

This is really different, and I have a lot to learn!

There are three dominant cultures in our world – guilt / innocence, honor / shame, and fear / power. Our American culture is primarily guilt / innocence. We are taught from a young age that character means doing the right thing even when no one is looking. But this isn't what I want to focus on now.

Ellen and I are heading to Southeast Asia to live and serve in an entirely different culture characterized by honor and shame. How is it different? I'm glad you asked. Here is an example. One author described it this way...

*“A young woman is taking public transportation across her city, sharing a ride with three male passengers. She soon realizes that her fellow passengers have been drinking, obvious by their escalating belligerent and abusive behavior. They begin to harass her. This young woman is understandably uncomfortable and tries to downplay the situation. In their intoxication these men become physically aggressive toward her.*

*At just that moment this young woman looks up and sees her uncle in an oncoming car, heading in her direction. But instead of flagging down her uncle who could rescue her, she hides not wanting her uncle to see her. Why? Her primary motivation is avoiding shame and maintaining family honor.”*

There is a Thai word for shame that means “to rip someone's face off” such that they appear ugly before others. Jayson Georges in *“The 3D Gospel: Ministry in guilt, fear and shame cultures”* writes that

*“... Honor and shame function like a social credit rating measuring one's reputation. Shame and honor are contagious; what one person does will affect the entire group (or family). At a young age, children are expected to act as representatives who uphold the family honor. So, a person's aim is to avoid bringing shame on one's family... “*

Again, this is really different and we have a lot to learn! We don't at all understand this approach to life. Yet we enter into this with a sincere desire to look, live and love like Jesus.

Please pray that our God of unfailing love will give us sensitivity, insight and wisdom so as not to add scornful shame. Please pray that our God of unfailing love will help us show how Jesus can restore honor and dignity for those who have lost face.

a friend,

Roger and Ellen