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Chapter 4 Reflection.

Summary

In chapter 4, Tennent examines anthropology, especially the human identity of the shame and guilt-based cultures. Tennent writes, “The purpose of this chapter is to explore this observation made by anthropologists, but from a theological perspective informed by biblical revelation” (78). According to the first anthropologist, Ruth Benedict, Western culture is categorized as guilt based culture and eastern culture as shame based (78). The difference between shame and guilt based cultures is that “shame cultures rely on external sanctions for good behavior” whereas guilt cultures rely on “an internalized conviction of sin” (79). Honor and shame are essential values in eastern cultures. Maybe that’s why the need of the community is important. Further, Tennent helps readers to have deeper understanding of the gospel to show that “Jesus bore our guilt and our shame, reversing the curse of the fall for all those who are in Christ” (101).

Key Learning

As I was reading this chapter, it brought many flashbacks of living in the shame-based culture in Nepal. Tennent illuminated why my parents had such a strong sense of pursuing honor in our community. They were so strict and expected me to be perfect in all areas so that I wouldn't bring shame to them. Indeed, shame is a strong feeling. It makes people do crazy things. But I am thankful that the power of the cross is strong enough to forgive all the guilts and shame. Tennent’s explanation of a few passage of Old Testament and New Testament were very insightful. He writes, “The parable of the prodigal son is not only about the son’s receiving

forgiveness for his incurred guilt (Luke 15:18, 21), but also about his shame being taken away and his being restored to a place of honor as a son” (87-88). God has the power to restore and make us new. Tennent writes, “The work of Christ on the cross is the most fundamental place where our new identify id formed. In Adam we became identified with guilt, fear, and shame. In Christ we are now identified with forgiveness, confidence, and honor” (92).

Implication

This chapter was a great reminder not to put my identity in what other people say about me. Sometimes, it is tempting to just to have a good reputation for popularity and honor, but it is not healthy. A good reputation brings pride, and a bad reputation brings shame. Its not healthy. Tennent reminded us that it is essential for a believer to put in Christ alone. He writes, “We, who once were identified by guilt and shame, now have a new identity in Christ and have become partakers of his righteousness and his honor” (101).