

Dr. David A. deSilva, Cultural World of the New Testament, Session 2, Reading 1 Peter Attuned to Honor and Shame 6-min. Video Overview

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Alright, today we're going to crack open a playbook that's like 2,000 years old. It was written for this small, kind of misunderstood group facing some serious social pressure. And you know what? The strategies in it? They're maybe more relevant now than ever.

Let's just start with a feeling I think we all know. You know that feeling, right? Maybe it's online shaming, pressure from your friends, or just that nagging sense that you don't really fit in. We've all been there.

But what if that pressure wasn't just awkward? What if it was threatening your entire existence? To really get this playbook, we've got to take a trip back in time to a totally different social world. So imagine this. Your entire identity, your value, everything that makes you you isn't up to you.

It's decided by the public court of opinion. In the ancient Roman world, this was the deal. Honor was everything.

And shame? Shame was basically social death. There was no agreed-upon way to disagree. What your community thought about you? Well, that was your reality.

Period. Okay, so into this high-stakes world, this pressure cooker of a society, comes this new movement. The very first Christians.

And let me tell you, to their neighbors, they looked, well, they looked like a pretty dangerous cult. I mean, try to see it from a Roman's point of view for a second. These people, they suddenly stopped going to the local festivals and parties.

You know, the stuff that held society together. They refused to honor the traditional gods, which to everyone else felt like they were putting the whole community at risk. And the wildest part? Their biggest hope was for their king to come back and just overturn the entire Roman world.

So yeah, they looked antisocial, ungodly, and super disloyal. And this wasn't just some light gossip, you know? The accusations were heavy. The actual word used here is evildoers.

They were literally being painted as a threat to the moral fabric of society. And it's so important to get this. This public shaming wasn't random.

It had a clear purpose. It was a tool for social control. It was the majority's way of trying to force this weird minority group back in line.

It was a full-on campaign of social pressure, all designed to make them change their ways. So what do you do? What do you do when the whole world is trying to shame you into giving up? Well, you don't just take it. You flip the entire script.

The author of this New Testament letter, 1 Peter, lays out this absolutely brilliant three-step strategy for not just surviving, but for being resilient. It's pretty straightforward, really. Let's break it down.

First, you discredit the critic. Second, you reframe the pain you're feeling. And third, you build a whole new community that gives you the honor the outside world won't.

Okay, let's dig into that first step, because it's so fundamental. You can't be shamed by someone if you don't respect their judgment, right? So the author just systematically tears down the credibility of the shamers. He reminds the Christians, hey, you guys chose to leave that old way of life.

He calls that old life futile, darkness, and driven by ignorance. The takeaway? The critics aren't wise judges. They're the ones who are actually stuck in the past.

And he uses this really powerful metaphor to hammer the point home. It's the idea of a rejected stone. You've got the builder's view.

They look at a stone and say, no, this is worthless. But then you have God's view, who sees that exact same stone as the precious cornerstone of the whole building. See the strategy? It's all about exposing the critic's judgment as being just wrong.

They're bad builders who can't even see what's truly valuable. And this just flips the whole thing on its head. Suddenly, it's not the Christians we're on trial anymore.

It's their critics. By rejecting something that's actually valuable, they're the ones who are revealing their own bad judgment. The shame isn't on the stone.

It's on the builder who was foolish enough to throw it away. But just deflecting the shame wasn't quite enough. The playbook's second move is, honestly, even more radical.

It's all about transforming suffering from something shameful into a badge of honor. So all the insults, all the abuse, it gets completely reframed. This isn't a punishment.

It's a test to prove your faith is the real deal. It's not a sign that you failed. It's the very path that Jesus himself walked.

He suffered before he was honored. And it's not a dead end. It's just a temporary path on the way to future glory and honor.

It's proof that you're on the right side. This one line just nails the entire psychological flip. If you are reproached in Christ's name, you are privileged.

Wow. The very thing that was meant to shame them, being insulted for who they are, becomes a source of privilege, a sign they're doing something right. Shame has been completely turned into honor.

Okay, but let's be real. This kind of mental gymnastics is really, really hard to do all by yourself. And that brings us to the final and maybe the most crucial part of this whole playbook.

Creating a new social world. And this taps into a deep, fundamental truth about us as people. Honor isn't something you can just invent for yourself.

It has to be given to you, reflected back at you by people whose opinions you actually value. You need a new court of reputation. If the outside world is shaming you, you absolutely need an inside world that's honoring you.

And this is exactly what the early Christian community did for its members. The author just unleashes what one scholar calls an avalanche of honorific titles. He's just relentlessly building up this new, powerful, and deeply honorable identity for the group.

A direct counterattack to the world's narrative of shame. This slide just lays it out so clearly: that whole transformation. Look at this journey: they went from living a feudal way of life in darkness to having a living hope in God's marvelous light.

They went from being no people, literally nobodies, to being God's own people. This new community became the source of their worth. So okay, a really clever strategy from 2,000 years ago.

But why should we care? Why does it matter to us, right here, right now? Because this playbook, it's absolutely timeless. Think about it. In our world of digital mobs and constant social judgment, the ability to withstand that kind of pressure is a superpower.

And the strategy is exactly the same. First, you have to consciously decide whose opinion actually matters to you. Second, you find purpose and even strength in your hardships.

And finally, you find and cultivate communities that see you and affirm your value. And that really leaves us with a final question to chew on. In a world where anyone online can be your judge, where shame is literally just a click away, who makes up the court of reputation that truly matters to you? Who are your builders? Where's the community that recognizes your true worth, the one that sees you not as a rejected stone, but as a cornerstone? That's definitely something worth thinking about.