It was published in 2012.<sup>13</sup>
- Timothy Tennent's, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church Is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology* (quoted above), was published in 2007. His chapter 4, "Anthropology: Human Identity in Shame-Based Cultures of the Far East" is a brilliant exploration of the theological issues of honor and shame, especially with regard to the atonement.

<sup>7.</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).

<sup>8.</sup> Roland Muller, Honor & Shame: Unlocking the Door (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation, 2000); The Messenger, The Message, The Community: Three Critical Issues for the Cross-Cultural Church Planter (Saskatchewan, Canada: CanBooks, 2013).

<sup>9.</sup> David deSilva, Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000) 159.

<sup>10.</sup> Jewett writes in the introduction, "In the shameful cross, Christ overturned the honor system that dominated the Greco Roman and Jewish world, resulting in discrimination and exploitation of barbarians as well as in poisoning the relations between the congregations in Rome. The gospel offered grace to every group in equal measure, shattering the imperial premise of exceptionalism in virtue and honor." Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>11.</sup> John A. Forrester, Grace for Shame: The Forgotten Gospel (Toronto: Pastor's Attic Press, 2010).

<sup>12.</sup> Robin Stockitt, Restoring the Shamed: Towards a Theology of Shame (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012). 13. Edward Welch, Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection (Greensboro,

<sup>13.</sup> Edward Welch, Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejectio NC: New Growth Press, 2012).

- Jackson Wu's groundbreaking book, *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame* (EMS Dissertation Series),<sup>14</sup> integrates Reformed theology with the honor/shame dynamics of Scripture. It was published in 2012.
- Zeba Crook's book, *Reconceptualizing Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* was published in 2004.<sup>15</sup> The book is a definitive study on the honor/shame practice of patronage as it relates to the conversion and ministry of Apostle Paul.
- Brené Brown calls herself a "shame-and-vulnerability researcher." Brown does not write as a Christian scholar, but as a mother, educator and social science researcher; nevertheless, I believe her work concerning shame resilience is broadly applicable to Christian ministry. Her last two books, published in 2010 and 2012, have popularized the study of shame as a serious field of study.<sup>16</sup> Her two "TED Talks" have been viewed more than 13 million times.<sup>17</sup>

The point here is that the insights and research that these scholars offer is obviously very recent—only since the 1990s—in the overall history of the church.

#### Theological blind spots are common

The third reason for our blind spot about honor and shame is that blind spots are part of human nature. How can people with all their limitations spiritually, intellectually and culturally completely understand an infinite holy God? *Impossible*. I reference Jackson Wu to explain.

In Wu's book, *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame,* he offers a diagram to help describe the process of

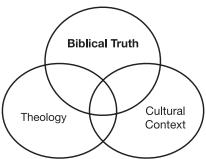


Figure 1.06: Jackson Wu's Figure 1 concerning contextualization

contextualization. In doing so, Wu also explains how blind spots occur.<sup>18</sup> Let's consider the various components of this diagram.

The top oval represents *biblical truth*. The left oval represents *theology*. The right oval represents the *cultural context* in which followers of Christ endeavor to communicate the gospel.

<sup>14.</sup> Wu, Saving God's Face.

<sup>15.</sup> Zeba A. Crook, Reconceptualizing Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).

<sup>16.</sup> Brené Brown, Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead (New York: Gotham Books, 2012); The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to be and Embrace Who You Are (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 2010).

<sup>17.</sup> Brené Brown, *Ted Talks*, accessed 9 August 2013, http://www.ted.com/search?cat=ss\_all&q=brene+brown.

<sup>18.</sup> Wu, Saving God's Face, 52-53.

Notice this important aspect of the diagram: *Biblical truth* is larger and higher than *theology*; this is because no matter how refined one's theology may be, it can never be as comprehensive as the totality of biblical truth. Humans have limited knowledge, but God is omniscient; humanity is fallen and fallible, but God's Word is holy and infallible. It follows that every theology is smaller than the totality of biblical truth.

The esteemed missiologist Paul Hiebert addressed the distinction between the totality of biblical truth—*revelation*—and *theology:* 

The former is God-given revelation; the latter is human understandings of that revelation and cannot be fully equated with it. Human knowledge is always partial and schematic, and it does not correspond one to one with reality. Our theology is our understanding of Scripture in our contexts; it may be true, but it is always partial and subject to our own perspectives. It seeks to answer the questions we raise.<sup>19</sup>

Now let's consider the numbered spaces in the diagram and what they represent.<sup>20</sup>

- Area 1 is where matters of truth in one's *theology* overlap with *biblical truth*, but they are outside of, or inconsistent with, the *cultural context*; these biblical matters confront the culture.
- Area 2 is where the "culture has accepted biblical categories and values (perhaps unknowingly),"<sup>21</sup> but are outside of one's *theology*. This is the area where blind spots occur, which is explained below.

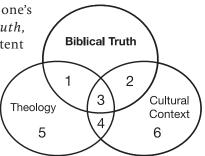


Figure 1.07: Jackson Wu's Figure 1 with numbered areas

- Area 3 is where values and beliefs are consistent with *biblical truth*, one's *theology* and the *cultural context*.
- Area 4 is where specific values in one's *theology* are accepted by the *cultural context*, but are outside of *biblical truth*.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19.</sup> Paul Hiebert, "The Gospel in Human Contexts: Changing Perceptions of Contextualization" in *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, eds. Ed Stetzer and David Hesselgrave (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2010), 93.

<sup>20.</sup> The following bulleted items 1–6 have been slightly reworded from Jackson Wu. The concept is entirely his. 21. Wu, *Saving God's Face*, 53.

<sup>22.</sup> Two examples of Area 4 are offered here. The first example is the so-called "Prosperity Gospel," which overlaps with American consumerism but is inconsistent with the overall testimony of Scripture. A second example (and one that is much more extreme) comes from the work of liberal German theologians prior to and during World War II. So-called scholars from the "German Christian Movement" actually created theology to support the holocaust against the Jews. This group supported the philosophy and goals of Germany's Nazi government but was obviously completely unfaithful to God's revelation in Scripture. See Susannah Heschel's meticulously researched book, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

- Area 5 is where beliefs are part of one's *theology*, but are neither *biblical* nor overlap with the *cultural context*.
- Area 6 is where beliefs and values in the *cultural context* are neither *biblical* nor a part of one's *theology*.

Wu explains that proper contextualization of the gospel requires a dialog or conversation—as indicated by the diagram—between the overarching *biblical truth*, one's *theology*, and the *cultural context*. He calls this conversation a "dialogical model" of contextualization.<sup>23</sup> He writes that all theology is necessarily already contextualized. Wu quotes Lesslie Newbigin: "We must start with the basic fact that there is no such thing as a pure gospel if by that is meant something which is not embodied in a culture. ... Every interpretation of the gospel is embodied in some cultural form."<sup>24</sup>

Mark Noll makes the same point, "The contrast between the West and the non-West is never between culture-free Christianity and culturally embedded Christianity, but between varieties of culturally embedded Christianity."<sup>25</sup>

#### Area 2 is where blind spots occur. Wu writes:

In area 2, the culture has accepted biblical categories and values (perhaps unknowingly). General revelation makes this possible. Nevertheless, the temptation remains for missionaries to reject the culture and press hard the truths expressed in area 1, or in 5 (where one's theology is neither biblical nor intersects the local culture).... For example, personal bias may cause him or her to deny uncritically the legitimacy of the culture's insights.<sup>26</sup>

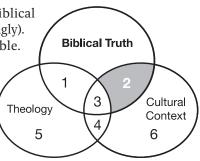


Figure 1.08: Jackson Wu's Figure 1; area 2 is where blind spots occur

The theological and cultural matter of honor and shame is, therefore, one example that fits into Area 2. We have demonstrated its biblical prominence. Honor/shame is likewise prominent in the majority of cultures of our world. An estimated 70 to 80 percent of the world's peoples are collectivistic rather than individualistic,<sup>27</sup> and therefore have honor and shame as a more dominant cultural

<sup>23.</sup> Wu, Saving God's Face, 52.

<sup>24.</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 144.

<sup>25.</sup> Noll, Kindle edition locations 399-400.

<sup>26.</sup> Wu, Saving God's Face, 53.

<sup>27. &</sup>quot;How prevalent are collectivistic societies? In today's world, Triandis (1989, 48) observes, 70 percent of the world's population remain collectivistic while 30 percent are individualistic. As a matter of fact, individualism seems totally strange, esoteric, incomprehensible, and even vicious to observers from collectivistic societies. Again, Triandis (1989, 50) notes that what is most important in the United States—individualism—is of least importance to the rest of the world." Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, SJ, "Ancient Mediterranean Persons in Cultural Perspective: Portrait of Paul," in *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models*, eds. Malina and Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 258. They reference Henry C. Triandis, "Cross-Cultural Studies of Individualism and Collectivism" in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation 1989: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Richard A. Diensbar and John J. Berman (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 41–133. Malina estimates that 80 percent of the world's peoples are collectivistic in "Anachronism, Ethnocentrism, and Shame: The Envy of the Chief Priests" in eds. Jewett, Alloway, and Lacey, 148.

value than do Western peoples. But honor/shame has been ignored by a majority of Western theologians. The systematic theologies disregard the matter of honor and shame altogether.

Wu adds: "From a Chinese perspective, Western theologians under-stress biblical ideas such as HS [honor/shame], group-identity, idolatry, and familial piety."<sup>28</sup>

Concerning African issues, Andrew Walls writes that Western theology is "too small" for African realities of life.

The truth is that Western models of theology are too small for Africa. Most of them reflect the worldview of the Enlightenment, and that is a small-scale worldview, one cut and shaved to fit a small-scale universe. ... They have nothing useful to say on issues involving such things as witchcraft or sorcery, since these do not exist in an Enlightenment universe. Nor can Western theology usefully discuss ancestors, since the West does not have the family structures that raise the questions.<sup>29</sup>

But the fact that theological blind spots occur does not merely point to a deficit of theological knowledge. It ultimately points to the possibility of a fuller, maturing experience of Jesus Christ. Walls writes about the cross-cultural proliferation of the gospel as a means to a fuller knowledge of Christ:

Each [cultural expression of Christian faith] is to have, like Jew and Greek in the early church, its own converted lifestyle as the distinctive features of each culture are turned toward Christ. The representation of Christ by any one group can at best be only partial. At best it reflects the conversion of one small segment of reality, and it needs to be complemented and perhaps corrected by others. The fullness of humanity lies in Christ; the aggregate of converted lifestyles points toward his full stature.<sup>30</sup>

So to unmask theological blind spots can be a most valuable exploration, for it can lead us to a fuller expression of the life of Jesus in our own lives, our own families, churches, and communities. Moreover, to unmask a theological blind spot can be critically important for making Christians more effective in cross-cultural ministry.<sup>31</sup>

In order to better grasp the reality of theological blind spots which are connected to cultural differences, we need to see a paradox: God's Word stands in authority above all cultures, but at the same time, God's Word can embrace varying cultural ideas and styles, which on the surface seem contradictory.

We will therefore move to the next chapter, where we will explore this paradox in something called the *canopy of biblical truth*. Let's take a look.

<sup>28.</sup> Wu, Saving God's Face, 54.

<sup>29.</sup> Walls, Kindle edition locations 1379-85.

<sup>30.</sup> Walls, Kindle edition locations 1342-45.

<sup>31.</sup> One of the most famous examples of an unmasked blind spot is represented by an article by missiologist Paul Hiebert. Craig Ott writes: "Hiebert's landmark article 'The Flaw of the Excluded Middle' (1982) is an example of how the worldview of Western theologians led to a blind spot regarding the biblical teaching on unseen powers, a teaching desperately needed especially in animistic contexts." *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, eds. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), Kindle edition locations 6595–97. The Hiebert article referenced is "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle" *Missiology* 10, no. 1 (January, 1982): 35–47. For more on Hiebert's article was originally published in Missiology 10, no. 1 (January, 1982): 35–47.

## The Canopy of Biblical Truth

A SCHRISTIANS, WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD. God created the universe (Gen 1:1); therefore, he is not a mere tribal god. He is the one God who rules over all nations and peoples. Nevertheless, God has revealed himself inside a particular culture and history, that of the ancient Middle East and of his people, the Jews. We believe Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the story of God's people. As God, Jesus became a man (John 1:14) in a particular historical situation and culture (Gal 4:4).

We believe that God will save and transform at least some from all peoples and cultures into the image of Christ, for we read in Revelation that in eternity future God's people will comprise the diversity of all tribes, tongues, and nations (Rev 5:9; 21:24–26). This means that there is a sense in which God affirms all cultures, for the cultural diversity of the *peoples* is somehow preserved in heaven. We also see from Scripture that he stands in confrontation and judgment over all peoples and cultures. It is with this dual dynamic in mind—affirmation and confrontation (or celebration and judgment)—that we can consider the idea of a *canopy of biblical truth*.

Consider the diagram on the next page: "Canopy of Biblical Truth." The idea of *canopy* may be seen in this Scripture: "The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens!" (Ps 113:4). Like a canopy, God is above all nations, peoples and cultures. His righteousness is *above all nations*. Although his Word is rooted in specific histories and cultures, it is likewise *supra-cultural*. The diagram contains a sample list of contrasts reflected in Scripture. The list consists of ideas, truths, cultural values, or areas of emphasis. The list of twelve "dualities" is by no means comprehensive; it is truly a mere sampling.

Let's explore in a little more detail these thirteen contrasts or "dualities."

1. Narrative/oral—and propositional/written: God's Word contains *narrative* truth in the form of histories, stories, and parables. Sometimes God's Word and mission are referred to as God's *story*. Jesus told many *stories*. Moreover, the people in the Bible were primarily *oral* peoples whose access to books and writing instruments was extremely limited. The stories of Scripture can be read aloud and memorized in order to fit the cultures of oral peoples. In contrast, the Bible also contains *propositional* truth. It is the Book of books—the *written* Word of God. Scripture is rich with *propositional* truth—in the form of declarations, proverbs, and principles, laws, prophetic revelations of the future, or letters explaining theological truth.

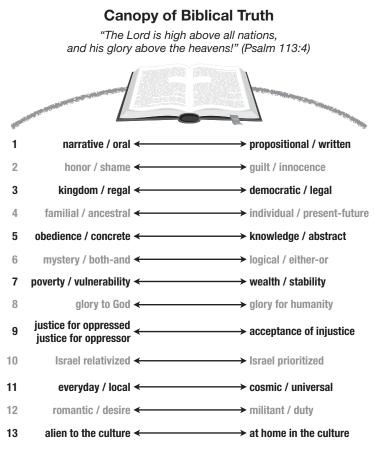


Figure 1.09: Canopy of Biblical Truth

- 2. **Honor/shame—and innocence/guilt:** God's Word is loaded with material about the *honor* or *shame* of humanity as well as the *guilt* or *innocence* of humanity. Scripture reveals that the gospel of Christ is the remedy for sin/guilt (Lev 5:19; Rom 3:23–25; 1 Cor 15:1–3). The gospel is also revealed as the remedy for sin/shame (Luke 15:11–32; Eph 1:3–11; Heb 12:2).<sup>1</sup>
- 3. **Kingdom/regal—and democratic/legal:** God's Word has enormous material about *kings* and *kingdoms* beginning in the Old Testament and continuing into the New; Jesus Christ is the Son of David (Mat 1:1)—the King of kings whose *regal kingdom* is forever (1 Tim 6:15). In contrast, Scripture is sometimes cited as the foundation for democracy, limitations on the absolute power of kings, as well as human rights, and freedom. Moreover, the laws of God—the *legal* aspects of God's truth—are widely present in both Old and New Testaments, although generally inside of a relational or covenantal framework.

<sup>1.</sup> The diagram suggests that according to the spectrum of *honor/shame vs. Innocence/guilt*, the only two results of sin are *shame* and *guilt*. Roland Muller points to another negative dynamic, that of *power/fear*, which is also a result of sin. This can be seen in the Genesis 3 account of the Fall of Humanity. See Muller, 107–12.

- 4. **Familial/ancestral—and individual/present-future:** God's Word has a huge amount of material about his working through *family* and offspring on behalf of other *families* (Gen 12:1). There is also much about remembering the past and having regard for one's *ancestors* (Mat 1:1–17). This may be contrasted with all the material in which God works through *individuals,* and where the orientation is the *present* or *future.* Scripture presents the gospel of salvation as being offered both to *families* and *individuals* (Acts 16:30–31).
- 5. **Obedience/concrete—and knowledge/abstract:** God's Word emphasizes the necessity of *obedience* to God and *concrete* action; knowledge apart from obedience results in pride. At the same time, God's people are commanded to "love the Lord your God … with all your mind" (Mark 12:30) and are warned that they will be destroyed for lack of *knowledge* (Isa 5:13; Hos 4:6).
- 6. **Mystery/both-and—and logical/either-or:** God's Word teaches the *mystery* of the Trinity; God is *both* One God, *and* a community of Three Persons. The paradox of God's sovereignty and human responsibility (both are biblical truths) is also a *both-and mystery*. However, God's Word also teaches in abundance many truths which are *logical* and *either-or.* "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). *Either* repent and be saved *or* do not repent and perish.
- 7. Poverty/vulnerability—and wealth/stability. "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20; cf. Mat 5:3). God's Word speaks favorably to his people in *poverty* and in *vulnerable* conditions. In contrast, God's Word contains a "development ethic" that produces *wealth* for individuals and nations—along with social *stability*.<sup>2</sup> The book of Proverbs contains many principles for gaining *wealth*.
- 8. **Glory to God**—**and glory for humanity:** God's Word teaches that the glory of God is the crux of all reality (Rom 11:36). At the same time, God's Word teaches that human beings are made in the image of a good and glorious God (Gen 1:27), and God shares his glory with those who believe and follow Jesus Christ (John 17:22).
- 9. Justice for the oppressed/justice for the oppressor—and acceptance of injustice: God's Word teaches the good news that God will bring liberty to the *oppressed* (Luke 4:18) and that God will harshly judge the *oppressor* (Isa 14:3–6; Mat 23:1–36; Luke 6:24–28; Rev 18:19–24). However, God also calls his people to *accept* and endure *injustice* and persecution (Mat 5:10–12; 1 Pet 3:9), following the example of Jesus (1 Pet 2:23).
- 10. **Israel relativized—and Israel prioritized:** God's Word teaches that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). The laws and traditions of God's people Israel are to be *relativized* under the Lordship of Christ. At

<sup>2.</sup> For more about the "development ethic" contained in the Bible see Darrow Miller and Stan Guthrie, *Discipling Nations: The Power of Truth to Transform Cultures* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 1998).

the same time, we see in Paul's letter to the Romans that the gospel is "to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16). Paul writes that God's people Israel are, in a sense, *prioritized* (Rom 4:16–18; 9:1–5) because the promise of the *all-nations blessing in Christ* came through God's people Israel, whose father is Abraham.

- 11. Everyday/local—and cosmic/universal: God's Word teaches that obedience to God is for the benefit of people right now in the immediate *everyday* and *local* situation. The second half of the Ten Commandments deals with society and the realm of family and human relationships (Ex 20:12–17). The kingdom of God is for today, right here, right now (Mat 6:10). But God's Word also teaches that he is reconciling together *all things* in Christ; this is the *cosmic* and *universal* level (Eph 1:10; Col 1:19–20).
- 12. **Romantic/desire—and militant/duty:** The Bible presents God as a husband and the people of God as his bride in the Old Testament (Eze 16:1–8; Is 54:5; 62:4–5; Hos 1:2–3) and also in the New Testament (Eph 5:25, 31–32; Rev 19:6–9). This shows that the nature of the relationship between God and his people is characterized by deep affection and *desire*. There is, indeed, a kind of *romance* between Christ and his bride. At the same time, God's Word reveals that his people are under the command of an all-powerful King whose mission is to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). God's people are called in *militant duty* to engage with their Lord through prayer in a battle "against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil" (Eph 6:12).
- 13. Alien to the culture/at home in the culture: The church is an alien community, standing against the idolatries of any political or social status quo (Rev 13) that is a rival to Almighty God.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the New Testament also provides support for working within the church's socio-political environment (Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–17) and identifying foreign cultural signposts as entry points for the gospel (Acts 17:22–34; cf. 1 Cor 9:19–23).

The point in reflecting on this sampling of contrasts is that God's Word covers a very wide spectrum of human ideas, social situations and cultural styles. Richard Bauckham writes, "The Bible does, in some sense, tell an overall story that encompasses all its other contents, but this story is not a sort of straitjacket that reduces all else to a narrowly defined uniformity. It is a story that is hospitable to considerable diversity and to tensions, challenges and even seeming contradictions of its own claims."<sup>4</sup> This contributes to our awareness that although the Bible

<sup>3.</sup> Dean Flemming does an excellent job exploring the paradox of the church being both *for* and *against* the socio-cultural environment in which it exists. He writes, "Perhaps most striking of all is the tension between Revelation's call for Christians to 'come out' of oppressive Babylon seems to be a far cry, say, from Peter's advice to 'accept the authority of every human institution' and to 'honor the emperor' (1 Pet 2:13, 17). And John's parody of Roman power as a diabolical beast (Rev 13) cuts a bold contrast with Paul's teaching that Roman authorities are 'instituted by God' (Rom 13:1) and function as 'God's servants' for the church's good (Rom 13:4, 6)." See Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), Kindle edition locations 288–89.

<sup>4.</sup> Richard Bauckham, Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 93–94.

was written in the specific cultural milieu of the ancient Middle East and Roman Empire—and thus reflects the pivotal cultural values of the time—the Bible as God's Word nevertheless stands above all cultures and reveals God's righteousness for *all peoples*.

This also reinforces to us that whatever our own expression of Christianity, the way we communicate the gospel of Christ is by necessity embodied in our own set of values and our own cultural style. As N. T. Wright says in the foreword to Scot McKnight's book *The King Jesus Gospel:* "The Christian faith is kaleidoscopic, and most of us are color-blind. It is multidimensional, and most of us manage to hold at most two dimensions in our heads at any one time. It is symphonic, and we can just about whistle one of the tunes."<sup>5</sup>

#### Let's take a look

The quote from Lesslie Newbigin bears repeating: *"Every interpretation of the gospel is embodied in some cultural form."* I was able to observe this more clearly when I prepared a presentation for a conference hosted by ACMI (Association of Christians Ministering among Internationals). My presentation compared the cultural assumptions of two different presentations of the gospel. The first example is "The Four Spiritual Laws" produced by CRU (formerly known as Campus Crusade for Christ);<sup>6</sup> the second is "The Father's Love Gospel Booklet," produced by Mission ONE (and designed by this author).<sup>7</sup> A free download from this workshop presentation is available on the Internet.<sup>8</sup>

"The Four Spiritual Laws" contains laws (or principles) ... propositional truth concerning the problem of sin ... verses about the gift of salvation through Christ ... abstract diagrams intended to clarify for individuals how their sin/guilt problem can be solved through Christ ... and what it means to have Christ on the "throne" of one's heart for a "Christ-directed life."

"The Father's Love Booklet" contains the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32) accompanied by drawings to illustrate the story. It has the parable Jesus told about a family, the descent into shame of the younger of two sons, and a father's radical love. Rather than using abstract diagrams, it has pictures illustrating the story; the story's surprising drama sets the stage for a gospel message that highlights sin-*shame* rather than sin-*guilt*. The booklet shows how to have one's shame covered and one's honor restored through Christ. "The Father's Love Booklet" does contain propositional truth, but it comes after the presentation of the deeply compelling story.

Let's explore how "The Four Spiritual Laws" is *embodied* in the cultural values of Western evangelicalism:

<sup>5.</sup> Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Kindle edition location, 11.

<sup>6. &</sup>quot;The Four Spiritual Laws" has been renamed "How to Know God Personally." The "laws" have been renamed as "principles." See "How to Know God Personally," *Cru*, accessed 14 September 2013, http://www.cru.org/how-to-know-god/would-you-like-to-know-god-personally/index.htm.

<sup>7.</sup> Werner Mischke, "The Father's Love Gospel Booklet," *Mission One,* accessed 26 September 2013, http:// thefatherslovebooklet.org.

<sup>8.</sup> Werner Mischke, "Knowing and sharing the gospel of Christ in the language of honor and shame," accessed 26 September 2013, http://www.slideshare.net/WernerMischke/contextualization-acmi. Presentation was made at the ACMI Conference, May 2013.

Western gospel presentation: "The Four Spiritual Laws" ("How to Know God Personally")				
Cultural factors (generally non-Western)	√	Cultural factors (generally Western)	$\checkmark$	Comment
narrative / oral		propositional / written	$\checkmark$	<ul> <li>No narrative or story</li> <li>No mention of Christ as fulfillment of Jewish prophecy</li> <li>Content is entirely propositional</li> </ul>
honor / shame		guilt / innocence	$\checkmark$	<ul> <li>Focused exclusively on forgiveness of "sins"</li> <li>No mention of a gospel that addresses sin/shame</li> </ul>
kingdom / regal		democratic / legal	$\checkmark$	<ul> <li>Content entirely based on "laws" or "principles" from Scripture</li> <li>Legal, rather than regal framework</li> <li>No mention of a King or "gospel of the kingdom"</li> </ul>
familial / ancestral		individual / present-future	$\checkmark$	<ul> <li>Message for individuals to receive Christ</li> <li>No mention of the possibility of families or communities receiving Christ together</li> <li>No value placed on ancestors</li> </ul>
obedience / concrete	$\checkmark$	knowledge / abstract	$\checkmark$	<ul> <li>Emphasis on follow-through (obedience)</li> <li>Has abstract diagrams: bridge over chasm symbolizing Christ as the bridge between God and humanity; chair diagram symbolizing 'throne' of human heart</li> </ul>
mystery / both-and		logical / either-or	$\checkmark$	Nothing mysterious, presented in highly logical approach
poverty / vulnerability		wealth / stability	$\checkmark$	<ul> <li>Assumes reader in economically stable situation</li> <li>Assumes no poverty or oppression</li> </ul>

Figure 1.10: Comparing cultural factors in a Western presentation of the gospel

In the simple exercise above concerning the cultural assumptions of a typical Western presentation of the gospel, we have brought to the surface what otherwise is hidden. Paul Hiebert writes about cultural assumptions as being a part of a culture's worldview, and that these assumptions must be examined in order for genuine transformation to occur: "One way to transform worldviews is to 'surface them'—to consciously examine the deep, unexamined assumptions we have and thereby make explicit what is implicit."<sup>9</sup>

Hiebert quotes Dean Arnold:

Cultural assumptions are insidious, not necessarily because they are wrong, but because they are hidden and affect the way members of a culture see and interpret the world. Cultural assumptions affect what we see and what we believe is true, right, and proper without question. They are so obvious to us that they seem to be universal and are seldom questioned unless they come in conflict with a set of assumptions from

<sup>9.</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), Kindle edition locations 6845–46.

another culture. More frequently than not, we fail to recognize that the values and assumptions that drive our culture are not in the Bible.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, the gospel presentation known as "The Four Spiritual Laws" is not unique in being influenced by Western cultural assumptions.<sup>11</sup> Every presentation of the gospel—by default—is expressed with its own cultural influences or assumptions.

We acknowledge, of course, that God has used "The Four Spiritual Laws" and other presentations like it. God only knows the multitudes who have made professions of faith through the Spirit-empowered witness of believers who have used and are using these resources.

Referencing "The Four Spiritual Laws" and "The Romans Road" plan of salvation, Timothy Tennent writes, "Both of them are based on scriptural passages and are simple enough for any believer to use. The question is whether this basic approach is adequate for evangelism in the Majority World and whether the gospel story can also be approached from a shame perspective, while yet remaining fully scriptural."<sup>12</sup>

Roland Muller writes as a seasoned missionary who worked for decades among peoples in the Middle East. Speaking of "The Four Spiritual Laws," Muller writes:

Once again, this method of sharing the gospel is based on a legal interpretation of the gospel message and works well with people who have an understanding of guilt and innocence. I believe that this plan, like The Romans Road, has severe limitations for hearers in a shame-based culture. It requires an understanding of the concept of sin and guilt, and it fails to address the life of the believer after he confesses and believes.<sup>13</sup>

In the quote below, Jackson Wu explains the main contours of Western theology, not to say that it is wrong or unbiblical, but simply to recognize that Western theology is itself influenced by Western culture.

A few features generally typify Western theology. First, typical Western constructions of the gospel are oriented on law, guilt, justification, and judgment. Second, gospel content tends to focus narrowly on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus wherein people find forgiveness from sin and eternal life. This book does not use the term "Western" in a derogatory manner. Using this word does not imply that Western Christianity has been mistaken in its primary forms of theologizing. Instead, this label is used because certain patterns and emphases are especially prominent in Western theology.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10.</sup> Dean Arnold, Foreword to *The Fall of Patriarchy: Its Broken Legacy Judged by Jesus and the Apostolic House Church Communities*, ed. Dell Birkey (Tucson, AZ: Fenestra Books, 2005), viii. As quoted in Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, Kindle edition locations 6846–50.

<sup>11.</sup> The organization Evangelism Explosion has an evangelistic presentation called "Steps to Life." The organization E3 Partners has a tool called the "Evangecube." Not surprisingly, these resources share the same Western cultural influences as "The Four Spiritual Laws" of CRU.

<sup>12.</sup> Tennent, 82.

<sup>13.</sup> Muller, The Message, The Messenger, The Community, 128.

<sup>14.</sup> Wu, *Saving God's Face*, 14. Wu does an extremely thorough job of showing how Western presentations of the gospel contain the assumptions of Western culture, in his Chapter Two: "Theological Contextualization in Practice," 10–69.

Hiebert writes about the negative impact of the West's secular worldview (often called "modernity") on the church and theology of the West:

In modernity the gospel increasingly was defined in terms of abstract doctrinal truths, not everyday living. The result was the development of systematic theology as a kind of science based on positivist presuppositions, a grand unified theory that explained everything. ... Truth was to be determined by rational argument and encoded in propositional statements linked by reason. This work of experts assumed that human rationality is based on universal, transcultural, and transhistorical laws of thought.<sup>15</sup>

*"Truth was to be determined by rational argument and encoded in propositional statements linked by reason."* 

"What could possibly be wrong with that?" I might ask.

As a Christian raised and trained in the West and as one who values logic and propositional truth, it can be deeply challenging (even disturbing) to entertain the idea that my Western assumptions influence—and may actually *limit*—the way I think about and communicate the gospel.

We must come to terms with the fact that the West's typical rendition of the gospel of Jesus Christ is *not* without theological blind spots, *not* neutral in its cultural assumptions, *not* universal in its appeal. Rather, the West's typical rendition of the gospel represents a truncated version of God's *comprehensive* glorious good news for all peoples, tribes, cultures, and nations.

Therefore, I am proposing in this book:

#### If a Christian's theology is Western while his or her cultural context is Majority World—Asian, African, Middle Eastern, Latin American (or other honor/shame culture)—then to ignore the theological/ cultural matter of honor and shame comprises a blind spot which hinders the missional impact of the gospel.

#### Blind spots in the West are more problematic

Again, the problem of "blind spots" is not unique to Western Christians. All Christians everywhere face this problem. Every expression of the Christian faith has its theological omissions or blind spots, whether Western, Latin American, East Asian, African, or Middle Eastern.

However, it is important to recognize that the Western expression of the faith has great influence in many parts of the world, and the West continues to hold a leadership role in the enterprise of Christian missions. The wealth of the Christian West also remains dominant relative to the church in the Majority World, and this accrues to undue influence.

<sup>15.</sup> Hiebert, Transforming Worldviews, Kindle edition locations 4032–36.

But that's not all. Many Christians in the Majority World have been or are being trained in a Western theological tradition, so unwittingly, they often carry forward in their ministries the theological biases of the West.<sup>16</sup>

This often results in Majority World Christians sharing the gospel in a way that the gospel itself carries Western values to peoples whose pivotal cultural values (frequently, including honor and shame) are quite different from the West's. It's a strange and unfortunate situation, indeed. This is one of the symptoms of what Jackson Wu calls "assuming the gospel."<sup>17</sup>

To compound this problem, many theological students in the West receive no training concerning the fact that the church's center of gravity has shifted from the West to the Global South. These students are thus unwittingly deprived—both academically and spiritually. Andrew Walls writes:

All over the Western world, ministers are being trained and future theological scholars are being identified and taken to doctoral level and beyond without any idea of what the church of today, in which they are called to serve, is really like. The way that Christian thought is presented to them implies that it is a Western religion, or at least, if it did not start that way, it has now become one.<sup>18</sup>

... More seriously, nothing in their theological education has prepared them for intelligent participation in a church that is principally African, Asian, and Latin American in composition or enabled them to realize the changed place of Western believers within that church.<sup>19</sup>

It therefore behooves us to try to recognize the blind spots inherent in Western Christianity—and I contend that *honor/shame* is a major one. It also requires that we look again at Scripture with a greater awareness about *its* culture and the way it intersects with the multicultural complexities of our world. Finally, we need to see afresh how the gospel of Jesus Christ can be communicated with greater impact for greater receptivity. Section 3 of this book explores a variety of approaches.

Having considered the problem of theological blind spots relative to honor and shame, let us now turn to another problem. That problem is the *pathological nature of shame*.

<sup>16.</sup> Darrell Whiteman writes about the negative aspects of globalization relative to cross-cultural theological dialog: "The bad news [about globalization] is that people are likely to try to dominate the conversation from a position of power, which in turn creates a new form of ecclesiastical and theological hegemony. Once again, it will look like the West is trying to dominate the world, not with economic structural adjustment policies that create poverty but with theological arrogance." See Darrell Whiteman, "Anthropological Reflections on Contextualizing Theology in a Globalizing World" in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, eds. Ott, Netland, and Shenk (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), Kindle edition locations 1182–86.

<sup>17.</sup> Wu, Saving God's Face, 51.

<sup>18.</sup> Walls, Kindle edition locations 1442-44.

<sup>19.</sup> Ibid., 1459-60.

#### Section 1 • Chapter 5

## Does It Hurt or Does It Heal?

THE BOOK SHAME AND GUILT, by social scientists June Price Tangney and Ronda L. Dearing, provides compelling insights that relate to Christian ministry, including global missions.

Below is material quoted from Tangney and Dearing that summarizes their research comparing the emotion of guilt to the emotion of shame and how they affect society.<sup>1</sup> Of course, from the Christian eternal perspective, guilt also refers to humanity's legal standing before God apart from salvation in Christ. But here we are looking at the varying emotional and social impacts of guilt and shame on everyday life.

Features shared by shame and guilt

- Both fall into the class of "moral" emotions
- Both are "self-conscious," self-referential emotions
- Both are negatively balanced emotions
- Both involve internal attributions of one sort or another
- Both are typically experienced in interpersonal conflicts

The negative events that give rise to shame and guilt are highly similar (frequently involving moral failures or transgressions).

	SHAME	GUILT	
Focus of evaluation	Global self: "I did that horrible thing"		
Degree of distress	Generally more painful than guilt	Generally less painful than shame	
Phenomenological experience	Shrinking, feeling small, feeling worthless, powerless	Tension, remorse, regret	
Operation of "self"	Self "split" into observing and observed "selves"	Unified self intact	
Impact on "self"	Self impaired by global devaluation	Self unimpaired by global devaluation	

Key dimensions on which shame and guilt differ:

<sup>1.</sup> June Tangney and Ronda Dearing, *Shame and Guilt* (New York: Guilford Press, 2002), 25. The book makes a compelling case from citing more than forty years of quantitative research that, generally speaking, *guilt* is more likely to lead to *healing* behavior, whereas *shame* is more likely to lead to *hurtful* behavior.

SHAME		GUILT	
Concern vis-à-vis the "other"	Concern for others' evaluation of self	Concern with one's effect on others	
Counterfactual processes	Mentally undoing some aspect of self Mentally undoing some aspect of he		
Motivational features	Desire to hide, escape, or strike back	Desire to confess, apologize, or repair	

Figure 1.11: Key dimensions on which shame and guilt differ according to Tangney and Dearing<sup>2</sup>

#### What does this imply for Christian ministry?

There are many implications for students and teachers of the Bible, pastors, crosscultural workers, counselors—everyone involved in Christian ministry.

Shame tells us: "I did that horrible thing," whereas guilt tells us: "I *did* that horrible *thing*."

Dyrness and Kärkkäinen agree. "[S]hame points to a much deeper reality. It is not only behavior that is wrong, but the person as well. The shamed self is a damaged, deficient self and falls short of some good goal or standard of excellence. It is fundamentally flawed."<sup>3</sup>

Simply stated, shame is about *who I am;* guilt is about *what I've done.* It follows, as stated above, that shame is generally more painful than guilt. Tangney and Dearing clearly describe the contrast between the effects of *guilt* versus the effects of *shame:* 



Figure 1.12: Guilt is about "what I've done;" shame is about "who I am"

The tension, remorse, and regret of guilt causes us to stop and rethink,

and it offers a way out, pressing us to confess, apologize, and make amends. We become better people, and the world becomes a better place.

In contrast, shame appears to be the less "moral" emotion in several important regards. When people feel ashamed of themselves, they are not particularly motivated to apologize and attempt to repair the situation. This is not an emotion that leads people to responsibly own up to their failures, mistakes, or transgressions and make things right. Instead, they are inclined to engage in all sorts of defensive maneuvers. They may withdraw and avoid the people around them. They may deny responsibility and blame others for the shame-eliciting situation. They may become downright hostile and angry at a world that has made them feel so small. In short, shamed individuals are inclined to assume a defensive posture rather than take a constructive, reparative stance in their relationships.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2.</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>3.</sup> Dyrness and Kärkkäinen, 815.

Of course, our need for the forgiveness for our *sin and guilt* is urgent. Jesus said, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:18). But when it comes to the emotional and social dimensions, the cure for our shame *is also urgent*. Could it be that when we teach God's Word with a focus on guilt while ignoring the sin-pathology of shame, we are ignoring an aspect of the gospel with great power to heal and transform the human soul?

The data presented by Tangney and Dearing indicate that shame has far more negative and sick effects on people than does guilt. Their research found that shame generally motivates people to "hide, escape, or strike back." In striking contrast, guilt generally motivates people to "confess, apologize, or repair." According to Tangney and Dearing, these results have been affirmed again and again over a period of more than forty years of conducting research by various universities.

Simply stated, *shame* is more likely to lead to *hurtful* behavior, whereas *guilt* is more likely to lead to *healing* behavior.

Many mission and culture leaders recognize that Majority World peoples have honor and shame as their pivotal cultural value. Could it be that when Christians present the gospel of Christ to Majority World peoples in a way that only addresses humanity's *guilt* before God, that resistance to the message of Christ's gospel may be easier to understand?

Consider what it would be to have as your constant, everyday drama the avoidance of shame, along with the pursuit of honor. This is what deeply motivates your life in every pursuit. Your life is moving in a deep, powerful river whose current is *honor and shame*. Consider how David Pryce-Jones expresses the dominance of honor/shame values in the Arab world:

Honor is what makes life worthwhile: shame is a living death, not to be endured, requiring that it be avenged. Honor involves recognition, the openly acknowledged esteem of others which renders a person secure and important in his or her own eyes and in front of everyone else.<sup>5</sup>

Between the poles of honor and shame stretches an uncharted field where everyone walks perilously all the time, trying as best he can to interpret the actions and words of others, on the watch for any incipient power-challenging response that might throw up winners and losers, honor and shame.<sup>6</sup>

Imagine if the atonement of Jesus Christ was not only presented as the solution to the problem of guilt and condemnation from God, but also as the covering of our shame and the restoration of our honor before God. Is not this the basic message of the Parable of the Prodigal Son?<sup>7</sup> Wouldn't this be more attractive? For persons and peoples who are saturated by the cultural value of honor and shame, wouldn't this more likely be a treasure worth dying for?

<sup>5.</sup> David Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1989, 2009), 35. 6. Ibid., 40–41.

<sup>7.</sup> Luke 15:11–32. See "The Father's Love Booklet" for a concise understanding of the honor/shame dynamics in the prodigal son parable and how it can be used to convey the message of the gospel: http://thefatherslovebooklet.org.

### A missing piece in Reformed theology?

One of the key doctrines in Reformed theology is known as "total depravity."

Total depravity (also called total inability or total corruption) is a biblical doctrine closely linked with the doctrine of original sin as formalized by Augustine and advocated in many Protestant confessions of faith and catechisms, especially in Calvinism. The doctrine understands the Bible to teach that, as a consequence of the Fall of man, every person born into the world is morally corrupt, enslaved to sin and is, apart from the grace of God, utterly unable to choose to follow God or choose to turn to Christ in faith for salvation.<sup>8</sup>

Consider this problem:

- One, the doctrine of total depravity affirms the utter fallenness of humanity not only in our *behavior* ("I *did* that horrible *thing*")—but also in our *being* ("I did that horrible thing").
- Two, because of a blind spot about honor and shame in Western theology, there is a tendency to focus on the atonement of Christ as the means by which sinners are justified and absolved of their sin and *guilt*, while generally being silent about sin and *shame*.
- Three, could it be, therefore, that a theology that tends to address the *guilt and behavior* of our sins to the exclusion of the *shame and being* of our sinfulness is problematic? Is it possible to believe in *total depravity*, while missing a vital part of the *total gospel*?

I submit that communicating the gospel of Christ in such a way that the message includes both the removal of our guilt—*and* the covering of our shame—comprises a more "global" gospel. It is more theologically coherent, reflecting a broader witness of Scripture; plus, it is more congruous to the whole need of deeply depraved humanity—our guilt *and shame*. Therefore, it is more likely to lead to transformation in the Christian life.

Moreover, it is especially wise and vital when communicating the gospel with people whose pivotal cultural value is honor and shame. Whether this refers to people from Majority World cultures or Westerners like myself who have struggled with a persistent shadow of shame (see Figure 1.13 on the next page), there is a widespread need for a more "global gospel."

Christian leaders, pastors, and missionaries should be asking themselves: When is the last time I communicated a message about overcoming shame through the cross of Jesus Christ?

#### Shame is experienced in different ways

Shame is complex. Whether you look at it emotionally, socially, psychologically, or spiritually, it is a multifaceted dynamic. Shame is experienced in different ways

<sup>8. &</sup>quot;Total depravity," *Theopedia.com*, accessed 8 October 2013, http://www.theopedia.com/Total\_depravity#note-0.

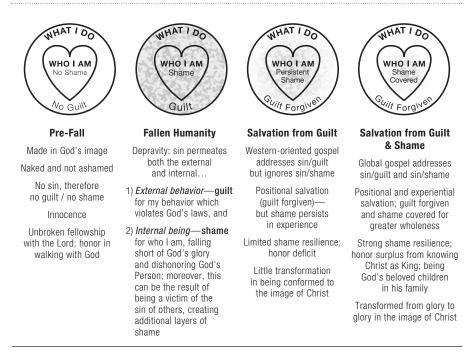


Figure 1.13: Salvation is a remedy for both guilt and shame

among different cultures. So as you make your way through this book, you may discover a paradox. Let me explain.

The focus of this book is cross-cultural ministry and the goal of Christian missions is to bless all peoples of the world. I often write about how a particular honor/shame dynamic relates to ministry among Majority World peoples. While reading, you may think to yourself, *Wow, this isn't just for cross-cultural ministry; this has great application to Western people as well.* 

The diagram and chart on the next page (Figure 1.14) may help resolve the tension of this paradox.

A careful look at Figure 1.14 demonstrates why this book relates to a broad audience—not just people involved in cross-cultural ministry. It is for pastors, Bible teachers and other leaders who want to discover how the Bible addresses sin/guilt *and* sin/shame. It is for all Christians who want to see how the gospel of Jesus Christ speaks to persons and peoples who struggle with the problem of shame, whether it is expressed as an *external behavior* or a *hidden emotion*.

Let me give you an example of how this material about honor and shame relates more broadly than one might think. In 2013, I was preaching about honor and shame at a church in Tempe, Arizona as part of their missions-emphasis week. My text was Luke 15:11–32. We gave each person a copy of "The Father's Love Booklet" (see chapter 3.1). With Majority World peoples in mind, this booklet illustrates The Parable of the Prodigal Son, and shows how the language of honor and shame can be used to present the gospel. I also briefly shared a story from my teenage years about how I was affected by a shadow of shame (see Introduction).



### SHAME CONTINUUM



Primarily Western	Comments	Primarily Eastern or Majority World
Shame is more internal, hidden	Since shame is the result of sin, it affects all peoples and all persons.	Shame is more external, obvious
Shame is more about feelings	<ul> <li>Honor competition—shame leading to revenge, and the pursuit of honor gains—frequently expresses itself in international affairs. It has often been the fuel for war. This is a powerful dynamic in both</li> </ul>	Shame is more about behavior
Shame is more about the individual's affect <i>(emotion)</i>	<ul> <li>Majority World and Western nations.</li> <li>Shame affects both Majority World peoples and Western peoples, but the impact tends to differ.</li> <li>No individual or people group is to the far extreme of one side, to the total exclusion of the other. Every person or people can be placed somewhere on this continuum.</li> <li>The Bible's vast material about honor and shame comes from an Eastern cultural view that is more about external behavior and is group-oriented.</li> <li>Some of the Bible's material about shame may nonetheless be applied to Westerners for whom shame is more often hidden—or often expressed through internal feelings and emotions.</li> </ul>	Shame is more about the social group <i>(demotion)</i>

Figure 1.14: East-West shame continuum

When the service ended, a Caucasian American woman around seventy years old with a joyful countenance came over to me and said something like this:

You know, when I was a little girl, something happened to me, and it has troubled me ever since. I have been a Christian for a long time, but in all my years, not once did I hear a message on shame. But today, God did something in my heart which has set me free. Thank you so much for your sermon!

"Not once did I hear a message on shame." Only God knows how many people in churches all over the world—regardless of ethnicity or social status—would sadly agree with this sentiment.

#### The need to cure both guilt and shame

Later in the book, we will consider views of the atonement of Christ and how a balanced view incorporates a cure for both *guilt* and *shame*, as well as the hope for both *righteousness* and *honor*. But for now, here is an introductory chart. Specific Scripture verses are not included here. These concepts will be unpacked scripturally in Sections 2 and 3 of this book.

The gospel of Christ as cure for both guilt and shame				
	GUILT ("I did that horrible thing")	SHAME ("/ did that horrible thing")		
Problem question	How can my sins and guilt be forgiven?	How can my sin and shame be covered and my honor restored?		
Atonement cure	Christ satisfied the wrath of God against humanity's guilt by his sacrificial death for my sins.	Christ vindicated the honor of God and absorbed humanity's shame whereby we were reconciled to God —and to one another—by his death for our sins.		
Salvation statement	The divine Judge forgives guilty sinners who by faith accept the death of Christ as the payment for their sins.	The divine King rescues shameful sinners who by faith believe that their King is a suffering servant to represent and rescue shameful humanity. First, he himself absorbs on the cross all evil and sin, guilt and shame; then, he conquers all evil through his own honor-status reversal of: life lived in perfect service, humiliating death, burial, resurrection, and exaltation in glory.		
Main benefit to believers	Christ's righteousness imputed to the believer satisfies the legal demands of the righteousness of God, thereby neutralizing the wrath of God. Believers are innocent before Holy God.	Believers have a new source of honor—Christ himself— by which their shame is covered. Christ shares his honor with believers (1) through the Holy Spirit, (2) as they are adopted into God's family, and (3) by identifying with Christ's honor-status reversal.		

Figure 1.15: The gospel of Christ as cure for both guilt and shame

The key discovery in this chapter has been that shame is perhaps a bigger problem than we ever realized. Shame is more likely to lead to *hurtful* behavior, whereas guilt is more likely to lead to *healing* behavior. This leads us to the next chapter, in which we will explore just how massive a problem, and how pathological a sin-sickness, *shame* really is.

# The Pathology of Shame in Our World

WE HAVE SEEN THAT SHAME IS MORE LIKELY to lead to *hurtful* behavior, whereas guilt is more likely to lead to *healing* behavior. The pathology of shame for individuals and families can be terrible and impact generations. But when the pathology of shame impacts whole societies and nations, it becomes truly horrendous. James W. Jones writes,

The two greatest group humiliations of the modern age produced the two greatest movements of genocide and terrorism in the modern world: the collapse of the Ottoman Empire along with the imposition of European colonialism on the Arab world leading to the rise of the jihad; and the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the First World War and the appeal of Nazism in Germany.<sup>1</sup>

So let's look at these "two greatest group humiliations" in a little more detail. We'll begin with Nazi Germany and then look at the Arab/Muslim example.

#### Shame as fuel for genocide in Nazi Germany

Concerning the humiliation—the *shaming*—of Germany following World War One, Jones writes:

The Treaty of Versailles removed all of Germany's colonies from its control, laid on Germany the worst sanctions that decimated the economy, and demanded its disarmament. All of these had been sources of pride and their loss was a total humiliation for the Germans. These humiliations along with the virtual collapse of the weak Weimar government and the German economy laid the groundwork for Hitler's rise to power. German veterans returning to a defeated and destabilized nation reported "as a Front-fighter, the collapse of the Fatherland in November 1918 was to me completely incomprehensible," or "I had believed adamantly in Germany's invincibility and now I only saw the country in its deepest humiliation—the entire world fell to the ground."<sup>2</sup> People holding such sentiments became the core of the Nazi movement. National humiliation

<sup>1.</sup> James W. Jones, "Shame, Humiliation, and Religious Violence: A Self-Psychological Investigation," in eds. Jewett, Alloway, and Lacey, 41.

<sup>2.</sup> Jones quotes an article by David Redles, "Ordering Chaos: Nazi Millennialism and the Quest for Meaning," in *The Fundamentalist Mindset: Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History*, ed. Charles B. Strozier et al., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 156–74.

caused by military defeat, internal political weakness, and economic collapse had at least two disastrous results for Germany and for the rest of the world: it set off a furious search for scapegoats, for someone or some group to blame and to punish for all this suffering; and it unleashed a ferocious drive to undo the humiliation by defeating those who had humiliated Germany. Many citizens were vulnerable to someone who could explain which group was to blame and could offer a way to overcome the humiliation. That person was obviously Adolf Hitler who pointed the finger of responsibility at Jews and other "non-Arians" and had a plan to restore German prominence through military conquest.<sup>3</sup>

It is ironic that the national shame that fueled World War Two and the Holocaust ended up giving Germany the reputation as the most barbaric of civilized nations shaming the German people for generations for their descent into such horrible evil. As a first-generation American from a German family, this shame has touched my life and other members of my extended family in deep and enduring ways.

#### Shame as fuel for terrorism in the Muslim world

The last century has not been favorable to the Muslim world.

- The Ottoman Empire lasted more than six hundred years, from 1299 to 1922. When it was defeated by Western powers, European colonialism took the reins, humiliating the Arab and Muslim world (as well as the Arab Christian world).<sup>4</sup>
- Israel became an official nation in 1948. The gaining of Jewish sovereignty over the majority of Palestine—partly a result of failed negotiations with Arab leaders, plus the Arab League's unsuccessful military response to the newly formed Jewish state—was a profound indignity.<sup>5</sup>
- Israel's resounding military defeat of Egypt in 1967 remains a disgrace on Arab pride.

"These collective humiliations still cast a shadow over the Muslim world and are an important background for the rise of militant and violent Islamic groups who seek to restore the ancient caliphate and with it the pride and power of the Muslim civilization."<sup>6</sup>

5. Allis Radosh and Ronald Radosh, *A Safe Haven: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009) describes with meticulous documentation the story of how Israel became a nation and that the Arab position about Jewish statehood was non-negotiable: "The Arabs made it clear they would accept nothing less than an Arab Palestine, with a Jewish minority living under its laws" (203). This refusal to compromise one iota doomed the Arab position with regard to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), which ultimately recommended to the United Nations General Assembly that Palestine be "partitioned" to allow for a Jewish sovereign state. The chapters "UNSCOP: Prelude to Partition" and "The Fight Over Partition: 'A Line of Fire and Blood'" (207–76) tell the story. See especially pages 227, 244, and 260.

6. Jones, 41.

<sup>3.</sup> Jones, 41.

<sup>4.</sup> In a broad-ranging comment concerning the end of the Ottoman Empire and World War I, Marc Aronson writes, "The Ottomans lost; England, France, and America won. The winners got to decide what would happen in the Middle East. And they did. If the Jews did better at convincing those powers to back them than the Muslims did, that is hardball politics. Too many Arabs either kept their eyes on their clans and families, or held onto the losing idea that all the Arab people could be unified and not divided up into separate nations. That was unfortunate for them. But that is what happens in conflicts: if you back the wrong horse, you lose. The Arabs may feel frustrated, resentful, even furious about that outcome. But that anger does nothing to change political facts." Marc Aronson, *Unsettled: The Problem of Loving Israel* (New York: Atheneum, 2008), 32–33.

Below is a short excerpt from Osama bin Laden's article, written in 2002, in response to questions about why Al Qaeda flew planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. (Note: By quoting bin Laden, we are in no way expressing sympathy for the actions of Al Qaeda or any other terrorist organization. We simply want to gain a better understanding of how the dynamics of honor and shame fuel violence.) Central to bin Laden's argument for violence against America is the mistreatment of Palestinians ever since they were forcibly removed in 1948 when Israel became a nation: "The blood pouring out of Palestine must be equally revenged. You must know that the Palestinians do not cry alone; their women are not widowed alone; their sons are not orphaned alone." At the end of his diatribe, bin Laden writes:

The Islamic Nation that was able to dismiss and destroy the previous evil Empires like yourself; the Nation that rejects your attacks, wishes to remove your evils, and is prepared to fight you. You are well aware that the Islamic Nation, from the very core of its soul, despises your haughtiness and arrogance.

If the Americans refuse to listen to our advice and the goodness, guidance and righteousness that we call them to, then be aware that you will lose this Crusade Bush began, just like the other previous Crusades in which you were humiliated by the hands of the Mujahideen, fleeing to your home in great silence and disgrace. If the Americans do not respond, then their fate will be that of the Soviets who fled from Afghanistan to deal with their military defeat, political breakup, ideological downfall, and economic bankruptcy.<sup>7</sup>

Observe the key words, "the Islamic Nation, from the very core of its soul, despises your *haughtiness and arrogance*." Notice also the sentence, "[B]e aware that you will lose this Crusade [which] Bush began, just like the other previous Crusades in which you were *humiliated* by the hands of the Mujahideen, fleeing to your home in great silence and disgrace."

The key dynamic underlying the Muslim reaction to "American imperialism" is honor and shame. *Make no mistake about it:* Honor and shame—honor competition—is the underlying dynamic of the events of September 11, 2001. The Muslim world had been shamed by the West, America and Israel—*and Al Qaeda is taking revenge.* Honor competition is the most combustible fuel for war; this is as true today as it has been for millennia.

But honor competition is not only at the crux of conflict between the "house of Islam" and the "imperial West." Honor competition is also the fuel for bloodshed *within* the "house of Islam"—and it has been so for centuries. As this book is being

<sup>7.</sup> From "Full text: bin Laden's 'letter to America'. *The Guardian*, Sunday 24 November 2002, http://www. theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/24/theobserver, accessed 15 September 2013. It is enlightening to read the perspective of a radical Muslim leader concerning America. The letter is argued from a moral position consistent with the absolutes of Islamic Sharia law. He criticizes America's separation of religion from politics, the use of interest (usury) as oppressive to the poor, and America's laws permitting intoxicants and drugs. Plus, America is "a nation that permits acts of immorality, and you consider them to be pillars of personal freedom." This is just a sampling of the wrongs levied against America that form the logical basis for the war waged by Al Qaeda against America.

written, more than 150,000 people have been killed in the civil war in Syria<sup>8</sup>—between the Sunni rebels and the government forces who are Shiite or Alawite.<sup>9</sup>

#### Caution: Don't generalize

Having said this, it is wise to remember that only a minority of Muslims actually believe that the Quran supports the use of violence. An even smaller minority are actually engaged in violence.<sup>10</sup> Islam comprises over 1.6 billion people—about 26 percent of the world's population. And there is great diversity of views among them.

Moreover, the dynamics of honor and shame existed in the Arab region prior to the birth of Islam's Prophet Muhammed.

Like other peoples in the Mediterranean basin, the Arabs use concepts of shame and honor to sanction their conduct. This shame-honor ranking—to borrow a term from the social sciences—stems from the ancient tribalism of the region and predates Islam, though in the course of time merging with it in some respects. Acquisition of honor, pride, dignity, respect and the converse avoidance of shame, disgrace, and humiliation are keys to Arab motivation, clarifying and illuminating behavior in the past as well as in the present.<sup>11</sup>

### Honor-based violence in the family unit

Since the year 2000, there has been a significant increase in the *awareness* among westerners concerning honor-based violence. Many North Americans and residents of Europe have begun to hear news about "honor killings" that have been occurring more frequently in Western cities.

Perhaps the most famous honor-killing is the murder of the provocative filmmaker Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam, The Netherlands on November 2, 2004. Theo's great grandfather was the brother of the world-famous painter Vincent van Gogh. The article for Theo van Gogh on Wikipedia records the murder as follows:

Van Gogh was murdered by Mohammed Bouyeri as he was cycling to work on 2 November 2004 at about 9 o'clock in the morning. The killer shot Van Gogh eight times with an HS 2000 handgun. Initially from his bicycle, Bouyeri fired several bullets at Van Gogh, who was hit, as were two bystanders. Wounded, Van Gogh ran to the other side of the road and fell to the ground on the cycle lane. According to eyewitnesses, Van Gogh's last words were: "Mercy, mercy! We can talk about it, can't we?" Bouyeri then walked up to Van Gogh, who was still lying down, and calmly shot him several more times at close range. Bouyeri then cut Van Gogh's throat, and tried to decapitate him with a large knife, after which he stabbed the knife deep into Van Gogh's chest, reaching his spinal cord. He then

11. Pryce-Jones, 34.

<sup>8. &</sup>quot;Death toll in Syria's civil war above 150,000: monitor." *Reuters*, 1 April 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/01/us-syria-crisis-toll-idUSBREA300YX20140401, accessed 12 July 2014.

<sup>9.</sup> Pryce-Jones writes convincingly about a culture of violence across multiple generations and a variety of Arab nations which is fueled by honor and shame. See Pryce-Jones, 108–21.

<sup>10.</sup> For a nuanced and thorough article on the subject of Islamic terrorism, see Colin Chapman, "Christian responses to Islam, Islamism and 'Islamic terrorism," *Jubilee Centre*, Cambridge Papers, Vol. 16 No 2, June 2007, http://www.jubilee-centre.org/document.php?id=55, accessed 16 September 2013.

attached a note to the body with a smaller knife. Van Gogh died on the spot. The two knives were left implanted.<sup>12</sup>

The note that was attached by knife to van Gogh's body was written by Mohammed Bouyeri, an Islamist Muslim. The note was addressed, not to van Gogh, but to a woman from Somalia who had become part of the Dutch government. Her name: Ayaan Hirshi Ali, an outspoken critic of radical Islam. The note includes the following words:

Dear Mrs Hirshi Ali,

Since your appearance in the Dutch political arena you have been constantly busy criticizing Muslims and terrorizing Islam with your statements. You are hereby not the first and not the last and also won't be the last to have joined the crusade against Islam.

With your attacks you have not only turned your back on the Truth, but you are also marching along the ranks of the soldiers of evil. U [You] are not putting your hostility towards Islam under chairs and benches and therefore your masters have rewarded you with a seat in parliament. They have found in you an ally who gives them all the "powder" so that they don't have to dirty their own hands. It appears that you are blinded by your burning unbelief and in your rage you are not able to see that your [sic] are just an instrument of the real enemies of Islam ....

Mrs. Hirshi Ali, I don't blame you for all of this, as a soldier of evil you are just doing your work.

This letter is Inshallah (God willing) an attempt to stop your evil and silence you forever. These writings will Inshallah cause your mask to fall off.<sup>13</sup>

Hirshi Ali and Theo van Gogh had been collaborating. "Working from a script written by Ayaan Hirshi Ali, Van Gogh created the ten-minute short film *Submission*. The movie deals with violence against women in some Islamic societies; it tells the stories, using visual shock tactics, of four abused Muslim women."<sup>14</sup>

After the gruesome murder of van Gogh, Hirshi Ali went into hiding and ultimately moved to the United States where she became the founder in 2007 of the AHA Foundation. The purpose of the foundation is "to help protect and defend the rights of women in the US from religiously and culturally instigated oppression."<sup>15</sup>

Honor violence is a form of violence against women committed with the motive of protecting or regaining the honor of the perpetrator, family, or community. Victims of honor violence are targeted because their actual or perceived behavior is deemed to be shameful or to violate cultural or religious norms. Conduct such as resisting an arranged marriage, seeking

<sup>12. &</sup>quot;Theo van Gogh," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theo\_van\_Gogh\_(film\_director), accessed 17 September 2013.

<sup>13.</sup> See http://www.militantislammonitor.org/article/id/312, accessed 17 September 2013.

<sup>14. &</sup>quot;Theo van Gogh," Wikipedia, accessed 17 September 2013.

<sup>15.</sup> AHA Foundation, http://theahafoundation.org/about/, accessed 23 August 2014.

a divorce, adopting a Western lifestyle and wearing Western clothing, and having friends of the opposite sex have resulted in honor violence.

Honor violence involves systematic control of the victim that escalates over a period of time and may begin at a young age. Honor violence can be perpetrated by one individual or can be a group campaign of harassment and violence committed by an entire family or community. It can take many forms, including verbal/emotional abuse, threats, stalking, harassment, false imprisonment, physical violence, sexual abuse, and homicide.<sup>16</sup>

The AHA Foundation addresses three primary problems: honor violence, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation (FGM). AHA estimates that each year, there are approximately five thousand honor-killings in the world.

The rise of immigrants from Hindu and Muslim religious backgrounds to Western cities has increased the awareness of the problem among North Americans. In response to the question, "Does this happen in the United States?" the AHA website states the following:

# *Yes. There are numerous recent examples of honor violence and honor killings in the U.S., a few of which are described below.*

**Aiya Altameemi:** In Arizona in February 2012, 19-year-old Aiya Altameemi was physically assaulted by her mother, father, and younger sister because she was seen talking to a boy. Her father put a knife to her throat and threatened to kill her, while her mother and sister tied her to a bed, taped her mouth shut, and beat her. This incident followed a previous incident in November 2011 when Aiya's mother burned her on the face with a hot spoon because she refused to consent to an arranged marriage with a man twice her age. During an interview with police, Aiya's parents stated that they had abused their daughter because her behavior violated "Iraqi culture." Aiya's mother, father, and sister are all facing charges related to these incidents.

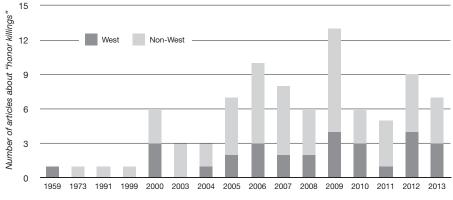
**Sarah and Amina Said:** In Texas in January 2008, Yaser Said shot and killed his teenage daughters, Sarah and Amina, because he was enraged by their Western lifestyle, particularly that they each had boyfriends. During a vigil held for the girls after their deaths, their brother took the microphone and suggested that his sisters were responsible for what had happened to them, saying, "They pulled the trigger, not my dad." Said fled after the murders and has not yet been apprehended.

**Noor Almaleki:** In Arizona in October 2009, Faleh Almaleki murdered his 20-year-old daughter, Noor, by running her down with his vehicle because he believed that she had shamed the family by becoming too Western and refusing to marry a man he had selected for her in Iraq. In February 2011, Almaleki was convicted of murder and sentenced to 34½ years in prison.

<sup>16. &</sup>quot;Honor Violence," AHA Foundation, http://theahafoundation.org/issues/honor-violence/, accessed 27 September 2013.

**Fauzia A. Mohammad:** In May 2008, Waheed Allah Mohammad stabbed his 19-year-old sister, Fauzia, outside of their home in Henrietta, New York. The stabbing occurred during a heated argument between Fauzia and a number of family members over Fauzia's plan to move to New York City with a friend. Mohammad told investigators that he had stabbed his sister because she had disgraced their family by going to clubs and wearing immodest clothing and was a "bad Muslim girl." Mohammad pleaded guilty to attempted murder and assault and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.<sup>17</sup>

Our office conducted a search of all articles in *The New York Times* by "honor killing." The survey and related research yielded the following graph:



Western nations mentioned in NYT articles: Italy, United States, Australia, Germany, Denmark, United Kingdom Non-Western nations mentioned in NYT articles: Lebanon, Brazil, Jordan, Dominican Republic, Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, Japan, China, Afghanistan, Syria, India, Mali, Saudi Arabia

The purpose of conducting this small research project is to simply point out that in the West, the strange practice of "honor killings" has emerged as a criminal phenomena in our own cities and communities—due in part to ever-increasing cultural diversity.<sup>18</sup> If you doubt such a problem exists in your city, I suggest you go to the website of the newspaper of your city, or of the large city closest to where you live, and conduct your own search for "honor killing." You may be surprised at what you discover.

#### Is all shame bad?

In exploring these extreme examples of honor-based violence, we might conclude that all shame is harmful, all shame is bad. However, Lewis Smedes makes a strong case for the distinction between healthy and unhealthy shame. Not all shame is

 Ibid.
 18. Gang violence may also be considered honor-based violence because "gang culture" reflects a hierarchical community based on loyalty and honor/shame rather than ethics. To add the number of killings resulting from gang violence would, of course, magnify these numbers enormously.

Figure 1.16: Articles in The New York Times under search for "honor-killings"

bad; not all shame causes harm. In his chapter titled, "Healthy Shame: A Voice from Our True Self," he writes, "There is a nice irony in shame: our feelings of inferiority are a sure sign of our superiority, and our feelings of unworthiness testify to our great worth. Only a very noble being can feel shame. ... If we never feel shame, we may have lost contact with the person we most truly are."<sup>19</sup>

The subsequent chapter in Smedes's book is, "Unhealthy Shame: A Voice from Our False Self." He lists the sources of unhealthy shame as *culture, religion,* and *parents.*<sup>20</sup> John Forrester also speaks of the contrast between *good shame,* which he calls "discretionary shame"—and *bad shame,* which he calls "disgrace shame."<sup>21</sup> For the purposes of this book, when we refer to shame, we are generally referring to the latter—*unhealthy/disgrace shame* or *toxic shame*.

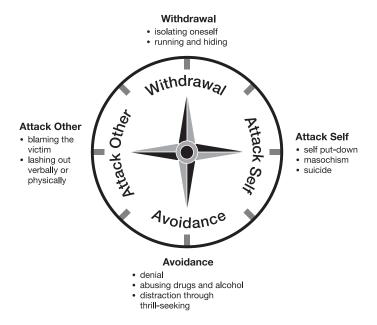


Figure 1.17: Nathansan's Compass of Shame

#### The Compass of Shame

Dr. Donald Nathansan has developed a way of understanding the pathological effects of shame using something he calls, "The Compass of Shame." He contends that "at each pole is a library of responses or scripts for things to say and do when shame strikes and we don't know how to deal with it honestly."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19.</sup> Lewis B. Smedes, *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 38. A portrayal of healthy shame or appropriate dishonor is found in Jeremiah: "But from our youth the shameful thing has devoured all for which our fathers labored, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor cover us. For we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day, and we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God" (Jer 3:24–25). See also Jer 6:15; 8:12.

<sup>20.</sup> Smedes, 31.

<sup>21.</sup> Forrester, 23.

<sup>22.</sup> Dr. Donald Nathansan, *The Compass of Shame*, YouTube video, accessed 17 September 2013, http://www. youtube.com/watch?v=LZ1fSW7zevE. Also see his *The Many Faces of Shame* (New York: Guilford Press, 1987).

We can easily see in these four poles that this is consistent with the principle we explored earlier in this section: Whereas guilt is more likely to lead to *healing* behavior, shame is more likely to lead to *hurtful* behavior.

Some interesting questions may be asked based on this diagram. All the various "scripts" of the Compass of Shame may be observed to varying degrees in all cultures. But one wonders whether there are some major contours:

- **Contour #1.** *Shame in East Asia—eastern pole—"Attack Self.*" Could it be that the "eastern pole" located at the right of the compass is generally consistent with East Asian culture in which social harmony is more highly valued? One thinks of China, Japan, Korea, or Thailand—where the "fear of losing face" may lead to suicide—an "attack on the self." The Bangkok Post reported on September 3, 2013: "Fear of losing face and an inability to express emotion are contributing factors behind Northern Thailand's status as the country's suicide capital, a mental health expert said on Tuesday. The North has had the highest suicide rate in Thailand for 10 consecutive years, with Chiang Mai, home to almost two million people, reporting a suicide rate of 14 for every 100,000 people, the highest in the region."<sup>23</sup>
- **Contour #2.** *Shame in Western Asia and Mediterranean Basin—western pole—"Attack Others."* In Western Asia and the Mediterranean Basin, could it be that in the response to shame there is less of the "Attack Self" dynamic and more of the dynamic of the "western pole"— "Attack Others"—hence the propensity toward bloodshed and terrorism? Malina believes that peoples who are from the region of the Mediterranean Basin and Middle East "are anti-introspective and not psychologically minded." He shares an anecdote both funny and tragic: "As I was recently told by a Mediterranean informant after we both witnessed an incident of public shaming, 'If I was shamed and felt the urge to commit suicide, I would kill somebody.' This, in a nutshell, is a typical anti-introspective, collectivistic reaction to being shamed."<sup>24</sup>
- **Contour #3.** *Shame in the West—all four poles.* The West has experienced a deterioration of the family and community ... increasing loneliness ... widespread alcoholism and drug abuse ... the postmodern loss of meaning ... rampant materialism and greed ... a crisis of confidence in social institutions ... along with the rise of multiculturalism due to globalization and the migration of peoples. Could it be that the characteristics of the Compass of Shame at all four poles—*Withdrawal, Avoidance, Attack Others, Attack Self*—are on the rise in the West?

In the above three "contours," we tread lightly because of the broad generalizations involved. However, taken in the context of this entire first section of the book, a clear and compelling problem may be summarized by this question:

<sup>23. &</sup>quot;Suicide linked with fear of 'losing face," Bangkok Post, http://www.bangkokpost.com/

breakingnews/367783/fear-of-losing-face-leads-to-suicide-in-northern-thailand, accessed 17 September 2013. 24. Bruce Malina, "Anachronism, Ethnocentrism, and Shame" in eds. Jewett, Alloway, and Lacey, 149–50.

#### Considering the pervasive sinful pathology of shame in our world, is the gospel of Jesus Christ robust enough, comprehensive enough, *global enough*—to provide the cure?

The purpose of this book is to answer this question with a resounding *YES*! But we won't see how the gospel of Christ addresses the sinful pathology of shame if we do not first understand the varied honor/shame dynamics in the Bible; we need to identify these features in the panorama of Scripture. To be sure, we will see in the Bible the *dark side* of honor and shame. But we will also explore an extensive, glorious *bright side*, as well.

And so we continue now to Section 2, where we will discover that the dynamics of honor and shame in the Bible are literally *hidden in plain sight*.



# Hidden in Plain Sight— Dynamics of Honor and Shame in the Bible



Figure 2.00: The honor/shame wheel

# Hidden in Plain Sight— Honor/Shame Dynamics in the Bible

In this section we will explore NINE DYNAMICS of honor/shame in Scripture, and one overarching motif. The dynamics are: (1) Love of honor, (2) Two sources of honor, (3) Image of limited good, (4) Challenge and riposte, (5) Concept of face, (6) Body language, (7) Patronage, (8) Name / Kinship / Blood, and (9) Purity. The biblical motif we will explore is called *Honor-Status Reversal;* this is the tenth honor/shame dynamic explored in this book.

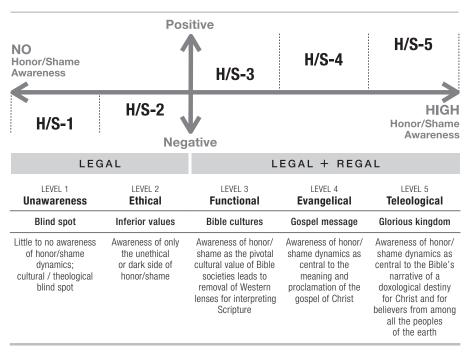
# Progressive levels of awareness of honor/shame

Some people involved in cross-cultural ministry are aware of the negative aspects of honor/shame cultures. They readily point out honor/shame dynamics as being ethically negative. Statements like this (by Westerners) are common: *"You cannot*"

really trust them because when they talk to you they only tell you what you want to hear; they are just trying to 'save face.'" Sometimes new believers are shamed, ostracized, or even killed by their families and communities when they become Christians—evidence of the unethical nature of an honor/shame culture. As already discussed in this book, honor-killings are sometimes condoned when an individual brings shame on one's family. We are right in exposing and condemning such sinful behavior.

But while it is true that there is a dark side to honor/shame cultures—evidenced in both the ancient cultures of the Bible and in today's honor/shame cultures<sup>1</sup> there is nevertheless a bright (even glorious!) side to honor and shame that we behold in the Scriptures. It is this *positive* dimension of honor/shame about which many Christians lack awareness and which is a symptom of the theological blind spot discussed in the prior section of this book.

Figure 2.01, below, represents varying levels of awareness regarding honor and shame. (The full chart is found in Appendix 2.)



# Figure 2.01: H/S-1 to H/S-5: Levels of awareness of honor and shame (for full chart see Appendix 2)

<sup>1.</sup> Missionaries have historically viewed the honor/shame dynamic of *face* as a negative trait of Thai culture. Concerning this negative attribution, Christopher Flanders writes, "Some might object that since face is essentially a negative cultural trait, a disconnect with Thai culture is actually proper. Though face can indeed be negative, I will argue that face is something all of us do all the time. Face forms a critical and necessary dimension of the human self and all social relations. There is room to explore not only negative dimensions of face but also potentially positive and healthy dimensions as well." See Christopher L. Flanders, *About Face: Rethinking Face for 21st Century Mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 8.

**Levels of awareness of honor and shame.** As I have done research for this book and conducted training about honor and shame in various settings (including cross-cultural environments), I have observed that there are varying levels of awareness concerning the dynamics of honor and shame in cross-cultural ministry. This diagram proposes that two levels are negative and three levels are positive. Let's begin with the two *negative* levels:

- **H/S-1—Unawareness:** Level one refers to the *absence of understanding* of honor/shame dynamics; it is called "unawareness."
- **H/S-2—Ethical:** Level two is called the "ethical" level. Some Christians have an awareness of honor and shame but it is altogether negative, seeing exclusively an immoral quality to the honor/shame dynamics of a culture. I call this the "ethical" level of awareness because it sees primarily the *unethical* aspects of honor/shame.

Three additional levels are *positive*:

- **H/S-3—Functional:** In level three awareness, Christians understand that the dynamics of honor and shame can be a most helpful *tool* for interpreting the Bible—a wonderfully positive resource. I call this the "functional" level of awareness. *Note:* Sections 1 and 2 of this book move the reader from "unawareness," to "ethical" awareness, and upward to an awareness of the "functional" value of honor/shame for understanding Scripture.
- **H/S-4**—**Evangelical:** In level four awareness, Christians see that the gospel may be articulated in a variety of ways in Scripture using the language of honor and shame; this gives honor/shame dynamics an even more positive role in Christian ministry. This is called the "evangelical" level because it is all about the gospel. Section 3 of this book explores how the gospel of Christ is variously articulated in Scripture incorporating ten honor/ shame dynamics.
- **H/S-5—Teleological:** Finally, there is level five awareness of honor/shame. Seeing that God's ultimate purpose of gathering worshipers from among all peoples is to honor and glorify Christ, while honoring all the peoples of the world in the process—this is what I consider the highest level of awareness. I call this the "teleological" level (teleology has to do with ultimate purpose). This will be explored in Section 4 along with other summary points.

### Honor and shame: The dark side and the bright side

One of the signature aspects of this book is to explore both the dark side and bright side of the pivotal cultural value of honor and shame in the Bible. Therefore, in Section 2 you will see a comparison chart that is near the conclusion of each of the first nine chapters in this section.

Each comparison chart has three parts, as indicated in the template on the next page. First, the particular honor/shame dynamic is represented graphically by an icon in the first column. Second, the middle column—representing the *dark side* of the honor/shame dynamic under consideration—is categorized as "kingdom

of this world." And third, a column representing the *bright side* of the honor/ shame dynamic under consideration is categorized as "kingdom-reign of God."

# A kingdom summary—dark side and bright side (template)

Honor/shame dynamic—kingdom of this world vs. kingdom-reign of God			
	Kingdom of this world	Kingdom-reign of God	
H/S (honor/shame graphic icon)	<ul> <li>Feature #1 of dark side of the honor/shame dynamic as informed by Scripture and lived out in the kingdom of this world</li> <li>Feature #2 of dark side</li> <li>Feature #3 of dark side</li> <li>Feature #4 of dark side</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Feature #1 of the bright side of the honor/shame dynamic as informed by Scripture lived out in the kingdom- reign of God</li> <li>Feature #2 of bright side</li> <li>Feature #3 of bright side</li> <li>Feature #4 of bright side</li> </ul>	

Figure 2.02: Template of comparison chart dark side and bright side of honor/shame dynamic

We turn now to the first chapter in Section 2, "Honor/Shame Dynamic #1: Love of Honor."

#### Section 2 • Chapter 1



# Honor/Shame Dynamic #1: Love of Honor

#### Why is this important?

- Demonstrates from Scripture that the love of honor can be rooted in both evil and good motivations.
- Helps explain stories in the Bible in which people appear strangely "selfish."

The epic film *Gladiator* depicts the violence and values of the Roman Empire. When the hero Maximus inspires the other gladiators to fight, he cries, "For the glory of Rome!" And the Romans' love of honor and glory is on full display.

In the ancient Middle East, including the Roman Empire, the *love of honor* was a core value; it was simply *understood*. We know this because men wrote this down before, during, and after the Roman Empire.

For example, before the Roman Empire came into existence, the Greek philosopher Aristotle said:

Now the greatest external good we should assume to be the thing which we offer as a tribute to the gods and which is most coveted by men of high station, and is the prize awarded for the noblest deeds; and such a thing is honour, for *honour is clearly the greatest of external goods ... it is honour above all else which great men claim and deserve.*<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

J. E. Lendon references the Roman lawyer, author, and magistrate, Pliny the Younger, who lived in the first century (c. 61–112). "Pliny wrote hundreds of letters, many of which still survive, that are regarded as a historical source for the time

<sup>1.</sup> As quoted in Neyrey, Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew, 5.

period."<sup>2</sup> Lendon comments on the typical affection for honor, glory and fame among the Romans:

How little surprising, then, the sentiments of Pliny the Younger: "Men differ in their views, but I deem that man happiest of all who enjoys the anticipation of good and abiding *fame*, and who, assured of posterity's judgement, *lives now in possession of the glory* that he will then have." To the historian, it was naturally the *pursuit of renown* that raised man above the animal. And the orator took it for granted that *honour stood at the root of human motivation* and human institutions."<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

The great Christian leader Augustine of Hippo (354–430) lived during the latter part of the Roman Empire. He said, "For the glory that the Romans burned to possess, be it known, is the favourable judgment of men who think well of other men."<sup>4</sup>

*Love of honor:* Zeba Crook points out that the Greeks even had a word for it—*philotimia.*<sup>5</sup> Jerome Neyrey simply states, "The ancients name love of honor and praise as their premier value."<sup>6</sup>

#### Examples

Consider the blatant pursuit of honor we find among the disciples:

And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he [Jesus] asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about *who was the greatest*" (Mark 9:33–34). (Emphasis mine.)

Jesus caught them in the act. "What were you discussing on the way?" (As though Jesus didn't know.) The disciples were arguing about who was the greatest, who had the most honor, prestige, or power in their group. They were engaging in honor competition. The Bible calls it *rivalry*.<sup>7</sup> Here's how Jesus responded.

And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (v. 35).

Jesus called his disciples. What he said would be opposite their social, religious, and cultural ways. This was hard to grasp. Jesus said, in effect: *I understand your love of honor. I get it. Like you, I'm also very interested in honor and glory. So in my kingdom, here's how you gain honor. It's simple. If you want to be first—if you want to have the most honor—you must be the servant of all.* 

This is upside-down—a reversal of our normal ways. But it is God's way.

In the next chapter, Mark 10:35–45, this theme is amplified. The disciples James and John, the sons of Zebedee, tell Jesus, "Teacher, we want you to do for us

<sup>2. &</sup>quot;Pliny the Younger," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pliny\_the\_Younger, accessed 2 December 2013.

<sup>3.</sup> Lendon, Kindle edition locations 465-68.

<sup>4.</sup> Neyrey, Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew, 17.

<sup>5.</sup> Crook, 63.

<sup>6.</sup> Neyrey, Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew, 17.

<sup>7.</sup> Philippians 1:15

whatever we ask of you." This was bold. If I was Jesus, I would have said, *Get real. Come back to me when you have a more reasonable request.* 

Surprisingly, Jesus said, "What do you want me to do for you?" (v. 36).

And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory" (v. 37).

This is nothing less than audacious to my Western mindset. What a blatant request for a favor from Jesus. What were James and John displaying? *Love of honor!* 

Did Jesus rebuke James and John for their seemingly selfish request? No. Interestingly, Jesus ended up *endorsing* their pursuit of honor, although he turned it upside-down.

And Jesus called them [all of his disciples] to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (vv. 42–45).

Jesus was teaching: In God's kingdom, you gain honor in a way that's backward from the ways of the world. Here's how: If you want to be first—if you want to have the most honor—you must be the slave of all. And here's the proof of the principle: The very one who has and deserves the most honor—the Son of Man—is one who humbles himself by giving his life "as a ransom for many."

# Honor and shame: A kingdom summary—dark side and bright side

The interaction between Jesus and the disciples concerning the desire of honor raises a question: *Is the pursuit of honor, the love of honor, the longing for honor—always sinful?* It appears that Jesus tells us, *No, there is an appropriate pursuit for honor.* 

However, first let's delve into the dark and sinful side of the *love of honor* that the Bible clearly reveals. Let's consider first some select passages in Genesis in the light of honor and shame.

We discover first of all that before sin there was no shame (Gen 2:25). Lewis Smedes describes it beautifully: "Adam and Eve walked naked with God in the cool of the garden and felt no shame. ... They felt no shame because they felt perfect trust. When they lost trust they felt shame. And so it was that 'the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them.<sup>308</sup> God provided a covering for their nakedness (Gen 3:21) through "garments of skins," thereby alleviating some of their shame and restoring some of their honor.<sup>9</sup>

8. Smedes, 63.

<sup>9.</sup> The *ESV Study Bible* notes: "Because God provides garments to clothe Adam and Eve, thus requiring the death of an animal to cover their nakedness, many see a parallel here related to (1) the system of animal sacrifices to atone for sin later instituted by God through the leadership of Moses in Israel, and (2) the eventual sacrifice death of Christ as an atonement for sin" (from *ESV Study Bible*, 57). This author agrees that these verses describe how humanity's sin problem of nakedness and shame (3:10–11) is solved by God's mercy through sacrifice (Gen 3:21). It follows that as blood was shed in Gen 3:21 for the sin and shame of Adam and Eve, so also Christ's blood was shed for the sin and shame of all humanity. Do these foundational verses in Genesis suggest that the meaning of Christ's atonement may be understood, in part, as the covering of shame? Could it be that humanity's need for the covering of shame is just as *theologically basic* as humanity's need for the forgiveness of guilt?

Origins of shame in Genesis—how the	sinful "love of honor" leads to shame		
Passage	Honor/shame dynamic		
Adam and Eve / The Fall			
And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (Gen 2:25).	<ul> <li>Adam and Eve lived in the honor of God's presence in the beatific Garden.</li> <li>Their condition is described as the absence of shame (not the absence of guilt nor the absence of fear).</li> </ul>		
He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (Gen 3:1).	<ul> <li>Satan challenges God's honor by questioning God's Word and integrity.</li> </ul>		
For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God (Gen 3:5)	• "You will be like God" is an appeal to pride, the sinful love of honor.		
So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate (Gen 3:6).	<ul> <li>The desire for increased honor (love of honor) is inherent in saying "the tree was to be desired to make one wise."</li> <li>Living in God's presence was not enough, a dishonor to God.</li> </ul>		
But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Gen 3:9–11).	<ul> <li>The sinful love of honor led to the Fall.</li> <li>Disobedience to God is equivalent to dishonoring God.</li> <li>Self-awareness about one's nakedness means shame.</li> <li>Shame leads to hiding because of fear.</li> </ul>		
cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life (Gen 3:17).	<ul> <li>The ground is cursed; their work will require pain— both of which connote shame</li> </ul>		
Cain a	nd Abel		
In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell (Gen 4:3–5).	<ul> <li>It is likely that giving the firstborn of his flock, as Abel did, was a more sacrificial offering than what Cain offered, expressing more gratitude and greater honor to God.</li> <li>God "had regard" for Abel's offering, but "he had no regard" for Cain's. The jealousy of Cain (love of honor/honor competition) led to the murder of Abel.</li> </ul>		
Tower of Babel			
Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth" (Gen 11:4).	<ul> <li>A clear expression of the love honor is contained in the phrase, "and let us make a name for ourselves." This is human-derived honor, a stark contrast to God- derived honor given Abraham when God promised him: "I will make your name great" (Gen 12:2).</li> <li>God disallowed it, confusing their languages to disperse them across the earth (Gen 11:9).</li> </ul>		

Figure 2.03: Select examples in Genesis-the love of honor leads to shame

Shame, as the result of the evil pursuit of honor, is at the very origin of humanity's sin in Genesis. "There is a prominent contrast in the Garden of Eden account (Gen 2:25; 3:7–10) between the pre-sin lack of shame, and the shame-related experiences (hiding, awareness of nakedness) after Eve and Adam ate the fruit. Thus the initial experience after sin entered the world seems to have been shame."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10.</sup> Dyrness and Kärkkäinen, 815.

Another clear expression of the sinful dimension of the love of honor is expressed in Isaiah 14 in the account of the fall of the King of Babylon (Is 14:12–14).<sup>11</sup> "You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; … I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly … I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'"

Of course, God condemns the King of Babylon for his arrogant pursuit of honor. God says through Isaiah, "But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit" (Isa 14:15).

From the Fall of humanity ... to the first murder ... to the origin of language ... and the fall of the King of Babylon ... there is clearly a very dark side to the love of honor as revealed in Scripture. The prideful love of honor is *so dark* that it brought destruction, pain, oppression, confusion, death—to the full spectrum of humanity.

However, this book will demonstrate that honor and shame has a bright and glorious side as well. In fact, you may be surprised to discover that we'll spend as much or more time on the *bright side* of honor and shame as on the dark side. But for now, here is the point:

Whether we observe *love of honor* as a value in the kingdom of darkness or *love of honor* as a value in the kingdom of God—you will discover honor and shame as a pervasive, pivotal cultural value and emotional dynamic in Scripture.

#### Love of honor—the bright side

We have seen the origins of the dark side of honor and shame in Genesis—how the sinful love of honor led to shame. We now turn to the *bright side, the glorious side* of the love of honor. From the Old Testament, I'll begin with two examples. The first example involves Moses; the second involves David:

#### "Show me your glory"

And the Lord said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." Moses said, "Please show me your glory." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live" (Ex 33:17–20).

*"Please show me your glory."* What a bold request! Moses wanted to behold the glory of God. His love of glory was expressed as the desire to essentially see God. Curiously, God did not chastise Moses for his desire. However, God could only partially grant Moses's request.

#### "Awake, my glory"

The second Old Testament example involves David when he was fleeing from Saul in the cave (Ps 57; 1 Sam 22). Here we find a magnificent expression of faith

<sup>11.</sup> In the immediate historical context, Isaiah 14:12–15 refers to the King of Babylon. This passage is sometimes described as the fall of Satan; this is because Satan is the leader of the kingdom of darkness, which in Revelation 18 is called Babylon.

in God. David laments his vulnerability and the darkness of this cave experience (Ps 57:1–4); he acknowledges the anxiety and fear he feels because Saul and his army are out to kill him. Remarkably, David then calls for God to be exalted and glorified "above the heavens" and "over all the earth" (v. 5).

Next, David speaks to his own soul—and to God:

My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast! I will sing and make melody! Awake, my glory! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn! I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations (Ps 57:7–9).

*"Awake, my glory!"* David is expressing his *longing for glory.* What is the Bible telling us? David had been anointed king by Samuel some years before (1 Sam 16:1–13), but he was still not king. In fact, here he was in a cave, afraid for his life! Would he ever become king and experience the honor and glory of his regal destiny?

In the midst of this dark cave, David envisions his regal identity being fully expressed—and having international, if not *global*, influence.<sup>12</sup> David describes what this global influence will look like: "*I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations.*"

#### Is there a God-honoring way to love honor and seek glory?

Consider Paul's words to the Romans:

He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing *seek for glory and honor and immortality*, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury (Rom 2:6–8). (Emphasis mine).

Notice Paul's description of believers: They are people "who by patience in welldoing seek for glory and honor and immortality;" it is to *them* that God "will give eternal life." And this is contrasted with "those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth." How can that be? How can seeking "glory and honor and immortality" be the opposite of "self-seeking"? To our Western Christian sensibilities, this seems dissonant, weird.

Consider also in John 5 (a chapter loaded with references to honor and glory) what Jesus said to the Pharisees:

How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? (John 5:44).

Here we see the unbelief of the Pharisees described as *not seeking glory*—the failure to "seek the glory that comes from the only God."

Another Scripture in the same vein is John 12:42–43. Jesus is speaking of "the authorities [who] believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it ... for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God."

<sup>12. &</sup>quot;I will awake the dawn" (Ps 57:8) is poetic speech for "I will make the sun rise"—an indirect way of saying "I will have influence beyond the horizon," i.e. global influence.

Jesus is making a comparison: He is comparing the love of *honor which comes from man*—to another kind of honor—*the honor which has its source in God himself*. Jesus is saying that there is a right and proper seeking of honor and glory from God. It's a reflection of honor/shame dynamic #1—love of honor.

### Glory to God and glory for humanity

As Christians, when we think of the word *glory* in the Bible, we rightly think of God. As Christians we believe that the glory of God is paramount in all of life. The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins this way:

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Perhaps the most concise statements about the crux of God's glory were written by Apostle Paul:

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen (Rom 11:36). ... So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). ... To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen (Eph 3:21).

But there is an aspect about this word *glory* in Scripture that is frequently ignored. It is this: *the many Scriptures in which "glory" refers to humanity.* In fact, of the 470 cases in which the words *glory, glorify, glorified,* or *glorious* appear in the English Standard Version of the Holy Bible, 139 refer to humanity.

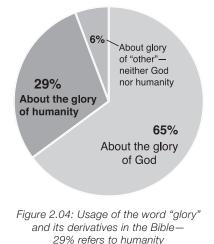
My research yielded these results: Of the English words in the Bible<sup>13</sup> translated as *glory*, *glorify*, *glorified*, and *glorious*...

- 65% relate to God and his domain.
- 29% relate to humanity.<sup>14</sup>
- 6% relate to "other"—neither God nor humanity.

For me, the surprise is that nearly one-third of the "glory verses" relate to humanity. Here's a short selection:

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor (Ps 8:5).

On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God (Ps 62:7).



<sup>13.</sup> This analysis was done using the *Holy Bible, English Standard Version*® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

<sup>14.</sup> There are eleven cases in which humanity's glory is embedded in the glory of Christ, so the "case" is counted twice. Some examples are 2 Cor 3:18; Col 1:27; 2 Thes 1:10, 12; 2:14; 2 Tim 2:10.

Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you (Isa 55:5).

How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? (John 5:44).

... for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God (John 12:43).

The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one (John 17:22).

To those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life (Rom 2:7).<sup>15</sup>

... that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom 8:21).

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory (1 Cor 2:7).

Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones (Jude 1:8).

What are we to make of all these references to the glory of humanity—the psalmist David praying, "Awake, my glory" ... believers seeking "the glory that comes from the only God" ... Jesus telling the Father about the glory "I have given to them" ... creation being set free and obtaining the "glory of the children of God" ... and believers being called the "glorious ones"?

All this biblical "glory and honor" about humanity is first of all attributable to all humans (despite the Fall) having been made in the image of a good and glorious God (Gen 1:27). It is then magnified by the believer's faith and identity in Christ.

Peter writes to believers in exile in Asia Minor, "So the honor is for you to believe" (1 Pet 2:7). This *longing for honor* relates to what it means to follow Jesus. This is an answer to humanity's struggle with shame—*and longing for honor*.

Let's observe the contrast in the chart on the next page between honor/shame dynamics in the kingdom of this world versus the honor/shame dynamics in the kingdom-reign of God.

When you read the Bible with an awareness of this *emotional* landscape—the love of/longing for honor and fear of shame—God's Word simply makes more sense and it has more impact. I contend that by incorporating the emotional variable in Scripture interpretation, you will come closer to understanding how the original authors and hearers of the Scriptures would have experienced God's Word. And remember, this is

<sup>15.</sup> Jewett comments on Rom 2:7: "Paul is deliberately employing honorific categories to appeal to his audience. ... Both glory and honor are central motivations in the culture of the ancient Mediterranean world, where young people were taught to emulate the behavior of ideal prototypes. ... That one should seek honor and glory was simply assumed in Rome. ... Later in Romans, Paul will link 'eternal life' more closely with grace in Christ (Rom 5:21; 6:21–22), thus removing it from the framework of a reward for good behavior. But there is no hint of this clarification in 2:7, which simply conforms to what Paul perceives to be the orientation of his audience." See Jewett, *Romans*, 205–6.

one of the goals of hermeneutics: Get as close as possible to how the original hearers and readers would have understood God's revelation—to try to stand in their shoes.

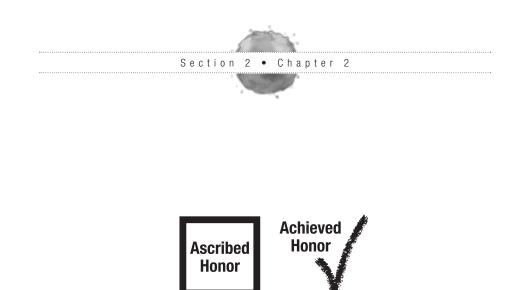
# A kingdom summary—dark side and bright side

Love of honor—kingdom of this world vs. kingdom-reign of God			
	Kingdom of this world	Kingdom-reign of God	
HONOR	Honor is self-derived: "Let us make a name for ourselves" (Gen 11:4)	Honor is God-derived: God says, "I will bless you and make your name great" (Gen 12:2)	
	Honor is located exclusively in human- based family, institutions, achievement	Honor is located in the kingdom of God and Christ the King	
	Shame is the loss of honor, and the fear of disconnection from one's family, people or other group	No shame for God's people when living in obedience under God's loving reign	
	Violence, exclusion, oppression, death	Peace, harmony, social progress, abundance	
	Destructive honor competition is inevitable	Destructive honor competition is avoidable	

Figure 2.05: Love of honor-kingdom of this world vs. kingdom-reign of God

#### Action points

- *Fast-forward:* To explore ways that the *love of honor* can shape a contextualized presentation of the gospel of Christ, turn to Section 3, Chapter 1.
- *Reflect:* Consider the location of your honor. (1) To what extent is your honor—the honor you actually *experience*—located in your family, job, wealth, sports team, ministry, education, or appearance? (2) To what extent is your honor—the honor you actually *experience*—located in Jesus Christ, his church, and his kingdom? How do (1) and (2) compare?
- *Bible study:* Do a word study in the Psalms on the word *glory* and of the related words *glorify, glorified,* and *glorious.* Examine how many refer to the glory of God and how many refer to the glory of humanity. What conclusions can you make from this comparison?
- *Teaching:* Develop a lesson about salvation incorporating the longing for honor and the covering of shame based on 1 Peter. (Alternatively, base your message on Romans 3:23, Romans 2:7–8, or John 5:44.)
- *Mission:* Some mission leaders and cross-cultural workers recognize the dark side of honor and shame (e.g., ethical compromise, honor-based violence). This can lead to looking down on honor/shame societies as culturally inferior. Can we also see the *bright side* of honor/shame as revealed in Scripture? In what ways might this impact your church or mission team?



# Honor/Shame Dynamic #2: Two Sources of Honor—Ascribed and Achieved

Why is this important?

- Shows how honor-status is attached to title, rank, family name, and social position (ascribed honor)—compared to status and respect gained by competition or aggression (achieved honor).
- Helps the Bible reader see the dramatic attention given by Scripture's authors to the ascribed and achieved honor of Jesus Christ.
- Helps pastors, teachers and counselors better communicate that the believer's immense *ascribed* honor in Jesus Christ finds expression in words such as *adoption, child of God, heir*—and *member* of the body of Christ.

# Definition

According to Jerome Neyrey, "Worth and value are either *ascribed* to individuals by others, or they are *achieved* by them."<sup>1</sup>

There are two sources of honor—ascribed and achieved.<sup>2</sup>

• Ascribed honor "refers to the granting of respect and given to a person from members of the two basic institutions of antiquity, namely: family/ kinship or state/politics."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1.</sup> Neyrey, Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew, 15.

<sup>2.</sup> This point is true for honor/shame societies, but is also true in general. People in all societies—whether they have honor and shame as their pivotal cultural value or not—have only two sources of honor: ascribed and achieved.

<sup>3.</sup> Neyrey, Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew, 15.

• Achieved honor refers to honor gained by "competition, aggression, and envy: ... Some scholars of the ancient world describe it as an 'agonistic society,' by which they point to its intensely competitive nature and the common envy shown successful persons."<sup>4</sup>

It is clear; *ascribed honor* is more about one's *being*—derived from family, kinship, tribe, place of birth, or title, regardless of individual merit. On the other hand, *achieved honor* is more about one's *behavior*—achieved honor is gained by action through honor competition in the arenas of education, sport, politics, warfare, or simply the daily "social game of push-and-shove." The diagrams used in Section 1 to describe the difference between shame and guilt can now also be extended to describe the difference between ascribed and achieved honor.



Figure 2.06: Ascribed honor relates more to one's being—"who I am;" achieved honor relates more to one's behavior—"what I do"

#### Examples

Let's begin with verses about the ascribed honor of Jesus Christ. First ...

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Mat 1:1).

The entire first chapter of Matthew is given to establish the honor of Christ's identity by recording the Jewish family line through which Jesus came. This was extremely important to the Jewish people, and it makes perfect sense that it appears in Matthew's gospel, since this gospel more than any other was written to the Jewish audience.

Secondly ...

and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Mat 3:17).

Following the baptism of Jesus, God the Father declares the honor of his Son by publicly stating his divine love and pleasure toward him. Now add to that the understanding that *family*—also referred to as *kinship*—is the starting point of each person's ascribed honor.

Speaking of the importance of family and kinship, New Testament scholar David deSilva says,

In the ancient world, people are not just taken on their "merits." Instead, their merits begin with the merits (or debits) of their lineage,

<sup>4.</sup> Ibid., 16. Agonistic behavior is defined as "any social behavior related to fighting. The term has broader meaning than aggressive behavior because it includes threats, displays, retreats, placating aggressors, and conciliation." See "Agonistic behaviour," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agonistic\_behavior, accessed 29 April 2014.

the reputation of their ancestral house. Greeks and Romans receive a basic identity from their larger family: for Romans this takes the form of including the clan name in the name of each individual.<sup>5</sup>

Suddenly, one begins to grasp that this public, divine declaration of the Father's love for his Son is intended to amplify Christ's ascribed honor for everyone watching and listening. For people in honor/shame societies, the force of this cannot be overstated.

Now let's turn to a classic passage about the *achieved* honor of Jesus Christ:

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:8–11).

Note the word, "Therefore." This word is a conjunction, linking the superexaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ with what he achieved on the cross. Christ's honor was, in this sense, earned or achieved, because of the humiliation he suffered and the work he accomplished ("It is finished," John 19:30)—through his shameful death by crucifixion and subsequent resurrection.

Below is a passage that combines both the ascribed honor and achieved honor of Jesus Christ—Hebrews 1:1–5, 8–9:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,

but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, *[ascribed honor]* through whom also he created the world.

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature *[ascribed honor]*, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power *[achieved honor]*. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high *[achieved honor]*,

having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs *[ascribed honor]*.

For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? [ascribed honor]

Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"? [ascribed honor]

... But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, [ascribed honor] the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." [achieved honor]

<sup>5.</sup> deSilva, 159.

The first chapter of Hebrews is all about the honor of one Person. The author is making an irrefutable case for the exalted honor of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. I contend that the author of Hebrews wants the reader to not just *know* something about Christ, but to *feel* something, to *emote* with obedience, to obey with emotion—in response to our highly exalted Savior. The author *feels astounded, amazed, terrified with delight* concerning the utterly supreme honor, authority, power and glory of Jesus Christ—and he wants the reader to have the same experience.

A Western Christian may observe the opening chapter of Hebrews in a detached, logical way—while the Eastern Christian from an honor/shame culture may perceive this with far more relevance and impact.

For the Western Christian, it would be like looking at a map called the Bible and seeing on that map a river called "The Honor and Glory of the Son of God." The Western believer says, "Ah, yes, there it is; that is a very big river, indeed."

Christians from an honor/shame culture—where the value of honor and shame dominates life—would be more likely to receive this passage of Scripture with deep emotional and life-impacting significance. Because of the significance for them of honor and shame, it is *unlike* seeing the name of the river on a map; it is more like *swimming* in that river of truth, being influenced by the strong current of the river, terrified by its depth while enjoying its life-giving vitality. The believer from an honor/shame culture cannot compartmentalize honor and shame as a facet of truth to be acknowledged, but swims in this honor and shame reality every hour of every day of his or her life.

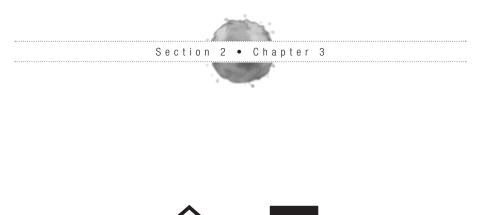
	Kingdom of this world	Kingdom-reign of God
Ascribed Honor Achieved Honor	Ascribed and achieved honor become corrupt and destructive when isolated from God's kingdom—leading to arrogance, pride, and competitive praise- seeking from others apart from God's praise.	<ul> <li>ASCRIBED HONOR</li> <li>Jesus has ascribed honor as Son of God, loved by the Father</li> <li>People gain a new source of honor by being born again, becoming children o God</li> <li>ACHIEVED HONOR</li> <li>Jesus has achieved honor as Savior of the world, conquering sin and shame, death and the devil</li> <li>Believers gain honor by serving and loving others</li> <li>Believers experience honor by abiding in a life-long cruciform journey of loving obedience in Christ</li> <li>God's people involved in athletic, educational, professional, or artistic accomplishment—performed for the glory of God</li> </ul>

### A kingdom summary—dark side and bright side

Figure 2.07: Ascribed and achieved honor-kingdom of this world vs. kingdom-reign of God

# Action points

- *Fast-forward:* To explore ways that the *two sources of honor, ascribed and achieved,* can shape a contextualized presentation of the gospel of Christ, turn to Section 3, Chapter 2.
- *Reflect:* How can the first chapter of Hebrews—describing the ascribed and achieved honor of Jesus Christ—be used in your personal devotional life to worship God? How might this be used in a small group worship experience?
- *Bible study:* When studying Scripture, attach more significance to names and titles. Since ancient Middle Eastern cultures were very hierarchical (not egalitarian), the ascribed honor inherent in titles carried real power and emotional weight—conveying respect and fear. Names and titles carry much more honorific meaning in the East than in the West.
- *Teaching:* How can you best portray the exalted wonder—the ascribed and achieved honor—of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Suggested passages: Philippians 2:5–11, Hebrews 1:1–14.
- *Mission:* When conducting your mission trips, cross-cultural partnerships, or other cross-cultural ministry, consider what impact your efforts are having on the ascribed *honor* of the people involved. How does this affect the honor or dignity of your partners? Of the community that your partners are serving?





# Honor/Shame Dynamic #3: Image of Limited Good

#### Why is this important?

- Emphasizes a strongly held value of honor/shame societies that is contrary to Western ideals.
- Contributes to an understanding of why honor competition is a continuous dynamic in the drama of Scripture.
- Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders were in constant honor competition; this helps explain—from a social science perspective—why this led to violence and why the Jews conspired to have Jesus crucified.
- Contributes to a rationale for the seemingly unending cycle of conflict and violence in some honor/shame societies, i.e., the Middle East.

### Definition

The image of limited good is "the belief that everything in the social, economic, natural universe ... everything desired in life: land, wealth, respect and status, power and influence ... exist in finite quantity and are in short supply."<sup>1</sup> If you gain, I lose ... it's a "zero-sum game."

<sup>1.</sup> Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew*, 18. Scholars call this the "*image* of limited good," because, in fact, "good" is not necessarily limited. This author considered calling this honor/shame principle "limited good" for the sake of simplicity, but rejected the idea. While *land* may be correctly considered finite and limited—wealth and power, honor and glory—may or may not be limited. The limitations are real only in the mind of the person or society, thus the description is apt: "the *image* of limited good." The Bible teaches that in Christ there is no "limited good."

All people do not view the world similarly. The industrialized West considers the world to be a limitless source of resources for an ever expanding economy that benefits all. A rising tide lifts all boats. But anthropologists who study other cultures, modern and ancient, inform us that other people see the world as a fixed and limited source of just so much grain, water, fertility, and honor. For them, this supply will never expand, and the benefits must be divided out between all people. Thus, one person or group's share increases only because it is being taken away from others. When people operating under the presumption that everyone is born into a family with only so much wealth, grain, siblings, and respect perceive others apparently getting more of the limited goods, the scene is set for conflict.<sup>2</sup>

#### Saul and David

Consider this account from the life of David—following his victory over the Philistine Goliath. The honor/shame dynamic of King Saul in relation to David is revealing:

As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands." And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" And Saul eyed David from that day on (1 Sam 18:6–9).

It is easy for us to recognize Saul's jealousy. But when you add to this the understanding that in an honor/shame culture, honor is a "limited good" (a zerosum game), the power of this value to influence behavior—particularly to *generate conflict*—is raised to another order of magnitude.

From an honor/shame perspective, King Saul saw that his honor as king was threatened by the *achieved* honor of David. Saul's very personhood, his total identity, was threatened by David. As David's honor rose in the hearts of the people of Israel, Saul's own honor fell—even though he was still king. Saul's honor was at stake, and David's dramatic increase in honor was to Saul the equivalent of a mortal threat. Therefore, Saul became obsessed with finding a way to kill David.

Contrary to the idea that Saul was perhaps mentally disturbed, his reaction was only logical. Since Saul believed in the concept of "limited good," it was inconceivable for him to celebrate David's victory with the people.

<sup>2.</sup> Neyrey and Stewart, 235. Of course, not everyone in the "industrialized West" has the view that "an ever expanding economy ... benefits all." Neyrey is broadly generalizing. In fact, the reader will note that a few pages further into this chapter, a chart by Darrow Miller characterizes the secular worldview of the West to reflect a "limited good" worldview.

### Paul in prison

In the New Testament, consider this passage from the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Observe the honor/shame dynamics, and in particular, how Paul completely overturns "the image of limited good."

What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all *ashamed*, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be *honored* in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account (Phil 1:18–24). (Emphasis mine.)

Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ and a Roman citizen—both great honors. However, Paul was in prison as he wrote this letter, which would normally be considered a low and shameful condition. But Paul wrote with great faith, "It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed" (1:20).

How does Paul's relationship with Jesus Christ give him the means to overturn "the image of limited good" ... turning "win-lose" into "win-win?"

At the crux of this dynamic shift is Paul's life in Christ. His expectation is that, rather than being ashamed of imprisonment or death, he will trust in Christ. Rather than being ashamed by disloyalty or dishonor toward God, Paul will "with full courage" allow "Christ [to] be honored" in his body, "whether by life or by death." How can Paul do this?

Here's how: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

The win-lose drama of Paul's imprisonment and possible execution is turned into a sublime declaration of irrepressible victory in Jesus Christ. It overturns the dynamics of *win-lose* and the "image of limited good"—through the *win-win* of a life totally immersed in the resurrection life and supreme honor of Jesus Christ. Paul did not locate his honor in his achievements, his family, title, or circumstances. Paul located his honor in *the most honorable One,* Jesus Christ.

Paul goes on in other parts of his joy-filled letter to demonstrate how this works—not just for him during his imprisonment—but for all believers, regardless of their circumstances. In the latter part of his letter he writes, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19). Paul was directly challenging this widespread belief of the "image of limited good." He revealed that for all Christians, there is no "limited good" in Christ. There is, in fact, an unlimited storehouse of provision for physical needs, for blessing, and for honor through Christ. Paul calls it God's "riches in glory in Christ Jesus" — potentially available by faith to all persons who follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

### Reinforcing the cycle of poverty

In *Discipling Nations: The Power of Truth to Transform Cultures*, Miller and Guthrie describe how societies can perpetuate a culture of poverty primarily because of their basic worldview. The *image of limited good* is completely at odds with what Miller calls the "development ethic" that is contained in the "transforming story" of the Bible.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the book, Miller and Guthrie compare three basic worldviews: *animism, theism,* and *secularism.* These basic three worldviews have drastically different perspectives about nature. One of the society-transforming ideas that comes from the Bible is a view of nature called the "open system."<sup>4</sup> Below is a chart, "The Nature of Nature,"<sup>5</sup> which shows the contrasts:

	Animism	Theism	Secularism
Ruler	Nature	GOD	Man
Perspective	Biocentric	Theocentric	Anthropocentric
Nature	Capricious	Open System (Created)	Closed System
Man	A Spirit	A Mind, The Image of God (A living soul)	A Mouth, The Highest Animal
Resources	Limited Good	Positive Sum	Zero Sum
Man's Role	Worshiper / Victim	Steward / Regent	Consumer / Miner

Figure 2.08: Miller's "The Nature of Nature"

In a closed system, everyone competes for the same resources. As stated above, "Everything desired in life: land, wealth, respect and status, power and influence ... exist in finite quantity and are in short supply."

But those who believe in an "open system" are not bound by the *image of limited good*. Miller writes, "Development is thus more about discovering and exploring God's world than merely trying to help people survive. It is about creating new resources, not redistributing scarce ones."

Secularists, and those influenced by their teaching, have a hard time with this. They are locked into a worldview that takes as an article of faith the idea that "spaceship earth" is headed for a crash. Like all pessimists, the ecological glass for them is always half empty. They believe we live in a closed system. Their brothers in the mindset of poverty, the animists, do not believe in natural laws, which cuts at the knees any kind of scientific progress. Those who look at the world as God's creation, however, have a radically different outlook. They see a world of potentialities limited only by their own creativity and moral stewardship.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3.</sup> Miller and Guthrie, 243–79.

<sup>4.</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>5.</sup> Ibid., 149. Figure 7.2.

<sup>6.</sup> Ibid., 148.

Miller is drawing broad generalizations, to be sure, but in the context of his book's multifaceted overall theme, it is valid. There are many reasons for chronic poverty, some of which are oppressive *external* social or political forces. But among the *internal* dynamics that contribute to chronic poverty is a worldview that clings to the *image of limited good.*<sup>7</sup>

In the economic development or relative prosperity of nations, *ideas matter*, including whether a nation clings to the "idea" of *limited good*. Former Harvard economics and history professor David S. Landes wrote a landmark book, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor*. In his summary he stated, "If we learned anything from the history of economic development, it is that culture makes all the difference."<sup>8</sup>

### A kingdom summary—dark side and bright side

Image of limited good—kingdom of this world vs. kingdom-reign of God			
	Kingdom of this world	Kingdom-reign of God	
	<ul> <li>Contributes to the onset of violence toward self and others</li> <li>Reinforces culture of poverty and a mindset of despair</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>There is no limited good in Jesus Christ and the riches of his glory</li> <li>Abundance for all is the mindset of God's kingdom; this generates hope and transformation in families, communities, peoples, nations</li> </ul>	

Figure 2.09: Image of limited good-kingdom of this world vs. kingdom-reign of God

We will further explore the dynamics of violence in relation to honor/shame later in this book.

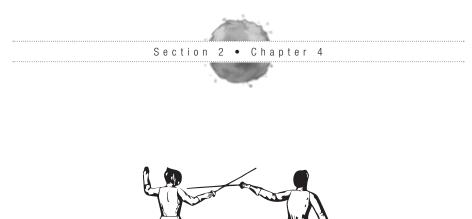
#### Action points

- *Fast-forward:* To explore how the *image of limited good* can shape a contextualized presentation of the gospel of Christ, turn to Section 3, Chapter 3.
- *Reflect:* In what ways has God's "riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19) helped you overcome a sense of inadequacy or satisfied your longing for honor?
- *Bible study:* Read through the Gospel of Mark in one sitting, keeping in mind how the honor/shame variables worked together in a dark symmetry of religious and political powers to generate violence and crucify the Son of God.

<sup>7.</sup> See Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus, *The Poverty of Nations: A Sustainable Solution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013). The book offers a multitude of historical evidences and Scripture-based principles that support my contention that some honor/shame dynamics such as the *image of limited good* inhibit economic development, and thus perpetuate poverty. See especially pages 275–307; as I read these pages, I discovered that many of the principles of economic growth are antithetical to some of the values of honor/shame cultures.

<sup>8.</sup> David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 516, as quoted in Grudem and Asmus, 317.

- *Teaching:* In the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand (Luke 9:10–17), explore how the image of limited good is overturned by the miracle of Jesus.
- *Mission:* In ministering to the poor and oppressed, to what degree does your ministry sometimes have the attitude of the "image of limited good"? This would be reflected in thinking, "They cannot help themselves, we must do it for them." How can you explore together with your ministry partners their *assets and blessings*, rather than their deficits and limitations, pursuing together the *unlimited good* and abundance of the reign of God?





# Honor/Shame Dynamic #4: Challenge and Riposte

### Why is this important?

- Reveals honor competition as an ever-present dynamic in the drama of Scripture.
- Gives a specific four-part structure to the honor competition characterizing the confrontations between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders.
- Magnifies the extent of Christ's victories—along with his superior intelligence and humanity—in his honor competition with the religious leaders.
- Contributes to an explanation for the seemingly unending cycle of conflict and violence in some honor/shame societies, such as the Middle East.
- Gives insight to the radical nature of Jesus' upside-down honor code.

# Definition

"Riposte" is a term used in the sport of fencing, meaning "a quick return thrust following a parry." Socially it means, "a quick clever reply to an insult or criticism." There are four steps to this protocol or social code of challenge and riposte—or "push-and-shove."

- Claim of worth or value
- Challenge to that claim or refusal to acknowledge the claim
- Riposte or defense of the claim
- Public verdict of success awarded to either claimant or challenger<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1.</sup> Neyrey, Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew, 20.

When I first learned about this honor/shame dynamic, it placed a whole new light on the many encounters between Jesus and the Pharisees. Most if not all of the interactions recorded in the Gospels between Jesus and the Pharisees were conducted in public. These interactions, when seen through the cultural lens of honor and shame, follow the rules of the "honor game," also known as *challenge and riposte*.

# Examples

In Matthew 12, you'll see ... Jesus' claim of worth or value ... the challenge by the Pharisees to Jesus' honor ... the riposte by Jesus in defense of his claim ... and the public verdict. You will also observe that the riposte by Jesus consisted of both direct and indirect communication, in addition to a miracle.

- <sup>8</sup> "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."
- <sup>9</sup> He went on from there and entered their synagogue.
- <sup>10</sup> And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him.
- <sup>11</sup> He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?
- <sup>12</sup> "Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."
- <sup>13</sup> Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other.
- <sup>14</sup> But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.
- <sup>15</sup> Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all
- <sup>16</sup> and ordered them not to make him known ... .
- <sup>23</sup> And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" (Mat 12:8–16, 23).

**1. Claim of worth or value:** Matthew 12:8 is a claim by Jesus concerning his worth and value. Verses 1–7 of this chapter describe the confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning the disciples plucking and eating grain on the Sabbath. Verse 8 is the verdict—"For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

**2. Challenge to that claim or refusal to acknowledge the claim:** Verse 10 displays the challenge by the Pharisees to Jesus' claim. "And they asked him, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'—so that they might accuse him."

**3. Riposte or defense of the claim:** Jesus' riposte, or defense, is in three powerful parts.

First, Jesus uses indirect communication. "He said to them, 'Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it

and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep!" (vv. 11–12).<sup>2</sup> Jesus describes a sheep in desperate need being rescued by its shepherd—a word-picture that goes beyond reason to connect heart-to-heart. Jesus answers their challenge indirectly.

Second, Jesus adds a declarative direct response. Jesus says straightforwardly, "So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (v. 12). The statement is dripping with irony. As I imagine the crowd watching, I can almost hear them laughing with Jesus at the Pharisees.

Third, Jesus adds to his words an action—he performs a miracle: "Then he said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other" (v. 13).

This three-part riposte to the Pharisees' challenge was so powerful that "the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him" (v. 14). Why were they so enraged? Because their honor and standing in the public sphere took a huge hit, while at the same time, the honor and renown of Jesus was skyrocketing. This led to:

**4. Public verdict of success awarded to either claimant or challenger.** "And many followed him, and he healed them all and ordered them not to make him known. ... And all the people were amazed, and said, 'Can this be the Son of David?' (vv. 15, 23). The public verdict of increased honor for Jesus is represented by the words, "And many followed him" and "all the people were amazed."<sup>3</sup>

On the facing page is another example of *challenge and riposte;* it is contained in Luke 13:10–17.

As you read through the gospels, you can see these steps unfold time and again. Keep in mind that step four—*public verdict of success awarded to either claimant or challenger*—is not always explicitly stated. Since Jesus won every honor competition between himself and the religious leaders, it was not always necessary for the gospel writers to state the obvious.

Jerome Neyrey puts it this way:

This peer game of push-and-shove can be played in any of the typical forums of social life: marketplace, gymnasium, synagogue, banquet with one's male companions, and the like. From our reading of the Gospels, it seems to have occurred whenever Jesus stepped into the public space. The very pervasiveness of this challenge-riposte game indicates that Jesus was both claiming prestige and worth (as God's agent) and achieving a splendid reputation as prophet, teacher, and healer. The fact that he was so regularly challenged ... indicates that he was a very honorable person who was worthy of allegiance and loyalty. It is to his credit that he was both envied (Matt. 27:18) and challenged.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2.</sup> Jesus is pointing out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, causing them a loss of honor or "face."

<sup>3.</sup> In honor/shame cultures the social "game" of challenge-riposte can readily escalate to violence, and we shall see that Jesus teaches us to abandon this game of oneupmanship. Jesus engaged in *challenge and riposte* not so much as an example to believers, but because *he had to*. Because of Jesus' holiness as the Son of God and his very life purpose, it was by necessity that he challenged the status quo. Jesus engaged with his culture in such a way as to identify himself as the Messiah to provoke his own death in fulfillment of all that was written.

<sup>4.</sup> Neyrey, Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew, 20.

Challenge & riposte: Four steps	Jesus heals a woman with a disabling spirit	Comment	
1. Claim of worth or value	Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. (Luke 13:10–12).	Note the public nature of the situation—in the synagogue with everyone watching. Jesus' claim of worth is that he is able to heal the woman and set her free—and to do so in violation of the Jewish Sabbath codes.	
2. Challenge to that claim or refusal to acknowledge the claim	But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day" (Luke 13:13–14).	Jesus undermined the honor of the synagogue ruler by challenging the Sabbath codes. In response, the "indignant" synagogue ruler challenged Jesus' right to heal on the Sabbath.	
3. Riposte or defense of the claim	Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 13:15–16).	Jesus reveals that compassion and mercy is at the heart of God's law. The phrase, <i>"Does not each of you,"</i> suggests that Jesus is not just speaking to the leader of the synagogue but also the whole crowd.	
4. Public verdict of success awarded to either claimant or challenger	As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him (Luke 13:17).	The crowd is delighted; the public verdict is that Jesus wins the honor competition. Moreover, "his adversaries were put to shame"— which ultimately fueled violence against Jesus.	

Figure 2.10: Challenge and riposte in Luke 13:10–17

# The cosmic challenge and riposte

The above examples of *challenge and riposte* are representative of all the interactions between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders. Time after time, Jesus won each honor competition with these men. In doing so, two things resulted. First, he exposed their evil origins and motivations (John 8:44–47); second, by exposing them, he incurred their violence against him—a conspiracy that led to his death.

Notice the paradox: Jesus won every public "game" of *challenge and riposte* in conversation with the Pharisees. But winning these honor competitions created so much jealousy among the Pharisees that it led to his shameful death by crucifixion, an apparent final humiliation of Jesus. Christ's purposeful submission to all that the Father willed through the cross required that "when he was reviled, he did not revile in return" (1 Pet 2:23).

To human observers at the time of the crucifixion, the cross seemed to be the destruction of Christ, when in fact, the murder of God's Son was ordained by God (Acts 2:23)—and only led to a cosmic *riposte*, a conquest of much larger proportions. The death and resurrection of Christ comprised a victory over the ultimate enemy—*sin-and-death-and-the-kingdom-of-darkness*—the great adversary of the kingdom of God and all humanity.

# Christians follow the example of Jesus

In the cross we see Christ's reaction to the violence against him: Submit to the will of God (Luke 22:42) in order to gain a much greater victory. He absorbed the shaming attacks of his human enemies rather than taking revenge. Retaliation was not in God's plan for Jesus. Likewise, the practice of retaliation is outside of God's will for Christians.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught his disciples to abandon the culturally accepted practice of retaliation and defending one's honor through violence—or through playing the "game" of *challenge and riposte*.

You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Mat 5:38–44).

Jerome Neyrey interprets this to mean that followers of Jesus are to simply "vacate the playing field"<sup>5</sup> of the honor/shame game of *challenge and riposte*.

During the episode of Christ's arrest, interrogation, flogging and crucifixion, Jesus did not respond with a *riposte*—despite the fact that he was insulted, shamed, and reviled. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter attempted to physically defend Jesus, cutting off the ear of Malchus, servant of the high priest (John 18:10). Jesus swiftly squashed this response: "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Mat 26:52–53).

Jesus did not have to defend himself. He knew that, ultimately, his honor was eternally secure and would be vindicated when he rose from the dead (Mark 10:34, cf. Phil 2:9–11).

## Peter got the message

The same Peter who had tried to defend Jesus learned his lesson. Many years later he wrote to Gentile believers that Jesus is an example for all Christians:

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly (1 Pet 2:23).

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling,

<sup>5.</sup> This is the phrase Neyrey uses. He contends that Jesus is calling his followers, particularly males, to "vacate the playing field," so that rather than gaining honor in the traditional way through public game-playing, they are gaining honor by living in the kingdom of God in joyful obedience to their King. See Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew*, 214.

but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing (1 Pet 3:8–9).

When Christians are challenged by unbelievers concerning their life in Christ, the only acceptable *riposte* for a Christian is one that is infused by the gentle wisdom of Jesus:

But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect (1 Pet 3:15).

David deSilva describes the passage in 1 Peter this way: "The Christian is challenged to answer the hostile challenge with generosity, the violent challenge with the courageous refusal to use violence, the challenge in the form of a curse with a blessing from God's inexhaustible resources of goodness and kindness."<sup>6</sup>

Is there any kind of rivalry that is acceptable for those who claim to be followers of Christ? *Yes.* It is a rivalry of affectionate honor: "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor" (Rom 12:10).<sup>7</sup>

Before moving on to the next principle of honor/shame societies, let's briefly go back to the dark side of honor and shame. You will see how the dynamics of certain honor/shame features work together in a dangerous synergy which leads to a greater likelihood of violence.

Honor/shame arithmetic

# Honor, shame, conflict

These three features of honor/shame societies love of honor, the image of limited good, and challenge and riposte may be considered variables in the equation of violence.

Broadly speaking, when these dynamics are present in individuals, families and peoples, the result is a greater propensity for violence.

As stated in Section 1, Chapter 5, there are two

# Love of honor Image of limited good Image of limited good Challenge & riposte

<sup>6.</sup> See David deSilva's chapter, "Turning Shame into Honor: The Pastoral Strategy of 1 Peter" in *The Shame Factor: How Shame Shapes Society*, eds. Jewett, Alloway, and Lacey, 175.

<sup>7.</sup> The *no-retaliation-ethic* taught by Jesus is also re-articulated by Paul in Romans 12:14–21. Moreover, Paul instructed the church at Philippi, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves" (Phil 2:3). ESV 2002 uses "rivalry" in place of "selfish ambition." Rivalry is another word for honor competition, the "social game" of *challenge and riposte*.

*attack modes* in the "Compass of Shame" by which violence manifests itself in honor/shame societies:

- "Attack self"—violence directed internally—against oneself (depression, self-afflicted wounds, suicide). This is more common in societies where *social harmony* trumps violence against others.
- **"Attack other"**—violence directed externally—against others (honor-based violence such as honor killings, kidnapping, etc.). This is more common in societies where violence (such as honor killings) is an acceptable form of protest.

# A kingdom summary—dark side and bright side

Challenge and riposte—kingdom of this world vs. kingdom-reign of God					
	Kingdom of this world	Kingdom-reign of God			
	<ul> <li>Many forms of honor competition lead to conflict, revenge, violence, destruction, death</li> <li>Cyclical win-lose competition magnifies the problem—between individuals, families, peoples, nations; making it seemingly endless</li> <li>Some rivalry may be socially acceptable (athletic, educational, business), but still not glorify God</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>As the only true king, Jesus rightfully reigns; he won every honor competition in the human arena (with religious and political leaders)—and cosmic arena (with the kingdom of darkness)</li> <li>The cross, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ form a cosmic riposte against all evil</li> <li>All rivalry between Christians is forbidden except outdoing one another in serving, showing honor</li> <li>When Christians locate their honor in King Jesus, they have no honor deficit; this frees them from the need for honor competition and its destructive force</li> </ul>			

Figure 2.12: Challenge and riposte-kingdom of this world vs. kingdom-reign of God

# Action points

- *Fast-forward:* To explore ways that *challenge and riposte* can shape a contextualized presentation of the gospel of Christ, turn to Section 3, Chapter 4.
- *Reflect:* When was the last time you were offended and tempted to defend yourself and engage in rivalry—but because of your deeply felt awareness of your own honor in Christ, you withheld from striking back by words or actions?
- *Bible study:* Read through one of the Gospels in your daily devotional time and make note of every conversation that occurs in public between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Observe the degree to which the dynamics of challenge and riposte are present in each occurrence.
- *Teaching:* When teaching on the Gospels, don't miss the humor of Jesus when he responds to the challenges of the Jewish religious leaders. Emphasize

the intelligence, irony and humor that Jesus uses in his various ripostes. For example, Luke 15:7 is loaded with irony, even humor.

• *Mission:* Rivalry can flourish among mission colleagues, mission teams, and on mission trips. To what extent is this part of your team? It is crucial for leaders to exhibit servanthood and humility. The only kind of honor competition befitting Christians is when they try to out-serve one another (Mark 10:43–44), or "Outdo one another in showing honor" (Rom 12:10).

This *partial preview* has been made available to invite pre-publication sales.

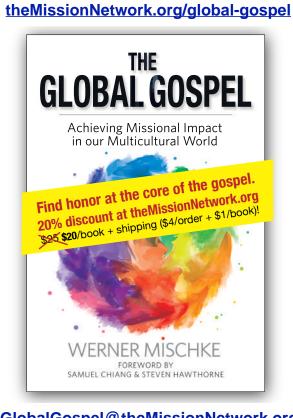
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# A Global Gospel for Our Multicultural World

# A Global Gospel for Our Multicultural World

IN SECTION 1, WE DEMONSTRATED that Western theology has a blind spot concerning honor and shame, and that shame is an extremely serious sinful pathology in our world. In Section 2, we examined nine basic features of honor and shame in the Bible—and one honor/shame motif.

We have been made aware of the unethical dimensions of honor/shame by looking at the dark side of each of the various honor/shame dynamics. But we have also looked at the bright side, in which honor/shame dynamics are clearly a part of the kingdom-reign of God.

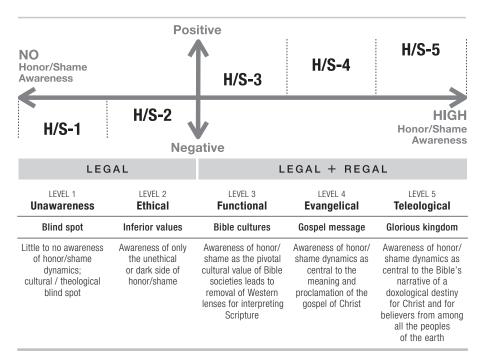


Figure 3.01: H/S-1 to H/S-5: Levels of awareness of honor and shame (for full chart see Appendix 2) Referring to Figure 3.01, on the previous page, we have thus moved beyond level H/S-1—"Unawareness"—to the "Ethical" level of H/S-2, and onward into level H/S-3, the "Functional" level.

In the "Functional" level we discovered how we can *use* honor/shame dynamics to better interpret the Scriptures. We also learned about another function: knowing about honor/shame dynamics helps us better understand, and thus build relationships, with people from the Majority World.

Moreover, recalling our concern for the unreached and unevangelized peoples of the world, we considered the fact that thousands of Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and tribal peoples are collectivistic rather than individualistic. They are therefore much more motivated by honor/shame dynamics than Western peoples.

We posed this question at the end of Section 1: *Considering the pervasive sinful pathology of shame in our world, is the gospel of Jesus Christ robust enough, comprehensive enough, global enough to provide the cure?* We answer, YES!

A related question, however, is whether our witness to this good news actually reflects the comprehensive fullness of what the gospel of Christ can do—not only for the guilt of humanity, but also for its deeply sinful pathology of shame.

Therefore, we now move into Section 3, which is called "A Global Gospel for Our Multicultural World." This section lifts us to level H/S-4. This is the "Evangelical" level. It is at this level that we will discover how the gospel message of Jesus Christ can be articulated using any one or all of the honor/shame dynamics. We will discover the ample scriptural material that shows how the atonement of Jesus Christ overlaps with honor and shame.

We will discover that honor/shame dynamics are central to the meaning and proclamation of the gospel of Christ.

### Caution—innovation ahead

I believe that the contents in this section represent what, for some, will be innovative and perhaps controversial, so I want to lay a strong foundation. This introduction is therefore rather lengthy in laying that foundation and consists of three parts:

**Overview:** In this first part, I emphasize the bias which Westerners often carry, referencing seven leading Christian scholars from around the world. The various quotes and comments from these scholars have been selected to pointedly address the issue of Western theological bias and the need for greater contextualization. *Warning:* Many North American and Western readers may feel uncomfortable with this material.

**Gospel seed:** In the second part, I will explain the concept of the "seed of the gospel"—husk and kernel—for the purpose of contextualizing a *global gospel*.

**Conversation:** In the third part, I will present an approach to contextualizing the gospel that features a "conversation within Scripture" between *the atonement of Christ* and the Bible's *pivotal cultural value of honor and shame* so that fresh presentations of the gospel can be developed that may better resonate among people in honor/shame cultures.

These three items will form the basis for the following ten chapters of Section 3.

# AN OVERVIEW: Western theological bias and the need for contextualization

# David J. Bosch (1929–1992)<sup>1</sup>

Bosch's massive work of scholarship, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, has much to contribute to the discussion in this book. In writing about the colonial mission period, Bosch states:

In chapter 9 of this study, ... I have stressed the decisive influence of Western colonialism, cultural superiority feelings, and "manifest destiny" exercised on the Western missionary enterprise and the extent to which this compromised the gospel. ... By the time the large-scale Western colonial expansion began, Western Christians were unconscious of the fact that their theology was culturally conditioned; they simply assumed that it was supra-cultural and universally valid. And since Western culture was implicitly regarded as Christian, it was equally self-evident that this culture had to be exported together with the Christian faith.<sup>2</sup>

Bosch speaks of the "danger of absolutism of contextualization," which I take to be reflected in the often-assumed principle that, *the Western presentation of the gospel is universally resonant for all cultures.* 

This is, in fact, what has happened in Western missionary outreach where theology, contextualized in the West, was in essence elevated to gospel status and exported to other continents as a package deal. Contextualism thus means universalizing one's own theological position, making it applicable to everybody and demanding that others submit to it.<sup>3</sup>

Bosch then argues that the West is not alone in this tendency. It's part of human nature to think ethnocentrically—to be unaware of one's own cultural or theological bias. "If Western theology has not been immune to this tendency, neither are Third-World contextual theologies. A new imperialism in theology then replaces the old."<sup>4</sup>

Could it be that the days of *colonialism in mission methods* may be largely behind us—while *colonialism in theology* is still an issue? The Western Christian academy still dominates, and Western theological approaches are usually considered universally valid by Western mission practitioners and cross-cultural workers. Ponder the many Western organizations that offer theological training for all pastors anywhere—all with an unconscious Western theological bias. For

<sup>1.</sup> David Jacobus Bosch was an influential missiologist and theologian from South Africa. He is widely remembered for his book *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991). This work is regarded as a "magnum opus" of Christian scholarship and one of the most comprehensive, thoroughly researched, and frequently referenced books on the mission of the Christian church. He was a member of the Dutch Reformed Church and fought for many years—courageously and counter-culturally—against apartheid in South Africa. He was Professor of Missiology at the University of South Africa in Pretoria. See "David Bosch," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\_Bosch, accessed 30 December 2013.

<sup>2.</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 448. Bosch's chapter "Mission as Inculturation" (447–57) is an excellent overview about the problem of bias.

<sup>3.</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>4.</sup> Ibid.

the massive short-term mission movement, this is certainly the case. It's difficult to come to terms with the fact that the "Western air" we breathe actually influences the way we *think-and-do theology*. Moreover, does not theology affect mission practice and methodology? Considering the West's theological blind spot about honor and shame, on this count alone, I contend that the era of colonialism in world missions is not really over.<sup>5</sup>

# Samuel Escobar<sup>6</sup>

"As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21). In Samuel Escobar's *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone,* he references John 20:21 as "not only a mandate for mission, but a model for mission style."<sup>7</sup> Reflecting on his participation in the Lausanne global mission consultations, Escobar writes:

When in the light of biblical imperatives we revised some of the traditional ways of doing mission, we realized to what degree that pattern had become just a human enterprise and was in danger of being merely the religious side of the expansion of one culture and one empire.

Essentially the shift to the emphasis of John's version of the [Great] Commission *on the way* in which Jesus himself accomplished his mission means the abandonment of the imperial mission mentality. Imperial missiology carried on missionary work from a position of superiority: political, military, financial, technological. While "the cross and the sword" symbolized it at the height of Iberian mission in the 16th century, "commerce and Christianity" symbolized it at the height of Protestant European mission in the 19th century. And in our lifetime "information technology and gospel" has come to symbolize it. In the imperial missiology paradigm, Christianity is thus dependent on the prop and tutelage of another powerful partner. ... The paradigm shift that this understanding requires is still underway, especially among the evangelical missionary establishment.<sup>8</sup>

Later in the book, Escobar reflects on the habit of Western Christians to impose their theology on Christians of the Majority World while being unaware of the "social conditioning" that influences it. Quoting American missionary William Dyrness, "The day is surely past when we simply allow Third World believers to have their say while we Western theologians prepare the definite answers to

<sup>5.</sup> Commenting on theological colonialism as a negative impact of globalization, Darrell L. Whiteman writes: "The bad news is that people are likely to try to dominate the conversation from a position of power, which in turn creates a new form of ecclesiastical and theological hegemony. Once again, it will look like the West is trying to dominate the world, not with economic structural adjustment policies that create poverty but with theological arrogance." From *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, eds. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), Kindle edition locations 1184–86.

<sup>6.</sup> Samuel Escobar is a leading Latin American theologian. A native of Peru, he served as professor of missiology at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. He was also president of United Bible Societies and International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.

<sup>7.</sup> Escobar, 25.

<sup>8.</sup> Ibid., 26.

their questions. For now we recognize that if we listen carefully we find our own assumptions challenged and our thinking sharpened." Escobar continues:

The acute question of the social conditioning of theological perception is one of the key points at which presuppositions are challenged and theological understanding may be sharpened. ... This also implies the clarification of the historical conditions within which Western theological categories developed, in order to show their limitations as ways of reading Scripture.<sup>9</sup>

For example, if we as North American Christians do not recognize that we have a "socially conditioned" bias that prioritizes the individual over the group, we will be more inclined to read Scripture as though it is always *written to me, the individual,* rather than *written to God's people, the community.* If we as Western Christians do not recognize that we have a "socially conditioned" bias that prioritizes the *legal* over the *regal* aspects of the gospel, we will unwittingly ignore the many references to the gospel of the kingdom in the New Testament.

Escobar is clearly calling for a new humility on the part of Western Christians with regard to our theology—to grapple with the fact that our beliefs are, in part, "socially conditioned" into "Western theological categories."

### Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998)<sup>10</sup>

We referenced Newbigin earlier. "We must start with the basic fact that there is no such thing as a pure gospel if by that is meant something which is not embodied in a culture. ... Every interpretation of the gospel is embodied in some cultural form." Newbigin continues: "The missionary does not come with the pure gospel and then adapt it to the culture where she serves: she comes with a gospel which is already embodied in the culture by which the missionary was formed."<sup>11</sup> Later in his book, he writes about the danger of a *domesticated gospel*.

The result then is that the world is not challenged at its depth but rather absorbs and domesticates the gospel and uses it to sacralize its own purposes. We have seen that happen in the history of the old churches of Western Christendom. It is the experience of the younger churches of the East and South which has alerted us to this domestication of the gospel in our culture. ... True contextualization accords to the gospel its rightful primacy, its power to penetrate every culture and to speak within each culture, in its own speech and symbol, the word which is both No and Yes, both judgment and grace.<sup>12</sup>

I contend that the Christian West (and we are speaking here of the evangelical church) is exporting and promoting a *domesticated gospel*, one that reinforces its own Western theological biases. Moreover, to the degree that the Christian West

9. Ibid., 137.

<sup>10.</sup> Lesslie Newbigin (1909–1998) "was a British theologian, missiologist, missionary and author. Though originally ordained within the Church of Scotland, Newbigin spent much of his career serving as a missionary in India and became affiliated with the Church of South India and the United Reformed Church, becoming one of the Church of South India's first bishops. A prolific author who wrote on a wide range of theological topics, Newbigin is best known for his contributions to missiology and ecclesiology." See "Lesslie Newbigin," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesslie\_Newbigin, accessed 30 December 2013.

<sup>11.</sup> Newbigin, 144.

<sup>12.</sup> Ibid., 152.

*discourages* an indigenous Christian community from using its own "speech and symbols" to create its own theology—it thereby hinders the maturing of that indigenous church.

### Soong-Chan Rah<sup>13</sup>

Soong-Chan Rah's *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* addresses the white cultural captivity of the American evangelical church. Rah argues that this cultural captivity has been expressed in a variety of ways, including paternalism in world missions.

In the history of world missions, one of the most significant concerns is the paternalism and cultural insensitivity that may be a part of the missionary enterprise. Because of an existing imbalance of power, the movement of the gospel message from Western culture to non-western culture yields a system of dependence and results in a cultural hegemony.<sup>14</sup>

Normally, I have thought about paternalism as an attitude problem (that of superiority) rather than a theological problem. Perhaps it is both. I have come to believe that an individualistic, law-oriented gospel that addresses the problem of guilt to the exclusion of the problem of shame is a form of cultural hegemony. Rah would add that there's another problem: A gospel that addresses the problem of *individual personal sins* while ignoring *social, systemic sins* of racism, consumerism, or materialism is likewise seeing the gospel from only one dimension.<sup>15</sup> He recommends that we look at the gospel from a variety of perspectives—like the way we can watch a football game from various vantage points, various "seats," in a stadium:

It is the arrogance of Western, white captivity to assume that one's own cultural point of view is the *be all* and *end all* of the gospel story. Every seat has its advantages and disadvantages, and it is imperative for the entire global community of believers to learn from one another in order to more fully understand the depth of the character of God.<sup>16</sup>

### Tite Tiénou<sup>17</sup>

Tite Tiénou references the dramatic southward shift of the world Christian movement and how this can help rectify the misperception of Christianity as a Western religion.

<sup>13. &</sup>quot;Rev. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah is Milton B. Engebretson Associate Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois, and the author of *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, 11: InterVarsity Press, 2009). Rah is formerly the founding Senior Pastor of the Cambridge Community Fellowship Church (CCFC), a multi-ethnic, urban ministry-focused church committed to living out the values of racial reconciliation and social justice in the urban context." See *Profrah.com*, http://www.profrah.com/about.html, accessed 30 December 2013.

<sup>14.</sup> Rah, Kindle edition locations 2178-81.

<sup>15.</sup> Ibid. Chapter 2 is "Consumerism and Materialism: The Soul of Western, White Cultural Captivity" (Kindle edition locations 679–81). Chapter 3 is "Racism: The Residue of Western, White Cultural Captivity" (Kindle edition locations 1000–1001).

<sup>16.</sup> Ibid., Kindle edition locations 2301-04.

<sup>17.</sup> Tite Tiénou is co-provost, senior vice president of education and dean at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. He is also professor of theology of mission. Dr. Tiénou has served as president and dean of Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de l'Alliance Chrétienne in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa. He also served as a pastor in his native Burkina Faso. See *Trinity Evangelical Divinity School*, http://divinity.tiu.edu/academics/faculty/tite-tienou-phd/, accessed 30 December 2013.

The good news, in this case, is that since people of color now represent the majority of Christians in the world, the perception of Christianity as a Western religion can be corrected. Making the case for Christianity on the basis that it is a worldwide global religion can, especially in Africa, erase the stigma of Christianity as a white man's religion. This will bring about apologetic dividends not only for Christians in Africa but also for those in Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific Islands. In other words, if Christianity is de-Westernized, Christians in Africa, Asia, and Latin America will be able to defend themselves when accused of being agents of Westernization and puppets in the hands of foreigners whose intention is the destruction of local cultures and religions.<sup>18</sup>

However, Tiénou also critiques the reluctance of the Western theological academy to come to terms with the globalizing of the Christian faith.

Acknowledging the fact that the majority of Christians are no longer Westerners is one thing. One may even concede that the demographic future of Christianity belongs to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Does this also mean that the future of Christian theology and scholarship is being decided on these continents as well? One cannot presume a positive answer to this question in spite of the fact that Andrew Walls affirms that "the primary responsibility for the determinative theological scholarship for the twenty-first century will lie with the Christian communities of Africa, Asia, and Latin America."<sup>19</sup>

Tiénou expands on the challenge of Western theological bias by acknowledging the problem of English as the de facto language of theological conferences and scholarship:

English seems to be the language of global Christianity; it dominates international Christian conferences and international theologizing. ... The present domination of English in international theologizing effectively closes the door to theologians who do not express their thoughts in that language. But can Christian scholarship and theology be truly global with one language in control? The use of English as the de facto language for international theological scholarship can only reinforce the dialogue of the deaf.<sup>20</sup>

Tiénou's usage of the phrase, "the dialog of the deaf," refers to the caricature of Americans as bad listeners. Tiénou applies the phrase to Christian theologians and the academy when he writes, " ... America and the third world are engaged in a dialogue of the deaf. This characterization is applicable to the relationship between Western Christian scholars and those in Africa, Asia, and Latin America." He quotes Ali Mazrui: "Americans are brilliant communicators but bad listeners."

<sup>18.</sup> Tite Tiénou: "Christian Theology in an Era of World Christianity" in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, eds. Ott and Netland (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), Kindle edition locations 692–98.

<sup>19.</sup> Ibid., Kindle edition locations 747–52. Tiénou quotes Andrew Walls: 2002a. "Christian Scholarship in Africa in the Twenty-first Century." *Transformation* 19, no. 4 (October): 217–28.

<sup>20.</sup> Ibid., Kindle edition locations 848-53.

<sup>21.</sup> Ibid., Kindle edition locations 840–42. Tiénou quotes Ali Mazrui, *Cultural Forces in World Politics* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990).

## Timothy C. Tennent<sup>22</sup>

We have already referenced Tennent's book, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity.*<sup>23</sup> This book is a remarkable overview of a variety of theologies in our world. Tennent grapples with being faithful to the authority of the biblical text, while at the same time learning from various theologies in our incredibly diverse global Christian community.

Tennent has also written *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century*. He writes of "Mission by Translation" and examines how the early church sought to "communicate the gospel within the intellectual and linguistic frameworks of their hearers, rather than insisting that the Gentiles discover Jesus within the existing framework of Judaism."<sup>24</sup> Tennent cites three examples of how the early church adapted their message using the "thought forms of their target group."<sup>25</sup> Tennent's three examples are summarized as follows:

- "Jesus as Messiah—Jesus as Lord."<sup>26</sup> Consider these two verses that historian Luke records in Acts: "Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus" (Acts 11:19–20). Tennent says that the church that was scattered was "speaking the word to no one except Jews," but others "spoke to the Hellenists;" these were the Gentile Greeks, the non-Jews. How did they communicate the gospel to them? They could have preached *Christ* Jesus—meaning *Messiah* Jesus, alluding to the hopes and longings of the Jewish people. But, Tennent writes, "The title *Messiah*, as rich as it was, simply did not carry much meaning for a Gentile." Instead, they were "preaching the *Lord* Jesus." Tennent says, "They utilized the title *kurios*, which, although richly used in the biblical tradition, was the word Hellenistic pagans gave to their cult deities."<sup>27</sup>
- "Jewish Scriptures and Pagan Sources."<sup>28</sup> Acts 17:16–34 records the account of Paul's visit to Athens. He visited the Areopagus where he preached a message to those who were gathered there. Instead of using Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah as a beginning point of communication, he finds common ground by quoting two Greek poets with whom the Athenians were undoubtedly familiar.

<sup>22. &</sup>quot;Asbury Theological Seminary President Timothy C. Tennent took office on July 1, 2009, and was inaugurated in November of the same year. He previously served 11 years as Professor of World Missions and Indian Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Mass. ... He also teaches annually at the Luther W. New Jr. Theological College of Dehra Dun, India, where he has served as an adjunct professor since 1989. He has also ministered and taught in China, Thailand, Nigeria and Eastern Europe. Ordained in the United Methodist Church, he has pastored churches in Georgia, and preached regularly in churches throughout New England and across the country." See *timothytennent.com*, http://timothytennent.com/about/, accessed 30 December 2013.

<sup>23.</sup> Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007). 24. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 329.

<sup>25.</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>26.</sup> Ibid., 328.

<sup>27.</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28.</sup> Ibid., 329.

In verse 28, Paul quotes from the seventh-century B.C. Cretan poet Epimenedes, when he declares, "In him we live and move and have our being." In the same verse Paul goes on to say, "As even some of your own poets have said, 'We are indeed his offspring," which Tennent adds is "a quotation from the Cilician poet Aratus."<sup>29</sup>

• "Jesus is the logos of God."<sup>30</sup> The Apostle John begins his Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The Greek word *logos* is translated *Word* and refers to an impersonal force, the "active reason" or "animating principle"<sup>31</sup> for the creation and sustaining of the universe. "John's contemporaries would have understood *logos* as a philosophical term referring to a rational capacity or generative principle that is present in all of nature."<sup>32</sup> So when John writes, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), he transformed the usage of the word *logos* as an impersonal force to a usage depicting the deeply personal, relational Jesus—the One who is fully God and fully human.

# Jackson Wu<sup>33</sup>

In Section 1, Chapter 2, we explored some of the ideas from Jackson Wu's *Saving God's Face*. His diagram (see pages 49–51) helped us understand why theological blind spots occur. I'll add here one paragraph from his book:

The aforementioned observations are not an implicit condemnation of Western theology. Rather, it is essential that those seeking to contextualize the gospel plainly recognize the long theological current that moves much Western missiological thinking. If particular Western conceptions of the gospel are assumed and then contextualized for another cultural context, serious questions arise about the viability of a genuinely nonwestern articulation of the gospel. This is not to say other contextual theologies must contradict historically Western theologies. Susan Baker highlights a danger of contextualization, namely "reductionism." She warns against constricting theology to any one set of themes and texts, cautioning, "In this [reductionism] we find that we have reduced Scripture to only one part of what the Lord has to say to us, and we lose sight of the overall redemptive-historical unfolding of God's complete plan for us." In short, uncritically assuming the gospel can undermine the credibility of contextualization.<sup>34</sup>

Wu's phrase "uncritically assuming the gospel" is key. I contend that a majority of Western pastors and Christian leaders, along with missionaries and short-term

<sup>29.</sup> Ibid. 30. Ibid., 332.

<sup>31.</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32.</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33.</sup> Jackson Wu is a teacher at a seminary in Asia. His degrees include: B.S. (Applied Mathematics), M.A. (Philosophy), M.Div, Ph.D (Applied Theology). His blog is jacksonwu.org.

<sup>34.</sup> Wu, 20–21. Wu quotes Susan Baker in "The Social Sciences for Urban Ministry," in *The Urban Face* of Mission: Ministering the Gospel in a Diverse and Changing World, eds. Manuel Ortiz and Susan S. Baker (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2002), 77.

mission trip-goers, are unwittingly "assuming the gospel" and thereby practicing "reductionism" with their Western ways of thinking.

# Western theological bias begets the need for more effective contextualization

In quoting these seven scholars—Bosch, Escobar, Newbigin, Rah, Tiénou, Tennent, and Wu—the point I am trying to make is two-fold.

- First, I am emphasizing that the Western Christian community tends to exert its own theological biases in the global church; this needs to be recognized and mitigated.
- Second, effective contextualization is essential for making the gospel come alive in every culture.

It is wrong to *assume* that the gospel as articulated in one culture is the best way to articulate it in another culture. To "assume the gospel" as Bosch and Wu contend, runs the risk of an imperialist attitude (often unwittingly) that prioritizes Western culture over others.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, as Timothy Tennent points out, we see from the very authors of Scripture, that the gospel can borrow phrases, words, "thought forms" from the audience—the people to whom the gospel is being presented—in order to more faithfully communicate the richness and depth of the good news of Jesus Christ.<sup>36</sup>

I contend that the "thought forms" of thousands of non-Western, unreached and unengaged people groups consist in large measure of the pivotal cultural value of honor and shame. Plus, many of our neighbors in our cities and communities whether co-workers, colleagues, immigrants, refugees, students, asylum seekers have "thought forms" that likewise overlap with the values of honor and shame *much more* than with the Western values of guilt, innocence and law.

Western-educated Christians must find better ways to communicate the expansive, transforming truths of the gospel of Christ without having to carry the Western baggage with which they are so comfortable.

# THE SEED OF THE GOSPEL

David Bosch writes about *the seed of the gospel* having two parts: the *husk* and the *kernel*. The husk refers to *form*; the kernel refers to *function*.<sup>37</sup> Bosch contends that the traditional approach to contextualization by Christian missionaries has been to modify the husk while keeping the kernel the same; in other words, the kernel

<sup>35.</sup> Chris Flanders provides a lucid example from the missionary enterprise in Thailand, referencing a report published back in 1888. The missionaries articulated a "gospel," which although true, was also unwittingly rooted, in part, in Western thought forms. It meant that "Thai people and Thai culture had nothing to contribute to the gospel message." Flanders contends this has resulted in "a deep disconnect with Thai culture, the effects of which the Christian church in Thailand continue to struggle against, even to this present day." See Flanders, 19–20.

<sup>36.</sup> Dean Flemming has written an entire book on this subject: *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission.* He identifies how various authors of the New Testament borrowed the ideas and thought forms of their respective audiences—both to articulate the gospel and to help them move toward Christ-centered transformation.

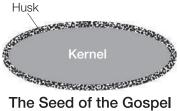
<sup>37.</sup> Bosch, 449.

*is* the gospel and it is supra-cultural. He critiques this traditional view as follows:

The faith as understood and canonized in the Western church ... was the unalloyed *kernel;* [on the other hand] the cultural accoutrements of the people to whom the missionaries went were the expendable *husk.* In the accommodation process, the *kernel* had to remain intact but adapted to the forms of the new culture; at the same time, these cultures had to be adapted to the "kernel." (Emphasis mine.)<sup>38</sup>

Bosch contends that a traditional view of contextualization is inadequate. Jackson Wu agrees:

> [M]any view contextualization as a process that comes after one has already settled on the meaning of the gospel, that is, what



(only the "husk" contextualized)

Figure 3.02: Seed of the gospel traditional view (language and other cultural forms change, but how the gospel is articulated remains unchanged)

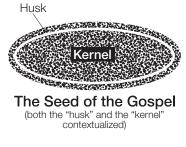


Figure 3.03: Seed of the gospel modified view

constitutes its content. [Kevin] Vanhoozer, critical of this approach, says, "Contextual theology, according to this view, is a matter of extracting the doctrinal kernel from its original cultural husk and then reinserting it in, or adapting it to, a new cultural husk. The key presupposition of this model is that the essential message is supra-cultural, able to be abstracted from its concrete mode of expression. Contextualization, according to this view, is primarily a matter of communication: decoding and encoding."<sup>39</sup>

What is needed is an approach to contextualization that goes beyond *decoding and encoding*—to contextualize both the *husk and kernel* of the gospel.<sup>40</sup> This way, by the grace of God and the Holy Spirit, the gospel would best resonate with the host culture or people group. The gospel would therefore have a greater likelihood of being received and being transformational.

<sup>38.</sup> Ibid., 449.

<sup>39.</sup> Wu, 23. Wu quotes Kevin Vanhoozer, "One Rule to Rule Them All?' Theological Method in an Era of World Christianity," in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, eds. Craig Ott and Harold Netland (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic & Brazos Press, 2006), 100.

<sup>40.</sup> Chris Flanders uses the concept of "gospel seed" as *husk* and *kernel* to critique the persistent failure of mission efforts in Thailand to effectively contextualize the gospel, "Rarely ... does discussion about the proper content of the [gospel] message exist. Even those who do attempt to formulate a message more in terms of Thai culture ultimately offer only new *husks* within which the essential evangelical *kernel* of remission of sins and relief from guilt may be more effectively wrapped. To this day, it seems that there is little attention to how Thai culture may help frame the message of the gospel" [emphasis mine]. See Flanders, 38.

**Summary:** Every communication of gospel content, including the very *kernel* of the gospel, contains cultural assumptions and ideas which, first of all, resonate with the culture of the messenger (preacher, missionary, believer). The question is whether it *also resonates* with the people with whom the messenger is communicating.

Could it be that Western believers can do a better job presenting the gospel to Majority World peoples so that the good news truly resonates? Could it be that the key is including biblical "thought forms" *in the very kernel of the gospel*—which include the values of honor and shame?

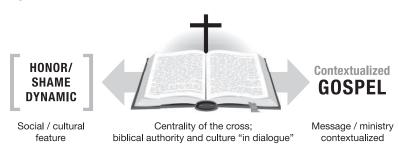
# "CONVERSATION WITHIN SCRIPTURE" between the atonement of Christ and honor/shame

Jackson Wu recommends a "dialogical approach to contextualization"—a *dialog* or *conversation* between "Scripture, the interpreter, the missionary/messenger, and the recipient of the message."<sup>41</sup> I am doing something like that in this third section of the book.

We will explore several theological "conversations" in Section 3. Each "conversation" consists of a question about the gospel and culture—specifically the cultural value of honor and shame—followed by an exploration from Scripture which, in turn, will provide an answer.

In Section 2, we examined in the Bible nine different dynamics of honor/shame societies—and one honor/shame motif—for a total of ten separate dynamics. In this section, we will devote one chapter to each of these ten dynamics. Here's the question we will be asking in each chapter.

# Is there enough biblical material to warrant an exploration of how the honor/shame dynamic intersects with the good news of Jesus Christ, so that a fresh presentation of the gospel can be developed to better resonate among people in honor/shame cultures?



The diagram for this conversation looks like this:

Figure 3.04: Conversation between Scripture, honor/shame dynamics, and the gospel

<sup>41.</sup> Wu, 1. For the phrase "dialogical contextualization," Wu references David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003).

In each chapter we will explore biblical material about the atonement of Christ—crux of every gospel message—and whether it overlaps with the particular honor/shame dynamic in question.<sup>42</sup> We will be making some exciting discoveries.

# Can the culture of Scripture be the primary influence in the way we articulate the gospel?

I propose that this "dialogical" exploration between Christ's atonement and various honor/shame dynamics in Scripture can be helpful to the global church. We live in an increasingly multicultural church in which theological dialog focuses on varying facets of the gospel, informed by various local cultures, traditions, and histories. For example, Western theology, African theology, Chinese theology, Latin American theology—these *all* are shaped in part by values of their respective host cultures.

In contrast, the exploration contained in this section attempts to offer gospel presentation alternatives which are informed by the Bible's *own* culture—the pivotal cultural value of honor and shame. Culturally speaking, we are using the honor/shame culture of Bible societies as a *starting point*. This may be distinguished from starting with cultural signposts in a host culture which, through the creative efforts of a missionary or theologian, may in turn point to the gospel.

Whereas local theologies may be influenced by unique local customs, traditions, or social dynamics, in this exploration we begin with Scripture's own pivotal cultural value of honor and shame and attempt to find valid variations for articulating the gospel message.

Kevin Vanhoozer has written about intercultural theological dialog in a globalized world; he writes forcefully about the challenge and the value of placing primary importance on *Scripture*—over culture, tradition or history.

The lived experience of this or that culture, along with the history and tradition of the church as a whole, has a legitimate role to play as a *secondary* theological source. The primary source, however, must remain Scripture. The Bible is the formative text with which all Christians, regardless of their cultural context, must ultimately grapple, the authoritative script that all Christians must perform, albeit in a diversity of culturally appropriate ways.<sup>43</sup>

Indeed: "*The primary source, however, must remain Scripture.*" This third section of the book shows how each of the honor/shame dynamics (presented in Section 2) overlaps with the atonement of Christ. You will see that these multifaceted explorations of Christ's gospel contained in this section of the book are wholly based on the Bible. You will also see that these variations in expressing the gospel message are different from—and supplementary to—traditional Western approaches.

<sup>42.</sup> See Timothy Tennent's excellent overview of the implications of honor and shame for systematic theology, especially in relation to the atonement, in his *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 92–101. Tennent covers "The Public Nature of the Atonement" (94–95), "The Social and Relational Aspect of the Atonement" (95–97), and "Process of Christian Conversion (Application of the Atonement)" (97–99).

<sup>43.</sup> Vanhoozer, Kindle edition locations 1937-41.

Dean Flemming writes that Paul contextualized his gospel message. He used various ways to articulate the gospel depending on the cultural and social situation.

Rather than consistently talking about the meaning of salvation in Christ in a few standard terms, [Paul] deploys whatever language will bring out the particular dimension of salvation a given church needs to hear. This observation has implications for our efforts to describe the experience of God's saving work to contemporary people. It surely ought to caution us against exalting any single metaphor or theme—whether "justification by faith" or being "born again" or "Spirit baptism"—to a dominant position. If we follow Paul's lead, we will recognize both the richness of language available to us to describe the church's multidimensional experience of salvation and the variety of situations to which that language must be applied.<sup>44</sup>

Timothy Tennent writes that "honor and shame are among the most important values in the ancient Mediterranean world, and continue to play a vital role in the formation of human identity in much of North Africa, Middle East, and Asia. *A deeper appreciation for how the gospel relates to these values* will be increasingly important as the church continues to expand in the context of cultures that are predominantly shame-based."<sup>45</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

How the gospel relates to honor/shame values is what this section is all about. *You will see:* The church *is able* to articulate the gospel in more than judicial terms. The multifaceted gospel of Jesus Christ does reveal a salvation—not only from the *guilt* of our sinful *behavior*—but also from the *shame* of our sinful *being*.

My intention in this section is that you will more clearly behold our glorious God and Savior by understanding a more multifaceted *global gospel* that may deeply resonate with more individuals, families, and peoples all over the world.

We therefore turn now to Chapter 1 of Section 3 and ask: *Is there a global gospel shaped by the "love of honor"?* 

<sup>44.</sup> Flemming, Kindle edition location 107.

<sup>45.</sup> Tennent, Theology in the Context of World Christianity, 101.



# A Gospel Shaped by the "Love of Honor"?

**Explore a "global gospel."** Is there enough biblical material to warrant an exploration of how the dynamic of the **love of honor** intersects with the good news of Jesus Christ, so that a fresh presentation of the gospel can be developed to better resonate among people in honor/shame cultures?

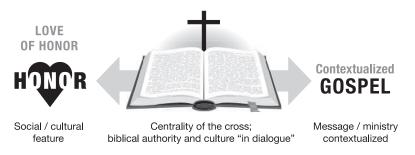


Figure 3.05: Can there be a gospel presentation framed by the love of honor?

# Yes, there is abundant material in Scripture connecting the "love of honor" with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Such a presentation of a "global gospel" may be crafted according to this principle: For peoples living in societies with the pivotal cultural value of honor and shame—the longing for honor and, correspondingly, the alleviation of shame, can be a motivating factor in their journey of believing in Christ and gaining eternal life.

Most Western presentations of the gospel assume that the primary felt need of *all humanity* is the alleviation of guilt from sin,<sup>1</sup> and that the cross of Christ addresses this need. But this derives from a Western theological bias. Instead, why not begin a "gospel message" with the assumption of humanity's longing for glory and honor, and correspondingly, the alleviation of shame?

<sup>1.</sup> The sin, guilt and shame of all humanity before God is biblically and *objectively* true. The question is not whether this is objectively true. The question is whether a focus on the alleviation of sin and guilt is the best initial message of the gospel to address the *subjective* felt need of peoples for whom honor and shame is a pivotal cultural value.

A gospel message that assumes humanity's longing for glory and honor? Yes! Both Jesus and Paul included these dynamics in their communication. Jesus said to the unbelieving Pharisees, "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44). Paul wrote to the believers at Rome, "To those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life" (Rom 2:7).

One may rightly ask, "But where does the *longing for honor*—and humanity's corresponding need for *the covering of shame*—intersect with the cross of Christ? How does the atonement answer this need?" Below are some options:

**Option 1: The Parable of the Prodigal Son as entry point for the gospel.** "The Father's Love Gospel Booklet" (see next page) is an example of a "global gospel" presentation that incorporates the longing for honor and the covering of shame. It contains the story of the Prodigal Son, along with artwork that goes along with the story.<sup>2</sup> It is a fitting presentation of the gospel for people who have honor and shame as a vital cultural value.

Shown on the next page are six pages of the twenty-page booklet.<sup>3</sup> The six pages provide a sampling of both the *narrative parts* (pages 1–15)—and *propositional* elements (pages 16–20)—of this gospel presentation.<sup>4</sup>

One of the keys to this "gospel presentation" is the dramatic way that the father in the story endures shame both in relation to the younger son and the older son. Hence, this statement from the booklet: "*Jesus is teaching that God is like a father willing to suffer shame for us.*" It points to the verse in Hebrews which says that Jesus, "the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him *endured the cross, despising the shame,* and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2). (Emphasis mine.) A key paragraph in the booklet is as follows:

JESUS DEFEATED SIN, SHAME, DEATH. He died on the cross, suffering shame for all peoples. But in rising from death, Jesus defeated sin and shame for us. And when we believe in Jesus, following Him day by day, we can truly live in victory over sin and shame!<sup>5</sup>

"The Father's Love Gospel Booklet" is available in English, Spanish, and Arabic. It is an example of creatively contextualizing both the *husk* and *kernel* of "the seed of the gospel," while retaining fidelity to the Scriptures.

<sup>2.</sup> All of the pages for this booklet may be seen at http://thefatherslovebooklet.org. Designed by Werner Mischke and produced by Mission ONE, 2012. The booklet is available in English and Spanish in the United States. An Arabic version has been produced for distribution in the Middle East. Illustrations are by Robert H. Flores.

<sup>3.</sup> See http://thefatherslovebooklet.org for the complete pages of The Father's Love Booklet.

<sup>4.</sup> Jeff Gulleson provided inspiration for the booklet as a resource by which a believer could have a conversation with another person about the nature of the father's suffering love. Mark D. Baker provided significant recommendations for the content of this booklet through personal correspondence. Additional general insights from Kenneth Bailey, *The Cross and the Prodigal: Luke 15 Through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005); Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Faith* (New York: Penguin, 2008); John MacArthur, *The Prodigal Son: An Astonishing Study of the Parable Jesus Told to Unveil God's Grace for You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008).

<sup>5. &</sup>quot;The Father's Love" booklet, page 18. See http://thefatherslovebooklet.org.

### THE GLOBAL GOSPEL



Figure 3.06: Six pages from The Father's Love Booklet (reduced in size to fit on page)

**Option 2: Concern for honor and shame in 1 Peter.** A second possibility for presenting a gospel message—in which the longing for honor connects with the atonement—would be a booklet, sermon or sermon series from the book of 1 Peter. Here's why:

First, clear references to salvation and the atoning work of Christ on the cross are contained in this epistle (1:3, 18–19; 2:24; 3:18).

Second, the epistle is written to believers who are enduring shame, slander, and hostility because of their faith (1:6; 2:4, 11, 19–21; 3:9, 14–16; 4:1, 12–14, 19; 5:9–10).

Third, Peter places enormous emphasis on the supreme honor of the believer and the prestige of the Christian family (1:6–9, 12, 20–21; 2:4–10; 4:1; 5:4–6, 10–11).

It may be summed up by Peter's declaration "So the honor is for you who believe" (2:7), which is made in the context of a quotation from Isaiah 28:16:

For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" (1 Pet 2:6–7).

Using the epistle of 1 Peter, every pastor, Bible teacher, or cross-cultural worker should be able to develop a spoken gospel presentation by which the atonement of Jesus Christ intersects with the longing for honor and covering of shame.

### Other options for a global gospel highlighting the love of honor:

- *"I will ... make your name great"* (Gen 12:2). This idea is suitable for Muslims, Asian societies, tribal peoples, and others who are devoted to one's ancestors. Present God's purpose with ancient Abraham as an introduction to the gospel of justification by faith (Gen 12:1–3; Gal 3:7–29). Show how Israel is *relativized* because the global gospel is for *all* families and peoples. You can demonstrate how Abraham's story is foundational for the gospel of grace, revealing that Jesus is the offspring of Abraham (Gal 3:16). While this may be a long complicated story, it is likely that people from oral cultures will delight in its complex drama.
- *"Awake, my glory!"* (Ps 57:8). Create a gospel sermon, booklet, or smartphone app with pictures around Psalm 57. Highlight the drama of David's victory over Goliath, the jealousy of Saul and his consequent efforts to kill David, and David's longing for regal honor as expressed in Psalm 57:7–9. Link with Romans 3:23—"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Show that a relationship with Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, is the means for having one's *glory awakened* for the most glorious purpose on earth: the global mission of God that his glory be declared among all peoples and nations.

# What is the significance of a global gospel incorporating the "love of honor"?

Below are some questions that arise from this exploration:

- In what ways is salvation the fulfillment of the longing to have one's shame covered and one's honor restored?
- What can you do with your team to creatively produce resources that highlight a "global gospel" focused on a message of *salvation in Christ as the fulfillment of the longing for honor and the covering of shame?*
- Can we be creative enough to build an expression of a gospel message that extends beyond the cure for guilt and craft a more "global gospel" of Jesus Christ in light of the *longing for honor and alleviation of shame?*

This *partial preview* has been made available to invite pre-publication sales.

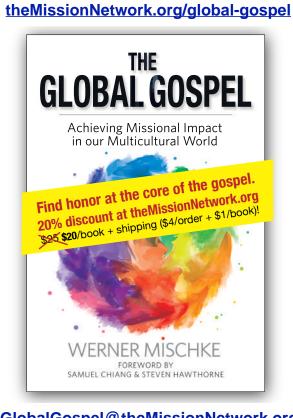
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# Honor/Shame Dynamics in the World Christian Movement

# Honor/Shame Dynamics in the World Christian Movement

IN THE PREVIOUS SECTION, we explored the wide-ranging ways that the gospel of Jesus Christ can be articulated by using the Bible's honor/shame dynamics. We explored level H/S-4, the "Evangelical" level, in Figure 2.01. It is all about the "gospel message."

We begin now with Section 4: "Honor/Shame Dynamics in the World Christian Movement." There are four chapters in this final section of the book.

- 1. Honor/Shame Dynamics in Our Purpose
- 2. Honor/Shame Dynamics in Our Training
- 3. Honor/Shame Dynamics in Our Practice
- 4. Believers Have No Honor Deficit (a summary)

The first chapter, "Honor/Shame Dynamics in our Purpose," explores what may be considered the highest level of awareness of honor and shame in the world Christian movement. Figure 4.01, which is the same as Figure 2.01, is shown on the next page. We see that the final level is called "Teleological." It is so named because the Greek root word *telos* simply means *end*. So we'll be exploring the *end purpose*, the ultimate destination of God's people in God's story. We'll be examining how Scripture's *telos* affects our mission today in the world Christian movement.

	Pos	itive		
NO Honor/Shame Awareness		H/S-3	H/S-4	H/S-5
H/S-1	H/S-2	ative		HIGH Honor/Shame Awareness
LEG	. 0		EGAL + REG	A L
LEVEL 1 Unawareness	LEVEL 2 Ethical	LEVEL 3 Functional	LEVEL 4 Evangelical	LEVEL 5 Teleological
Blind spot	Inferior values	Bible cultures	Gospel message	Glorious kingdom
Little to no awareness of honor/shame dynamics; cultural / theological blind spot	Awareness of only the unethical or dark side of honor/shame	Awareness of honor/ shame as the pivotal cultural value of Bible societies leads to removal of Western lenses for interpreting Scripture	Awareness of honor/ shame dynamics as central to the meaning and proclamation of the gospel of Christ	Awareness of honor/ shame dynamics as central to the Bible's narrative of a doxological destiny for Christ and for believers from among all the peoples of the earth

Figure 4.01: H/S-1 to H/S-5: Levels of awareness of honor and shame (for full chart see Appendix 2)

In chapters 4.2 and 4.3, we will examine some implications for training and practice in the world Christian movement. These two chapters are starting points rather than an attempt at being comprehensive.

A short final chapter offers my summary for the book.

I hope the scripturally rooted truths and ideas in this section will stimulate dialog and creativity in the world Christian community. May believers be helped in bringing the global gospel of Jesus Christ to all the peoples of the earth.

# **Honor/Shame Dynamics in Our Purpose**

H CONOR/SHAME DYNAMICS ARE IMPORTANT VALUES in the ultimate purpose, the *telos*,<sup>1</sup> of God's story, and thus, the world Christian movement. This is true, first of all, in the honor and praise that is to be given to God by all nations. "God's penchant for praise" and his passion for his glory is the crux and fuel for world missions.<sup>2</sup>

Psalm 96:1–5 is a key passage for understanding the glory of God as being central to the ultimate purpose and mission of God's people.

Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

The task given to God's people is to "tell of his salvation" and "declare his glory" to all nations and "among all the peoples!" And what is the reason to *tell* and *declare*? "For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised." Simply, God deserves lavish honor and praise. The worship of the one and only true God by all peoples and nations is the ultimate rationale for world missions.

In Steve Hawthorne's article, "The Story of His Glory," the overriding dynamic from Psalm 96 concerning world missions is stated through this elegant principle:

### God reveals his glory to all nations in order to receive glory from all peoples through worship.<sup>3</sup>

Expanding on this using the language of honor and shame, the principle may be restated like this: God reveals his glory, honor and blessing to persons from among all peoples so they experience salvation from sin and gain abundant blessing. They

<sup>1.</sup> The meaning of *telos* is simply "an ultimate object or aim; ORIGIN Greek, literally 'end." New Oxford American Dictionary 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2010).

<sup>2.</sup> Steve Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, Third Edition* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999). I gratefully acknowledge the influence of Steve Hawthorne's work in this chapter. His article "The Story of His Glory" had a big impact on my life and ministry. His Ph.D. thesis, *Let All the Peoples Praise Him: Toward a Teleological Paradigm of the Missio Dei*, was made available to me in 2013; it is a profound expansion on "The Story of His Glory." The wonderful phrase "God's penchant for praise," is from "The Story of His Glory."

<sup>3.</sup> Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," 50.

have their guilt forgiven, their shame covered and honor elevated in knowing the only true and living God. They are transformed and honored in becoming "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29) as God receives from them the glorifying worship he desires and deserves.

Hawthorne explains:

People are indeed saved by the global declaration of God's salvation, but the ultimate value of their salvation is not to be seen in what they are saved *from*, it is what they are saved *for* that really matters. People are saved to serve God in worship. In this respect, we can say that world evangelization is for God. However accustomed we may be to seeing people as being of paramount importance, the Bible is clear: The rationale for mission is the colossal worthiness of God.<sup>4</sup>

This theme is echoed in the opening words in John Piper's book *Let the Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions.* 

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.<sup>5</sup>

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul emphasizes three times in chapter 1 the grand purpose of *praise for God and his glory*. Our salvation through Christ's blood and adoption as children of God is "to the praise of his glorious grace" (Eph 1:6); our calling into God's eternal purpose is "to the praise of his glory" (1:12); and our eternal inheritance sealed by the Holy Spirit is "to the praise of his glory" (1:14). Piper writes, "The extraordinary greatness of the praise that the Lord should receive is the ground and impetus of our mission to the nations."<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the giving of glory and honor to God by humanity's worship and affectionate adoration is at the heart of missions. *For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised!* He is worthy! All of *life*, all of *ministry*, all of *missions* should be to the praise of the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

## We become like that which we worship

Psalm 96 offers another crucial reason why the glory of God—the worship of the one and only God—is the ultimate purpose for mission. "For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens" (v. 5). To worship any god but God is to engage in idolatry. And every form of idolatry invariably results in shame, oppression, defilement.<sup>7</sup>

Psalm 135:15–18 makes it plain: "The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but

<sup>4.</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>5.</sup> John Piper, Let the Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), Kindle edition locations 163–66.

<sup>6.</sup> Ibid., Kindle edition locations 4394-95.

<sup>7.</sup> Jeremiah 5:5–7 makes clear the profound link between idolatry and oppression. Moreover, when God judges his people for their idolatry, there is inherently a loving, salvific dimension to it.

do not see; they have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths. *Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them.*" (Emphasis mine, cf. Ps 115:4–8, Is 44:9–20.)

To worship false gods is to become like them—lifeless. Consider any form of oppression anywhere in the world: You will almost always see underlying that oppression some form of false worship, unholy affection, idolatry.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, in worshiping God through Jesus Christ we become like Jesus—alive, free, vital, yes—*even glorious*. By gazing at Christ, "with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, [we] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18).

This is why it is in everyone's self-interest—and every *people's* self-interest—to worship the one and only God of all creation. John Piper writes:

The liberating fact is that the message we take to the frontiers is that people everywhere should seek their own best interest. We are summoning people to God. And those who come say, "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps 16:11). God glorifies himself among the nations with the command, "Delight yourself in the Lord!" (Ps 37:4). His first and great requirement of all men everywhere is that they repent from seeking their joy in other things and begin to seek it only in him.<sup>9</sup>

## We want to be glorious in God to share the glory of God

In the book, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends,* co-authors Pocock, Van Rheenan, and McConnell have a chapter on "Changing Motivations for Missions." They explore the text of 2 Corinthians 3:7–4:18 as one passage that illustrates how God's glory is both the origin and goal of missions.

As Moses on Mount Sinai reflected God's radiance, Christians under the new covenant begin to reflect the nature of God as they look to Christ. Paul says that they "are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory" (3:18). This transformation, which results from looking upon Christ, who is the image of God, leads to ministry.<sup>10</sup>

It leads to ministry and mission because the glory of Christ is revealed in our hearts. Here's how it works:

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6).

<sup>8.</sup> Sadly, there are, in the history of the Christian church, abundant examples of oppression in the name of Christ. This only reinforces the point that, even for Christians, oppression against others is possible when we take our eyes off of Jesus. The sinfulness of Christians—or those who call themselves Christians—may challenge but does not refute the principle: *The knowledge and worship of Jesus Christ by his followers relativizes the desire for revenge, violence, and oppression*. True followers of Jesus Christ are known by their grace and truth, love and compassion.

<sup>9.</sup> Ibid., Kindle edition locations 969-73.

<sup>10.</sup> Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenan, and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 175.

The glory of God in this verse is compared to something as majestic and powerful as God speaking at creation, "Let there be light" (Gen 1:3). This same powerful God who speaks light and life into existence has shone into our darkened hearts in such a way that this light and life must be given away. Hence, the phrase, "has shone in our hearts to *give* the light." It must be shared! It must be given away! Receiving "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" in the intimate "face" and honorific personhood of Jesus Christ is so powerful, beautiful, creative, and freeing, that *it must be shared with others*.<sup>11</sup>

Apostle Paul understood the glory of God as the expression of the transcendent Personhood of God revealed in Jesus Christ. In addition, he emphasized that God's glory was not only *transcendent* but also *immanent*—"something existing or operating within."<sup>12</sup> The glory of God is to be *internalized*, something *progressively experienced within* by believers through a life of gazing in wonder at Jesus and living in Christ-directed obedience. This is why Paul wrote, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18).

Believers can become progressively like Jesus, reflecting his glory—itself an astounding honor. Pocock, Van Rheenan, and McConnell write:

Becoming like God has always been the ultimate motivation for missions. Understandings of hell and lostness are secondary to seeing God's glory and incarnating this glory in Christian ministry. C. S. Lewis says that Christians not only see the beauty of God but also become beautiful: "We want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. We are called to taste the *infinite* glory of God and thereby become *finitely* glorious ourselves.<sup>13</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

No wonder Paul wrote, "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, *we do not lose heart*" (2 Cor 4:1). He repeats the phrase near the end of chapter 4: *"So we do not lose heart"* (v. 16). "Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an *eternal weight of glory* beyond all comparison" (vv. 16–17). The inner experience of God's glory in Christ and the ultimate hope of even greater glory in eternity sustained Paul in his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles.

This glory in Christ is to be known *in part* by individual persons. The Bible also reveals that this glory in Christ is to be known in community by people *groups*. It will be known *in fullness* by the singular kingdom community of God's family of

<sup>11.</sup> Some may think this verse is not about sharing the gospel, but rather is about the internal experience of God's glory shining in one's heart. However, consider the previous verses of chapter 4. Paul is writing about the ministry of "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor 4:4). Paul is explaining how he ministers; he hides nothing, but rather, "by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God" (v. 2). Paul is also defending himself from the accusation of self-promotion: "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (v. 5). Therefore, I contend that the context of 2 Corinthians 4 recommends that verse 6 is about the *outward purpose* of sharing the gospel—"to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (v. 6).

<sup>12. &</sup>quot;Immanent," New Oxford American Dictionary 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2010), referenced by Mac OSX 10.8.2.

<sup>13.</sup> Pocock, Rheenan, and McConnell, 175–76. They quote C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 12–13.

ethnicities. We are also mindful of the fact that the Bible was written by *individuals* with mostly *group-oriented* values.

Therefore, let us briefly focus our attention on the group-oriented aspect of God's revelation.

And we all [plural], with unveiled face [singular], beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed [plural] into the same image from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18).

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts [plural] to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6).

So we [plural] do not lose heart [singular]. Though our [plural] outer self [singular] is wasting away, our [plural] inner self [singular] is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us [plural] an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (2 Cor 4:16–17).

So the glory of God is experienced both individually and *in community*. Other verses that illustrate this collectivistic mindset are found in Hebrews.

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify *our* [plural] *conscience* [singular] from dead works to serve the living God (Heb 9:13–14).

This indicates that the conscience is not merely experienced individually but in some sense also *in community*—collectively. This is remarkable to me as an individual believer raised in the West because I was trained to believe *I* am only guilty for *my own* sins, and thus bear the consequences of *my own* sins—in *my own* conscience—and *my own* experience.

On the other hand, I understand the concept of "our conscience" when I think about collective German guilt derived from the evils and horrors committed by Germans in the Holocaust of World War II. This collective guilt is suffered by many Germans, even those born after World War II.<sup>14</sup>

**Do you see it?** *Our* hearts, *our* outer self, *our* inner self, *our* conscience. The point here is that God's revelation in Scripture incorporates a *beautiful balance*—or perhaps a *sparkling tension*—between the individual and the group.<sup>15</sup>

And we will see that in God's ultimate purpose, he lavishly shares his glory with his people comprising both individuals and groups. God does this in such a way that both *individual believers* and *believers comprising people groups* experience redemption. Both individual saints and the distinct people groups of whom they are a part will be elevated to high regal honor through God's kingdom and through the kingdom's King: our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>14. &</sup>quot;German collective guilt," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German\_collective\_guilt, accessed 26 February 2014.

<sup>15.</sup> It is notable to observe the group dynamic described in the Day of Atonement: "And he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel" (Lev 16:19). The Day of Atonement was for the whole "people of Israel."

### Mission purpose as God's glory *shared*—with his people, and with his peoples

There is a sense in which all glory and honor belong exclusively to God. Apostle Paul wrote the beautiful summary at the end of Romans 11, "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen" (Rom 11:36). Because God is creator, all glory originates with God and ultimately is returned to God. Relatedly, Steve Hawthorne writes about God being both the origin and destiny of mission, "God Himself fulfills His mission with His people. God is not merely the origin. He is the *telos*. He cannot be Alpha without also being Omega."<sup>16</sup>

Scripture also teaches that, while all glory and honor belong to God, there is a dominant feature of his character—"God is love" (1 John 4:8)—by which God actually shares his glory and regal honor with his people. God's love is expressed in a relational exchange. God not only saves sinners from judgment and hell, but also elevates their honor by sharing his glory with them.

First, God shares his glory with, and elevates the honor of, individual saints. And second, God shares his glory with, and elevates the honor of, people groups, *panta ta ethne*—all the peoples, nations, and kinship groups.<sup>17</sup> Here's how we can understand this:

- God forgives the sin, covers the shame, and elevates the honor of individual believers.
- All believers are part of their own people group.
- Sin exists both *individually*—and *corporately* (at the level of kinship group, people group, ethnic group, nation).
- The uniqueness and diversity of the peoples are preserved in heaven.
- Because God redeems individual believers who comprise people groups which are preserved in heaven, God also forgives the sin, covers the shame, and elevates the honor of all peoples.

Together, the incredible diversity of individuals and peoples comprise the eternal family of God. This *regal people* is the singular new humanity in Christ

<sup>16.</sup> Hawthorne, Let All the Peoples Praise Him, 53.

<sup>17.</sup> For an excellent overview of the usage of "all the peoples"—panta ta ethne—in the Bible, see John Piper's Let the Nations Be Glad!, Kindle Locations 3618-4229. Piper's definitive summary about the usage of panta ta ethne is as follows: "1. In the New Testament, the singular use of ethnos never means Gentile individuals but always people group or nation. 2. The plural ethne can mean either Gentile individuals or people groups. Sometimes the context demands that it mean one or the other, but in most instances it could carry either meaning. 3. The phrase panta ta ethne occurs eighteen times in the New Testament. Only once must it mean Gentile individuals. Nine times it must mean people groups. The other eight times are ambiguous. 4. Virtually all of the nearly one hundred uses of panta ta ethne in the Greek Old Testament refer to nations in distinction from the nation of Israel. ... The promise made to Abraham that in him 'all the families of the earth' would be blessed and that he would be 'the father of many nations' is taken up in the New Testament and gives the mission of the church a people-group focus because of this Old Testament emphasis. 6. The Old Testament missionary hope is expressed repeatedly as exhortations, promises, prayers, and plans for God's glory to be declared among the peoples and his salvation to be known by all the nations. 7. Paul understood his specifically missionary task in terms of this Old Testament hope and made the promises concerning peoples the foundation of his mission. He was devoted to reaching more and more people groups, not simply more and more individuals. He interpreted Christ's commission to him in these terms. 8. The apostle John envisioned the task of missions as the ingathering of 'the children of God' or the 'other sheep' out of 'every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.' 9. The Old Testament context of Jesus' missionary commission in Luke 24:46-47 shows that panta ta ethne would most naturally mean all the peoples or nations. 10. Mark 11:17 shows that Jesus probably thinks in terms of people groups when he envisions the worldwide purpose of God" (Kindle edition locations 4210-29).

(Eph 2:15, the "one new man") that has been purchased by his blood and has a sure destiny in Christ.

This is an honor-saturated, group-oriented, ethnicity-focused purpose that is in perfect balance with God's love for individuals. In our exploration below, we'll emphasize beautiful unity amidst breathtaking diversity in the relational love of God. I intend to show that this ultimate *purpose of God* (teleology) has love and honor at its core. I will also show that it bears much significance for our mission purpose, practice and training.

#### Jesus said it: God shares his glory with believers

First, let us settle the fact that God is actually giving glory to those who follow Jesus Christ. In John 17, Jesus is praying to the Father in what is often called his High Priestly Prayer:

The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one (John 17:22).

So God gives glory to people who follow Christ as Lord. In John 5, Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees and critiques their unbelief as a failed quest for glory:

How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? (John 5:44).

Relatedly, Jesus spoke of the authorities who were afraid to confess Christ: "For they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God" (John 12:43). Clearly, Jesus' own words indicate that God shares his glory with people.

So we may conclude that people can be led to believing faith in Christ by actually *seeking glory promised them by God*. Jesus did not say it is wrong to seek glory. Jesus said it is wrong to seek glory given by people, rather than "the glory that comes from the only God." The Pharisees were only mistaken in *whom* they were seeking glory from, and this mistake undermined their belief in Jesus.

So as astounding as it may seem, God shares his glory with those who love and follow Christ.<sup>18</sup> Hawthorne writes, "God is so rich in glory that He bestows extravagant honors upon His human servants without compromising His own majesty in the slightest."<sup>19</sup>

But the truth of God sharing his glory with his people is not an innovation of the New Testament. The Old Testament also conveys this truth, albeit more indirectly. Let's look again at Psalm 96. Verse 6 reads: "Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." Again, we turn to Hawthorne, who writes of this verse:

"Splendor and majesty" do not refer to God's self-experience. Rather, along with "strength and beauty" ... they are features of God's presence that are to be the experience of people who approach Him in true worship. There can be nothing more splendid or majestic for humans than to be

<sup>18.</sup> See footnote 34 on p. 203 concerning the verses in Isaiah where God says, "My glory I will not give to another" (Is 48:11).

<sup>19.</sup> Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," 50.

elevated and placed in the gorgeous, heart-stopping grandeur of God's regal presence.

Worship is the way that people glorify God. When looked at from God's point of view, we can see that worship is also God's way of glorifying people—in all the best sense of bringing people into their highest honor. Worship fulfills God's love. He loves people so vastly that He wills to exalt them to something better than greatness; He wants to bring them into an honored nearness to Him.<sup>20</sup>

### Exploring the honor/shame dynamics in God's purpose to bless all peoples

We now turn to an exploration of how honor/shame dynamics in God's ultimate purpose (teleology) may be seen in Scripture. Limited space does not permit a comprehensive review of verses with teleological importance relative to missions. Therefore, we will examine here a selective set of Scriptures and consider their significance.<sup>21</sup>

In any study or any perspective of the Bible's teleology, the subject of the *kingdom of God* is front and center. Due to space limitations, we will not explore the many varied ways to interpret the kingdom.

But of this one thing we can be sure: However one understands and experiences the kingdom of God, believers gain a new source of honor by being redeemed by and related to the King, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this set of Scriptures—primarily from the books of Daniel and Revelation we will examine the way God shares his glory with persons and people groups.

The kingdom of God is paramount in the story and purposes of God. In Daniel 7 we detect a beautiful merger of honor between God the Father (called "the Ancient of Days"), the Son of Man (Jesus), and the saints of God. Observe, first of all, the verses below concerning God the Father as the Ancient of Days:

As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened (Dan 7:9–10).

God's justice is to be meted out by the Ancient of Days as "the court sat in judgment and the books were opened" (v. 10).

Then, in verse 14, the Son of Man is given the kingdom—with all its glory and diversity.

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a

<sup>20.</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>21.</sup> For a much more exhaustive treatment on God's ultimate purpose or teleology, see Hawthorne: Let All the Peoples Praise Him.

kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed (vv. 13–14).

The "son of man" is "given dominion and glory and a kingdom" comprising the diversity of "peoples, nations, and languages"—a vivid vision of Jesus the Son of Man receiving the honor of the Father in the form of the kingdom of God.

Curiously, in 1 Corinthians 15:24 we see another perspective. "Then comes the end, when [Jesus] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power." This is different. Whereas in Daniel 7:13–14, the Father gives the kingdom to the Son, here it is *Christ* who delivers the kingdom to the *Father*.

In Luke's Gospel we find another twist. Scripture reveals God presenting the kingdom to his "little flock." Jesus says, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). *Amazing!* The Father gives the kingdom to his "little flock," and does so with *pleasure?* Who are these vulnerable ones, this "little flock"? Is this not the community of the saints of God redeemed by the blood of Christ?

We return to Daniel 7 and find the same sublime truth. Again we find the almost unbelievable bestowal of honor to the saints in Daniel 7:18, 22, and 27.

- In verse 18, it is the saints who "*possess the kingdom* forever, forever and ever."
- In verse 22, "until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when *the saints possessed the kingdom.*"
- In verse 27, "And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven *shall be given to the people of the saints* of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."<sup>22</sup> (Emphasis mine).

#### We must ask, To whom is the kingdom of God given?

Is the kingdom given by Christ to God the Father (1 Cor 15:24)? *Yes.* Is the kingdom given by the Ancient of Days to Jesus, the "son of man" (Dan 7:13–14)? *Yes.* Is the kingdom given by God to the saints (Dan 7:18, 22, 27; Luke 12:32)? *Yes.* 

What we observe is nothing less than the relational exchange of honor between God and his people. God the Father, the Lord Jesus, and the saints of God *together* possess and share the kingdom.<sup>23</sup>

It makes sense that God, the Ancient of Days, Creator, Ruler and Judge should possess the kingdom; *he owns it.* It makes sense that Christ as Redeemer, Savior and Lord should possess the kingdom; *he earned it—the peoples who populate it were purchased by his blood* (Rev 5:9).

But how can it be that persons and peoples who were once defiled, inglorious

<sup>22.</sup> Moreover, the *ESV Study Bible* has a footnote on this verse that "obey him" can also be translated "obey them."

<sup>23.</sup> Could it be that this is what Jesus was hinting at in the Beatitudes? "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 5:3).

sinners, and enemies of God (Eph 2:1–3) will possess the kingdom? *We are but creatures. We have not earned it!* It stretches human imagination, even the minds of the redeemed, to embrace this ineffable truth.

How do we embrace the totality of honor given to God's people, the community of saints? It is almost too precious to describe.

This is why Peter said, "So the honor is for you who believe" (1 Pet 2:7). This is why Paul considered that "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom 8:18).

This is why Paul also described the hope of our salvation as "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27)! And why Paul wrote, that this "hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5).

This is why John pondered the mystery: "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1).

#### Honor magnified among the saints and peoples in Revelation

The large chart in Appendix 5 is an overview of the honor/shame dynamics contained in the book of Revelation. The reader is strongly encouraged to at least skim the chart to observe *how abundant* is the honor/shame language. Pay special attention to the center column, which is labeled, *"God gives honor to the saints—individual believers and people groups they comprise."* 

The purpose of this chart is to demonstrate the extensive degree to which believers—and the peoples they comprise—are given honor by God. When seen in the light of specific honor/shame dynamics, the inescapable conclusion is this: *The glory and honor that Almighty God shares with the saints gathered from among all peoples is almost beyond imagination.* (And notably, without an understanding of the pivotal cultural value of honor and shame in Bible societies, this conclusion would not be as easily accessible.) One example of Revelation's beatific visions is in chapter 5:

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" (Rev 5:9–13).

The day is coming when every people group will be represented in the magnificent choir worshiping the regal Savior (v. 9). The Lamb is worthy! Christ's honor and glory are supreme. The worship of the slain Lamb of God can never be exhausted. And at the same time we observe that the saints and manifold peoples they comprise are *also honored*—"you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (v. 10).

Such is the overflowing love and honor of Almighty God. He actually dwells with his people (Rev 21:3). It's incredible that the saints live with God in his house. "Therefore they are before the throne of God ... and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence" (Rev 7:15). What a display of the honor of God's grace and hospitality toward the redeemed.

It is the overflowing love and honor of Christ the King sitting with conquering saints who have joined him on his throne (Rev 3:21). Yes, the saints even gain the honor of sitting enthroned with their Savior. It fulfills God's promise that he "raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6).

It is the overflowing love and honor of the Bridegroom banqueting with his bride (Rev 19:7–9). Banquets are the most celebratory and generous displays of honor and joy! The magnificent mystery of Christ being one with the church (Eph 5:25) will finally become a sacred reality saturated with affection and glory. What a romance!

And finally, it is the overflowing love of Christ receiving the honor of the kings of the earth:

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev 21:22–27).

In the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:10) again we behold the overflowing love and honor of God as he condescends to receive the glory of the nations. "They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations."<sup>24</sup>

At least some from all the peoples are redeemed. All the kinship groups are there. All the nations are represented by their kings as they bring the finest unique works of art and culture, wisdom and science, all the beautiful wonders of their own people. All have been transformed, made clean, holy, unspeakably precious by the purifying atonement of Christ (Heb 1:3).

<sup>24.</sup> Richard Mouw explores the political, cultural, and social dimensions of this passage in Revelation and how it overlaps with Isaiah 60. "In short, ancient kings served as the primary authorities over the broad patterns of the cultural lives of their nations. And when they stood over against other nations, they were the bearers, the representatives, of their respective cultures. To assemble kings together, then, was in an important sense to assemble their national cultures together." Richard J. Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), Kindle edition locations 457–58).

Richard Mouw has written of the overlaps between Isaiah 60 and Revelation 21:22–27. He describes how both passages give insights about the eternal city to come. He explores the political, cultural, and social dimensions of these parallel passages of Scripture.

And now these entities are gathered into the renewed Jerusalem. But as they appear in this transformed commercial center, they are no longer signs of pagan cultural strength or displays of alien power. ... Here in the transformed City these vessels and goods serve a very different purpose. Isaiah is very explicit about this new purpose, noting what function each creature and item now performs. Ephah's camels now "proclaim the praise of the Lord" (Is 60:6). Nebaioth's rams "shall minister to you" as acceptable sacrifices on the Lord's altars (Is 60:7). The ships of Tarshish bring precious metals "for the name of the Lord your God" (Is 60:9). And the costly lumber from Lebanon will "beautify the place of my sanctuary" (Is. 60:9). Each of the items mentioned is now to be put to the service of God and his people.<sup>25</sup>

Every regal gift is transformed by Christ. Every gift is received by the King of kings, glorifying God, while at the same time bestowing honor on each and every people.

## People group rivalry gone, while every people group's honor is magnified

No peoples will ever be marginalized again. No culture or people will ever again be intimidated by a "market-dominant majority."<sup>26</sup> No ethnic group or race will ever again be discriminated against or fear for its place in the larger community. No one will ever again feel shame because of race or ethnicity. The sense of inferiority that comes from the designations of *upper caste* and *upper class … middle-class* or *upper-middle class … lower class* or *lower caste* or *untouchables …* will be banished forever. No ethnic group or social strata will ever again lord it over another.

Now, because God rewards service and faithfulness, we envision that some peoples or kinship groups will have greater reward than others for their sacrifices to God and their obedience to God's global kingdom purposes. But no people, nation, culture, or kinship group will ever again be *demeaned*. As "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb" (Is 11:6), so also the strong people group will dwell in peace with the less strong; the oppression or hegemony of one nation, culture, kinship, or people group *against* others will be abolished.

And wondrously, the diversity of each people will be preserved. Christopher Wright writes of this passage, "The image we might prefer for the Bible's portrait of the nations is not a melting pot (in which all differences are blended together into a single alloy) but a salad bowl (in which all ingredients preserve their distinctive

<sup>25.</sup> Ibid., Kindle edition locations 218-24.

<sup>26.</sup> The term is from Amy Chua, World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability (New York: Random House, 2003).

color, texture, and taste). The new creation will preserve the rich diversity of the original creation, but [be] purged of the sin-laden effects of the Fall.<sup>"27</sup>

The nations are both preserved and transformed in Christ from glory to glory, elevated in beauty and honor. The *telos*, the ultimate purpose of God has a multiethnic quality. Hawthorne writes: "The peoples endure everlastingly. The city which is heaven on earth will be adorned by Kings of the people continually bringing the treasure and fruit of the peoples to God's throne (Rev 21:22–26)."<sup>28</sup>

The diversity of praise from the variety of peoples and tribes and nations is woven throughout the final book of Revelation. God could have focused his plan on individuals alone, but the glorious heights of his purpose will only be reached with the harmonious worship of all the peoples. It fulfills God's original promise to Abraham to bless all the peoples of the earth (Gen 12:3).

You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev 5:9).

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb (Rev 7:9).

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory ..." (Rev 14:6–7).

Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you ... (Rev 15:4).

And threw [Satan] into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer (Rev 20:3).

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations (Rev 21:23–26).

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Rev 22:2).

The tree of life (Rev 22:2) echoing the original garden (Gen 2:9) is now the source of what brings healing to the *ethnon*, the peoples. I imagine this healing creating a fountain of joy for an ongoing festival of cultural variety amidst the unified worship of Christ. God's global mission "is not merely the salvation of innumerable souls but specifically the healing of the nations."<sup>29</sup> It will be like an ever-growing celebration of manifold, cultural excellencies and wonders for God's joy and the peoples' gladness: "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!" (Ps 67:4–5).

<sup>27.</sup> Christopher Wright, 456.

<sup>28.</sup> Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," 60.

<sup>29.</sup> Christopher Wright, 456.

*What a gathering this will be!* All the saints and the peoples together comprising an immense multitude will boast in the Lord—"Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. ... Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory" (Rev 19:1, 6–7).

They will have all been redeemed, their sin and shame a faint and distant memory! Their *falling-short-of-the-glory-of-God* (Rom 3:23) will be no more. The honor of every saint and every people will be restored, yes, even elevated before God to its greatest weight and highest value.

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever (Rev 22:3–5).

At last! The drama of the ages, the vindication of the Lamb of God and the immense honor-status reversal of the nations, is finally complete. No more tears and pain. No more sin. No more guilt. No more shame. No more oppression or curse. Now, only blessing and honor and glory as together the redeemed saints and the peoples dwell before "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev 22:1). And yes, the saints "will reign forever and ever" (v. 5).

"And his servants will worship him" (v. 3). *Of course they will*. The very name of the mighty Lamb of God has been placed "on their foreheads" (v. 4). They will gladly bear Christ's honor on their minds and in their hearts forever—they are the redeemed who serve together as "the wife of the Lamb" (Rev 21:9).

The honorific romance began with Christ the Word (John 1:1–3), continues with Christ the Lamb who was slain and Christ the mighty conqueror over sin, death and hell. It culminates with Christ the Bridegroom. Surely it is a Christ-directed relational *telos*. Steve Hawthorne refers to this as a "Christotelic drama."<sup>30</sup>

The theodrama is Christotelic in a historic sense, but also in a relational sense. All things come to him. The crescendo of the entire theodrama is not a remembered event or person. Instead, the crescendo is potently anticipated. The climax moves not only forward, but also Christ-ward. All things will eventually come under Him: either to be subdued under His feet as His enemies, or to be perfected under His head as His people.<sup>31</sup>

The origin, the covenantal journey, and the relational destination are all embedded in Christ himself, the Alpha and Omega (Rev 21:6). It is a glory-*sharing* purpose; an honor-*sharing* teleology:

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are glorified forever and ever while, in mighty love and unending abundance, God shares his glory with the saints from among all the diverse peoples in his kingdom for eternity.

This comprises the *telos* of mission.

<sup>30.</sup> Hawthorne, *Let All the Peoples Praise Him*, 255. 31. Ibid., 256

#### God-centered or human-centered?

Human perspectives about heaven, the afterlife, God's eternal kingdom, and ultimate purposes tend toward two extremes—the God-centered and the human-centered. Richard Mouw offers helpful comments:

Carol Zaleski has articulated a nice distinction about the ways in which people think about heaven. "Some depictions of heaven," she writes, "are strongly theocentric, portraying the blessed as caught up in an endless rapture of adoration; others are sociable and anthropocentric. But a more adequate picture would be theocentric and anthropocentric at once."<sup>32</sup>

Mouw then affirms the more anthropocentric elements of *city and culture* in our eternal future:

[T]he vision of an Eternal City in which the patterns and products of our present cultural lives are transformed, and in which a multitude that no human being can number is gathered from the tribes and nations of the earth to sing the Lamb's praises—this vision still manages to inspire in me a profound sense of wonder and anticipation.<sup>33</sup>

The material below combines God-centered and human-centered purposes for mission. The anthropocentric purposes (both negative and positive) are under an *ultimate* theocentric goal—the glory of God. What follows is an explanation in three segments:

- The *glory of God* is the overarching theocentric motivation for mission.
- *Hell* and *lostness* represent the *need* of humanity—the negative, anthropocentric motivations for mission.
- *Personal honor* and *people group honor* represent the *hope* of humanity—the positive, anthropocentric motivations for mission.

Let's begin with the ultimate—the theocentric purpose of God.

### 1. The glory of God—overarching theocentric motivation for mission

Pocock, Van Rheenan and McConnell reflect on the trend in mission motivation that has been more God-centered than human-centered. They gratefully acknowledge the movement by which *the glory of God* has infused many believers in North America and around the world as a return to a more God-centered motivation for mission.

Contemporary trends ... are more positive than negative. Preaching that reflects the glory of God is a return to the core of the gospel. Proclaiming good news is an announcement of God's in-breaking glory, an opening of eyes, a turning from darkness to light, a revolution from "the power of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18) ... .

<sup>32.</sup> Mouw, Kindle edition locations: 31–33. Mouw quotes Carol Zaleski, "Fear of Heaven," *The Christian Century*, March 14, 2001: 24.

<sup>33.</sup> Ibid., Kindle edition locations 40–42.

The glory of God is the essence of the kingdom of God and therefore can stimulate missions like no other motivation. Rather than complain that lostness is not a part of present theology, mission leaders must seek to *redefine lostness within the broader theological motif of giving glory to God.*<sup>34</sup> (Emphasis mine.)

I heartily agree with these paragraphs above. Indeed, the glory of God is the ultimate purpose of mission because God, who is holy and good, is supreme in all things. God deserves worship and praise from all peoples and nations. The *needs* of humanity—and the *hopes* of humanity—are met in knowing and worshiping Jesus Christ through lifestyles of obedience.

We have, of course, already explored in this chapter various facets of the glory of God as the crux and destiny of Christian mission. So little else needs to be said about this.

We turn now to explore human-centered motivations for mission, the first of which are "negative."

#### 2. Hell and lostness represent the *need* of humanity the "negative" anthropocentric motivations for mission

When I use the word *negative* here, I do not mean it is *negative and untrue*. I am saying it is *negative and true*. For example, a warning may be given about a very real danger and pending destruction; it is bad news and also true. Negative emotions of fear and foreboding may be the result, but nevertheless the warning is founded on truth. Moreover, if the one being warned heeds the warning and avoids destruction, then the *negative* information has been most valuable!<sup>35</sup>

There are two motivations for mission identified as *negative* by Pocock, Van Rheenan, and McConnell. The first is *hell*. The second is *lostness*.<sup>36</sup>

#### Hell as a "negative" motivation for mission

The problem question answered by this mission purpose is: *How can I avoid eternal judgment from God for my sin?* This foreboding question has motivated untold multitudes throughout church history.

In the Middle Ages of Europe and the period known as Christendom, the church was aligned with the state and often used religion as a means of controlling people. The state and the church mutually reinforced the power of the status quo. Salvation was defined as exclusive to the Catholic church, and the fear of hell fortified this belief for multitudes.

During the Middle Ages the church used fear of hell to maintain the allegiance of its people. Hell was portrayed as a place of turmoil, chaos, pain, despair, and wretchedness. Dante's *Inferno* graphically described the state of souls after death with sins punished according to their severity. Sinners were traitors who rebelled against God and the church. ... Johann

<sup>34.</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>35.</sup> See Ezekiel 33:1–9 for a vivid expression of this principle.

<sup>36.</sup> Pocock, Van Rheenan, McConnell, 161–81. Their excellent chapter on this topic is titled "Changing Motivations for Missions: From Fear of Hell to the Glory of God."

Tetzel, using fear of hell to extract money for indulgences during the time of Martin Luther, illustrates how the threat of eternal punishment can induce response.<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately, spiritual abuse by the church has a long, sordid history. It continues today in some faith communities in which leaders manipulate their members through emotional and other forms of abuse.

However, the fallenness of church leaders does not negate the truth claims of Jesus Christ regarding hell. In the gospels, Jesus clearly taught of the reality of perishing in hell, warning us of coming judgment (John 3:16; Luke 16:19–31; Mat 25:46). Jesus said,

And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43–48).

According to the Bible, hell is a reality which is *negative and true*. It remains a compelling and urgent motivation for mission. Eternal punishment is reserved for all who dishonor the glorious, infinite, Almighty God. Gratefully, we serve a God of love who has made provision through Christ to save sinners from judgment.

The Bible teaches that God's judgment in condemning Satan, his fallen angels and unredeemed persons to hell is a horrible eternal destiny to be feared and avoided. Everyone must be given the opportunity to be saved. This need of humanity constitutes a "negative" purpose of mission.

#### Lostness as a "negative" motivation for mission

The problem question answered by this mission motivation is: *How can I be saved from my sin and hopelessness?* 

Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Therefore, a powerful purpose for Christian mission is the lostness of individual persons in particular and humanity in general. "If Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, should that not also be our motivation?"<sup>38</sup>

Luke's Gospel includes in chapter 15 three parables—the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son—to emphasize *humanity's need* and the *Father's heart* in seeking the lost. These parables magnify how terrible it is to be lost, living apart from God. "People without God cannot discover their ultimate identity, that they were created to live in a relationship with God. Humans living without God have lost their created identity. They are operating by human initiative or under the varying influences of Satan."<sup>39</sup>

Without salvation from lostness, people worship lifeless idols (whether pagan or secular) and live in varying degrees of hopelessness. They are unable to worship

<sup>37.</sup> Ibid., 164-68.

<sup>38.</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>39.</sup> Ibid., 173.

God or glorify him as Creator. This need of humanity also constitutes a "negative" purpose of mission.

To summarize point 2 (which concerns *hell* and *lostness*), here is the principle for negative motivations for mission:

#### Negative anthropocentric motivations for mission hell and lostness—are under the ultimate theocentric purpose of the glory of God.

We turn now to human-centered motivations for mission that are "positive."

# 3. Personal honor and people-group honor represent the *hope* of humanity—the "positive" anthropocentric motivations for mission

As we explore these two human-centered motivations for mission that are "positive," we see that the *longing for honor* is at the core of both. A cautionary note is in order.

Whenever I speak of the longing for honor, it triggers a related thought: *the problem of human pride*. A caution is in order because the Bible says, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Pro 16:18). We can rightly say that *pride* was a major reason for the Fall of humanity (Gen 3). Therefore, we must proceed circumspectly.

On the one hand, we make note of the perils of overemphasizing the *longing for honor* as a biblically based motivation for mission—because honor and pride are seductive. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the testimony of Scripture concerning the fact that God shares his honor and glory with the saints. So there is a tension here which requires our examination.

How can we resolve this tension? The answer is—through Jesus.

**Christ our glory.** We resolve this tension by emphasizing that all this honor and glory for believers is embedded in our being *in Christ*, "the hope of glory" (Col 1:27).<sup>40</sup> God has adopted us into his family (Eph 1:5; Rom 8:15). Our honor is in our adopted kinship—we are siblings of Jesus our elder brother (Rom 8:29). Our honor is exclusively and totally in what God has done for us in Christ. *It's all by grace, that no one may boast* (Eph 2:9).

Paul is our example. He resolved this tension *by boasting in the Lord*. When Paul wrote "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Cor 1:31), he was quoting Jeremiah:

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth" (Jer 9:23–24).

Paul's focus was constantly on Jesus and how Christ had changed his life: "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which

<sup>40.</sup> I am grateful to Steven Hawthorne who has emphasized this point in personal conversations: Our honor as believers is embedded exclusively in Jesus Christ.

the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal 6:14). Indeed, we need discipline to keep our eyes on Jesus—and humility to boast in nothing but the cross.

Having briefly addressed this appropriate caution, let us now explore the two human-centered mission motivations which have at their core *the longing for honor*.

### The longing for personal honor as a "positive" motivation for mission

The problem question answered by this mission motivation is: *How can my longing for honor be satisfied?* 

This is a *positive* human-centered motivation for mission. It is based on the truth demonstrated earlier in this chapter (and throughout this book)—that God, by his infinite grace and the riches of his glory, shares his honor with individuals who believe and follow Jesus Christ.

This *longing for personal honor* is in the heart of every person. Sin is the obstacle that blocks this longing from being fulfilled. The hope of salvation—the hope of *glory* in knowing and serving Christ—is good news that must be shared with everyone. The honor of joining God's eternal family must be proclaimed. This glorious *hope* of humanity (in contrast to a *need* of humanity) constitutes a "positive" purpose of mission.

### The longing for people-group honor as a "positive" motivation for mission

The problem question answered by this mission motivation is: *How can our people's longing for honor be satisfied?* 

The *longing for people-group honor* is, collectively, in the heart of every tribe, tongue, and nation. Sin is the obstacle that blocks this longing from being fulfilled. The hope of glory in knowing and serving Christ *collectively* must be made known. The honor of joining God's eternal family of ethnicities must be proclaimed.

The sure destiny in Christ's kingdom is that at least some from all peoples will have their own cultures transformed; these peoples and cultures will be elevated to their greatest beauty and highest value. Believers from all peoples will worship and glorify God forever and ever. *And this is good news which must be shared with everyone*.

This glorious *hope* of humanity (in contrast to a *need* of humanity) also constitutes a "positive" purpose of mission.

To summarize point 3 (that concerns *personal honor* and *people-group honor*), here is the principle for human-centered, positive motivations for mission:

Positive anthropocentric motivations for mission personal honor and people-group honor—are also under the ultimate theocentric purpose of the glory of God.

#### Seeing these varied mission motivations as a unified whole

The combination of points 1, 2, and 3 (explained above) is represented by Figure 4.02, on the next page.

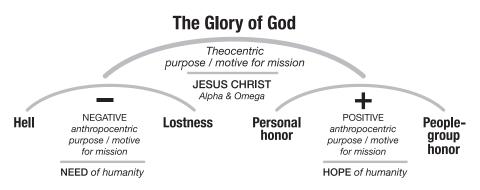


Figure 4.02: Negative and positive anthropocentric purposes under the ultimate purpose of the glory of God

## The *glory* of God, the *need* of humanity, the *hope* of humanity— all biblical motivations for mission

Jesus Christ is "the Alpha and the Omega" (Rev 1:8) and "the Lamb who was slain" (Rev 5:12), worthy of all honor and glory. God deserves the worship of all creation. "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen" (Rom 11:36). God's glory is not only the *source* and the *crux* of all creation. God's glory is its very *destiny*. It is the theocentric motivation for mission.

#### And with regard to anthropocentric motivations for mission ...

**The negative:** On the one hand Scripture reveals a *hell* reserved for God's judgment on Satan, his fallen angels and all persons who have rebelled against God. The Bible also reveals the utter *lostness* of humanity apart from God. These "negative" truths that motivate people for mission are ultimately reflections of the glory of God. They are expressions of God's righteous judgment—and his compassion in seeking the lost.

**The positive:** On the other hand, Scripture also reveals a God who promises to elevate the honor of individual *believers* as well as the distinct *peoples* whom they comprise. These "positive" truths that motivate people for mission are centered in the promises of God to cover the shame and elevate the honor of *persons* and *people groups*. This is also placed under the ultimate reality of the glory of God, for it is a most glorious reflection of his generosity and love.

Mission motivation can be purely for *the glory of God*. Mission motivation can also be to save persons from the punishment of *hell* and the despair of *lostness*. Mission motivation can be the elevation of the *honor of persons* or the *honor of people groups*. Practically speaking, isn't our mission motivation and purpose often a blend of all these dynamics?

Whatever the motivation, believers on mission with God are all ultimately gathering worshipers for God. As John Piper says, "God is pursuing with omnipotent

### passion a worldwide purpose of gathering joyful worshipers for himself from every tribe and tongue and people and nation."<sup>41</sup> The chart below summarizes this chapter.

	Theocentric telos and motivation for mission—Jesus Christ the Alpha and Omega Theology of the glory of God			
	Eternal punishment for dishonoring the glorious infinite, Almighty God	Those who worship idols become like them— lifeless, hopeless	Redeemed persons— the saints—will worship and glorify God forever and ever	At least some from all peoples will worship and glorify God forever and ever
	Anthropocentric motivation-negative/fear		Anthropocentric motivation positive/hope	
Theology of	Hell	Lostness	Personal honor	People-group honor
Problem question	How can I avoid eternal judgment by God for my sin?	How can I be saved from my sin, guilt, and hopelessness?	How can my longing for honor be satisfied?	How can our people's longing for honor be satisfied?
God so loved the world	God's love in forgiving sinners – satisfying the wrath of God against sin	God's love in seeking and saving the lost	God's love for persons in forgiving sin, covering shame, receiving their worship, sharing with them his honor	God's love for people groups in forgiving sin, covering shame, receiving their worship, sharing with them his honor
Transformation	New life in Christ     New eternal destiny	New life in Christ     New eternal destiny	New life in Christ     New eternal destiny     New source of honor	New life in Christ     New eternal destiny     New source of honor     Peoples and their     cultures transformed

Figure 4.03: Anthropocentric motivations for mission – positive and negative – under a theocentric telos

### Honor/shame dynamics in our mission purpose—final considerations

- **Christ our glory.** Lest we become proud, we must remember that all this honor and glory for the saints and the peoples is embedded in our being "in Christ." God has adopted us into his family (Eph 1:5; Rom 8:15). Our honor is in our adopted kinship—we are siblings of Jesus our elder brother (Rom 8:29). *Our honor, simply, is totally and exclusively in what God has done for us in Christ.* It is by grace, that no one may boast (Eph 2:9). What practices or disciplines would help believers retain their devotion to Christ to avoid the temptation of thinking that their honor is located within themselves?
- Attracting persons and peoples. In the history of Christian mission, particularly in the period of colonial missions, many *individual persons* were saved and became believers. Some were extracted from their tribes and people groups and given residence in the mission compounds. This extraction from their community often became a hindrance to further evangelism in their community. Even today, many first-generation believers experience alienation from their communities and families of origin. What might happen if the efforts to evangelize and plant churches were done

<sup>41.</sup> John Piper, Let the Nations Be Glad! Kindle edition locations 1080-81.

with a dual approach, attracting both *persons* and *peoples* to Christ, not only because of their guilt which must be repented of and forgiven, but also because of the honor that both *persons* and *peoples* would gain from being followers of the risen Christ?

- **Blessing the unengaged.** What does this mean for peoples who have honor/shame as a pivotal cultural value and are considered unreached or unengaged? Can questions such as *"How can my longing for honor be satisfied?"* or *"Does Jesus care about our people's longing for honor?"* be entry points for evangelism and church planting efforts? Dream together with your team. What might this look like?
- **Call for creativity.** How might this mission *telos*, which includes a concern for *personal honor* and *people-group honor*, impact evangelism to marginalized or low-status peoples? What can you and your team do to create evangelistic resources and church-planting training that *begin with the end in mind*, that is, that begin with all peoples worshiping the most worthy person in the universe, Jesus Christ, and having their unique shame profile *covered* and unique cultural honor *magnified* through Christ in his kingdom? What immediate actions can you and your team engage in to reveal the love and honor of God for persons and peoples that point to this ultimate reality?
- Honor-oriented mobilization. How might this truth that God shares his honor and glory with persons and peoples impact mission mobilization in honor/shame cultures?
- Shame resilience, honor surplus. We must not fail to grasp an intention of the Word of God: There is abundant honor available to believers, both now and in eternity, through Christ and his kingdom. Therefore, it is to be normative—not exceptional—that believers know our Lord in such a way that they experience an *honor surplus*—an overflowing of life in Jesus (John 7:38). This honor surplus should correspond to strong shame resilience empowered by the Holy Spirit, so that believers are able to live ethically superior lives, committed to God's mission to bless all the peoples of the earth, willing to suffer for the sake of Christ's name. What behaviors would characterize a believer with strong shame resilience and an honor surplus in Christ? What behaviors would characterize the believer who lacks this honor surplus in Christ?
- **Through the Holy Spirit.** What is the role of the Holy Spirit in making *real* the believer's honor surplus in Christ? What is the role of the church family?
- **Two biblical extremes—hell and heaven.** The letter to the Hebrews warns about the inescapable retribution from God that comes to those who "neglect such a great salvation" (Heb 2:3). When believers embrace the hope of this fullness of honor in Christ that God gives to redeemed persons and peoples, they experience *a positive reality*, an honor surplus, "a great

salvation." How might this honor-enhancing reality in Christ provide an effective contrast to the message of the *negative reality* of hell and lostness? Does the positive side somehow make the negative side more real or more believable?

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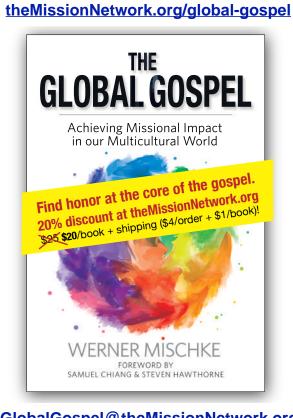
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