

# CROSS-CULTURAL LIVING



## *Challenges of Cross-Cultural Living*

### SCRIPTURE FOCUS

*“For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.”* 1 Corinthians 9:19

*“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”* Colossians 3:2-3

*“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”* Philippians 2:5

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### QUOTES

*“A failure to grasp the nature of culture would be a failure to grasp much of the nature of the missionary work itself.”* Louis Luzbetak

*“Good missionaries have always been good anthropologists.”* Eugene Nida

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### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As a result of the readings, discussion and activities in this session, the cross-cultural witness candidate should be able to:

- understand the dynamics of culture
- gain a perspective on how each person learns culture and the effect this has on actions and attitudes
- recognize and successfully navigate culture shock
- acquire skills and attitudes necessary to identify with people in a host culture, and initiate lifestyle and ministry practices that create a cross-cultural view of the world,

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in order to cross culture and give faithful witness of Jesus Christ to persons living in a host culture

You have committed yourself to be a cross-cultural witness and are making plans to move overseas to live and communicate the good news of Jesus Christ. There are the promises from scripture and the history of God's faithfulness in your life that give you the assurance that He will be with you and carry you through whatever difficulties lie ahead. Yet, there are many who fail to make the necessary adjustments in lifestyle and mindset to live cross-culturally and effectively communicate Christ.

Just because you have a sense of call from God, there is no assurance of success. While the Holy Spirit can and does miraculously bridge the huge gap of language, customs, and mindset that will separate you from people who are radically different from us, you must do your part and ready yourself to cross the cultural boundaries. You can do this by gaining an understanding of how culture operates and by acquiring cross-cultural skills.

In the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) and the talents (14-30), we are instructed to be diligent in our readiness and faithful in what God has given us. Hopefully, this session affords you the opportunity to increase your understanding of culture, to gain skills, and to learn how you can prepare yourself right now for what is ahead.

The following story highlights the challenges inherent in cross-cultural living and witness. The questions at the end of the story will help you to identify the issues related to these challenges.

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### CASE STUDY: PROBLEMS IN PARADISE

Roger and Beth Banks stepped off a Boeing 737 onto the runway tarmac. The day of arrival in their new tropical home had finally come. This was the day ... the moment they had anticipated for years. Throughout childhood and adolescence, they had read and heard stories of the arrival of missionaries in far away, mysterious places: the Judson's in Burma, Hudson Taylor in China, and Amy Carmichael in India. The legends of early missionaries had encouraged and motivated this young man and woman as they endured school, the questions of friends and family, and their long journey to the mission field. They had made it! They were finally in their country of missionary service.

It had been with confidence that the Banks moved from a successful pastorate in rural Texas toward missions. Most of the people in their congregation did not understand at all why the Banks would want to leave such a good situation. And yet, it was with great fanfare and lots of tears that their friends and family said goodbye to them.

As the Banks stepped from the last step of the rusting metal airport stairway onto the black asphalt, the damp, heavy air was the single reality. The tropical air hung over them like a wet blanket, making it hard to breathe. A wall of greenery encircled the airstrip and hid everything else from view. Tall palm trees swayed in the gusting breeze blocking the horizon. Everything about this place was totally opposite from what they had left in central Texas just 24 hours ago.

At the bottom of the stairway, dark, motionless men in tattered blue shorts and shirts leaned

against the door or fender of the surrounding vehicles, or they squatted low to the ground. All of them looked straight ahead as if their minds were somewhere else.

The couple had told themselves many times throughout their long journey that life and ministry in this new country would be different and difficult. Therefore, they were sure in their resolve that they could endure whatever they encountered, even though they had no idea what that might be. Others had told them that because God had called them, He would help them endure anything they might encounter.

As the couple followed the line of passengers across the tarmac, they could see crowds of people gathered at the chain-linked fence on either side of the terminal building. The crowd at the right of the building became the couple's focus as they moved closer and closer to that end of the building. Faces, hair, and clothing of individuals became vivid and distinct as they neared the terminal. Bare-chested men stood with their faces pressed against the fence, and women with colorful saris draped over their heads gathered children at their feet. All of them gawked at the strange spectacle of the overly dressed, nicely groomed foreigners with loads of carryon bags moving toward them.

As Roger walked, he could not take his eyes off the crowd at the fence. Because they gawked at him, he stared back in a studied manner. He thought to himself, "What do these people see? Why do I feel so out of place...so strange?"

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*HE WONDERED IF HE REALLY HAD  
MISUNDERSTOOD THE CALL OF GOD.*

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Upbringing and manners told him to break off the stare, but he could not. The crowd gripped him.

At a point midway between the parked plane and the terminal, Roger suspended the long trek in order to shift his load. Once he was ready to proceed, he felt overwhelmed by the combined effect of air, heat, trees, fence, and faces. He could not take another step. He needed to regroup, say something, or assess what was going on around and inside of him.

"We are here because of the call of God," he reassured himself in a half whisper. He looked at his red-faced wife who was struggling with her bags under the burden of the heat and humidity. In a louder but less confident voice, he repeated, "We are here because of the call of God." His wife gave him a frantic look of disbelief.

The dreams, calling, and expectations of the couple met reality in that moment. Their loss of the familiar and shock at the dissimilar would soon turn into frustration and anger as they tried to navigate their way in the new culture and learn the ways and words of these people. The ways of these people were not just strange to Roger and Beth, but they were "against human nature" and "morally wrong." Everything was dirty, every person was a crook and a cheat, and nothing ran on time. Roger and Beth compared everything to life back "home." In comparison, this strange place was a terrible mess.

Rather than adjusting or coming to a sense of being at home, the young couple grew more and more disoriented and their level of anxiety grew. Rather than eating the local dishes of rice and curry, they frequented restaurants that served Western food and were "sanitary." Rather than venturing out into the beautiful countryside or visiting people in their homes, they stayed in their apartment and read novels. Rather than making friends, they distrusted everyone.

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After thirteen months, Roger and Beth walked from the airport terminal to another Boeing 737. Roger had written letters to a friend at a church that needed a Minister of Education. He had explained to his friend and others that he had a change of call and was being led back to the United States.

As they reached the rusty stairway to board the plane, Roger turned and looked back toward the fence. It all seemed like a bad dream that was about to end. And yet, he wondered if he really had misunderstood the call of God. Could it be that he had been called to this place, but something had gone wrong from the very beginning? Could it be that the food, traffic, and disease were not the real problem?

### REFLECT#1

1. At what point did Roger and Beth begin to move toward leaving their new home and why?
2. How did their "call" help or hurt the situation?
3. What was the problem that they never overcame or solved?
4. What kind of activities or intervention could have helped Roger and Beth?

## WHY CULTURE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

One of the challenges facing Roger and Beth was their understanding of the new culture in which they found themselves and its effect on them. Their transition into a new setting would have been helped by not only an understanding of that particular culture but culture as a concept and how it operates. Read the following definitions of culture and be ready to summarize in your own words what is meant by culture.

### Culture is ...

"... the integrated system of learned patterns of ideas, values, behavior, products, and institutions characteristic of a society." (Van Rhee, 1996)

"... the common ideas, feelings, and values that guide community and personal behavior that organizes and regulates what the group thinks, feels, and does about God, the world, and humanity." (Conn, 2000)

"... a dynamic process in which its elements, including such fundamental components as language and values, change, and development in response to new historical developments." (De Gruchy, 1993, 140)

"... the total life-way and mentality of a people." (Luzbetak, 1976, 4)

"... the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do." (Hiebert, 1985:30)

"... is an integrated system of beliefs (about God or reality or ultimate meaning), of values (about what is true, good, beautiful and normative), of customs (how to behave, relate to others, talk, pray, dress, work, play, trade, farm, eat, etc.), and of institutions which express these beliefs, values and customs (government, law courts, temples or churches, family, schools, hospitals, factories, shops, unions, clubs, etc.) which bind a society together and gives

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it a sense of identity, dignity, security, and continuity.” (“The Willowbank Report,” January 1978, cited in *Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, edited by Robert T. Coote and John Stott. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1980, 313).

The greatest aid to overcoming culture shock is self-awareness – knowing what is happening to you and why.

So, we can conclude that culture is ...

- the total life way of a people
- the integrated patterns of behavior for a people
- the commonly held values of a people
- the system of beliefs common to a people

Thus, culture defines who we are, why we act as we do, and what we believe. But how do we become culturally defined and what effect does this have on us?

### REFLECT #2

1. What are some of the common themes and ideas in these definitions of culture?
2. What are some of the dynamics at work in culture?

## ENCULTURATION – ETHNOCENTRISM

People from every culture go through a process called **enculturation**. From parents, teachers, peers, media, stories, and religion, people learn how to do what is right or appropriate to their particular culture. Culture does not transfer from one to another via their DNA or some other biological factor like hair type, skin color or height. Culture is learned. Enculturation is why someone born in Korea who comes to South Florida at a very early age will talk, act, and react like most everyone else in South Florida. Culture teaches a member of a particular society how they are to communicate with one another and what they must do to live and interact with one another. Culture is a society’s design for successful living.<sup>1</sup>

Through the enculturation process, we are taught how to live and cope within our own cultural setting. Thus, it is easy for us to come to the conviction that the way we eat, greet, and talk in our culture is the only proper or civilized way to do these things.

**Ethnocentrism** is “the tendency to apply one’s own cultural values in judging the behavior and beliefs of people raised in other cultures.” (Kottak, 1994:45) Any person from any culture will tend to view their way of life as superior. Ethnocentrism is a cultural universal, not just the tendency of those from Western industrialized cultures.

**Ethnocentrism affected Roger and Beth:**

1. Since they measured their host culture by their own culture, they failed to appreciate or value the customs, institutions, language, and behaviors that gave the people in this culture their identity and dignity as a people. Roger and Beth’s culture was the sole standard of what was good, appropriate, and moral.

2. Because they failed to appreciate the host culture, they could not recover from the shocks

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or jolts that the new culture presented for them. While culture shock is inevitable and experienced by everyone, it does not have to result in the rejection of the host culture and a return to one's own culture.

Enculturation is the natural process of learning one's culture in order to be an appropriate and successful member of one's own society. Ethnocentrism is the prejudging of the ways of another culture as wrong or inferior. Because all of us have been thoroughly enculturated and each of us is ethnocentric to some degree, we experience culture shock when we cross the boundary of our culture into another.

## CULTURE SHOCK

Kalvero Oberg, an early pioneer of the concept of "culture shock," describes the symptoms as:

*"excessive washing of the hands; excessive concern over drinking water, food, dishes, and bedding; fear of physical contact with attendants or servants; the absent-minded, far-away stare (sometimes called "the tropical stare"); a feeling of helplessness and a desire for dependence on long-term residents of one's own nationality; fits of anger over delays and other minor frustrations; delay and outright refusal to learn the language of the host country; excessive fear of being cheated, robbed, or injured; great concern over minor pains and irruptions of the skin; and finally, that terrible longing to be back home, to be able to have a good cup of coffee and a piece of apple pie, to walk into that corner drugstore, to visit one's relatives, and, in general, to talk to people who really make sense."*

In order to unpack the definition, symptoms, and cures for culture shock, access and read the following online articles:

*Culture Shock, Its Stages, and How to Fight It* by Dr. Carmen Guanipa;

<http://www.longwood.edu/internationalaffairs/study-abroad/preparing-for-departure/cultural-adjustment/>

How to Cope with Culture Shock; <https://h2g2.com/edited.entry/A2848359>

Understanding Culture Stress; <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/shock.htm>

### REFLECT#3

1. Write a short description of each of the stages of Culture Shock:

Tourist Stage

Disenchantment Stage

Resolution Stage

Adjustment Stage

Identification Stage

2. Have you ever experienced some form of culture shock or reverse culture shock? Describe.

3. How did you cope? What did you learn about yourself? Be prepared to share with your learning community.

## COPING WITH CULTURE SHOCK: PURSUE LOVE

If we do not successfully transition through the stages of culture shock to the point of identification, either we will give up and return to our home culture, or we will stay in the host culture but live an increasingly negative and destructive existence. Neither of these is desirable

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nor do they aid in the advancement of the kingdom of God. Rather, our goal as cross-cultural witnesses is to identify with those to whom God has called us to serve. While understanding, attitude, and skill are necessary ingredients for successful transition, love is indispensable. True identification cannot happen without the motive and commitment of love.

Scripture instructs us to make **love** the aim of our lives.

Jesus tells His disciples that the greatest commandment is to “love the Lord God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” And the second command is just like it, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” as featured in Matthew 22:37-39.

I can move half-way around the world, endure all kinds of misunderstandings and the strange ways of others, suffer through language study, and remain dutifully in my place of service for 20 or 30 years, but if I “do not have love, it profits me nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3).

And yet, we must do more than hear that we have a duty to love. True self-giving and other-identifying love originates from Christ’s love toward us. His love transforms us into people who are free to love – to identify.

Jesus Christ, of course, did more than teach us about this love. He identified with those whom His Father sent him to serve and loved them unto death. Paul exhorts the believers of his day and us to “*have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*” (Philippians 2:5-8)

**Identification** is a kind of death. We die to our way of doing, our way of knowing, our way of thinking, and become a new kind of man or woman so that we might love profoundly, completely.

Identification is the way in which Jesus came to us and is the way in which He asks us to go to the world.

### REFLECT #4

1. In what ways does Jesus identify with us?
2. What causes Christ to empty Himself and to humble Himself? Should we be motivated by the same causes?
3. What other scripture passages or examples from the life of Jesus describe or demonstrate identification?

## EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW

Four individuals in mission history represent unusual and bold attempts to identify with others cross-culturally. These individuals provide examples for us to follow.

- Matteo Ricci
- Robert de Nobili
- Bartholomew de las Casas
- Hudson Taylor

**Matteo Ricci (1552 – 1610)**

Matteo Ricci was born in Macerata, Italy, in the papal domain on October 6, 1552. He entered the Jesuit order in 1571 and studied for six years in Rome, Florence, and Coimbra before traveling to India in the spring of 1578. Ricci arrived in Goa, India and spent the next four years there or in Cochin (to the south), studying theology and other church matters. He then traveled to Macao in 1582 to study Chinese and the teachings of Confucius.



In September of 1583, Ricci settled in Zhaoqing, China with Michele Ruggieri, one of his Italian friends. Ricci's language skills advanced by leaps and bounds. By 1585 he was speaking without an interpreter and reading and writing moderately well. In 1594 he began writing original compositions without the help of other Chinese scholars.

Initially, Ricci had dressed like a Buddhist priest but later changed to dressing like a member of the scholar class. This was significant, as the Jesuit mission had decided to appeal to the intellectual people of China, rather than challenge the Buddhists. He continued to study Chinese thought and eventually concluded that certain elements of Chinese worship and devotion (such as ancestral worship and dedication to Confucius) were social and national in character and could be tolerated by Christians. Ricci made Chinese friends, some of whom were politically important. He made slow but steady progress in gaining converts. He used scientific and mathematical knowledge to persuade members of the Confucian elites to study their beliefs and embrace his faith.

Throughout Ricci's stay in China, he increasingly took Chinese values more and more seriously. He gave up the dream of converting scores of Chinese and settled to the idea of slow work among an intelligent and skeptical group of Chinese scholars.

Before Ricci's death in 1610, he had become respected and honored for his learning. Chinese scholars saw in Ricci one whose knowledge of their language, literature, and thought was equal to their own. Matteo Ricci was fifty-eight at his death. He was buried with honor by the Chinese court, and a Buddhist temple was converted into a Christian church so that it might receive his body.<sup>2</sup>

**Robert de Nobili (1577-1656)**

Nobili was born in Italy and died at Mylapore, Madras, India. In 1597 he joined the Jesuits despite opposition from his family. After completing his studies, he was sent to India at his request in 1605.



What he found in Madras was that few converts were being made because Christians and Christianity were almost entirely a Portuguese religion. Thus, because the Portuguese were despised, few Indians wanted to convert. In response to this, Nobili began a study of Tamil, Sanskrit, and Telugu, as well as Indian philosophy and Hindu literature. He identified completely with the holy men of India by adopting their dress, diet, and some of their customs. The decision to identify with the Hindu way of life and custom meant



that Nobili separated himself from his colleagues. Part of this identification was to build for himself a Brahmin quarter. It was here that Indians would come and debate Christianity and Hinduism.

Nobili explained some of the rationale for his approach in a letter:

*It is good they should understand this well so as to be able to explain to others that the same religion may be practiced by men of differing social customs, languages, and lineage, and that by becoming Christians they do not thereby change their caste, to become 'Paranghi' [a term of derision for the Portuguese]. The only obstacle to their conversion is the fear that by becoming Christians they will lose their nobility and become 'Paranghi', which is a great disgrace. It was because he lived in Portuguese style that Father Gonçalo Fernandez in the fifteen years which he spent here, could not, in spite of the example of his holy life, convert a single respectable adult, whereas since I changed my dress and manner of living, and adapted myself to all the customs of this country, many were, by the grace of God, converted in a short time and became excellent Christians. I hope that the number of conversions will go on increasing every day, as it certainly will do, when these people get rid of that wrong notion and see that the new converts continue as before to follow the customs of their race and caste in the matter of food, dress, and social intercourse, and that they do not become Paranghi, but only abandon their superstition and idolatry in order to worship the true God.*

Through this approach, Nobili saw the conversion of several high caste Indians. However, the success of his approach was opposed by colleagues and officials in the Indian government. He was accused of watering down the gospel by his missionary colleagues. He was vindicated by Pope Gregory XV. Nobili eventually baptized about 600 high-caste Indians. Nobili died in India, blind and in great poverty.<sup>3</sup>

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### Bartholomew (Bartolomé) de las Casas (1484-1566)

Bartolomé de las Casas was born in Seville on August 24, 1484. Las Casas joined his father in an expedition to Hispanola when he was 18. He had some past military experience, taking part in putting down a Morisco uprising while still in Spain, and possibly participated in military campaigns in the "Indies."



Las Casas traveled to Rome in 1506 to become ordained into the priesthood, the first priest of the New World to be ordained. He was already in charge of some lands in Hispanola, but after his ordination, the new governor granted him an *encomienda*. In this system, the native population was distributed among the Spanish settlers and obligated to supply free labor in exchange for elementary instruction in Christianity. This system, called worse than slavery, greatly contributed to the decline of the population of Hispanola, due to overwork, malnutrition, and epidemics.

In 1514, at the age of thirty, twelve years after he arrived in Hispanola, Las Casas experienced a "crisis of conscience" over the treatment of the people. Las Casas describes this experience as similar to Paul's conversion:

*If one sacrifices ill-gotten goods, the offering is blemished; the gifts of the lawless are not acceptable...Like*

*one who kills a son before his father's eyes is the person who offers a sacrifice from the property of the poor. The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; whoever deprives them of it is a murderer.*

As a result of this conversion experience, las Casas renounced his *encomienda* and returned to Spain to campaign for justice for the natives of the New World. Las Casas then dedicated the remainder of his life to the establishment of their claims to full humanity and full legal equality with the Spaniards. He tried to establish a settlement in Venezuela to implement his proposals for peaceful conversion of the Indians; however, this attempt was a failure. He spent the next 14 years in Hispañola, where he entered the Dominican Order. He joined a Dominican mission to Peru, which ended in Nicaragua. He worked in Nicaragua and Guatemala for some time, where he was shocked by the devastation of Central America brought about by the Spanish occupation.

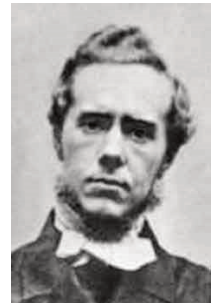
He wrote a passionate letter defending his own record and drawing attention to the atrocities committed in the name of conversion in the New World. Soon after this letter, an agreement was made with the Governor of Guatemala that an area (modern Chiapas in southern Mexico) would be set aside for peaceful conversion by the Dominicans, with all other Spaniards forbidden access. Las Casas had much success following the principles that the authority of the Indian princes be maintained and that conversion be effected peacefully.

Las Casas went to Mexico City in 1538, where he protested strongly against the practice of mass baptisms. During his stay, las Casas wrote his most theological work, *The Only Way of Attracting All Peoples to the True Religion*, in which he condemned the means by which the New World was conquered. In 1540 las Casas returned to Spain, where he wrote *The Very Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, which contributed to the resulting New Laws, which demanded immediate emancipation of all Indian slaves and abolished the system of *encomiendas* (the abolition of the *encomiendas* was later invalidated). Las Casas was then appointed Bishop of Chiapas to help in implementing the New Laws. As Bishop, he refused to absolve any Spaniard who did not make restitution for maltreatment of Indians. During the last years of his life, from 1547-1566, Las Casas lived in Spain and devoted his time to writing and working on the Council of the Indies.<sup>4</sup>

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### Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)

James Hudson Taylor was born in Yorkshire England, May 21, 1832. His family was devoutly Methodist, and as a child, Hudson Taylor declared that he would go to China as a missionary. At seventeen Taylor had a transforming conversion experience, for which his family had been praying while reading in his father's library. Some time later, Taylor purposed to go as a missionary to China and began preparing himself for the missionary life. He searched for all the information he could find about China and began corresponding with the Chinese Evangelization Society. He trained to become a doctor and gave up many of his daily comforts.



An opportunity arose in 1853 for Taylor to travel to China to begin his missionary career at the age of twenty-one. Upon arriving in Shanghai, he encountered civil war and no opportunities to spread his faith. Regardless, Taylor stayed and began studying Chinese, which he had grasped sufficiently to begin active missionary work within fifteen

months. He decided to adopt Chinese dress and had his head shaved in the local style. Taylor was deeply concerned for the many Chinese in interior China, far away from any missionary activity.

In 1856, Taylor set up his residence in Ningpo, where he resigned from the Chinese Evangelization Society and began to rely on friends in England for his support. In Ningpo, he met and married Maria Dyer, the orphaned daughter of a missionary. In 1860, the Taylors returned to England because of Hudson's deteriorating health due to tuberculosis. While in England, he finished his medical course and worked on a revision of a translation of the New Testament into the language of the Ningpo people. Taylor increasingly felt an urgency to reach the interior of China and spoke with missionary societies in England and wrote articles concerning it. In June 1865, Taylor formed the China Inland Mission with the aim of reaching the interior of China. One of the chief principles of the China Inland Mission was identification with the Chinese people. The missionaries were to dress as Chinese and were not to rely on their own governments for protection. Taylor, his wife, and their four children, along with the first missionaries of the China Inland Mission, set out for China in May 1866.

Hudson Taylor continued to experience difficulties in the form of violence and illness. By 1870 three of his children and his wife had died and he was seriously ill and in danger of being massacred along with other foreigners. Taylor returned to London where he remarried. Taylor spent most of his later years crusading for "his" missionaries in China, asking Christians for prayer and appealing for more missionaries. He died on June 3, 1905, in China, after he made his eleventh voyage to that country.<sup>5</sup>

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## SURVIVING CULTURE SHOCK AND MOVING TOWARD IDENTIFICATION

Because there is no single formula or solution for surviving culture shock and identifying with a people, the way in which one person copes and transitions may not be what will work for another. However, the following principles are general enough to provide help to anyone, as they move through the various stages of culture shock and toward identification.

**Awareness.** Do not deny that you are in culture shock. One of your greatest assets is the awareness that your cultural cues are not connecting with those of your host culture. Awareness helps us know what is going on and causes us to be intentional about seeking help, support, and solutions. A denial of how you are feeling and what you are experiencing is your worst enemy.

**Retreat.** Seek reasonable amounts of retreat. You should not try to 'gut it out' or 'push through', no matter the cost. In the end, long-term stress and shock can be damaging and will produce the kind of resentment and harm that takes years to overcome. Give yourself periods of respite or break from the immersion into the strange and unfamiliar.

**Goals.** Set reasonable adjustment goals that are incremental rather than overall and grand. You need to have achievable, small goals that allow you to celebrate small victories and achievements.

**Friends.** Find a local friend. You need a friend within the culture that will help you to navigate

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the tricky road of the new culture. Ask God to provide you with just the right person who is a true insider and yet sympathetic and understanding to your difficulties of entering the new culture.

**Language.** Learn the language. The absolute best help in surviving culture shock is the ability to communicate in the language of the culture. Acquiring the language will give you insight and meaning into rituals, customs, symbols, and actions. Language gives the outsider the kind of insider knowledge and perspective that gives understanding to the new ways.

**Comparison.** Do not compare yourself with others. You should avoid the temptation to compare your own progress or difficulties with colleagues, your spouse, and especially the veterans. Everyone moves at a different pace, and each person's points of shock are different. Comparison will only frustrate and confuse you.

**Health.** Take care of yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Each of these aspects of your life is interconnected with the others and how you are doing in one area will affect how you perform in the others. So, you need to maintain yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually. While you may not be able to have the exact same routine of prayer and Bible reading that you had in your home culture, you need to make sure you establish one that fits your new situation and is culturally appropriate. You need to develop a way to take physical exercise. And you need to develop culturally suitable ways for your emotional and social needs to be met.

**Counsel.** Seek counsel. The counsel of those who are a bit further down the road can provide you with invaluable and practical help and be a source of encouragement. You are not meant to go through culture shock solo but in community with others.

**The End.** Keep the end in mind. The ultimate aim of progressing through culture shock is that you might love the men, women, and children of that culture in the name of Christ. The aim is not to just survive or even to thrive but that you love others well.

**Identity.** Find your identity in Christ. Successful transition through the stages of culture shock comes from being free to love and give to others. This kind of freedom comes from finding one's identity in Christ rather than the ideas, concepts, and values of one's culture. Your hope must be in Christ, not in the American way, cleanliness, movies, food, or any other familiar and comfortable cultural idea or form.

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## PRINCIPLES FOR CROSS-CULTURAL LIVING AND WITNESS

The following are the key principles highlighted in this session that you might apply as you cross cultures.

- People are able to function within a particular society with a degree of ease and success because of a common process called **enculturation**.
- Enculturation taken to the extreme is **ethnocentrism** and causes people to prejudge others or become prejudiced toward others.
- **Culture shock** is inevitable for anyone who crosses from their culture to another, but it does not have to be destructive or fatal.

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- Intentional action can be taken to help one move through the stages of culture shock toward **identification**.
  - While such things as acquiring the language, making friends within the culture, and self-awareness help with culture shock, the ultimate remedy is to find one's identity in **Christ** rather than the ideas, concepts, values, or forms of any culture.
  - Crossing cultures exposes the selfishness and pride in our lives and calls us to love **others and give ourselves** to others in a Christ-like manner.
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### SELF-AWARENESS, SURVIVAL, AND SOLUTION: LEARNING NOW

If we wish to live and give witness to Christ cross-culturally, we must be proactive in doing the kinds of activities that make us self-aware and others-directed. The following activities will help you to actively and intentionally prepare to encounter another culture. As you try these activities, record your difficulties, struggles, and successes in your Learning Journal. Or if you have already done these either in your home culture or cross-culturally, recall the difficulties, struggles, and successes you encountered. Be prepared to participate in a group discussion with your Learning Community.

#### **Imagine**

Imagine what it will be like to be different from everyone else. What will you feel, act, and react?

As you encounter people who are obviously from another culture than your own, put yourself in their shoes. How might shopping or driving be different for them? In what ways might they have to do things that go against their cultural norms? What are they missing, longing for?

#### **Lifestyle**

What lifestyle choices can you make **NOW** to prepare to live cross-culturally? Begin implementing particular cultural practices of your possible future culture in your home, with your family, or in your personal life.

#### **Formation**

Center your life in Christ rather than cultural ideas, concepts, values, or forms. Work toward finding your identity in Christ. Remember – Christ in you, the hope of glory.

What scripture blesses you at this time related to the challenges of cross-cultural witness?

#### **Language**

Begin to learn another language. Language acquisition will quickly take you out of your comfort zone and place you in the position of a learner.

#### **Stretch Life-on-Life**

Are you presently involved with those of a different culture: language, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, etc.? If not, why not?

Cross-cultural living should not begin just when you step off a plane in a distant country. If you are unable or unwilling to live cross-culturally here, what is to say you will there?

Seek out those who are culturally different and find ways to love them. Who will you seek out this week?

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR *CROSS-CULTURAL LIVING*

Brewster, Tom, and Elizabeth. "The Difference Bonding Makes." In *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, edited by Steven Hawthorne and Ralph Winter, 444-48. 3rd Edition. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999.

The Brewsters argue for immediate and thorough emersion into the new culture in order that the missionary might become a 'belonger', bonding with nationals rather than other missionaries. Relationships need to be established with local people, and one must function immediately as a learner in order to acquire language and identify with people in the new culture. 5 pages.

Conn, Harvie. "Culture." In *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, Edited by Scott Moreau, 2000 Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker.

DeGruchy, John W. "Christian Witness and the Transformation of Culture in Society in Transition." In *Christ and Context*, Edited by Hilary Regan and A. J. Torrance. 1993 Edition. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Hiebert, Paul G. *Cultural Anthropology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983.

Hiebert, Paul G. *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1985.

Hiebert, Paul G. *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994.

Kraft, Charles. *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979.

Luzbetak, Louis J. *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988.

Nida, Eugene A. *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions*. New York: Harper and Brothers 1954.

This is a delightful and readable book with a load of illustrative material. Nida clearly demonstrates the connection between anthropological understanding and skill and the Christian mission. This book should be read by all who are preparing to give witness cross-culturally. 274 pages.

Oberg, Kalervo. "Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments." In *Practical Anthropology* 7 (July-August, 1960): 177-84.

Reyburn, William D. "Identification in the Missionary Task," In *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, Edited by Steven Hawthorne and Ralph Winter, 449-55. 3rd Edition. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999.

## PANORAMA

Reyburn uses his personal experience and struggles with the concept of identification to pinpoint purpose and limitations in one's identification in a host culture. 7 pages.

Hesselgrave, David J. *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.

Keesing, Felix M., and Roger M. Keesing. *New Perspectives in Cultural Anthropology*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971.

Kluckhohn, Clyde. *Mirror for Man: Anthropology and Modern Life*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1949.

Summerfield, Ellen. *Survival Kit for Multicultural Living*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1997.

The author explores from a secular perspective the issues facing those who live in multicultural America. She offers a practical guidance for successful multicultural living. 182 pages.

Rommen, Edward, and Gary Corwin. "Missiology and the Social Sciences: Contributions, Cautions, and Conclusions." In *Evangelical Missiological Society Series Number 4*, edited by Edward Rommen and Gary Corwin. Pasadena: William Carey Library.

This book narrowly focuses on the sometimes tentative and volatile relationship between Christian missions and the social sciences. The authors investigate this relationship through economics, technology, anthropology, psychology, and sociology. 223 pages.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For a fuller discussion on the nature of culture, see Louis J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 133-222.

<sup>2</sup>Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Viking, 1984); and *Chinese Roundabout: Essays in History and Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992).

<sup>3</sup>A. Saulière, *His Star in the East* (Gujarat, India: Anand Press, 1995).

<sup>4</sup>David Brading, "Prophet and Apostle: Bartolomé de las Casas and the Spiritual Conquest of America," in *Christianity and Missions, 1450-1800*, ed. J. S. Cummins (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 1997); and Manuel Gimenez Fernandez, "Bartolomé de Las Casas: A Biographical Sketch," in *Bartolomé de las Casas in History*, ed. Juan Friede and Benjamin Keen (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971).

<sup>5</sup>Kenneth Scott Latourette, *These Sought a Country* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950).

<sup>6</sup>This list is a compilation of strategies from several sources: Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures*, pp. 218-221.

## CROSS-CULTURAL LIVING

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