



Communal Culture: Honor and Shame

Notes

	Eastern Culture	Western Culture
Main driver of behavior	Gain honor, avoid shame	Do what is right and not what is wrong; avoid guilt
Motivation	External motivation -- Do what is approved by one's family and community; meet social expectations	Internal motivation -- Do what you believe to be right
Result of "bad" behavior	Ostracized by one's community	Minimal; consequences if illegal
Cultural messages	Live in harmony, blend in, listen to your community	Be an individual, make up your own mind, stop listening to the crowd

Honor	Shame
Wise, life-giving	Fool
Able to care for one's household, neighbors, etc.	Unable to care for one's household, neighbors, etc. Actions endanger one's community.
Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exodus 20:12 ● Esther 3:2 ● Romans 12:10 	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Psalm 25:3 ● Jeremiah 17:13 ● I Corinthians 6:5

Biblical examples where honor and shame issues are key

- 1 Samuel 25 -- David, Nabal, Abigail
- Matthew 22:23-33, 46 -- Jesus and the Sadducees

- External conviction/shame -- Jesus bears our shame
We had the honor to be in God's presence in Eden but experienced shame after rejecting God and lost that community. Jesus came and humbled himself, gave up his status, but he regained it in the resurrection and ascension.
- Internal conviction/guilt -- Jesus bears our guilt
All from Adam on have been guilty before God but Jesus is guiltless/sinless. We are declared not guilty when he takes our sin on the cross and we place our trust in him.

Jesus takes our shame and restores our honor

- Hebrews 12:2b
- 1 Peter 2:6
- 2 Thessalonians 1:11a

Sin and repentance affect both individuals and their community.

Discussion Questions

How does the concept of honor and shame illuminate these passages?

- Exodus 20:12 (Honor your father and mother)
- 2 Samuel 10:1-5 (Hanun and David's men)
- John 2:1-11 (Wedding at Cana)
- Matthew 20:1-16 (Parable of Laborers in a Vineyard)
 - How would the men be viewed if they returned home without being hired?
 - The men did not go home, but waited all day, eager to work. Instead of giving them charity, what did the owner do for their honor/shame status by hiring them for part of the day?
- Judges 16:25-30 (Samson)
 - Optional/time permitting: Review how Samson was shamed by Delilah earlier in this chapter

Recommended Resources

[*Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* by E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien](#)

Filled with good cultural information, including excellent chapters on honor and shame.



[The complicated truth about China's social credit system](#) (wired.co.uk)

A modern example in an honor/shame culture.



[*Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity* by Nabeel Qureshi](#)

Referenced in the video with an honor/shame example; helpful for understanding the Muslim faith with its Eastern mindset

