

HONOR *SHAME* BIBLE STUDY OVERVIEW

Honor and shame are woven throughout the pages of the Bible, yet they are rarely mentioned in books or sermons in Western Christianity. Most western Christians understand the Gospel only from a guilt and righteousness paradigm.

However, as Jayson Georges says in *The 3D Gospel*, “The gospel is a many-sided diamond, and God wants people in all cultures to experience his complete salvation.” Christians today need a many-sided understanding of the Gospel. This will help their own walk with God, as well as when they share the Gospel with people around them, especially when sharing in today’s increasingly cross-cultural world.

This study was written to deepen Western Christians’ understanding of honor and shame in the Bible and in their own lives. This six-part study serves as an “Honor-Shame 101” to provide a basic understanding of honor and shame in both the metanarrative and individual stories of the Bible.

Since honor and shame always take place within cultural contexts, the first study introduces a **cultural and linguistic understanding** of honor and shame. What is honor? What is shame? Honor and shame are often difficult to define, and this study lays a foundation for the rest of the study.

The second study starts at the beginning of the Bible with the **Creation and Fall**. Who is God and why is He honorable? How does our sin bring shame upon us? A deepened understanding of sin and shame opens the door to understanding the Gospel in new and impactful ways.

The third study examines honor and shame in the **Old Testament**, from God's covenant to Abraham to the Psalms, prophets, and more. Honor and shame may cause these familiar stories to be read in a new light.

The fourth study looks at the **life of Jesus**. How did Jesus overturn the false honor system of the day? What honor did Jesus have and how did he use it?

The fifth study looks at **Jesus' death and resurrection**. What was the purpose of Jesus' death from an honor shame perspective? How does Jesus' death and resurrection lead to us gaining honor?

The sixth and final study answers the question, "**What impact does this have on our lives?**" This study looks at the epistles as well as giving space for reflection questions and further exploration.

Each study includes an **Additional Resources** section at the end for further study and exploration. May God show himself to you in new ways so that you would experience the "unsearchable riches of Christ" in deep and refreshing ways.

Introduction

What do you hope to take away from this study?

What is your experience with honor and shame?

Why are honor and shame important for us to understand?

HONOR *SHAME* BIBLE STUDY 1

INTRODUCTION

What is honor?

“Honor is the value of a person in his or her own eyes (that is, one’s claim to worth) plus that person’s value in the eyes of his or her social group. Honor is a claim to worth along with the social acknowledgement of worth.” - Bruce Malina

“Broadly speaking, a person’s honor or ‘face’ is one’s perceived worth according to the agreed standards of a particular social context. Every group holds certain ideals and assumptions.” - Jackson Wu in Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes

What is shame?

“In shame-based cultures, acceptable behavior is defined by ideals from the community. You must be the person others expect you to be... Because shame leads to exclusion and rejection, the primary response is to hide or cover the shame. If others are not aware of the issue, then shame does not exist.” - Jayson Georges in Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures

Reading

Read the pages 20-24 from *The 3D Gospel* by Jayson Georges about Shame-Honor Cultures and answer the reflection questions.

What feelings did you have as you read about shame-honor cultures?

What felt familiar to you about shame-honor cultures?

What felt foreign or confusing to you about shame-honor cultures?

How would you differentiate between shame and guilt?

Read “Eastern versus Western Honor & Shame”

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jacksonwu/2017/04/26/eastern-versus-western-honor-shame-2/>

How do you see ascribed and achieved honor and shame play out in your own culture?

In Conclusion

What did you learn from this study?

What was most helpful for you to understand honor and shame?

What questions does this first study raise for you?

Additional Resources

- Honor & Shame 101 on YouTube (5 minutes) - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r89-QVkg8_8
- 7 Problems with Defining “Honor” & “Shame” - <https://honorshame.com/definition-honor-shame/>
- The Culture Test: <http://theculturetest.com/> - The Culture Test is a free, five-minute tool for learning your primary cultural paradigm - guilt, shame, or fear.
- Back to God’s Village on YouTube (5 minutes) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLQmgPT-xOU> - A gospel presentation from a Central Asian perspective.
- <https://honorshame.com/blog/> and <https://honorshame.com/recommendations/>
Browse through any articles or resources that are interesting.

HONOR *SHAME* BIBLE STUDY 2

CREATION AND FALL

Creation: Genesis 1-2

As you read, what honor and shame language do you notice? What impact does this have on how you read the story?

What does it mean for mankind to be made in the image of God?

How does God give honor to mankind? (read Genesis 1:26-29 and Psalm 8)

Read Psalm 96. Why is God worthy of honor? What should our response be?

The Fall: Genesis 3

What did the serpent offer? How does this relate with honor and shame?

What was Adam and Eve's response after disobeying God?

How did sin lead to shame?

In Genesis 3:16-19, how did Adam and Eve lose honor and status because of their sin?
(also read Isaiah 59:1-2)

The Fall: Romans 1:18-32 and 2:23-24

What do these verses say about sin and shame? Use the word chart from page 4.

How does sin dishonor God?

Reflection:

How could you share about God's honor and glory to someone from an honor-shame background?

Reread Genesis 1:26-29 and reflect on what it means to be made in the image of God.
What feelings does this bring up for you?

How would you define “sin” in an honor-shame context?

How do you experience shame when you sin?

“In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve lost face and status before all creation. As disloyal children they lost honor. They were cursed with pain, grueling labor, weakness and dirtiness - indicators of low status. Death is the ultimate shame; humans return back to the lowly dust they came from. Ultimately, Adam and Eve were banished from God’s community, exiled from the presence of God. The human family lost its face. We lack honor before God. ‘To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you’ (Dan 9:8). We bear shame in the eyes of people and God. People are internally ashamed and externally disgraced.”
- Jayson Georges, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures* pg 69

Additional Resources:

- In this study we saw how sin leads to shame. Read Genesis 4 and consider how shame can lead to sin.
- “What is the ‘Image of God’? God’s Face!” - <https://honorshame.com/image-godhonor/>
- “In the Beginning... Honor” - <https://honorshame.com/image-god-honor/>
- “The Shame of Original Sin (Genesis 3)” - <https://honorshame.com/shameoriginal-sin-gen-3/>
- “The Gospel According to Patronage: A Summary” - <https://honorshame.com/the-gospel-according-to-patronage-a-summary/>

HONOR *SHAME* BIBLE STUDY 3

THE OLD TESTAMENT

God's Covenant with Abraham: Genesis 12:1-3 and 15:1-21

Listen to "Does God Lose Face? Romans 1:21-25 by Jackson Wu" from 9:18 to 20:35 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgFsZ7qZ1Ss>

What does God ask Abram to leave behind?

What does God promise to give Abram? How does honor tie into these promises?

What implications does the covenant have for Abraham?

What implications does the covenant have for God?

The Golden Calf: Exodus 32

How do the Israelites act shamefully? How does this connect with Romans 1?

How does Moses appeal to God's honor? (Also read Numbers 14:13-19)

Continue to read Exodus 33:1-6,12-23. What was the primary source of the Israelites' honor? What implications do you think this might have to us as Christians today? (Also read Jeremiah 9:23-24)

Reading from *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*

Read the story about David and Bathsheba from *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes* by Richards and O'Brien. How does their retelling of the story change the way you read this story?

Reflection

What questions did this study raise for you?

What other Bible stories do you want to read through again with an honor-shame lens?

How did this study deepen your understanding of sin? Of God's honor?

Additional Resources:

- The story of Ruth from *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures* by Georges and Baker (pages 76-82).

Additional Passages to study (optional):

- Genesis 11:1-9 - The Tower of Babel
- Ruth - notice redemption and the status reversal from shame to honor
- 2 Samuel 7 - David's Prayer of Gratitude
- Psalm 79 – notice the psalmist's shame and how he appeals to God for help
- Isaiah 43:1-13 - Israel the Lord's Chosen
- Ezekiel 16 - The Lord's Faithless Bride
- Luke 2:46-55 - Mary's Song of Praise

HONOR *SHAME* BIBLE STUDY 4

JESUS' LIFE

From the culture he lived in to the way he lived his life, Jesus' life was full of honor and shame dynamics. While this study focuses on a few passages, there are numerous other verses that give depth and breadth to Jesus' life and how he engaged with honor and shame.

To begin, watch this 11 minute video about the first century culture that Jesus lived in: [https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tng9pcOTSY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tng9pcOTSY)

Redefining Honor

One consequence of sin is that humans create their own sources of honor that differ from the honor that comes from God. When Jesus came, he frequently clashed with people over these man-made sources of honor. Use this chart below to explore how Jesus called out the false honor systems of the day and redefined honor according to God.

	What was the false, man-made honor system?	What did Jesus say or do to overturn the man-made honor?	How do you see Jesus redefine honor?
Matthew 6:1-7 6:16-18			
Mark 7:1-22			

	What was the false, man-made honor system?	What did Jesus say or do to overturn the man-made honor?	How do you see Jesus redefine honor?
John 8:31-47			(also see Galatians 3:7-9)
Mark 10:35-45			
Matthew 9:9-13			
John 13:1-17			

In Jesus' times, who were the people who had ascribed shame? Who had achieved shame?

How do you see Jesus give honor to those with ascribed shame and achieved shame?

How did Jesus have both ascribed honor and achieved honor?

- A few passages to start with are Colossians 1:15-20, John 17:1-5, Matthew 7:28-29, Mark 1:9-11, Matthew 1:1-17, Matthew 17:1-13, Luke 20:19-26.

Reflection

Imagine that Jesus came to 21st century American churches. What do you think are false, man-made honor systems he might challenge?

Where in your life do you struggle with shame (ascribed or achieved)? How could Jesus meet you there to give you honor?

Additional Verses and Resources:

- Sermon on the Mount - Matthew 5-7
- Romans 5:12-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:42-49 about how Jesus is the new Adam.
- Hebrews 3:1-6 - Jesus Greater Than Moses
- A retelling of the Parable of the Prodigal Son from *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures* by Georges and Baker (pages 102-106)

HONOR *SHAME* BIBLE STUDY 5

JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Jesus' death and resurrection are well known stories for Christians, yet most of our understanding and theology comes from a guilt and righteousness paradigm. We know that Jesus died as the atoning sacrifice to save us from our guilt. This study seeks to understand how Jesus rescues us from shame and gives us honor.

Jesus' Death

Read one account of the events leading up to Jesus' death (Matthew 26:47-27:66; Mark 14:43-15:47; Luke 22:47-23:56; or John 18:1-19:42). How was Jesus shamed before and in his crucifixion?

Isaiah 53 is understood to be a messianic prophecy written about 700 years before Jesus. Philippians 2:1-11 was written decades after Jesus' death and resurrection. How do these both capture Jesus' shame and dishonor? How do they show how God honored Jesus through his resurrection?

From an honor-shame perspective, why do you think Jesus had to die? What passages help you to understand this?

Why was it necessary for God to resurrect Jesus? (see Romans 6:1-14, Acts 2:22-36, and Philippians 2:1-11 to start)

Justification and the Resurrection

“Believers are justified because of Christ’s resurrection. It proves God will vindicate his people via their resurrection. By faith, they are unified with Christ in his death and resurrection (compare Romans 6:1-7). Their faith in the risen Christ proves they too will be raised by God. Christ’s resurrection in effect declares his followers are not captive to sin. Thus, justification restores the believer’s honor. It prevents and removes shame (compare Romans 5:5; 10:11). Believers now serve the risen King of kings. They are no longer slaves to sin, compelled to do things that bring shame (Romans 6:21). The resurrection is the manifestation of our justification because it displays Christ’s victory and kingship. Likewise, faith demonstrates we are God’s people because of what Christ accomplished.”

- Jackson Wu in *Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes*, pages 93-94

Reflection:

How do you think Jesus fulfilled God's covenant to Abraham?

How does Jesus' death and resurrection remove our shame?

How do we gain honor through Jesus' resurrection?

Take some time to reflect and pray over the Gospel truths in this study and what they mean for you.

Additional Resources and Verses:

- Pages 107-114 from *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures* by Jayson Georges and Mark Baker.
- The entire book of Hebrews is full of passages about how Jesus is the most honorable priest bringing in a new and greater covenant. Start with 1:1-4, 2:5-11, 3:1-6, 4:14-5:10, 7:22-8:7, 9:11-26, 10:11-14.

HONOR *SHAME* BIBLE STUDY 6

IMPACT AND APPLICATION

Read Philippians 3:3-11 and answer the following questions:

How does Paul feel about his human sources of honor?

What is Paul's new source of honor?

What are your human sources of honor (both ascribed and achieved)? Remember that honor and shame are relative to the culture and community you are in.

Rewrite these verses, replacing Paul's words in verses 5-9 with your human sources of honor.

Read 1 Peter 2:1-12 and Ephesians 2:11-22.

What do the biblical authors say is our new honorable identity in Christ?

What impact do you think this has on the way we live as followers of Jesus?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:5-12 and 12:7-10.

How do you think God can use our shameful human weaknesses to proclaim his glory?

Reflect on your own life about how God could receive glory through an area of shame in your life.

Reflection questions:

How did the study affect the way you do evangelism?

In a few sentences, how could you share the Gospel with someone from an honor-shame context?

What is a story from your own life of how God rescued you from shame and restored your honor?

How would you disciple someone from an honor-shame culture differently after doing this study?

How has this study affected your walk with God?

What do you want to study and explore more from this study?

Additional Passages:

- 1 Corinthians 1:26-2:5, 4:6-21 - God's honor standards, witnessing
- 1 Peter 5:1-7 - Honorable shepherding of God's people
- James 2:1-7 - Don't give honor based upon outward appearances
- Hebrews 12:1-4
- Romans 12-15 – How to live in a God-honoring way
- Revelation 21:1-8 & 21:22-22:5 – God's glory that is to come.

Additional questions or areas to explore:

- What is the role of the Holy Spirit from an honor-shame perspective?
- What is the role of community in a believer's life in an honor-shame context?
- Is there such a thing as good shame? Can shame be used by Christians?
- How would you explain salvation in the context of honor and shame?

Additional Resources:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXD6e_o1N8 - How Do I Use Honor Shame in Sharing My Testimony? (4 minutes)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8K0eEozV68> - How Do I Begin a Gospel Conversation Using Honor Shame? (5 minutes)
- <https://honorshame.com/5-shameful-things-westerners-say/> - 5 Shameful Things Westerners Say
- "Chapter 7: Relationships" from *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures* by Georges and Baker (28 pages)

HONOR *SHAME* BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *The 3D Gospel* by Jayson Georges. Although only 74 pages long, this book dives into the three main paradigms (shame-honor, guilt-innocence/righteousness, fear-power), both in culture and how the gospel fits each paradigm. This serves as a great introduction into the gospel paradigms.
2. *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes* by Richards and O'Brien. This is also a great intro level book into how our Western culture influences the way we read the Bible. One author was a missionary in Indonesia for over a decade and the other studies church history, so together they are full of insights on culture and history, but they write in a way that is easy to read and understand. They start by examining surface level differences but end up going deep beneath the surface.
3. *Misreading Scripture with Individualist Eyes* by Richards and James. Like *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*, this is a reader-friendly book that helps examine how culture impacts the ways we read the Bible, but this time with a focus on examining individualist vs collectivist cultures.
4. *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures* by Georges and Baker. This book is broken into three sections about culture, theology, and practical ministry applications. The chapter on relationships (chapter 7) is full of useful tools and things to be aware of in relationships with people from predominantly honor-shame cultures.
5. *Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes* by Jackson Wu. This is an easy-to-read commentary that studies Romans from more of an Eastern perspective. There are lots of cultural insights, but this book also shows how Paul redefines honor and shame in light of the Gospel and what it means to be an insider. Since Romans has been primarily viewed as the foundation of guilt-based theology, this book sheds a new light on Paul's letter to the Roman church.
6. *Ministering in Patronage Cultures* by Jayson Georges. Most Westerners misunderstand patronage as a corrupt system at best, but this book lays out how patronage - a reciprocal relationship between social unequals - is a central part of global cultures and the biblical story of God's mission.

7. *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel* by various authors. This book is a compilation of 16 articles by various ministry practitioners and leaders from different disciplines and nations who came together for the 2017 Honor-Shame Conference. Articles range from “Abuse and Shame” to “Discipleship in Asian Honor Cultures” to “The Muslim Woman’s Journey from Shame to Honor”.
8. *The Global Gospel* by Werner Mischke. This book breaks down different elements of honor-shame cultures (challenge-riposte, patron-client, etc.) and shows how the Gospel can be shared in each one. At the end, he encourages the reader to look at the cultural context they hope to apply the gospel to and then think through the different elements and how to present the gospel to that specific culture.
9. *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* by Kenneth Bailey. While this functions more as a commentary on parts of the four Gospel accounts, Bailey’s experience with Middle Eastern culture combined with his sound theological and historical understanding gives incredible insight into the life and teachings of Jesus.
10. *Saving God’s Face* by Jackson Wu. This book is dense, as it was part of Wu’s seminary dissertation. He speaks from years of experience serving in East Asia and does a great job contextualizing the gospel for a Chinese audience. He also has a great chapter early on about the importance of contextualization.