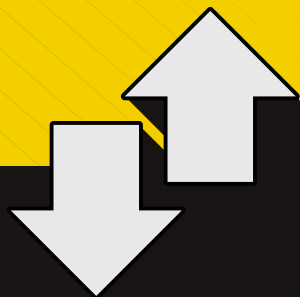


THE DIVINE EXCHANGE



SPRING 2024



THE DIVINE EXCHANGE

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STUDY SCHEDULE

Guilt

Session One, February 13th: Church

Session Two, February 20th: Small Groups



Innocence

Session Three, February 27th: Church

Session Four, March 5th: Small Groups



Fear

Session Five, March 12th: Church

Session Six, March 19th: Small Groups



Power

Session Seven, March 26th: Church

Session Eight, April 2nd: Small Groups



Shame

Session Nine, April 9th: Church

Session Ten, April 16th: Small Groups



Honor

Session Eleven, April 23rd: Church

Session Twelve, April 30th: Small Groups



Wrap-Up

May 7th: Church

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

II Corinthians 5:21

INTRODUCTION

Three Worldviews

What did Jesus accomplish on the cross? Your answer will depend on your culture more than you realize. But this doesn't mean that your answer is wrong or that the people and values you were raised with planted some false idea in your mind. It means that your answer is probably limited. In this study we will look at three types of worldviews and see how each one focuses on an aspect of human need and gospel hope for our sin.

What is a Worldview?

A worldview is the lens through which we look at everything. It is the values and assumptions that sit

underneath our decisions and relationships. It is the answer you would give if asked “why” repeatedly. For example, what did you do today? Perhaps you went to work. Why was that important to you? Maybe to feed your family. Where did you get the idea that that was important? Probably from your parents or culture. Probably from stories you were told where this was important. But did you know there are several worldviews in which it is actually considered important to not care for one’s family? It’s at this point – when the things we just assume are how everyone thinks meets a whole different set of values- that we start to recognize our worldview.

We will review each of the three worldviews as we come to them. It is also important to understand that these three categories are not spelled out for us in the Bible. The framework in this study is from the book *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures* by Jayson Georges. There are other ways to categorize cultures and worldviews, but this description is simple while still covering all cultures. Keep in mind that no culture or person fits entirely into just one of these categories. They always come in some mixture, but a given culture and person will fit primarily in one of the worldviews.

The Divine Exchange

When God created people, He made them morally whole. They had a right relationship with Him and one another. In Genesis 3:1-13 we watch the first sin – in theology it is called “original sin” – change the very nature of

humankind. In each part of this study we will see how Jesus exchanges His place with ours – His innocence with our guilt, His power with our fear, His honor with our shame.

How to Get the Most Out of This Study

1. Be open to more from the gospel. You'll find in this study that Jesus is the answer to all our needs. However, if you stick to just one primary need, you will be brushing aside vital aspects of the gospel. Go through the study with an openness to all God has for you.

2. Read the whole chapter. Each week's chapter is designed to be brief and not take all your spare time. Challenge yourself to read all the material. An audio version is available through the men's webpage or on the church app.

3. Look up the verses at the beginning of the Bible section of each chapter.

4. Write answers to the discussion questions. Your group may not go over each question but if you go through them yourself, you will get more from the study. Actually write answers down – it will draw much more from you than just briefly thinking about what your answer could be.

5. Show up each week. Whether at the general sessions or the small groups, your participation is important for you and the other men in the study.

Culture Quiz

Before we start, take the brief culture quiz here to see where you fit on this cultural framework. Answer the questions for yourself or your culture – or take it twice to see results for both.

theculturetest.com or



CHAPTER ONE:

Guilt

Guilt/innocence cultures are all about law. They are primarily concerned with structure and rules and whether someone lines up with those rules. Legal punishments like fines, lawsuits, and jail time are used as deterrents against bad behavior. Morality is not necessarily linked to obedience. That is, people might do something not because they believe it is the right thing to do but because they are afraid of the consequences if they do not do it.

Because each person must obey the rules, and each person has equal rights and accountability, these cultures are very individualistic. In a guilt/innocence culture, you cannot piggy-back on someone else's good conduct. That is, unlike the other two cultures where relationships are a huge part of how someone is weighed in society's eyes, everyone rises and falls on their own in an innocence/guilt culture. You cannot take on someone else's fine or sentence. You cannot obey the rules on someone else's behalf. You are on your own.

Ideally, in this culture, no one is above the rules so everyone is equally valuable with equal rights. Partly because each person is accountable to rules and standards,

Guilt

this kind of culture focuses on individuals as unique. Names and individual identity are very important. People matter in their own right, not only as part of a larger group.

In guilt/innocence cultures:

- Rules and laws are very important and should be written down.
- The needs of the individual outweigh the needs of the group.
- Identity is individually formed.
- Legal rights, fairness, and consistency are highly valued.
- Legal penalties deter bad behavior.
- One desires to be found innocent at all costs.
- Thinking tends to be critical, analytical, and cause-effect.
- The most important communication is what is written, not spoken.
- One may separate legality from morality.

Guilt

- Sees Jesus as taking our guilt and giving us innocence.¹

If you did not notice already, the West, including America, is definitely a guilt/innocence culture. We are beginning our study with this because it will be the most familiar to you. In this first part we will look at guilt. In the next section we will see how Jesus exchanges our guilt for His innocence.

Guilt in the Bible



READ :

Gen. 3:8-13; Ps. 51:3-6; Ps. 139; Lk. 5:8; I Jn. 3:20-21; II Cor. 5:21

Guilt entered human experience in the Fall narrative of Genesis 3. When we look at the first three chapters of the Bible, we get to see life before and after guilt, fear, and shame. The potential for all these things was already present in Adam and Eve even before they ever sinned. God gave Adam a beautiful garden but commanded him not to eat of a particular tree or he would die (2:16-17).

¹ Adapted in part from “Three Colors of Worldview” workshop by Bart Heiligenberg, 2018 © N-Culture.

Guilt

We can only assume that Adam then passed this instruction on to Eve after she was created. We do not know who added to the command, but when Eve repeats it, she adds that they were not to even touch the tree. This is still before sin corrupted their very nature, so that we are seeing the human tendency to find safety in the rules – and if the rules don't seem safe enough we add more rules. We see this in the Jewish rabbis fleshing out the biblical commands with hundreds more regulations. We see it in the fact that the text of the California laws on parking lots is longer than the entire U.S Constitution. Rules breed more rules.

Rules are not wrong – clearly in Genesis 2 God is the first lawgiver. But rules cannot save us like guilt/innocence cultures believe. What rules do is give a standard of right and wrong and define whether we are guilty. They do not heal guilt.

Romans 7:7

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

Galatians 3:21

Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.

Guilt

Blame shifting

When God confronts Adam on his sin, Adam blames Eve – and by extension seems to blame God for giving Him his wife. Eve in turn blames the serpent who tempted her. The guilt/innocence mentality will do anything to be found innocent. In this worldview, nothing is ever my fault and I will go to any lengths to justify what I do. We are defensive and prone to argue about our rights, motives, and the finer technicalities of our decisions. But God does not blink at any of this. He judges rightly.

Guilt is Not Always About Law

We see God proclaim people guilty throughout the Bible. Rom. 3:23 says that all people have fallen short of the standard of God's glory (see also Matt. 5:48). When we speak of God's graciousness, we sometimes describe it almost in terms of God having no rules, freeing us from all the entangling regulations of the Old Testament. But Jesus did not do that at all. In His "Sermon on the Mount" of Matthew 5-7, Jesus says that He came not to get rid of the law, but to fulfill it (5:17). When we look at the sermon as a whole, we see a frightening pattern. Jesus starts with things that were clearly illegal and wrong – murder and adultery – and drills down to the heart under these things: hatred and lust. Jesus is saying that guilt exists not only in breaking society's or the Bible's rules, but the heart beneath our actions, whether we ever actually take those actions or not.

Guilt

Guilt is a matter of the intent of our heart as much as of our actions.

Next, Jesus moves to things that were legally permitted – divorce, taking oaths, and retaliating for wrongs – and turns them into requirements of love for others and faithfulness to God. If that weren't far enough, Jesus addresses things that are not only legally permitted but moral goods – prayer, generosity, and fasting. He again shows that guilt can come even in these if our motives are for ourselves rather than about others and God. Jesus finds moral guilt even where there is no legal guilt. We should beware.

Is Guilt Actually a Problem?

The answer to whether guilt is a problem is yes and no. Guilt is a problem in that it was never God's original design. We were meant to be in perfect standing with Him forever. Guilt is the status of never behaving perfectly and therefore never measuring up to His holiness. On the other hand, guilt is good in that it lets us know when we are out of line with the Lord and His commands. By way of analogy, pain is both a problem and a help, depending on how we look at it.

The world often tries to get rid of guilt as though it were always steering us wrong. This is often as unsophisticated as taking things that were traditionally thought of as wrong and now declaring them good. Perhaps this can help get rid of a feeling of guilt – and perhaps not

Guilt

– but it does not do away with the actual legal standing of guilt. We may feel fine and still be guilty before the Lord (I Cor. 4:4; Lev. 5:17).

So guilt as a standing before God is a problem. Feeling guilty when we are guilty is a good thing. Keep in mind that we will look at how God deals with our guilt more in the next chapter.

Men and Guilt

Men understand guilt all too well. There are any number of things that can make us feel guilty. Many men live under guilt from their families. Highly critical parents' voices might sit under the surface of our thoughts, no matter how long ago we heard them. Wives may tell us – whether they come right out and say it – that we are always wrong. Men typically see their wives as morally superior. We may have great regrets over how we handled a relationship or raised our children. This may not describe your family, but it does describe the experience of many men.

There are other sources of guilt as well. Perhaps you are from a highly legalistic church where behavior was more important than God's grace. Perhaps you are a combat veteran who feels guilt over things you did in the course of war. You may have tangled yourself in illegal or unethical practices in your career. You may have committed crimes – whether anyone knows or not.

Guilt

Is guilt a part of your daily life? Do you wear it like a protective cloak, believing that feeling bad enough is the path to righteousness? Does it seem like it will always be there, haunting you forever? No matter how we feel or do not feel it, the Bible is clear that each of us fails to measure up (Rom. 3:23).

We understand guilt/innocence culture since for most of us, it is our worldview. We know all about fine print, policies, lawsuits, hollow public statements, government forms, the embarrassment of forgetting people's names, weighing our right to vacation time with the need to stand out for our hard work. We know about the friction of everyone having freedom and rights which often clash with others' desires. Guilt/innocence culture can be an exhausting thing to navigate. Every detail, term, name, and policy becomes important. However, there is a God-given value to this kind of worldview.

Individuals Matter to God

We have seen how one aspect of guilt/innocence cultures is that they are very individualistic. They care about the behavior, rights, and value of each person. This has definite drawbacks since it can make us think primarily about ourselves. We tend to look at being part of a group as optional rather than as biblical. We focus on our private thoughts and lives and our own personal salvation and downplay the role of others we are connected to.

However, there is a beautiful side to individualism. Individualistic cultures care about each and every person – and God does too. The Bible's focus often moves from a

broad view to focus on a few individuals. The Tower of Babel story shifts to a focus on Abram and his family. The book of Judges looks at all Israel through the stories of individual leaders and then the book of Ruth focuses on a handful of people during that era. The Bible uses people's names and stories to show how deeply God cares about each person. You can read Psalms 139 for David's expression of how God made us uniquely and knows us entirely.

Jesus Takes Your Guilt on Himself

So how does the gospel speak to guilt/innocence cultures? First, to reiterate from earlier in this chapter, we have to understand that Jesus does not just get rid of rules that cause us guilt. In fact, He tightens the rules until our very hearts are judged. Second, God does not ignore our wrongs and scatter forgiveness over us like pixy dust. Rom. 3:26 tells us that since God cannot ignore sin and still be righteous, nor can He punish all sin and still be merciful, He puts the penalty of our sin on Jesus. Jesus went to the cross as a murderer, liar, thief, addict, pervert; as a two-faced, arrogant sinner. He went as us. Jesus took our status of sinner and enemy of God upon Himself. When the Jewish leaders put Him on trial, they had to pay people to make up false testimony against Him. But His legal innocence would not have saved Him. Jesus was set on being guilty before God the Father for your sake.

II Corinthians 5:21

*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

The Role of Confession

In an evangelical church, the idea of confession can sound out of place. But Scripture tells us to confess to one another (James 5:16). This topic could take up a study all on its own, but we will just mention it here.

When we confess our sins, we are first acknowledging that God is right about us. We are agreeing with His standards and rules and allowing Him to convict us of wrong. Sometimes we can stop here, but sometimes we need to confess to one another. God's grace makes it so that we do not need to hide and can tell the truth about our hearts to our brothers. Consider how you can move toward a practice of confession to a trusted brother in the Lord, but remember that it all starts with being able to call your sin what it is before God.

Next time we will look at Jesus making us innocent. As you reflect and discuss this week's material, try to hold off on jumping to any happy solutions. Sit with the understanding that we are all guilty before the standards of the righteous Law-Giver.

Discussion Questions

1. How much does feeling guilty affect you?
2. How has guilt been a godly thing in your life and how has it been ungodly?
3. In what ways does our highly legal culture shape your relationship with God?
4. Do you tend to be more loose with biblical commands (seeing Jesus as the one who erases rules) or more strict (seeing Jesus as a judge)?
5. Do you ever confess your sins to others? What does that do for your walk with the Lord?

Guilt

CHAPTER TWO:

Innocence

Refer to the previous section on guilt if you do not remember what the description of guilt/innocence culture is.

In this section, we need to define innocence. You might think that “innocence” is a very simple term to define – it is just the opposite of guilt, right? Actually, this is one of the areas where our highly legal culture helps color in the understanding of the gospel. Our judicial system has a difference in terms between “innocent” and “not guilty”. Just as Jesus showed that we can live according to the rules – even biblical rules – and yet be guilty at the heart level, we can be found legally guilty and yet be innocent. What this all means is that either the person being judged or the person judging might be wrong. If I think I am innocent but God the perfect Judge thinks otherwise, I am wrong. If I did nothing wrong and yet am convicted in court, the jury is wrong about me. It is always possible for an innocent person to go to jail and for a guilty

Innocence

person to go free. What our actual legal standing is may not match what our declared legal standing is. This is why in the United States defendants are found “not guilty” rather than innocent. “Not guilty” means that the prosecution did not prove their case. It is like a jury saying, “We cannot be sure this person is guilty,” rather than saying, “We know for sure that this person did not do this.”

Innocence in the Bible



READ :

Romans 5; John 19:4-6

We should look again at a verse from last time: II Corinthians 5:21.

II Corinthians 5:21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

If God had only put our guilt on Jesus, as we saw last time, that would be to declare us not guilty. It would remove our guilt – but only until we sinned again. If Jesus only took our guilt, we would be locked into a cycle of sin and Jesus forgiving us, sacrificing Himself over and over. But that is not what the Bible describes. Rather, we see that Jesus takes on our guilt to give us His righteousness. You are made innocent in Him. You are not “not guilty.” You

Innocence

are innocent. It is as though the jury has said, “We know for certain that he did not do this thing. Actually, we have incontrovertible proof that he is a completely good man who nobody could ever convict of anything” – a statement that otherwise is true only of Jesus. This is how innocent you are in Christ because this is how innocent He is in actuality. He was completely obedient where we were disobedient. He obeys on your behalf and His obedience and innocence is transferred to you. You are declared righteous in Christ. This solves the problem of sinning again after Jesus made sacrifice for you. You are declared righteous.

Isaiah 53:11

Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Isaiah 53:11 is saying that because Jesus took on your iniquity (sin), you are legally declared (“accounted”) righteous. This legal status does not change. It is our new standing (Rom. 5:1-2). We are now seen just as obedient as Jesus is (Rom. 5:19) even though our actual behavior is not perfect.

Performative Declaration

The term “performative” is often used to today to mean something that is done merely for show or to check a box for optics’ sake. We understand this in our culture as well. We have heard public apologies that were clearly written by a PR agent. We have seen hollow corporate nods to various causes without any real action behind them. We’ve seen policies and trainings that involve things an employer does not actually care about but which need to be included so no one can accuse them of ignoring it. However, this is not the only meaning of “performative”. It can also mean using one’s authority to make something be the case simply by saying it. For example, phrases like, “You’re under arrest,” “I now pronounce you man and wife,” or “You’re forgiven” are all performative statements. They make something the case through nothing but words. Phrases like this require authority and God uses His authority to declare us righteous. Of course, He does not simply say this to make it so in the same way He said, “Let there be light.” Rather, Jesus’ sacrifice of Himself satisfies the penalty for sin and transfers righteousness to you. This is the divine exchange- God trading places and statuses with you.

In just about any religion there is a belief that you can transfer bad but not good. Evil, bad luck, uncleanness, or shame can all be transferred from one person to another. But goodness cannot be transferred. To illustrate, you cannot add “clean” to “dirty” – cleaning agents only take away dirt and bacteria. That is part of what is so radical

Innocence

about what the Bible is saying. It is claiming that not only does Jesus take on your guilt but that He transfers His innocence to us. This is incredibly unique in religious thought. It is the beauty of the divine exchange.

Remember that guilt is not only a feeling but a status we have before God. In the same way, innocence is not a feeling only but our permanent spiritual standing.

Men and Innocence

In the last chapter we noted some of the ways men deal with guilt and the guilt/innocence culture. You may need to review that section if it is not familiar to you at this point.

For men there are many sources of guilt, some legitimate and some not. Before we get to the discussion questions, take a spiritual inventory. What sources of guilt are in your life? Is the guilt legitimate or not? Ask the Spirit to reveal the truth to you at this point since we tend to be overly condemnatory or overly easy on ourselves.

Innocence as a legal standing makes sense to men because we like knowing our place. Men pay attention to rankings and position. This understanding helps prepare men to live in a relationship with God that never changes. We are deemed righteous sons even as our actual obedience needs to increase as we learn to follow more closely.

However, men also like earning their place. We want to know that we rank where we do because we worked

Innocence

hard, gained experience, and got ahead. This poses a problem for our acceptance of the gospel because righteousness in Christ does not work that way. Jesus earned your position for you and exchanged places with you. If you cannot accept this, you keep your status as a guilty enemy of God. If you can, you are seen by the Father just as obedient as Jesus is.

Consider your source of innocence. In our culture, we all have one. Since a worldview like ours avoids guilt and seeks innocence at any cost, we all find some way to justify ourselves. This may be blaming others, like Adam and Eve did. It may be downplaying our actions by comparing ourselves to people who have done worse than us. Some of us practice a cheap grace of insincere apologies to God so we can feel better and move on quickly. Some seek innocence in guilt itself- assuming God will forgive them if they torture themselves enough. Perhaps you have bought into the world's notion that all guilt is bad and should be chalked up to an oppressive traditional society.

As Christians, we have only one legitimate source of innocence and He exchanged places with you. He was made guilty so you could be made innocent.

Discussion Questions

1. *How do you react to receiving all your righteousness from Jesus?*
2. *What source of innocence do you lean on?*
3. *What are some ways a guilt/innocence culture understands the gospel well?*
4. *If Jesus makes us righteous in status, how do we still pursue righteousness in our lives?*

Innocence

CHAPTER THREE:

Fear

Fear is not complicated to define. We all understand fear all too well, even if we have different things which cause our fear. What we will spend time defining in this chapter is fear/power culture and the root of human fear. Fear/power cultures are those that see underlying forces beneath the visible world which, if not appeased or controlled, will dominate one's life or cause any amount of harm. A person will go to great lengths to manage the forces that cause them fear.

In fear/power cultures:

- Those in power determine social rules, but the rules do not necessarily apply to them.
- Those in power seek to stay in power but the rules change if the person in power changes.
- One must align with the most powerful person.

Fear

- One seeks to instill fear over others in order to gain power.
- There is a tendency to abuse those below since one cannot exert power over those above.
- May involve the idea of a “benevolent dictator” who is totalitarian but seen as protecting and providing for the people.
- Sees Jesus as taking our fear and giving us power.
- Common in sub-Saharan Africa, communist and post-communist societies, large corporations, gangs, animist cultures, and authoritarian countries.²

Fear/power cultures involve many different sources of fears. It might be a dictatorial government sending you to jail because of a family connection or a supervisor who uses you as a scapegoat when they make a poor decision. Both these examples involve injustices in order to illustrate the difference between fear/power and guilt/innocence cultures. While injustice occurs in both, fear/power thinking is that might makes right. Something is not really wrong if the person in power does it.

² Adapted in part from “Three Colors of Worldview” workshop by Bart Heiligenberg, 2018 © N-Culture.

Fear in the Bible



READ :

II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:12; Acts 16:25-34

Genesis chapter three gave us the beginning of guilt when we saw Adam and Eve try to shift blame off of themselves. We also see the beginning of fear in the same instance. Prior to their sin, Adam and Eve had a beautiful relationship with God. They had no terror of God, each other, animals, even satanic serpents talking to them. Suddenly, they found themselves hiding from God to avoid His punishment.

Just as we saw that guilt is not necessarily bad, fear is also from the Lord. Scripture repeatedly tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This is the fear that Adam and Eve should have clung to in their temptation. God had told them that they would die upon eating the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Fear of the Lord (Ps. 19:9; 34:9; 111:10; 115:13; 128:1; Prov. 1:7; 24:21; Ecc. 12:13), civil authorities (Prov. 24:21; Rom. 13:2-3), and – to some extent – church discipline (Matt. 18:15-20) are all healthy forms of fear.

We will see below that if we do not need to fear God, we will be able to handle any lesser fear. ON the other hand, if we fear God, we have nothing else to fear. In 1906 the British Navy developed a ship which became the

Fear

catalyst of modern naval warfare. The HMS Dreadnought was the first battleship to carry all heavy cannon and was developed largely under the vision of Sir John Fisher. Sir John chose the motto of the ship – “Fear God and dread naught” – on the basis of the many places in scripture in which we are commanded to “fear not”. Both “naught” and “nought” are old words meaning “nothing.” With a ship as well-armed as this and a God as powerful as the God of the Bible, Sir John Fisher saw little around him which could lay claim to his fear.

However, fear is also from sin. After it made its way into human experience, fear has wielded great power over our lives and societies. World kingdoms have long ruled through force and coercion, be it physical, religious, or psychological. Some societies – and some individuals - are particularly driven by the fear dynamic.

There is a slight difference between worry and fear. Worry is hypothetical – it is torment over what might happen in the future. Fear is more certain – it knows what punishment awaits if one does not appease the powers that be. Worries usually do not come to be, so that they are a lower form of fear. Worries might even be avoided. Fear, especially in a culture built on fear, is unavoidable. Gangs bring people into their service against their will. Corrupt police arrest people who have done nothing wrong – sometimes even for being a success or force for good.

Fear/power cultures fear either people or spirits. Dictatorships, corporations, gangs, and the like all involve the fear of people and what they will do to you if you find

Fear

yourself under their feet. Proverbs 29:25 tells us that the fear of man brings a snare but whoever trusts in the Lord will be safe. Psalms 56:11 and 118:6 tell us that we ought not fear people because they really cannot do anything of substance to us. Jesus said that we should rather fear God who can destroy in hell while people can only kill us (Matt. 10:28).

Fear of spirits is perhaps a less familiar hallmark of fear/power cultures. Animist or shamanist cultures believe in spirits, often local entities which inhabit and control aspects of daily life – often in nature. The spirits must be appeased, by rituals, shamans, or both. Sometimes the shaman must also be appeased, so that fear is layered in a society. Sometimes westerners downplay the role of spiritual beings to our detriment and to the disadvantage of evangelism. While the biblical worldview does not have the same idea of how spirits operate, the Bible is clear that angels and demons exercise influence in our world. We should neither ignore nor live in fear of spiritual forces. Eph. 6:12 tells us that our struggle is not really with other people but with spiritual authorities. God has allowed His good world to fall under the oppression of Satan and his demons. This is the power behind idols (I Cor. 10:20) including servitude to spirits in nature. God gives us His power here, but we will look at that in the next chapter.

Men and Fear

For the last three years, an average of 37% of adults in the U.S. have reported feeling more anxious than the year before.³

Men often dismiss, downplay, or hide their fear. It may come out as frustration or withdrawal, but it is there. Men bear a heavy burden of responsibility. People likely depend on you and you may not have the same ability to depend on others. One of the harshest effects of our guilt/innocence culture is its individualism. Individualism sees everyone as important and unique, but it also holds everyone responsible for themselves. This means that we live our lives largely alone. We are responsible to manage our affairs flawlessly, which goes against God's design for us. We were meant to help bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2; Phil. 2:3-4). Nothing causes anxiety like being alone.

You may work in a corporate environment. These are an example of a fear/power culture, even inside the larger guilt/innocence culture of the U.S. If that is you, you understand that workplace politics are not just matters of cliques but of a system of self-protection and self-

³ Vankar, Preeti. "Anxiety Increase in Adults U.S. 2023." Statista, November 29, 2023. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/867055/anxiety-since-last-year-us-adults/>. Accessed 1/11/2024.

promotion at the expense of others. When you are expendable, trust gives way to fear.

Perhaps you have lived through abuse, combat, poverty, illness, or some other traumatic experience. These can ingrain fear into a man so that he feels always under threat. Like anxiety, men tend to hide – or more often downplay – trauma.

Men have many sources of fear. As we proceed, consider what yours are, and how honest you are about them.

Jesus Takes Our Fear on Himself

When we think of Jesus taking our guilt on Himself, it makes sense in our guilt/innocence culture. On the other hand, Jesus taking our fear seems odd. We have trouble ever thinking of Jesus being afraid – in fact He is the least afraid person we can encounter.

Actually, Jesus takes on our fear in two ways – one a matter of how we are afraid and one a matter of what we fear. First, Jesus takes on a raw, visceral fear more intense than any you have known. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus faced His impending death and told His disciples that His heart was troubled. The Greek word translated “troubled” here is the strongest word for depression. Jesus is also described as being in agony. Luke says that His sweat was like blood – a rare medical phenomenon called hematohidrosis in which capillaries burst into the sweat glands when someone is under extreme physical or

Fear

emotional stress.⁴ Jesus knew what He was about to bear at His trial and crucifixion. We have not experienced fear like He did on our behalf.

Second, Jesus took on what we fear. He stepped into the fear of man and allowed corrupt earthly powers to crush Him. What are you afraid of? If we go a little deeper than life's basic worries, we will find that we fear things like rejection, poverty, pain, death, change, insignificance, and judgment. Deeper still, we might find these would be no problem as long as we have acceptance, an inheritance, permanence, and purpose in Christ. So, the greatest thing we can fear is God's judgment. This is the fear Jesus faced for us.

Discussion Questions:

1. What major fears do you think are common for men? How do they tend to deal with them?

⁴ Jerajani, H R, Bhagyashri Jaju, M M Phiske, and Nitin Lade. "Hematohidrosis - a Rare Clinical Phenomenon." Indian journal of dermatology, July 2009.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2810702/#:~:text=Jesus%20Christ%20experienced%20hematohidrosis%20while,blood%20falling%20to%20the%20ground.%E2%80%9D>. Accessed 1/11/2024.

Fear

2. How much is fear a part of your life?

3. How does the idea that Jesus was afraid affect the way you see Him and what He did?

4. How is the fear of God a good thing?

CHAPTER FOUR:

POWER

There is no need to fear something over which you have power, which is why God has nothing to fear. Jesus experienced deep fear in His human nature when, having laid His power aside and taken on human weakness, He faced torment on multiple levels. When Jesus gives us His power, we are released from fear.

Power in the Bible



READ :

Exodus 15:11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15; Eph. 1:19-20; Rom. 16:20; Acts 1:8; I Corinthians 2:4-5; II Timothy 1:7; Philippians 4:13

If you recall from the previous chapter, when we talk about fear in the Bible and in culture, we are talking at two levels.

Internal Fear and Power

There is the internal fear we carry with us, the underlying dread of suffering from judgment, failure, rejection, pain, death, and so on. While these fears may be

Power

common to everyone, we suffer them alone. Having looked at this in the last chapter, we can now turn to the internal power Christ provides us. The Holy Spirit in us changes our spirit from one of fear to one of power, love, and self-control (II Tim. 1:7). Power here is ability – it is God who works in us to be able to do as we ought (Phil. 2:13). Love casts out fear (I Jn. 4:18) and relates to power through justice. God’s power is lived in a justice that protects and provides, which is an act of love. Self-control is perhaps the most basic unit of internal power. A disciple of Christ exercises dominion over their body, emotion, mind, and behavior.

External Fear and Power

The kind of fear that fear/power cultures deal with is the external fear of the “powers that be.” This is the fear of power structures that pose a threat. This might be management, government, criminals, bullies, demons, or any external force of intimidation and punishment.

As you read the verses on power above, you likely noticed that several are speaking about Christ’s power supplanting the devil’s kingdom with His own. Jesus comes to establish God’s good justice in a world hijacked by sin. Our guilt/innocence mentality leads us to think of sin primarily as an individual problem. Fear/power cultures see it as a system that Christ must overthrow. As our view of sin and its power expands beyond the internal, so does our view of Jesus and what He accomplished.

Power

We live in a world in the grip of darkness. No amount of technology, psychology, education, violence, laws, wealth, or anything else have stopped this tyranny. Instead, Jesus is the light that the world cannot overcome (Jn. 1:4-5). He establishes His Kingdom progressively over time by exercising the true power of humility, obedience, and sacrifice. He allowed the earthly kingdoms of darkness to crush Him and not us so He could give us His power to also be lights of the world (Matt. 5:14). He uses us to exercise His power over wicked systems. Our individualism struggles with this aspect of the gospel, but it is clearly a huge part of what Jesus came to do.

Distance

Each of the three worldviews discussed in this study involve distancing oneself from risky people. In guilt/innocence cultures, people distance themselves from guilty people so that blame does not fall on them. We might think of the principle of “plausible deniability” which keeps high officials such as the President from being blamed for the actions of those under their authority. In shame/honor cultures, a shamed person is shunned because to associate with them brings dishonor on others. But nowhere is this distancing as extreme as in fear/power cultures. This worldview distances itself from undesirable people because punishment would otherwise follow. Bosses look for subordinates to pin failure on and nobody jumps in to defend them out of fear of suffering as well. Citizens

Power

distance themselves from victims of crime by saying they did not witness anything rather than risk reprisal.

Jesus not only did not distance himself from those suffering under despotic power (we could think of His defense of John the Baptist while John was in prison). He came to be close, a very present help in times of trouble (Ps. 46:1). He did not run from us when the Father's wrath was to be poured out, but went to the cross in our place. He will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5).

Men and Power

Men are very conscious of power dynamics. We look for ways to protect our loved ones from threats. We struggle with the loss of power from injury or age. We are embarrassed by our weakness, and pounce on the weakness of others. We are well aware of rankings and care about who is in charge. We shake hands like it's a competition. Remember that we were designed to be powerful servant-leaders, representing God to those who need protective authority.

At some point in his life, every man is hit in the face by the real world. His hopes are challenged and perhaps crushed; his innocence is taken from him; new fears are formed as his power is measured against the world's system. This is why Christian men must receive a higher power which comes only from Jesus Christ. We should not be simplistic or naïve about worldly power. Just because we follow Jesus and He promises us power in the world, does

Power

not mean we have total power over it. If you are caught in its jaws, you will certainly suffer. The Church has been persecuted from its birth until now. We are agents of God's Kingdom who exercise His rule here, but we should always be cautious and savvy rather than cavalier (Matt. 10:16). Jesus allowed the world's power to execute Him and His followers can expect trouble. But do not forget that Jesus has overcome the world (Jn. 16:33).

Power starts small and grows. It is exercised over self, then in the home, then in the world, but usually in the little things. Look for areas you have already been given power over and start taking control of the small things that need to be brought under God's authority.

Self-Control

There are any number of areas in which God offers the power of self-control to men - for our words which come often from a place of pride or fear; for our eyes which always want to know what we are missing no matter what we have; for our appetites that consume food and possessions with abandon. The power of Christ, the fully obedient one, is given to you so that you can fulfill God's purposes rather than your own. Self-control can be an infuriatingly fleeting thing, but it is foundational in how God gives us power. Look to Him to give you the ability to put yourself under submission to Him. This is never easy, nor is it passive, but it is promised to us.

Power
Earthly Power

In the last chapter we reflected on the place of fear in our lives. Who causes you fear? Perhaps your company feels like a lifeboat with too many people. Perhaps you go back and forth between wanting to know everything your kids are doing, and wanting to bury your head in the sand and hope for the best. The news may cause you to feel powerless over tragedies and injustices.

The Church is the way God establishes a beachhead for His Kingdom. He will use you in ways that may at times seem small but are effective in bringing His ways to a dark world. Do not discount the effect of individual acts of justice and charity. Do not assume God cannot put you and other believers in places of influence.

Do not discount the power of prayer in a dark world. Our greatest power is not something in us but in our relationship. We have direct access to the Almighty God of the Universe and should make good use of it. Our first response to internal or external fear needs to be prayer to the most powerful one. This does not mean that we pray only and never act, but that we know the source of our power and how it will be aimed correctly.

Pray for believing and unbelieving authority figures and ask for God to use you for His Kingdom power. Paul specifically instructed that men in the church should practice prayer (I Tim. 2:8). Are you open to all the ways, large and small, that God may give you power over the world's system?

Power

Demonic Power

In Ephesians 6:12 we see that our struggle is not ultimately with human forces but with a system of demonic powers behind the scenes. We should respond with humility. While demonic forces are not more powerful than God, they are stronger than us, and we should exercise caution (I Pt. 5:8; Jude 9). Using power does not mean we live with the world's swagger. In our dealings with the people of the world, keep in mind that deceived people are not our enemies but are victims of the deceiver. However, God does give His people His authority in the face of the evil behind the world's system. One day we will judge these fallen angels (I Cor. 6:3) and even now we have more authority than we may think (Mk. 3:14-15).

Justice

Fear/power cultures deal with great injustices. This is because in these societies might makes right. The wealthy and well-connected make the rules and the rules do not apply to them. Because the whole world is under the realm of darkness, injustice pervades all of it – even in a legal culture like ours. Injustice may be large or small, but it is a misuse of power. The gospel calls us as men beyond our own individual salvation to establish justice for others. Again, this begins in small ways. God has given you the power to be fair and to care for someone vulnerable. The gospel is fuller in our lives when we give others a taste of Christ's Kingdom safety.

Two Responses to Power

Men tend to avoid the power God gives or they twist it. Some men flee from leadership in the home or outside it. They seek to live passive lives under submission to anyone else – a wife, parents, children, a boss, church leaders. These men struggle to make choices and take responsibility.

Other men have a horrible capacity for pride, control, and abuse. Some have allowed their God-given design to be mighty leaders who wield spiritual authority alongside God to become frighteningly twisted. Men can become tyrannical and call it “teaching.” They can become self-serving and call it “fairness.”

Both these approaches twist what God has made us to be. We are sons of the Most High, adopted as princes in the Kingdom to rule for the goodness of those around us. We will fail often in our calling, but when we use our power the way it was designed, we are close to the heart of God.

Discussion Questions

1. What is an area or relationship, large or small, where you can enact justice?

Power

2. What is an area God would have you exercise more of His power?

3. How would you pray differently if you saw it more as a source of power?

4. Do you tend to be more removed or more domineering in how you wield power?

5. Is your fear/power dynamic more about internal or external concerns?

CHAPTER FIVE:

SHAME

Shame/honor cultures hold group identities and relationships extremely highly. How one is regarded by the group is perhaps the most important thing in life and is to be guarded at all costs. The worst thing that can happen is to become an outcast. A person's family, tribe, village, team, unit, or some other group defines – and perhaps even owns – them.

In shame/honor thinking, shame is highly contagious. In stark contrast to our individualist legal thinking, a person is not only found at fault for their own misdeeds, but for the misdeeds of anyone in their group. While parents in our culture may be embarrassed to discuss a family member who is in jail or addicted to drugs, they generally will not keep the family member a secret, disown them, or publicly disavow them. This is not the same in shame/honor cultures. With varying degrees of intensity, these cultures see shame as a contagion so that you bear the dishonor brought on by someone else in your group.

We tend to confuse guilt with shame because guilt is more familiar to us. Even though they are related, shame

Shame

is different from guilt. Guilt is about moral fault, while shame is about being rejected. Guilt says that you did something wrong, while shame says you are something wrong. It is entirely possible to be shamed without having done anything wrong. For example, someone can be ostracized for being disabled or for something a relative did wrong. Perhaps someone's guilt will cause them shame, but not necessarily - and shame may come without guilt.

In shame/honor cultures:

- Identity comes from the group.
- An individual belongs to their group, especially the family.
- Group goals are what is important.
- Honor can be bestowed but not taken on oneself.
- Social norms and rules are taught in the society, not written down.
- One must hide what is shameful and not get caught.
- Shame must be deflected or distracted from, or, if this is impossible, one must face the full consequence of dishonor (up to exile or death).
- Sees Jesus as taking our shame and giving us honor.

Shame

- Common in Asia, including the Middle East, militaries, and gangs.⁵

The Bible addresses all three of the cultural paradigms we are discussing in this study, but shame/honor is the dominant mentality of the Bible. So much of the Old Testament, and much of the New Testament, will make far more sense to us as we become more familiar with the shame/honor system.

Shame in the Bible



READ:

*Gen. 2:25; Is. 54:4; Ps. 62:7; I Sam. 2:8; Is. 53:3;
Matt. 27:27-31; Heb. 12:2; Phil. 2:8-9; Rom.
10:11; Mark 8:38*

The Origin of Shame

In Gen. 2:25 we see Adam and Eve naked and unashamed. In 3:7 we see that they were not only unashamed but that before their sin, they had no idea they were naked. They had no knowledge of clothing so how did

⁵ Adapted in part from “Three Colors of Worldview” workshop by Bart Heiligenberg, 2018 © N-Culture.

Shame

Adam and Eve come up with the idea to sew fig leaves together for clothing? They so viscerally felt shame that they felt exposed. Adam and Eve felt nakedness and therefore realized they were naked. Just like guilt and fear, shame is a direct and instant result of sin.

Shame and Legalism

Because shame can come not only from an individual's failure to measure up, but from some failure in a person they are connected to, shame/honor cultures have a tendency toward legalism. Legalism is a system in which every aspect of life is regulated by law. This may sound exactly like the guilt/innocence culture, and it certainly fits there as well. However, there is a key aspect of legalism that fits squarely in the shame/honor system. In a legalistic mindset, people are held accountable for their association with unacceptable people- sometimes even being associated with those who are themselves associated with dishonorable people. Shame is so contagious that one needs to make sure they distance themselves from even those whose lives touch the outcasts. In a legalistic system, not only must someone not associate with dishonorable people, they must call out shame around them or they might become shameful themselves. This thinking means that an honorable person must make it clear that they believe the dishonorable person is wrong or bad. It is not enough to not associate with a shameful person, the honorable person must call them out to preserve his or her honor. Consider then the power of Jesus associating with

Shame

the undesirable, sinful members of first century Jewish society.

Individual and Group Shame

The Bible addresses individual shame, which is how we primarily think of it in our culture. Again, shame and guilt overlap when we are talking about personal shame. Sin conducted in secret has consequences. The original shame brought into human nature by the original sin pervades us even today. To varying degrees, we still sew proverbial fig leaves together to cover our exposure. Sin causes us to assume everyone knows we are fake, degenerate failures. We feel unworthy and unwanted. Perhaps nobody knows our lust, our anger, our wasted years, yet we struggle to look ourselves in the eye and carry ourselves in public. When sin gives us a reason to hide, shame says to stay hidden. Shame tells us that the worst thing possible is not the sin – we tend to tolerate that – but being found out. Just like Adam and Eve’s original sin, ours causes us to feel exposed and to hide from God and one another.

But, as has been touched on already, shame is often a group matter. In order to really understand this worldview and how the gospel addresses human shame, we need to realize that it is really more about the group you are a part of. Some would never go against their group since being cast out or even being its black sheep would ruin their life. Some are loyal to their group, but the whole group has a lowered status in society.

Men and Shame

Abuse

Because shame is not always about what we did, but about a sort of invisible label we carry with us, we need to understand how wrongs done to a person can cause shame just as much, and perhaps more, than something they do themselves. Similarly to what we saw about fear, men often downplay the power of abuse. Studies show that as few as 5%⁶ and as many as 17%⁷ of men have experienced childhood sexual abuse, but without all incidents being reported the number must be higher. Abuse often causes the victim to participate in something they feel unable to refuse, making them feel complicit. This could be sexual abuse, harming someone at the direction of an abuser, or being forced to standby while someone else is abused. Abuse can cause a victim to feel a powerful, enduring shame. Men need to understand this effect either in their own lives or in the lives of the women – for whom the statistics are even higher - around them. Perhaps a man

⁶ “Child Sexual Abuse Statistics,” The National Center for Victims of Crime, accessed January 17, 2024, <https://victimsofcrime.org/child-sexual-abuse-statistics/>.

⁷ “The 1 in 6 Statistic - Sexual Abuse & Assault of Boys & Men: Confidential Support for Men,” Sexual Abuse & Assault of Boys & Men | Confidential Support for Men, April 5, 2022, <https://1in6.org/statistic/>.

Shame

was not abused in a heavy sense but was always cut down, led to believe they are worthless. This also carries a weight of shame with life-long repercussions. We cannot downplay the role of shame in those who always seek to prove themselves, justify or normalize what happened to them, never feel safe, or even entirely ignore their past. In the next chapter we will look at Jesus giving us His honor, but if abuse in your life is something you have never addressed, please consider accessing help for your healing.

Disrespect

Men operate in a system of respect. God created you in His image, which means you participate in His nature and purpose. He made you to be a ruler, creator, and cultivator of well-being. Dishonor eats at a man's soul because it grates against his God-given design. When a woman treats a man in a way that makes him feel like a child, he only reacts well if he also sees himself as somehow still not fully a man. If another man disrespects him – perhaps shaming him publicly – it wounds and perhaps infuriates him. This is why Paul instructed the young pastor Timothy not to rebuke an older man but to admonish him as a father (I Tim. 5:1).

Likewise, when a man has a family member, or perhaps a coworker, church member, or other person in their circle who may reflect on him poorly, he experiences the kind of shame present in shame/honor cultures. Every father has experienced being embarrassed by something their young child has said or done in public. When those children get

older, some of them are – if we are being honest - difficult to be proud of. In our culture, people are less likely to move away from you and your family because of the actions of one child, but the sense that they have brought shame on you is still there.

People in your life reflect on you and you on them. What you do as part of a group brings either honor or shame to the group. Men want to be part of storied military units, elite work teams, winning sports franchises, and either exclusive or dangerous neighborhoods -whichever they see as better. Men have an innate understanding of institutions and their place in them. We desire to be respected for our allegiance and bring honor to our groups. For Christian men, this is also true of the Church. Some Christians have sought to distance themselves from the Church because of its baggage. Some have all but removed themselves from church because they do not want it to reflect badly on them. Others skirt around admitting to being a Christian. But as we will see below, Jesus does not distance Himself from us. We are part of His family, for good or ill, and what we do reflects on the whole Church and on Jesus its Head.

Shifting to Shame

Culture shifts over time, as we all well know. Our guilt/innocence culture is in some ways moving toward a shame system. For example, “cancel culture” is an attempt to create distance from somebody who has been deemed to

Shame

bring shame. The legalism of a shame/honor culture means that disengaging from something or someone is not enough – publicly rebuking them and anyone who supports them is necessary to not bring shame on oneself. This shift is not a political one since both conservatives and liberals practice cancelling. It is a sign of cultural shift.

Secondly, shame/honor thinking is tribal; it cares more about group loyalty than almost anything. Rather than aligning ourselves with Jesus, this cultural shift demands that we align ourselves with a certain team and that we never associate with our “enemies.” It looks for perfection – no hint of shameful behavior (anything the other group stands for) will be tolerated. The gospel, rather, demands loyalty to only Christ and His ways. We do not look for perfectly unproblematic heroes since we know that all of us are sinners. We look to the only righteous one who takes on our shame.

A third way our culture is shifting toward shame/honor thinking is in online behavior. With the ability to hide behind a screen, people are more comfortable lashing out anonymously. This leads to online bullying, a fierce modern form of shaming.

On the other hand, some people are more comfortable posting about themselves and asking questions online rather than with a traditional direct relationship. While shame tells us to hide, the emerging version of shame/honor culture calls people to be open about things that would traditionally have been hidden or at least private. Believers can learn to use this opportunity

Shame

to discuss the truth as people open up about struggles and reasons they reject the gospel.

Another anomaly is that the individualism of American culture is strangely mixing with the shift toward shame/honor thinking. While many think in tribal ways, many others no longer want to be associated with institutions or clearly-defined groups. People are increasingly difficult to “nail down” in terms of their identity and beliefs. Christians are thus challenged to approach each person in their own right, applying the truths of the gospel on an individual basis.

There is a contradiction in this cultural shift. Shame is seen as something that should never be tolerated, yet it is also wielded as a powerful weapon against others. Shame is not always bad since, like fear and guilt, it tells us there is a problem we need help with. It tells us something is wrong. So when we try to reconcile extremes by trying to get rid of all shame and also eviscerate people deemed problematic, we are not helping things. Shame has its place in giving boundaries and consequences (I Cor. 6:5; 15:34). If we have no shame, we are no different from the world (Phil. 3:19). Our culture wants no shame for ourselves, but reserves the right to shame others. Jesus, rather, takes shame to honor others.⁸

⁸ This paragraph is owed to Gregg Ten Elshof’s interview on The Table podcast, 3/18/2022. Elshoff is author of *For Shame: Rediscovering the Virtues of a Maligned Emotion*, Zondervan, 2021.

Shame

Many Christian men are frustrated by these cultural shifts. We need to understand them and respond well. Hopefully this study is helping you begin to understand what is behind some of the things you see around you. Ideally, rather than merely being swept along, you will develop an understanding of the gospel that speaks to shame and honor thinking. This will help you communicate Christ to a changing world.

Jesus Takes Our Shame

Skins and the Lamb

In Genesis 3, after God had pronounced sentence on Adam and Eve, He gave them clothing of animal skin. We should see two things here. First, God covers our shame better than we can. It would do no good to try to reverse the curse of sin by simply forcing Adam and Eve to remove their fig leaves – they would just suffer exposure in their new fallen state. Truly being able to open up and deal with our shame requires somewhere to put it, not simply pretending it does not exist or that it is not shameful.

So, the second thing we see is that Jesus came to do exactly that – to take it on Himself. When John the Baptist saw Jesus arrive at the Jordan river where John had been baptizing, he declared, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn. 1:29). An animal had to give its life to cover Adam and Eve’s shame – Jesus would give His life to do away with it. Jesus does not merely cover over

our shame, He removes it. Remember that shame is infectious – we should think of it more like an entity that makes us dirty and less like a simple internal feeling. In order to get rid of shame, it must be transferred. Jesus does not make us feel better about sin or tell us it does not matter. He takes it on Himself and takes it away.

God is Shamed by and for His People

In the Bible's narrative, God chose a single people to represent Him to all other peoples. He calls Israel His priesthood to the nations (Ex. 19:5-6). But Israel misrepresented God through their disobedience. Their sin, and ours, brings shame on God's name. When we think of "taking the name of the Lord in vain" or "profaning His name" we ought not think only of speaking His name in a dishonoring way. We should think also about the lives we live as His representatives.

When Jesus was mocked and stripped, and crucified outside the city like garbage, He was shamed by us. He bore our shame away on the cross as a sacrifice. All our deep-seated fear of being found wanting is dealt with by Jesus.

In the Israelite mentality, to be shamed was so terrible a prospect that it was equated with being judged and sent to hell. Much like we would picture God finding us guilty and sentencing us, they would picture Him finding them wanting made eternal outcasts (e.g. Ps. 31:17). But God will never have cause to dishonor those whose shame is on Jesus (Ps. 25:3).

Part of the Family

As usual, we will resolve the problems presented in this chapter by looking next at what Jesus gives us. But for now, understand that in a shame/honor culture, family is usually one's most important relationship. Family defines and owns the individual. In Jesus' parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32), He illustrates God's heart for His people through the imagery of two sons who brought shame on their father. The father in turn humbles himself to act shamefully in order to love his sons. He runs to one, which would have been highly undignified. He throws the son a return party and fails to punish the other son when he refuses to attend. Both sons would have greatly embarrassed a father in Israelite culture. Shame/honor culture would dictate that the father ostracize or even kill his sons in order to not incur shame in society. Jesus is saying that the Father allows us to be part of His family by debasing Himself. Pause and consider that.

Confession

Confession has been mentioned previously. Confession is a way we battle fear and shame. Because Jesus has set us free, we have confidence to no longer hide but to acknowledge the state of our heart to God and our brothers. If you did have not already, consider who in your life you can be trusted with your confessions. Men usually seek to

Shame

live privately, but while shame tells us to be alone, the gospel frees us to be part of the community of Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. How important is group identity to you? Which group(s) most matter to you? I like to hang with men & people I have things in common with, age, interest, Activities, etc...
2. How well does your life represent God and the Church? not very well, -
3. What is most powerful to you about God allowing Himself to be shamed by His people? For one I would choose shame at all cost and Jesus will gladly stand for it.
4. Practically speaking, how does Jesus heal us from our shame? In other words, what would you say to a man living under a cloud of dishonor? he replaces our shame with his honor. I would have to figure out a way to explain how the divine exchange works.

Shame

CHAPTER SIX:

HONOR

We described shame/honor culture in the last chapter and looked at the effect of shame in our lives. You should recall that shame is not necessarily about what an individual does to lose relationship or status, it often comes from someone connected to that individual. Someone else can bring shame on you.

Shame is a status conferred on someone; so is honor. This is absolutely crucial to understanding this aspect of the gospel. Again, we are up against our individualistic guilt/innocence culture. We tend to think of honor as something we earn. America has the Medal of Honor for acts of extraordinary valor in the military. Can you imagine if everyone in the recipient's family also received a medal of honor simply for being related to a valorous person? In a shame/honor system, honor can be given by association just like shame is. Being part of an honorable group gives one honor. Individuals in the group who do well and act honorably can raise the whole group's status.

Another key element of shame/honor cultures is that honor can be bestowed but not taken. This means that

Honor

no one can honor themselves. It does not work to tell everyone how worthy of honor you are – that is just empty bragging. It does not work to go live alone where nobody can disagree with you and honor yourself – that is meaningless. Honor must come from someone else. In our culture, honor is almost always earned by the individual for themselves. In shame/honor culture, honor is always a matter of relationship.

Honor in the Bible



READ:

Ps. 62:7; Phil. 2:8-9; Rom. 8:18, 10:11; Jn. 17:22; I Pt. 2:6-10; Gal. 6:9; II Sam. 9, Lk. 22:24-30

Back to the Garden Once More

When we want to see God's design for the world, we can look at His original plan before sin entered the world. When God created humans, He made them in His image. This means that we share nature and purpose with God. He made us like Him – we reason and exercise wisdom; we relate and exercise love. He made us to do what He does – to revel in His glory and make a world in which others can experience His goodness. God the Creator gave Adam the job of naming the animals so that Adam could use the creative nature God gave him. God told Adam and Eve to

Honor

procreate so that, like God, they could give life. God told them to subdue the earth so that they could bring order to chaos, as He had in the creation process. God designed humans to share glory with Him.

If we skip from the beginning of the Bible's story to its end, we see that God plans to glorify us with Him. Rom. 8:18 says that having suffered with Christ, we will be glorified with Him. There is honor on both sides of this equation. Suffering with Christ is an honor because it identifies us with Him. When you have suffered alongside someone, you are bound to them more tightly. When you suffer the kinds of things Christ did, you know Him better and are more intimately linked with Him. Suffering with Christ is a badge of honor. There is no more honorable club than this one.

Rom. 8:18 also tells us that God's original plan to share glory with us will come to pass. He has already given us the honor of being His children and will lift us higher than we can imagine by making us like Him (I Jn. 3:1-2). We will inherit glory and the world along with Jesus. We will sit next to Him and judge fallen angels (I Cor. 6:3). We are participants in God's divine nature, having all things that pertain to life and godliness (II Pt. 1:3-4). You have no idea how high God is going to bring you.

Jesus Gives You His Honor

In all these verses we need to see that, like with His innocence and His power, Jesus goes beyond merely taking away our problem. That is, He does not only take His

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shame on Himself and then wish us good luck. In exchanging places with us, Jesus goes far beyond kindness, compassion, or mercy. He does not only humbly step down into our world of suffering but elevates us with Him. God could have only designed us in His image, making us the high point of creation, but He went beyond that. He could have simply let us see something of His glory, which would have brought us far beyond our starting level, but He went beyond that. He could have descended from glory into our world to reveal His greatness through humility, but He went beyond that. He could have saved us from sin and changed our lives here, but He went beyond that. He could have placed us in heaven to marvel at Him forever, but He went beyond that. God shares His glorious honor with you and that should stun you into awe.

Phil. 2:1-11 shows us that Jesus' humility is an aspect of His divine glory. It takes a strong person to be humble. Dictators and authoritarian regimes need to stifle free speech because they cannot abide anything that seems like a threat. They feel this is a show of strength but only reveals weakness. It is the weak person who cannot have his strength questioned. It takes a strong person to be insulted or questioned without lashing out. It takes an even stronger person to serve or to show weakness, both of which Jesus did. In God's eyes, true glory can take on shame. It is strong enough to be humble, high enough to be brought low.

If you did not read II Sam. 9 at the beginning of this chapter, stop and read it now. This is part of the story of

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David and Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was crippled from childhood and a remaining member of the family of Saul, the former king who had sought to kill David. David refused to dishonor Saul even in his death, executing the man who claimed to have killed Saul. When David sought someone from Saul's house, it likely struck fear in Mephibosheth's heart. In that day, after a new regime was in place, it was common practice to purge all remnants of the deposed king's people. Mephibosheth may have assumed he would be publicly executed as a symbol of Saul's fallen regime. He is also a cripple, a condition that brought him a level of shame throughout his life already. When Mephibosheth arrived at David's court, he bowed and honored the new king. David did not harm Mephibosheth. He did not even simply show him mercy, which David could have used as an opportunity to honor himself, showing what a kind and magnanimous king he was. Instead, David gave Mephibosheth a permanent place at the king's table to eat in his presence. He honored Mephibosheth above almost all others in the kingdom. Keep in mind that this was not because of who Mephibosheth was but because of Saul and Saul's honor as God's anointed king. David's heart to honor Mephibosheth strongly reveals God's heart to honor those who in themselves have no honor.

Honor and Men

Stolen Valor

There is a genre of online videos called “stolen valor videos.” These are videos of military members and veterans confronting people who wear counterfeit uniforms and medals in public in order to be respected as part of the armed forces when they have never served. Why would it be so common for people to go to these lengths to be honored? You likely know exactly why- because we have a deep need to be respected, especially as part of a respectable group. And why would it make that group so upset that they do the thing this individual most wants to avoid- being publicly shamed? Because you cannot steal honor – it must be given, as we have already seen. A person who will not suffer with the group has no claim on its honor. If you want to be one of God’s family, a true disciple, and a fellow heir with Christ, the price is suffering.

It is crucial that we understand that while we cannot steal honor for ourselves while shying away from living the painfully sacrificial life of Christ, neither can we earn this honor – it must be bestowed. Men’s love for sports helps us understand this. If you have ever referred to a professional team as “we” and worn their success and failure as though it were your own, you are not far from the Kingdom of God. A man who can sit on a couch and watch other men whom he has never met and who do not know he exists do something that his friends will either mock him for or which gives him bragging rights over them knows

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something about honor and grace. You see, the Bible tells us that Jesus is our champion, the one who wins on our behalf. Rom. 8:37 says that we are more than conquerors in Christ. Because He defeated death and sin, you are a winner. You did nothing to earn this victory but it is yours all the same. Just as you may feel victorious when your team wins, you are victorious because Christ has won.

An Original Need

We have seen that God designed all people to share glory with Him. Men understand this at a visceral level. Going back to Adam, God's original design was for Adam to serve a noble purpose alongside his God. He was to be creative, bring order, create life, and glorify God. God wanted Adam to participate in nothing short of helping form the perfect world God planned. After Adam sinned, he had every reason to expect immediate death. Instead, God placed a curse. Where God had told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, childbearing would now come with great suffering. Where God had told them to subdue the earth, it would now bear fruit only through great difficulty. In God's mercy, He forestalled their death and allowed them to continue His purposes. Perhaps this began a deep need in a man's heart – the need to accomplish something of great value. After Adam's God-given purpose was twisted and frustrated by sin, there remained a deep and ongoing need to live for great things. Men become absorbed by work, video games, projects, women, sports, exercise, money, houses, and any number of things.

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Underneath them is the irresistible lure of significance and underneath this desire is a soul built to participate in God's greatness. There are so many ways for a man to try to confirm his worth, to prove to himself that he deserves honor. They are all grasping for the wind.

The Source of All Honor

In Luke 22:24-30, we see an argument among Jesus' disciples over who was the greatest. Any man is prone to look around and compare himself with others, especially those within his same walk of life or career. Add to that being around Jesus Himself and we can understand how there was one-upmanship among the twelve. We should not be naïve and think that being around fellow believers is a recipe for humility – it often leads to prideful comparison.

Jesus does not put the disciples in their place – He explains their place. He instructs them that in His Kingdom, honor is lived in humility. As He invites us into His glory, He is inviting us into His humility. Next Jesus tells them just how significant they really are. He says that they will one day rule over the twelve tribes of Israel. They were squabbling over who was the greatest in terms that they could conceptualize. They had no idea how honored they would be in Christ. Men may compare and compete to be respected, but all true honor comes from the only Noble One who stooped to life us up.

A Shared Need

Looking for honor can come in either a domineering, bullying form in which we force others to acknowledge our greatness or an insecurity that asks for anyone to validate us. Some lash out when they feel disrespected. Some attempt only what they feel they cannot fail at. When we understand this need in ourselves, the unhealthy ways we look for it, and the glory we have in Christ, we are able to extend honor to others. Respect is a shared need among men, yet we often withhold it from one another, as though it were in limited supply.

Rather, you are in a position to extend honor through respect and encouragement. Older men should conduct themselves with dignity (Titus 2:2), and younger men should treat them respectfully even when they need to be corrected (I Tim. 5:1). Children are to obey and honor their parents (Eph. 6:1-2), and fathers are not to provoke their children to anger (Eph. 6:4). Fathers sometimes react badly when they feel disrespected. They may become more concerned with putting their children – usually sons – in their place, rather than helping them find their place. We are even to honor ungodly secular powers and “everyone” (I Pt. 2:17). Whether in the church, the family, or society, we are to be men who trade seeking our honor for seeking to honor others.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you seek honor apart from Christ?

want to get honor from
men

2. How does seeing God's plan to honor you change your perspective on Christ, yourself or those around you?

humbling, experience more,

3. How does getting honor from the Church and Christ, rather than on your own, affect your thinking?

That ~~these~~ ~~we~~ ~~are~~ will gift
nothing we yearn

4. Who in your life do you need to extend honor to? How can you do that?

wife, my children

5. What has been most significant to you in this study? How do you need to respond to what you've realized?

CONCLUSION

A Well-Rounded Gospel

Any given church exists in a culture where one of these three worldviews is primary. However, if you dig enough, you will see that all three paradigms are present in the church. There are guilt/innocence, fear/power, and shame/honor elements in any church. The church community is designed by God to live in His ways as we experience His Good News together. None of these worldviews should be avoided as each understands a part of how God created us and how His work on the cross rescues us from sin.

A well-rounded understanding of the gospel requires that we explore God through the lens of our deepest pains. The places where we risk separation from one another - guilt, fear, and shame – are the places Jesus offers us rescue. He exchanges places with us so that we can unite with Him and others through innocence, power, and honor.

If there was a section in this study that was particularly impactful to you, consider the possibility that this is an area in your soul and relationships that needs a divine exchange. Jesus has something so much better to offer you than what you are holding on to. Will you let Him make the trade?

Engaging Our Neighbors

Your primary mode of looking at the gospel is shaped by your culture. You have a little of the other two worldviews mixed in, but one is always primary. Sharing the gospel across a cultural boundary gives you three opportunities. First, when you share with someone different from you, you are forced to reconsider the gospel from their perspective. It must be tailored to their understanding, and this will help you understand it better yourself. Second, you get to experience one of your primary purposes: inviting the lost into God's Kingdom. Third, especially when a person of a different culture adopts the gospel, their perspective helps color in your understanding of God and His ways. This study is designed for you to examine the gospel through more lenses so that your soul may be increasingly made whole. But the next step is to prayerfully look for opportunities to call members of all cultures into the Kingdom.

If you would like to explore the gospel in light of the three worldviews in this study further, it is recommended that you read *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures* by Jayson Georges.

If you have questions or comments, please contact Andrew Lacasse at alacasse@calvarymurrieta.com.

Small Group Names and Contact Info

Small Group Prayer Requests

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