

GOSPEL PRAYER WITH AND FOR PEOPLE IN HONOR-SHAME CULTURES

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*Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." John 20:21 (ESV)*

Today, we are part of a "global church with a globalized mission in a globalized world".¹ The global church is on the move, pursuing the Great Commission from everywhere to everyone.² As we go, it is vital to understand how God's honor embodied in Jesus is profoundly good news among peoples whose core life value is maintaining honor and avoiding shame. This paper embarks on a cross-cultural journey to develop a Great Commission model that incorporates prayer in outreach and ministry to people within predominantly honor-shame cultures.

Specifically, this paper outlines the biblical themes of honor and shame in gospel prayer. What is gospel prayer? *Gospel prayer* is prayer shaped by Scripture and focused on the gospel of Jesus Christ. The thesis of this paper is that as we pray *with and for* people using gospel prayer in terms meaningful to people in honor-shame cultures, the Holy Spirit can use those prayers to bring them into relationship with Jesus. In application, this paper considers some of the issues involved in developing contextualized gospel prayer in Japan's honor-shame culture, including some of the challenges for contextualizing prayer in Japan. A hypothetical model proposes use of gospel prayer with and for people in Japan using honor-shame gospel themes meaningful to the Japanese people as part of outreach and discipleship.³

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH?

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
Acts 1:8 (ESV)

The church is sent into the world to witness to Jesus by proclaiming the gospel and making disciples of all nations. This is the "unique and central calling" of the church.⁴ "Mission" means being sent and being given a task to accomplish.⁵ Jesus' prayer for His disciples in John 17

¹ Paul Borthwick, *Western Christians in Global Mission: What's the Role of the North American Church?* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 2012), 74.

² The phrase "from everywhere to everyone" is from the title of the book by Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 2003).

³ *Author's Note*: This paper offers a thesis and hypothetical model for ministry among Japanese people (as well as broader applications) that would benefit from dialogue with Japanese and other global ministry practitioners. The author is a seminary student and a student of Japanese culture, a person who prays for the people of Japan and for God's glory among the nations, but who has not lived or served in Japan.

⁴ Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom and the Great Commission* (Crossway, Wheaton, 2011), 297, Kindle.

⁵ DeYoung and Gilbert, *Mission of the Church*, 191, Kindle.

reflects a clear consciousness of His own *being sent* by the Father as much as His own *sending* of His disciples into the world.⁶ “The biblical conviction that God is active in the world, active in human history through people He sends, is at the heart of mission.”⁷ The question for the church is what is the specific purpose that the church is sent into the world to accomplish?⁸

The mission of the church is to “go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father.”⁹ The Lausanne Covenant affirms: “The Church is at the very centre of God’s cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the gospel.”¹⁰ The vision of mission is “the drive to share the good news with all, to cross every border with the gospel.”¹¹

The whole church is called to take the whole gospel to the whole world, proclaiming Christ until he comes, with all necessary urgency, unity, and sacrifice.¹²

God’s people, relying on God’s power and presence, are sent to share the gospel so that everyone has a chance to respond – and today, the Majority Church is beginning to share in that mission. “The Majority World is moving from being a mission field to a mission force”.¹³

The biblical perspective on mission has a global vision and a global component that comes from faith in God the Creator and His intention to bless all of humankind through the instruments he chooses. At the same time, God is forming a new global people from races, cultures and languages spread over the whole earth, a people who cannot do less than have a global vision but who live their vision in the local situation where God has placed them.¹⁴

The universal truths of the gospel are being revisited and retold in new global contexts by the Majority World church, honoring the authority of God’s Word and reminding us that the gospel really does penetrate and become rooted in the specific culture in which its seeds are planted.¹⁵ “The church is on a journey... Global flows are taking us in new directions.”¹⁶ On this journey, we will travel together with other Jesus-followers from around the world to share the good news

⁶ Escobar, *New Global Mission*, 99.

⁷ Escobar, *New Global Mission*, 86.

⁸ DeYoung and Gilbert, *Mission of the Church*, 203, Kindle.

⁹ DeYoung and Gilbert, *Mission of the Church*, 854-861, Kindle.

¹⁰ Lausanne Covenant, “The Church and Evangelism” (Aug. 1, 1974).

<http://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>, accessed June 19, 2017.

¹¹ Escobar, *New Global Mission*, 13.

¹² Manila Manifesto, “Conclusion: Proclaim Christ Until He Comes” (July 20, 1989)

<https://www.lausanne.org/content/manifesto/the-manila-manifesto>, accessed June 19, 2017

¹³ Borthwick, *Western Christians in Global Mission*, 88, 112-116, 193.

¹⁴ Escobar, *New Global Mission*, 63.

¹⁵ Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2007), 2-15; Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas? The Quest for An Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 2014), 190-191.

¹⁶ Miriam Adeney, *Kingdom Without Borders: The Untold Story of Global Christianity* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 2009), 33.

and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, sharing gospel prayer with and for people we meet along the way.

GOSPEL PRAYER AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

As we seek to carry out the mission of the church, we do well to model Jesus' commitment to prayer. Jesus' life and ministry focused on doing His Father's work and seeking the Father's heart and mind through prayer (Mk. 1:35; Lk. 5:16). Jesus told us to pray persistently in His name (Jn. 14:13-14; 16:23-27). Prayer is conspicuously intertwined with the mission of the early church (Acts 1:14, 24; 2:42; 4:31; 6:4; 13:2-3).

Prayer is the handmaid of missions. The success of all real missionary effort is dependent on prayer. The life and spirit of missions are the life and spirit of prayer. Both prayer and missions were born in the divine mind.¹⁷

The Holy Spirit, through prayer and God's Word shared by God's people, gives worldwide power to God's mission. We should pray with God's highest praise and glory in view, confident of the ultimate value of God's eternal purposes that are assured in Jesus.¹⁸

The thesis of this paper is that as we pray *with and for* people using gospel prayer in terms meaningful to people in honor-shame cultures, the Holy Spirit can use those prayers to bring them into relationship with Jesus. Since the words used here may carry different meanings to different people,¹⁹ especially as we seek to bridge understanding with honor-shame cultures, let's begin with a brief exposition of two terms.

First, as used here, *gospel prayer* is prayer shaped by Scripture and focused on the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is that God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth found in Jesus (1 Tim. 2:3-4; Rom. 1:16), including "both the removal of our guilt – *and* the covering of our shame."²⁰ To be clear, gospel prayer is not an alternative or substitute for sharing the gospel or global ministry; it is designed to be an integral part of it. Why are Paul's epistles so full of prayers? "For the apostle Paul, prayer is not a substitute for Christian service; it is part of it."²¹ Paul prayed with and for people out of his love – praying for them and praying alongside them on their faith journey – and we should do the same.²²

¹⁷ EM Bounds, *Essentials of Prayer* (Whitaker House, New Kensington, 1994), 140, 149.

¹⁸ D.A. Carson, *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2014), 112-122, 188-190.

¹⁹ David J. Hasselgrave, "The Power of Words", *Global Missiology* (Jan. 2006), http://www.globalmissiology.org/english/archive/hasselgrave_power_of_words_1_2006.html. Accessed Sept. 10, 2017.

²⁰ Werner Mischke, *The Global Gospel: Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World* (Mission ONE, Scottsdale, 2015), 1203, Kindle.

²¹ Carson, *Praying with Paul*, 70.

²² The prayers in Paul's epistles were written to believers usually gathered in small communities of faith that likely also included some people who were seeking to learn about Jesus and some people who were on their path of discipleship toward believing faith. Likewise, gospel prayer with and for people can be a wonderful practice for believers, but not simply for believers. It is our hope that the unbelieving people we pray with and for are also on a path toward believing faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit at work in them.

Second, praying *with and for* another person is different than prayers offered *for* people, such as private prayer, or strategic prayer²³ (on behalf of a people group or even particular peoples) or even prayers offered in corporate worship – all of which are biblical and essential to mission. We simply ask, “May I pray for you” and, if they are willing, we pray aloud as they are present with us – prayer *with and for* them – based on our relationship with them and reflecting our relationship with Jesus. Grounded in a biblical view of people, we pray with genuine respect and love for the honor and dignity of our friends in other cultures.²⁴

DYNAMICS OF HONOR and SHAME IN CULTURE

The prominence of honor and shame dynamics across the Majority World requires fresh missiological thinking to strengthen the global church and its Great Commission outreach.

The global church needs to articulate a theology that equips Majority World Christians to follow Jesus in their own sociocultural context marked by honor-shame realities. ... Honor and shame pervade the cultural outlook of most people groups with limited or no access to the gospel. A biblical missiology for honor-shame contexts is strategic for fulfilling the Great Commission among all nations, ...²⁵

Honor and shame cultures carry expectations that individuals conform to group expectations and participate as contributing members of the group. This dynamic holds that what is best for maintaining harmony in relationships and honoring people is right; and what shames is wrong. There is seldom a right way or wrong way of doing things, rather there is an honorable and dishonorable way of doing things.²⁶

“Honor” is a person’s worth in society. It is defined as the acknowledgement of worth, glory, name, prestige, reputation, and dignity within their social context. Another way of saying this in many cultures is that people are concerned with “face.” Face may be ascribed or achieved – that is, inherited or earned.²⁷

²³ As an example of strategic prayer, the Lausanne Movement recently announced a new strategic partnership with Operation World, representing “a longstanding commitment to prayer and mission, as well as a strong conviction that Christians worldwide must have more opportunities—in more languages and in more forms of media—to join in prayer for the nations.” News release: “The Lausanne Movement and Operation World join forces to mobilize prayer globally” (July 25, 2017) <https://www.lausanne.org/news-releases/lausanne-movement-operation-world-join-forces-mobilise-prayer-globally>. Accessed July 26, 2017.

²⁴ Escobar, *New Global Mission*, 156-157.

²⁵ Jayson Georges, “The Good News for Honor-Shame Cultures: Uncovering A Core Aspect of God's Mission”, *Lausanne Global Analysis* (Mar. 2017, Vol. 6, Issue 2). Accessed July 1, 2017. <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2017-03/the-good-news-for-honor-shame-cultures>.

²⁶ Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (InterVarsity, Downers Grove, 2016), 454, 493, 550-616, 671-72, Kindle; E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O’Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, 2012), 1268, Kindle. Jayson Georges, *The 3-D Gospel: Ministering in Guilt, Shame and Fear Cultures* (Time Press, 2014), 227-232, 258, Kindle.

²⁷ Jackson Wu, *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation and Honor* (William Carey International University Press, Pasadena, 2012) 437, Kindle; Jackson Wu. “Biblical Theology From A Chinese Perspective: Interpreting Scripture Through The Lens of Honor and Shame,” *Global Missiology* (July 2013). <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/1217/2821>. Accessed Sept. 10, 2017.

“Shame” means that other people think lowly of you and do not want to be with you because of a perceived deficiency or failure to meet the standards of his or her community – an external shame. Shame causes a person to “lose face”, taking away their identity and value. Shame also produces feelings of humiliation, disapproval, and abandonment – internal shame. Shame means inadequacy of the entire person. While guilt says, “I made a mistake”; shame says, “I am a mistake.”²⁸

Honor-shame cultures are naturally “collectivistic”. Collectivistic societies define people by their relationship to the group. “Identity is a collective idea: ‘I am who I know.’ Descartes said, ‘I think, therefore I am.’ A Chinese could paraphrase, ‘I belong, therefore I am.’”²⁹

The social matrix of collectivistic cultures is designed around establishing and expanding a network of relationships. Group-oriented cultures value relational harmony.³⁰ No one can elevate himself; people know their place and must stay within it.³¹ The values of honor and shame are expressed uniquely within different cultures.

The Bible tells us that God is the supreme measure of honor.³² God desires to bless the nations with honor and share His name with His people. Adam and Eve’s disloyalty and disobedience to God introduced shame into the world and they lost face before all creation. Sin and shame reflect the ways people sin against and disrespect God. Having lost God’s honor, people resort to counterfeit honor (*see* Rom. 1:21– 28; 2:23-24; 3:23).³³ The restoration of honor, raising people from a position of shame to a position of honor, plays a key role in God’s covenantal and redemptive mission. The good news of the gospel is seen in the teachings and miracles of Jesus that touched the lives of people without honor and restored them to a place of honor.³⁴ Salvation in Jesus brings honor and restores face, covers shame, and brings people into God’s family, a divine community (Jn. 17:22; Rom. 8:1; 10:11).³⁵ “Believers have no honor deficit. They are not ashamed. They are children of God, siblings of the King. They are full and they are free, on mission with God to bless all the peoples of the earth.”³⁶

²⁸ Georges, *3D Gospel*, 271-272, Kindle.

²⁹ Jackson Wu, *One Gospel for All Nations: A Practical Approach to Biblical Contextualization* (William Carey Library, Pasadena, 2015), 2535-2537, Kindle; Roland Muller, *Honor & Shame: Unlocking the Door* (Xlibris, Bloomington, 2000), 47.

³⁰ Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures*, 643-647, 655-656, Kindle; Richards and O’Brien, *Misreading Scripture*, 1008-1013, Kindle; Georges, *3-D Gospel*, 243-249, Kindle.

³¹ Muller, *Honor & Shame*, 58.

³² Wu, *One Gospel for All Nations*, 2563, Kindle.

³³ Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures* 1012-1039, Kindle; Georges, *3-D Gospel*, 451-461, 576-585, Kindle.

³⁴ Georges, “The Good News for Honor-Shame Cultures: Uncovering A Core Aspect of God's Mission”. (*See also* Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures*, 998, 1115, 1290-1346, Kindle; Muller, *Honor & Shame*, 57-68)

³⁵ Jayson Georges, “Honor and Shame 201: An Interactive Ministry Training”, available at *HonorShame.com* and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOO0X77ekdk> Published Jan. 20, 2015, accessed June 23, 2017; Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures*, 1438-1870, Kindle; Georges, *3-D Gospel*, 475-494, Kindle.

³⁶ Werner Mischke, *The Global Gospel: Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World* (Mission ONE, Scottsdale, 2015), 6316-6317, Kindle.

From an honor-shame perspective, the gospel transforms one's entire worldview. Honor and shame provide a holistic framework for seeing the world. With one's whole life — whether we eat, drink, or whatever we do — Christians seek to give God “face”, i.e. magnify God's worth.³⁷

PRAYER IN THE CONTEXT OF HONOR and SHAME THEMES IN SCRIPTURE

We pray because we have been divinely designed for community and communion with our creator God.³⁸ “Prayer is God's idea. Man's need to communicate with God is a result of God creating that need in man.”³⁹ Many peoples, in diverse cultures and religions, “pray” in some fashion, but biblical prayer is honorable because it is grounded in God's Word and it seeks to glorify God who graciously designed us to communicate with Him. Biblical prayer is more than just talking to God, it is God-honoring – “infused with a vision of the character of God.”⁴⁰

Prayer is relational, drawing us into relationship with the One who hears our prayers. The Holy Spirit uses prayer to change us as we meet Jesus, to open our hearts to believe in Him by faith through God's grace, and to learn to walk in His ways. Extending honor to people, including simple opportunities to pray with and for people, may lead to opportunity to share the gospel.

Praying with and for our friends is powerful on several levels. It creates a unique bond with someone when you pray for them. It encourages them that you'd take time to stop and pray. It shows them that you care enough to ask, “how can I pray for you?” And it allows God to work where you and I won't be able to.⁴¹

The prayers of Scripture and teachings of Jesus on prayer reflect many of the honor-shame themes and values found throughout Scripture – described below using some of the honor-shame dynamics described by Mischke in *The Global Gospel*.⁴²

1. Concept of Face – Seeking God's face in prayer.

The concept of “face” is a metaphor for one's social value as perceived within some group setting.⁴³ Concepts of “face” are seen throughout Scripture including losing face, humanity's shame before God as the result of sin, expressed by turning away and hiding from God's face; and gaining face, humanity's redemption and healing from shame that comes when people turn

³⁷ Jackson Wu, “6 Ways Honor and Shame Make Disciples (Not Converts),” *HonorShame* (July 21, 2017). <http://honorshame.com/6-ways-honor-shame-make-disciples-not-converts/>. Accessed Aug. 12, 2017.

³⁸ Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 2012), 241-252, Kindle.

³⁹ Don Crawford, “Introduction”, *Giving Ourselves to Prayer: An Acts 6:4 Primer for Ministry* (PrayerShop Publishing, Terre Haute, 2008), 7.

⁴⁰ Arturo Azurdia, “Characteristics of God-Honoring Prayer,” *Giving Ourselves to Prayer: An Acts 6:4 Primer for Ministry* (PrayerShop Publishing, Terre Haute, 2008), 109-113.

⁴¹ Carl Medearis, *Muslims, Christians, and Jesus: Gaining Understanding and Building Relationships* (Bethany House, Minneapolis, 2008), 107.

⁴² Mischke's book, *The Global Gospel*, describes in greater detail the honor-shame dynamics used here.

⁴³ Wu, *One Gospel for All Nations*, 2507-2508, Kindle; Richards and O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture*, 1242-1245, Kindle; Wu, “Biblical Theology From A Chinese Perspective”, 6.

to, and are given peace before, the face of God.⁴⁴ When God turns His face toward us, we are blessed:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift his countenance upon you and give you peace. Num. 6:24-26 (ESV)

“The face of God’s people – that is, their honor – is inextricably linked to the experience of beholding the face of God.”⁴⁵ When Moses spent time in God’s presence, his face literally glowed as it reflected God’s honor (Exod. 34: 29-35; cf. 2 Cor. 3:13-18). The glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). When we pray, we seek God’s face – that is, His blessing and honor (Ps. 27:8; Dan. 9:3; 1 Pet. 3:12).

2. Honor of a Name – Prayer in God’s name.

The name of God is “nearly synonymous with the *honor* of God and the *glory* of God”, as seen when God says, “I am the LORD; that is My name; My glory I give to no other” (Is. 42: 8).⁴⁶ The name of Jesus is above all other names in heaven and on earth (Eph. 1:21). In His name, all the peoples will find hope (Matt. 12:21). By God’s grace through faith, believing in the name of Jesus is the power of salvation (Rom. 10:11-13; Phil. 2:10).

Gospel prayer is prayer in God’s name. Jesus prayed to the Father; and taught us that God the Father is honored when we pray in His name: “Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it” (Jn. 14: 13-14). Yet, praying in the name of Jesus is not a magic formula. The apostle Paul recounted a story of how a magician (unbeliever) and his sons tried to invoke the name of Jesus for their personal benefit – the demons rejected and shamed them (Acts 19:13-17). Praying in the name of Jesus means to pray in a manner consistent with His values and purposes. It is to pray with the glorification and honor of God as its supreme motive;⁴⁷ it is praying with respectful submission to the will of the Father, seeking that His will be done, not ours (1 Jn. 5:13-14).

3. Patronage – God as Patron and Benefactor Who Responds to Our Prayers.

In honor-shame cultures, a patron is considered an honorable benefactor, the honorable one who confers blessing on the one in need; and a client is the one receiving the gift, the blessing. In Paul’s prayer on behalf of Ephesian believers, he prays to God the “Father of glory” (Eph. 1:17), God our great Patron and benefactor through Jesus. When God blesses people, He is seen as the divine Patron who blesses and gives grace to those who call upon Him; and when people bless God, they are fulfilling the role of the loyal client, returning honor to Him.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Mischke, *Global Gospel*, 2025-2036, Kindle.

⁴⁵ Mischke, *Global Gospel*, 2073-2083, Kindle.

⁴⁶ Mischke, *Global Gospel*, 2581-2684, Kindle (emphasis in original).

⁴⁷ Carson, 118-119.

⁴⁸ Mischke, *Global Gospel*, 2282-2284, 2355-2360, Kindle; Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures*, 739-760, Kindle; Richards and O’Brien, *Misreading Scripture*, 1779-1810, Kindle; Mischke, “The Honor of Praying to ‘the Father of glory’,” *Culture Learner* (Dec. 29, 2010), <http://werner-mischke.org/2010/12/29/the-honor-of-being-blessed-by-‘the-father-of-glory’>, accessed Aug. 4, 2017.

Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 is a gracious example of God's patronage. God the Father is the ultimate Patron, the One who honors the Son as the Son honors the Father; and Jesus is the Co-benefactor with Him to us. We are the recipients of the honor of His name, His blessing, and His protection. When we pray, we return honor to God. Likewise, as we pray for the honor of others, we return honor to God and we become co-benefactors with Jesus, seeking God's blessing for them.⁴⁹

4. Image of Limited Good – God's Generosity Through Prayer.

The image of limited good is "the belief that everything in the social, economic, natural universe ... everything desired in life: land, wealth, respect and status, power and influence ... exist in finite quantity and are in short supply. If you gain, I lose ... it's a 'zero-sum game'."⁵⁰ In gospel terms: "The gospel is an offering of salvation to all the peoples of the world; it is in essence an expression of a God-ordained unlimited good available to all. This is, of course, why it is called "good news."⁵¹

Jesus taught us to pray to God, our heavenly Father, for His gracious provision for our physical and spiritual needs consistent with His will (Matt. 6:9-13; Lk. 11:1-4). He prayed out of God's gracious honor surplus.

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? Matt. 7:7-11 (ESV)

People in honor-shame cultures can easily relate to Jesus' parable of the man who found himself short of food when unexpected guests arrived. Even though it was late, the man went to his neighbor to ask for bread; finally, the neighbor gave him what was needed – because of the man's persistence and because the neighbor understood the shame of being unable to be hospitable to guests (Lk. 11:5-8) – a lesson from Jesus about persistent prayer, maintaining honor and God's gracious provision that removes shame (Lk. 11:1-13). Jesus taught that God's providence was not a limited good, because God is gracious and delights in honoring His children when they ask and seek Him.

Further study is needed: Many other examples of honor-shame dynamics are found in the prayers of Scripture and Jesus' teachings on prayer – yet, there was surprisingly little written on the topic of prayer in honor-shame research sources. Space limits further discussion here, but it is a worthy area for further study.

PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEXTUALIZED GOSPEL PRAYER IN JAPAN'S HONOR & SHAME CULTURE

⁴⁹ Cf. Mischke, *Global Gospel*, 2411-2530, Kindle (example of God and Abraham).

⁵⁰ Mischke, *Global Gospel*, 1787, 1832–1863, Kindle.

⁵¹ Mischke, *Global Gospel*, 4421-4423, Kindle.

Contextualization refers to the ways that people interpret, communicate, and apply the Bible within a particular cultural context.⁵² “Just as there are many ‘gods that are not God’ and numerous ‘gospels that are not gospel,’” contextualization of the gospel of Jesus Christ requires a commitment to the authoritative Word of God as the primary objective.

Jackson Wu submits that contextualization should be a “dialogue between culture and Scripture,” a process that requires “humility, courage, and curiosity.”⁵³ He suggests that the Bible contains a diversity of gospel presentations while maintaining a firm but flexible foundation that answers these questions in ways that find expression in the particular cultural context: Who is Jesus? What has Jesus done? Why is Jesus important? How should we respond?⁵⁴ He then describes four stages necessary for fully contextualizing the gospel.

Stated in brief, we need to (1) identify how the Bible frames and explains the gospel, (2) interconnect cultural themes corresponding to the biblical gospel, (3) interpret the Bible using a cultural lens, and (4) infer the gospel’s significance for the local culture.⁵⁵

The contextualization dialogue process requires faithfulness to God’s Word, creativity and cultural integration. Jackson Wu’s essay, “Biblical Theology From a Chinese Perspective”, offers several examples of how different gospel presentations could be contextualized from a Chinese perspective, explained using culturally significant honor and shame themes.⁵⁶

Here, the contextualization dialogue process should address how to express the message of gospel prayer as well as learning culturally acceptable ways to simply pray with and for Japanese people. The untested hypothetical model suggested here is best developed in cooperative dialogue with wise culturally informed Japanese and other believers⁵⁷ in order to produce contextualization that is faithful to Scripture and meaningful within Japanese culture.⁵⁸ Research alone does not offer the depth of insight, knowledge or experience needed to fully articulate the intricacies of Japanese honor and shame dynamics that would be vital to contextualized gospel prayer.

Why is Japan’s religious culture and honor-shame dynamic so challenging for contextualizing the gospel?

Religious culture and honor-shame dynamics influencing gospel contextualization in Japan are complex and nuanced beyond the scope of this paper. Following Jackson Wu’s contextual

⁵² David J. Hasselgrave, “Types of Revelation and ‘Holy Books’ and their Contextualization,” *Global Missiology* (Jan. 2008). <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/249/695>. Accessed Sept. 10, 2017.

⁵³ Wu, *Saving God’s Face*, 1004, Kindle.

⁵⁴ Wu, *One Gospel for All Nations*, 350.

⁵⁵ Wu, *One Gospel for All Nations*, 365-368.

⁵⁶ Wu, “Biblical Theology From A Chinese Perspective”.

⁵⁷ Wu, *One Gospel for All Nations*, 3465-3470, Kindle (“Contextualization is not a one-person job ... no one person has all the skills ... we need other people. We belong to the church. We need other members of the body of Christ.”)

⁵⁸ Wu, *One Gospel for All Nations*, 546-547, 671-672, 1904-1906, Kindle.

dialogue process, there are some fundamental questions that should be considered regarding contextualization of the gospel within Japanese culture and its honor-shame dynamics:

In contextualization, one first seeks to understand people within their particular cultural context in order to appreciate their ways of thinking. What questions do they bring to the Bible and through what thought categories do they read Scripture? What are the culture's values, problems, and assumptions? ...

In an Eastern context, the questions reflected on usually relate to reputation (saving, gaining, and losing face), group identity (whether ethnic or familial), and proper relationship (hierarchy, harmony, and roles).⁵⁹

In the novel, *Silence* by Japanese Catholic author Shūsaku Endō, an apostate priest in the 1600s expressed his despair that Japan “is a terrible swamp”, and that the transplanted sapling of Christianity struggles to survive there. The former priest lamented that Japanese Christians “were not praying to the Christian God. They twisted God to their own way of thinking.”⁶⁰ Stated less dramatically, religious experience among the Japanese people has been described as “a richly diverse syncretic mix, which reconciled apparently contradictory beliefs”⁶¹ and as “tolerant religious pluralism”, layering animistic and folk religion, Shinto and Buddhist beliefs, undergirded by the ethical and moral values of Confucianism, and touched but not penetrated by Christianity.⁶²

Japanese people do not feel compelled to join a particular organized religion, and the exclusive nature of Christianity – honoring only one God and refusing to observe traditional Japanese rituals – leads people to shun it.⁶³ Japanese Christians wrestle with questions of how to honor parents, respect ancestors and respond to enduring folk belief on interdependence with the spirit world, along with Japanese cultural expressions of the honor and shame dynamic.⁶⁴ Shame for the Japanese people often involves failing to meet the expectations of others (external shame); and one's own experience of shame because of his or her failure to meet expectations (internal shame). Japanese theologians have been focusing on the betrayal and sufferings of Jesus as a central theme for Japanese theology.⁶⁵

What are some of the challenges of contextualizing prayer in Japan? In Japan, a significant challenge for contextualizing gospel prayer is distinguishing it from Japanese animistic, Shinto and Buddhist ritualistic traditions of prayer.

⁵⁹ Wu, *Saving God's Face*, 1100, 1110, Kindle.

⁶⁰ Shūsaku Endō, *Silence* (Picador Modern Classics, New York, 1969), 158, 160.

⁶¹ John Dougill, *In Search of Japan's Hidden Christians: A Story of Suppression, Secrecy and Survival* (Tuttle, Rutland, 2012), 148-149.

⁶² Robert Ellwood, *Introducing Japanese Religion* (Routledge, New York, 2008), 7-9. Japanese people may participate in Shinto shrines as a child, have a Christian wedding, live by Confucian social ethos and morality, seek help from shamanistic-type healers, and attend Buddhist funeral services. *Id.*

⁶³ Samuel Lee, *Understanding Japan Through the Eyes of Christian Faith*, 4th Ed. (Foundation University Press, The Netherlands, 2011), pp. 61-63, 89, 92.

⁶⁴ Mark R. Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements* (Univ. of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1998), 129-155.

⁶⁵ Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*, 263. See also Simon Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up* (Intervarsity, Downers Grove, 2014), 1554-1586, Kindle

A Japanese person is likely to pray to ‘the *kamisama* in heaven’, a nameless composite embracing Jesus, all the buddahs and the whole magnitude of Shinto *kami* – all in one.⁶⁶

Varied forms of non-Christian prayer are commonly practiced in Japan: rituals honoring ancestors, seeking favor or protection from *kami* spirits,⁶⁷ Zen and various iterations of Buddhist meditation, or reciting the name of Amida or the Lotus Sutra. How does gospel prayer avoid the swamp of Japanese syncretism?

A Hypothetical Model for Use of Gospel Prayer for Outreach and Discipleship in Japan’s Honor-Shame Culture

REMINDER: This untested hypothetical model assumes that gospel prayer is a valued adjunct in ministry in an honor-shame culture like Japan, supporting and aligning with other contextualized outreach and discipleship ministry.

A. Keep first things first – focus on the honor-shame gospel message and praying shaped by Scripture.

Keeping first things first means to focus on the honor-shame gospel message in biblical prayer. The things that concern the heart of God must shape the heart of our prayers with and for Japanese people. The forgoing discussion introduced some of the honor-shame themes in biblical prayer. Using Jackson Wu’s insights on fundamental cultural-gospel issues in East Asia, honor-shame themes in Japan are most likely to relate to reputation (saving, gaining, and losing face), group identity (whether ethnic or familial), and proper relationship (hierarchy, harmony, and roles), along with implications for placing one’s loyalty in Jesus, becoming part of a new community with other Jesus-followers and learning to live according to His honor code, which will be discussed below in the context of Scriptures about prayer.

1. Reputation (gaining face) – Honor-Status Reversal.

Honor-status reversal happens when a person/family/people have their status in the community turned upside down – replacing shame with honor so people gain face.⁶⁸ “Salvation from God overturns previous measures of status. He reverses our identity. The gospel is a message of ‘salvation-as-reversal, of status transposition, of outsiders becoming insiders, and grace for unexpected people.’”⁶⁹ Gaining face replaces external shame with honor.

Paul’s prayer in Colossians 1:13-14 vividly captures this status reversal: “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we

⁶⁶ Dougill, *In Search of Japan’s Hidden Christians*, 224-225.

⁶⁷ While the “*kami*” are spoken of by westerners as gods in a polytheistic sense, the practitioners of Shinto hold that anything that is full of power, mysterious, or simply beyond our abilities of comprehension is “*kami*”; sometimes seen as guardians, often represented by particular images such as the quixotic fox or spiritual places like trees, waterfalls, rocks, mountain peaks. Ellwood, *Japanese Religion*, 48-49, 60-61; John K. Nelson, *A Year in the Life of A Shinto Shrine* (Univ. of Washington Press, Seattle, 1996), 27.

⁶⁸ Mischke, *Global Gospel*, 3409-3415, 3528, Kindle.

⁶⁹ Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 2776-2780, Kindle.

have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” In a poignant tale of status reversal that brought down the proud, Jesus entered the temple grounds, overturning the tables and shaming the religious leaders, declaring: “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers” (Mk. 11:17).

2. Proper relationship (hierarchy, harmony, and roles) – Ascribed Honor

Ascribed honor is inherited based on one’s position, relationships, or characteristics, often based on family/ kinship or state/politics.⁷⁰ “In many ways, ascribed honor is prioritized over achieved honor in Eastern cultures. ... Ascribed honor is prioritized because people are socially shamed if they do not conform to group norms. An Eastern perspective sees conformity as humble and virtuous, a way of honoring the group and its elders. Nonconformity is insolence and pride. Thus, weight is given to ascribed honor.”⁷¹

According to Scripture, ascribed honor is extended to those who believe in Jesus because believers “have their personal honor completely relocated by God into his family and kingdom. While one’s family honor may or may not be great and may vary according to life’s good or bad circumstances, the high honor derived from being born again as a child of God is forever settled.”⁷²

Understanding and appropriating the truth of believers’ ascribed honor in Christ was Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1:18, when he asked God to open the eyes of their hearts (to overcome their internal sense of shame) so that they might truly know the hope to which He has called them – the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints (ascribed honor).

3. Group identity (whether ethnic or familial) – Group Incorporation

Group incorporation describes the salvation motif of “inclusion into the group of God’s honored people. God bestows an honorable status on the excluded by welcoming and including them into his new community. Outsiders are now insiders. ... In Romans Paul expounds this gospel: God worked decisively in Jesus to create his own family, and salvific inclusion into this honored community is available to people from all groups. Salvation is group membership.”⁷³

Prayer is a real-life venue for learning to understand group incorporation from God’s perspective, as God honors believers by bringing them into His family through faith in Christ. Jesus taught His disciples to pray to His Father who delights in answering the prayers of His children (Matt. 7:7-11). In Christ, we have been adopted into God’s family, privileged to cry out in prayer to Abba, Father (Rom 8:15; Gal. 4:6). Paul prayed to God, the Father from whom

⁷⁰ Mischke, *Global Gospel*, 1701-1702, Kindle; Jackson Wu, “Eastern v. Western Honor and Shame,” *Patheos*, April 26, 2017. <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jacksonwu/2017/04/26/eastern-versus-western-honor-shame-2/> Accessed Sept. 16, 2017.

⁷¹ Wu, *Eastern versus Western Honor and Shame*.

⁷² Mischke, *Global Gospel*, 4336-4338, Kindle.

⁷³ Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 2965-2966, 3001-3002, Kindle.

every family in heaven and on earth is named (Eph. 3:14-15), on behalf of all who have been brought into God’s household in Jesus (Eph. 2:19).⁷⁴

4. Community and Honor Code – Relational Community and New Life in Christ

Following Jesus changes a person’s primary group identity.⁷⁵ The church – the community of believers – “is God’s chosen instrument for bearing his glory and reflecting his honor. As people participate in the community of God’s people, notions of honor and shame are transformed to reflect God’s honor code in all areas of life. ... Following Jesus involves adopting his code of honor in all areas of life, making everyday decisions based on what God determines is honorable or shameful.”⁷⁶ Yet, according to Simon Chan, in Japan some people may warmly embrace the person of Jesus but not the church as the visible community.⁷⁷

Prayer engages believers in relational community and their new life in Christ. Prayer is instrumental to the community in seeking God’s guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit, (Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4; 10:9; 12:5; 13:2-3), and seeking to live according to Jesus’ honor code (James 5:13-18; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; 2 Thess. 2:1-5).

B. Gospel prayer for outreach can be used alongside the transformational stages of community, discipleship and evangelism in a collectivistic culture.

God meets people where they are, and seeks to transform them from shame to honor in Jesus. Jayson Georges and Mark Baker have helpfully developed a model for evangelism in collectivist cultures.⁷⁸ According to their model, this transformation happens as people associate with believers (community), their lives begin to change as they follow Jesus (discipleship), and then they come to publicly profess Jesus as Lord (evangelism).

Community	→	Discipleship	→	Evangelism
Belong	→	Behave	→	Believe
Seeker	→	Disciple	→	Believer

In a parallel fashion, as we develop friendships with Japanese people, gospel prayer with and for them can be used by the Holy Spirit to draw them into relationship with Jesus. The prayers discussed below are simply examples of gospel prayers in Scripture that include honor-shame themes and that reflect some of the transformational stages of community, discipleship and evangelism – but they have not been contextualized in ways that would truly speak to the hearts of the Japanese people. It is important to take the time to learn how to pray with and for people using culturally shaped honor-shame gospel prayer because “words matter and ideas have

⁷⁴ Mischke, *Global Gospel*, 2691-2904, Kindle; Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures*, 2809, 2962-3005, Kindle.

⁷⁵ Jackson Wu, “6 Ways Honor and Shame Make Disciples (Not Converts)”, *HonorShame* (July 21, 2017). <http://honorshame.com/6-ways-honor-shame-make-disciples-not-converts/>. Accessed Aug. 12, 2017.

⁷⁶ Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 4232-4234, 3705-3706, Kindle.

⁷⁷ Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology*, 3306-3310, Kindle.

⁷⁸ Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures*, 3151-3165, Kindle. Jayson Georges mentions a similar model in the video, “Honor and Shame 201”. [L]
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consequences.”⁷⁹ Our spoken words of prayer should consistently echo God’s Word and its honor-shame themes of gospel truth to our friends.⁸⁰ It is our best safeguard against the swamp of Japanese syncretism.

1. Belong – Gospel prayer publicly builds honorable relational bridges that point people to God.

The prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1-5 expresses values of relational harmony, praying for God to extend honor to all people so they might lead peaceful and godly lives. God is the divine patron, and the one who prays becomes a co-benefactor and gains face by praying for God to bless others.

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all, with is the testimony given at the proper time. 1 Tim. 2:1-5 (ESV)

Praying for others to be blessed is honorable, leading to peaceful and quiet lives, godly and dignified in every way. The gospel message is clear: God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth found in Jesus. Community prayer builds honorable relationship bridges, it points people to God, and it shares the gospel.

2. Behave – Gospel prayer invites people to live according to God’s honor code.

As seekers pursue a faith journey toward discipleship, gospel prayer brings God’s wisdom into that journey, inviting people into prayer to live according to God’s honor code.⁸¹ In Colossians 1:9-14, gospel prayer is used to draw people to Jesus and learn to walk in a manner that pleases Him, as they grow in knowledge of Him.

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power,

⁷⁹ Dr. Evan Burns, Lectures, GL 515, Western Seminary (Summer 2017).

⁸⁰ Dennis Fuqua suggested developing a habit of looking at Scripture with prayer in mind, in his book *United and Ignited: Encountering God through Dynamic Corporate Prayer* (L/P Press, Vancouver, 2012), 90-91:

When I hear, read, or study Scripture, I am almost always asking the question, “How could this truth be prayed?” ... “How could this text pray?” It is important to note that my question is not simply about how I might lead others in prayer from this verse, *but rather how I can pray from it.* ...

Because I have made a habit of doing this when I am not thinking or preparing for a specific time of prayer, I have found it comes very naturally to me when I am considering or even facilitating a time of prayer (emphasis added).

⁸¹ Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures*, 3442-3487, Kindle. “If a believer’s honor code is not reoriented toward God’s, then major parts of a believer’s life will be determined by the default values of culture” (3487, Kindle).

according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Col. 1:9-14 (ESV)

This prayer affirms the honor-status reversal available to believers because those who are in Christ are delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to Christ's kingdom, the kingdom of light – powerful images of deliverance from the darkness of external and internal shame to the ascribed honor of belonging to Christ's kingdom.⁸² This prayer also declares God's power to deliver from the power of spiritual forces. In Japanese culture, where folk religion has embedded sensitivity to spiritual forces, gospel prayer offers opportunity to respond to this very real spiritual concern among the Japanese people as they seek God's face.

3. Believe – Gospel prayer can be used to invite people to come to Jesus, and to believe in Him.

As the Holy Spirit prepares the hearts and minds of Japanese people to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, they are called to declare their loyalty to Him.⁸³ Even though Paul was writing to Ephesian believers, the prayer in Ephesians 1:16-21 can be contextualized to invite people to listen to the call of Jesus and to believe in Him – using honor-shame themes.

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. Eph. 1:16-21 (ESV)

In this prayer, highest honor is attributed to Jesus, seated at the right hand of the Father of glory with all things placed under His feet. God's mighty power over all other powers is on full display. This prayer asks God to open the eyes of our heart to be able to see and respond to Jesus' call by believing in Him who is the only source of hope, the honorable One who deserves full loyalty (Eph. 4:4). Giving allegiance to Jesus and living under His name is the only way to enter God's family⁸⁴ in the community of faith with its glorious inheritance prepared for believers according to God's eternal plan in Jesus.

C. Model God's honor in gospel prayer *with and for* our Japanese friends.

The second purpose of this hypothetical model of contextualizing gospel prayer is learning culturally acceptable ways to simply pray with and for people – and to actually begin praying

⁸² Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures*, 3701-3710, Kindle.

⁸³ Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor Shame Cultures*, 3380-3398, Kindle.

⁸⁴ Georges, *3-D Gospel*, 777, Kindle.

with and for our Japanese friends. “Pray for their honor – it demonstrates a concern for them and helps them to look to God for honor.”⁸⁵

Our lives should show personal devotion to prayer. As we model a praying life among our Japanese friends, praying with and for them should be a natural outflow of how much we care for them with the love of Jesus. We simply want to pray with and for people in ways that will speak to their hearts, minds and spirits with God’s honor, love and truth, always showing highest honor to the One being addressed and lifting up the honor of those people with whom we pray.

CONCLUSION

When Christians in the Majority World pray, “they really expect God to speak, act, heal and deliver.”⁸⁶ We should pray with expectancy that God uses all of our prayers (whether with and for people, private, strategic, or in corporate worship) to achieve His glorious purposes. In Jesus’ parable of the widow who continued to bring her petition before the unworthy judge, her persistent petitions finally prevailed. God honors the prayers of His people who call out to Him day and night (Luke 18:1-8). As we minister and develop relationships with people, especially those in honor-shame cultures, gospel prayer provides a genuine path for people to meet Jesus and grow to love Him because it is relational and honorable, and grounded in God’s Word.

Pray without ceasing. Pray for Jesus-followers in Japan to grow into deeper understanding of the love of Jesus; pray for the lost, the seekers and those who are disciples on the way to faith; and pray with and for those people who God brings into your life. Pray all these things to bring highest glory and honor to the Lord Jesus Christ. The prayer of a person who finds their honor in Jesus has great power (James 5:13-18).

*Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,
according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and
in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Eph. 3:20-21 (ESV)*

⁸⁵ Georges, “Honor and Shame 201”.

⁸⁶ Borthwick, *Western Christians in Global Mission*, 93.

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