

Shame: Why Am I This Way? (Week 3: Shame-Honor and the Bible)

The US is a justice-guilt culture. As such, we have a normal tendency to read and interpret the bible through a justice-guilt lens. For example:

- It focuses on the rules. Someone messes up. Someone bears the consequences. The person who did wrong is the focus of blame. Justice includes restitution, punishment.....Question: Can you think of examples?
 - Adam and Eve
 - Israel in the book of Judges
 - David's sin with Bathsheba
 - Judas Iscariot
 - Ananias and Saphira
- It focuses on the individual.
 - Sin.
 - Salvation.
- If focuses on the task. What's been done. What's to be done.

But the bible was written in a shame-honor culture. The stories are being lived in a shame-honor culture. So, to better understand shame, and to better understand shame in the bible, we first have to understand the shame-honor culture that the bible was written in.

Shame-Honor Cultures

HONOR: High respect; esteem. Privilege. Both through person's eyes and others'.
It is like a credit rating.

SHAME: Loss of respect, esteem. Loss of privilege, status.

1. Shame-Honor cultures are emotional currency cultures. How the others in the culture 'feel' about you is what is most important.

The US is a task-oriented culture, we care less about how people feel about us as long as the job is done and/or we get what we want.

- In the US, we work with people all of the time who we don't like.
Not so in a shame-honor culture.
- In the US, we tolerate embarrassing and/or wayward family members.
Not so in a shame-honor culture.

- In the US we let obnoxious people ‘live and let live.’
Not so in a shame-honor culture.
- Shame can be a powerful way of getting something done.

EX: Workers lock our management and work to prove they can boost production. This shames the bosses and brings more honor to the company and the workers...thus the workers get raises.

- US we use courts to try and right a wrong.

2. Kinship is everything (*strangers have no honor*)

- Identity is tied to kinship, family, tribe. I am not a ‘complete’ person unless I am in a productive relationship in a group and see as so through the eyes of others.
- Honor is... linked to blood. It is ascribed through birth or inheritance.
- Shame is ... even removal from family.
- To not avenge a shaming act is cowardice. Honor must be restored above all else.
- US we leave family to form own destiny apart from family

3. Group culture

- The person does not think of himself or herself as an individual who acts alone regardless of what other’s think and say. Rather the person is ever aware of the expectations of others, and strives to match those expectations. This is the group-embedded, group-oriented personality.
- The smooth functioning of a person’s life and the group(s) the person belongs to depends on the maintenance of the relationship between the individual and the group.
- To step out of line with the group is to bring shame to self and the group.
- US is values independence over interdependence

4. Conflict is always brewing (*honor at risk through challenge*)

- A closed system. For one person’s honor to increase, someone else’s must decrease.
- US values open system...want more power...go get it, or take it.

5. Honor resides primarily with the men
 - a. The head of the group/family (male) is the person primarily responsible for the honor of the family and how members bring honor or shame to the family.
 - b. Guard purity of the women
 - c. US is moving away from patriarchy

6. Honor is weighed in the court of public opinion
 - a. Verdict broadcast through gossip

7. Honor does not equal truth or virtue
 - a. Honor is public opinion, not principle
 - b. Heads of families meet.
 - c. US...justice demands we tell the ‘truth’

8. Possessions are used to maintain or acquire honor (e.g. dowery).
 - a. US possessions and ownership drive power

9. Personal guilt is not the concern (shame is)

		<u>Others believe I am:</u>		
		guilty	not guilty	
<u>I believe I am:</u>	guilty	I am guilty and am punished	I should feel guilty regardless	GUILT CULTURE
	not guilty	I protest my innocence and fight the accusation	No problem	
<u>I believe I am:</u>	guilty	I am guilty and am punished	No-one knows, so I am not shamed	SHAME CULTURE
	not guilty	I am shamed and dishonored by their belief	No problem	

10. Communication is indirect

- a. Speech is coded to help preserve honor.
- b. Although it can be a lie, deception, etc.
- c. US prefers direct communication. Say what you're gonna say.

PLAY VIDEO

Shame-Honor in Scripture

If we only read/interpret scripture through our low-relational, individualistic western-oriented lenses, our understanding will be limited.

Adam and Eve

Abraham (bold move to risk shame for a bigger sense of honor)

Noah

Ruth/Naomi

Esther

Jonah

Job

Zacchaeus

Pharisees...honored in their society

Eating in homes of others

Arguing in public (acquire honor through challenge and response honor game)

Inheritance to bring honor

Covenant dictates behaviors

Community suffers/is blessed

Hospitality

Shame-Honor and Gospel

The good news of Jesus came first to shame-oriented people

Jesus shows God's acceptance of all

Jesus shows God elevates all

Jesus gives access to God for all

God's love is unconditional

Everyone has a role where no one is shamed...all parts necessary.

Shame-Honor and Bible

So...should the bible be interpreted through a justice-guilt lens or a shame-honor lens?

Is the gospel about forgiving sin or restoring honor (lifting up, new relationship)?

When we know how to approach scripture, gospel, reconciling through BOTH lenses, we are able to help people heal and find victory and redemption from both guilt and shame.

How can salvation be interpreted as honor?

How can this help the person struggling with shame?

Who gets the ultimate honor? Why?

Who feels the ultimate shame? Why?

Free at Last

Breaking the bondages of guilt and shame

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2. _____ is everything.

3. _____ culture.

4. _____ is always brewing.

5. Honor resides primarily with the _____.

6. Honor is weighed in the court of _____.

7. Honor does not equal _____ or _____.

8. _____ are used to maintain or acquire honor.

9. Personal _____ is not the concern.

10. Communication is _____.

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Examples of Shame-Honor in the Bible:

Shame-Honor and Gospel

Examples of Shame-Honor in the Gospel: