

Dr. David deSilva, Cultural World of the New Testament

Session 2, 1 Peter, Honor and Shame

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of deSilva, Cultural World of the New Testament, Session 2, Introduction, Honor and Shame, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. David DeSilva examines the cultural context of 1 Peter, focusing on the concepts of honor and shame prevalent in the Greco-Roman world. He argues that the letter addresses early Christians facing social ostracization and persecution for their faith, exploring how the author counters this shame. DeSilva highlights the author's strategies: reframing the outsiders' judgment as flawed, reinterpreting suffering as a path to divine honor, and emphasizing the Christians' new identity within their community. The lecture concludes by applying these insights to contemporary Christians facing similar challenges in various cultures, suggesting ways to offer support and affirmation.

2. 19 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. deSilva, Cultural World of the NT, Session 2 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Introduction → The Cultural World of the NT).



**DeSilva_CultureNT_
Session02.mp3**

3. Cultural World of the New Testament, Session 2, 1 Peter, Honor and Shame

Reading 1 Peter Attuned to Honor and Shame: A Study Guide

Short-Answer Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the primary challenge that Peter addresses in his letter, according to Dr. deSilva?
2. How did early Christians' hope in a coming Messiah contribute to their being shamed by non-Christian neighbors?
3. What specific social gatherings did early Christians withdraw from, and why?
4. How does the author of 1 Peter use the example of a syllogism to explain the flawed judgment of non-Christians towards Jesus?
5. How does the author of 1 Peter empower Christian slaves in their interactions with non-Christian masters?
6. According to Seneca, how should a wise person respond to insults or injuries?
7. How does the author of 1 Peter reframe the concept of suffering for early Christians?
8. What Old Testament historical events provide a framework for understanding the displacement experienced by early Christians?
9. How does the presence of the Holy Spirit counteract the shame experienced by early Christians?
10. What specific actions does the author of 1 Peter encourage Christians to take in response to being shamed?

Answer Key

1. The primary challenge addressed by Peter in his letter is the shame and slander experienced by early Christians due to their conversion and commitment to Christ. This shame was inflicted by non-Christian neighbors who saw their beliefs and practices as deviant and disruptive.

2. Early Christians believed in a Messiah who would overturn the existing world order, including the Roman peace. This belief was seen as a threat by non-Christians, who valued the stability and order of the Roman Empire, leading to slander and accusations of disloyalty.
3. Early Christians withdrew from civic and social gatherings, including feasts and festivals, because these events often involved idolatrous rituals that conflicted with their faith. Even private dinner parties included rituals honoring pagan gods, making participation difficult for Christians.
4. The author uses the example of a syllogism to demonstrate that just as a flawed judgment of a syllogism doesn't affect the validity of the syllogism itself, the rejection of Jesus by non-Christians doesn't diminish his true worth or significance in God's eyes. The flawed judgment lies with those who reject, not with the one being judged.
5. The author empowers Christian slaves by encouraging them to maintain a pure conscience before God, even if it means enduring punishment from their masters. He assures them that suffering unjustly for their faith is a sign of their commitment to God and not a reflection of their worth.
6. Seneca argues that a wise person should disregard insults or injuries if they are undeserved. He believes that the person inflicting the injustice is the one who should feel ashamed, as their actions reflect poorly on their own character.
7. The author reframes suffering as a test of faith, a means of proving the genuineness of their commitment to God. He argues that enduring trials with faith leads to greater honor and glory in God's eyes, drawing parallels with the suffering and ultimate vindication of Jesus.
8. The Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel and the Babylonian conquest of Judah, resulting in the scattering of God's people, provide a historical framework for understanding the displacement experienced by early Christians. Their experience of being marginalized reflects the historical suffering and displacement of God's chosen people.
9. The Holy Spirit, dwelling within believers, is a sign of God's favor and presence in their lives. This intimate connection with God through the Holy Spirit offers comfort and strength amidst trials, affirming their worth and countering the shame imposed by outsiders.

10. The author encourages Christians to respond to shame with steadfast faith, good conduct, and gentle defense of their beliefs. They are called to return good for evil, show love and unity within the Christian community, and ultimately trust God's judgment and vindication.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the ways in which the author of 1 Peter uses the concept of honor and shame to encourage and strengthen early Christians in the face of persecution.
2. Discuss the specific social and cultural factors that contributed to the shame and marginalization experienced by early Christians. How did these factors influence their interactions with non-Christian neighbors?
3. Examine the role of the example of Jesus in 1 Peter. How does the author use the life, suffering, and vindication of Jesus to shape the understanding and response of early Christians to their own experiences?
4. Explore the importance of community in 1 Peter. How does the author emphasize the role of the Christian community in supporting and affirming the honor of individual believers facing persecution?
5. Considering the modern context, discuss the relevance of the themes of honor, shame, and persecution addressed in 1 Peter for Christians living in diverse cultural contexts today. How can the strategies presented in the letter be applied to contemporary challenges?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Deviancy Control:** Societal mechanisms used to enforce conformity to norms and punish behavior deemed deviant.
- **Diaspora:** The dispersion of a people from their homeland, often forced by historical events like war or persecution.
- **Honor:** A social value reflecting worth, respect, and status within a community, often earned through virtuous actions and adherence to social norms.
- **Shame:** A negative social emotion resulting from actions or beliefs that violate social norms, leading to feelings of disgrace and loss of honor.
- **Rehabilitation:** The process of restoring an individual's social standing and acceptance within a community after they have been shamed or deemed deviant.
- **Slander:** False and malicious statements intended to damage someone's reputation and social standing.
- **Syllogism:** A logical argument consisting of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion deduced from the premises.
- **Resident Alien:** An individual residing in a community or country without being a citizen, often experiencing a sense of displacement and social marginality.
- **Social Matrix:** The network of relationships and social structures that provide support and influence within a community.
- **Apologia:** A formal defense of one's beliefs or actions, often used to counter accusations or criticisms.

4. Briefing Document

Briefing Doc: Reading 1 Peter Through the Lens of Honor and Shame

Source: Dr. David deSilva, The Cultural World of the New Testament, Session 2, Reading 1 Peter Attuned to Honor and Shame.

Main Theme: This lecture explores how understanding the cultural values of honor and shame can illuminate the message and purpose of 1 Peter. The author argues that Peter was writing to a community facing significant social pressure and shame for their Christian beliefs and practices, and he employs various strategies to help them cope and persevere.

Most Important Ideas/Facts:

1. The Challenge of Shame:

- Early Christians were experiencing slander, reproach, and even physical abuse due to their commitment to the Gospel.
- "There's evidence throughout 1 Peter that this is the primary presenting challenge that Peter is addressing."
- This shame was a form of social control used by non-Christians who perceived the Christian movement as deviant and threatening.
- "The goal of the Christian's neighbors would be to use shame to use deviancy control techniques in order to correct deviant behavior based on deviant convictions."
- Reasons for non-Christian hostility included perceived threats to Roman peace, neglect of traditional gods, and withdrawal from social events involving idolatry.
- "They were, therefore, not supporters of the Roman peace, the Roman world."
- "They also noticed that Christians withdrew their presence from almost every civic gathering, social gathering, or even private social event or dinner."

2. Strategies for Deflecting Shame:

- **Invalidating Outsider Judgment:** Peter reminds Christians that the judgment of non-Christians is flawed and unreliable because they are "in the dark" about God. He emphasizes that their former way of life was marked by ignorance and conformity to passions.

- "The author of 1 Peter reminds the hearers that they made a conscious decision to disassociate themselves from their former way of life, which remains the lifestyle of the people around them."
- "The non-Christian neighbors, then, are attempting to shame the Christians back into a less honorable, more limited way of life."
- **Reinterpreting Shame as a Path to Honor:** Suffering for righteousness is presented as a badge of honor, aligning them with Christ's suffering and paving the way for future glory.
- "The author also defines being on the margins of society as the new normal."
- "The experience of Jesus, therefore, both normalizes the disciples' experience of shame... and also provides a precedent for the expectation that continued endurance will lead to honor."
- **Cultivating Internal Honor:** Christians are urged to develop self-respect based on embodying virtues and ideals esteemed by God, such as mastering passions and maintaining a pure conscience even in the face of pressure.
- "The author calls the hearers, calls his audience, to counter feelings of shame, of being shamed by outsiders, by developing healthy self-respect based on the embodiment of ideals and virtues that they know to be held in esteem, both within and beyond the Christian culture."

3. Affirming Christian Honor:

- **God's Favor and Future Glory:** Peter highlights God's love and favor for believers, reminding them of their spiritual inheritance and the future glory awaiting them at Christ's return.
- "The testing that Christians now endure may be difficult, but the sifting that awaits those outside the Christian group is far more severe, and its outcome far more dire."
- **New Identity in Christ:** He emphasizes their new and honorable identity as God's chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation, set apart for God's service.
- "They have moved from a shameful place, the place of the non-Christians, to a new frontier of nobility, a basis for self-esteem and moral courage rooted in their relationship with God and one another."

- **The Christian Community as a Support System:** Mutual love, unity, hospitality, and humility within the community are crucial for reinforcing their sense of belonging and counteracting the shame from the outside world.
- "It is essential that the relational bonds within the group become more valuable, more powerful, and more important than the relational capital that outsiders have."

4. Relevance for Today's Church:

- DeSilva draws parallels to the persecution faced by Christians in various parts of the world today, particularly in honor-shame cultures. He urges the global church to act as a support system for persecuted Christians through prayer, material aid, diplomacy, and active affirmation of their dignity.
- "1 Peter suggests avenues by which to support Christians in restricted and hostile environments."
- "We can act in ways that will affirm the honor of our Christian sisters and brothers more loudly and more meaningfully than their neighbors seek to erode their honor."

Quotes: Key quotes highlighting the main themes and ideas are included throughout the summary above.

5. FAQs on deSilva, Cultural World of the New Testament, Session 2, 1 Peter, Honor and Shame, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Understanding the Impact of Honor and Shame in 1 Peter

1. What is the main social challenge that the author of 1 Peter addresses?

The author of 1 Peter primarily addresses the challenge of shame experienced by early Christians due to slander, reproach, and even physical abuse from their non-Christian neighbors.

2. Why did non-Christians attempt to shame early Christians?

Non-Christians viewed the early Christians as deviant and attempted to use shame as a social control mechanism to correct their perceived deviant behavior and beliefs. They perceived the Christian hope in the overturning of the Roman peace, their withdrawal from civic events involving idolatry, and their rejection of traditional gods as threats to social stability and order.

3. How does the author of 1 Peter insulate his audience against the shame inflicted by their neighbors?

The author first argues that the judgment of outsiders is flawed and unreliable by highlighting the dishonorable and ignorant nature of their non-Christian accusers. He further points out that the true standard of judgment lies with God, who values the Christians even as the world rejects them.

4. What strategies does the author use to reinterpret the experience of shame?

He reframes the Christians' trials as a testing ground for their faith, demonstrating its genuineness and leading to greater honor in God's eyes. He also normalizes marginalization by drawing parallels with the suffering of Jesus and the historical experiences of God's people, highlighting that suffering for righteousness is part of God's plan for them.

5. How does the author of 1 Peter empower Christians to resist giving in to shame?

He encourages them to develop self-respect based on embodying Christian ideals and virtues, reminding them that they are living according to God's will even when it results in suffering. He also empowers Christian slaves to maintain their integrity and resist pressure from their masters to violate their faith, affirming their honor in choosing God over social conformity.

6. How does the concept of spiritual warfare play a role in 1 Peter's message?

The author reframes non-Christian persecution as part of a larger spiritual battle against the devil, who seeks to devour the believers. This perspective encourages Christians to resist social pressure and remain firm in their faith, recognizing that their struggle is ultimately against a cosmic enemy rather than their human neighbors.

7. What is the appropriate Christian response to challenges and insults according to 1 Peter?

Instead of retaliating with insults or violence, Christians are called to follow Jesus' example by responding with blessing and good deeds. This approach seeks to win over opponents and demonstrate the true nature of Christian character, ultimately silencing the ignorant slander of those who oppose them.

8. What implications does 1 Peter have for supporting persecuted Christians today?

The letter emphasizes the importance of tangible support for those facing pressure for their faith. It encourages prayer, material assistance, diplomatic efforts, and personal communication that reminds them of their value in God's eyes and the larger Christian community. By offering practical aid and affirming their honor, we can strengthen the resilience of persecuted Christians around the world.