

Different does not have to be wrong!

I stepped out early, still dark, a bright moon peaking through the clouds, brushed fresh snow off the car, drove Ellen to work at Roberts Wesleyan College, then enjoyed the back roads into a neighboring town and my coffee shop of choice these days – thank you Timothy Horton. The car said that the outside temperature was 5 Fahrenheit (that's -15 Celsius for my SE Asia friends). Our first few weeks in SE Asia will be spent in Chiang Rai, Thailand where the temperature as I write is 71 Fahrenheit (that's 22 Celsius).

Now seated at "my table", laptop open, coffee steaming, just finished my daily Bible reading, and sorting my thoughts.

Different does not have to be wrong! Continuing my study of the honor / shame culture. A recent field of study for the church. Why is this important? Werner Mischke – a new friend introduced to me by Paul B – thank you Paul!) writes *"An estimated 70 to 80 percent of the world's people's ... have honor and shame as a more dominant cultural value than do Western people."* That's roughly 5.5 to 6.2 billion people out of a world population of 7.8 billion!

Different does not have to be wrong! Okay – so what's different about the honor / shame culture? Two examples. First – in our guilt / innocence culture that we grew up in when we do something wrong our focus is on the wrong we have done. "I can't believe I did *that!*" In the honor / shame culture when we do something wrong the focus is on self. "I can't believe *I* did that!"

A second example – in our western guilt / innocence culture rules guide relationships. A rule is a rule, and there are no exceptions. But in the honor / shame culture relationships guide rules. Because you are family (or a close friend) we will make an exception.

Different does not have to be wrong! Mischke is helping me to see that the dynamics of honor / shame are "hidden in plain sight" in the Bible. As I said, a recent field of study, and brand new to me.

We fly in two weeks, on New Years Day. Ready or not. So much to learn. Thank you one and all for your faithful prayers.

a friend,

Roger and Ellen