

Jessica Lee

Tennet Chapter 4

In chapter four the author begins with an example of shame-based culture set in Japan, Jordan, and Korea. Tennet then begins to explore the differences between and the struggles of Eastern and Western cultures concerning shame and guilt. Finally, Tennet explores three questions: "What is the role of guilt versus shame in the formation of human identity? What are the implications of this distinction of our understanding of sin and the application of the work of Christ in our lives? Should a theology of the atonement be formed differently when articulated within the context of a shame-based culture?"

This was quite an interesting read for me. I grew up seeing shame-based culture affect my parents, my grandparents, and the community at both churches I attended in my childhood. It didn't affect me as much, because I lived in an area where there was a low percentage of Asians. The context my brother and I grew up in was different from the rest of my family. I may be biased, but I would have to agree with the Asian scholar Young Gweon You that Tennet references in this chapter that Korea is a "model shame-based culture." If you're Korean, you know that gossip is huge in Korean culture. It is a running joke among my Korean friends that if you tell one Ahjumma (Older lady, usually a mother) something, you can just assume all the other Ahjummas know. Although it is an activity that brings these women together, it can also cause one person to be heavily ostracized solely based on the gossip that is spread about said person.

Upon reading this chapter, a question I have is 'how have people from shame-based cultures accepted Christ and what helps them understand the depth of their sin and their need for forgiveness if their values from the start do not align with Christ's?' Do we depend on the Holy Spirit to reveal and realign their way of thinking? To be able to go on missions in these countries, I feel it is important to have an understanding of how to approach these people with the gospel in a way that is compassionate, yet firm. However, one thing is for sure. Jesus took away their shame once and for all on that cross thousands of years ago, though it will probably be hard to change the way they have been thinking all their lives, there will be a great celebration at the gain of new brothers and sisters in Christ.