

Missions Emphasis Weekend

Understanding "us" and "them" Better
A Key to More Effective Missions



When Individualists live with Collectivists (and vice versa)

- Worldviews create a map that makes sense of life
 - For individualists, Cinderella becomes a framework for understanding romance
 - But for collectivist parents, the person is going about dating all wrong; the person should be seeking the help of loved ones.
- Culture Shock
 - When my mental map doesn't match what's around me
 - I can't figure out why someone is glad or mad or proud or embarrassed
- “When East meets West”—well, actually they rarely meet; usually they are ships passing in the night.

Why is there often misunderstanding?

We all hold the same *biblical* values, but
different cultural values

Individualist Values

- Self-reliance
- Love “new”
- “Success”

Collectivist Values

- Kinship
- Patronage
- Mediation

Why is there often misunderstanding when trying to get others to follow Jesus?

Same Holy Spirit, but different cultural ways to teach values

Individualist methods

- Media
- Stories
- Guilt

Collectivist Methods

- Honor
- Shaming
- Boundaries

To apply this to missions, first, it helps us to read the Bible better

- The Bible was written by collectivists and reflect often the cultural values of their world.
- Top biblical sins?
 - Inhospitality
 - Ingratitude (grumbling)
 - Shattering community (by not forgiving)
- Many collectivists would nod their heads in agreement.
- Many individualists would shake their heads in confusion

So, a biblical story might not even mention
what the big issue was
(because it went without being said)

In two biblical stories, I praise the person when the Bible was
expecting me to be appalled at them:

- the Patriarch Joseph (with his coat of many colors)
(Jacob wasn't the hero of the story but the villain)
- King Solomon
(the biblical "praise" of Solomon wasn't really praise)

Without knowing “what went without being said,” I couldn’t figure out, really, why folks were doing what they were doing.

So, subconsciously, I provided a rationale (from my own culture).

I turned the Joseph story (with his multi-colored coat) into an “American Success Story.”

Joseph and his coat of many colors.

I heard the story as sibling rivalry and petty jealousy.



I had never noticed the story
was about inheritance.

Inheritance is a bigger theme in Scripture
than my modern American culture hears.

- Firstborn

Gen 37:2 This is the account of Jacob's family line. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

Gen 37:3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. ⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

We were suppose to think: loved = inheritance.

Gen 37:5 Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶ He said to them, “Listen to this dream I had: ⁷ We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.”

⁸ His brothers said to him, “Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Not: Joseph and his Coat

but Joseph and his Arrogance

Joseph and his Arrogance

Gen 39:8 But he refused. “With me in charge,” he told her, “my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. ⁹ *No one is greater in this house than I am. ...*

¹⁴ she called her household servants. “Look,” she said to them, “*this Hebrew* has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. ¹⁵ When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.”

Joseph and his Arrogance

Gen 39:16 She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. ¹⁷ Then she told him this story: “That Hebrew slave *you* brought us came to me to make sport of me. ¹⁸ But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.”

¹⁹ When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, “This is how *your* slave treated me,” he burned with anger. ²⁰ Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined.

Joseph and his Arrogance

Gen 39:20 But while Joseph was there in the prison, ²¹ the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. ²² So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there.

“Inheritance”
went without
being said; yet it
was the major
issue in Joseph’s
story...



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Our Worldview can work as blinders

- “not seeing” some parts
- adding some parts to the story
- Let’s look at the story of Solomon



King David wants to build a temple to God ...

1 Chron. 17 After David was settled in his palace, he said to Nathan the prophet, “Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under a tent.”

² Nathan replied to David, “Whatever you have in mind, do it, for God is with you.”

³ But that night the word of God came to Nathan, saying:

⁴ “Go and tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD says: You are not the one to build me a house to dwell in. ⁵ I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought Israel up out of Egypt to this day. I have moved from one tent site to another, from one dwelling place to another. ⁶ Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their leaders^[a] whom I commanded to shepherd my people, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”’”

God (through Nathan) tells David...

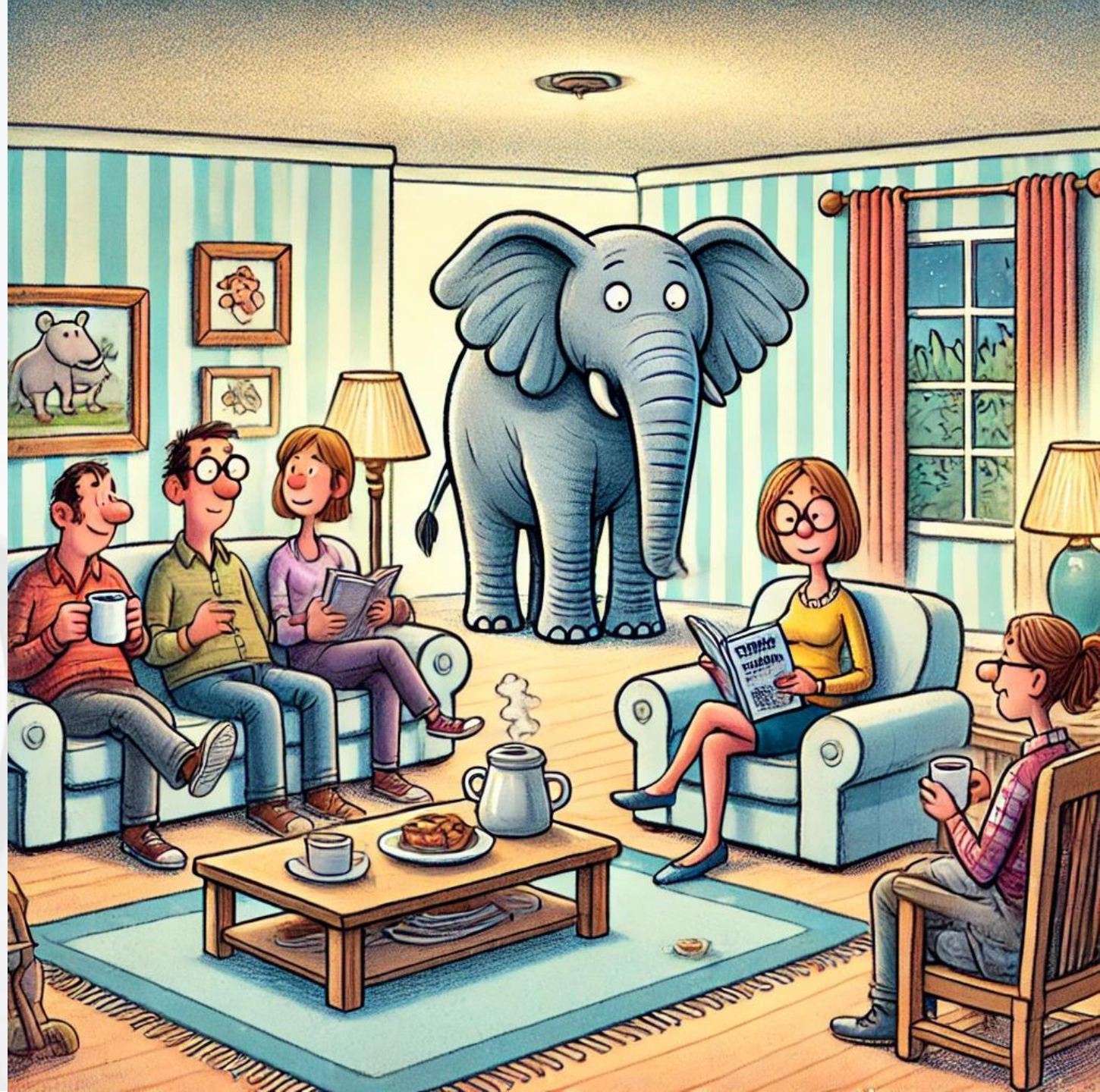
1 Chron. 17:10““I declare to you that the LORD will build a house for you: ¹¹ When your days are over and you go to be with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹² He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. ¹³ I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. ¹⁴ I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever.””

Solomon was the answer, right?

- He was David's next son, and he become king.
- Solomon built a temple to God. Ta-da!
- He must be the fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy, but ... the prophet Nathan had said: ¹⁴ I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever.
- The writer of Chronicles is writing after the Babylonians had destroyed Solomon's temple and kingdom. He knows the end of the story even as he is writing the words of Nathan.

One more example...

Our worldview
(often subconsciously)
tells us to ignore an
elephant in the room,
something the biblical
story was “shouting”
and we just never saw
it.

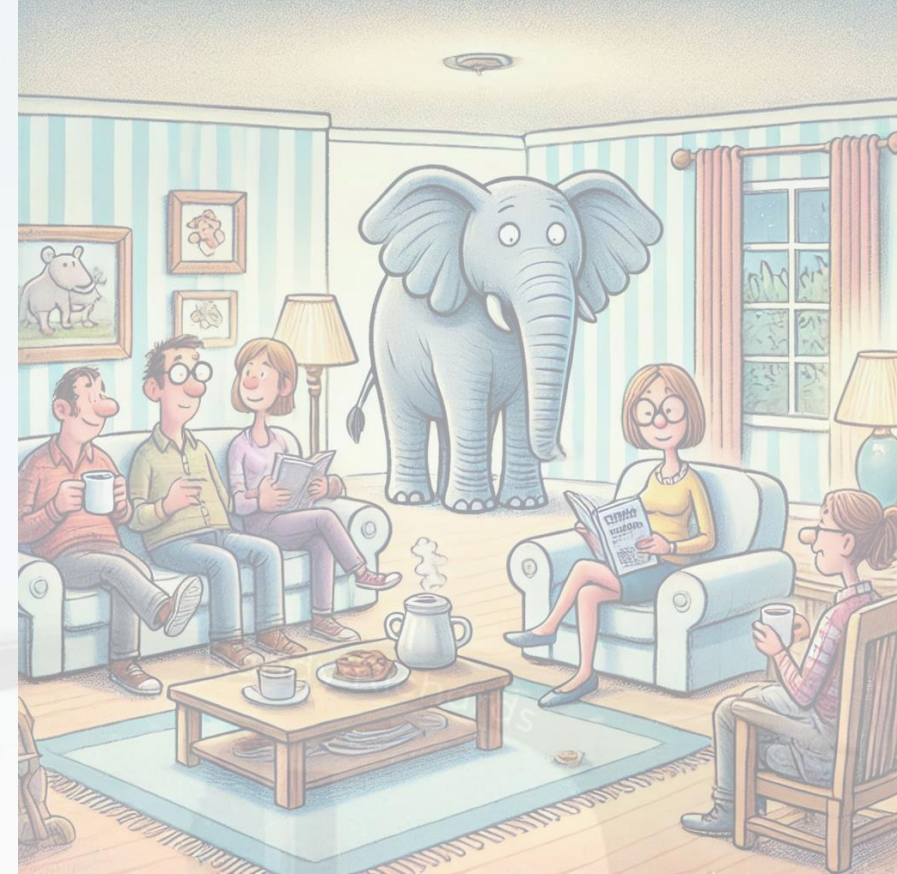


The elephant in the room:

“I never noticed...”

The “praise” of Solomon
really wasn't praise.

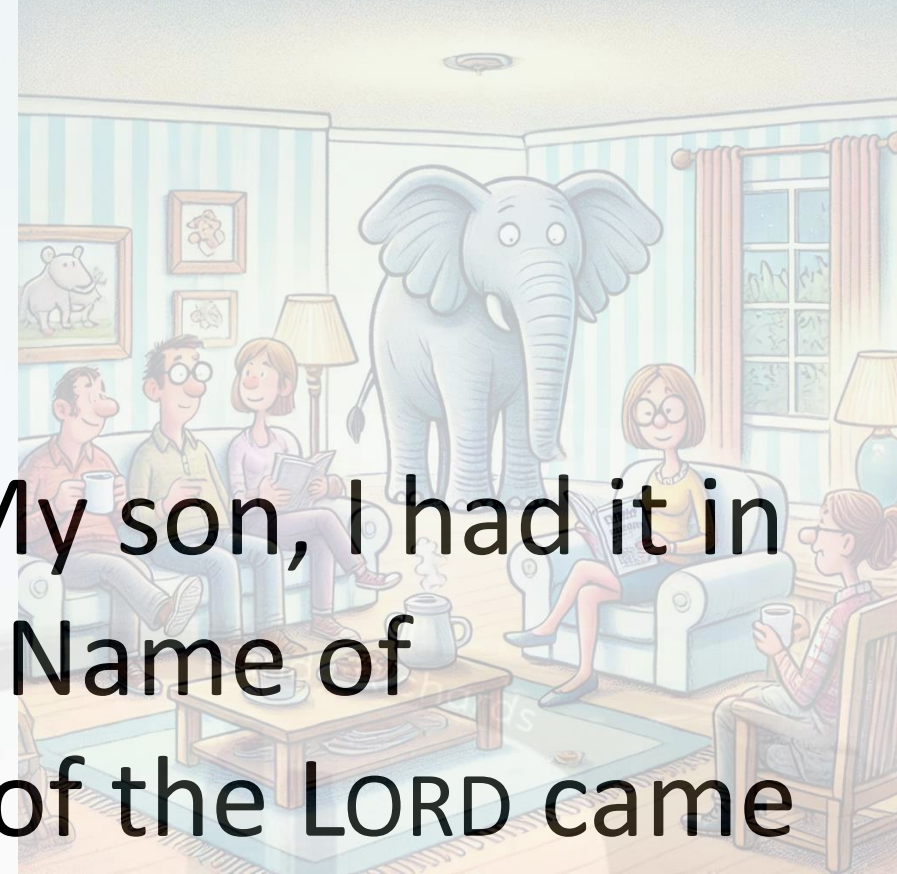
But to realize that Solomon was being critiqued,
the story required me to know
what went without being said



Bread of Life Church

The elephant in the room: “bloody hands”

1 Chr. 22:7 David said to Solomon: “My son, I had it in my heart to build a house for the Name of the LORD my God. ⁸ But this word of the LORD came to me: ‘You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight.’”



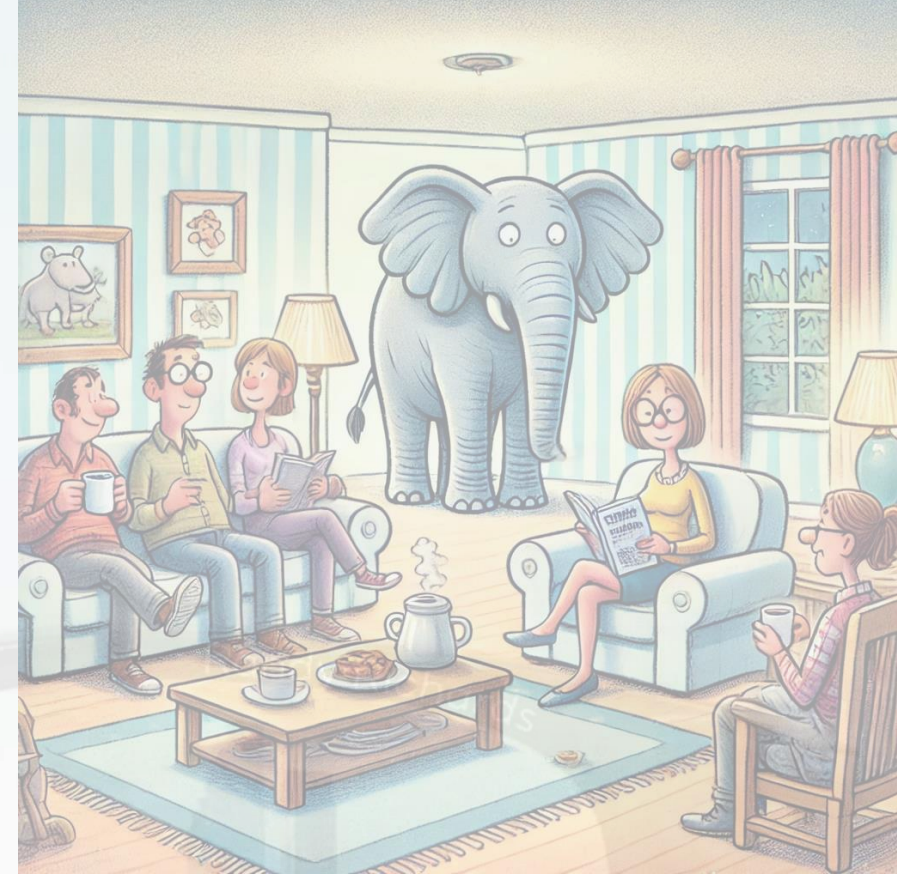
The elephant in the room: “I never noticed...”

- David gives Solomon a list of people to kill, including those David had promised not to kill.
- Solomon orders his older brother killed (1 Kgs. 2:23). In fact, the first few chapters of Solomon are stories of all the Israelites Solomon kills.
- Solomon wants to kill Joab (David’s friend). Joab flees to the Altar of the Lord for sanctuary.



Without knowing “what went without being said,” I couldn’t figure out, really, why folks were doing what they were doing.

Subconsciously, I provided a rationale (from my own culture).



I turned Solomon into a hero with a small flaw.

But the Chronicler was “shouting” that Solomon was not the promised “Son of David”

The Chronicler knew it wasn't Solomon.

How do you as the Chronicler tell the story and show that despite his great wisdom, Solomon wasn't the promised king, the promised son of David?

The Chronicler does it by assuming what "everybody knows" Moses had said about kings.

Moses said:

Deut 17:16 The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of **horses** for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, “You are not to go back that way again.”¹⁷ He must not take many **wives**, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of **silver and gold**.

But what about Solomon's wisdom?

God does indeed
give Solomon
great wisdom.

How does
Solomon use it?



In going on “mission,” we want to give to others the Gospel,
not [the Gospel + our culture].

To do this, we must keep getting better at reading the Bible, a lifelong task.

This includes realizing how worldviews influence “us” and “them.”



So what?

**How does this
apply to us?**

How might these stories apply to us?

Bread of Life Church



Randy Richards

