

信

Contextualization:

Sharing the Gospel in a Chinese Context

望

**A Ministry Orientation Guide
for Short-term Cross-Cultural Workers**

爱



How to use this guide
Page 1-2

	Page
I. Summary of Key Themes for Chinese Culture and Contextualization	3-5
II. A Few Points of Intersection of Scripture and Chinese Culture	7-8
III. A Simple List: "Do This" and "Don't Do That"	9
IV. The Gospel Summarized in One Long Paragraph	10
V. Any Gospel Presentation Should Answer Four Questions	11-12
VI. Honor and Shame in Gospel Story from a Chinese Perspective	13-18
VII. Discussing the Problem of Sin as Shame	19
XIII. Studying Scripture through a Lens of Honor and Shame	20
IX. Appendix Items	21-25
"THE FATHER'S LOVE"	
"BROKEN"	
"FLIPPING A CONVERSATION"	
OTHER "HANGERS"	
THE BIG PICTURE OF MISSIONS STRATEGY (MULTIPLY, MATURE, MOBILIZE)	
FOR TEACHERS DOING THEOLOGICAL TRAINING IN CHINA	
X. Some Select Resources for Orienting to the Church and Its Culture	26-28

How to Use this Guide

Have proper expectations for what is possible. We don't expect you to become an expert on East Asian culture in just a few weeks. However, that doesn't mean you can't learn something that may help your ministry in Asia.

How you use this guide depends on who you are. There's more information in this packet that most people will be able to remember. Accordingly, we have diversified the type and level of content to fit an array of interests and backgrounds.



you are...

If you are a *team leader*, different sections could be made assigned material to read and discuss as pre-trip team meetings.

If you are a *strategy leader*, this material could provide a framework for training teams.

If you *teach theology*, you will be especially interested in the sections that talk about the Chinese education experience and how Scriptural themes that are important to Chinese culture.

If you are a *team member*, use this packet not only to familiarize yourself with Chinese culture but also to help you think of new questions and potential ways that you can communicate truth with the Chinese people. How do these various aspects of Chinese culture and contextualization stand in contrast to your own experience and traditions?

If you are *human*, you will make mistakes. This orientation guide will not prevent those. However, perhaps with a little preparation, we can anticipate some problems we might run into as we share the gospel in East Asia.

This is a guide to assist short-term volunteer teams do contextualization. It is not designed to address topics like culture shock, security concerns, or cultural adaption. An entirely separate manual could be written to handle that subject.

What you have in your hands is just an **introductory guide**. It's full of right *and wrong* information. Why? Something is true at least somewhere in China. Anytime one tries to make generalizations, there will be people and places that don't fit. Nevertheless, generalizations are generally true and to that degree, they are useful. Chinese culture is full of contradictions. In one sense, uniformity is valued yet, in another respect, the culture is incredibly local. What is true in one place simply may be unheard of elsewhere. In addition, this packet is simply an introduction to contextualization issues. It is not intended to be comprehensive.

We would ask that you read through this packet with these ideas in mind. **Be gracious** with broad statements and word choice. At times, one may be tempted to say this or that is wrong. Perhaps, what is written is simply incomplete. If one were to attempt to be comprehensive, any orientation guide would require multiple volumes and of course you would not be reading it.

Naturally, this overview interacts with the Bible, making various theological assertions along the way. Once again, we urge your **patient reflection**. For any statement that might be made, no doubt volumes of books and articles have been written. This is no place to elaborate on every related issue and its implications. Perhaps, you may not like a particular word that is chosen. We admit that in a number of places, other words could be used. Read each sentence keeping in mind that no summary *by definition* is complete.

We are glad you are coming to East Asia! We have tried to offer a **flexible** orientation guide that introduces the biggest concepts that characterizes Chinese culture. At the same time, the work of missions is inherently *biblical or theological*. Our mission comes from God himself. Therefore, we offer a variety of resources that can highlight what God's word has to say on various matters.

We **pray** this packet will guide your into greater worship of the Creator of the world, who raised Jesus from the dead so that all nations would know him!

**A Summary of
Key Themes for Chinese Culture and Contextualization**



What is “Contextualization”?

“Contextualization” among missionaries refers to one’s understanding, communicating, and applying biblical truth in a particular cultural context.

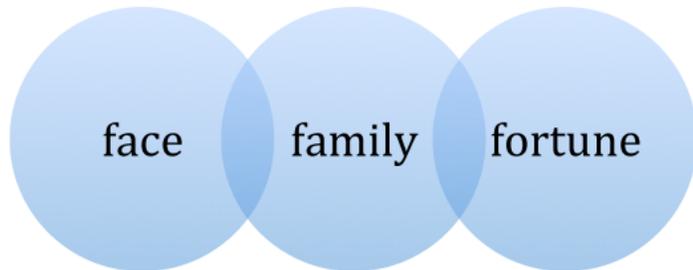
All theology is contextualized; there is no such thing as a theological doctrine that can be expressed without using various culture categories. Many think of contextualization primarily as a matter of application or communication. This is an incomplete understanding. Contextualization, at a most basic level, is a matter of biblical interpretation from which we form our theology.¹

God wrote the Bible for all people, for all times, for all places. This is why contextualization is important. We want to speak people’s heart language so they too will love Jesus in their context.

¹ We can think of theological contextualization as how to embody or incarnate biblical truth. Contextualization is more than simply what clothes we wear on the outside. Truth and contextualization are like spirit and body. The spirit needs a body to live; a body can live without clothing. Likewise, contextualization is better compared to a body that one’s clothing. The former is essential; the latter has more to do with propriety and fashion.

Introduction

No culture can be reduced to a few points. Chinese culture is unique just like every other culture. See this section as something like a map.



It gives some general markers to direct your cultural reflections and ministry practice. Crossing a cultural can be both exciting and traumatic. It is natural for people to assume what is typical for them for the most part is also “normal” for other people in other places and times. We know better than to think this way. However, we tend to do it anyway. Crossing a culture offers the incredible opportunity to learn and share in the experiences of others who are made in God’s image. In humility, we should seek to understand how other people see the world. Through dialogue, we learn from one another, being “quick to hear, slow to speak” (James 1:19, ESV).

What are Some Key Themes in Chinese Culture?

face

China is an honor-shame culture.

Another way of saying this is that Chinese people are very concerned with “face” — gaining face, saving face, and not losing face. Essentially, one’s “face” refers to one’s social value as perceived within some group setting. “Face” is inherently public. One’s face determines one’s group identity.

This concept is multifaceted. People gain or lose face for a number of reasons. Some are quite simple, even trivial, such as when a person is clumsy and trips, falling on his or her back. That can embarrass someone and lose face. On the other hand, honor-shame has a moral dimension. One is regarded as shameful if he does not conform to the moral expectations of the community (i.e. family, country, etc.). No one wants it said of him, “He has no sense of shame.” Likewise, we all honor and praise people whom we judge as having good character.

Face can be “achieved” or “ascribed.” To put it another way, it may be earned or inherited. For example, one may inherit the honor or shame of his friend group, family, name, or position. A no-named person can suddenly gain face, by association, simply by marrying someone who is famous. In addition, people earn public honor or shame based on what they do. The watching public applauds good grades, winning an award or sporting competition. Criminal activity and failing out of school brings social shame. We give face in countless ways, such as when show respect and praise someone. One’s “face” is his or her “social currency.” To give (or withhold) honor to another person is to acknowledge their position or worth. It establishes (or breaks) relationship and forms identity. Our identity is shaped by the ways in with we are both different and the same as others.

Face is not unique to Asia. It’s a human phenomenon. In the West, the concern for public recognition comes in different forms. Every community holds to varying standards of honor and shame. Americans, for example, may speak of “people pleasing” and immerse themselves with social media, like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and personal blogs. Westerners typically stress achieved or earned face and thus *individuality*. Identity is often conceived in terms of how “I” am different than others.

family

Relationships (or, *guanxi*) are everything in Chinese culture.

One’s face determines *guanxi* and vice versa. Foundational to Confucian philosophy is the emphasis on hierarchy of social relationship. Moral behavior depends on properly order relationships so that “harmony” is achieved. Not surprisingly, Chinese people have prized social conformity for thousands of years. “The bird that sticks out is the one that gets shot.”

A person’s *guanxi* has greater influence in determining a person’s well being than any other single factor. Relationships are managed through an informal but unmistakable custom of reciprocity, where people exchange small and large favors or gifts as a way of cultivating mutual favor. One act of kindness puts another person in relational debt. Even if it’s not discussed, all parties now the time will come when the gift giver may call on a favor in kind. Since Chinese think primarily in terms of face and *guanxi*, there is less emphasis given to “law” and “absolute truth,” compared to the West. Morality cannot be separated from relationships that exist in concrete situations. The Chinese are keenly aware that right and wrong, to some degree, are contingent on circumstances. One has greater obligations to a family member than to a stranger; also, people should not break the glass on someone’s car, unless of course that person needs rescuing.

The most important relationships are those within one’s family. Generally speaking, the parent-child relationship is honored above the marriage relationship. Children are to show filial piety or respect to their parents as well as their ancestors. It is the child’s duty to perpetuate and honor the family name. Elder parents frequently live with their grown children, who are responsible to care

for them in old age. It's not uncommon that grandparents will have as much or more of an active role in raising a grandchild as do the parents, each who may have full time jobs.

Identity is a collective idea. "I am who I know." Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am." Someone has said for the Chinese, "I belong, therefore I am." History, nationality, and ethnicity shape how a person is seen in the eyes of others. The Chinese are proud of their long history. One must respect his or her elders, whether living and dead. Ethnicity is more than one mere description among others. To be "Chinese" is to identify with an ethnic people whose glory extends for generations past. As a people, China should act like a family. Literally, the Chinese word for country is *guo jia*, meaning "kingdom-family." Naturally, people divide the world into two groups—insiders and outsiders. Famously, China is called the Middle Kingdom (*zhong guo*, 中国). If you are not Chinese, you are collectively called an *outside-country-person*, *wai guo ren*.

fortune

Money is the "opium of the people,"

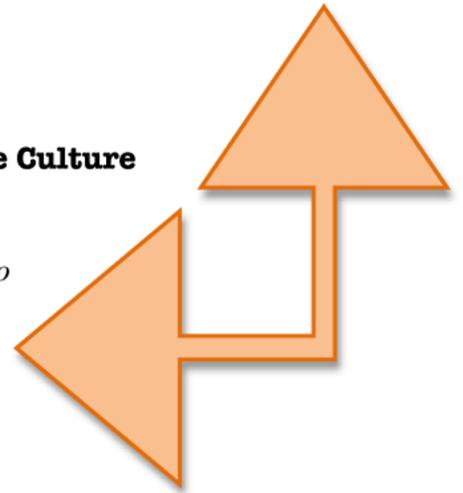
... to twist the words of Karl Marx. The country opened up to the outside world in the late 1970s after the death of Communist Party Chairman, Mao Zedong. One might say that China is a socialist state with capitalistic characteristics. Increasingly, one feels inclined to switch the order. The population has grown wealthier since former President Deng Xiaoping urged his people to try their best to get rich for the sake of the country. There remains a huge gap that separates the wealthiest and poorest Chinese.

In keeping with traditional thought, education is regarded as the key to economic success (though it doesn't necessarily trump one's relationships, i.e. *guanxi*). Children endure incredible pressure to study, study, study in order to get higher grades and eventually pass the nationwide *gao kao* ("high exam"), which can single-handedly determine if and where a student attends college. The education system is consistent with the needs of learning Chinese characters. Memorization is emphasized more than creative and critical thinking, which tends to run counter to group conformity.

In order to secure good fortune, Chinese are rather pragmatic. They are less interested in systematic theories and focus more on concrete solutions to get what is wanted. Traditionally, religion serves a practical function of gaining blessings in this life and after death. Political powers in China have always assessed religions for their social utility—how they help or hinder the goals of the state. It is not surprising that the one-child policy, which has been in place since 1982, has resulted in parents essentially treating their one son or daughter like an idol. The family's hopes for face and fortune hinge on their one kid. For the sake of lineage and economics, sons are generally preferred over daughters.

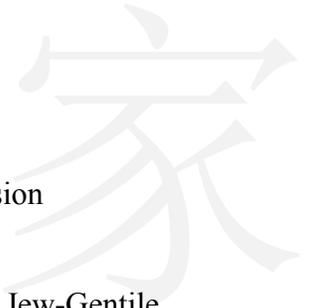
A Few Points of Intersection of Scripture and Chinese Culture

The following gives a number of brief bullet points suggesting *ways to apply what you just read* about Chinese culture as you seek to ministry in China. It is too difficult to list every relevant passage. Therefore, we will limit citations to Romans, since this letter is generally viewed as more law-oriented.



Face (e.g. honor, shame, etc.)

- The essence of sin is dishonoring or shaming God (Rom 1:21–23; 2:23–24; 3:23).
- Disobeying God’s commands (laws) is a *means* to dishonoring God (i.e. sin; Rom 2:23–24).
- Judgment can be conceived as being put to shame (Rom 9:33; 10:11).
- A consequence of sin is that we ourselves become shameful (objectively, not just subjectively; Rom 1:24–28).
- Sin also makes us ashamed (subjectively; Rom 6:21).
- Salvation grants humans honor (Rom 2:7, 10; 8:17–23, 30).
- Salvation means not being “put to shame” (Rom 5:5; 10:10–11, 13).
- God seeks “face.” Christ came to give God honor among the nations (Rom 3:25–26; 15:8–9).
- God allows evil to persist (for now) in order to reveal his glory (Rom 9:17, 21–23).
- Faith gives glory to God (Rom 4:20–21) and rejoices in the glory of God (5:2).
- Faith is expressed through what we boasts/rejoice in (same word in Greek; Rom 2:17, 23; 3:27; 5:2, 3, 11).
- The difference between faith and sin consists in whose approval we seek (Rom 2:29 et al).
- Don’t think so highly of yourself (Rom 1:22; 12:3, 16).
- Flattery undermines the church (Rom 16:18).

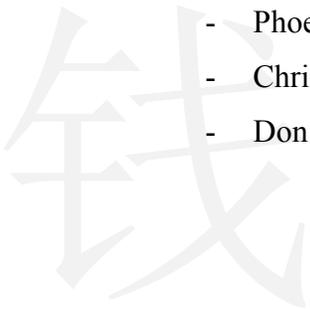


Family (e.g. group-identity, relationships, etc.)

- People seek face via the groups in which they belong (cf. Jew-Gentile discussion throughout Romans).
- Loyalty and identity often rests in culture, including ethnicity (Rom 1:14–16; Jew-Gentile discussions throughout Romans).
- God is not partial to any ethnicity (Rom 2:10–11, others).
- God requires the Church to cooperate and cross-cultures (Rom 1:5, 14–16; 15:16–21).
- Christians seek to “outdo one another in showing honour” (Rom 12:10; 13:7).
- Christians seek to “live in harmony with one another” (Rom 12:16; ch. 14; 16:17).
- Christ frees us from slavery to sin to slavery to righteousness (God). “Slavery” is typically regarded as shameful (as when enslaved to sin) but glorious yet humbling when a slave to God (Rom 6:1–22).
- Christian’s change their identity from slaves to *sons of God* (i.e. family; 8:14–23).
- Christians have a collective identity, as Christ’s body (Rom 12:4–8; ch. 14).
- The Church is a family (various, such as being sons and siblings)
- Unity glorifies God (Rom 15:6–7).
- Christians are mutually obligated to one another (Rom 15:27).
- Biblical cultures used family as a way of marking identity (Rom 16:7–15).

Fortune (e.g. money, politics, practical concerns about the future, etc.)

- How we love (even in simple things) shows honor to God (Rom 14:6, 23).
- Honor governing authorities (Rom 13:1–7).
- Pay taxes and whatever else is owed (Rom 13:6–7).
- Do not covet (Rom 13:8–10).
- Generously help the poor in need (Rom 15:25–28).
- Phoebe supported Paul and others’ ministry (Rom 16:2).
- Christians rejoice in suffering (Rom 5:3; 8:17–18).
- Don’t be wise in your own eyes (Rom 12:3, 16).



Do

Pray without ceasing and spending time in Scripture each day.

Feel freedom to make friends with anyone, ask questions, and be positive.

Err on the side of boldness, sharing the gospel and your testimony.

Talk about *Jesus*, not just “God” in general.

Ask your hosts a lot of questions . . .

. . . about Chinese culture.

. . . about what they are doing so that you can join in their local strategy.

. . . about their own family and experiences.

Be flexible. It's *very possible* that all the plans you have right now will be changed in a second.

Use security-sensitive language: “M-work” instead of “missions,” “clubs” or “fellowships” for “church,” “shepherds” instead of “pastors,” etc.

Do be aware that while Chinese Christians may use a “sinner’s prayer,” many Chinese people can confuse it will a sort of formula for getting saved or securing God’s blessing. If you use this approach, explain that it is *Jesus* who saves, not prayers.

Don't

Talk about politics, specifically Tiananmen, Tibet, and Taiwan.

Confuse apologetics with evangelism, monotheism with faith in Jesus, your testimony with the gospel.

Use a lot of Christian-speak, like “walking an aisle,” “justification,” etc.

Be paralyzed with fear about making cultural mistakes. The Chinese are gracious. Watch and learn from those around you.

Complain. It honors neither our Lord nor our Chinese friends.

Be overly concerned with your email, Facebook, Twitter, etc. that you forget your purpose for coming to China.

The Gospel

The following section guides you to reflect on what the essence of the gospel is and how to communicate it effectively during your time in East Asia. There is only one gospel but there are multiple ways of expressing it. The packet offers a few different vantage points in order to reinforce key ideas. No one is expected to memorize any set paragraph of presentation. Relax. If in doubt, focus on the story of our resurrected King Jesus.

The Gospel Summarized in One Long Paragraph

The **gospel** is the good news that God has accomplished his creation purposes by fulfilling his promises given through Israel. In particular, the gospel narrates how God reigns over all nations through Jesus whom he resurrected thus defeating his enemies, the last being death. As a result, Jesus reconciles us to God the Father by redeeming us from slavery to sin, which is any idolatrous power that corrupts our desires and condemns us to everlasting shame. God will recreate the world in which the human family receives, reveals, and rejoices in God's glory. In response, God commands all nations to repent of their rebellion. Any who give their allegiance to Jesus will not be put to shame.

For Further Study: A Few Explicit Summaries of the Gospel in Scripture

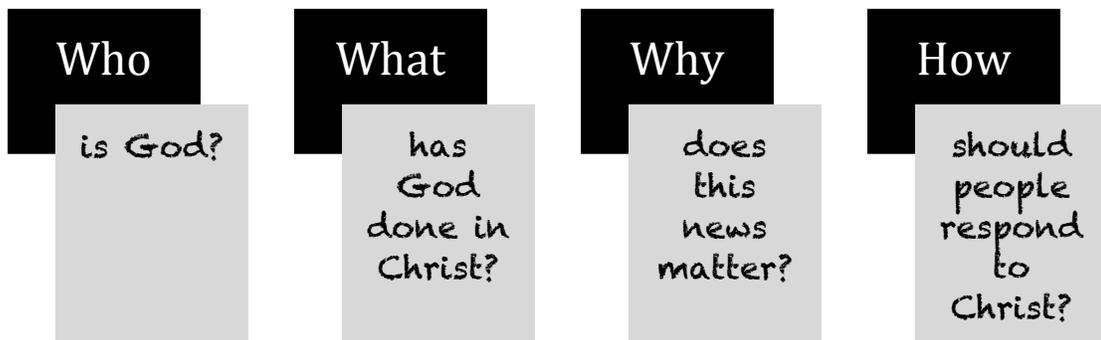
- 1 Cor 15:4–8, 20–28
- Rom 1:1–4
- Gal 3:8
- Acts 13:26–39
- 2 Tim 2:8
- 2 Cor 4:3–6

Any Gospel Presentation Should Answer

4 Questions

How do we share the gospel in China? Like the apostles, we also do not have set formulas used for every person in any circumstance. We share one gospel but use a variety of methods, stories, themes, and expressions. Among Jews and God-fearing Gentiles, Paul more explicitly highlighted the elements of the gospel like the Abrahamic covenant and promise of David's having a descendent that would rule forever over the nations. However, among those Gentiles who were not sympathetic to Judaism, Paul takes a different approach without changing the basic elements of the gospel. The book of Acts explicitly tells us that Paul preached the gospel in Lystra, Athens, and elsewhere (cf. Acts 14:15, 21; 17:18).

A survey of Scripture shows the following pattern. A full gospel presentation answers four questions:



The Bible gives a number of complementary answers to each question. We may need to use a variety of metaphors and stories to make the gospel clear for different listeners. Listed below is one biblically faithful way to answer these questions that is also easy to remember.

God through Christ **reigns** over all nations.

God **resurrected** Christ, who died for human sin.

God through Christ **reconciles** humanity's relationship with God, with other people, and with the world.

All people from every nation are commanded to **repent** and instead give their loyalty to Jesus as Supreme and Saving King of the world.

The point must be reemphasized: These statements make up a brief outline of possible answers. The person who shares the gospel must explain what these words mean. Our listeners may not share our background. We cannot assume they understand the words and concepts we are using. Pray for patience, wisdom, and insight to communicate cross-culturally.

Using one set of themes and Scriptures does not mean we deny the validity of other concepts and texts. Our desire is to be faithful to the Bible and clear for our Chinese friends. There are other possible ways of explaining the gospel of salvation. For example:

Who is God?

Creator, King, Father, Shepherd, Master, Savior, Husband to his people.

The key idea highlighted here is God's supremacy. He is the highest authority who sovereignly rules over all things with love, wisdom, and righteousness. God created the world to be a kingdom in which he manifests his own glory and so is worshipped by humans, whom he created to reflect his rule over all things.

What has God done in Christ?

historical events of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension are of critical importance.

He keeps his covenant promises to bless all nations. Likewise, God through Christ defeats his enemies, including demons, disease, and death. The

Why does this news matter?

him. Christ redeems us from slavery and adopts us as children. Other possible themes that could be discussed include glorification, re-creation, purification, and justification. Ultimately, God will create a new heaven and new earth. There will be no more sin and death, for God will bring judgment upon the world's evil, putting to shame anyone who will not respond to him in faith.

God saves people from the shame and condemnation of sin, which is dishonoring God by rebelling against

How should people respond to Christ?

and identity are changed. In addition, we could talk about faith, which not only means "trust" but also has the idea of loyalty. In short, we seek to convey the point that we must be united to Christ with our head, heart, and hand. People must so identify with Jesus Christ that he and his people share in one another's honor and shame.

In this context, "repentance," refers to a changing of one's mind or heart such that one's sense of value, honor-shame,

Honor and Shame in Gospel Story from a Chinese Perspective



天下一家	One Family Under Heaven
丢脸争面	Losing Face, Seeking Face
万民之王	King of All Nations
拨乱反正	Setting the World Right
以辱为荣	Honor through Shame
雪耻复国	God Vindicates His Honor & Restores His Kingdom



A. 天下一家

We are one family under heaven

God, our Creator, is father and king. He made the human family, who bears his image. We are made to be his children. We owe him filial piety—respect as from children to parents. As citizens in his kingdom, we also owe him honor. All people have this debt. Naturally, our identity and name-position come from our relationship with him. This is expressed in the way we live, stewarding his world. Since humans share the same father, we are family members, thus have the same family name.

B. 丢脸争面

Losing Face, Pursuing Face

However, humans have publically shamed God. How? We have not reflected his worth. Throughout history, we have all rebelled and not obeyed him. This is because we have no sense of shame. People would rather have autonomy rather than relationship, i.e. depend on our heavenly father. We could also say we don't want "to bring honor on the family name."

As a result, we ourselves have lost face. We have become shameful. Therefore, we have broken our relationship with God and with each other. The consequences are serious. God kicked us out of our home. People have brought disgrace upon the family.

As a result, we have lost our sense of identity. We are isolated. Loss of face and isolation bring fear. After all, we have lost all standing and honor. Or, as the Chinese idiom puts it, our “names stink forever.”

Take Adam and Eve for example. At first, they were not ashamed. However, their actions revealed their real face. Therefore, when they heard God coming, they “hid themselves” because they were “afraid” (Gen 3:8, 10).

They begin thinking about how to protect face. Even worse, people begin competing for face. For example, we also recall Cain and Abel.

(*Lian* is the kind of face that refers to our character, who we really are. It is precious. *Mianzi* is simply the general way that people respect or honor others. It could simply mean a person is famous. *Lian* is a kind of *mianzi*, but *mianzi* is not necessarily *lian*.)

Therefore, we try to use *mianzi* to somehow compensate for our lack of *lian*. To do this, we begin forming factions and dividing into group where we will be respected. Everyone pursues honor and wants to avoid shame. We all love *mianzi*. We are content with being “big fish in a small pond.” If others don’t think we have value, then we have no sense of security. Why does no face bring a sense of fear?

Consider Babel. Those people wanted to build a tower. Why? In Genesis 11:4, we see their ambition:

“Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.’”

They have two inter-related reasons. First, they want a great name: “let us make a name for ourselves.” Second, they want a sense of security: “lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”

However, God looks down on them. Gen 11:5 says, “And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built.” Even though their tower was supposed to reach the heavens, notice verse 5’s irony, “the LORD came down to see”; in other words, they cannot reach the heavens. Or perhaps, we can say, people “fall short of the glory of God” (cf. Rom 3:23).

In effect, notice the consequence. The human family brakes up into factions. We use trivial commonalities to piece together a seeming unity. However, superficial characteristics can only create a superficial harmony.

Even if we reject God as Father, God remains our true King. We have betrayed our king. Since we originally were created to serve as his “vassal kings,” we can also say humans launched a coup. In effect, we have invaded his kingdom. We have colonized his world. We divide the world into our

own group and spheres. We are rebels. We have become his enemies. Within God's kingdom, different human factions are engaged in civil war.

C. 万民之王 King of all Nations

Where do we belong? Who are we? People depend on their relationship network. People think their relationships will save them. However, not all relationships are the same. If we have relationship with God, we *really* have *guanxi*. We *really* have honor. However, since we have shamed God, we are alone. We cannot make up for our mistakes. We cannot ourselves reconcile our broken relationship with God.

Whereas human constantly seek to have a name, God in history takes the initiative to restore human dignity. God takes the initiative to reconcile his human family. He began to reestablish his Kingdom through a particular group of people.

In Genesis 12, God revealed himself to a particular man named Abraham. God promised to make Abraham have a great name. In addition, God made a covenant with Abraham, saying, "through your offspring, all nations would be blessed" (cf. Gen 22:18; Acts 3:25). Eventually, through Abraham's offspring, all nations would be remade into one human family.

However, in Gen 12:1, God told Abraham he had to leave his "country and [his] kindred and [his] father's household." The family God had promised would not come entirely through bloodline, but through God's promise. Abraham's descendants had to be loyal to God, their true Father and King.

God's promise sounded strange. You see, . . . they had no children. In addition, Abraham and his wife were both very old, so their bodies could not birth children. They did not completely understand God's word, so Abraham lay with his servant. She birthed a son, however, God did not was to use this boy. God's promise did not depend on bloodline. Afterward, Abraham sent the servant and her son away.

God wanted to miraculously keep his promise. Therefore, some years later, God allowed Abraham's wife to become pregnant to a son, name Isaac. God tested Abraham (Gen 22), telling him to sacrifice Isaac his "only son." Abraham trusted God; however, just before Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, God stopped Abraham. He provided Abraham a substitute, a lamb. This substitute protected God's promise and his family.

However, God's creating a covenant creates a problem. Since people have dishonored God, he should put them to shame. However, with Abraham, he has just committed to save and bless all nations. How can God uphold his honor, keeping his promises, and put the world to right? He cannot simply overlook human evil. That would be shameful. He also cannot break his covenant. That would also be shameful.

How can God restore his family and reclaim his kingdom? How is God to vindicate himself? For many years, this remained a mystery.

God continued to grow Abraham's family. Eventually, his family became a nation called "Israel." At times, it seemed God forgot his people. Because of famine, Israel has to go to Egypt. The Egyptian king oppressed them, enslaving them. Nevertheless, God rescued them. He showed he was not just the God of one particular land; he controlled the world. No country, no king could usurp his authority.

After leaving Egypt, God establish Israel as a kingdom. God was there king. God called Israel his "firstborn son" (Exod 4:22–23). God told them, ". . . you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." In other words, God immediately tells them they do not exist themselves. Rather, God adopts them in order to represent God among the nations. Basically, Israel originally was to be a mediator. Through Israel—Abraham's offspring—God would restore the world brotherhood. Therefore, God treated them graciously. He established rules for proper living. These family rules were meant to reveal what kind of father-king the world has?

Unfortunately, Israel was unfaithful. They did not trust God their father. Over time, Israel rejected God as king. They wanted a human king. Not only this, but Israel became <more and more concerned with who was in and who was out. They misunderstood the purpose of their law. Therefore, they also misunderstood the meaning of "righteousness." The family of Israel became exclusivistic. They thought, they were nation at the center of the world. Therefore, Israel, like the rest of humanity, forgot their vocation/calling. Their law itself had never made them a special civilization. Rather, only their relationship with God is able to set them apart.

God would not put up with Israel's defaming God. They trusted themselves; they magnified their group identity, and asked false gods to bless them. They confused religion and relationship. They used religious rituals, like *liyi* [礼仪], in order to get advantages. They only wanted to pull relationship in order to be their own benefit. In other words, they cared only for themselves.

As a consequence, God avenges himself. God exiled Israel. Hence, Israel was put to shame. Foreign powers oppressed them.

However, this exile was not forever. God reaffirmed his covenant. He will not forsake his family. He promised to wipe away their national humiliation. At that time, they were also called Jews. Years later, God graciously gave the Jews back their lost land/territory. Unfortunately, even though they return home, various foreign countries continually occupied Israel. However, God does not simply point to *the resurgence of their nation*; rather, God will surprise people; he will exceed people's expectations.

D. 拨乱反正 **Setting the World Right**

When the Roman Empire ruled, the Jews were full of nationalistic zeal. Many people wanted to overthrow the imperialists. In order to show patriotism, people were very serious about the Jewish

law. After all, they thought, their shame was due to their disregarding to words God had given to their ancestors. They lost sight of a simple fact: people's specialness is based on having relationship with our Father-King.

Indeed, God in fact sent a King, a Savior. His name is Jesus. As King, Jesus represents Israel. He is God's Son. Therefore, he is also the world's king. He is called "Christ," which refers to Israel's king. Unexpectedly, he did not attempt to use armed force to topple/overthrow Israel's political enemies. In fact, Jesus exposed the Jewish leader's "real face." He reviled their corruption. The leaders cared more about their face than they did the poor/needy.

In Jesus, God will set the world right. However, Jesus does not show partiality. Jesus taught that Israel misunderstood God's covenant. His promise was not according to bloodline, but rather faith. Therefore, family-background and relationships networks are unable to save us. Abraham's true offspring do not trust group-identity or law; rather, they give allegiances to God. Faith consists in loyalty, not and other traditions. God's words and law should affect people's hearts—inside, not just outside. Jesus will draw all people to himself (cf. John 12:32). God stresses humanity not clan.

Jesus redefines family. On one occasion, Jesus said, "And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.' And he answered them, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother'" (Mark 3:32-35).

Jesus perfectly honored God the Father. He demonstrated God's sovereignty. He cast out demons, healed diseases, made people resurrect, and had power over nature.

In history, the Jews suffered humiliation, therefore they wanted God to set things right/give them vindication. In actual fact, God wants vindication. This was Jesus' mission.

He was not merely one of Abraham's offspring; rather, he was the unique seed. Like a "firstborn son," he wipes away family shame. How so?

Eventually, the social leaders turned against Jesus. They conspire kill Jesus. They tortured him and killed him on a cross. Yet, this was God's plan. Because all people have rebelled against God, our heavenly king, we all deserve death. Therefore, besides honor, we also have a second debt, i.e. our life. However, God accepts Jesus sacrifice on behalf of his people. In this way, Jesus pays back in full our debts—our honor debt and our life death. Jesus represents humanity—perfectly glorifying God and removing human shame. Accordingly, God is able to keep his covenant. God defends his own name; he does not ignore wrongdoing. At the same time, through Jesus, all nations will be blessed.

Worldly powers could not force Jesus to deny God his Father. Therefore, three days after his burial, God made Jesus resurrect. Not merely his spirit, but Jesus' whole body came out. This resurrection vindicated Jesus. Even though the world regarded Jesus as a criminal, God established him as king. This all means that Jesus defeats all God's enemies, even death.

He usurps every worldly authority. In Jesus, God reclaimed his rightful place. If we are willing to repent and yield allegiance to Jesus as Lord, then God will grant us pardon.

In short, Jesus serves as a mediator. He reconciles the heavenly Father and his children. No matter your background, position, achievement, network, or other identity, anyone can come under Jesus' name.

E. 以辱为荣 **Honored through Shame**

How does all we've said change our lives? In short, we can say *yi ru wei rong* [“以辱为荣”]. What does this mean? What the world sees as shameful, God sees as honorable. Likewise, <what God regards as honorable, the world sees as shameful. In two respects, we can understand this idea. First, this idea refers to how God works. God uses seemingly shameful means to get glory himself. For example, most people will say Jesus' death is shameful. Second, how God sees the world is very different. Many people think “getting face” and “getting a name” is desirable; however, God regards such pride as lamentable.

Joining God's family (or his kingdom) means we gain a new view of life. Therefore, our value-perspective also changes. As a result, our new desires lead to a new way of living. We are willing sacrifice our own interests for others. We don't idolize face. We don't care about competing with others. We care more about *lian* than *mianzi*. Not only that, we delight in God's honor.

Our loyalties change. We gain a new family—that is, all who trust in Jesus Christ. Our family is not simply according to bloodline. Rather, our identity is in Jesus. Humility gives us freedom and joy. We joyfully envisage Jesus return.

F. 雪耻复国 **God Vindicates His Honor and Restores His Kingdom**

Someday in the future, Jesus will return. He will set the world to rights. He will not continue to tolerate evil. He will punish evil people; he will completely rescue his people. Finally, all nations will worship Jesus. In that way, all nations will return home. God will establish “universal brotherhood.” Humans will forever reflect God's glory.

Discussing the Problem of Sin as Shame,

Why do we want a name? Face? Relationships?

Our identity comes from various places . . . our family background, hometown, and our web of relationships. Our past can direct our future. No one wants to “belong nowhere” [无所归属]. People fear isolation. People often worry about who is an insider and who is an outsider.

All Under Heaven Are One Family [天下一家]

Humanity is a big family because the one true God, our Creator, is Father and King. His human family bears his image. People were made to his children. Thus, we owe him “filial piety” (honor/respect). In this way, all people have a debt. Naturally, our identity and name-position come from our relationship with him. This is expressed in the way we live, steward his world. Since humans are born of the same Creator-Father, he calls upon people everywhere to be members of his family, bearing his name.

What happened? We have all done wrong. We know no one is perfect. However, what is the essence of the human problem?

In short, humans have shamed God. How? We have not reflected his worth. Throughout history, we have not obeyed him. People have disregarded him, spurning the Father’s authority and love. In effect, we have publically spit in our Father’s face.

This is because we have no sense of shame. People would rather have autonomy rather than relationship, i.e. depend on our heavenly Father. Humans have an independent streak. As a result, people break relationship with our heavenly Father and with each other. We lack righteous love [仁义]. We could also say we don’t want “to bring honor on the family name” [光耀门楣].

The consequences are serious. God kicked us out of our home and his family. People have brought disgrace upon the family [辱门败户].

Because of our sin [过犯], ***we have lost face and our sense of identity. When people are distant from our Father, we also become estranged with each other. We have become shameful. We are isolated.***

Loss of face and isolation bring fear. Why does no face bring a sense of fear? If others don’t think we have value, then we have no sense of security. After all, we have “lost all standing and honor” [身败名裂]. Or, we could say, our “names will stink forever” [遗臭万年].

Lacking *lian*, people settle for *mianzi*. *Lian* refers to one’s most fundamental face, that which marks their basic character or worth as a person. *Mianzi* refers more broadly to one’s reputation. This could be temporary or for superficial reasons, like winning a game.] However, mere face cannot compensate for *lian* and relationship. We think face and a great name with bring security (cf. Gen 11:4). Therefore, humans began having rivalry. People started protecting their face; even worse, competing for a name.

People use a number of ways to find a sense of identity—like their job, nationality, wealth, etc.

Nevertheless, we still fear that others will expose our real face. We have forgotten that we come from the same human family. We lack a sense of shame. We even deny our own family.

Studying Scripture through a Lens of Honor and Shame (To be developed)

These seven lessons are simply for the purpose of helping you think about Scripture using an honor-shame perspective. Traditional, western theology highlights motifs like law, guilt, and individual salvation. Although there is nothing wrong with these ideas themselves, it is helpful to see how the Bible talks about other themes, which are more familiar to people from East Asian cultures. Such concepts include honor, shame, and collective identity.

We also seek to understand and communicate biblical truth in a way that is faithful to Scripture. We all have cultural blind spots. These studies can prepare you to examine the Bible afresh. God's revelation is for all nations.

Who is God?

What is Sin?

What Do We Boast In?

What is Faith?

Who is Jesus?

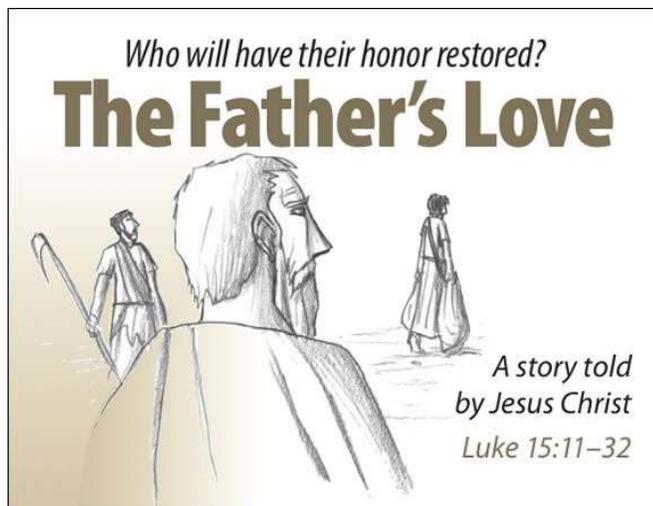
Where Do I Belong? [Identity, Family, Church]

What is Our Hope?

Appendix Items

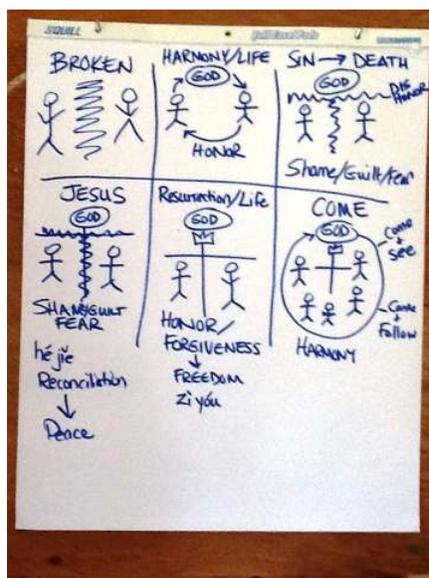
I. “THE FATHER’S LOVE”

The booklet “The Father’s Love” was written for honor-shame cultures. We mention it simply to give one example of how one might communicate the message of salvation in terms of honor and shame. The booklet has not yet been translated into Mandarin. You can find the complete booklet at: <http://thefatherslovebooklet.org/>



II. “BROKEN”

I-DIG (International Disciples Group, Intersarsity). Online: <http://cms.intersarsity.org/ism/article/10672>
“Broken” offers a nice and simple diagram with many connection points to eastern cultures. Visit the Intersarsity’s International Student Ministry site to learn more about it.



III. “FLIPPING A CONVERSATION”

There is a key to getting into many evangelistic conversations. One should think about how to “flip a conversation.” Try to think of 3–4 topics that you can easily and often talk about, perhaps you family, your job, or interests. Think of a few ways that you and intentionally steer these conversation topics towards the gospel.

IV. OTHER “HANGERS”

There are various “hanger,” or sets of words, to help one remember the gospel story. We have mentioned “Who? What? Why? How?” and “Reign, Resurrect, Reconcile, Repent.” Here are some other options.

Father, Face, Faith

One God, One Family, One King

Creator, Covenant, Christ, Confess

Lord, Liberation, Loyalty

Feel free to think of your own. We’d love to hear your suggestions.

V. THE BIG PICTURE OF MISSIONS STRATEGY (MULTIPLY, MATURE, MOBILIZE)

We want you to have a grasp for the big picture of missions strategy. In essence, there are three major parts to be aware of. They shape the head, heart, and hands. Everything we do supports one of these three goals—to *multiply, mature, and mobilize*. Below each category, there are some examples of the kind of activities that might be included within each.

MULTIPLY

1. Evangelism
2. Church planting
3. Leadership

MATURE

1. Personal Life (spiritual fruit, spiritual disciplines)
2. Family Life
3. Community Life (church, team, neighbors)

MOBILIZE

1. Constituency (sending churches, sent churches)
2. Global Church
3. GCC

VI. FOR TEACHERS DOING THEOLOGICAL TRAINING IN CHINA

Chinese Education

Chinese education gives greater stress to memorization than to analytical or logical skills. As a result, many students struggle with critical problem solving, which is taken for granted by the average western adult. Since the Chinese language uses characters rather than an alphabet, it must be learned entirely through repetition and rote memorization. Chinese students continue learning to read and write their own language even into high school. Assignments in other subjects, like math or history, may also be assigned a *writing* grade.

In college and universities, a standard education is far more specialized than the typical liberal arts education common in many Western universities. Accordingly, graduates learn to be proficient in the area of their expertise but may not know how to integrate their knowledge across disciplines and spheres of life.

Teachers are revered authorities. Students are hesitant to ask questions, for fear of making the teacher lose face (if they don't know the answer) or themselves losing face. Consequently, most class instruction is delivered in the form of lectures. Other methods that involve class participation, group projects, debate, and dialogue are less frequently or rarely used.

The Chinese education system is test-driven. Students all too often simply study for the sake of the test. For the most part, if and where students attend upper level studies will depend on a single test score at the end of their high school career. Sports and individual class grades are not emphasized as they in America. In primary and secondary, bribery is a common way to get students into better schools. Cheating is epidemic. It is even common that graduate students will plagiarize entire thesis papers.

How Does This Affect Theological Training in China?

Most likely, you students will have vast portions of Scripture memorized. However, they may struggle explain a passage's meaning, the interrelationship between doctrines, and apply Scripture to church and daily life. Systematic theology and doctrine is stressed over hermeneutical/exegetical process.

Because the teacher is an "expert," many students can uncritically accept a teacher's conclusions. Even if there is disagreement, a student may not voice his or her opinion so readily. Unfortunately, this dynamic can give teacher far too much authority in the classroom. If the teacher's interpretation goes unchallenged and the student's lack interpretive training, then the teacher, practically speaking, is given greater authority than the Bible itself. In the same way, students may uncritically accept the word of their pastors without checking their view against Scripture.

Since students can easily memorize answers to objective questions, essay assignments are challenging opportunities for Chinese to integrate and apply their knowledge. However, students

often lack writing and research skills as well as theological resources. In order to fill space Scripture verses will be cited at great length. Essay answers can be full of repetition.

Plagiarism is rampant, even among theology students. It is not that they are unaware that it is wrong. Rather, such practices are so common in Chinese culture that many people are simply desensitized to it, treating such instances of “cheating” as minor infractions like exceeding the speed limit. Other doing similar training have found vast sections of their student papers do be nothing more than cut and pasted portions from a Chinese website. If you do not have access to software that checks for plagiarism, then it would be recommended to ask questions about which is would be difficult for students to plagiarize data from the Internet.

Though they find it difficult, students are greatly helped by being taught theological and exegetical process. Typically, they lack understanding about major concepts or motifs and how they fit within the grand narrative. One way to spur conversation is to sporadically break students in to small discussion groups. Afterwards, perhaps a few share their insights and applications. Because people can be reticent to stick out in the crowd and fear losing face in front of the teacher, it can be difficult for teachers to get the desired response from students when asked questions. Even simple Yes/No questions can be returned with blank stares. Not only patience but also persistence is needed. Narrowly focused leading (“safe”) questions can be helpful to generate participation. Likewise, open-ended questions about Chinese culture and their experience can foster participation. More complex questions may first need to be discussed in groups before a teacher can expect eager interaction from the class.

Finally, be personal. Chinese need to see you are more than an information expert. Introduce yourself and your family. Help them to know you also don’t know it all, . . . and that’s ok. As is true in any culture, information can quickly become a tool or weapon used against others to exalt oneself. We pray that theological training would nurture humble head, heart, and hands.

Selected Introductory Resources

This bibliography is simply for anyone wanting to do some further study in a particular area. Some of these books are introductory and others a mid-level reads. Feel free to Amazon.com or elsewhere to read some preview them and check out reviews.

CHINESE CONTEXTUALIZATION

Tan, Hann-Tzoo (Joey). *The Chinese Way—Contextualizing the Gospel for the Chinese*. Kindle edition. Dr. Hann-Tzoo (Joey) Tan, 2012.

Wan, Enoch. "Christianity In The Eye Of Traditional Chinese." *Global Missiology* 1, no. 1 (October 2003). <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/issue/view/27>.

———. "Critiquing the Method of Traditional Western Theology and Calling for Sino-Theology." *Global Missiology* 1, no. 1 (October 2003): www.globalmissiology.org.

———. "Practical Contextualization: A Case Study of Evangelizing Contemporary Chinese." *Global Missiology* 1, no. 1 (October 2003). <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/issue/view/27>.

Wu, Jackson. *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame* (Pasadena, Calif.: WCIUP, 2013).

"Authority in a Collectivist Church: Identifying Crucial Concerns for a Chinese Ecclesiology." *Global Missiology* 1, no. 9 (October 2011): <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/issue/view/64>.

"We Compromise the Gospel When We Settle For Truth—How "Right" Interpretations Leads to "Wrong" Contextualization" *Global Missiology*, Vol 2, No. 10 (Jan 2013).

"Contextualizing the One Gospel in Any Culture: A Model from the Biblical Text for a Global Context." *Global Missiology*, Vol 3, No. 10 (April 2013).

"Biblical Theology from a Chinese Perspective: Interpreting Scripture through the Lens of Honor and Shame." *Global Missiology*, Vol 4, No. 10 (July 2013).

"The Gospel with Chinese Characteristics: A Concrete Example of Cultural Contextualization." *Global Missiology*, Vol 1, No. 11 (Oct 2013).

*Various other comments about Chinese culture, theology and contextualization, in addition to other resources, may be found at Jackson Wu's blog: jacksonwu.org

CHINESE CULTURE

An Introduction to the Mainland Chinese Soul. Raleigh, N.C.: LEAD Consulting, 2001.

Hu, Wenzhong, and Cornelius Lee Grove. *Encountering the Chinese: A Guide for Americans*. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, 1991.

Liu, Dilin. *Metaphor, Culture, and Worldview: The Case of American English and the Chinese Language*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2002.

Stewart, Edward C. *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, 1972.

Wasserstrom, Jeffrey N. *China in the 21st Century: What Everyone Needs To Know*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, USA, 2010. <http://www.myilibrary.com?id=250116>.

Zhang, Haihua, and Geoffrey Baker. *Think Like Chinese*. Annandale, N.S.W.: Federation Press, 2008.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHINESE CHURCH

Aikman, David. *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power*. Lanham, Md.: Regnery, 2003.

Bays, Daniel H. *A New History of Christianity in China*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

Cao, Nanlai. *Constructing China's Jerusalem: Christians, Power, and Place in Contemporary Wenzhou*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010.

Cook, Richard R., and David W. Pao, eds. *After Imperialism: Christian Identity in China and the Global Evangelical Movement*. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011.

Liao, Yiwu. *God is Red: The Secret Story of How Christianity Survived and Flourished in Communist China*. New York, N.Y.: HarperOne, 2011.

CROSSING CULTURAL WORK AND LIFE OVERSEAS

Elmer, Duane. *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1993.

———. *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting In Around the World*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2002.

Hudson, Carrie Anne. *Redefining Home: Squatty Potties, Split Pants, and Other Things that Divide My World*. Brenham, Tex.: Lucid Books, 2012.

CONTEXTUALIZATION AND CONTEXTUALIZED THEOLOGY

Cook, Matthew, Rob Haskell, Ruth Julian, and Natee Tanchanpongs, eds. *Local Theology for the Global Church: Principles for an Evangelical Approach to Contextualization*. Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2010.

Flemming, Dean. *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2005.

Jenkins, Philip. *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Tennent, Timothy C. *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church Is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007.

HONOR AND SHAME

deSilva, David A. *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2000.

———. *The Hope of Glory: Honor Discourse and New Testament Interpretation*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999.

Müller, Roland. *Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door*. Bloomington, Ind.: Xlibris, 2001.

MISSIONS, GOSPEL, EVANGELISM

Ashford, Bruce, ed. *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations*. Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Academic, 2011.

Dickson, John. *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission: Promoting the Gospel with More Than Our Lips*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010.

Engen, Charles E. Van, Dean S. Gilliland, Arthur F. Glasser, and Shawn B. Redford. *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible*. Baker Academic, 2003.

Goheen, Michael W., and Craig G. Bartholomew. *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008.

———. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004.

Hiebert, Paul. *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2008.

McKnight, Scot. *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2011.

Newman, Randy. *Questioning Evangelism: Engaging People's Hearts the Way Jesus Did*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 2004.

Packer, J. I. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2008.

Piper, John. *Let the Nations Be Glad!: The Supremacy of God in Missions*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1993.