A special excerpt of *The Global Gospel*

Chapters 5: Does it Hurt or Does it Heal
Chapter 6: The Pathology of Shame in Our World

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THE
GLOBAL GOSPEL

Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World

WERNER MISCHKE

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

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

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RESOURCES
Does It Hurt or Does It Heal?

The book *Shame and Guilt*, by social scientists June Price Tangney and Ronda L. Dearing, provides compelling insights that relate to Christian ministry, including global missions.

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

Features shared by shame and guilt
- Both fall into the class of “moral” emotions
- Both are “self-conscious,” self-referential emotions
- Both are negatively balanced emotions
- Both involve internal attributions of one sort or another
- Both are typically experienced in interpersonal conflicts

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

Key dimensions on which shame and guilt differ:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SHAME</th>
<th>GUILT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus of evaluation</td>
<td>Global self: “I did that horrible thing”</td>
<td>Specific behavior: “I did that horrible thing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of distress</td>
<td>Generally more painful than guilt</td>
<td>Generally less painful than shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological experience</td>
<td>Shrinking, feeling small, feeling worthless, powerless</td>
<td>Tension, remorse, regret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation of “self”</td>
<td>Self “split” into observing and observed “selves”</td>
<td>Unified self intact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on “self”</td>
<td>Self impaired by global devaluation</td>
<td>Self unimpaired by global devaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

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

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

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

The tension, remorse, and regret of guilt causes us to stop and rethink, and it offers a way out, pressing us to confess, apologize, and make amends. We become better people, and the world becomes a better place.

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

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2. Ibid., 25.
3. Dyrness and Kärkkäinen, 815.
4. Tangney and Dearing, 190.
Of course, our need for the forgiveness for our sin and guilt is urgent. Jesus said, “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (John 3:18). But when it comes to the emotional and social dimensions, the cure for our shame is also urgent. Could it be that when we teach God’s Word with a focus on guilt while ignoring the sin-pathology of shame, we are ignoring an aspect of the gospel with great power to heal and transform the human soul?

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

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

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

Consider what it would be to have as your constant, everyday drama the avoidance of shame, along with the pursuit of honor. This is what deeply motivates your life in every pursuit. Your life is moving in a deep, powerful river whose current is honor and shame.

Consider how David Pryce-Jones expresses the dominance of honor/shame values in the Arab world:

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

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

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

6. Ibid., 40–41.
7. Luke 15:11–32. See “The Father’s Love Booklet” for a concise understanding of the honor/shame dynamics in the prodigal son parable and how it can be used to convey the message of the gospel: http://thefatherslovebooklet.org.
A missing piece in Reformed theology?

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

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

Consider this problem:

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

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

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

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

Shame is experienced in different ways

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

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

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

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

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

Let me give you an example of how this material about honor and shame relates more broadly than one might think. In 2013, I was preaching about honor and shame at a church in Tempe, Arizona as part of their missions-emphasis week. My text was Luke 15:11–32. We gave each person a copy of “The Father’s Love Booklet” (see chapter 3.1). With Majority World peoples in mind, this booklet illustrates The Parable of the Prodigal Son, and shows how the language of honor and shame can be used to present the gospel. I also briefly shared a story from my teenage years about how I was affected by a shadow of shame (see Introduction).
Shame is more internal, hidden
- Since shame is the result of sin, it affects all peoples and all persons.
- Honor competition—shame leading to revenge, and the pursuit of honor gains—frequently expresses itself in international affairs. It has often been the fuel for war. This is a powerful dynamic in both Majority World and Western nations.
- Shame affects both Majority World peoples and Western peoples, but the impact tends to differ.
- No individual or people group is to the far extreme of one side, to the total exclusion of the other. Every person or people can be placed somewhere on this continuum.
- The Bible’s vast material about honor and shame comes from an Eastern cultural view that is more about external behavior and is group-oriented.
- Some of the Bible’s material about shame may nonetheless be applied to Westerners for whom shame is more often hidden—or often expressed through internal feelings and emotions.

Shame is more about feelings
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Shame is more about the individual’s affect (emotion)

Primarily Western
- Shame is more internal, hidden
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Primarily Eastern or Majority World
- Shame is more external, obvious
- Shame is more about behavior
- Shame is more about the social group (demotion)

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

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

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

The need to cure both guilt and shame
Later in the book, we will consider views of the atonement of Christ and how a balanced view incorporates a cure for both guilt and shame, as well as the hope for both righteousness and honor. But for now, here is an introductory chart. Specific Scripture verses are not included here. These concepts will be unpacked scripturally in Sections 2 and 3 of this book.
The key discovery in this chapter has been that shame is perhaps a bigger problem than we ever realized. Shame is more likely to lead to hurtful behavior, whereas guilt is more likely to lead to healing behavior. This leads us to the next chapter, in which we will explore just how massive a problem, and how pathological a sin-sickness, shame really is.
The Pathology of Shame in Our World

We have seen that shame is more likely to lead to hurtful behavior, whereas guilt is more likely to lead to healing behavior. The pathology of shame for individuals and families can be terrible and impact generations. But when the pathology of shame impacts whole societies and nations, it becomes truly horrendous. James W. Jones writes,

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

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

Shame as fuel for genocide in Nazi Germany

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

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

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

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

Shame as fuel for terrorism in the Muslim world

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

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

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

4. In a broad-ranging comment concerning the end of the Ottoman Empire and World War I, Marc Aronson writes, “The Ottomans lost; England, France, and America won. The winners got to decide what would happen in the Middle East. And they did. If the Jews did better at convincing those powers to back them than the Muslims did, that is hardball politics. Too many Arabs either kept their eyes on their clans and families, or held onto the losing idea that all the Arab people could be unified and not divided up into separate nations. That was unfortunate for them. But that is what happens in conflicts: if you back the wrong horse, you lose. The Arabs may feel frustrated, resentful, even furious about that outcome. But that anger does nothing to change political facts.” Marc Aronson, Unsettled: The Problem of Loving Israel (New York: Atheneum, 2008), 32–33.
5. Allis Radosh and Ronald Radosh, A Safe Haven: Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel (New York: HarperCollins, 2009) describes with meticulous documentation the story of how Israel became a nation and that the Arab position about Jewish statehood was non-negotiable: “The Arabs made it clear they would accept nothing less than an Arab Palestine, with a Jewish minority living under its laws” (203). This refusal to compromise one iota doomed the Arab position with regard to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), which ultimately recommended to the United Nations General Assembly that Palestine be “partitioned” to allow for a Jewish sovereign state. The chapters “UNSCOP: Prelude to Partition” and “The Fight Over Partition: A Line of Fire and Blood” (207–76) tell the story. See especially pages 227, 244, and 260.
Below is a short excerpt from Osama bin Laden's article, written in 2002, in response to questions about why Al Qaeda flew planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. (Note: By quoting bin Laden, we are in no way expressing sympathy for the actions of Al Qaeda or any other terrorist organization. We simply want to gain a better understanding of how the dynamics of honor and shame fuel violence.) Central to bin Laden's argument for violence against America is the mistreatment of Palestinians ever since they were forcibly removed in 1948 when Israel became a nation: "The blood pouring out of Palestine must be equally revenged. You must know that the Palestinians do not cry alone; their women are not widowed alone; their sons are not orphaned alone." At the end of his diatribe, bin Laden writes:

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

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

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

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

But honor competition is not only at the crux of conflict between the “house of Islam” and the “imperial West.” Honor competition is also the fuel for bloodshed within the “house of Islam”—and it has been so for centuries. As this book is being
written, more than 150,000 people have been killed in the civil war in Syria—
between the Sunni rebels and the government forces who are Shiite or Alawite.

Caution: Don’t generalize

Having said this, it is wise to remember that only a minority of Muslims actually
believe that the Quran supports the use of violence. An even smaller minority are
actually engaged in violence. Islam comprises over 1.6 billion people—about 26
percent of the world’s population. And there is great diversity of views among them.
Moreover, the dynamics of honor and shame existed in the Arab region prior
to the birth of Islam’s Prophet Muhammed.

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

Honor-based violence in the family unit

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

Perhaps the most famous honor-killing is the murder of the provocative
Theo’s great grandfather was the brother of the world-famous painter Vincent van
Gogh. The article for Theo van Gogh on Wikipedia records the murder as follows:

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

9. Pryce-Jones writes convincingly about a culture of violence across multiple generations and a variety of Arab nations which is fueled by honor and shame. See Pryce-Jones, 108–21.
11. Pryce-Jones, 34.
attached a note to the body with a smaller knife. Van Gogh died on the spot. The two knives were left implanted. 12

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

Dear Mrs Hirshi Ali,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**THE PATHOLOGY OF SHAME IN OUR WORLD**

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

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

![Graph showing articles in The New York Times under search for "honor killings"](image)

**Figure 1.16: Articles in The New York Times under search for “honor killings”**

The purpose of conducting this small research project is to simply point out that in the West, the strange practice of “honor killings” has emerged as a criminal phenomena in our own cities and communities—due in part to ever-increasing cultural diversity.  

If you doubt such a problem exists in your city, I suggest you go to the website of the newspaper of your city, or of the large city closest to where you live, and conduct your own search for “honor killing.” You may be surprised at what you discover.

**Is all shame bad?**

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

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17. Ibid.  
18. Gang violence may also be considered honor-based violence because *gang culture* reflects a hierarchical community based on loyalty and honor/shame rather than ethics. To add the number of killings resulting from gang violence would, of course, magnify these numbers enormously.
bad; not all shame causes harm. In his chapter titled, “Healthy Shame: A Voice from Our True Self,” he writes, “There is a nice irony in shame: our feelings of inferiority are a sure sign of our superiority, and our feelings of unworthiness testify to our great worth. Only a very noble being can feel shame. ... If we never feel shame, we may have lost contact with the person we most truly are.”

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

The Compass of Shame

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

19. Lewis B. Smedes, Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don’t Deserve (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 38. A portrayal of healthy shame or appropriate dishonor is found in Jeremiah: “But from our youth the shameful thing has devoured all for which our fathers labored, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. Let us lie down in our shame, and let our dishonor cover us. For we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day, and we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God” (Jer 3:24–25). See also Jer 6:15; 8:12.
We can easily see in these four poles that this is consistent with the principle we explored earlier in this section: Whereas guilt is more likely to lead to healing behavior, shame is more likely to lead to hurtful behavior.

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

- **Contour #1. Shame in East Asia—eastern pole—“Attack Self.”** Could it be that the “eastern pole” located at the right of the compass is generally consistent with East Asian culture in which social harmony is more highly valued? One thinks of China, Japan, Korea, or Thailand—where the “fear of losing face” may lead to suicide—an “attack on the self.” The Bangkok Post reported on September 3, 2013: “Fear of losing face and an inability to express emotion are contributing factors behind Northern Thailand’s status as the country’s suicide capital, a mental health expert said on Tuesday. The North has had the highest suicide rate in Thailand for 10 consecutive years, with Chiang Mai, home to almost two million people, reporting a suicide rate of 14 for every 100,000 people, the highest in the region.”

- **Contour #2. Shame in Western Asia and Mediterranean Basin—western pole—“Attack Others.”** In Western Asia and the Mediterranean Basin, could it be that in the response to shame there is less of the “Attack Self” dynamic and more of the dynamic of the “western pole”—“Attack Others”—hence the propensity toward bloodshed and terrorism? Malina believes that peoples who are from the region of the Mediterranean Basin and Middle East “are anti-introspective and not psychologically minded.” He shares an anecdote both funny and tragic: “As I was recently told by a Mediterranean informant after we both witnessed an incident of public shaming, ‘If I was shamed and felt the urge to commit suicide, I would kill somebody.’ This, in a nutshell, is a typical anti-introspective, collectivistic reaction to being shamed.”

- **Contour #3. Shame in the West—all four poles.** The West has experienced a deterioration of the family and community ... increasing loneliness ... widespread alcoholism and drug abuse ... the postmodern loss of meaning ... rampant materialism and greed ... a crisis of confidence in social institutions ... along with the rise of multiculturalism due to globalization and the migration of peoples. Could it be that the characteristics of the Compass of Shame at all four poles—Withdrawal, Avoidance, Attack Others, Attack Self—are on the rise in the West?

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

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

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

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