

Why Penal Substitution Doesn't Work with Asian-Americans

Mako Nagasawa

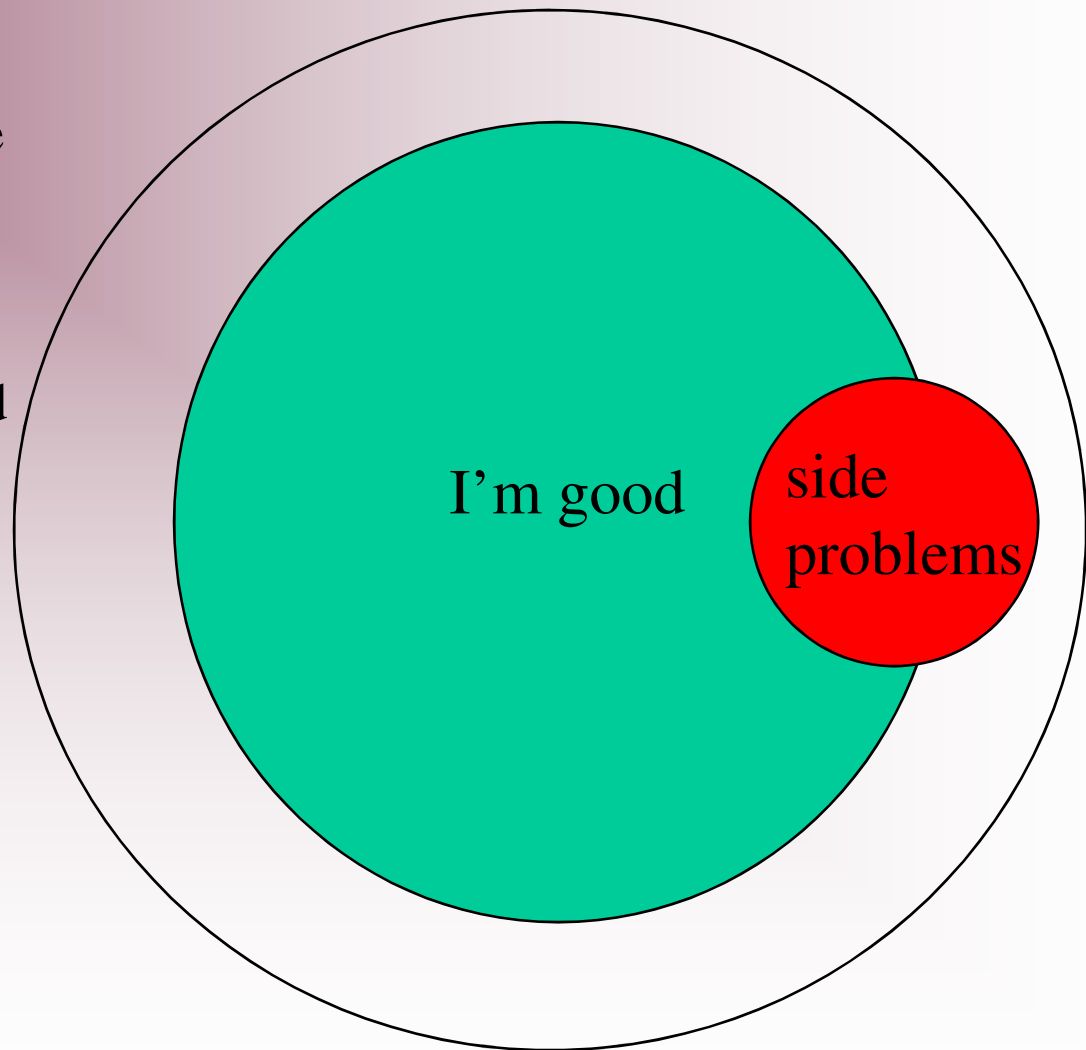
November, 2001

Frameworks

- Two basic types of people
 - Guilt based
 - Shame based
- Two basic theories of the Cross
 - Jesus died instead of us
 - We died with Jesus

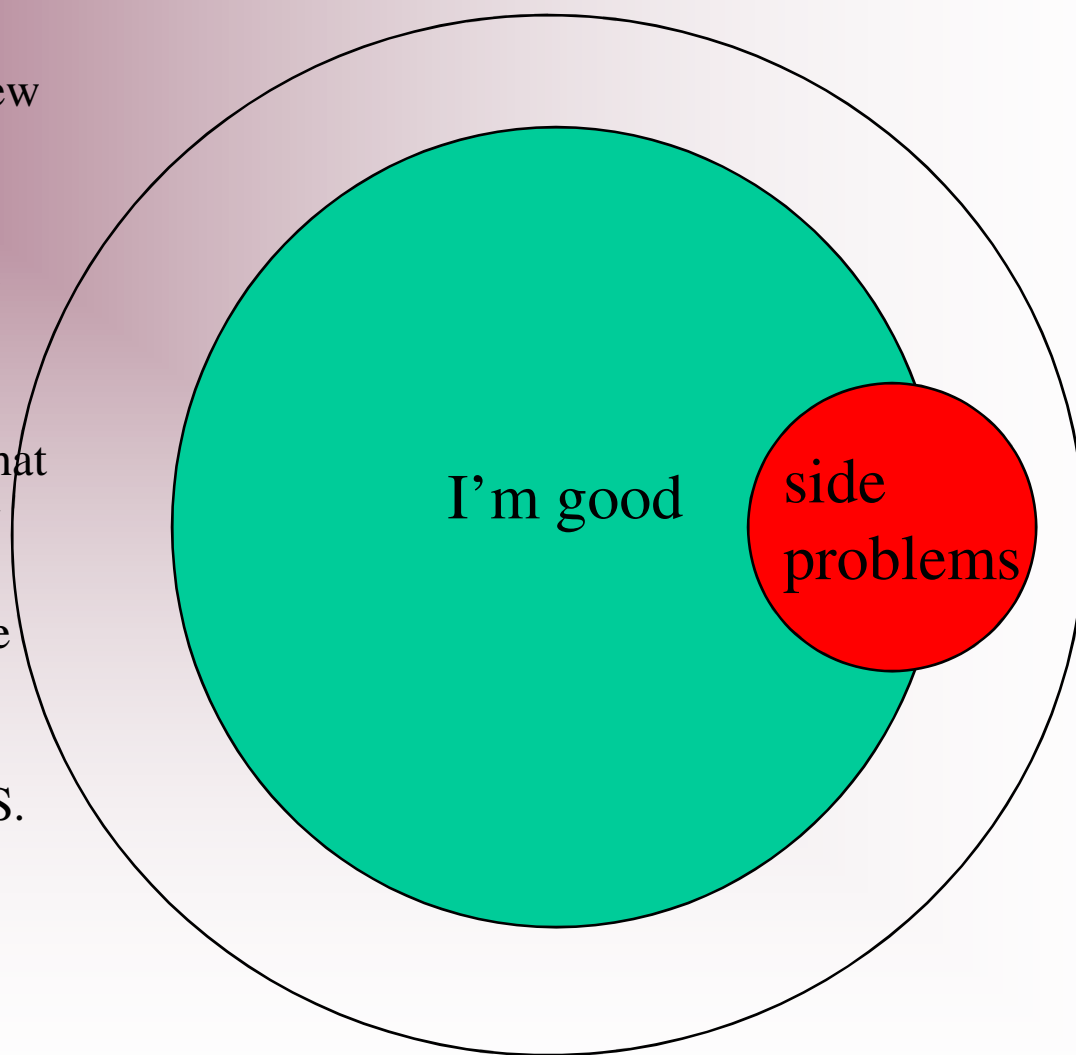
Non-Christian Self Concept #1 - Guilt Based

- There was a belief in the moral superiority of America and White Americans.
- This, family stability, and perhaps a rising humanism contributed to the “I’m good” mindset.
- This was the cultural climate of White America and thus Fundamentalism in the early 1900’s.



Non-Christian Self Concept #1 - Guilt Based

- Comes from having relational stability and internalizing a positive view of one's self.
- Says, "My mistakes don't define me. Though I have some problems, I'm essentially okay."
- Guilt based, in the sense that the person is motivated by self-improvement. White American Christians in the early 1900's were perhaps also influenced by nationalism (corporate U.S. identity as a great nation) and Wesley's idea of attainable perfection (witness Pentecostal and Holiness movements).



Non-Christian Self Concept #2 - Shame Based

- People from non-Western communitarian cultures tend to think of the group as good and themselves as bad, perhaps by internalizing criticism to conform.
- Urban minorities internalized a lot of negative messages and relational instability.
- For some, the collapse of the White family in the 1960's led to painful relational instability.
- For some, the collapse of the triumphant White American story was also painful and shaming.



Non-Christian Self Concept #2 - Shame Based

- Internalized a lot of rejection, criticism, or instability
- Says, “My relationships have failed. I must somehow be to blame.
- Says, “I have a lot of problems; I’m essentially bad. My bad character and mistakes define me.
- Says, “I have a layer of goodness that I need to project as a façade. I can’t let people know who I really am.



Differences Between the Two Non-Christian Self-Concepts

- I believe relationships are held together by...
 - Confession and honesty (GUILT); or
 - Avoiding confrontation and exposure (SHAME)
- When I make a mistake, I...
 - Feel like my good decisions outweigh my bad ones (GUILT); or
 - Feel defined by the mistake (SHAME)
- When I feel unworthy or like a failure, I...
 - Can pick myself up and go on (GUILT); or
 - Feel paralyzed and powerless (SHAME)
- Towards authority figures, I feel...
 - Basically respected and welcomed into some level of intimacy (GUILT); or
 - Basically under threat of criticism and prevented from intimacy (SHAME)
- I think that if others really knew me, they would...
 - Like me because I'm basically an attractive person (GUILT); or
 - Dislike me because the real me needs to be changed or hidden (SHAME)

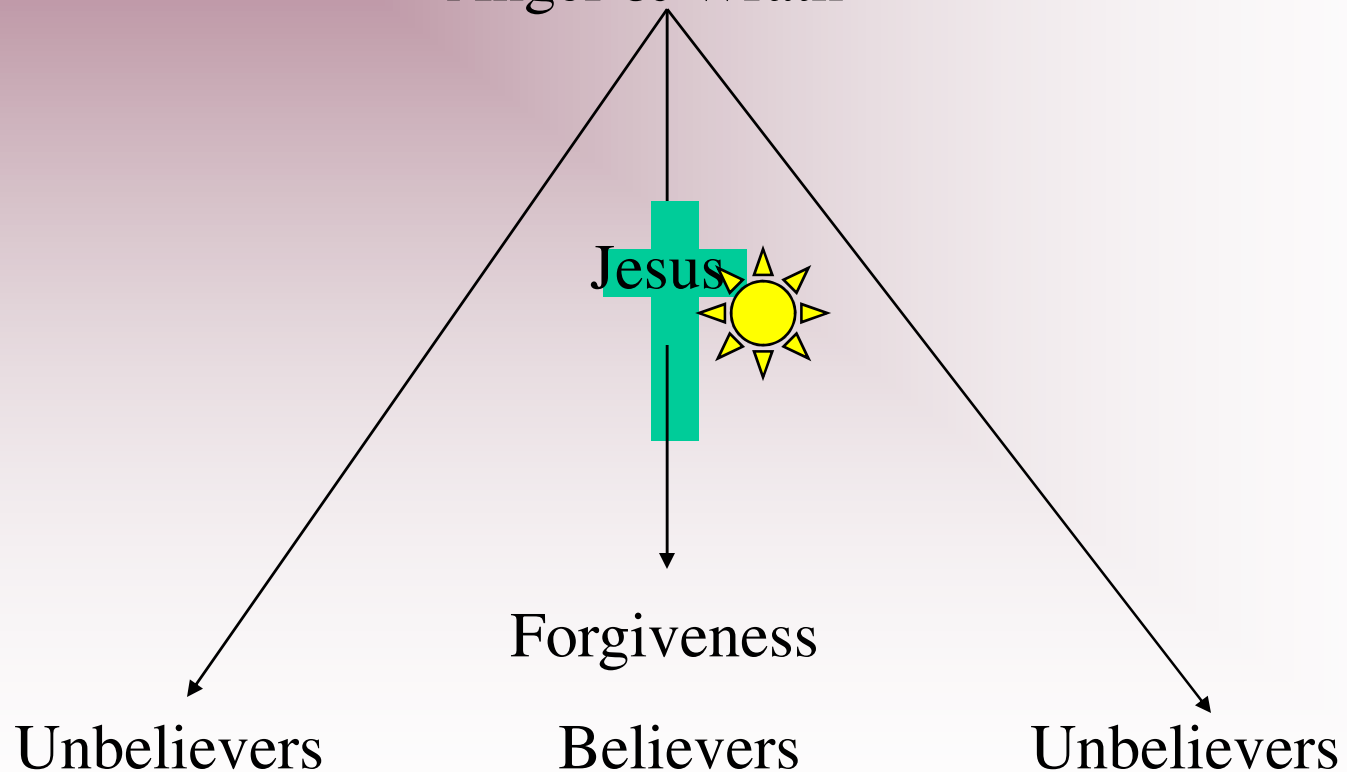
So how do these two types of
people understand their own
spirituality?

Theory of the Cross #1

- *American Fundamentalist* understanding

God the Father

Anger & Wrath



Theory of the Cross #1

- *American Fundamentalist* understanding
 - Jesus took on God's wrath and anger at the Cross
 - The Father seems like a Judge and stands for anger, justice, and wrath. The Son seems like an innocent victim and stands for love, mercy, and compassion.
 - Believing in Jesus means that God has no more anger left over for us
 - Hence Jesus died **instead of us**, to change how God feels towards us, though we tend to still fear the Father and appreciate the Son.
 - This has been called 'penal substitution.'

Problems with Theory of the Cross #1

- *The Father's Image*
 - The Father never seems to lose His angry Judge demeanor. Does not address the yearning to have a loving Father. Strongly maintains the 'strict father' image of politically conservative White Americans.
- *Intimacy Not Organically Promoted or Modeled*
 - We still feel distant from God, even though He might not be angry with us. Does not address the yearning for spiritual intimacy.
- *Motivation for Obedience*
 - Obedience is not organically connected to the Cross, which is understood exclusively to mean "debt-forgiveness." But if we're forgiven for all disobedience, then another motivation for Christian obedience has to arise, which tends to be either (1) guilt-inducing or (2) self-centered (Christian hedonism).
 - "C'mon! Don't you know Jesus died for you?"
 - "If you obey Jesus, God will bless you and make your life better."

Theory of the Cross #2

- *Union with Jesus* understanding

The Old Age

God

The Old Age will end

Unbelievers:

- In sin, separated from God
- Old creations
- Objects of wrath
- Disempowered
- Do not know or experience God as a Father, just as GOD

Jesus

Death & Resurrection

Believers:

- In Christ by the Spirit
- New creations
- Forgiven
- Empowered
- God is a **Father ONLY** to those 'in Jesus'

The New Age begins

New Heavens & Earth

Theory of the Cross #2

- *Union with Jesus* understanding
 - God is separate from us in His wrath but wants to be one with us in His love. We are not His children yet.
 - Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit are thus God's way of uniting Himself to us.
 - Participatory understanding of the cross. Jesus participated in our fallen humanity, and our death. We must die with Jesus.
 - Believing in Jesus means our old identity died with Jesus, who lived and died to change who we are, and we are given a new identity in the resurrected Jesus by the Spirit
 - Believing in Jesus = dying & rising with Jesus = being in Jesus = Jesus being in us.
 - God is a Father **ONLY** to those in His Son, Jesus. This is called **adoption** in Christ. It is ontological and familial, not legal.

Answers Given By Theory of the Cross #2

- *The Father's Image*
 - God's Fatherhood can now be understood from Jesus' relationship with his Father. He is delighted, intimate, and exalts His child.
- *Intimacy Organic to Salvation*
 - There is no other way to experience God as Father but to be 'in Christ,' and the 'in Christ' and 'union with Christ by the Spirit' language powerfully addresses the yearning for spiritual intimacy.
- *Motivation for Obedience*
 - Obedience is organically connected to the Cross because our old identity has died, and our new identity has been born through Jesus' resurrection, in union with him by the Spirit. Thus, it is possible and necessary to appeal first to a Christian's new identity (e.g. Romans 6:1-11).

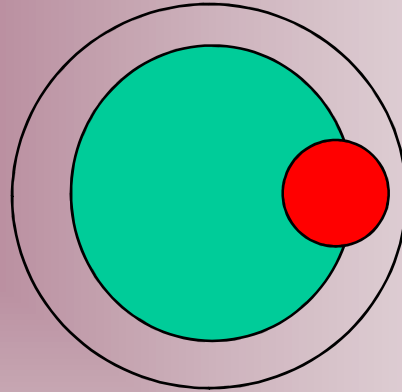
Differences between the Two Theories

- **Sin** is wrong actions, thoughts, activities.
- **Jesus died** at the Cross.
- God's Fatherhood is defined by **anger and wrath**.
- The Cross comes **between the Father and the Son**.
- The **Cross is about debt-forgiveness**, about Jesus paying our debt in our place.
- The **Cross interferes** with motivations for obedience.
- Separation and intimacy with God **must be added later** into the discussion.
- Holy Spirit **must also be added** into the discussion.
- **Legal and penal**
- **Sin** is a wrong state of being; 'sins' of thoughts and acts are what result.
- **We died with Jesus** at the Cross.
- God's Fatherhood is defined by **His love for Jesus**.
- The Cross comes **between the old creation and the new**.
- **The Cross is about personal transformation**, dying to your old self and rising new.
- The **Cross motivates** your obedience as a new creation.
- Separation and intimacy with God **are organic** and must be discussed as part of the event.
- Holy Spirit **fits organically** and of necessity into the model.
- **Ontological, familial and relational**

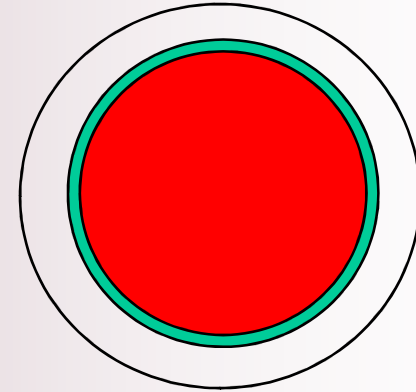
What the Scriptures Say: Union With Jesus

- We Have Died and Risen With Jesus
 - Romans 6:1-11; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 3:7-12; Colossians 2:12-13
- We Are in Jesus By the Spirit
 - John 14:8-21, 15:1-9; Ephesians 1:1-14, 2:11-22
- Jesus Lives Within Us By the Spirit
 - Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; 2 Corinthians 4-5; Ephesians 3:14-19, John 4:1-42 and 7:38-39
- *Every discussion of the Cross eventually sees us participating in it because it is a full-blown Jewish argument about how to enter God's new creation. The Fundamentalist 'penal atonement' understanding can only be made by (1) taking a few verses out of context (e.g. Romans 3:21-26 apart from Romans 6 - 8) and/or (2) taking fundamentally Jewish concepts (e.g. 'redemption' as deliverance, transfer between realms, as in Col.1:13-14) out of context and making their meaning dependent on their Greco-Roman connotations ('redemption' as only a debt-payment).*

Ministry During Two-Thirds of the 20th Century



Guilt-Based Person



Shame Based Person

Jesus died
instead of you

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White American Christians believing in America's moral goodness, but trying to rationally convince people of their sin and guilt

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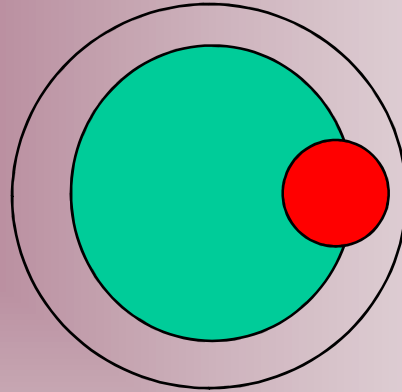
Jesus died, and you
with him, to
transform you into a
new creation

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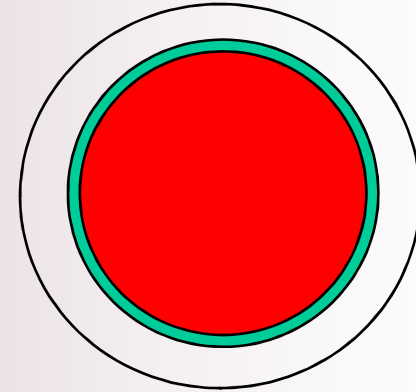
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African-American Christians, with people already aware of their sin and shame, offered personal change and freedom from sin.

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White American Church argued, "You need God because you're not perfect." Everyone could admit to not being perfect, but they could still handle it in the "I'm basically good" self-concept.



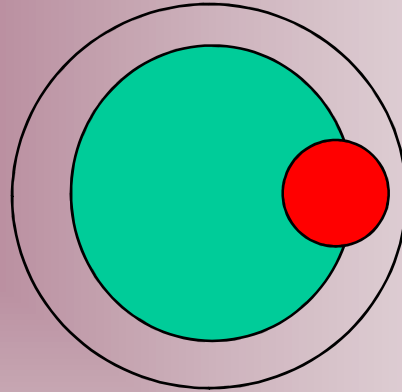
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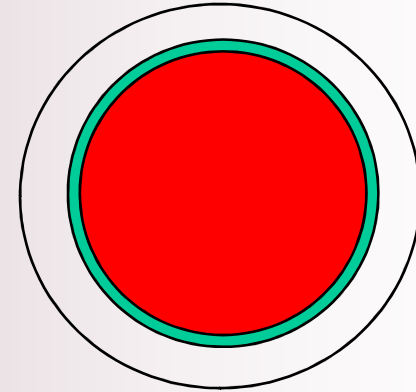
African-American ministers said, "My life was in trouble, I was messed up, but God grabbed hold of me and turned me around. You wouldn't have wanted to know me before Christ rescued me from the devil."



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Shame Based Person

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So White American Christians
experienced forgiveness for not
being perfect

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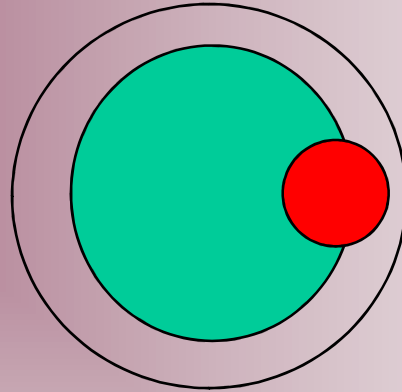
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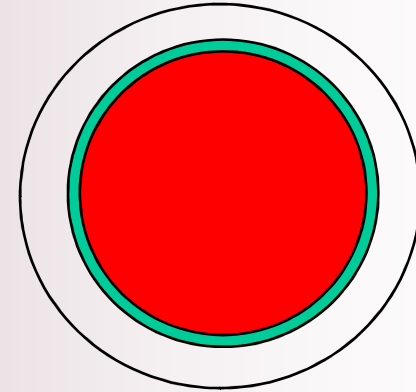
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And African American Christians
experienced transformation

Ministry During Two-Thirds of the 20th Century



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So White American Christians
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Meanwhile educated East Asian-
American Christians were searching
for a meaningful theological
language.

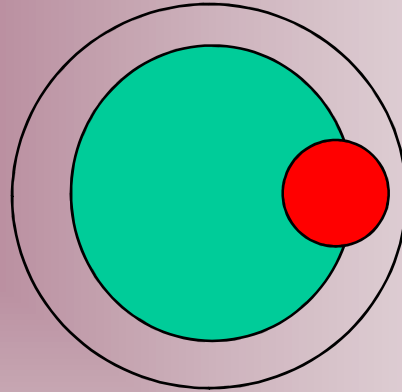
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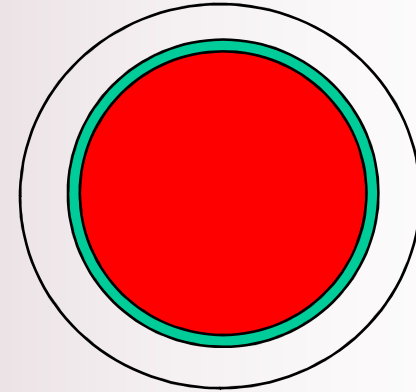
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African American Christians
experienced transformation

Ministry During Two-Thirds of the 20th Century

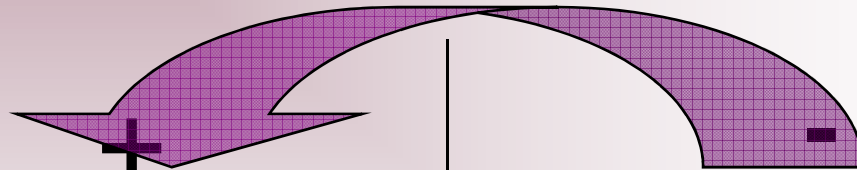


Guilt-Based Person



Shame Based Person

Jesus died
instead of you



White American Christians
experienced forgiveness for not
being perfect

Most Asian-American ministers
were trained at White seminaries
and tried to adopt Fundamentalist
theology.

Jesus died, and you
with him, to
transform you into a
new creation

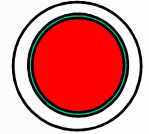
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African American Christians
experienced transformation

One Indicator: The Effect on Asian Americans

Shame Based Person



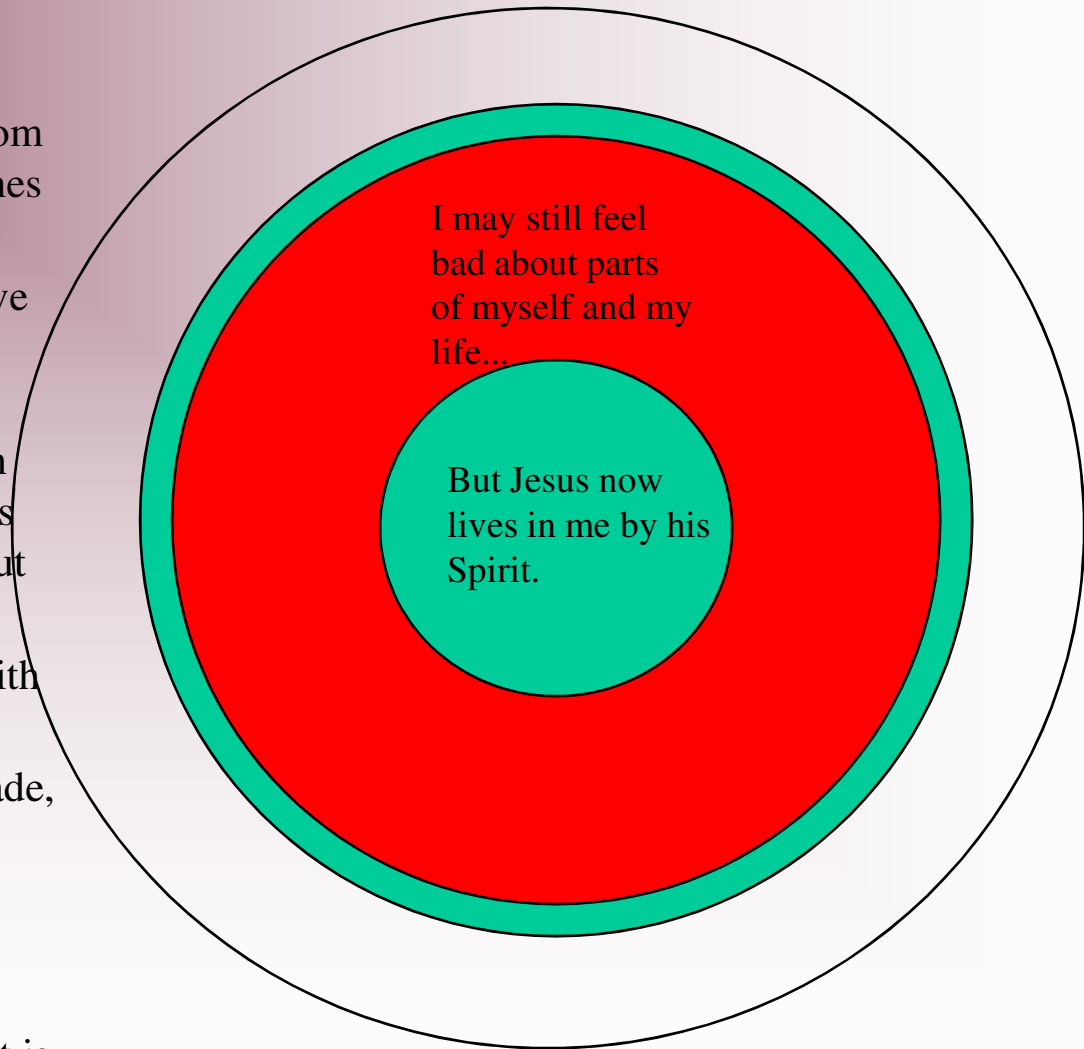
- *The Father's Image is Troubling*
 - The Father never seems to lose His angry Judge demeanor. How is God really a loving Father?
- *Intimacy is Not Organically Promoted or Modeled*
 - We still feel distant from God, and are ambivalent about whether He is still angry with us. Does God really yearn for intimacy with us?
- *Motivation for Obedience is Poor*
 - “Debt-forgiveness” from White America becomes “debt-obligation” in Asian-America. This makes Asian-Americans, more so than their White American counterparts, want to *repay the debt* because of their cultural familiarity with this motivational language.
 - “Don’t you know how much Jesus suffered for you?”
 - “Don’t you get how much God gave up for you?”

What Shame-Based People Need to Know: Union With Jesus

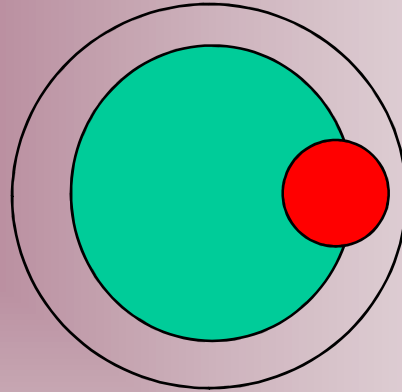
- Our sinful core identity died with Jesus at the Cross; it got what it deserved. It's not that Jesus just took the penalty for us and made us guilt-debtors to him.
- God's Fatherhood is defined by love for Jesus and for those in Jesus. The Fatherhood of God is intensely intimate, and our adoption is caused by being in Jesus.
- The Cross - Resurrection motivates further obedience in us because we are new creations, and now it's about being consistent with who we already are in Jesus: God's children.
- Separation and intimacy with God are organic and must be discussed as part of the saving event. The Holy Spirit fits organically into the model.
- Familial and relational understanding of salvation.

How Jesus Heals Shame Based People

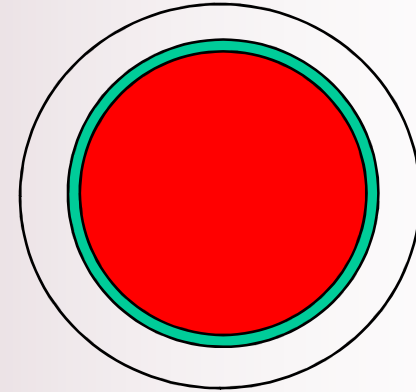
- I now have relational stability with Jesus, to help me handle the relational instability I feel everywhere else.
- I now have Jesus as a refuge from the world of criticism that defines me as a failure.
- I have a purpose, to let Jesus live his life out through me, not to protect myself
- I am ‘in Christ.’ Jesus is now in me, and defines who I am. He is at the core of me, and pushes out the negative part.
- I will definitely still struggle with sin, as Paul did in Romans 7.
- But now I can let go of my façade, because I know I don’t have to manufacture my own acceptability.
- Like Paul, I can say, “I myself (the true me)...serve God. That is who I am.” (Rom.7:25)



Ministry in the 21st Century



Guilt-Based Person



Shame Based Person

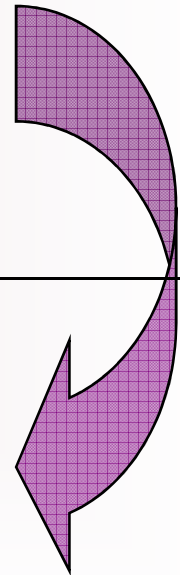
Jesus died
instead of you

Jesus died, and you
with him, to
transform you into a
new creation

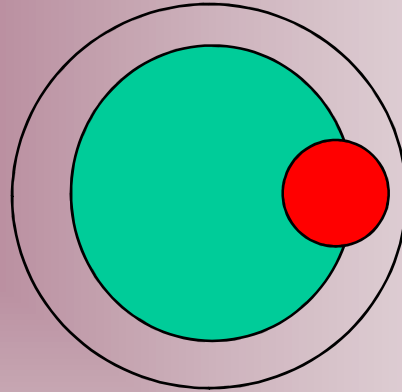
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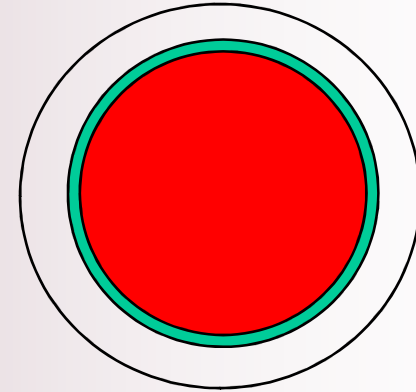
As-Am's are recovering
the 'in Christ' language
from White Christian
counselors and theology
from the Eastern
Orthodox tradition.



Ministry in the 21st Century



Guilt-Based Person



Shame Based Person

Jesus died
instead of you

White Protestants moving towards shame-based culture, (1) by painfully realizing that White American history is filled with injustice, and (2) because of the instability of the White family.

Cultural shift

Jesus died, and you
with him, to
transform you into a
new creation

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Ministry



Appendix A

Pastoral Contexts of Key
'Union with Christ' Scriptures