



## **Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door**

*Roland Muller*

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## **Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door** Roland Muller

In this book, Roland Muller removes the mystique from shame-based cultures. Using the Bible, he introduces us to honor, shame, and fear-based cultures, illustrating their development over the years and demonstrating their influence on our understanding of

## **Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door Details**

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## **From Reader Review Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door for online ebook**

### **Caden Cramsey says**

A good introduction to the concepts of honor and shame/guilt and innocence/fear power and trying to show the gospel as something multifaceted. It is focused on Arab culture, so the in-depth explanations are centered around that.

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### **Cliff Dailey says**

Muller offers helpful insight into how God's gospel is often addressed in one facet. The best information of this book is his note of 3 dominating culture bases and how the gospel of Christ addresses each: 1) guilt/innocence; 2) honor/shame; and, 3) fear/power. This is a quick read and for any who want to begin to learn more about addressing human sin and its guilt from breaking God's law, shame from breaking God's relationship, and fear from breaking God's trust. Living in Asia, I didn't find this as helpful to speak towards Chinese culture because Muller emphasizes examples from Middle East culture. But, it's begun me asking Chinese friends what makes them feel shame. I suspect that my gospel presentations will be more wholistic from this point out, and for that I rejoice.

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### **Sarah says**

This book really opened my eyes to Western/Arabic relational problems. I definitely recommend it to anyone considering over-seas work (missions, governmental relations, whatever), because it gives very valid insights into the way different cultures work. Kind of boring in places, but definitely worth the read =)

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### **Josh Mccoy says**

This is the second time I've read this book. It was given to me by an Indonesian friend after I moved there in 2009 and it proved to be incredibly helpful in both understanding the culture and understanding how to talk about my faith with my friends in a way that made sense to them. If you are a Christian and participate in anything cross-cultural, I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that you're doing yourself a disservice if you do not read this book.

Theological, practical, and extremely clear in his presentation, Roland Muller explains that all worldviews consist of 3 main constructs: Fear/Power, Guilt/Innocence, and Shame/Honor. All cultures contain all 3 constructs to some degree but some are more important than others depending on the culture. He uses this thesis to expand and give a vision for how Westerners might be more effective at sharing the Gospel with other cultural groups - particularly the Shame/Honor groups. Since Muller has spent a significant part of his life in Muslim cultural contexts, this is where he gleans most of his examples but he is careful not to narrow his focus too much. The book is applicable to any culture, anywhere.

FANTASTIC book! Buy a copy, underline, and re-read it every year or two as a refresher on culture and our powerful, perfect, and most honorable God!

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### **Paul, says**

I liked most of this little book, up until about chapter eight. Understanding honor and shame is important to working in the Muslim world. I appreciate his layout of how honor and shame work in contrast to fear and to guilt. I also appreciate his emphasis on the synergy between honor/shame and a communal mindset. This helps me understand a lot of the violence that breaks out in tribal contexts when the honor of the group is offended. I would probably argue that this book has a bit of the "If you are a hammer, everything looks like a nail" problem though.

Interestingly enough, the only one of the Muller's "three major worldviews" I don't see in the Genesis account is guilt. That was a nice piece of eisegesis.

The book goes south later on as Muller tries to understand how honor and shame make a difference to the Arab Muslim. He ends up making lots of over-generalizations whose truthfulness I question based on my own experience with Arabic Muslims. I was also disappointed with Muller's lack of understanding/interaction with the Qur'an. For example, being called a dog in public is dishonorable according to Muller because dogs are scavengers who eat the scraps and not the prime meat. However, in Islam, dogs are considered ritually unclean and the word "dog" is often used as an epithet. This seems like a much stronger understanding of why it is dishonorable to be called a dog, because it is a curse word. (Just like in English, for that matter.)

Muller takes small differences and makes them seem really large and relevant. For example, Christianity and Islam are very different because in Christianity things are "right and wrong" but in Islam they are only right and wrong based on the shame. "However, few things are considered right or wrong. Right and wrong in Islam are defined by the Qur'an." (p.81) How is that different from the Christian perception of the Bible? Christians know what is right and wrong from the Bible.

Especially since the authority he cites is Sania Amandy, a "world-renowned scholar" who doesn't exist in Wikipedia and whose last work, "Temperament and Character of the Arabs" was published in 1960. Even the title should tell us that that book is way out-of-date, and using psychological and sociological methods that are no longer considered appropriate, and would probably be considered offensive. Sentences like "This is because in the Arab value system, great value and prestige are placed on the ability to dominate others" (p.80)

In any case, take the idea of honor and shame and use it where it makes sense. It exists in all cultures, but becomes stronger when tied into a tribal or communal culture.

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### **Jennifer Phenicie says**

Incredibly enlightening  
Great metaphors and explanations

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**Rachel Hannusch says**

A fascinating look at cross-cultural application of the Gospel. A must read for anyone interested in foreign missions, or simply an interest in sociological mindsets - Highly recommend!

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**Bill Brown says**

Eye opening book

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**James says**

This changed my perspective on my own right vs wrong (good/bad) western philosophy and it's limitations in relating to cultures and world views where Honor or Power take a higher priority to Reason and Rightness.

The most eye opening part for me was the realization that God, in His perfect sovereignty, has woven elements of all three of the major world philosophies (Good, Honor, Shame) throughout scripture and the gospel.

Great quick read.

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**Bryan Neuschwander says**

Basic but helpful.

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**Jonathan Wylie says**

Learning how to share the 'good news' to another culture is hard. But this book has helped me learn that the Father speaks in many different ways the same message. He has created a way to be reconciled to Him and made new.

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**Teresa says**

Great thesis, but I would love to hear more anecdotes and stories. The shame/honor culture makes me think about gang behavior, too.

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### **Mick Donahue says**

A great book for those working in Eastern cultures where shame plays a huge role. A must-read in order to understand a properly contextualized gospel in our Arab setting.

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### **Laura says**

Eye-opening.

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### **Andrew says**

Very interesting perspective. It gave me a lot to think about and has caused me to adjust many of the ways I view different cultures. I've heard the idea of Guilt/Innocence based cultures vs Shame/Honor based cultures, and vaguely understood what they meant, but this book brought true clarity to the differences and how those differences effect much of the world today. I definitely recommend the book to people, despite many of its editorial problems and much of the writing style.

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### **Jake Griess says**

This book is a great introduction to understanding the Gospel in a tri-faceted way. It brings to attention that the Gospel speaks not only to our guilt before God but our shame and fear as well. The author challenges westerners to consider if we have thought of the Gospel only in terms of guilt/innocence.

Overall, a very good book and a great step in stone for delving deeper into understanding how to contextualize the Gospel.

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### **Remington says**

This book provides a great starting point for exploring the worldview of honor and shame. Muller also opens up the topic of two other world views. Great biblical grounding and outside sources are used to expand these views. Muller truly does “unlock the door” and I am now excited to “open the door, and discover that the fields are indeed white unto harvest”.

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### **Haley says**

Introduces three major worldviews, and how the gospel meets the need for each one.

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**Kathleen Flynn says**

Experienced a paradigm shift in my understanding of our guilt/ innocence Western thinking in contrast to the shame/ honor culture of the Arab world. Highly recommend!

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**Katie Sargent says**

In Honor and Shame, Roland Muller talks about the impact that sin has had on the human race in three ways, through guilt, shame and fear. I began reading this book with a bit of skepticism as I saw how Muller was interpreting the events in Genesis 2 and 3 in a way I have never heard before. Yet, as I read further, I began to see the message of the gospel expanding in its depth and scope. Muller's explanation of how we are affected in life east of Eden has broadened the import of the gospel, how I think about it and how I will communicate it with others around me.

It is a short read and one I would highly recommend to those interested in beginning to form a robust understanding of sin, its effects and the gospel.

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