

Reflection – Chapter 4

This chapter discusses the differences in Western and Eastern culture. It shows how lives are lived and how we understand the gospel of Jesus Christ in such things as atonement. As I read this chapter what stood out to me was how we see our identity is shaped by culture. The main type of cultures identified are guilt based and shamed based cultures. There is also little said about fear based cultures. In a guilt based culture the identity is group based while in a shame based culture identity is individualistic. Although, this appears to be the view of the majority, there are some researchers that are less inclined to accept the internal and external distinction.

As aforementioned, human identity is shaped by culture. In a shame based culture, such as Japan and Korea, who one is and how they function in society is based on external factors. According to Tennen, this keeps people in a certain formal framework. Someone from a shame based culture always sees themselves in relation to others if they shame themselves, they shame their family or community. They see themselves embedded into a group dynamic. They are part of a group in every aspect. When one comes to Christ they come as a family, group or clan. Conversion is not an individual event. This is instilled in each from childhood. I think that coming from this view humbles one because all they do has to be seen in the eye of how it affects the group.

In a guilty based culture, Individualistic behavior is important. Values are reinforced by telling you what you should and should not do. This is internalized. Independence is learned

from an early age and is valued over interdependence. There is not much concern on the outer group. When we feel guilt we are left with an internal sense of failure. I failed, not the whole group. When it comes to salvation it is a personal matter not a group matter. It is something you do personally.

We see that cultural differences are different in every culture and each culture has emphasis on being individual or being part of a group. I like that it was pointed out that the gospel is seen from a different angle in each group. In a shame based culture atonement is public while in a guilt based culture it is individual. Jesus died for all, yet he died for us as individuals. Guilt, shame and fear are seen from the beginning with Adam and Eve and continues till today but differently in each culture.