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Shame in the Pews

Liturgy That Frees People from Shame

By
Daniel Song

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry.

Saint Louis, Missouri

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how pastors and worship leaders in churches design the liturgy of their weekly worship service in order for congregants to experience freedom from shame. Unfortunately, many churches in the West primarily focus on guilt and justification and give little attention on the destructive impacts of shame. This leaves many in the church feeling hopeless, isolated, and unworthy of God's love.

This study utilized a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with seven pastors and worship leaders from various denominations, ethnicities, and church demographics who oversaw planning and leading the worship service. The interviews focused on gaining data with five research questions: How do pastors and ministry leaders describe the impact of shame amongst their congregants? How familiar are pastors and ministry leaders familiar with honor-shame cultures and what ways do they address it in their worship and liturgy? In what ways do pastors and ministry leaders address shame in the liturgy? What challenges do pastors face in trying to combat shame through the liturgy? What outcomes do pastors desire to observe from liturgy designed for congregants to experience freedom from shame?

The literature review focused on three key areas to understand in designing liturgy that would help congregants experience freedom from shame: a biblical framework for shame, honor-shame culture, and liturgical formation.

This study concluded that there are three necessary components to help people experience freedom from shame through liturgy: intentional liturgy focused on shame, embodied practices in liturgy, and practice of vulnerability amongst its leaders. Related to

these three components, this study found that pastors and worship leaders face three major challenges: discomfort with vulnerability, resistance to change, theological pushback, re-traumatization of shame, and a lack of engagement. To address these challenges, this study identified the importance of the collective, offering opportunities for liturgies to reflect the corporate, and to set a culture of vulnerability beginning with its leaders.

"No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true."

— Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlett Letter*

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Lastly, thanks to my church family for allowing me the time and space to finish my dissertation. I appreciated that you did not shame me for taking as long as I did. But more importantly, thank you for your love and support.

Abbreviations

PCA	Presbyterian Church in America
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature

Chapter 1

Introduction

"No offense, but there is more freedom and transformation that happens at Alcoholics Anonymous than there is at church on Sunday mornings." These are the honest words shared by a man who struggles with substance abuse.

The church often believes and communicates that corporate worship on Sunday mornings is the most vital part of a Christian's life. In Reformed theology, the ordinary means of grace, the Word and the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper), are central to corporate worship.[1] While preaching is often the high point of Sunday mornings, many other elements comprise the worship service. Congregants sing hymns and songs, Scripture is read, prayers are lifted up, sins are confessed and forgiven, creeds are confessed, and benedictions are pronounced.

While the liturgy and the experience of worship may differ from church to church, the primary focus of Western churches is guilt. Philip Jamieson, who taught pastoral theology at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, writes in his book, *The Face of Forgiveness,* "Because of the Western church's emphasis on the penal substitution model of the atonement, the experience of guilt has dominated Christian circles."[2] In other words, the emphasis of the gospel in Western churches is that Christians are forgiven for what they have done. Jesus' work on the cross is mostly

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[1] John Calvin, *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed. JKS Reid, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 22 (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1954), 170–77.

[2] Philip D. Jamieson, *The Face of Forgiveness: A Pastoral Theology of Shame and Redemption* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 48.

understood as justification and forgiveness for what someone did or did not do. Consequently, Jesus' work on the cross addresses only actions, behaviors, and thoughts. What is not dealt with is the "basic problem of our broken identity."[3] Mark Meynell, an ordained minister in the Church of England and Associate Director of Langham Preaching, notes, "Well-intentioned presentations of this gospel liberation may not have the hoped-for result. It may even leave sufferers feeling *more* wretched."[4]

While justification is a necessary doctrine of Christianity, the church rarely addresses the shame many experience when they step into the church. Psychiatrist Curt Thompson, who speaks and writes on the intersection of neurobiology and Christian formation, writes that the gospel is a "story whose beginning is as much about *how* we were made as it is about *why* we were made."[5] What if people believe that God does not love them and that they are actually unworthy of God's love and forgiveness? Consequently, when sins are declared forgiven, it is not only unhelpful, but it can also be hurtful to the person feeling unworthy of being loved and forgiven.

The Power of Shame

In the church, guilt and shame have been used interchangeably to describe an emotional response to sins committed against God. A systematic theology professor at Calvin Theological Seminary, Mary VanderBerg, argues, "Literature tends to brush over

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[3] Jamieson, 71–71.

[4] Mark Meynell, *When Darkness Seems My Closest Friend: Reflections On Life And Ministry With Depression* (Lisle, IL: IVP, 2018), 69–70.

[5] Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 36.

shame, using it in the same breath as guilt and making little distinction between the two concepts."[6] While there may be some similarities, shame and guilt are vastly different. Guilt is an emotion that is attributed to an action that a person has committed. Shame, on the other hand, is an emotion that is attributed to one's identity or personhood. In other words, "The difference between shame and guilt is best understood as the difference between 'I am bad' and 'I did something bad.'"[7] Shame internalizes the actions and attacks one's own self-worth. Brené Brown, a research professor at the University of Houston and well known for her TED talks and books on shame and vulnerability, describes shame as an "intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging."[8]

Shame inevitably leads to disconnection and isolation because shame's power insists a person is not worthy of love and connection. Thompson describes the potential impact: "[Shame's] goal is to disintegrate any and every system it targets, be that one's personal story, a family, marriage, friendship, church, school, community, business or political system. Its power lies in its subtlety and its silence..."[9] Thompson goes on to explain that when people turn away from others to gain relief from feeling shame, that action "reinforces the very shame we are attempting to avoid… We feel shame, and then

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[6] Mary VandenBerg, "Shame, Guilt, and the Practice of Repentance: An Intersection of Modern Psychology with the Wisdom of Calvin," *Christian Scholar's Review* (blog), June 1, 2021, https://christianscholars.com/shame-guilt-and-the-practice-of-repentance-an-intersection-of-modern-psychology-with-the-wisdom-of-calvin/.

[7] Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (New York: Avery, 2015), 71.

[8] Brown, 69.

[9] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*, 22.

feel shame for feeling shame. It begets itself."[10] Thus, people find themselves caught in a vicious cycle, unable to find healing and freedom from their shame.

In addition, shame not only produces isolation and hiding but also fear, anger, and anxiety. Gershen Kaufman, Professor Emeritus in psychology at Michigan State University and author of many books on shame, addresses ways in which people employ strategies to deal with shame: rage, contempt, power, perfection, blame, and withdrawal.[11] It is easier to get angry, judge, criticize, and think less of others than to face one's own shame. Thompson agrees and tells his patients that "shamed people shame people."[12] Whatever the strategy, each diverts the painful reality of shame and disconnects from others.

To experience freedom from shame, one must regain connections. Brown explains that the key pursuit is vulnerability. "Rather than sitting on the sidelines and hurling judgment and advice, we must dare to show up and let ourselves be seen."[13] Being seen requires courage and risk to be vulnerable. In turn, vulnerability requires a sense of being valued or worthy. "A sense of worthiness inspires us to be vulnerable, share openly, and persevere. Shame keeps us small, resentful, and afraid."[14]

Ironically, the necessary ingredient for shame to lose its power over people is the very thing that keeps people living in shame. In other words, although shame causes

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[10] Thompson, 31.

[11] Jamieson, *The Face of Forgiveness*, 65–66.

[12] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*, 29.

[13] Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 2.

[14] Brown, 64.

people to hide because of the fear that others would know who they are, it is only by becoming vulnerable and being seen and known by those same others that shame is dismantled. Thompson agrees with Brown in the need for connection: "Shame is not something we 'fix' in the privacy of our mental processes… We combat it within the context of conversation, prayer, and other communal, embodied actions."[15] Further, he writes, "It is in the *movement toward another*, toward connection with someone who is safe, that we come to know life and freedom from this prison."[16] For anyone who enters its fellowship, the church should be the place where shame is combated. Unfortunately, people do not often experience freedom from shame in the context of church.

The Power of Liturgy

There are several reasons why the church, and specifically gathered worship, has not been effective in bringing freedom from shame. But before examining these weaknesses, it is important to examine the importance of liturgy in worship because it shapes and forms the hearts and desires of people.

James K.A. Smith, who has published extensive writing on desire and liturgy, argues that while many assume, "You are what you think," he argues, "You are what you love." And people worship whatever or whoever they love the most. "We learn to love, then, not primarily by acquiring information about *what* we should love but rather through practices that form the habits of *how* we love."[17] It is not words and cognition

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[15] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*, 17–18.

[16] Thompson, 35.

[17] James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2016), 21.

only that form people but rather the bent of the heart and its overflow. Liturgy and other habitual behaviors are examples of that bent and overflow. Smith goes on to write, "Christian worship doesn't just teach you how to think; it teaches us how to love, and it does so by inviting us into the biblical story and implanting that story in our bones."[18] As people who are embodied creatures, liturgy in worship shapes people and informs what they love and believe.

Tish Warren, an Anglican priest and author, describes a dark period in her life when she could not utter a word to God in prayer. She shares, "In the midst of this, though words failed me, prayer without words – prayer in and through my body – became a lifeline. I couldn't find words, but I could kneel… My body led in prayer and led me – all of me, eventually even my words – into prayer."[19] In such a difficult period in her life, Warren was transformed by the power of habit and ritual.

This is the power of liturgy. It can form God's people to be more like him. Smith writes that many other "liturgies" bend people's loves and desires to the culture, such as shopping malls, stadiums, and universities. "Liturgies work affectively and aesthetically – they grab hold of our guts through the power of image, story, and metaphor."[20] So while the culture has its own liturgy to shape belief, the church has its own liturgy that uses imagery, story, and metaphors to form and direct people. "The practices we submit

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[18] Smith, 85.

[19] Tish Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016), 46–47.

[20] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 46.

ourselves to in Christian worship are God's way of rehabituating our loves toward the kingdom."[21]

Since the liturgy of gathered worship can form God's people through embodied practices, people may experience connection and freedom from shame as well. In an article from *Christianity Today* exploring the neuroscience of lamenting together in community, K.J. Ramsey, an author and therapist, summarizes the potential outcomes:

> When we suffer, forsaken, unwanted, and unloved are written all over our neural pathways, but through taste, touch, smell, sight, and sound, our minds can be rewritten as beloved. Through group practices and liturgies engaging our bodies' senses, like communion, we together evoke and participate in the embodied reality of the kingdom of God. The more thoroughly and repeatedly we engage our senses in the rituals of worship together, the more our minds will be renewed to experience the life of the world to come as real, true, and for us.[22]

Because God's people are embodied creatures who taste, hear, speak, move, smell, and touch, liturgy is not only something that people do. Liturgy does something to people. Therefore, through singing, praying, reading Scripture, partaking in the Lord's Supper, confessing sin, hearing God's word, raising of hands, standing and kneeling, the people of God are formed in their entire being.

Why then has liturgy not rewritten the shame many still feel when attending church? As Ed Welch, a counselor and faculty member at Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, writes, "People are dying from it – some quickly, others slowly.

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[21] Smith, 78.

[22] K. J. Ramsey, "Scripture and Neuroscience Agree: It Helps to Lament in Community," ChristianityToday.com, accessed September 14, 2021, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/november-web-only/neuroscience-and-scripture-agree-it-helps-to-lament-in-comm.html.

It is the heart disease of this and every era."[23] One reason that people might be "dying" is that shame is rarely discussed in the church. When addressing sin, sermons focus mostly on guilt, not shame. An ordained minister of the Anglican Church in Germany, Robin Stockitt, argues, "Our theology in the Western tradition has become accustomed to a particular paradigm that begins with the pressing need to address the problem of human guilt before God, and it is from this starting point that a theological edifice has been constructed."[24] Addressing guilt is not enough. As discussed above, guilt deals with the actions of what someone has done. It is not just behavior that needs to be addressed but also one's identity. "With the incarnation, we have far more than a model of behavior; instead, we have a new identity in Christ… The saving activity of the triune God has not only addressed the guilt of our behavior but has also transformed our shame with a new identity."[25] Since preaching guilt and forgiveness is not enough for people to be freed from shame, churches must create a more spiritually and emotionally transformative experience, and the liturgy of corporate worship could provide that experience.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore effective methods for pastors and ministry leaders to help congregants experience freedom from shame.

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[23] Edward T. Welch, *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2012), 1.

[24] Robin Stockitt, *Restoring the Shamed: Towards a Theology of Shame* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 8.

[25] Jamieson, *The Face of Forgiveness*, 72.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the qualitative research:

1. How do pastors and ministry leaders describe the impact of shame amongst their congregants?
2. How familiar are pastors and ministry leaders familiar with honor-shame cultures and what ways do they address it in their worship and liturgy?
3. In what ways do pastors and ministry leaders address shame in the liturgy?
4. What challenges do pastors face in trying to combat shame through the liturgy?
5. What outcomes do pastors desire to observe from liturgy designed for congregants to experience freedom from shame?

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for many affected by shame through the liturgy of gathered worship on Sunday mornings. By implementing best practices in the liturgy of a gathered worship, three groups could benefit: individuals, churches, and pastors and worship leaders.

First, the study has the potential to transform relationships with God and also with others. If the results are implemented well, congregants could better experience healing from shame through of the power of the gospel manifested through Sunday worship every week. The findings might show how liturgy transforms through an experience of the fullness of God's love, secures people in their identity, and draws them closer to the Lord, knowing that even when the worst is known, they are still loved by their Father. When applied in the church, the study findings might also create opportunities for people

to experience authentic relationships with others. Instead of withdrawing at weekly worship services, they could experience connection, belonging, and acceptance. The research could also help pastors and worship leaders design liturgy so that duplicity could be replaced with authenticity and fear could be replaced with love. The results would have immense application for church planting and revitalization as well.

Second, the research findings could greatly impact local churches. From its leaders to its members, the study could show the church how to be better known in weakness, brokenness, humility, and authenticity, so that the gospel of forgiveness, reconciliation, and identity in Christ would be lifted up. It would also energize and free people to serve and give as an expression of identity in Christ and image bearers of God.

Lastly, pastors could better shepherd and care for their flock. While guilt needs to be forgiven and legal standing with Jesus is eternal, a more robust view of sin and identity will shape the liturgy of gathered worship to better address shame on this side of heaven. Whether in Scripture passages, songs, sermons, or embodied practices, pastors can think through how shame impacts their congregants, and Lord willing, the Holy Spirit will reveal insights for healing, for his glory and for the people's good.

Definition of Terms

In this study, key terms are defined as follows:

Shame – "I am bad." It is the emotion that destroys one's sense of identity and self-worth brought upon by the internalization of one's actions done to them or by them. It is highly relational.

Guilt – "I did something bad." It is the emotion that signals someone's actions went against their value system. It is not about the self, but the actions committed.

Liturgy – rituals and practices done repeatedly.

Sacraments – "A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers." (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Question 92)

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors and worship leaders design the liturgy of their weekly worship service for congregants to experience freedom from shame. To gain insight for this study, three areas of literature will be reviewed to build a foundation for the qualitative research: first, a biblical framework for shame; second, learning from honor-shame cultures,; and lastly, the formation of rituals and liturgy.

First, the study will examine the biblical framework for shame, both its origins and then the freedom possible. What does Scripture say about shame? Where does shame originate? How does the gospel bring freedom to those suffering with shame? The researcher will examine the story of Adam and Eve, their children, Cain and Abel, and of Jesus' work on the cross.

Second, the literature review will survey the importance of honor-shame cultures. How does honor-shame cultures impact the church when it comes to dynamics of community, discipleship, and hospitality? What are the challenges of honor-shame cultures when confronted with the Western church?

Lastly, the literature review will examine the impact liturgy has on the formation of people. How do rituals and liturgies form and shape people? What elements of rituals bring about change? What impact do words have compared to physical activity as embodied creatures?

A Biblical Framework of Shame

To understand the ways in which shame impacts so many people, it is important to first examine what the Bible has to say about shame. This section will take a biblical survey of shame's origins and its impact through the story of Adam and Eve and their children, Cain and Abel, followed by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Origins of Shame

Adam and Eve

Adam and Eve found themselves in a world that is very good. Genesis 1:31 states, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." By his word, God had created a world that was very good, including Adam and Eve. They were the pinnacle of God's creation. In Genesis 1:27, humanity is described as made in the image of God. "So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Not only was the world very good, but God had also made humanity in the image of God, set apart from the rest of creation, and to help rule over God's world as his vice-regents. (Genesis 1:28-30).

However, the story of creation took a drastic turn in the third chapter of Genesis. A crafty serpent entered the story. "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made." (Genesis 3:1) He asked a question regarding God's command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to trick Eve into disobeying God. "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" (Genesis 3:1) Curt Thompson writes, "To be fooled is to be shamed, if even at the

subtlest nonconscious level of awareness."[26] For the first time in the Bible, the reliability of God's word is questioned. Eve replies, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" It was the latter portion of Eve's response, i.e. "neither shall you touch it," when sin entered creation. Philip Jamieson writes, "[At] this point, the damage is done; we no longer believe that we can take God at his word. A shadow has fallen and there is a distance and mistrust in the relationship [between God and man]."[27] Moreover, Thompson believes that the doubt created by the serpent disrupted the relationship between God and Eve, and Eve was left alone to process the answer herself without anyone else.[28] Instead of waiting for God or the man to answer, she stayed isolated and alone. The serpent replied to her that they wouldn't die, but that their eyes would be opened, and they would become like God. (Genesis 3:4-5) The implication according to Thompson is, "God does not want you to be like him. God does not want you to have what he has… you are not as important as you think. You, as it turns out, are less than you think. You. Are. Not. Enough."[29]

Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, and Scripture states, "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." (Genesis 3:7) This reality was drastically different from what is recorded in Genesis 2:25: "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." When speaking of this verse, Thompson writes, "The

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[26] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*, 101.

[27] Jamieson, *The Face of Forgiveness*, 75.

[28] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*, 101.

[29] Thompson, 103.

vulnerability of nakedness is the antithesis of shame."[30] But for the first time in their lives, they realized their nakedness and were ashamed. They had always been naked, but it was only in this moment that their inclination was to hide. They hid in two ways: first, they hid their nakedness by sewing fig leaves and making loincloths. "Fig leaves are all they have left to cope."[31] Second, they hid from God when they hear him walking in the garden nearby. (Genesis 3:7-8) Adam answers God's question, "Where are you?" with "I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." (Genesis 3:10)

This is the origin of humanity's shame. Before Adam and Eve ever felt guilty for what they had done, the first and primary emotion was fear of who they are, their nakedness, and so they hid. Jamieson writes:

> The need for covering ourselves is the implicit acknowledgement that we are not who we claim to be: independent, limitless, and self-creating. The covering of ourselves reveals shame that is the acknowledgment that we abide within the sight of the other and that we fear their judgment of us. We fear that they will come to realize who we really are, not all-powerful, but broken and weak.[32]

In other words, Adam and Eve ate the fruit forbidden by God, thinking they would become like God, "independent, limitless, and self-creating." However, when their eyes were opened, they realized that they were the farthest thing from that reality. The realization of who they were elicits a reaction of fear and hiding from God and one another. "Shame reminds us that we really are not who we claim to be."[33]

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[30] Thompson, 99.

[31] Thompson, 108.

[32] Jamieson, *The Face of Forgiveness*, 77.

[33] Jamieson, 78.

The Effects of Shame

Isolation

So, what was their response? Hide. "Hiding is the natural response to shame."[34] They did not attempt to hide their actions or behavior. They attempted to hide themselves.[35] So, it was not guilt that they dealt with first, but rather their shame. Accordingly, God also dealt with Adam and Eve's shame first, after they had sinned against God's command. He first asks, "Where are you?" God's priority is to address and free them from their shame and hiding.[36] He wants them to realize they are lost yet may be seen and found by the God who graciously asks, "Where are you?"

God was not asking about their external location but rather their internal location.[37] "This is what the God of the biblical narrative does. He pursues. He comes to find us... God's inquiry appears genuine. There is no immediate evidence that it is offered in an accusing manner…"[38] God genuinely wanted to give them the opportunity to come and reengage their relationship with him even in the face of shame. Even though God's question was gracious and loving, it was interpreted as God being harsh and accusatory. Jamieson agrees. "Without knowing it, in our self-absorbed, shame-filled categories we have become disabled from hearing the grace of God's call. God speaks in love and seeks

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[34] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*, 108.

[35] Jamieson, *The Face of Forgiveness*, 79.

[36] Jamieson, 81.

[37] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*, 110.

[38] Thompson, 110.

fellowship. We hear condemnation and anger."[39] This is the power shame carries, and it was demonstrated through Adam and Eve. They were afraid.

Only after addressing their shame did God ask what they had done. "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Genesis 3:11) Guilt and shame are equally important, but shame takes priority. There is an order in which God deals with their sin.

Relationships

Another impact of shame is the deterioration of relationships. Adam and Eve are made to be one flesh and a helpmate. "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." (Genesis 2:18) Shame has broken their relationship. One way to hide from shame is to shift blame, and Adam blamed Eve and God. "The woman whom you gave to be with me…". (Genesis 3:12) Adam no longer viewed his wife as a coregent, helper, or one flesh but as a "competitor," "stranger," and "potential rival."[40]

The effects of shame are highlighted in Adam and Eve's children, Cain and Abel. After God clothed Adam and Eve and sent them out of the Garden of Eden into the wilderness, they had two children, Cain and Abel. Unfortunately, shame reared its ugly head between these two brothers. Jamieson notes, "Rivalry is the natural conclusion of shame-filled lives."[41] These two brothers brought an offering to the Lord, and "the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard."

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[39] Jamieson, *The Face of Forgiveness*, 81.

[40] Jamieson, 80.

[41] Jamieson, 83.

(Genesis 4:4-5) This divine favor upset Cain, and he was filled with anger. In the economy of shame, "If God favors one, it must naturally mean that he does not love the other... Shame shuns community because the presence of the others is perceived as a threat. Shamed eyes cannot meet the eyes of others."[42] Cain's anger was manifested because he believed that he was unworthy of God's love and acceptance. The only thing he could do was to shift blame, as Adam had done against Eve. This time, Cain was so angry that he murdered his brother.

As God had done with Adam and Eve previously, God confronted Cain's shame first by asking a question. "Where is Abel your brother?" (Genesis 4:9) The question was about identity and location. "God is forcing Cain to recall that he is in relationship with his brother."[43] Cain replies, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9), signaling that he was living a life of shame, alone and isolated, void of any need for relationships. Then, after God asked the question addressing Cain's shame, he asked about his actions and behavior in Genesis 4:10: "What have you done?" Again, Scripture reminds the reader that when God deals with sin, he addresses identity first followed by behavior and actions. In other words, God addresses shame before guilt. God is more concerned with who we are than what we do. It is "being" before "doing." It is "[only] after the shamed are called out can they face the truth of their actions."[44]

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[42] Jamieson, 83.

[43] Jamieson, 84.

[44] Jamieson, 85.

Love and Pursuit of God

Despite the murder committed by Cain, God showed kindness and grace towards him. Though the mark on Cain signified his curse, to be sent out as a fugitive and a wanderer, it was also a sign of God's love for him as protection from any harm. "Even wrathful, wandering Cain cannot fully escape the God who loves him and cares for him."[45] This was also true of God's warning and reminder to Cain before he murders his brother. God reminded him that restoration was possible, asking him, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?" (Genesis 4:6-7) The Hebrew word שְׂאֵת is translated, "will there not be a lifting up?" God was inviting Cain to come back, to lift his face, and be restored. But Cain chose to turn from God or in God's words, keep his face downward. Cain's shame was much stronger than the knowledge that he was accepted by God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes shame this way: "Shame is man's ineffaceable recollection of his estrangement from the origin; it is grief for this estrangement, and the powerless longing to return to unity with the origin."[46] Jamieson says something similar when talking about shame and its origin. He writes, "Shame, we discover, is inescapable on our part because of who we really are: image bearers of God. What was our crowning glory is now the horrible burden of a general sense of failure: failure to achieve, failure to relate to God and to neighbor in noncompetitive ways."[47] The story of joy, love, vulnerability, connection, and deep relationships is no longer present. Thompson writes,

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[45] Jamieson, 87.

[46] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Eberhard Bethge, and N. Horton Smith, *Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 20.

[47] Jamieson, *The Face of Forgiveness*, 88.

"No longer would connection, curiosity, and creativity be engaged freely, without the worry of failure or being exposed and humiliated for making mistakes. There was a new, bent order, one filled with thistles, undermining and abuse. Shame's mission was complete."[48]

Freedom from Shame

With the fall, shame enters the world, and the story of God's people is marked by hiding, fear, broken relationships, isolation, and disconnection. But the God who pursued Adam, Eve, and Cain is the same God who continued to pursue and love his creation that they might experience freedom from their shame. found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The following is an encounter with a Samaritan woman who suffered much shame. The story culminates with Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection signaling the hope and freedom for those suffering from shame.

The Woman at the Well

Jesus interacted with a Samaritan woman at a well in John 4:4-42. She did not know this, but her encounter with Jesus freed her from years of shame. The author, John, first described her as a Samaritan. Jews despised Samaritans because they were a mixed race. They were partly descended from remnants of the ten northern tribes who lived in Samaria before Syrian captivity and partly descended from other peoples that the Syrians had conquered. (2 Kings 17:21-24) Their religion was also heretical. It was a blend of the worship of Yahweh with pagan idolatry. Jey Kanagaraj, Professor of New Testament and

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[48] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*, 112.

the Head of the Department of Biblical Studies at Union Biblical Seminary, writes, "This indicates that there was hatred among the Jews against Samaritans, to the extent that they would not use the vessels used by the Samaritans for purity reasons. The rabbis taught the Jews not to eat Samaritans' cooking or to have any ritual contact with them."[49]

Secondly, she was a woman. Rabbis did not teach women, nor did they have women disciples. In Jewish culture a woman's testimony was inadmissible in court because women were viewed as irrational and untrustworthy. Kenneth Bailey, who was a missionary in the Middle East and New Testament scholar, writes, "[Jesus] breaks the social taboo against talking to a woman, particularly in an uninhabited place with no witnesses. Throughout forty years of life in the Middle East, I never crossed this social boundary line. In village society, a strange man does not even make eye contact with a woman in a public place."[50]

And lastly but most importantly, she was living an immoral life. She had been married five times and was now living with a man outside of marriage. In divorce the woman was viewed at fault. She had become a woman who went from man to man, and consequently, she would have been unacceptable to Jews and her own people for her immoral life, her ethnicity, and gender. Because of her deep shame, she went to draw water at the hottest time of the day, the sixth hour, high noon. Bailey points out, "The woman in this story appears at the well *alone* at noon. Only a 'bad woman' would be so blatant. She is either a social outcast or knows that travelers can be found at the well at

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[49] Jey J. Kanagaraj, *John*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 40.

[50] Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 202–3.

noon and wants to contact them."[51] No one would be there. She was able to live in isolation, disconnected from society and hidden. But Jesus was there, spoke to her, and asked for a drink. If that were not scandalous enough, Jesus went a step further and told her to get her husband to tell him about this living water that caused no one to thirst again. The woman answers him, "I have no husband." Jesus replies, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." (John 4:17-18, ESV) She must have been shocked. Her identity as an immoral, Samaritan woman that caused her hiding, isolation and drawing water at the hottest time of day was now revealed to Jesus. He had known all along. And yet, he spoke to her and offered her living water.

Shame is defeated when the worst is known, and love is still offered to her. Consequently, this was her response. "Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?' They came out of the town and made their way toward him." R.C. Sproul, a theologian and pastor, summarized the Samaritan woman's response: "I hate it every time I come here. I feel like I have a scarlet 'A' sewn on my clothing. I have to sneak past the eyes of every woman in the village. When I come here and sit at this place to get my water, I feel ashamed, embarrassed, and alone. If You have water like this, give it to me, and I'll never have to come back to this well again."[52] She found freedom from her shame through her encounter with Jesus.

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[51] Bailey, 202.

[52] R. C. Sproul, *John: An Expositional Commentary* (Sanford, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2019), 60.

Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

Because of Jesus' life and ministry to the shamed, marginalized, and lowly, Jesus was ultimately led to the cross to die and rise from the dead. Freedom from shame is ultimately found in Jesus.

Paul reminds the Christians in Romans 5:7-8, "For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." While a normal person would be reluctant at best to die for another person, Jesus dies for objects of God's wrath. Jesus' love is offered to those that do not deserve love. William Hendriksen, author and New Testament scholar, writes, "What Paul is saying is that God's love, as revealed in Jesus Christ, is both unprecedented and unparalleled. No merit from our side could have moved Christ to die for us, for he died for us 'while we were still sinners.'"[53] This profound love of Jesus was displayed through his sacrifice on the cross. Jayson Georges, author and founder of HonorShame.com, and Mark Baker, professor of mission and theology at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, state, "Jesus was so committed to the shamed and excluded that he loved them in unexpected and costly ways… willingly gives us status and honor, to the point of death, in order to include the excluded and honor the shamed."[54] There was nothing more shameful than to hang on the cross and die. Stockitt elaborates, saying it was "a place for those who do not belong to society, the unwanted, the scum of the earth. Furthermore, his crucifixion exposed Christ

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[53] William Hendriksen, *Romans: Chapters 1-16*, 2nd ed., New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 173.

[54] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (Lisle, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 109.

in his *nakedness*… To be naked had become over the centuries a deeply shameful thing… Part of the intent of crucifixion was to heap shame on the victim to an ultimate extent and as such were reserved only for slaves and those who were not Roman citizens."[55] As the Hebrew writer reminds the church, "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame…" (Hebrews 12:1-2, ESV). He took on humanity's shame so that humanity would be freed from shame.

By taking on shame, Jesus also gave his creation a new identity because of his resurrection. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV) Through Jesus' resurrection, the shamed are transformed and receive his honor and glory. Georges and Baker write, "Adam lost his original glory, but Paul explains that Jesus as second Adam restores that glory… This glory in Christ is one aspect of being brought into walking in 'newness of life.'"[56] The glory that was lost because of sin is now regained because of Jesus who gives us his glory. This glory replaces shame with a new identity that is worthy. Georges and Baker continue, "For shamed people to leave their place of disgrace and exclusion, they need a new identity, and they need to receive honor and acceptance from others. Since shame is a relational issue, the solution must be relational. To become adopted children in God's family offers the needed new identity."[57] Shame is replaced with a new identity of glory, honor, and adoption. Paul summarizes in Romans 8:15-17:

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[55] Stockitt, *Restoring the Shamed*, 139.

[56] Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 111.

[57] Georges and Baker, 111.

> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Consequently, Jesus' death destroyed shame while the resurrection of Jesus ushers people into a new family with a new identity filled with the glory and honor of Jesus. This transformation is experienced through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Instead of isolation, unworthiness, and condemnation, people are offered family, honor, and unconditional love. Welch summarizes this idea, stating, "The life, death, resurrection, and reign of Jesus prove that the old system of lineage and achievement is now in ruins. The lowly are helped to their feet…The hard work that remains is for Christ to be your boast in such a way that praise is your way to do battle, and your head is held up and prepared for his return."[58] The shamed are now enabled to live in freedom and power boasting in what Jesus has done for them. "The power of shame to exclude is destroyed,"[59] and those so blessed are given the blessing of Aaron: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26, ESV)

Summary of the Biblical Framework

The opening chapters of the Bible reveal the devastating impact sin had on Adam and Eve, namely that Adam and Eve experienced shame. They hid, isolated themselves

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[58] Edward T. Welch, "The Unlikely Path from Shame to Boasting," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 37, no. 2 (2023): 70.

[59] Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*, 114.

from one another and God, and questioned their identity and self-worth. They blamed each other, saw others as a threat, and lived through one son murdering the other.

By God's grace, the story did not end there, and the good news of freedom from shame is ultimately found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Even when the worst was known about God's creation, he offered love and pursued his creation. This manner is beautifully shown in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. She was a woman filled with shame, but because Jesus offered her dignity and worth, even though he knew about her immoral life and ethnicity, she was transformed by his love, and shame was lifted. However, to truly be freed from shame, Jesus ultimately had to go to the cross and rise from the dead so that shamed people might experience honor, glory, and adoption into the family of God.

Having seen the impact of shame in the world and the hope that comes from Jesus, it is important to see in the next section a specific kind of shame played out outside of the Western culture. This next literature section will examine honor-shame.

Honor-shame Culture

In the previous section, a biblical framework for shame was reviewed from the opening chapters of Genesis to the healing and restoration made possible through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The cultural factors and the implications for the church today will now be viewed with this Scriptural framework in mind. Most literature agrees that Western theology has operated through the lens of guilt more than shame, but most of the world has operated conversely. Georges and Baker published an online survey with over nine thousand participants from all over the world. It confirmed that "non-Western cultures are most influenced by honor-shame values…This data suggests that

approximately 80 percent of the global population (i.e., Asians, Arabs, Africans and even Latin Americans) runs on the honor-shame operating system. Westerners (i.e., North Americans and Western Europeans) not familiar with honor and shame, globally speaking, are the odd ones out." Christopher Flanders, associate professor of missions at Abilene Christian University, and Werner Mischke, vice president of Mission ONE, a partnership and training ministry to advance the gospel through the global church, agree and write, "Western theology, with all its diversity, benefits, and blessings, may be nonetheless influenced by various Western values of guilt, law, and justice... focuses on salvation for individuals as a pardon for sin and guilt, a forensic solution."[60] In other words, the Western church has emphasized the legal aspects of the gospel reflecting its culture. Te-Li Lau, Associate Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, goes further and argues that not only has the Western church focused more on guilt and less on shame but it has also unnecessarily removed shame, teaching it carries no good and is only destructive. Lau writes, "Given the negativity surrounding shame, many are skeptical about the moral value of shame and call for its extirpation… Since every form of shame is bad and destructive, we must renounce its use and develop shame resilience."[61] However, given that the majority of the world operates in an honor-shame culture, the gospel can offer the Western church a fuller picture of the gospel. Georges and Baker write:

> Because of its inevitable cultural constraints, Western theology does not exhaust the full meaning and application of biblical truth. Western theology itself is not "wrong"

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[60] Christopher Flanders and Werner Mischke, *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel : Reframing Our Message and Ministry* (Littleton: William Carey, 2020), xxi.

[61] Te-Li Lau, *Defending Shame* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2020), 230.

> but simply incomplete and limited by cultural blinders… One such "blind spot" in Western theology is honor and shame… The neglect of honor-shame in Western theology ultimately leads to shallow forms of Christianity, as people trust God for one component of salvation (i.e., forgiveness of sin's guilt), but then bypass Christ's work for absolving sin's shame.[62]

The authors are emphasizing the importance of not reducing the gospel to an either/or and instead preserving the gospel's "both/and." The gospel is multi-faceted, and the Western church could flourish by looking through the lens of honor-shame. Given the implications for the church, the following will be examined: community, discipleship, hospitality.

Community

An honor-shame culture has a huge impact on community because it values the collective over the individual. Georges and Baker make the distinction that an honor-shame culture "refers to collectivistic societies where the community tends to shame and exclude people who fail to meet group expectations and reward loyal members with honor. In contrast, an 'innocence-guilt culture,' as commonly encountered in Western, Anglo contexts, is more individualistic. It relies on conscience, justice, and laws to regulate social behavior."[63] David Dunaetz, Associate Professor of Leadership and Organizational Psychology at Azusa Pacific University and church planting missionary in France for seventeen years, also views the impact of honor-shame culture on the community. He writes, "In cultures that are high in collectivism, one's identity is solidly founded on one's in- group (or collectivity); the individual's sense of self is highly

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[62] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 22.

[63] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 18.

congruent with the perceived characteristics of one's in-group, whether it be family, nation, or ethnicity."[64] In other words, both imply that their sense of self does not come from the individual but rather the collective.

Positively, more cohesiveness and interdependence exist within the community. Dunaetz writes, "The social norms defining acceptable behavior are more uniform throughout the culture."[65] Georges and Baker give the example that conversions in honor-shame cultures value first community, then discipleship, and lastly evangelism. "Group-oriented people view conversion as transferring loyalty and identity to a new group, so they must experience the group before choosing to join it. So, participation in the body of Christ is the first step in the evangelistic process."[66] They share another example: "I heard of one young Middle Eastern man who, upon trusting in Jesus, first memorized the genealogy of Matthew 1:1-18. He wanted to know his family ancestry, the lineage he was born into spiritually…So honor, in essence, is inherited from one's kin."[67] These examples convey how the community plays an integral part of one's identity in an honor-shame culture.

The natural consequences of an honor-shame culture can also impact communities negatively. Because the corporate is prioritized over the individual, "a father in

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[64] David R Dunaetz, "Approaching Honor and Shame with Humility: Limitations to Our Current Understanding," *Missiology* 49, no. 4 (2021): 409.

[65] David R Dunaetz, "Approaching Honor and Shame with Humility: Limitations to Our Current Understanding," *Missiology* 49, no. 4 (2021): 410.

[66] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 185–86.

[67] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 17.

Afghanistan may feel compelled to kill his own child if she or he marries someone from an inferior family."[68] The shame impacts not just the individual but also the family or collective. "Vicarious shame is much more likely in collectivistic cultures, where one's identity is closely associated with group membership, than in individualistic cultures, where group membership is less central to one's identity."[69] Georges and Baker follow suit and state, "Shame is contagious; the dishonor attached to one person is felt by all. What one person does affects the entire 'in-group' to which they belong."[70] One of the factors that impact the level of shame the community feels is the social hierarchy and power dynamics that are at play.

> In high-power-distance cultures (compared to low-power-distance cultures), shaming may be more visible because when a powerholder shames an individual, their power is viewed as legitimate and credible… Thus, in high-power-distance countries, social control by those in authority is likely greater than in low-power-distance countries because the common person may have a greater fear of being exposed.[71]

Given the positive and negative implications of community in an honor-shame culture, Te-Li Lau suggests that rather than "expunging shame, a more prudent option is to rehabilitate shame."[72] While shame has potential risks for great damage, it can also be used in an honor-shame culture for moral formation. "A person cannot be without shame,

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[68] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 45.

[69] David R Dunaetz, "Approaching Honor and Shame with Humility: Limitations to Our Current Understanding," *Missiology* 49, no. 4 (2021): 410.

[70] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 46.

[71] David R Dunaetz, "Approaching Honor and Shame with Humility: Limitations to Our Current Understanding," *Missiology* 49, no. 4 (2021): 411.

[72] Te-Li Lau, *Defending Shame: Its Formative Power in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2020), 231.

for the shame of being without shame is shamelessness. Moreover, the emotion of shame is the sprout that booms into the virtue of righteousness when it is properly nurtured and cultivated."[73]

Discipleship

As stated above, in an honor-shame culture, the importance of community precedes the importance of discipleship. Once an individual belongs to a certain collective group, he or she is then formed and shaped by the collective's values and ideals. Most, if not all, would agree that discipleship is at the heart of Jesus' mission. Jesus gives the great commission in Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (ESV) While there are different ways to define discipleship, Cristian Dumitrescu, professor of Intercultural Studies, Mission, and Research at Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies and missionary in Romania, defines discipleship as "mentoring," "coaching," and "necessary to make sure that the Master remains Jesus."[74]

The mandate Jesus gives for discipleship is clear, yet Western Christianity faces many challenges when confronted with the differences of an honor-shame culture. Dumitrescu writes, "Jesus indicates that the goal of mission is discipleship. Missionaries and pastors baptize many new converts, but the discipleship process is often lacking.

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[73] Te-Li Lau, *Defending Shame: Its Formative Power in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2020), 231.

[74] Christopher Flanders and Werner Mischke, *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel : Reframing Our Message and Ministry* (Littleton: William Carey Publishing, 2020), 155.

Sincere people look to Jesus as a model yet tend to ignore the social or cultural contexts in which they are working."[75] In other words, the models and strategies used for discipleship are primarily Western rather than culturally sensitive. Georges and Baker also note the frustrations created when the Western church does not consider the context of an honor-shame culture. In the following table of Figure 1, the Western church, guilt-innocence values contrast with the values of the honor-shame culture. For example, indirect communication is viewed as lying and deceptive, or money used as patronage is seen as corrupt and dependent. Maturity in Jesus is then defined by Western values. "This approach categorically rejects honor-shame values, and the fruit of the Spirit begins to look strangely Western. Majority World Christians are not taught to live skillfully within their honor-shame context, but to reject all these aspects of their culture."[76]

Arena of Life	Honor-Shame Cultures	G-I Assessment of H-S Cultures	Guilt-Innocence Cultures	H-S Assessment of G-I Cultures
money	patronage	corrupt, dependent	independence, capitalism	stingy, ungenerous
communication	indirectness	lying, deceptive	direct, explicit	inconsiderate, crass
time	event	lazy, tardy	task, efficiency	arrogant, unkind
hygiene	purity	ritualistic, pharisaical	science, secularism	defiled, unclean
food	hospitality	obligatory, ostentatious	convenience, functionality	isolated, neglectful
behavior	social roles	unequal, oppressive	egalitarian, equality	disrespectful, presumptuous

Figure 1: Cross-cultural assessments

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[75] Christopher Flanders and Werner Mischke, *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel : Reframing Our Message and Ministry* (Littleton: William Carey Publishing, 2020), 156.

[76] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 60.

Another impact of guilt-innocence discipleship is syncretism. Dumitrescu states, "Christian converts around the world often display syncretism in more or less visible ways. Christians from Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, or animistic backgrounds often return to their previous faith communities, and Christians blame insufficient teaching and understanding or lack of spiritual growth for the discipleship failure."[77] He gives a variety of reasons for syncretism directly related to the honor-shame culture.

First, honor for the family and community is more important than the individual. Therefore, to preserve the honor of the family, the entire family will accept the Christian faith while still practicing the rituals of their family's religion so as not to bring shame to their community. Second, respect and hierarchy are crucial to honor-shame culture. "The notion of respect is commonly associated with obligation. Obligation and uniformity support the idea of harmony."[78] The individual is obligated to follow those in positions of power and authority.

To address the challenges of discipleship in an honor-shame culture then requires an understanding of how the gospel addresses the honor-shame culture. Jackson Wu, an author who has lived and worked in East Asia for two decades and serves on the Asian/Asian American Theology steering committee of the Evangelical Theological Society, suggests:

> Honor and shame are not merely cultural pressures but notions of value and worth that shape a person's worldview. Thus, honor and shame are essential for

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[77] Christopher Flanders and Werner Mischke, *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel : Reframing Our Message and Ministry* (Littleton: William Carey Publishing, 2020), 155.

[78] Christopher Flanders and Werner Mischke, *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel : Reframing Our Message and Ministry* (Littleton: William Carey Publishing, 2020), 161.

> discipleship. Following Jesus means adopting God's honor code for all areas of life, learning to value what God deems valuable. God's imputed honor empowers Christians to resist cultural disgrace and live for the glory of God's name, even in the face of shaming persecution.[79]

In other words, because the gospel is much larger than just one culture's view on money, time, food, or communication, there is a more robust and beautiful expression of Christian growth and discipleship. A Western Christian will benefit from a person who grew up in an honor-shame culture and vice versa. "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17)

Hospitality

Hospitality matters a great deal in the honor-shame culture because it transforms lives. Georges and Baker reflect on the power of hospitality in a non-Western culture:

> Hospitality functions as a common tool of honor. It transforms an outside stranger into an inside friend. Food honors the guest. Eating together means sharing life together. Breaking bread symbolizes community and acceptance. The table indicates acceptance, togetherness, and incorporation. For this reason, the thought of eating alone in a car or in a cubicle is incomprehensible to non-Westerners—it's better go hungry than to eat alone.[80]

vănThanh Nguyễn, professor of New Testament Studies and the holder of the Bishop Francis Xavier Ford, Maryknoll, Chair of Catholic Missiology at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois, writes that hospitality "reveals the most fundamental value of the Kingdom of God, namely, welcoming strangers."[81] In other words, hospitality can

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[79] Jayson Georges, "The Good News for Honor-Shame Cultures," Lausanne Movement, accessed September 19, 2024, https://lausanne.org/global-analysis/the-good-news-for-honor-shame-cultures.

[80] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 58–59.

[81] vănThanh Nguyễn, "An Asian View of Biblical Hospitality," *Biblical Research* 53 (2008): 39.

bring healing and transformation to those who are invited because of the social dynamics of an honor-shame culture. Georges and Baker share an illustration comparing honor and shame: "Hospitality and feasting provide opportunities to accumulate honor by publicly sharing food. Large banquets with endless provisions merit tremendous status in many cultures... When the World Bank asked the poor themselves what it means to be poor, many people noted the shame of not providing food to guests."[82]

Ernest van Eck, professor of New Testament Studies in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, writes about the importance of hospitality in first-century Palestine, where there were no hotels.

> [Hospitality] in the first-century Mediterranean world was mainly the process of receiving outsiders and changing them from strangers to guests… Thus, a stranger (or friend) arriving in a community (village) served as a challenge to the community – the host had to protect the honour of his guest and had to show concern for his needs. The guest, in turn, was embedded in the honour of his host, as well as in the honour of the host's group (for e.g. the village.)[83]

Honor-shame dynamics govern the host practicing hospitality and the guest receiving it.

As with any cultural value, the benefits and challenges of hospitality in an honor-shame culture must be weighed carefully. Georges and Baker present five phases[84] in redeeming hospitality for the welcome and transformation of others. Phase one begins with the "Unknown" before a person is introduced to another culture. As the adage goes,

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[82] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 58.

[83] Ernest van Eck, "When Neighbours Are Not Neighbours: A Social-Scientific Reading of the Parable of the Friend at Midnight (Lk 11:5-8)," *HTS Theological Studies* 67, no. 1 (2011): 5.

[84] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 61–64.

"You don't know what you don't know." The second phase is "Positive." Hospitality's first impressions are all good or affirmative. The person appreciates the hospitality of the honor-shame culture. "The hospitality, generosity, laid-back attitude and family orientation merit admiration."[85] Then it moves to phase three, "Negative," because the more time a person spends in the other culture, the new culture's values clash and the ugly aspects of honor-shame come to light. "The charm of hospitality fades away when an unannounced visitor knocks on your door. You know they will stay and just chat for hours… But knowing how 'shameful' it would be to not welcome the unplanned guest, you open the door, but not your heart."[86] Phase three moves from appreciation to burden. Phase four moves to "Critical." With a negative view of the culture, a person judges the underlying systems and structures of hospitality. For example, Georges and Baker tell of a man whose father died, but even though they were poor, the expectations to honor and not shame the family obligated them to feed family and friends for days, putting them into financial debt. They concluded, "In those moments I concluded hospitality was an oppressive evil that destroys people financially and emotionally by holding the gun of shame to people's head."[87] Lastly, phase five is "Balanced." The person can evaluate the positives and negatives, keep the beauty of the honor-shame culture, and redeem the negative to achieve a balanced view of hospitality. "Jesus repeatedly used food and hospitality to bless and honor people… and also confronted many aspects of the honor-

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[85] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 62.

[86] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 62.

[87] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 63.

shame system of his day."[88]

Summary of Honor-shame Culture

The importance of understanding the honor-shame culture is crucial because it is the water that most of the world swims in. To see shame described as only bad and negative as it has been in the West would be narrow. Having a fuller picture of shame allows followers of Jesus to grow and see how honor-shame impacts different areas of life. The literature examined three areas: community, discipleship, and hospitality. Because the honor-shame culture in most of the world is about the community and not the individual, the actions one takes reflects the entire community. Whether it is family, tribe, or organization, both success and failure have direct implications on the community. Thus, shame can be used positively for the moral formation of an individual and community. Their identity and worth are determined by their collective community. Consequently, discipleship and spiritual formation must be examined from within an honor-shame culture, because what a Western individual deems inappropriate might be accepted by an Asian American and vice versa. Everyone has cultural blind spots. By growing in understanding of honor-shame culture in the Western church, followers of Jesus can grow and disciple more effectively. Lastly, the importance of hospitality in the honor-shame culture was examined as a practice that brings about transformation from shame because of the acceptance, welcome, and safety people will experience.

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[88] Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (IVP Academic, 2016), 64.

Having examined the biblical framework for shame and the honor-shame culture, the last literature review will examine the importance of how liturgy and embodiment can free people from shame.

Liturgical Formation

The final area of literature examines the formation of people through liturgy. How are people formed and shaped? Brad D. Strawn and Warren S. Brown, professors of psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary, argue that it has long been assumed that people are shaped by how they think. They think before they believe. The anthropology of human beings has taught, "Humans became walking heads, disembodied and disconnected from what they actually do in the world and disconnected from the other bodies around them. The subsequent model of human formation is to fill persons up with the right kind of information so that they will act rightly."[89] In other words, it was assumed that correct teaching would lead to correct behavior.

Smith would agree with Strawn and Brown. He argues that the church has adopted an anthropology from the Enlightenment that says: "I think, therefore I am," quoting the French philosopher, René Descartes. "Like Descartes, we view our bodies (at best!) as extraneous, temporary vehicles for trucking our bodies around our souls or 'mind,' which are where all the real action takes place."[90] Susan Eastman, professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School and author, also recognizes this distinction "that

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[89] Brad D. Strawn and Warren S. Brown, "Liturgical Animals: What Psychology and Neuroscience Tell Us about Formation and Worship," *Liturgy* 28, no. 4 (July 22, 2013): 3.

[90] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 3.

the essence of self is in a nonmaterial 'soul' that is separate from the body, and that the self is a freestanding, autonomous agent, fully conscious of and responsible for its thoughts, motivations, and actions."[91]

While doctrine, knowledge, and integration are important, what role does liturgy and ritual play? Strawn and Brown ask, "Does liturgy fill the mind with thoughts and ideas that can trickle top-down to eventually influence the sorts of persons we are and the way we act? Or does liturgy allow us to act individually and corporately in ways that reshape our minds and change our behavioral tendencies?"[92] They, along with Smith, agree that liturgy plays an important part in spiritual formation, perhaps more important than what is taught and accepted, because people are embodied creatures.

Embodied Liturgy

Tish Warren, an Anglican priest and author, highlights the importance of the body when she reflects on a dark period in her life when she could not pray to God:

> I felt like my words were a sad, deflated balloon tangled in branches, lifeless, stuck, and limp. In the midst of this, though words failed me, prayer without words – prayer in and through my body – became a lifeline. I couldn't find words, but I could kneel. I could submit to God through my knees, and I'd lift my hands to hold up an ache: a fleshy, unnamable longing that I carried around my ribs. I'd offer up an aching body with my hands, my knees, my tears, my lifted eyes. My body led in prayer and led me – all of me, eventually even my words – into prayer.[93]

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[91] Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2017), 64.

[92] Strawn and Warren, "Liturgical Animals," 3.

[93] Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, 46–47.

Her story sheds light on the importance of the body as it pertains to the self. When she attempts to engage God, body and mind intricately work together. When she bends her body, her soul bends to God. By repeatedly engaging her body, she can utter words to God again. Her story shows how rituals or liturgies are not just things that people do, but they do something to people. Smith writes, "Liturgies work effectively and aesthetically – they grab hold of our guts through the power of image, story, and metaphor. That's why the most powerful liturgies are attuned to our embodiment; they speak to our senses; they get under our skin. The way to the heart is through the body, you could say."[94] What people do with their bodies is what Smith calls "communal practices" or "cultural liturgies." Strawn and Smith elaborate on the idea of Smith's communal practices noting, "We don't consciously think about most of what we do; rather, we react in embodied ways to environmental stimuli… We believe that these are formed through a long history of embodied social interactions – liturgies if you will – in which humans are constantly embedded with other bodies."[95]

While the embodied-self connects to God (e.g. Warren bending her knees to God), the embodied-self also interacts with others and the outside world. Eastman writes, "The body is the means and mode of communication and connection with other people in particular environmental and historical contexts… To be a body is to be historically entwined with one's world."[96]

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[94] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 46.

[95] Strawn and Warren, "Liturgical Animals," 5.

[96] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 99–100.

Strawn and Smith examine the forces at work that shape and form individual selves, in particular with child-adult interactions – imitation, interpersonal attachment, empathy and language. The development factors at work in children are true for adults as well. "The impact on human development of these processes of ongoing reciprocal interaction with one's social environment does not come to an end somewhere in later childhood or early adolescence."[97]

The first process Strawn and Smith look at is imitation. "[They] both learn new behaviors by observing and copying the action of others and learn about the meaning of the action of others through their own imitative behavior."[98] For example, children will imitate facial gestures such as smiling, sticking the tongue out, and opening the mouth. Imitation allows the infant to understand that other humans are like the infant. James Smith, as well as Susan Eastman, examine imitation as well. Smith writes, "We learn the virtues through *imitation*. More specifically, we learn to be virtuous by imitating exemplars of justice, compassion, kindness, and love…"[99] Again, learning is not just acquiring information but imitating as seen with children. Eastman writes:

> …the experience of *being* imitated communicates a sort of recognition of oneself as distinctive and worthy of attention… A baby girl learns that she exists by being the object of her mother's and father's loving gaze. She learns what it is to see by being seen, as she sees herself reflected in the eyes of her parents.[100]

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[97] Strawn and Warren, "Liturgical Animals," 10.

[98] Strawn and Warren, "Liturgical Animals," 6.

[99] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 18–19.

[100] Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 74–75.

Human beings are not siloed beings but are always interacting with others. Imitation helps an individual learn about themselves through the actions of another. Strawn and Smith agree with Eastman. “Imitation is a critical process in the development of social behaviors and social knowledge, including a theory of mind. Throughout childhood and adolescence, imitation plays a role in the development of character and in spiritual formation...”[101]

Another important process of formation that Strawn and Smith identify is interpersonal attachment. Based upon John Bowlby’s attachment theory, there are four kinds of attachment: secure, preoccupied, avoidant, and disorganized. Depending on what a child experiences, “These early embodied infant-caregiver interactions set up a working model of relationship that children carry into adulthood.”[102]

The third factor is empathy. “Children learn empathy by being shown empathy.”[103] It is through these interactions children grow up to learn that others around them share or do not share similar ideas and feelings.

Lastly, language is learned only through interactions with those around them. “It is obvious, but worth noting, that language is impossible for children to learn outside of a rich and constant verbal interchange with parent and other persons.”[104] Language helps form and shape a child as they learn values and virtues through story and imagination.

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[101] Strawn, Brad D., “Liturgical Animals: What Psychology and Neuroscience Tell Us about Formation and Worship,” 7.

[102] Strawn, Brad D., 7.

[103] Strawn, Brad D., 8.

[104] Strawn, Brad D., 8.

Strawn and Smith identify theses four factors – imitation, attachment, empathy, and language — to show that embodied people can be formed only by engagement with the outside world. "We are born bodies with needs and develop sensory, motor, and mental systems that are very plastic… and subject to formation based on our experiences… All of these embodied processes strongly influence the personality and character of the persons they are becoming. None of these processes happen without human interaction."[105] Thomas Fuchs, professor of philosophy and psychiatry at Heidelberg University in Germany, also examined infants in his study of "collective body memories." He argues, "Even the earliest experiences of how infants are held, comforted, guided, and reacted to by their caregivers are imprinted in their implicit or body memory, hence also displayed in their later actions and interactions."[106]

While Smith does not look at the interactions of children and adults, he identifies one other area worth noting: design or architecture. He uses the example of the mall as a temple with its glass atriums, arches, and large spaces that invite people to participate and make transactions.

> The design of the interior is inviting to an almost excessive degree, drawing both seekers and the faithful into the enclosed interior spaces, with windows on the ceiling open to the sky but none on the walls open to the surrounding moat of automobiles. The sense conveyed is one of vertical or transcendent openness that at the same time shuts off the clamor and distractions of the horizontal, mundane world. This architectural mode of enclosure and enfolding suggests sanctuary, retreat, and escape.[107]

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[105] Strawn, Brad D., 10.

[106] Thomas Fuchs, "Collective Body Memories," in *Embodiment, Enaction, and Culture: Investigating the Constitution of the Shared World*, ed. Christoph Durt, Thomas Fuchs, and Christian Tewes (Boston: MIT, 2017), 338, https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262035552.003.0018.

[107] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 42.

He argues that as embodied people interact with the environment around them, such as a mall, the buildings themselves communicate value and shape people. The same can be true of the church and worship. Richard Vosko, a Catholic priest and a liturgical design consultant, writes about the "ritual place."[108] There must be attention given to "the environment for worship and how we are shaped by it."[109] He goes on to say, "Because the worship practice is organized in light of the ecclesiology of the church, the architectural setting for liturgy affirms that identity."[110] Thus, it is not just human interactions but also spaces that inform and form people. In other words, since a liturgy occurs within spaces in buildings, it, along with human and divine interactions, engage the entire person, not just the brain, and are formational to embodied human beings.

Purpose of Liturgy: Telos

If liturgy is embodied through interaction with others and the outside world and not solely by thought and belief in the mind, what is the purpose of liturgy? Strawn and Smith write, "These liturgies (practices) create habits that in turn shape the intentionality of one's aim toward a particular telos… The question is not will humans love, but what will they love? The telos of that love is directed by the habits that are formed through the embodied liturgies in which humans are embodied."[111] Smith would agree and examines

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[108] Richard S. Vosko, "Shaped by What We Shape: How the Environment for Worship Affects Ritual Behavior," *Liturgy* 25, no. 1 (October 22, 2009): 4–12, https://doi.org/10.1080/0450630903209744.

[109] Vosko, 4.

[110] Vosko, 6.

[111] Strawn, Brad D., "Liturgical Animals: What Psychology and Neuroscience Tell Us about Formation and Worship," 4.

the question that Jesus asked the disciples in the Gospel of John. Of all the things that Jesus could have said to Andrew and John, he asked them a question. And not just any question. It is probably the most important question asked of anyone who desires or is interested in seeking Jesus: "What are you seeking?" (John 1:38, ESV) In other words, "What do you want?" The first recorded words of Jesus, which began his ministry on earth, reveal desires and loves. "It is the first, last, and most fundamental question of Christian discipleship."[112] Smith argues, "We *are* what we want. Our wants and longings and desires are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behavior flow. Our wants reverberate from our heart, the epicenter of the human person."[113] He argues it is not the mind but the heart at the core of identity. So, in the example above about the mall, Smith argues that the mall has its own liturgy conveying to person the need for more and more. The mall shapes people through its space, design, and advertisements to become consumers who buy products. This shaping is the goal, or telos, of liturgy. What do people long for? What will people love? Or as Jesus asked, "What are you seeking?" Smith elaborates:

> To be human is to be animated and oriented by some vision of the good life, some picture of what we think counts as "flourishing." And we want that. We crave it. We desire it. This is why our most fundamental mode of orientation to the world is love. We are oriented by our longings, directed by our desires. We adopt ways of life that are indexed to such visions of the good life, not usually because we "think through" our options but rather because some picture captures our imagination.

In other words, people seek what they believe will bring about flourishing and the good life. Warren echoes Smith when addressing the goal of embodied liturgy. "Through the

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[112] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 1.

[113] Smith, 2.

practice of an embodied liturgy, we learn the true telos of embodiment: Our bodies are instruments of worship."[114] People *worship* what they *love*.

The problem is that people are misdirected towards the love or worship of creation, instead of what creation was created to worship, namely God. "When we use our bodies to rebel against God or to worship the false gods of sex, youth, or personal autonomy… we are using a sacred object… in a way that denigrates its beautiful and high purpose... But when we use our bodies for their intended purpose… [it is] as glorious as a great cathedral being used just as its architect had dreamt it would be."[115] Smith uses the language of "kingdom" when addressing telos. "To be human, we could say, is to desire the kingdom – *some* kingdom.[116] If people worship and love the kingdoms of consumerism at the mall, or sex and youth, then discipleship is the way to recalibrate and redirect people back to the kingdom of God from the kingdom of self or money or sex. As Smith says fittingly, "Our idolatries, then, are more liturgical than theological."[117] It becomes the liturgies of the culture and institutions of society that convince people that the good life is something other than God. If this is true, then one of the means, if not the primary means, for discipleship and seeking the kingdom of God would be through the weekly liturgy of corporate worship on Sunday mornings. Strawn and Smith put it this way: "If one of the major goals of the Christian life is acquisition of wisdom and virtue (e.g., embodied sanctification), then perhaps we can understand the social interactions we

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[114] Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, 44.

[115] Warren, 45.

[116] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 11.

[117] Smith, 23.

experience at church, including the ritual interactions we enact in worship, as essential aspects of this formation."[118]

Liturgy in Corporate Worship

In reference to Colossians 3:12-16, where the Apostle Paul exhorts the church to put on "compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience… And above all these, put on love…", Smith shows that "liturgy is the way we learn to 'put on' Christ." [119] He later writes, "Worship that restores us is worship that restories us. Worship that renews us is worship that renarrates our identity at an unconscious level. In order to do that, Christian worship needs to be governed by the biblical story and to invite us in by speaking to our embodiment."[120] The liturgy of corporate worship should tell the grand story of the gospel, thereby shaping the people of God to seek his kingdom. D. D. Murphy, associate professor of religious studies at West Virginia Wesleyan College, writes, "The 'knowledge' imparted in worship . . . is a knowledge that can be known only in the doing of it. It is, at heart, bodily and performative. We are habituated to and in the knowledge of the Christian faith by the ritual performance that is worship, so that a deep unity between doctrine and practice is taken for granted."[121] Thus, corporate worship liturgy cannot be passive as people engage God and one another. There is responsive

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[118] Strawn, Brad D., "Liturgical Animals: What Psychology and Neuroscience Tell Us about Formation and Worship," 11.

[119] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 69.

[120] Smith, 95.

[121] Debra Dean Murphy, *Teaching That Transforms: Worship as the Heart of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2004), 325.

reading, singing songs, kneeling, praying out loud and silently, confession of sin and assurance of pardon, hearing God's word, and practicing the sacraments such as the Lord's Supper and the lifting of hands.

Liturgy is embodied in many ways and shapes and bends hearts to the kingdom of God. Smith illustrates using a four-chapter story[122] that begins with "gathering." God calls people to worship, and they are forgiven. Second is "listening." People listen to God's word to be instructed, and the gospel is proclaimed. Third is "communing." God communes with his people at the Lord's Supper. And lastly is "sending." The people of God who bear his image are called to go out and carry out his mission.

Vosko views the liturgy differently from Smith as he thinks about the space in which the people of God gather.[123] First, the "church welcomes." From the parking lot to the lights to the lobby, and bathrooms, hospitality is important. Second, the "church initiates." The baptismal fount should be visible as they enter the sanctuary to remind the people of faith that they have been initiated into the family of God. Third, the "church forgives." A small chapel or room should be visible reminding them of God's mercy, reconciliation, and forgiveness. Third, the "church nourishes." The main ritual place, the sanctuary, should be large enough to gather together, with good acoustics and lighting, with no dark spots, for people to be nourished through God's word and the Lord's Supper. Also, the "church sings." Acoustics, choir positions, and musical arrangements are important as the people of God sing together. Though Vosko comes from a Catholic

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[122] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 96–98.

[123] Vosko, "Shaped by What We Shape: How the Environment for Worship Affects Ritual Behavior," 7–11.

tradition, he emphasizes that corporate worship must engage not only the mind but also the body, as it pertains to physical space, lighting, sound, and seating.

Often though, the body is disconnected from worship in many churches. "If we are bodies, then what is *done*, as opposed to simply what is said, thought, believed, or experienced, has greater importance and demands greater intentionality."[124] Strawn and Smith identify a few ways people are disconnected from the liturgy.[125] First, there is a focus on the "inward experience" of God more than his presence with all his people gathered together. Second, there is a heavy emphasis on the individual. It is highly "autonomous and isolated." Worship is about "Jesus and me" rather than "Jesus and we." Lastly, worship lacks any connection outside of the four walls of the church building. "Corporate worship is necessary for vital Christian life, but it is not sufficient as the totality of that life. It must be seamlessly continuous with the rest of the daily communal life of the body of Christ. It is the totality of ongoing life that constitutes worship."[126] These problems that Strawn and Brown address highlight this cultural moment: hyper individualism. The kind of worship that Strawn and Brown imagine is active, interpersonal, and participatory.

> Much of adult Christian education and even some forms of worship have typically focused on getting Christians to think or believe the right things, and thus have missed the opportunity for the development of deep behavioral habits formed through embodied congregational life. Ironically,

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[124] Strawn, Brad D., "Liturgical Animals: What Psychology and Neuroscience Tell Us about Formation and Worship," 11.

[125] Strawn, Brad D., 12–13.

[126] Strawn, Brad D., 13.

> we have not taken the liturgical nature of human beings seriously enough![127]

While it is true that churches have not taken "the liturgical nature of human beings seriously enough," some elements in the liturgy of corporate worship are deeply affecting, as seen through the sacraments.

Baptism

Because baptism initiates Christians into the family of God using water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it "both makes and signifies a social reality, which is why it is situated in the context of gathered worship. While perhaps only one person has been baptized, all of us participate in the sacrament." [128] In the Presbyterian Church in America, the *Book of Church Order* instructs the church that it is not just the one being baptized who makes vows, but the whole congregation also makes vows to the baptized individual. There is a commitment to one another. The *Book of Church Order*, chapter 56, paragraph 5, requires that the congregation promises the following:

> 1. Do you as a congregation undertake the responsibility of assisting the parents in the Christian nurture of this child?
>
> 2. Specifically, do you as a congregation promise to carefully teach him the Word of God, to patiently instruct him in the principles of our holy faith, to regularly pray with and for him, and to graciously set an example of piety and godliness before him, so that he might see—as well as know—the way of the Lord?

The entire congregation participates together and commits to each other that they will assist the child or adult to grow in their faith and in their love for God and neighbor.

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[127] Strawn, Brad D., 11.

[128] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 115.

It is not just through vows being promised to God and each other, Smith also states, "The ritual should call to mind our own baptism, thus rehearsing for us our own 'pledge of allegiance,' reminding us that we are citizens of another city. This is also why some churches have water at their entry, providing a tangible occasion for recalling *whose* we are."[129] The tangible, embodied practice of water reminds believers that they are to remember and recall that the sacrament signified by water is a reality for each and every single person who has been baptized. Some churches have given baptized members additional ways to remember their baptism such as candles:

> [I]n their congregation each person who is baptized receives a baptismal candle to take home. They are encouraged to bring out the candle each year and to light it on their baptismal anniversary. The sight and scent of the tiny flame comes 'loaded,' you might say, with the memory of what the Spirit has done – and is doing. The candle also serves to remind them that the candles of their 'natural' birthday are taken up and sanctified by the baptismal identity in Christ: this is their 'new creation' birthday. The lighting of the candle is a tangible reminder of who they are and whose they are, and weaving this rite into their home reinforces that their baptism is *for* the world.[130]

Through the simple use of a candle gifted to the baptized individual, this church uses embodied practice to remember that their identity is in Christ despite life's difficult circumstances. They can look back at their baptism and know they belong to the Lord.

As the Father spoke to the Jesus on his baptism, those same words are pronounced for all who are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17, ESV) Warren writes, "We are united with Christ and the approval of the Father is spoken over us. We are marked

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[129] Smith, 115.

[130] Smith, 130.

from our first waking moment by an identity that is given to us by grace: an identity that is deeper and more real than any other identity we will don on that day."[131] Whether it is the water, the vows read and verbalized, the baptismal founts located in entryways, or even the candles churches may gift, each is a tangible reminder that embodies the beautiful promise for all who have been baptized.

Lord's Supper

The other sacrament given to the church is the Lord's Supper, sometimes called Communion or the Eucharist. Nicholas Wolterstorff, professor emeritus of Yale University and author, explores the theology of liturgy and argues that at this point of the worship service, it goes beyond "speech actions" to something greater, if not "*the* high point" of the liturgy.[132] "In the Reformed tradition, it is often said that preaching and the Eucharist are modes of proclamation, the proclamation being verbal in preaching and pictorial in the Eucharist… Christ offers himself for our partaking…"[133]

There is a vertical participation between God and his people, but it is also horizontal, between the people of God themselves, communing with God and one another. Smith notes, "We are invited to sit down for supper with the Creator of the universe, to dine with the King. But we are *all* invited to do so, which means we need to be reconciled to one another as well. Our communion with Christ spills over into

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[131] Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, 19.

[132] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology*, The Kantzer Lectures in Revealed Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 146.

[133] Wolterstorff, 159.

communion as his body."[134] When people come together to partake of the Lord's Supper, the church is truly one body. There is no VIP section. Those who partake are all on the same playing field.

Further, the Lord's Supper is not just a remembrance. It points people forward in anticipation of what is to come when Jesus returns. As Jeffrey Meyers, a local pastor in St. Louis, states, it "teaches that our present experience of God's presence and blessing is incomplete."[135] The Lord's Supper is a foretaste of the wedding supper of the Lamb when the bride, the body of Christ will be finally wed to the groom, Jesus. There will be no more tears, sin, or death.

Lastly, the sacrament of the Lord's supper is embodied in the elements themselves. As the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:16, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break? Is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" In reference to 1 Corinthians 10:16, Meyers writes, "We receive and eat the bread, and, through the miraculous action of God's Spirit, we are as a community (re)formed as His Body (1 Cor. 10:16). We drink the cup, and we are, through the blood of the covenant shed for our forgiveness, made into living sacrifices."[136] As ordinary elements of bread and wine are used, the people of God are nourished physically and spiritually by the work of the Holy Spirit. Something "miraculous" occurs as the body of Christ partakes together. Warren summarizes:

> The Eucharist is a profoundly communal meal that reorients us from people who are merely individualist consumers into people who are,

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[134] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 98.

[135] Jeffrey J. Meyers, *The Lord's Service: The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), 226.

[136] Meyers, 225.

> together, capable of imaging Christ in the world… But the Eucharist goes even further. In it, we feast on Christ, and are thereby mysteriously formed together into one body, the body of Christ.[137]

Summary of Liturgical Formation

The review of literature regarding liturgical formation communicates that liturgy in corporate worship does not only engage the mind but also the entire person, including their bodies. The embodied-self engages with the outside world, and it deeply forms and shapes them. Whether the culture, institutions, or society at large, they all communicate through liturgy what the good life is and seek what will bring flourishing. Thus, Jesus asked the disciples what they were seeking. People will worship what they love, not what they think. But if humanity was created to worship God and to seek his kingdom, all other worshipped things are idols or false kingdoms that do not bring true flourishing. Thus, liturgy in corporate worship is intended to redirect hearts and bodies to pursue God and his kingdom. Liturgy cannot be just an information transfer but is also the engagement of the whole person. Everything from the space of the church building and architecture to the responsive readings, singing, praying, confessing sin, and participating in the sacraments are the ways people are formed and shaped on Sunday morning to become more like Jesus and to seek his kingdom, not one's own.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature review examined three areas: a biblical framework for shame, the implications of an honor-shame culture, and the field of liturgical formation. Surveying

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[137] Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, 71.

the biblical framework for shame shows the destructive nature shame has on humanity. The effects of shame cause a person to hide from God and others, isolate, and believe that they are not worthy of love or acceptance. Shame undoes everything God created – a place of relationships, connection, mutual love, and acceptance.

While shame is a result of the Fall and has destroyed relationships between God and humanity and with each other, another aspect to shame exists in most of the world: honor-shame. Whereas in Western culture the individual's actions reflect only themselves, the honor-shame culture finds its worth and sense of identity from the collective, the community to which they belong. Expected behavior brings honor and avoids shame for the whole community. While there are negative outcomes, there are also transformative ways that shame can be redeemed, so that people experience honor and glory through community, discipleship, and hospitality.

Liturgical formation emphasizes that people are more than just their brains. Liturgies and rituals transform minds and entire beings. They are not just things that people do, but they do something to people. If liturgy has this kind of transformative effect on people, what would it look like to apply this to churches on Sunday morning when millions of people experiencing shame enter the sanctuary? How can people experience freedom from shame through the liturgies that are performed each Sunday morning? Chapter four will address these questions and research the ways pastors and worship leaders have implemented effective liturgies to help people experience connection, love, and acceptance and no longer have to hide from God and others.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors and worship leaders design the liturgy of their weekly worship service in order for congregants to experience freedom from their shame. The assumption of this study was that pastors and worship leaders have learned important principles involved in forming a worship service that would address the shame that many in the congregation would experience walking into church on a Sunday morning. How did each element help address shame and help them experience the freedom that comes from the liturgy? To address this purpose, the researcher followed a basic qualitative study to determine best practices for a Sunday worship service. To examine these areas more closely, the following research questions guided the qualitative research:

1. How do pastors and ministry leaders describe the impact of shame amongst their congregants?
2. How familiar are pastors and ministry leaders familiar with honor-shame cultures and what ways do they address it in their worship and liturgy?
3. In what ways do pastors and ministry leaders address shame in the liturgy?
4. What challenges do pastors face in trying to combat shame through the liturgy?
5. What outcomes do pastors and worship leaders desire to observe from liturgy designed for congregants to experience freedom from shame?

Design of the Study

Sharan B. Merriam, in her book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, defines a general, basic qualitative study as "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences."[138] In other words, qualitative research is interested in "how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world.[139] Merriam identifies four characteristics of qualitative research: "focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive."[140]

This study employed a qualitative research design and conducted semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data gathering. This qualitative method provided for the discovery of more comprehensive and descriptive data from participant perspectives in the narrow phenomena of combating shame through the liturgy of a worship service created by pastors. In doing so, it "offers the greatest promise of making a difference in people's lives."[141]

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[138] Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed., The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 6.

[139] Merriam and Tisdell, 15.

[140] Merriam and Tisdell, 15.

[141] Merriam and Tisdell, 1.

Participant Sample Selection

This research required participants, pastors and worship leaders specifically, who were able to communicate in depth about creating liturgies for Sunday worship services that would not only engage those that experienced shame, but also provide freedom from their shame through the power of the Gospel. Therefore, the purposeful study sample consisted of a selection of people from the population of pastors and worship leaders who have thought through the impact of shame on their members and who were responsible for the formation of the liturgy on Sunday services to combat their shame and begin to experience freedom. "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned.[142]

Participants were chosen for a typical type of sample to "reflect the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest"[143] for the data collected. Participants were purposefully chosen with the following criteria: male and female, pastors or worship leaders who oversaw the worship service from beginning to end, theologically reformed, and with at least five years of experience at the same church. Each of these criteria provided for minimizing variables in areas not of focus in this study, while also requiring professional experience of the participants to be significant enough for data towards best practices. The participants varied in race and denominations, which provided a broader range of liturgies and best practices to address shame in worship services.

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[142] Merriam and Tisdell, 96.

[143] Merriam and Tisdell, 97.

The final study was conducted through personal interviews with 6 pastors or worship leaders in all geographic areas of the United States. They were invited to participate via an introductory letter, followed by a personal phone call. All expressed interest and gave written informed consent to participate. In addition, each participant signed a "Research Participant Consent Form" to respect and to protect the human rights of the participants. A sample of the Form is below. The Human Rights Risk Level Assessment is "no risk" according to the Seminary IRB guidelines.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

I agree to participate in the research which is being conducted by Daniel Song to investigate how liturgy can free us from shame for the Doctor of Ministry degree program at Covenant Theological Seminary. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary. I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that they can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, and/or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1) The purpose of the research is to investigate how pastors and worship leaders can shape the liturgy of their corporate worship services to help people who experience shame find freedom through the Gospel of Jesus.
2) Potential benefits of the research may include helping pastors and worship leaders understand the impact of shame on their members, equipping them with thoughtful and effective practices for liturgical worship, and ultimately helping members find freedom from their shame. Though there are no direct benefits for participants, the hope is they will be encouraged by the experience of sharing their experiences with an eager listener and learner.
3) The research process will include six interviews of pastors and worship leaders who are involved in the creating and planning of the worship services at their church. These interviews will be recorded, transcribed and analyzed for the purposes of discerning best practices, ideas, and challenges for liturgy.
4) Participants in this research will take part in a ninety minute interview.
5) Potential discomforts or stresses: none expected.
6) Potential risks: Minimal Risk Level Criteria
   _____Participants are asked to reveal personal information regarding individual viewpoints, background, experiences, behaviors, attitudes or beliefs.
   _____People are selected to participate based upon particularly unique characteristics

(e.g., they all hold the same position in an organization; they have similar training; or, they come from a similar background), or extraordinary life experience.

_____Topics or questions raised are probably politically, emotionally, culturally, spiritually, or psychologically sensitive.

_____Participants are required to reflect upon their own behavior, values, relationships, or person in such a way that one might be influenced or affected, and/or anxiety or concern might be raised regarding the subject matter of the inquiry.

_____Participants may have regrets, concerns, afterthoughts, or reactions to the interview.

_____Participants may become tired, weakened, or be mentally or physically impacted in any way from the research interview.

_____The research may inconvenience participants by causing a delay or intrusion into their activities and/or may take more than 20 minutes of the participants' time.

7) Any information that I provide will be held in strict confidence. At no time will my name be reported along with my responses. The data gathered for this research is confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Audiotapes or videotapes of interviews will be erased following the completion of the dissertation. By my signature, I am giving informed consent for the use of my responses in this research project.
8) Limits of Privacy: I understand that, by law, the researcher cannot keep information confidential if it involves abuse of a child or vulnerable adult or plans for a person to harm themselves or to hurt someone else.
9) The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the study.

_____

Printed Name and Signature of Researcher Date

_____

Printed Name and Signature of Participant Date

Sign both copies of this form. Keep one. Return the other to the researcher. Thank you.

Research at Covenant Theological Seminary which involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to: Director, Doctor of Ministry; Covenant Theological Seminary; 12330 Conway Road; St. Louis, MO 63141; Phone (314) 434-4044.

Data Collection

This study utilized semi-structured interviews for primary data gathering. The open-ended nature of interview questions facilitates the ability to build upon participant responses to complex issues in order to explore them more thoroughly. Merriam states, "neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic."[144] Ultimately, these methods enabled this study to look for common themes, patterns, concerns, and contrasting views across the variation of participants.

The researcher performed a pilot test of the interview protocol to evaluate the questions for clarity and usefulness in eliciting relevant data. Initial interview protocol categories were derived from the literature but evolved around the explanations and descriptions that emerged from doing constant comparison work during the interviewing process. Coding and categorizing the data while continuing the process of interviewing also allowed for the emergence of new sources of data. According to Merriam and Tisdell, "*Coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve pieces of the data*."[145]

The researcher interviewed seven pastors or worship leaders for ninety minutes each. To accommodate participant schedules, the researcher scheduled interviews a month in advance to meet online using an application called Zoom. The researcher videotaped the interviews with a built-in transcription program by Zoom. By conducting

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[144] Merriam and Tisdell, 110–11.

[145] Merriam and Tisdell, 199.

two interviews a month, the researcher completed the data gathering in the course of four months. Directly after each interview, the researcher wrote field notes with descriptive and reflective observations on the interview time.

The interview protocol contained the following questions.

1. How do pastors and ministry leaders describe the impact of shame amongst their congregants?
2. How familiar are pastors and ministry leaders familiar with honor-shame cultures and what ways do they address it in their worship and liturgy?
3. In what ways do pastors and ministry leaders address shame in the liturgy?
4. What challenges do pastors face in trying to combat shame through the liturgy?
5. What outcomes do pastors desire to observe from liturgy designed for congregants to experience freedom from shame?

Data Analysis

As soon as possible and always within one week of each meeting, the researcher collected each of the recorded interviews and transcribed them using the software provided by Zoom. The researcher then went back to listen to the recordings and made any edits that were necessary to the transcripts. This allowed for accuracy as well as the opportunity for the researcher to better familiarize himself with the content.

This study utilized the constant comparison method of routinely analyzing the data throughout the interview process. This method provided for the ongoing revision, clarification, and evaluation of the resultant data categories. The goal of the data analysis

is "to *answer your research question(s).*[146] It is a "complex procedure that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation."[147]

When the interviews and observation notes were fully transcribed into computer files, they were coded and analyzed by Dedoose. The analysis focused on discovering and identifying common themes and patterns across the variation of participants; and congruence or discrepancy between the different groups of participants.

Researcher Position

Merriam and Tisdale emphasize that "the human instrument has shortcomings and biases that can have an impact on the study… Rather than trying to eliminate these biases or 'subjectivities,' it is important to identify them and monitor them in relation to the theoretical framework and in light of the researcher's own interests."[148] Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the researcher's own preference, experiences, and potential biases that may impact the findings.

The researcher is a Korean American male who has resided in the Midwest for most of his life. He is married to a Korean American wife with three children. He is a presbyterian pastor in the Presbyterian Church in America and has pastored a multi-ethnic church for fifteen years. He grew up in a pastor's family his entire life with an influential father who was well known in the Korean churches around the world.

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[146] Merriam and Tisdell, 202.

[147] Merriam and Tisdell, 202.

[148] Merriam and Tisdell, 16.

Being born as a Korean American, living under the microscope of a famous pastor as his father, and living as a minority in a majority culture has shaped his experience of shame in profound ways. While these life experiences, including pastoring a multi-ethnic church, may have potentially influenced interpretations of his data, it most likely has benefited his own ministry and given greater insight into shame and the freedom that comes through liturgy. The researcher's experiences may also strengthen his capacity to understand more deeply the perspectives and language of the participants.

Study Limitations

As stated in the previous section, participants interviewed for this study were limited to those serving as pastors and worship leaders who oversee the liturgy on Sunday morning worship services. Therefore, the study does not necessarily apply to contexts outside of a worship service. Some of the study's findings may be generalized to other similar settings in church contexts or in other Christian gathering contexts and situations such as small groups or individuals walk with Jesus. Readers who desire to generalize some of the particular aspects of these conclusions on shame and liturgy should test those aspects in their particular context. As with all qualitative studies, readers bear the responsibility to determine what can be appropriately applied to their context.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how pastors and worship leaders design the liturgy of their weekly worship service for congregants to experience freedom from their shame. The assumption of this study was that pastors and worship leaders have learned important principles involved in forming a worship service that would address the shame that many in the congregation would experience walking into church on a Sunday morning. This chapter provides the findings of the seven interviews and reports on common themes and relevant insights pertaining to the research questions. To address the purpose of this study, the following research questions guided the qualitative research.

1. How do pastors and ministry leaders describe the impact of shame amongst their congregants?
2. How familiar are pastors and ministry leaders familiar with honor-shame cultures and what ways do they address it in their worship and liturgy?
3. In what ways do pastors and ministry leaders address shame in the liturgy?
4. What challenges do pastors face in trying to combat shame through the liturgy?
5. What outcomes do pastors and ministry leaders desire to observe from liturgy designed for congregants to experience freedom from shame?

Introductions to Participants and Context

The researcher selected seven pastors or worship leaders to participate in this study. Because shame impacts all human beings, the diversity of participants was

important to the research. The diversity was reflected in gender (three women, four men), race (Asian, Caucasian, African American, and bi-racial), geography (West Coast, East Coast, Midwest, and South), denomination (Presbyterian, Anglican, non-denominational), and the types of churches they serve (Asian, Caucasian, multi-ethnic, and Black). Additionally, the participants have had at least ten years of ministry pastoring or leading worship in their churches. All names and identifiable participant information have been changed to protect identities.

Adam is an Asian American pastor in his 40s leading a non-denominational Asian church in a large city on the West Coast. He has also been involved in the music industry and worked as a worship pastor.

Jessica is Caucasian, in her 40s, and a director of worship at a Presbyterian church in the South that is predominantly Caucasian and affluent. She has also authored multiple books on the topic of worship and music.

Bill is a Caucasian pastor leading a Presbyterian church in the Northwest for seven years and has been involved in writing and music.

Abigail is Caucasian and in her 40s. She is on staff at Anglican church plant in the South that is predominantly Caucasian. She has written books on the topics of liturgy, prayer, and spiritual formation.

Chris is bi-racial, in his 40s, and planted a multi-ethnic, Presbyterian church in a lower income, diverse East Coast city.

Sarah is Caucasian, in her late 30s, and leads worship for a multi-ethnic, Presbyterian church on the East Coast, and has published a book on worship and liturgy.

John is an African American pastor in his 50s who planted a Presbyterian church in a predominantly black community in a Midwestern city and pastored a Caucasian church on the East Coast.

The Impact of Shame on the Congregation

The first research question sought to describe the impact shame had on the congregations where the participants served as pastors and worship leaders. The participants shared numerous ways in which shame has impacted their church members as they walk into church on Sunday mornings. While the list is extensive, they can be organized under three categories: identity, behavior, and relationships.

Shame and Identity

All the participants began with identity as the first thing that their congregation struggles with when it came to shame. Whether personal insecurities, societal expectations or the questions of what it meant to be made in the image of God, the impact of shame was most felt in one's core identity. There were three areas of identity that participants shared: sexual, racial, and socio-economic identity.

Sexual Identity

Sexual shame was mentioned by all the participants as a significant source of shame for their congregants. It was often tied to their past and/or present sexual experiences or the ongoing struggle of same sex attraction. Adam stated, "Sexual sin almost has to be its own bucket. In our current culture, it's a big one. From pornography, cohabitation, and infidelity, this is a big source of shame." Chris, Jessica, and Sarah all

used the words, “scared,” “frightened,” and “unloveable,” to describe the expected reactions if people found out that they were struggling with same sex attraction. Chris spoke about many who wrestle with same sex attraction and the common question was, “Who am I? I don’t want this part of myself, yet I can’t resist that part of myself!” Abigail shared what one of their members said, “If people found out about my sexual brokenness, I would never be able to return to church.” John called this the “silent killer” for the church. Because everything related to sex was so privatized and secretive in the church, shame had a stronghold on the people and was slowly killing the people who came to church on Sunday mornings.

Racial Identity

Another area of identity that shame impacted was cultural and racial. While not every participant shared this, all the participants in a minority or minority context did. Chris, Adam, Sarah, and John noted that many in their congregation struggled with shame related to their cultural background or racial identity. John explained, “For a lot of the folks that are African American, there's a shame you feel for who you are and where you live and how you live. They are less than because of the color of their skin.” Adam shared about the Asian American community and those in his church who “feel pressures to excel academically and live up to the expectations that are placed on them.” So, if they fail to live up to the narrative of the “model minority,” it leads to a potential cycle of shame and hiding. In other words, those negative stereotypes about their race are internalized and manifested in feeling that they are less than others.

Generational trauma also played a role in their shame. Chris shared how many in his own congregation and in the area where their church was situated had experienced

shame that had been "passed down through generations because of the historical injustices and ongoing discrimination." This had impacted not only personal shame but how different racial groups interacted with one another. There was an unwillingness to go deeper and be vulnerable because the pain and hurt and shame was holding them captive.

Socio-economic Identity

Lastly, socio-economic factors played a role in their identity and shame. Those participants who served in poorer communities shared how those from lower socio-economic backgrounds felt shame about their financial status and living conditions compared to others who were better off. Abigail shared about a couple who were ashamed of their living conditions and lived in isolation. It was not until Abigail encouraged her to allow people in the church to help clean and renovate their home that they finally opened up and even began to host gatherings and practice hospitality.

Even in wealthier congregations, socio-economic shame lingered for those who felt like they could never measure up to much of the church. Jessica shared how many would attempt to keep up with Joneses "by maintaining a façade of wealth even if it meant that they would be in major debt." In other words, Jessica's congregants would hide from their socio-economic shame by projecting wealth to look like they had succeeded, even if it meant financial ruin.

Shame and Behavior

Along with identity, the second category the participants named was how past and present behaviors or actions impacted their struggle with shame. The common behaviors identified were addictions, performance and achievement, past sins, or sins done to them.

Addictions

Many participants shared that shame stemming from addictions usually meant substance abuse or other addictive behaviors. Chris spoke about observing the vicious cycle of shame driving a member of his church into addictive behaviors, which in turn produced more shame. Chris summarized, “It traps people into a destructive pattern that is often difficult to break because they are isolated from the community they need, and it just exacerbates their feelings of unworthiness.”

Many participants shared other addictions their congregants were struggling with: gambling, pornography, and drugs, medications, and alcohol. Abigail pastored those who struggled with substance abuse and attended meetings with them to walk alongside them. While they were willing to open up to Abigail, they would continue to live a life of hiding and shame because of the fear of being exposed. Pornography addiction was common for all of the participants. Adam shared that even though it is so prevalent in the culture, as well as the church, no one wanted to admit it. Even in discipleship groups that were smaller and more intimate, if people shared, it was “controlled sharing.” They would share only just enough to admit they struggled but not share everything for the fear of being judged and not accepted.

Performance and Achievement

Along with addictions came performance and achievement shame. This type was especially prevalent in high-achieving communities where people felt shame for not meeting certain standards of success. Jessica recalled that in their affluent church, “If you have enough money, you can control people’s perception of you. Join the right clubs, drive the right car, wear the right clothes, and you can affect how people think of you and

view you." One's performance, success, and achievements could hide one's weaknesses, brokenness, and sin. This pattern also came up for Adam in his Asian American context. If the children of immigrants were not successful and did not achieve the "American Dream," there was a lot of shame and hiding. They would remove themselves from their Asian community and the church. There was a running joke among Koreans that those who failed in business and had a lot of shame moved to Atlanta to hide. Bill mentioned that shame was often behind the subtle behavior changes of his members and absence from the regular life of the church. "The first signs of a warning on the dashcam of a car that there's deeper problems of shame are church attendance."

Past and Present Sins

While it is impossible to cover every past and present sin committed by or against another individual, sin was often addressed by the participants. They mentioned members who committed felonies and went to prison, abuse, abortion, premarital sex, infidelity, cheating, tax fraud, and the list goes on. There were also stories about shameful sins committed against them: being victims of abuse, bullied in school, and victims of crimes that left them feeling unworthy.

Abigail spoke of a congregant who had never shared with anyone that she had gotten an abortion. But she felt compelled to share it with Abigail, who at that time was not ordained. So, the woman implored her to become a priest so she could share her story with a woman who could understand her suffering and shame. Sarah told of a situation where no one knew that a man at the church had been in prison. After a few people found out, he immediately left the church and was never seen again.

Shame and Relationships

The last of the three categories mentioned was relational shame. Although most of the participants did not address this theme, the profound impact of broken relationships is worth noting. The two types that were mentioned were familial shame and religious or spiritual shame.

Familial Shame

The family unit can both be positive and negative. Unsurprisingly, when there were ruptures in the family, it often led to detrimental consequences needing repair. If it was not repaired, there was often shame taken on by the members of the family. Bill noted that for many people, "Shame often stems from hidden identity issues related to their families, particularly their fathers." He noted, "A lack of affirmation from fathers, saying 'I love you,' can cause people to seek validation elsewhere." This deficit can lead to potential false identities and shame. Adam reflected similarly and used the concept of "father wounds." He indicated that paternal relationships were often a source of shame that needed to be addressed in faith communities. It was these examples of familial shame that highlighted the importance of how father-child relationships can be a significant source of shame for many in the church, affecting their identities, faith experiences, and interactions within the church.

Religious and Spiritual Shame

Besides familial shame, religious and spiritual shame was discussed by participants who had suffered traumatic experiences in previous churches. Chris brought up that often in his meetings with members, he was "always struck by how often shame is

connected to some experience with Christians that they've had in the past, whether that be interpersonal relationships or with church leadership or with a particular church culture." Thus, these members who have had traumatic experiences in the church were reticent to join because they felt they were not good enough to be a part of a healthy church. Another participant, Bill, described a member struggling with shame because he was coming from a Jehovah's Witness background. He felt unworthy, inadequate, and ashamed of his past religious experience, so he never brought it up to people. There were also stories of spiritual abuse and the shame experienced from it. The common questions they would ask themselves were, "How could I be stupid enough to not see how horrible it was?" They would also be filled with deep shame because of the abuse and the lies that were told to them – they weren't good enough, they didn't repent enough, or they had to do more for the church to earn God's love.

Summary of Shame's Impact on the Congregation

The first question aimed to discover the ways in which shame impacted the participant's congregants in their local churches. Three primary categories arose from the interviews. They revolved around identity, behavior, and relationships. These themes of shame often intersected and compounded each other, creating complex layers of shame that the members brought with them into worship and their communities.

Honor-Shame Culture in Liturgical Worship

The second research question sought to determine the participants' understanding of the honor-shame culture. While the topic of shame in the Western culture has been growing, most of the world has operated in an honor-shame culture for centuries. The

question allowed the opportunity for the participants to understand the nuance of shame, its spectrum, and how it can be reflected in the liturgy of a worship service. There was a wide variety of understanding of the honor-shame culture amongst the participants, and much of it was dependent upon their background and church context.

Silence of Honor-shame in the Western Church

While most of the participants were either familiar with the honor-shame culture or had a limited understanding of it, one participant was less familiar with it. The participant had less direct experience and in-depth knowledge compared to the others. Because of silence or lack of responses, not much time was spent on this question, and so the interview quickly moved on to the following questions. The responses generally stated that they did not know much about honor-shame culture or could not articulate what it meant or describe it. Consequently, the participant was not able to give an adequate response to how liturgical parts of worship might reflect the honor-shame culture. The participant commented, "Unfortunately, I am less familiar with the concept and want to grow in this area. But I do believe that it is something that acts as background noise in people's minds even if it's hard to explain."

Subtleties of Honor-shame in the Western Church

Most of the participants had some knowledge and were able to demonstrate an aptitude to discuss the honor-shame culture and its implications in worship. They were able to discuss honor-shame culture in relationship to their experiences in ministry and worship. Because of the honor-shame culture in Asian and African communities, Adam and John, respectively, were able to share significant insights of honor-shame culture and

the role it plays in their service. For example, Adam shared that in their Asian American context, “The children’s behavior reflected positively or negatively on the entire family.” Similarly, John shared that this would spill out into other areas of ministry too. The families of the pastors, elders, and deacons all had to look good to the community and church because it would reflect how good or bad the church was. Their family would bring honor to the church or bring shame.

One interesting remark came from Abigail, who served in a majority White context. She said, “Her own Southern background has elements of honor-shame culture, and these dynamics can exist within Western contexts as well.” She was suggesting that while honor-shame was predominantly in the East and Southern hemisphere, the reality was that people could identify and operate with a communal lens and not always individually. Abigail went on to say, “If people are able to operate corporately with a sports team, people are able to operate corporately with sin and redemption.”

Strengths of Honor-shame in the Western Church

While some participants would say the Western world viewed shame as only negative and to be completely removed, others saw shame as something that could be positive for the community and the church. Abigail explained, “Shame, like guilt, can be a real and not inherently a bad thing. The idea that we should strive to be shameless is not healthy. There are things that we should feel shame over.” She introduced the concept of “false shame” versus “true shame” and continued. “The key question isn’t whether shame is universally bad, but rather whether we’re experiencing false shame or true shame.” Abigail argued that true shame helps correct wrong doings, keeps one another accountable, and brings flourishing to a community.

Other participants also noted that honor-shame culture is helpful for people in the church to think more corporately than individually. John said, "If the Bible addressed God's people corporately in a context that operated in a honor-shame culture, then there is much for us to learn in our individualistic, Western culture." The stronger emphasis of the collective identity was much more aligned with biblical teachings and the communal nature of the church.

Another strength that a participant shared was the obligations and duties that came in an honor-shame culture. Adam shared that in his predominantly Asian American church, people served because they found it their duty and responsibility to help their community. To do otherwise was to bring shame to themselves and others.

However, many participants did remind themselves that while there were strengths to the honor-shame culture, "false shame" led to hiding, isolation, and unworthiness. So, it was important for them to always bring the gospel of Jesus to the forefront and operate through the lens of the cross.

Practices of Honor-shame in the Western Church

There were many different practices in the liturgy that the participants identified as having elements of honor-shame. Sarah remarked, "All of it reflects honor-shame culture because all of worship is corporate." While that may be true, there were two in particular mentioned most often: confession and communion.

Corporate Confession

By nature, the confession is corporate and emphasizes the collective identity of the church body. Jessica explained, "By confessing together, it reinforces the idea that sin

and shame affect the entire group and not just me." Confession acknowledged the shared responsibility for sin and its consequences. It also reminded the church that there is a public element to it. The congregants addressed their shortcomings not just privately but publicly before God and others. Thus, the result of this public confession was that the entire community was restored with honor together. Bill noted, "The assurance of pardon reminds me that the brother or sister I'm in conflict with is forgiven and made in the image of God. So, he's worthy of honor and glory and forgiveness."

Communion

Communion also is corporate and shared together, thus reflecting the honor-shame culture. John spoke about the corporate nature. "The act of taking the Lord's Supper together reminds us of the corporate nature of faith. It's not meant to be taken alone at your house." Honor also was expressed when the church ate and drank together. Chris noted, "The Lord's Supper symbolizes Christ's sacrifice, which removes shame and restores honor to believers. It's a tangible reminder that despite our unworthiness, Christ honors his people by inviting them to table fellowship." Sharing a meal in an honor-shame culture meant acceptance, inclusion, and honor. Chris goes on to say, "We are the honorary guests to his great feast."

Summary of Honor-Shame Culture in Liturgical Worship

Although the honor-shame culture is predominantly more prevalent outside of the Western world, the participants were able to articulate and address the honor-shame culture and its positive impact in subtle ways in the church. Dangers and pitfalls existed, but the strengths of honor-shame culture, such as accountability and flourishing,

community, and duties and obligations, also came to light. There was also a recognition that corporate confession and communion emphasized the importance and strengths of honor-shame culture. These two practices within worship highlighted the importance of the corporate community, collective identity, and honor and acceptance.

Addressing Shame in Liturgy

The third research question sought to determine the various ways pastors and worship leaders addressed shame in their liturgy. The participants shared many insights that addressed shame that their congregants faced, but they consistently named the following ways of addressing shame in their worship: vulnerable leadership, prayers of lament, importance of confession and communion, diverse cultural traditions, creative arts, and physical posture.

Vulnerable Leadership

All the participants stressed the importance of intentional vulnerability modeled by the leadership of the church. Whether during the liturgical elements of worship or preaching, sharing their own struggles created a culture where it was safe for others in the church to be honest about their own shame. Jessica shared, “While it isn’t during our worship service, our staff meetings always begin with check-ins where leaders are practicing vulnerability. This sets a culture where our leadership, pastors and all, are living out a practice of vulnerability and connection.” Bill went further to say, “Pastors must confront their own shame to avoid passing it on to their church members and other leaders.”

While it might seem easy enough to say that leadership must exemplify vulnerability for the congregants to also combat their own shame, pastors and worship leaders must first do the hard work of working out their own stories of shame. A great example was a story Jessica shared about her senior pastor. She had shared a personal story of deep pain that required her to step away for a season of ministry. Instead of receiving condemnation, she was met with support and love. This exchange of openness cultivated a community of grace, confession, and honor. If the senior pastor had struggled with shame, she believed he would have shamed her because shamed people shame people. Instead, he honored her and showed grace because he had worked through his own stories of shame.

Abigail agreed as well and emphasized, "Creating a culture of vulnerability starts with leadership." She told of a church planter who was open about his history of addiction with his superiors before they decided to hire him. This level of honesty set the tone for the entire congregation and created a church where people were open about their struggles. Chris specifically shared how often his own stories of struggle and failure in his sermons would connect with congregants' struggles and failures. It would give them the courage to share with the pastor and eventually have the courage to share with their community groups.

Overall, the participants agreed that when leaders modeled vulnerability and humility about their own struggles from the pulpit, a safer environment emerged for members to share their own experiences with shame, seek help, and find healing through the worship service.

Prayers of Lament

Incorporating prayers of lament in worship services allowed people to name their suffering and connect with those also experiencing similar struggles.

Prayers of lament allowed a space for the congregation to express their struggles and bring to the light what had been in the dark. Chris recalled that they had a time of lament every single Sunday to address the church's concerns and provide a dedicated space to lament. He said it was a "significant formative element" in their worship service. He also said that for many, the church experience was all about celebrations and joys. "You're supposed to have it all together and come bearing no problems," he remarked. "So, it creates a holistic worship experience that acknowledges both the joys and sorrows of the Christian life." In other words, it balanced the victory-oriented elements of worship with space to address suffering, pain, and shame. John also shared that he incorporated lament in their service every Sunday. "Not only does it allow them to bring their cries for help to the Lord, but it helps them connect with one another." This element was what was needed to find freedom from shame through connection, community, and disclosure.

Interestingly, while Bill also noted the importance of lament in their liturgy, he made the distinction that lament is not the same as the confession of sin. For the participants who named lament as an important lament of the liturgy to address shame, it was used in the place of confession. Bill argued that confession of sin is about sin, but "Lament is about the problems of the world and the effect of the fall." He believed that lament belonged in the prayers of the people rather than during the corporate confession of sin because this is "where people cry out to God and ask him to act on the issues they're lamenting about."

Either way, the participants who spoke about the importance of lament all believed it was necessary to allow congregants to express their pain, find solidarity with others, and experience freedom from their shame through the power of the Gospel.

Importance of Confession and Communion

Two other important elements of liturgy that the participants identified were corporate confession and the sacrament of communion. Of all the liturgical elements in a service, these two were mentioned most often by the participants because of the shared experience and the powerful emphasis of the congregants' identity as a beloved child of God, forgiven and invited to the table.

Corporate Confession and Assurance

There were several reasons most of the participants named corporate confession and assurance as a crucial practice of the liturgy to free people from shame. The corporate confession, along with a silent time of confession for individual reflection, followed by words of forgiveness, emphasized the truth that God's people are forgiven and worthy of his love, even when the worst is known. Sarah said that this practice "creates a space of shared vulnerability and honesty and reduces isolation by confessing their brokenness and sin together as a community." Adam mentioned that it wasn't just for the congregants but also for the leaders of the church. "It's everyone! It includes pastors, elders, staff. We all struggle with sin and shame." Abigail made the point that "bringing hidden things to light through honest confession is often the only way of breaking shame's isolating trap. The communal nature of these practices seems particularly effective in combating shame's tendency to drive people into hiding." Bill

also expressed hope that these practices "would lead to a church where people confidently confess their sins because they trust in Jesus' identity for them rather than being defined by their shame.

Incorporating regular corporate confession and assurance of forgiveness addressed shame and brought freedom to the congregation because it provided a structured, regular practice of vulnerability and forgiveness, and reinforced their identity in Christ in the context of the entire community.

Communion

The participants consistently emphasized the importance of communion (Lord's Table) as much as they did corporate confession because of the central importance in addressing shame and forming identity and belonging in the family of God. Both Sarah and Bill viewed communion as the pinnacle and climax of the liturgy. Sarah said, "Everything in the liturgy is preparing you and moving you towards the Supper. We're not going to go take his body and blood when we have not received the assurance of forgiveness." Bill commented, "It's such a powerful act that forces people struggling with shame to accept that they are redeemed and forgiven. It's this beautiful act of taking the bread and the cup together that reinforces the corporate identity of believers as the body of Christ."

Sarah's conviction that communion was vital, she said, was communicated through the length of time spent on the Lord's Supper. Her church intentionally lengthened the communion portion of their service to emphasize its significance.

The importance of communion for the people of God was clear from the participants. They all saw it as a tangible reminder of Jesus' sacrifice and love that

directly countered the feelings of shame and unworthiness. As Abigail reflected, “At the table, you are loved, and you belong.”

Diverse Cultural Traditions

Several participants shared how their churches incorporated diverse cultural traditions and elements into their liturgies to address shame from different perspectives. Sarah shared how they accommodate various cultural expressions of shame and honor. She said that they emphasize demonstrating the “manifold beauty of the church” by integrating diverse cultural elements. For example, they used different liturgies from around the world along with creeds better suited for the corporate nature of the faith.

Similarly, Abigail shared how their church uses Kenyan liturgy during Epiphany and Pentecost because of its communal language, using “we” instead of “I.” She shared that the Kenyan liturgy symbolically “sends their troubles to the cross of Christ,” which exposes congregants to a different cultural perspective on shame and community.

In these ways, diverse cultural elements create a more inclusive environment that can address shame from multiple perspectives and help congregants from different backgrounds feel more connected to the worship of God and the body.

Creative Arts

While the participants did not provide extensive examples of the creative arts in addressing shame, there were some very helpful insights especially with regards to music.

Jessica encouraged original music by congregation members to combat shame in worship. While it does not explicitly focus on shame, this creative outlet allows for real, authentic, and honest expressions for their own context. It is not written by someone they

do not know but by their own people who experience the same hardships and struggles within that local community, thus, connecting people to each other emotionally.

Sarah also shared that they intentionally incorporate diverse musical styles in their worship to represent the different cultural expressions. They use traditional hymns, contemporary gospel music, and classical pieces to create a welcome environment for people from various backgrounds and create a safe place to allow the gospel to free them from their shame.

Besides music, Bill communicated the importance of custom art pieces in their sanctuary that depict the gospel story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. He said he believes that these visual elements reinforce the congregation's identity within the larger narrative of the gospel. John alluded to the stained glass windows in his church that create a sense of "otherness" in the worship space. He believed it addresses shame by creating an environment distinct from everyday life.

Physical Posture

Only two participants mentioned physical posture as a method of addressing shame in the liturgy. While not a common response from the group of participants, these two recognized the important role it plays in the liturgy. Bill's church practices kneeling during confession and the raising of the hands to receive the benediction. In these ways, he said, "Incorporating bodily engagement in liturgy reminds us that we're not just souls with a mind, but our bodies inform that we need Jesus, and we receive his blessing. We don't know it; we feel it through our bodies." Abigail also has everyone in the church, including the clergy and leaders, kneel for corporate confession. She says, "The physical act of humbling themselves as a community is seen as particularly powerful in addressing

shamed people because after confessing, they stand and receive absolution pronounced over the entire congregation including the leaders." These physical acts and postures strengthen the narrative that everyone is broken, sinful, they are not alone in their struggles, and yet they are also loved and forgiven.

Summary of Addressing Shame in Liturgy

The third question asked the participants the ways they address shame in their liturgy. While many approaches were shared, the most common exhibited vulnerability and humility, prayers of lament, corporate confession and communion, diverse worship traditions, creative arts, and physical posture within the liturgy. These practices in their liturgy reminded people of their identity in Christ and God's grace and forgiveness for them, and also fostered community to counteract the deadly effects of shame.

Challenges in Combatting Shame

The fourth question asked the participants the challenges they confronted when they implemented best practices for addressing shame in their liturgy. The participants named five: discomfort with vulnerability, resistance to change, theological pushback, re-traumatization of shame, and a lack of engagement.

Discomfort with Vulnerability

The most common challenges the participants faced was their congregants' discomfort with vulnerability. There was a fear of rejection or judgment. Many worried that if they opened up about their struggles and weaknesses, others in the church would think less of them or reject them all together. Jessica shared about a teenager who

struggled with anxiety but was afraid to share with her friends in youth group. She finally did at a youth retreat and was "surprised and relieved to find that her peers still loved her and accepted her."

However, some related negative experiences when vulnerability was met with ridicule, dismissal, or betrayal. John shared that one of their congregants who opened up about addiction was met with silence and ambivalence. No one offered to help or walk with him when he needed it most.

There was also the fear of losing control. Being vulnerable means letting go of control over how others perceive you. If the desire is to maintain control of a façade of success and perfection, being vulnerable about weaknesses and struggles feels like death. Jessica shared that in their affluent community, "Women did everything to remain in the community and put up a front like accumulating debt." Otherwise, they would be afraid of "getting kicked out of the community." It demonstrated how fear of vulnerability can manifest in various ways.

Resistance to Change

Another challenge the participants faced was a resistance to change. Particularly those from more individualistic backgrounds resisted communal liturgies that emphasized collective identity. For example, when Abigail introduced the Kenyan liturgy that used more communal language, some of the parishioners objected, calling it "socialist" simply because it differed from their familiar individualistic approach. Some participants such as John believed that the resistance to change had a lot to do with comfort with tradition. They found a lot of security and familiarity in routine, so these changes felt "disruptive and unsettling," according to Adam.

Theological Pushback

Along with resistance to change was theological pushback. Both Sarah and Bill shared that some of their people found the liturgical practices too similar to Catholic traditions and resisted their implementation. Bill commented that some in the church "worried about compromising their theological commitments." The pastors and leadership had to carefully explain the purpose and historical roots of these practices. Sarah explained that "the why" was so important for the leadership and pastors to address over time. The congregants did not understand it immediately, but over time, many began to understand how the liturgy would address the shame people brought into worship. Sarah and Bill shared that it was important to "ground new practices in Scripture" and "communicate clearly about the biblical basis for new practices."

Re-Traumatization of Shame

A fourth challenge brought up was the potential for re-traumatization of past shame and pain. When the pastors or worship leaders would address shame in the preaching of God's word or encourage confession during the time of cleansing, there was a risk of inadvertently re-traumatizing individuals in the church. For example, John shared that anytime certain words or topics were used or introduced, one of their members would experience panic attacks and had to leave the service. Adam shared a few instances when bringing up stories of freedom from sexual brokenness had "unintentionally reinforced the feelings of shame they were covering up."

While responses are difficult to predict, participants offered some helpful suggestions to navigate these challenges. For instance, Chris thought about using carefully chosen language that acknowledged shame without dwelling on it. As an

example, he shared about a recent sermon that compared God's love for his people to a marriage relationship. He thought it was a great sermon until he heard that many singles did not attend their small groups that week because they did not want to have to talk about marriage. Chris said, "It was a big fail for me because it didn't cross my mind that something beautiful and true would still be significant areas of shame for them."

Lack of Engagement

The last challenge named was a lack of engagement with the service. Bill mentioned the difficulties in getting people to connect with the words and the actions of the liturgy rather than just "worshipping in a rote manner." There were several reasons, and then a few conclusions emerged with general agreement.

Chris noted that the cultural and demographic differences play a part. Diversity itself created challenges in making the people in the church feel included and meeting the needs of the different cultures. He said the results made people feel disconnected and less engaged. So, Chris tried to have his congregation engage with their diverse community and neighborhood to address real needs, hoping the care would be reflected in corporate worship as well.

Another reason for disengagement was the inadequate connection to identity issues. When churches fail to effectively address issues of identity and help people understand their worth in Christ, it can lead to disengagement. Bill said, "Everything in our world tells us it's all about your performance. So, if the church says do this and don't do that, we sound just like the world. What they need to hear is that they are made in the image of God, and we are sons and daughters of the king." Bill believed that they need to hear a better story of the gospel.

Summary of Challenges in Combatting Shame

The interview participants identified several challenges they faced when combatting shame through their worship service. One challenge was the discomfort of being vulnerable. While it is essential, the participants saw how difficult it was for their congregants to open up. Another challenge was the resistance to change. Many of the participants' congregants struggled to adapt to new challenges, even calling the pastors "socialists." There was also the challenge of theological pushback. Some were afraid that the participants were not adhering to Reformed doctrine in combatting shame. Another challenge was re-traumatization of shame and reinforcement of shame with certain stories or trigger words. Lastly, there was the lack of engagement from a significant group of church members. There was a disconnection between the liturgy and the shame they experienced, so it was easier for them to pull away and not engage the service.

Desired Outcomes

The fifth and final question asked for their desired outcomes and hopes, if their churches and ministries became places where people experienced freedom from shame. All the participants paused for some time and showed a variety of emotions as they dreamed of what could be if their churches were places of connection where shame no longer held people captive. Three themes came to the forefront: healing and transformation, genuine community, and missional impact.

Healing and Transformation

The participants voiced the expectation that people would experience healing and transformation in their individual lives. Sarah described their people as those "who are

radiant with the love of Christ" when they have experienced healing from shame. Their view of themselves would mirror how God views them. Not only would they feel loved, but they would also be delighted in. Bill described it as understanding their value as children of God. John shared how beautiful it would be to be transformed by the "felt realities of our adoption as sons and daughters, not just on Sundays but all week long."

Often family wounds need to be addressed. Adam stated, "Healing in immigrant families with honor-shame cultures involve confronting and working through deep sources of shame and pain." Doing the hard work of dismantling shame in their individual lives through worship would "address deep hidden sins by bringing them to the light," according to Abigail.

Genuine Community

The hope was for many people to experience genuine community where they can be known and receive grace and compassion. Adam shared that his hope would be that their church could be "a space where people can bring their whole selves, all their weaknesses and shortcomings, to every kind of group or space they inhabit." He mentioned marriages as well. "So many marriages would be healed because they are navigating their marital issues alone. If they were to come to the light and willing to share with community, 75 percent of issues would go away." In addition to marriages, Jessica and Chris also spoke of addictions, mental illness, and hostility being torn down.

Missional Impact

The last hope mentioned by the participants was the missional impact they longed for. As people experienced freedom from shame, Bill believed this freedom "would lead

to a missional impact with transformed individuals naturally wanting to share that freedom with others." Sarah hoped the people in her church would "become agents of social change." Such impact could happen only with a commitment to discipleship and ministries of presence, walking alongside people to help them experience freedom, according to Sarah. Jessica said something similar when she said that freedom from shame would have a "contagious effect" on the people in their church and neighborhood. People who "care less about the opinion of others" project the winsome joy of freedom from shame. She wanted to see a community that would "normalize seeking help for struggles" and make it part of the story shared to the world.

Summary of Desired Outcomes

The participants shared much hope for what God could do when people experience freedom from shame. Individually, they would experience healing and transformation from personal sin to family trauma to addictions. Relationally, they would experience genuine community because there would be no need to hide and live a life of duplicity. Lastly, there would be hope for the world because people who experience healing and freedom would share that same vulnerability and connection with others.

Summary of Findings

This chapter examined the findings given by pastors and worship leaders who design their liturgy in worship to help congregants experience freedom from their shame. They were asked five questions to collect findings and then organize them. The first question examined shame's impact on their church members. The pervasive nature of shame was seen through fractured identity, in issues of sex, race, and socio-economic

status. It was also seen through fractured behaviors of addictions, performance, and past sins. Lastly, fractured relationships of family and religion was a source of their shame.

The second question examined if the participants had an awareness of the cultural values of honor-shame and if it was present in their liturgy. While there was some uncertainty voiced, a subtle understanding of how it played out in their people and their liturgy emerged. Some saw the strengths of honor-shame culture, particularly in the liturgical elements of confession and community. These elements highlighted the importance of community, identity, and acceptance.

The third question asked how the participants addressed shame in their liturgy so their church would experience freedom. Many different ideas were shared, but the most common were vulnerable leadership, prayers of lament, confession and communion, diverse traditions, creative arts such as music, and physical posture during worship.

The fourth question examined the challenges that participants faced when combatting shame through the changes in their liturgy. The first was the discomfort and reticence to be vulnerable. Second, they recounted resistance to change. Third, there was theological pushback. There was also a re-traumatization of shame sometimes triggered by stories shared or words spoken. Lastly, the participants faced the challenge of a lack of engagement because it was easier to disengage than to engage their shame.

The last question allowed the participants to paint a picture of their hopes and desires if their churches actually experienced freedom from shame through their liturgy. Their vision encompassed individual healing and transformation, relational flourishing of a genuine, authentic community, and a missional, outward-facing community that would be vulnerable and bring freedom and life to those outside their church community.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how pastors and worship leaders design the liturgy of their weekly worship service so that congregants experience freedom from their shame. In Chapter 2, the review of literature shed insight on the question by examining three areas: a biblical framework for shame, honor-shame culture, and liturgical formation.

The following research questions guided the research.

1. How do pastors and ministry leaders describe the impact of shame amongst their congregants?
2. How familiar are pastors and ministry leaders familiar with honor-shame cultures and what ways do they address it in their worship and liturgy?
3. In what ways do pastors and ministry leaders address shame in the liturgy?
4. What challenges do pastors face in trying to combat shame through the liturgy?
5. What outcomes do pastors and worship leaders desire to observe from liturgy designed for congregants to experience freedom from shame?

Summary of the Study and Findings

This study reviewed relevant literature in three areas and analyzed interview data from seven pastors and worship leaders. The literature review examined three primary areas of research: the biblical framework for shame, honor-shame culture, and liturgical formation.

The first area of literature review examined the biblical framework of shame. The opening chapters of the Bible recount the devastating impact sin had on Adam and Eve, namely that Adam and Eve experienced shame. This was why they hid, isolated themselves from one another and God, and questioned their own identity and self-worth. They blamed each other and saw others as a threat, eventually leading to one son killing the other. By God's grace, however, the story does not end there, and the good news of freedom from shame is ultimately found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Even when the worst is known about God's creation, he offers love and pursues his creation. This was beautifully on display when Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at the well. She was filled with shame, but because Jesus offered her dignity and worth even though he knows about her immoral life and ethnicity, she was transformed by his love, and shame was lifted. However, to be freed from shame, Jesus ultimately had to go to the cross and rise from the dead so that shamed people might experience honor, glory, and adoption into the family of God.

The second area of literature review examined the honor-shame culture. Understanding the honor-shame culture is crucial because it is the water that most of the world swims in. To see shame described as only bad and negative, as it has been in the West, would be narrow. Having a fuller picture of shame allows followers of Jesus to grow and see how honor-shame impacts different areas of life. The literature examined three areas: community, discipleship, and hospitality. Because the honor-shame culture in most of the world is about the community and not the individual, the actions one takes reflect onto the entire community. Whether it is family, tribe, or organization, success and failure have direct implications on the community. Thus, shame can be used

positively for the moral formation of an individual and community. Their worth and self is determined by their collective community. Consequently, discipleship and spiritual formation must be examined in an honor-shame culture because what a Western individual deems inappropriate might actually be accepted by an Asian American and vice versa. Thus, each person has blind spots. By understanding honor-shame culture in the Western church, followers of Jesus can grow and disciple more effectively. Lastly, hospitality in the honor-shame culture was examined as a practice that brings about transformation from shame because of the acceptance, welcome, and safety people experience.

The last area of literature reviewed was liturgical formation in worship. Liturgy is formational because it engages not only the mind but also the entire person, including their bodies. As the embodied-self engages with the outside world, it deeply forms and shapes them. Whether the culture, institutions, or society at large, each communicates through liturgy what the good life is and seeks what will bring flourishing. Thus, Jesus asks the disciples what they seek. People worship what they love, not what they think. But if humanity was created to worship God and to seek his kingdom, all created things worshipped instead of God become idols or false kingdoms that do not bring true flourishing. Liturgy in corporate worship redirects hearts and bodies to pursue God and his kingdom. Liturgy cannot be just information transfer but the engagement of the whole person. Everything from the space of the church building and architecture to the responsive readings, singing, praying, confessing sin, and the sacraments are ways in which people are formed and shaped on Sunday morning to become more like Jesus and to seek his kingdom, not their own.

For the interview portion, seven participants, pastors and worship leaders, were asked five questions. The first question aimed to discover the ways in which shame impacted the participant's congregants in their local churches. Three primary categories arose from the interviews. They revolved around identity, behavior, and relationships. These themes of shame often intersected and compounded each other, creating complex layers of shame that the members brought with them into worship and their communities. Addressing these various forms of shame from sexual identity to religious and spiritual shame required a multifaceted approach in liturgy and worship.

The second question examined the honor-shame culture prevalent outside the Western world. The participants articulated the honor-shame culture and its impact in subtle and obvious ways. Dangers and pitfalls exist with shame, but there were strengths of the honor-shame culture such as accountability and flourishing, community, and duties and obligations. There was also the recognition that corporate confession and communion emphasized the importance and strengths of honor-shame culture. These two practices within worship highlighted the importance of the corporate community, collective identity, and honor and acceptance.

The third question asked the participants the ways they address shame in their liturgy. While many approaches were voiced, the most common were leadership that exhibited vulnerability and humility, prayers of lament, a corporate emphasis on confession and communion, diverse cultural traditions, creative arts, and physical posture within the liturgy. These liturgical elements reminded people of their identity in Christ, God's grace and forgiveness, and their community – all of which counteracted the deadly effects of shame in their lives.

The fourth question examined the challenges participants faced when combatting shame through their worship service. The common challenges named were the discomfort of being vulnerable, resistance to change, theological pushback, re-traumatization of shame, and a lack of engagement from some of their church members.

The last question examined the participants' hopes and desires for the possibilities of what God can do when people experience freedom from shame. Individually, they would experience healing and transformation from personal sin to family trauma to addictions. Relationally, they would experience genuine community because there would be no need to hide and live a life of duplicity. Lastly, there would be hope for the world because people who experience healing and freedom will likely share that same vulnerability and connection with others.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, the literature and interview research are compared to identify ways to address shame in liturgical worship so that people in churches may experience freedom from shame. The analysis revealed agreement, as was expected, between the literature and interviews. However, there were also elements that were either left out or surprising. Two areas of interest arose from these findings: the complexities of shame and the importance of gathered worship.

Complexities of Shame

Throughout the literature review and interviews with the participants, the variety of facets that shame takes on in our world and in our interactions with each other arose: destructive, subtle, and good shame.

Destructive Shame

Shame emerged as a pervasive and destructive force in the lives of individuals and communities across different contexts of the participants interviewed. The interviews revealed that shame went beyond mere guilt for actions. It struck people at their identity and insisted that they were unworthy and inherently bad people.

Those hiding from shame, and thus missing from their church family, exhibited the effects of shame, which led to disconnection from their community. Isolation was a church trait that many participants shared about their congregation. Those struggling with shame would not invite people over to their home and pretend to be someone they were not, often creating a façade of perfection.

This hiding often led to participants to mention that shame thus prevented opportunities for authentic relationships and created barriers to God's love and grace. Some shared that it led to performance-based faith, and a hoping that what they did would help them achieve God's love, which is antithetical to the gospel of Jesus.

Everything that was shared of the destructive nature of shame aligned with the biblical story of how shame entered our world and its destructive consequences. The origin of shame continues to wreak havoc our world thousands of years later. The lies Satan told Adam and Eve continue to be told to us. As Thompson wrote, "You, as it turns out, are *less than you think.* You. Are. Not. Enough."[149] We continue to isolate and hide as Adam and Eve did. Community is broken, and we see one another as "competitors," "strangers," and "rivals."[150] Our world that was once "very good" (Genesis 1:31) and

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[149] Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*, 103.

[150] Jamieson, *The Face of Forgiveness*, 80.

humanity “not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25) are now devasted by the impact of shame. Adam says, “I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” (Genesis 3:10) The destructive nature of shame continues to impact us today.

Therefore, it is crucial that the church bring shame to the light. Shame wants to hide and stay in the dark, but if the church identifies shame and its impact on the church and people, I believe it is the beginning of healing and freedom from shame. As God pursued Adam and Eve and asked where they were, the church can pursue and ask also.

Subtle Shame

Identifying shame and naming its impacts are important because failure to do so allows shame to hide in the background and slowly kill us. As Bill shared in his interview, shame acts as “background noise.” Pastors sort of know it is there, but we forget because it is so subtle. This is the nature of shame. All the interviewees said that they had not thought much about shame and ways to address it in worship and liturgy. Shame operates beneath the surface of conscious awareness. Many recognized that the subtle nature of shame stemmed from deeply ingrained identity issues rooted in family dynamics or past trauma. They could talk around shame and its impact and still fail to address it head on.

The literature agreed on the subtle nature of shame. It does not manifest overtly in our Western churches and acts as “background noise” compared to Eastern and Southern world where honor-shame is the dominant culture. “Approximately 80 percent of the

global population… runs on the honor-shame operating system. Westerners not familiar with honor and shame, globally speaking, are the odd ones out."[151]

I believe this blind spot is where the church must grow in their understanding: how shame operates in individuals, relationships, and their faith. If shame continues to operate as just white noise, pastors and leaders of churches will not be able to effectively address the issues that are outwardly visible.

Good Shame

The last facet of shame to consider is good shame. Abigail, in her interview, called it "true shame." She made the argument that there's a distinction between false shame and true shame in Scripture. Not all shame is negative. There are real obligations to community. The goal isn't to be shameless but to address false shame and find redemption for true shame through the gospel of Jesus. Other participants echoed Abigail, stressing the importance of honor-shame culture and its emphasis on the collective identity. Adam spoke on the importance of finding our individual identity from the collective. This is how the gospel of Jesus sets us free from shame. We find our collective identity in Jesus who calls us sons and daughters and adopts us into his family.

The literature reviews also echoed the importance of good shame. While the Western culture views shame very negatively, shame has positive impacts because it indicates real obligations to the community and thus shouldn't be entirely eliminated. Te-

[151] Georges and Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures*.

Li Lau argued that we need to "rehabilitate shame"[152] because it can be used for moral formation. Without shame, our world could not function, and it would be absolute chaos.

In the words of Abigail, we need to distinguish between false shame and true shame. Given that the gospel was writing in an honor-shame culture, the church needs to understand how the gospel interacts with honor-shame. We need to reject shame that is false while embracing the good shame of obligations we have to each other and the community, as well as the gospel truths of where we find our identity.

Importance of Gathered Worship

Gathered worship holds a central place in the life of the church and its people, serving as a place to experience spiritual formation, community, and freedom from shame. Analyzing data from the literature review and interviews, several important elements from gathered worship emerged that help people experience freedom from shame: corporate identity, specific elements of liturgy, embodiment, and pastoral leadership.

Corporate Identity

The corporate identity of worship is a fundamental aspect of the Christian faith that goes well beyond the individual experiences. It reflects the collective nature of the church as the body of Christ. This communal aspect of worship reflects the triune God's relational nature and shapes the members' identities as part of the larger family of God.

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[152] Te-Li Lau, *Defending Shame: Its Formative Power in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 231.

Bill spoke about the importance of why we gather every Sunday. It is to renew and remember our covenant and identity in Christ as the entire people of God. He spoke about the worship service telling the grand story of God and how it reinforces our collective identity as God's people. Everything we do on Sunday morning is as the corporate and not the individual.

The corporate aspect of worship goes against the very grain of shame. Shame wants to hide and isolate whereas worship forces us to gather together. But Abigail reminded us that the call by God in the beginning of service emphasizes that God desires to be with his people, which sets the tone for a relational encounter.

The literature agrees with the importance of corporate worship. Smith wrote, "Worship that restores us is worship that restories us."[153] But what has happened in the church is that worship focuses more on the individual than the corporate. Strawn and Brown observed that the focus on the "inward experience" of God isolates individuals from the rest of the people who have gathered. It was more "Jesus and me" than "Jesus and we."[154]

Thus, it is important that the church gather and focus on the corporate nature of worship. To emphasize the collective rather than the individual fulfills the purpose of God, gathering his people and dismantling the isolation and hiding that shame fosters.

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[153] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 95.

[154] Strawn, Brad D., "Liturgical Animals: What Psychology and Neuroscience Tell Us about Formation and Worship," 13.

Liturgy

Liturgy in gathered worship plays a crucial role in freeing people from shame by providing a structured, communal experience that addressees our deepest needs for identity, belonging, forgiveness, and love. Both the literature review and interviews highlighted the importance of liturgy in several ways: confession, communion, and a few ways that were unexpected but helpful.

Confession

The practice of corporate confession was often shared as a crucial element for addressing shame within the liturgy. There was an understanding that confession created a sense of vulnerability and acceptance. It combatted shame by bringing hidden things to light and receiving God's grace and acceptance despite their struggles.

The literature did not focus on confession itself but reflected on the importance of baptism as an important element to address shame, for the same reasons as confession. Baptism reminds us, whether the act of being baptized or looking back at our own baptism, that we belong to the Lord. It is a "pledge of allegiance" reminding us that we are citizens of another place.[155] Despite sin and struggles, God delights in us. As Warren wrote, "We are united with Christ, and the approval of the Father is spoken over us. We are marked from our first waking moment by an identity that is given to us by grace: an identity that is deeper and more real than any other identity we will don on that day."[156]

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[155] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 115.

[156] Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, 19.

Communion

Communion, or the Lord's Supper, was highlighted by the literature and interviews as an important element of liturgy. It reminds us that Christ's sacrifice and acceptance into God's family directly counters feelings of unworthiness and gives us honor at his table. Sarah reminded us that everything in the liturgy points to this point of the service. We are called to worship so that we can feast at the table. We are forgiven so that we can come cleansed at the table. We are instructed by God's word so that we can eat at the table. Wolterstorff called it "the high point" of the liturgy.[157]

The literature also reminded us that communion exists not just between the people and God, but also horizontally, among the people of God. We commune with God and one another. Smith notes, "We are invited to sit down for supper with the Creator of the universe, to dine with the King. But we are *all* invited to do so, which means we need to be reconciled to one another as well. Our communion with Christ spills over into communion as his body."[158] Meyers states, it "teaches that our present experience of God's presence and blessing is incomplete."[159]

The Lord's Supper is also a foretaste of the wedding supper of the Lamb when the bride, the body of Christ, will be finally wed to the groom, Jesus. There will be no more tears, sin, and death. No more shame as well. While not shared by the participants in the interviews, this is important to note for the church. It is not just a remembrance but points us forward to the hope we have that shame will be eradicated once and for all.

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[157] Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship*, 146.

[158] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 98.

[159] Meyers, *The Lord's Service*, 226.

Unexpectant and Helpful

The following three elements of liturgy came as unexpected surprises in the interviews with participants: the importance of lament, music, and liturgy from other countries. While the literature review did not mention them, all three emphasize the corporate nature of the people.

Lament provides space for the expression of vulnerability. Everyone can hear voices expressing their pain, struggles, and shame in a safe environment. It gives congregants permission to be honest about their emotions and experiences. It establishes a culture that invites others into our struggles and where hiding is discouraged.

Music also emphasizes the corporate identity, specifically songwriting from within the church. Jessica shared the importance of members writing songs sung by the congregation. It allowed the congregation to articulate feelings of shame that people struggle with and allowed an outlet for their emotions. It also allowed for common vocabulary to process these feelings together. Most music does not address shame, so writers can be given the freedom to do so. And because it is written by a church's own people, it will address issues or themes relevant to their experience with shame.

Lastly, Abigail brought up the importance of using Kenyan liturgy in their services. While the West is focused on individualism and guilt, liturgies from around the world incorporate more of the collective and shame. Despite the challenges mentioned in the previous chapter, diversity of liturgies would encourage confessions and creeds that the Western church could benefit from.

Embodiment

There were a lot of shared thoughts around embodied practices for gathered worship by the participants interviewed and in the literature review. When it came to the question of how spiritual growth is formed and shaped, the literature emphasized the importance of our bodies as much as our minds. "We don't consciously think about most of what we do; rather, we react in embodied ways to environmental stimuli… We believe that these are formed through a long history of embodied social interactions – liturgies if you will – in which humans are constantly embedded with other bodies."[160] Thus, the Apostle Paul says that we are to "put on Christ." (Colossians 3:12-16) There is an important aspect of practicing and engaging with our physical bodies.

The participants shared similar thoughts. Liturgy must engage the whole person, body, mind, and spirit. We are not just thinkers, and our physical actions can have profound impacts on our spiritual and emotional states. Bill's church knelt for confession to speak and act out humility and the need for cleansing. The physical act coupled with verbal confession broke through the isolation that shame often creates. He also had his church stand to receive the pardon of forgiveness. Standing at that moment during church internalized the truth of being forgiven while confident that we are accepted and loved. The sacraments are another example of embodied practices of liturgy. From the physical elements of water, wine, and bread, they are tactile, physical objects that remind us of our embodied existence. Jessica shared how corporate singing reminds us of our unity and

[160] Strawn, Brad D., "Liturgical Animals: What Psychology and Neuroscience Tell Us about Formation and Worship," 5.

shared experience as we engage the body through breath and voice. We are together in songs of celebration, joy, thanksgiving, lament, and shame.

Pastoral Leadership

Lastly, there were several participants who explained how leadership set the example of humility and vulnerability, important factors of dismantling shame. Creating a culture of vulnerability and honesty within the church is crucial for addressing shame. The process starts with the leadership and builds over time through shared experiences.

While no one mentioned the value of leadership setting an example in the literature, the biblical framework of shame gives us the ultimate example in Jesus. God became man, suffered and died on the cross, naked and humiliated. "Furthermore, his crucifixion exposed Christ in his *nakedness*… To be naked had become over the centuries a deeply shameful thing… Part of the intent of crucifixion was to heap shame on the victim to an ultimate extent and as such was reserved only for slaves and those who were not Roman citizens."[161] As the Hebrew writer reminds the church, "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame…." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Likewise, the participants shared that leadership must exhibit humility and vulnerability from the pulpit. Through sermon illustrations, and stories during liturgy, the congregants could see a leader humble and vulnerable, exhibiting weakness and dependence on the Lord. Positively, it was like the stories Jessica shared of her pastor

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[161] Stockitt, *Restoring the Shamed*, 139.

who loved her well as she shared her failures. He was someone freed from shame. Because shamed people shame people, the opposite is true too. When someone has experienced freedom from shame, they can offer the same to others instead of condemnation and judgment.

Recommendations for Practice

In light of the findings described above, I offer a few recommendations to help the church address shame and help people experience freedom from shame through the liturgy of gathered worship.

Intentionality

First, pastors and worship leaders need to be intentional about addressing shame in their liturgy. Over and over each interview participant expressed that they had never thought about shame and their worship service, including their liturgy. Whether they were minorities or majority culture, in multi-ethnic churches or monocultural, my dissertation topic was novel. As explained above, shame was the "background noise" that was always lingering in the form of struggles with identity, family, sexuality, isolation, and such, but it was rarely addressed. While they were all familiar with shame and its impact on their own stories, it was not at the forefront of their minds and practices.

The good news is that the form and structure of the service does not have to change much. My high school teacher used to say, "Don't put the emphasis on the wrong syllable." For the most part, many of the churches I spoke with have a beautiful liturgy structure shaped by the gospel story. Rather than creating a new liturgy, what if there were an emphasis, or intentionality, given to each part of the liturgy that addressed the

shame that people bring into service? In other words, the intentionality I speak of is "putting an emphasis on the right syllable." It does not mean getting rid of guilt, justification, and our eternal legal standing, but it does mean emphasizing the importance of shame as well. Before Adam and Eve ever felt guilty for what they had done, the first and primary emotion was shame - a fear for who they were, their identity.

For example, many churches begin with the call to worship. This is the invitation by God to invite us into worship using a scripture verse. Often, the call to worship will be from the Psalms calling us to sing, clap, and rejoice. Nothing is wrong with a call to worship that invites us to rejoice and sing. But if we understand that many people come to worship with shame and thinking that they are worthless and struggling with their identity, a call to worship that reminds us of our identity from Genesis 1 and 2 would be life-giving. God's call to worship begins with being reminded that we are all made in the image of God. We are not worthless but have worth.

Another example is the confession of sin. Many confessions focus on asking for forgiveness for what we have done and what we have left undone. This is an all-important prayer, but it fails to address the failure to believe I am of value and worthy of the love of God, the temptation to hide and isolate, living a duplicitous life, and so forth. Consequently, the assurance of pardon is no longer just about being justified in Christ but also an emphasis and intentionality on adoption, glory, honor, and acceptance because of what Jesus has done on our behalf.

These are just a few examples of using what we already have structured within our liturgies to address the shame that so many of our people struggle with daily. This

would also include practices already mentioned in prior chapters such as adopting liturgies from around the world and singing songs written by church members.

Embodied Practices

My second recommendation would be for pastors and worship leaders to consider how to incorporate embodied practices into our liturgy. The case has been made that we are embodied creatures. We are not just people who think. As embodied creatures, liturgy in worship shapes people and informs what we love and believe. Smith wrote, "We learn to love, then, not primarily by acquiring information about *what* we should love but rather through practices that form the habits of *how* we love."[162] He goes on to write, "Christian worship doesn't just teach you how to think; it teaches us how to love, and it does so by inviting us into the biblical story and implanting that story in our bones."[163]

If this is true, we can be creative about the ways we use our whole beings to worship and be formed by it. For example, corporately kneeling to confess our sin communicates that every single person from the youngest to the oldest in the sanctuary is in a posture of humility and vulnerability. Over time this practice would shape the people of God who struggle with shame to become more vulnerable and less isolated.

I believe this would also include thinking through physical space. From sights, smells, touch, and seating, there are ample opportunities to think through how we use the tactile, physical things to help people experience freedom from shame. I appreciated the practice of a church that would give people a candle on their baptism to light each year to

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[162] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 21.

[163] Smith, 85.

remember that God loves them, and they belong in the family of God. Not only do they see the candle each day, but they smell and see the light burn each anniversary of their baptism.

If hospitality is important to acceptance and belonging for those struggling with shame, what does the layout of the church seating communicate, e.g. a deep hallway with pews all looking forward vs. seating that is shaped in a U-curve?

There might be challenges and pushback as addressed above, such as "too Catholic" or "socialist," or other theological concerns, but if the embodied practices help free us from our shame, we can think creatively about how God has made us whole.

Vulnerability

The third recommendation for pastors and worship leaders is to establish a culture of vulnerability, beginning with leadership on Sunday mornings. The most accessible way is to begin with the preaching pastor. Research showed that a culture of vulnerability begins from the top down. If leadership were authentic about their weaknesses and struggles, it would model for the rest of the church a safe place where a church family can be open about their struggles and still belong to a community of faith. This kind of modeling would ripple into the rest of the congregation and eventually foster experiences of freedom from the shame that comes through the good news of the gospel.

Connections to Sunday Mornings

My fourth recommendation for pastors and worship leaders is to consider ways to connect Sunday morning and its liturgy to the rest of the week. Some of the pastors and worship leaders mentioned that part of seeing people freed from their shame through

liturgy was to connect the preaching, fellowship, and liturgy to other opportunities. Given that hospitality is such an important part of dismantling shame, what would it look to like to extend the fellowship of believers to meals before or after service? I know that in many immigrant churches, this is the norm for life together. Other opportunities might include connecting the Sunday preaching to community groups or small groups and discussing the ways it impacts their lives and each other.

Another opportunity to connect Sunday mornings to the rest of the week is to form discipleship groups that intentionally go much deeper where accountability, vulnerability, and being known are the antidote to shame. It is easy to come in and out of church and not have to connect with others, but such groups would allow people to connect and experience deeper relationships.

I also believe active shepherding by pastors and leaders outside of Sunday mornings can help people experience freedom from shame. Following up with members, asking them hard questions, showing love and care, and being vulnerable themselves will continue to do the good work that God is doing in the life of the believer.

The Holy Spirit

Lastly, there is another key aspect that must be stated. Pastors and worship leaders can implement the best practices and have the perfect liturgy and never see people change and experience freedom from shame. That is because we are completely dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of his people. We cannot change people. Only God can. So, while we are faithful as pastors and worship leaders to help our people experience freedom from shame, we must rely on the Spirit to ultimately do the work of change. Therefore, we ask for the Lord to meet people in their shame. I have seen

countless of people who have experienced freedom from shame, not because of some liturgy, but because of the Holy Spirit at work in that individual's life. So, we learn and grow and create beautiful liturgy to engage the hearts of the people while depending completely on the work of the Holy Spirit.

A couple of ways to turn our hearts to the work of the Holy Spirit is to spend time in prayer together as pastors, worship leaders, and others involved in the liturgy on Sunday mornings. By posturing ourselves upward to the Lord, we more clearly know ourselves to be God's people and confess that we are not the Christ, so we call upon him to transform lives. I also think praying after service asking God to use everything that has happened for the good of the people and for his glory. We would pray that the Scriptures read, songs sung, prayers lifted, the word preached, and the meal that we partook in would be the means for people to experience freedom from shame.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on the how pastors and worship leaders could help people experience freedom from shame through the liturgy of Sunday morning worship. As with any study, there are limitations as to how extensive the research can be. Therefore, pursuit of the following areas of study could be highly valuable for those who are interested in understanding shame and its impact, honor-shame culture, liturgical formation, and corporate worship. There are three areas that would be particularly relevant for further research: neuroscience, counseling, and church planting.

First, there is good research being done in the field of neuroscience and shame. Unfortunately, I did not have the time to add another area of literature review to my research. But for those interested in the intersection between shame and science, there is

an extensive list of books and journals on this topic. It would help further study on being embodied creatures and how that plays an integral role in our shame and formation.

Second, I think more research can be done in counseling with regards to shame. As people in congregations experience freedom from shame by being vulnerable, share their stories of what they have hidden from, uncover past trauma and pain, and shed light on things that have been in the dark, we need to be prepared to not only embrace them but to give them the tools needed to heal and repair their past ruptures. Pastors, worship leaders, and others in leadership need to be ready when the gospel exposes shame and they long to experience its freedom.

Lastly, it would be interesting to do further research on the impact this dissertation can have on church planting. Many participants shared how exciting this could be because of its missional component. Shame does not only impact those in the church. It impacts all of God's creation. Hence, as church planters think about the communities they invest in, how can church planting benefit from a liturgy that helps people experience freedom from shame? How can church planters begin to think about shame and its impact in their community? People long for connection and belonging. Church planting can begin to think through the impact of shame and reach people through the good news that Jesus came for the shamed.

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