



# *Cultural Empathy*

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## Introduction

### Cultural Empathy

The core of this material is about our capacity to not just enter another culture, but, at some level, become part of that culture. We learn to accept the abnormal (their culture) as our new normal, and they have allowed us to become participants in their world. In other words, we move from tourist to observer to participant to member.

Each of those words is a way of determining how well we are doing at adapting our lives to the new culture and truly becoming part of it.

As a tourist, we are only present as a visitor. Our mistakes are tolerated because we are like children who don't know any better. We are viewed as customers who are seeking and paying for help to maneuver through their world and culture. In this position, our primary goal is to visit the popular spots and purchase the trinkets that announce we have visited this particular place.

Observer is a minor improvement on this. We are allowed to watch, but not touch. We are to listen but be silent. We are children that need to be seen but not heard because we can't understand yet. It makes us feel special that we were allowed to be present but that is all it means. We have been allowed to be present and nothing more. We can take photos, sometimes, but the images are just that images and there is no understanding of what is happening.

Participant is a major step forward. At this point they believe we may hopefully understand what is happening. They hope that we are learning to respect their world. But as a participant we are still outsiders. We have no voice and can make no suggestions. The good news is that we can ask questions and they are now willing to answer those questions. Although the doubt may still be present, we at least we are now welcome.

The goal is to be a member. At this stage, we are allowed to participate and contribute to the process of life. They will let us cook a typical food, they will consult us about everyday life and activity, they will share deeper concepts because they know we will not be foolish in our responses or needlessly critical. There is a warning to be mentioned here. While we may be members at a key level, we may never become true members. And that is not because we have failed. We were not born into their culture and there are things we will never fully understand. But if we honestly accept that fact and learn to live among them at the levels where we can be a participant, then more doors will open over time.

That brings me to another set of words that are part of this process: apathy, sympathy, and empathy. To understand these words let us start with some dictionary definitions of the words

Apathy – is a lack of feeling, emotion, interest, and concern about something of great importance. A state of indifference, or the suppression of emotions such as concern, or passion. (Wikipedia)

Sympathy – an inclination to think or feel alike; the act or capacity of entering in or sharing the feelings or interests of another. (Merriam-Webster)

Empathy – the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference; the capacity to place oneself in another's position. (Wikipedia)

Apathy –

At this level we will never become part of the culture of another person. We are unable to see any value in who they are, how they think, how they live and in any aspect of their world. Enjoying their music and food is only superficial. At this stage, a person's intentions are to please himself rather than enter the culture. That is a key function of apathy. I am so focused on me that no one else matters. I enjoy aspects of who they are because they fit who I am.

There are a couple of examples of this in the Bible. The most extreme ones are those of Pharaoh (Exodus 1:11-22) and Herod (Matthew 2:16-16) who had no concern for the suffering their decisions would cause to the mothers of the babies they had killed. Their decisions were based on protecting their culture and lifestyle. At the same time any good thing they might do was not out of concern for others but to further benefit themselves and increase their control. This is an extreme form of apathy.

Another would be Job's wife. She was tired of dealing with all the loss. And when she lost her children, she became apathetic telling her husband that he might as well curse God and die (Job 9). Apathy causes us to shut down and seek escape. Job and his sickness were a constant reminder of her loss. She lost all concern for what he was suffering through and focused on somehow ending the cycle of suffering in her life.

Job's friends, at first glance, seem at least sympathetic, they sat in silence with their friend (Job 2:11-13). But this may have been more to fulfill social expectations than demonstrate any real concern for their friend. They are quick to condemn him, believing he is to blame for all that has happened (see comments of friends in chapter 4 and following).

There are many other stories in scripture that demonstrate such an attitude: The Levite and the priest in the story of the good-Samaritan (Luke 10:30-32) and Jonah's lack of concern for the children and people of Nineveh, even after they repented (Jonah 4:1-11).

The tourist is apathetic when it comes to the culture of the people he is visiting. The expectation is that they will take care of me and adjust to my way of living and working. They will learn what foods I like and what schedule I want to follow. In time, the culture will grow weary of this or become apathetic as well. They will only continue to tolerate such a visitor if there is some clear benefit to be derived from doing so.

It is important to understand this, so we can move on to the next level.

Sympathy –

At this point we have become aware of the differences between our two cultures. We begin to accept the differences, but more as a means to enter their world so that they will let us help them. Another word often used is compassion. We are learning to see the needs and issues that exist in their world; however, the problem is we still don't see beyond the obvious. It is much like the proverb that if you give a person a fish and you will feed them for a day, but if you teach them to fish, then you will feed them for a lifetime.

As an observer, we can see the needs and we can respond to those needs. We can provide help, resources, a hug and similar actions that will deal with the obvious. But if we dare to say we understand, we may lose more than we had hoped to gain.

Please don't misunderstand what I am saying. It is not wrong to be sympathetic and show compassion. We are commanded to do this, but the serious error is assuming such help will do more than care for the immediate need. If that is all we do, then we may cause serious damage and create dependency instead of relation.

At this stage, it is difficult for us to see the cause and we only focus on the results. Even if we do see the cause, we lack the ability to do anything that will bring about meaningful change.

David showed compassion for the mother of two sons who were sacrificed to bring an end to a curse caused by Saul (2 Samuel 21:10-14). He saw the suffering of this woman and arranged for an honorable burial for them. While this did relieve the shame, the mother was experiencing, it could not deal with her sorrow and loss. The act of compassion was based on an observation and not direct involvement or experience of the suffering of the mother.

In another story, we encounter the Good Samaritan and his willingness to help a complete stranger in need (Luke 10:33-35). Here we see a person moving from observer to participant. An observer may have provided the aid by sending someone else. A participant gets involved. The good Samaritan gets his hands dirty, so to speak. The good Samaritan even offered to pass by at a later time to be sure all was well and the bills for the wounded traveler were paid in full.

The interesting thing to note here is that the good Samaritan did not choose to live with the person until all was well. He went on about his business. This is a good example of what sympathy is and does. It is about participating in the life and struggles of another person for a period of time. A sympathetic person comes by for a visit, gives hugs as needed, but usually returns to the safety and comfort of their culture or home.

Jesus was sympathetic to the needs of others and of showed them compassion. A good example of this would be the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-26). Jesus had spent time living among the people and observing them and their way of life. On this day, he noted that the people had come to hear him teach, but they had not come prepared and did not have food. Jesus was sympathetic to their need for food and fed them. This act was necessary in the moment but did not represent a permanent solution to their need. They did not understand this and tried to make him their king with the hope he would provide for them. They were willing to become dependent if it would make their life easier. They did not express interest in growing and sharing together in order to develop a long-term relationship that would allow them to work together to find the best way to live in God's kingdom.

Sympathy is great as long as we understand that it has its limits and dangers.

Finally, that brings us to the word empathy. This is the ability to enter the world of another person and experience it on a personal and relational basis. You come to stay until you begin to understand and, more importantly, until they believe you are able to understand. It is because we began to share life together. We experience their life and let our past experiences be interpreted by the new context. That means we explain our life in the terms of their life. Our life has not changed but the context in which we live it has changed.

That willingness to live in the new context and interpret my life through that lens allows them to see me as a real person. As we live together, we build common experiences that help further develop the ability to not only understand what happens around us, but to enter into those activities and value them. We may never fully become one of them, but that is not the goal and is not always wise. Our goal is to become an accepted and valued member of their world.

This is exactly what Jesus did. He left his culture (Philippians 2:5-11) and his world to become part of our world. He learned a culture and understood clearly the needs and issues and worked within that culture to communicate God's truth. As a result, the people were attracted to him. He was not like the pharisees who were apathetic and sought to impose their rules and standards on others. He was not just sympathetic and he didn't just heal and teach to ease the burden of that day. He touched people from

within their world because he wanted them to understand and choose to follow Him and to seek a better way. A way that did not deny their culture and life, but filled it with greater meaning and hope.

This is what Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 when he talks about being willing to become all things to all people. He also made it clear that it was not about losing himself in their culture and submitting to them. He would change in any way possible without creating a conflict with God's law in his life. He did this for one purpose: so that those who would hear could hear and receive God's salvation.

Paul did this in every context without losing his identity or focus.

That is what cultural empathy is all about. We must learn enough about the people and culture of others, finding ways to adapt and fit in within a different context, without losing our own personal identifies.

The rest of this book will look at key issues and topics that affect this process of entering the world and culture of another person. If we can understand these key issues, others will be open to hear the greatest message ever given.

## Section One

### First Contact

In this section we are going to look at what happens as we begin to live in a new culture. We will consider how we respond to the environment around us, our personal concerns and safety. How we handle our first encounters with the new culture will affect how well we move from tourist to participant. The reality is if we struggle to understand the practical things of their life, we will not do well at understanding their world and how to communicate at a deeper level in their context.

#### Environment – Where am I?

The first area that impacts us is the nature of the environment where we find ourselves. We are suddenly surrounded by new odors, climate, food, housing, and more that grab at our senses and spin us in circles as we try to understand what is happening.

#### Perception

This is about the ideas that we formulated based on our first impressions of the culture that we receive through our senses. These are then evaluated based on our prior experiences, feelings about other cultures, our goals and hopes, as well as other factors.

So which sense has the strongest impacts on us? Sight may be the obvious choice because it is the most evident. However, the most powerful and impactful sense is smell.

#### Smell

While you may see something quickly, it is your sense of smell that will have the most effect on you. Sometimes they are pleasant like the new odors from local cooking, walking by a restaurant, or entering the home of a new friend. At other times, they will be unpleasant and difficult to manage, like the smell of garbage in the streets, the odor of a public toilet, or the body odor of the people or the very potent odor of the perfume they used to cover it.

But it is not the odors that are the real problem, but rather it is your reaction to them. If the food doesn't quite smell the same and makes you wonder if it is okay to eat, your face will react to this and create an image suggesting that it is unpleasant. Your hosts will see this long before you realize how your face is reacting.

When the odors are strong and distasteful your face will definitely respond with expressions of disgust and even judgement. You don't have to speak a word and the world knows that you resent the assault on your nose. Truthfully, this may be so potent as to cause you to comment on the odor, further reinforcing your negative reaction to their world.

In the same way, an odor that is pleasing will also cause a visible reaction. Your eyes open, you smile, and you take in deep breaths so as to further enjoy the pleasant odor. This could be the odor of flowers, a park, or food that is being prepared. You already want to continue to experience. But be careful because not every pleasant odor looks as pleasant when you finally see what is producing it. And you may have a hard time eating what you are smelling for other reasons.

### Sight

We quickly form judgments about many things based on an image that is often formed as a result of even the briefest of examinations of our environment. We see unusual attire, we see the garbage, we see the beggars, we see..., we see... And for everyone the list of things seen and how they impact us and our evaluation of the new culture are different. This is partially because every culture is different and looks different. But more importantly, it is because it is different from our vision of normal.

What we see will open doors or close them to our willingness to enter further into the world we are seeing. If all we see are the differences and decide we don't like them, then we will have great difficulty in entering the new culture and even more difficulty in being accepted by that culture.

Here is an example. We see the people, the state of their housing, the way they cook, and decide they are poor. We mostly decided this because it doesn't look as nice as ours or doesn't have the same accessories as ours. All we notice and see are the differences. Our visual world is overwhelmed and if we are not quick to take control, our reactions will become evident on our faces and be seen by all around us.

These visual images and their evaluations will have a powerful impact on how our other senses react to this new world.

### Touch

Our senses of smell and sight impact profoundly what we will touch and what we will allow to touch us or surround us. If an odor is too powerful and has a strong negative thought linked to it, we will not want to enter or go near the place where the odor is most evident. The people in those locations will quickly take note and decide that we don't like them and don't want to have contact with them. On the other hand, if the odor is pleasant it will make it easier to enter a home, store, or market and have contact with the people in that place.

If the odors and image suggest the people are not sanitary, we may be unwilling to have physical contact with them. We will smile, we may enter their world, but we will discreetly keep our hands occupied and avoid contact with that person. Or any contact will be brief and limited. This will be a real challenge in cultures where hugs, kisses, and handshakes are the norm for greeting.

Although you could take steps to cleanse your hands (e.g. wipes), one must be cautious of how this may appear to another person observing you cleanse your hands or face after your interaction with that person. This could negatively impact your potential relationship with this person.

#### Taste

Odors and images can be so powerful that we will refuse to taste the food given to us. I remember a friend saying that the rice chop looked so ugly and smelled so different that it took a long time before they would even taste it only to discover it was quite delicious.

The truth is that somethings just take time to learn to enjoy. Every place has its food that everyone enjoys but only after time do visitors began to enjoy the taste of the food and the spices being used. I know a friend that struggled with the amount of hot spice in the local food at first but over time began to enjoy it.

The challenge, once again, is controlling your facial response to the taste. Will we have the control to not reveal our dislike of the food? Will we have enough control, so our stomach doesn't rebel? We may enjoy the food, and this may not be a concern; however, how will you respond if you dislike the taste?

#### Sound

Finally, one will be surrounded by noises and sounds of the traffic, the traders, the music, and people working. All of these will be different and sometimes can make it hard to focus on anything else. Instead of learning to listen and enjoy new music and sounds, we find solace in our homes by listening to our preferred music and tuning out those of the culture. To some extent, this is okay. However, if we have no room for their music and we don't learn to understand the sounds we hear and build an awareness of the purpose for the sounds, we will limit our understanding of the culture and our access to it. This is especially true if we consider the sound to be intrusive in what we consider normal and acceptable. We may find ourselves annoyed at the birthday party that plays loud music until 4 am or a neighbor's rooster that insists on crowing at 3 am and is in the tree outside my bedroom window.

#### Senses

In time, we will become accustomed to all the sights, sounds, and odors. The day will come when we will barely notice most of it because our brain has registered it as normal. At the same time, we must be careful that we do not become numb to the people around us. It can mean that we no longer notice them and so begin to ignore them.

The key to having empathy is learning to adapt, learning to treat what is abnormal as normal, and still be able to see what is not acceptable so that we can work toward solutions within the culture. We should no longer be get overwhelmed by what is different but, at the same time, we must not lose sight of why we are there and our goal of entering their world to help them find the truth in God.

#### Control

We don't have control over our senses, especially when we are in the first stages of entering a new culture. Our initial goal should be to learn to control our responses. The messages that are sent by our facial expressions, our physical proximity to others, our willingness to eat their food, listen to their music, and enter into their world have a powerful impact on what they will believe about who we are and why we are there. It may become the difference between letting us in or excluding us from their world.

## Body Sense and cleanliness

This is the second area of first contact. It is about how do you deal with things that may affect your health. Take a moment and think about what you think you need in order to remain healthy in this new environment.

These issues are important and in some cases are not negotiable, especially at first when your body is struggling to adapt to an environment with new varieties of germs that will affect you biologically. There is no escape from this reality because you are about to change a number of things that can and often will unsettle you.

### Water

One of the most important health concerns to question is related to the safety of drinking water. Is the water safe to drink? And if your host offers you a glass of water should you drink it?

So, how do you respond and make decisions in this new setting while remaining culturally sensitive. Here is a list of things to consider:

1. Do your best to find out if the local water supply is safe to drink. Consider the variety of water sources: water from the well, water from the faucet in the homes, water served in a restaurant, and even the bottled water that is for sale.
2. If it is not, then what do you need to do to make sure you have a source of clean water. Do you need to filter the water? Do you need to treat the water with chemicals? Will you need to boil your water? Will you need to buy bottled water from a reputable dealer? In one place we lived, we discovered that we needed to filter the water and add 10 drops of bleach to every gallon to have clean water for drinking and cooking.
3. In terms of cooking, determine if the water from the faucet is safe for cooking or do you need water for that as well. If the water is not clean, can you use it to wash the dishes used for cooking and eating? You may have to bring water to a boil and use it to rinse your dishes.
4. Generally, it is not a problem to bath in the water available. Just don't open your mouth. Still, make sure you know if it is considered safe by the nationals. If they use it, then it is likely okay.
5. On another note, some bodies of water are safe for swimming and others are not. You need to learn this as well. A simple way to know is if anyone else is swimming there.

It is important to become an expert observer and watch what others are doing. If they only drink bottled water and have bottles of water in the house, then that is a good indicator that it is not wise to drink water from the tap or use it for cooking.

But it may happen that there is no clean water available and no time to filter or boil. At this point it is wise to learn what other options there may be to provide liquids for your body. Sodas, local drinks, coffee, tea, and fruits or fruit drinks will often provide culturally appropriate ways to do this.

Despite taking precautions, you may still find yourself in a situation where you are offered a drink and you are not sure if it is safe to drink. Additionally, it would be culturally offensive to refuse what has been offered. In this situation, one's faith and obedience may be tested.

### Food

The next item to consider is the food you eat. Generally speaking, the simple rule of thumb is to either peel it, soak it, or cook it. You may choose to soak all your vegetables in water with at least 10 drops of bleach or similar treatment for at least 5 minutes, then rinse in clean water. You may also opt to cooking

the food to ensure it is safe to eat. Find out what the people do to be sure their food is clean. You may learn some valuable lessons.

The real issue comes when you are expected to eat the local foods that are exotic or unusual to you and your palette such as the grubs of Papua New Guinea, spoiled milk of Kenya, and meats of all kinds of unusual animals and sea creatures. Sometimes they look appealing, but the taste is unsettling to your stomach. In other cases, it may look awful but taste incredible. If it appears unappealing the challenge will be to take a bite. The second challenge will be to swallow, if it doesn't taste good.

You may also discover foods that neither look appealing nor do they taste that good. However, there are many stories of people who didn't like something the first time they tried it, but came to enjoy and love the food, and even miss it when they returned home.

The goal here is to learn to appreciate what is served to you, try to like it, and hopefully desire it at some later point. As you go through this process, you may consider learning to cook the national dishes or try to prepare them for your guests. This demonstrates a desire and willingness to learn more about the people and their culture

Keep in mind that we have discussed two different settings: your home vs. a guest's home. What you can do in your house related to water and food will differ from when you are at another person's home. You know the precautions you take at your house, but it is usually inappropriate to ask questions about the preparation of the food in another's home. Also, if you are invited to a restaurant by your friends, you will have little control over how food is cared for and prepared.

### Public Spaces

Next on the list of cleanliness is how you care for the environment in which you live. This includes spaces such as your office, car, and home. It can also affect your expectations of other settings such as the church you attend, where you do business, supermarkets, markets, and other areas where our perception of cleanliness can and will affect our willingness to go to these places and uses their services.

Your personal standard of cleanliness (e.g. clothing and appearance, home) all impact your expectations of how others present themselves and their assigned settings. This can go both ways in that your standards may be higher or lower than theirs.

### Clothing

In regard to clothing, one of the first steps will be to identify how to wash clothes in your new setting. Here you may need different supplies or equipment. Will you be able to use a washer and dryer or will you need to wash clothes by hand?

Also, how often is laundry done? Is it done every day because people only have so many uniforms and sets of clothing? Or is it done more often? Who does the laundry? In some cultures, men are responsible to launder and iron their own clothes.

Washing and drying clothing is another concern to consider. Where is it done? How is it done? Is there an order to be followed? If you are hanging clothes out to dry, what clothing can and cannot be hung in public view?

Another key issue here is the understanding of what the word dirty signifies. Many cultures expect you have two sets of clothes: one for traveling to and from work and another set for at work. This is so that you will not be seen wearing clothes that are dirty in public places like stores and public transportation. What is the standard of the culture where you are?

With that in mind, it is important to learn what type of clothing is acceptable in the different settings and activities that are part of the culture. It is possible you will need to rethink your wardrobe prior to entering a new setting or culture.

## Home

Again, the word to understand is dirty and when one considers a home to be dirty and in need of cleaning. In some cultures, homes must be cleaned on a daily basis, while others on a weekly basis. Rooms that are more visible to guests may be cleaned more frequently than bedrooms. You must also consider your garden or yard and how to care for it.

When considering cleaning needs, identify available supplies, tools for cleaning, and what cultural expectations are in regards to cleanliness.

Additionally, make sure to consider painting and general maintenance of your home. Learn about what is considered normal maintenance and how people get things repaired. You may have to complete these tasks yourself or may be able to hire a professional.

After considering these factors, compare it all to your standards of cleanliness. What happens if you cannot maintain the level of cleanliness expected by the culture or the fact that you may not be as conscious of this area as those around you. The opposite of this can also be an issue. If your standards are higher than theirs, how will you respond when they enter your home or your spaces and in turn, make them dirty?

How does the level of cleanliness in the homes of your friends, the church you attend, and places of business affect you? If it is dirtier or cleaner than you are used to, how will that affect your attitude? This can be especially significant when eating in local restaurants who have different standards and rules related to what is acceptable in the way of cleanliness and storage of food.

One more item. Will you have the time to clean your house as needed or will you need to employ someone? It may be necessary to hire people so that you will have time to do your ministry. If you need to hire someone, is this desirable? If so, who should you employ for what work and how will you go about hiring them?

## Body

This can be a very sensitive area. Cultures vary greatly in what they consider acceptable and normal as it relates to bathing and personal hygiene. Some cultures expect everyone to bath several times a day, especially in tropical or warmer temperature locations. Others require bathing less frequently, especially in colder climates or where water access is limited.

For some, body odor has no meaning, it is a part of life. For others, it is important that you have on hand perfumes to cover any such odor. Sometimes the perfume is more powerful than the odor it is covering up.

Bathing techniques may vary with some going to a nearby body of water, others using a bucket in their house, while others have a room with a shower in their homes. Additionally, culturally, you may notice that bathing generally occurs at specific times of the day.

Hygiene also considers hair care, brushing teeth, shaving, and other items related to caring for your body. What are the expectations and norms of the culture? Learn where to go for things like hair care and nail care.

The list can go on and on. What is important is that you learn what is normal and make sure that you are presenting yourself in an appropriate manner. Also, be sure if your standard is higher that you do not expect them obey your rules. It may be your house, but you are in their country. You can always clean it again. If their standards are higher, then you will need to match it.

So, what does the word dirty really mean? And what does the word clean mean? The sooner you learn what these words mean in the culture, the sooner you will begin to understand what is important and why. They may apply these terms to more areas than food, home, and body. The terms may also be applied to relationships, places, and activities. As you find out how the terms are used, add those areas to the list above and define what they mean and how you need to adapt your life to their understanding.

At some point you may find yourself in conflict with some of their concepts. A clean activity for them may actually be in opposition to God's truth. If you have done a good job of exploring the meaning of the term and adapting where you can, you may gain the freedom to say no in certain circumstances

## Passage – Can you get there?

The definition and concept of a *passage* covers a number of key issues. The most obvious relates to your physical movement within the physical environment where you are living. It can also relate to your movement from tourist to member. In this section you will focus on your physical movement. There are a number of ideas that must be considered:

- How do you get there? - Modes of transportation
- Where can you go? - Learning where you are expected to go and permitted to go.
- When can you go? - Knowing when you can go is critical to having access and being safe.
- Can you go alone? - Security issues that should be considered
- Why do you need to get there? - Behind everything is knowing why.
- How do you get there? – How to get from tourist to member can be a moving target. What conditions might affect the how?

Transportation varies greatly from place to place. You may have to walk or use a multitude of transport options - from bicycles to modern subways and trains. You may also be expected to have your own personal transport. In many cases, this may be the only feasible option based on location and type of ministry.

For public transport

The first step is to learn what types of transport are available. This includes understanding routes, schedules, and fees for each type of transportation. Some transportation methods have flexible routes like taxis, while others are on fixed routes like buses and trains. Learning this information is a great opportunity to interact with locals and gain insight into the best way to get around your location

The second step is to learn how much each type of transportation costs. In some cases, the costs are fixed, but in other cases, you may be expected to negotiate the price. Or, in other cases, the cost is controlled by meters and the purchase of tickets. Learn the cost, where to obtain the tickets, and how the rates relate to where you are traveling to and from.

The third step is to learn when the different types of transport are available. There may be specific times when transportation is less available. Or, depending on the time of day, day of the week, or local holidays, transportation availability may vary, and you may have to choose a different type of transportation.

The fourth step is learning how to use the various transportation. This is about who sits where in a vehicle. It can be about having different prices for access to different places in the vehicle, like on trains and boats, which will affect cost. It can also mean sharing your taxi with another customer.

The fifth step is learning when it is safe to use public transport and when you need to have a guide (chaperone) or companion. It is important to learn when your friends will be comfortable with you traveling alone. You should also be aware of places you should or should not travel to or through.

Private transport

There are a number of things to learn about in this area.

**Vehicle** - What kind of vehicle do you need? What kind of vehicle, both type and brand is acceptable for you to own where you are living? There will be many people watching your actions and purchasing a vehicle that is too cheap or too costly may influence how others perceive you and interpret your actions.

**Maintenance and fuel** – Where do you take your vehicle for maintenance and how will you pay for the work? Although it seems obvious, your contacts there may have expectations that you will use a family member or friend for necessary work and labor. On the other hand, you may need to do some of the work on your own.

**Traffic** – Developing a mental map is the first step, allowing you to develop an understanding of traffic patterns and how they will affect your plans. What is the condition of the roads and how will they affect your travels?

**Usage** – if you have a vehicle, will you be expected to provide transport for others if needed? If people know where and when you are traveling, they may expect you to allow them to travel with you. If the church or group is planning an event, they may expect you to help provide transport for people and materials. Will you need to set a mileage rate for use of vehicle and how will this affect your relationships with others?

Where do I go?

When arriving in a new place, it can be overwhelming trying to identify places to go for all your needs. Where do you buy your food? Where are the clothing stores or do you need to find a tailor? (This is something you may have to do in some countries because nothing is available in your size.) Where do you find hardware, stationary, and many other things? How willing are you to let others help you and depend on them for the information you need? To a certain extent, you will depend on and rely on the locals to guide your decisions. Some of the options they present may be tied to personal opinions or bias (e.g. a family store, a particular church, etc.)

When can you go?

This was briefly discussed above, but it is worth reinforcing. In many cases, you may discover that your freedom and independence is limited. This fact may be a humbling experience, but it is wise to defer to their judgment. You may depend on others more, thus resulting in changes to your schedule and planning, as they may only be available to accompany you at certain times.

Can you go alone?

As noted above, one must be careful especially when arriving in a new place. At first, it may not be wise to go to many places alone, especially if you are using certain types of public transport. And again, you must consider where and when you are going to a particular place.

Why do you need to get there?

Going somewhere, just because a person can or wants to, is not always a good reason to go. It is amazing how attentive people are to our movements and activities. It is always good to examine why you are going where you are going and submit your plans to the scrutiny of others. They may have useful insights that can help you know if you need to go, if you are going to the correct place, or if you need to do something else before you go to a particular place. They may also be helpful in understanding the best way to accomplish your goal. In fact, your reason for going may not be relevant to the reality of the new culture you are trying to live in.

The first step in truly understanding how to get there is our ability to travel to the people of our new world and let them be a bridge to everything else. Never be afraid to ask questions and ask them to repeat their answers until you truly understand the directions and information being given.

## First Contact – Can you be safe?

In this section we will consider your physical safety and what to do if there is an accident or emergency.

Let's start with issues related to medical care and how you will deal with sickness and injury.

### Illness

Take the time to learn what the most common illnesses and medical problems are in your host country. The more you know, the better you can protect yourself and respond to any medical concerns, especially if they are uncommon in your home country. For example, malaria is more common in those for those who move from temperate to tropical climates. There will always be something in your host country that is not present in yours. Learn about it.

### Health care providers

Most every country has some form of medical care. In some cases, it may also include traditional medicine. The goal here is to learn what is available and how to access it. Start by finding out where people go for their medical care. Do they go to the store, the pharmacy, a local clinic, or to a doctor for treatment? How do they respond to minor illness (headaches, stomach aches) vs. more serious illnesses (infections, broken bones)?

### Medicines

Where do you get the medicines needed for treatment? You will need to explore what is available at the traditional medicine market, store, or pharmacy. Also, if you need prescription medicines for long term treatment, research the availability in your host country and what steps are needed to obtain medicine.

If the medicine is not available, then you may need to have it sent to you from your home country. It will be wise to learn about the laws related to importing a particular medicine and what is involved in getting it to your house. You may need a doctor to help with this process.

### Doctors

It will be important to find a doctor to provide general medical care when needed and who can refer you to specialist if and when necessary. In some countries it is important to have a local doctor because only they can provide documents related to medical clearance for visa applications. Learn about how to find a doctor. Are the doctors part of the public health system, are there private doctors, and are there specialists available?

## Emergencies

Emergencies are bound to happen. Create a plan that you can follow and guide your steps if an emergency occurs. Consider where you will go and who you will call.

The more serious situation here is what should you do if you are involved in an accident? In some countries, you are prohibited from leaving the site of the accident, if you are not severely injured. In other countries, you are advised strongly, even by the police, to go directly to the nearest police station to report what has happened. In some cultures, others arriving on the scene may decide you are to blame and attack you.

## Insurance

Take time to learn about how people pay for their medical care. They may have social medicine for general care (which may also be available to you for certain types of medical needs, such as vaccinations). Do they need medical insurance? Do you need medical insurance? If you need it, how will you obtain it and how are payments made? Does the medical facility directly bill the insurance company, or do you need to pay and then submit bills for reimbursement?

## Other dangers

There may be other dangers that you should be aware of when arriving in a new country. Inquire about types of animals, insects, and plants that may be dangerous and poisonous. Learn how to identify them and what to do if bitten, stung, or if you come into contact with any of them.

## Information

It will be good to maintain a file in your home with your medical information. This would include the following for each person

- medical history,
- surgical history,
- list of medicines you are taking
- allergies
- blood type
- special needs
- other information
- emergency contact information: local and in your home country
- Doctor contact information
- In case of emergency where to be taken inside and out of country
- Insurance information
- Passport number

## Death

No one wants to think about this, but it is important. You need to have a file with information and instructions about what to do if you are unconscious, seriously injured, or if you die. Include information regarding who to contact, what you want done with your body, and anything else that will help your family and others in dealing with your death.

## Evacuation

While we don't want to believe it can happen, disasters and political upheaval are part of the world we live in. Do you know what to do, where to go, and how to help others if you find yourself in the midst of a disaster situation, like an earthquake, flooding, or hurricane? Do have a plan so you know where to go to be safe and how to help in rescue and relief?

When there is political turmoil, it is good to have an escape plan including how to leave and where to go for safety. It will also be important to have a clear plan for communicating with key leaders, so they can help you decide when you can stay, when to relocate to a safer place, or when you need to leave. Part of this process is having sufficient reliable sources to make such decisions before the risk escalates and prevents you from being able to get to a safe place.

### Robbery and Theft

It is important to talk with the people around you to learn about the dangers of being robbed and assaulted. Often there are particular areas that are more dangerous than others. Learn where they are and when it may be safe to enter those areas, especially if they are in your area of ministry or include places of business you need to access.

Ask your friends to teach you about what to be aware of that would indicate there is danger. Find out how they know when a situation could be dangerous. Ask about where a person should park their vehicle and what safety measures need to be taken. You may need to install an alarm, pay a person to watch the vehicle, or only park in areas clearly identified as secure by the presence of guards etc.

Learn about how to make your home secure and what to be aware of in your neighborhood. There are so many options from installing security bars and locks and installing a home security system to hiring watchmen. Sometimes you will need to learn about finding a place to live that is in a guarded or secure community. What do your friends from the host country recommend and why? How might that affect your relationship? Will they feel like you are hiding from the world and isolating yourself? The balance between being safe and living among those you have come to serve can be very delicate. Take time to learn as much as you can before choosing the place you live.

### Neighbors

You also need to learn about your neighbors and their expectations. Talk to your friends about how to respond if your neighbor comes to your door with an emergency. You need to be concerned about their health and this can be an opportunity to demonstrate Christian care.

Ask if neighbors are likely to come to your door for help. Will they ask for things like food, bandages, transport, or medicines, like aspirin? How would you be expected to respond?

If the need is more serious, what is expected of you? Are you to call an ambulance, or take them to the emergency room, or doctor?

This also applies to how do you respond if you encounter an accident or medical emergency when traveling. Do they expect people to stop and help? Should you stop and help?

Do you best to ensure your safety and prepare for an emergency and seek advice from nationals and friends about how to live safely in their culture and world. However, continue to learn and adapt as there will always be situations that you are not prepared for and how you respond will be critical.

## First Shock - Cataclysm

As you gain more information about the new culture you are now living in, you will discover and be impacted by all that is different. Sometimes you may think things are similar but the reasoning behind the activity may be totally different. As you encounter more and more of these, you will begin to struggle with the differences. This struggle is called culture shock. There are varying levels of culture shock and what triggers it will be different from one person to the next. For one, it is the odors. For another, the food. And for yet another, it may be something else. It can be caused by one change or a combination of changes.

There is no way to predict what will affect each person and how strong the response will be. Whatever it is, it will bring that person to a crisis point. First, it is important to learn to identify what is happening and how to respond when you reach this point. I will call this the Cataclysm. After that, we will look at key areas that will cause such struggles. To be honest, you may deal with several different levels of struggle as you learn more about the culture and its approach to life.

Here are the topics you will work through

- Cataclysm – What is happening?
- Transplant – How do I live here?
- Behavior – Nothing makes sense.
- Value – Why, just why?
- Belief – Lost in the fog
- Process – Avoiding the pitfalls to reach the apple
- Cataclysm – What is happening?

When you enter another culture, all the standards and norms begin to shift. The shift can be minor or can be immense. In some ways, a minor shift can be more perplexing than a major shift. This is because it is not as obvious, and you may dangerously assume there is no difference. This assumption will place you in conflict and create discord in your perception of what is happening. Large shifts are visible and the smaller ones are less visible and require time to see. Both require you to make changes; changes that may cause the same sense of discord, but from a different source. In the one, we just don't see what is happening, and so struggle to know how to change. In the other, we see exactly what is happening and know what to change, but it still causes frustration.

This is the basis of culture shock. What is normal for you, is not the same here and you are constantly finding yourself in conflict or at odds with what is being done. As you continue to experience this conflict, it will begin to create emotional challenges and struggles that usually will cause visible changes in your actions and attitudes. Here are a few:

- Cleanliness – constantly washing hands after any contact with people or objects.
- Food – extreme worry about the safety of food and water. A desire to have only your kind of food and prepared by yourself or a person you trust.
- Focus – unable to focus on work, study, language learning, and ministry.
- Feelings – most significant is a feeling of impotency and sense of futility in what is being done.
- Language – avoiding talking with anyone who does not speak your language. Overwhelming fear of making mistakes and being misunderstood and even being laughed at.
- Fear – many examples related to fear of being hurt or assaulted until the person becomes unwilling to even leave the house.
- Dependency - There is a lack of trust in the people of this new culture. The person only trusts others of their own culture and becomes dependent on them for all their activity.

- Exaggeration – a tendency to inflate or overstate one’s problems, pains and fears.
- Flee – If there is no resolution of the reactions listed above, as well as others, then the person begins to develop a deep desire to isolate themselves from whatever is causing the stress. This may result in a complete break down and a powerful desire to escape and return home.

Many of the items above are the extreme forms of what happens when one experiences culture shock. There are a number of stages in the process of understanding what is happening and how to work through it, so that a person can adapt to the new environment.

The five stages are:

1. Honeymoon
2. Crisis
3. Recuperation
4. Adaptation
5. Reverse culture shock

### Honeymoon

This is the time when everything is exciting. Your enthusiasm and energy levels are high, and everyone is focused on helping you. You have finally arrived and there is a strong sense of accomplishment. As a result, you are willing to explore, try new foods, and absorb everything that is happening. Your curiosity is what drives you and the most common questions revolve around *what*. What is that? What are they doing? What does that mean? . At this point, the people around you are just as curious and want to know about you and what you are doing in their country.

Unfortunately, this period of high energy and interest will not last.

### Crisis

At some point things will begin to shift. The people will have less time to answer all of your questions and will expect you to start caring for yourself. That is often the trigger point because you will begin to discover you don’t know how to do this in the new culture.

The foods are different and 1) You are not able to prepare them, 2) You long for what is familiar, and 3) You discover that you cannot have the familiar all the time.

The lifestyle of the people is different and 1) You are not used to this lifestyle, 2) You long for the familiar, and 3) You discover that the two lifestyles are not compatible.

The thinking of the people is different and 1) You don’t understand them and struggle to communicate, 2) You long for someone from your culture to talk to because they understand, and 3) You discover that is not possible because it will isolate you from the people you have come to live among.

The relationships of the people are different and 1) You don’t understand how to be friend and family, 2) You long to spend time with friends and family and, 3) You discover that if you do that you offend the people around you and they feel rejected.

These are some examples of how the crisis appears and what happens. The struggle will begin to intensify depending on how well you can handle what is happening in you as a person. These different challenges affect your sense of self-sufficiency, self-esteem, and independence. They will bring varying levels of confusion, loneliness, isolation, and feelings of failure. If the person is not careful it could cause

a sense of apathy and desire to limit, even avoid contact, in the areas causing the crisis. If not dealt with this may lead to a desire to flee or escape.

As the crisis builds the person will deal with an inability to accept the differences, will praise and focus on their home culture, as if it is perfect, experience growing levels of anxiety and frustration, and even anger. The key here is for the person to recognize what is happening and be able to use what is triggering the crisis as a bridge back to balance.

### Recuperation

Everyone experiences culture shock. It can be a specific difference that triggers it or a general sense of things being out of sync. It can be minimal in impact, very severe, and anywhere in between. The key is being able to identify what is happening. This part of the process can come from several sources. You can identify what is happening, a family member can comment on what is happening, a team member may note and comment, or a local person will make a comment. They may not specifically say that you are in culture shock. The comment may simply be about something you are doing, or how you are reacting, that may open your mind to the fact that you are experiencing culture shock.

This is the key. At some point you must become aware of what is happening and begin to deal with what is happening. By correctly handling the cause, you will recover from the effects of culture shock. As you move forward, you will recover your sense of value, and your self-esteem will be restored. With it will come a foundation in humility, and the issues of self-sufficiency and independence will be redefined to include an awareness that these will only be possible as you learn to depend on others within this new culture. This will be possible because you are learning to build relationships with those around you.

### Adaptation

These new relationships will help you move to the next step. You will learn to adapt to this new world. This does not mean you completely abandoned your culture, because that is not possible. It simply means that you begin to place value in the culture of your new friends. You learn to live in their world and see it as an appropriate way to live.

At this point, as you learn to adapt you will place increasing trust in the people around you. You will begin to enjoy the events and activities that are part of their culture. Most importantly, you will begin to understand the why behind some of their customs and attitudes. Finally, you will begin to communicate with decreasing difficulty in their language, even to the point of understanding their humor.

### Reverse Culture Shock

If in fact you successfully become part of another culture and you correctly handle the process of adapting and dealing with the crisis of that process, then you will likely experience something quite similar to it when you return home. You will find that people don't understand how you think and respond. You will miss the foods, lifestyle, and other aspects of the culture you have been living in. And will have to repeat the whole process again of adapting to living in your home culture.

This is because you have gained a world of experiences and life they do not understand and cannot relate to. Each of you is observing the other and noting differences in customs and habits. There is a subtle shift in values and focus. It becomes difficult to explain your thoughts and ideas and you may feel that you are not relevant to your home culture. You have changed, and it makes your family, friends, and others uncomfortable.

You will have to go through a process of recuperation and adaptation again. However, this will never be fully possible. By living in another culture, your perspectives on the world around you have been altered. At this point, you will have three responses: 1) Reject all that you have learned in the other culture, 2) reject your home culture, or 3) integrate the two. The last is the best option and at the same time, the most challenging. It was the same goal as when you entered the other culture. Successfully done, it will give you a much broader understanding of life and the people around you.

This is what you want. Integration into the world around you so that you can effectively communicate with others and deliver the message of the gospel.

## First Shock – Transplant

In the next sections you will look at some of the key issues that are behind culture shock and that impact your ability to become integrated into another culture.

Transplant – how do you live here?

While some aspects of this have been touched on in the prior section (see First Contact), there is more to explore as you endeavor to move beyond those first contact concerns. At this point, the focus is about relationships and how this new world functions.

Relationships are critical to your ability to live and function in this new world. So, begin to ask, who are the people you need to know or know about?

Government – What things do you need to know about the government and its structure? Learn how political structure works and how authority is assigned. Learn about visas, driver's licenses, identity cards, and other aspects of being registered and permitted to live in this place. Know the laws of the land and how they are enforced. Who has what rights and responsibilities and how do you respond to those in authority?

Business – What things do you need to know about carrying out business in this country? How are finances handled? You will need to know how to obtain money for doing business and if things like credit and debit cards are acceptable. You will need to learn how to receive your finances in the country. Will you need to establish a bank account for receiving wire transfers, or can you use ATM machines to draw funds from your account in your home country? You will learn to know how business is handled in the stores. Is it a simple one step process or does it involve multiple steps?

Co-workers – Working relationships exist in two areas: your relationships with co-workers from your home country and co-workers from your host country. The expectations and social structures of each group can, and is often, very different. Who is your authority figure in each group? You may find yourself working with each separately or in combination. It will be important to understand which has priority in assigning your work, receiving reports, and approving your plans.

Friendships – It is important to learn about how friendships are made and maintained. This will be important to your ability to live in your new culture. This involves learning about your neighborhood and how people relate to each other. Are there community groups for things like security, government relations, recreation, and other areas? What part are you expected to play in these? Developing friendships in these types of groups will be critical to your adaptation and integration.

Social life – This is a critical aspect of developing friendships. Learn about common social activities. This can involve what people do with free time. Do they all gather at a park, coffee shop, or other site to meet and talk about life and their world? Learn about who spends time with whom. Are the groups

based on age, gender, or family structure? Do the men gather at the coffee shop while the young people gather in another location?

Family life – Learn about when families gather and why. Are they gathering to celebrate birthdays, graduations, and other related events? Do they gather to celebrate public holidays? Do they take vacations? Explore what part you may be expected to play and at what level you may be allowed to participate in such events.

Church and ministry – People have specific ideas and expectations about your level of participation in this area. They may have a higher level of expectation for you since you have come to serve in this specific area. These will be affected by the nature of your assignment. Take time to observe and learn about these expectations.

Also, take time to learn about how things function. In many cases, learning how relationships work will give you a great deal of information about how things function, but it is still a good idea to explore this further.

Daily routine – This covers a number of areas. One is to learn about the daily routine of the home. Learn about when people get up, when they eat, and when they sleep. Learn about how their routine is affected by having small children, grade school children, teenagers, and/or adult children in the house. Learn about the routine of going to and from work, school, and key businesses (e.g., grocery store, market) that are visited on a regular basis. It is important because it all affects your ability to live in the culture and learn how to become a part of it. If you choose to follow your own schedule, you may find yourself in conflict with the world around you and unable to carry out daily tasks and meet the people. For example: in Spain, almost all stores close from noon to three, but all the restaurants are open. The people eat from noon to 2 and then take a break. As a result, the stores tend to stay open later in the evening.

Business hours – Learn when key places are open. What are the daily hours for banks, government offices, and any other business you will need access to? This is not just about the daily hours but learning about the holidays and other events that will affect their schedule.

Holidays – Do you know the dates for the national holidays? Are you expected to celebrate them or participate in some way in the activities programmed for those days? It is a good idea to have a basic understanding of the history of key events like Independence Day and other significant holidays related specifically to the life of the people. They may be political, cultural, and religious in nature. You should explore and gain information at two levels: 1) level of participation of anyone in the country and 2) level of participation and involvement of Christians. They could be quite different.

Religions– it is always possible that you may be living in a country where the people have significantly different religious beliefs and practices. You are going to need to learn how to relate to them and their practices. What are their expectations of you in relation to those beliefs and practices? If they invite you to be present at a religious event, how will you respond and how will your response be perceived?

This is a short list of items that can affect how you live in your host culture. Hopefully as you review them you will be able to see other areas that you should add to the list and explore further. In each culture, there will be different levels of importance assigned to the same events and areas.

You are now becoming more aware that the world around you is truly different, which brings you to the next area in facing and dealing with culture shock.

## First Shock – Behavior: Nothing makes sense.

As you become more aware of where you are you will begin to become disoriented. This is caused by what you see happening around you. The reason can be threefold. First, the behaviors appear normal but the reason behind them is not what you are used to and second, the behaviors are different but have the same meanings as some of your behaviors, and three the behaviors are different and relate to things that are not part of your world.

At this point you may feel like your world is getting turned inside out or upside down. The gestures you depend on as clues to understand what is happening are new to you or are gestures you use but with different meanings and different contexts. The language has a different structure and order from what you are used to, and you are constantly making errors that leave both you and the other person confused.

Social practices and greetings have a different context and purpose and you are struggling to know who you can talk to about what and if they will actually give you an honest answer. You feel lost in a sea of information that seems impossible to sort out.

The use of objects and items in the culture only adds to your sense of lostness. They tell you what to do with each item you ask about but why they do what they do is unclear and confusing.

The list of mannerisms, actions, and behaviors is always extensive. They cover things from the basics of life, like how you eat your food, to the more complex activities, like those involved in a wedding ceremony.

Let me explain using, how you eat your food, as an example. This may involve using your hands (and knowing which hand is correct), to using any number of types of utensils for this purpose. The most complex being that of the formal setting for a meal in high society such as England where there can be as many as 12 forks, spoons, and knives as well as five different glasses and plates that are either at the table or brought with food at different times. Eating with my hands requires no instructions or practice (Since writing this I have been informed that in some cultures there are proper and improper ways to eat with your hand). Learning what to do at a formal setting will require much instruction in the use of each item on the table and will leave you asking over and over why? In between are utensils like chopsticks and the use of other foods like tortillas and roti for eating.

Are you confused yet? It is guaranteed you will make mistakes and you may never finally understand the why for how the table is set, the utensils being used, and the manner and rules related to their use. Even how the food is eaten, order of eating, manner of eating, and how to respond to those who prepared the food will leave you with even more questions.

Greetings will be another area filled with great variety. Do you shake hands or bow or even kneel when greeting? Do you hug? Do you kiss and how many times and on which cheek? Are there other actions to perform when greeting? Are there specific words and questions to be used when greeting? Is it permitted to greet a person of the opposite sex? What about children, how are they to be greeted or are they even included in any of this?

Gestures will almost certainly bring confusion and even serious misunderstanding. You may be communicating to others without even realizing it because your normal hand movements, facial

expressions, and body posture may have no meaning in your culture but in this culture have meaning and sometimes communicate in negative ways. Even more complicated is when your normal gestures mean something totally different in this new culture. An example would be nodding your head up and down. For many this means yes but there are a couple of culture where this actually means no. There is no explanation of why this is so and honestly nobody knows, it is just their way of saying no.

The behaviors you observe provide opportunities to become part of your new culture and the sooner you learn the correct way the sooner you will find yourself accepted. The problem to overcome is the struggle to understand why, to make sense of what is happening around you. It is this desire, almost demand, to understand the why that creates the crisis in you and will frustrate those you are trying to learn from and about.

Stop for a moment though and think about your life and customs and actions. For how many of them could you explain why you do what you do? Can you explain why you use a fork or a spoon and not some other utensil? Can you explain why you greet the way you do? Probably not and yet these changes in behavior can affect you and unsettle you in ways that will surprise you. Sometimes the members of the culture will even make you angry because to you they are behaving in the wrong way, which means they are not behaving the way you do and expect them to.

The differences may be small and yet they accumulate, and, in a manner, you store them day by day until they finally tip the scales and you are in shock and struggling with the differences in behavior. As you work through all this you will begin to see the next level of shock values.

## First Shock – Value: Why just why?

Actually, we began to touch on this a little bit in the discussion on behavior. We want to know why people behave the way they do. But that is more about discovering if there is a reason or explanation for a specific behavior or set of behaviors.

The question of value is deeper and often links groups of behaviors or creates relationships among the different behaviors.

At this point we don't just look at the actions and behaviors that are visible but begin to ask if they represent a particular value.

Greetings can represent a number of values. They can express the level of relationship and value of the person we are greeting. They can be used to show respect and honor as well as the closeness of the people involved. Formal greetings may be totally different than those used among family members and close friends. The words chosen may indicate the value of a relationship, if it is formal, business, age based, and familial.

The actions we observe are almost always linked to a value in some way. The value is the basis of what is observed and so defines the manner in which a person acts. The difficult part is that you can have the same value but a multitude of behaviors that are used to express that value. The behaviors reveal that there is a value that exists and is guiding the behavior.

Values are a critical part of every culture. They relate to family, work, religious practice, economic issues, division of labor, and many more areas. You should be able to look at any behavior and ask the question, what value is it linked to? and is revealed through this action or behavior.

Here is one to think about: marriage. How is marriage perceived? Is it based on the emotional connection of two people who are free to live together or be married without the consent of any other members of society? Or is it a complex decision where parents negotiate the marriage of their children and the entire society has an investment in what happens and its benefits to the entire social group? In the first, the value is in personal choice and freedom. In the second, there are many values involved. Respect and obedience of parents. The rights and needs of the community. The ability of the couple to contribute to the life and continued existence of the community. There are probably a number more values that could be seen with a little time and the right questions and observations.

Learning about the values of a group is a challenging process. It still may not explain why they use certain actions and behaviors, but you will begin to understand the values they represent in the culture. It will take more effort than just mimicking a behavior and using it in its proper setting. Learning about values means taking the time to observe how and when things occur.

The value of family will be easy to observe, sometimes. But the values that exist in the family will take more time and effort. Values related to selection of spouse, authority of parents, type of work and education of children, place and importance of elders or heads of family groups. You will discover that there are values related to levels of family, nuclear family, extended family, and family as part of clan or tribe. Sometimes learning about one value reveals other values that the first one is based on.

Food can open the door to learning about values. The value of food and how it is obtained and stored. Who is in charge of all the different steps and what does that say about their value and of the work they do. That leads to the value placed on work and not just work in general but different types of work. Do different types of employment have different levels of value and how does that affect the relations between different individuals, groups, and social levels.

Answering the question why will not happen by just asking why. In fact, you may never get an answer to that question. The information you gain will be more about the what or the content of the values. And you can learn what the relationships are between the different aspects of a culture and what has more or less value in that culture because there is always a hierarchy in values.

A key thing to keep in mind is be very careful about judging them and their values. This is a critical step in learning empathy. The ability to reserve judgment for later or to not judge at all is important. Your task is to learn and become part of their culture. Learning about their values, for the purpose of learning to respect them and build bridges of communication, will open the doors to them asking about you and your values as a Christian. Your task is not to change them, that is God's work. Your task is to understand and enter their world, so they will be able to listen to you as well.

There will be some areas that will present problems. These will be areas like the status of women, the nature of discipline with children, the nature of law and order, trial and punishment, social status, religious values, and any number of cultural traditions that may place you in conflict with the values of the culture.

The more you learn about the why, the values behind the behaviors, the more you will have opportunity to discuss those that are more difficult. Now you are becoming aware that it will involve a real commitment to become, not just a participant, but a member at some level. As you grow in your understanding of their values you will encounter the next level of struggle, belief and cosmivision. As

you ask questions you will need to learn what questions are appropriate and when they can be asked. In the wrong time and place they can be offensive. Also realize they may not in fact know the answer, because that is just how they do it.

## First Shock – Belief: Lost in the fog

If you thought that understanding their values was a challenge then you will soon realize that values are easy to explore and understand but beliefs are truly difficult and shrouded, so to speak, in a cloud. Beliefs are the foundation on which the values are formed.

Beliefs cover concepts of right and wrong and are the foundation of how justice and the administration of reward and punishment is structured. This also includes the concept of taboos.

Beliefs establish the formation of the family and other social groups and relations among members of the society.

Beliefs determine the nature of the resources available, their use, and any prohibitions related to the use of some of those resources.

Beliefs are the basis of the religious structures, worship, and relationships between the physical and spiritual world, if a belief in the spiritual realm exists.

Beliefs determine a group's relation to the natural world and the relationships that exist between the group and animals, natural elements (or science), and the groups place and rights related to all of these.

The list can go on and will vary from group to group. One set of beliefs being stronger or more influential than others and being the core around which the others are organized. This is true where religious beliefs are strong and so influence beliefs in many other areas.

Behind all of this is a deeper belief system that connects them all. It is called the worldview (cosmovision). Some basic types of this are atheistic, humanistic, pantheistic, spiritualistic, and deistic. Within each of these are a great variety like in Deistic: multiple Gods, Judeo Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others. You may even find mixtures of the main ones, these are often called folk religion to show when they mix spiritualistic structures with Deistic structures.

(Note: these are examples of worldview groupings based on religious structures. There are many ways to organize worldviews. One example of an organization structure can be found in the book *Five Worldviews*, by Dennis McCallum.)

Be prepared for the fact that for the most part the people may be able to explain their belief in a particular area but will find it difficult if not impossible to explain why they believe that way. People grow up in their cosmovision or worldview context and never really learn how they came to believe that way. They may have stories, myths, and historical tales that reveal how they came to see the world in the way they do, but those are not really explanations.

To them they are reality, and everything is tied to them and used to explain why they live the way they do and explain the why of events, good and bad, that happen in their lives and the life of the group. You may be allowed to ask questions and discuss what they understand about their beliefs and the

worldview they hold, but usually you will not be allowed to question and denigrate this aspect of their world.

You will have to wait for them to learn to trust you and then ask you questions about why you don't believe the way they do. There is no clear way of knowing when this will happen. But it will not happen if you are not willing to listen to them and accept their explanations as truth for them.

Only members or trusted people are allowed to question the validity of the why behind everything. And that usually only happens when there is a key event that creates doubt and uncertainty in their world. This can happen because of a disaster, an unexplained result that does not fit their idea of normal, and contact with other worldviews and those who follow them, like you.

Disasters can cause sudden upheaval and open them to alternative explanations. This can allow for sudden change and shift in belief. Key events and activities that create doubt or create bridges between you and them are unpredictable. You don't know when they will occur. It is like the peace child story. After a long period of language learning and war between two tribes an event occurred that opened the door to a shift in their worldview and for God's word to enter. In some cultures, it will just take time. The question is will, you be ready when the door opens, and will you live long enough in their culture so that it will open? Sometimes it will only be a few who respond and sometimes whole cultures become open.

But nothing will happen if we have no desire to be empathic, to learn to live in their world and go through the struggle of understanding that world so we will be given the right to speak.

## First Shock – Process: Avoiding the pitfalls to reach the apple

Navigating the process of enculturation (learning a culture) is a challenge. For those who grow up in the culture it is a lifetime process. They begin the learning process from the day they are born. They will learn the language and culture with the help of every aspect of their world. If they make a mistake it is quickly identified and corrected.

For you it will be a totally different process. You will not have the automatic help of everyone and every structure. Because you are an adult, they will assume you should know the information or that because you are an outsider, they are not responsible to help you learn. Enculturation becomes your responsibility and that means dealing with a number of pitfalls, errors that you are more susceptible to than one who grows up in the culture. In this final section we will identify a few of them

Assumptions – This is one of the more serious errors that can be made. To assume we understand without verifying what we think is happening or what something means. In general, you should not assume anything based on observation alone. That is the first level of error. The second is assuming you can understand what is happening without the help of others, that is egoism, and it will create many barriers between you and those who can teach you what is really happening. The last level is assuming that you can become part of the new culture. This is not something you can do. You need others to do this for you. You may have a deep and adequate knowledge of a culture but that does not guarantee they will let you be a member. It may mean you are simply a very good observer. Membership is based on relationship not knowledge.

Commitment – Entering a culture is a serious commitment. Not a commitment of a few weeks or months. It is the commitment of a lifetime. Unfortunately, you cannot commit a lifetime to it since you were not born in the culture. What it does mean is that you need to commit as completely and as long as possible to the process. You have to choose to stay when you feel like running away. You have to choose to be involved when you feel like you are useless. You have to commit all of who you are when you feel like reserving some portion, so you can escape. True commitment does not seek relief or escape because it knows that in those times of stress and struggle the greatest learning often occurs and that will take years. Commitment is ready for that.

Language learning – This area is loaded with fear and challenges. We are afraid to make mistakes, to be laughed at for making mistakes, and afraid we will never learn the language. We don't like feeling and looking like children in the eyes of adults. We don't like feeling helpless and dependent on others to help us because we don't know how to communicate. Truthfully the more we learn, in the beginning, the more we realize how little we know. It is easy to give up, become complacent, or dependent on others for communication beyond the basics.

Comparison – Everybody does this and in a limited way it is okay. Your new friends will ask you questions about your home and culture. The problem is that you could become wrapped up in making comparisons until everything is compared to home and you tell everyone what is the same and different. People cannot enter your life without you comparing them and what they do, to something from your home. This is destructive and not helpful. Keep it to yourself and try to learn to focus on the here and now. Comparison links you to the past and can prevent you from moving forward to living in the present and adapting to the future.

Contacts – it is important to evaluate who you are working with in the area of learning the language and culture. Choosing the wrong people will affect what you learn. An obvious one is don't use a member of your team to learn language. You need a local person for that, so you can learn to listen to them and understand the language as they speak it. It will also provide bridges to more information about the culture that an outsider can never provide.

It is also important to have key people in the culture who are your sources of learning and insight. You may gain some information from team mates but again they are seen as outsiders and do not provide the links and bridges you will need in the culture.

Activity – What you do with your time is an important area to think through. It is often too easy to plan your activities around people and events that are a normal part of your life. At times you will need that to relieve some of the stress of entering a new culture. But there needs to be a balance. You need to learn how to become involved in the normal life and activity of your host culture. If you don't, they will see your avoidance of participating in their world and withdraw from you and become less willing to help you learn and develop your understanding of their life. You will become unwelcome.

Routines – The routines of your new world will be different. If you don't adapt to those routines, you will find yourself out of sync with the world around you. Your schedule will not match theirs and they will only adapt to yours for a limited time since it causes a disruption in their routine. You may be able to maintain some routines in private but as soon as it involves them you need to adjust, not them.

Isolation – You are going to experience a level of isolation. You no longer have the support of your normal structures, your friends, local church, other groups, and family. How you deal with this will impact your ability to do more than just exist in this new world. The issue is will you be able to deal with a period of feeling isolated while you replace those support structures with local friends, groups, church, and others?

Energy level – This is a key concern because it will take a great deal of energy to learn a new language and a new culture. You are going to feel tired a lot. You will need to learn how to deal with this to be sure you get enough rest and have enough recreation and leisure time so that you can feel restored and able to continue. Burn out is a very real issue in the first years of adapting to a new culture.

Review – This is related to the issue of assumptions. You need to make sure there is time to review what you are learning. This review needs to occur at several levels. You need to do a personal review to think through your priorities and progress, so you can adjust your schedules and focuses. You need to have other teammates or outsiders review what you are doing and learning. They often can give helpful observations and recommendations that will give you a better perspective on what is happening and how you are progressing. The last level is being willing to submit what you are doing to the review of friends from within the culture. This is vital because they will see what you cannot see and can give valuable insight into what needs to be your focus at a given time and further steps that may be needed to improve on what you have already learned

Sources – This may seem redundant and, in a way it is, but you need to always review what you are using as your sources of information. Many books and guides encourage you to take time to read about the history and life of the country where you are going. This is good as a preliminary source, but it should not become our primary way of gaining information. It may provide a good general framework but may not relate to the real life of the people. A good recommendation is read it then forget it and have the people tell you their version of their history and life. Another source will be others who have done what you are doing, moved from their home country to live among this group or people. The same advice applies, it is not bad to hear what they have to say, it can be useful. Especially in avoiding mistakes and not redoing what has already been done. It saves time and you can use it to build on. Again, hear the information and then forget it and let the people explain it to you.

Your best sources should include children, yes, they can tell you much, so much you may be surprised. After that make sure you have a mix of people of different ages, social statuses, types of work, and gender, if it is permissible. This will help you get a broader perspective in whatever area you are exploring.

Well that covers a number of dangers in the process of identifying the sources of culture shock and dealing with it. You will all face these issues. How serious it is and how long it takes to move through and beyond to become more empathic, part of the culture, will depend on your willingness to see what is happening and get the help you need to move through the crisis of that moment and begin to adapt.

## The Bridge

So how do you learn all the information covered in the first section? How do you deal with the cultural issues and shock?

You need to build bridges and the most effective way to do that is language. You will learn better, faster, and with deeper awareness if you can talk to someone to gain the information, explain what is happening to you physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. There is no substitute for this. Reading books, listening to lectures, and watching videos will leave you disconnected and isolated. The information may be excellent but there will be no personal experience involved or relation building possible.

So, you have to learn to speak the language of the people in order to communicate. It will take time, even years, sometimes many years, to come even close to being effective. That will depend on your abilities, the time you invest in the process, those you seek out to help you, and of course the language you are learning. Some can be learned quickly, others like Chinese and tonal languages will cause you to struggle for years. This is because you will have to learn a completely different writing structure and retrain your ear to hear then repeat the tonal changes.

Before all of that you will need to learn to understand the process of communication. This means learning how to do the best job possible and how to deal with the places where your communication will breakdown and become unrecognizable. So, let's begin with the basics

The Basics – Steps One – lost to hope

Why do I say steps? Because there are many steps in the process of communication. It is not just forming the message and making it audible.

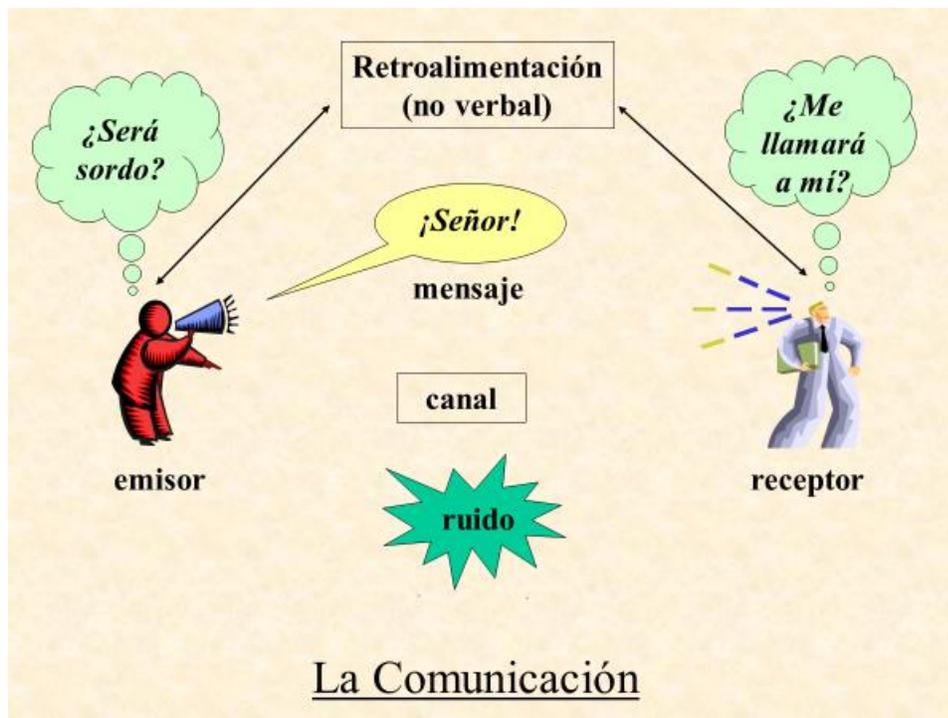
Here are the steps

1. Forming the message – You need to know exactly what you want to communicate. This involves the selection of the words and how they will be presented. The structure of our message can mean the difference between them just hearing the sounds and being able to understand the sounds you make. If it is not correctly formed in your thoughts, then you will not make sense in the next step.
2. Making it audible or heard – You will have to open your mouth and make the correct sounds. It is amazing how many different sounds exist in the world of languages. This also applies to how you communicate using sign language (there are many types of these as well).
3. Making a connection – Does the person know you are speaking to them? You need to be sure the person is listening and knows you wish to communicate. You need to make sure they are ready to receive your message and can focus on what you want to say to them.
4. Supporting the message – Along side of the audible message is all that is happening in the nonverbal world. How does your smile, frown, furled brow, and body position and movement support or contradict your message? Is there agreement or discord between them.
5. Channeling the message – This may sound strange, but it is important. What are you using to communicate and how will that affect your communication? Using a phone, microphone, and other apparatus can affect how well others hear you. Using emails, chats, and social media can limit the ability to communicate emotion, intent, urgency, and critical pieces of the message. They need to know if you are happy, sad, frustrated, angry, excited, and so on.
6. Choosing the context – Are you aware of how the context of where you are affects your communication? This is not about sound levels but about distractions, focus, emotions, and

things like level of relations with the person you speaking to. The same message could have different meanings to a father, a friend, or a stranger.

7. Dealing with the noise – every communication is affected by what is called noise. The emotions of both the sender and receiver have a significant effect on what happens to the message as it is transmitted. The noise around you may alter meanings of words and create dynamics that can even block a message. Things in the environment, like sound and odor, affect how well people listen and their focus in sending and receiving the message. Internally things like pain, tiredness, and lack of interest or rejection of message, sender, and or receiver will affect the message.

This diagram gives a simple illustration of some of this.



And all of that is just about the sender of the message. Most of the above also impacts the response of the person to your message. If you are not careful a simple message can become messy and uninterpretable.

It is a good idea to become aware of the steps one of communication so that you can be as clear as possible in your communication. It is guaranteed that as you begin the process you will fail in more than one of these. The challenge and goal is to continue the struggle and gain mastery of each one. But never think you will perfect the process because there is always one more step that will always be uncertain. You will never know the personal history of a person and a unique noise that comes with that personal history. Every person loads the words and phrases with a unique meaning based on their history and life. The basic meaning is still there but carries differing value and importance based on personal history, type of work, social context, and type of relationship. These same issues affect you as you select the words and form the message.

So basic communication is not as simple as it sounds. And there are more issues and steps than we have mentioned here. It is a wise communicator who studies carefully each step and learns to evaluate how

he or she is doing, not just from their own perspective but from that of an unbiased observer of how you communicate in a variety of contexts and using a variety of messages. They can see the whole picture and they can see how the receptor is doing at understanding your message. They will often see what you cannot see because they know the signs that indicate how the message is being received.

The Bridge

## Language – Getting it

Learning the language is an absolute. There is no option for this. You cannot use translators. You cannot hope that someone speaks your language. You must learn their language and experience all the pain and struggle involved. That means you need to be willing to make mistakes and be embarrassed, even able to laugh at yourself and let others enjoy the humor of your mistakes.

The experts talk about levels of language understanding. In general, they list five major levels of language understanding as follows: (Based on the levels of language as described in the appendix of LAMP).

Zero – you have absolutely no ability in the language. Knowing a few words and phrases is still zero level ability.

One – you have an elementary speaking proficiency. This means you can handle routine activities of travel and greetings and that you can ask and answer questions about familiar topics. Your comprehension is limited to short statements and often you will need to have them repeat their comments and at a slower rate to fully understand.

Two – you have a limited working proficiency with the language. You can now engage in superficial conversations, talk about yourself, and other familiar topics, without prior preparation related to the topic. Your pronunciation is intelligible but needs further development. Your vocabulary is growing, but you avoid certain patterns and topics to be able to use known vocabulary. Your comprehension is improving, and you can understand most of what is being said to you. Sometimes you will need repetition, but you seldom understand everything being said between native speakers.

Three – you now have a minimal professional proficiency. You have enough knowledge of language and structure to satisfy all social and work requirements. You can participate in most general conversations and in specific topics. Your vocabulary is broader, and you seldom grope for a word. Your pronunciation has improved but in key areas will need practice to improve and avoid developing bad habits. Your comprehension is such that you can easily be involved in the life of others and develop friendships. You are able to participate in the culture and able to deal with the stresses that may develop at this level.

Four – you now have full professional proficiency in the language. You can use the language fluently and accurately at multiple levels of activity and involvement in the culture. You can participate meaningfully in any conversation and it is easy for them to listen to you and understand you. Your grammar and structure errors are now rare, and you are able to do informal interpretation to and from your second language.

Five – you are a native speaker. That means your speaking ability is equivalent to that of a native speaker. You have complete understanding of idiomatic usage of the language and you adapt your style of speak to their style of speech. Learning new vocabulary is automatic and done unconsciously. To

reach this level usually involves receiving a university level of education in the language and living for some years immersed in the culture.

Some systems will add plus levels to each of these to help in evaluating how you are progressing in your language acquisition.

For you to become effective in the language you will need to do a number of key things.

1. Commit yourself to learning a language. This means you will set aside enough time each day, each week over a period of years to become proficient. Language cannot be learned if you are not willing to do this.
2. Living in the culture of the language. You need to be willing to immerse yourself in the life and culture of the people who speak the language. This is essential to learning to speak clearly and understand what is being said.
3. Finding a language helper. Learning from a book or tapes is never a replacement for having someone to teach you. This person will be able to correct your pronunciation and listen until you correctly speak a word or phrase. This person will understand what you need to know and help you explore learning, not just the language, but the culture in which it is used.
4. Finding a language helper. This concept cannot be overemphasized. This person will be able to help you gain access to the culture you are now living in and will be a bridge to other people and resources to help you expand and improve your skills.
5. Finding other language speakers. You will need to develop a group of people who will be willing to let you practice and help you improve your language skills. This group will open other doors to new topics, new aspects of the culture, and new contacts.
6. Having a plan. You will need to develop a plan to help expand your vocabulary, expand your areas of learning, improve your grammar, and explore the culture through your language learning process.

Language learning comes at a price and there is no way to reduce this fact. It will require a level of commitment and a willingness to sacrifice your pride and independence so that others can teach you. It will mean becoming a child in many ways. Truthfully, most of the children you encounter in the beginning of your language learning process know more than you about the language and how to live.

Will you sacrifice your status as an adult to learn from everyone, including the children around you?

You will be frustrated day after day because you don't get it. That means you don't understand the words, the pronunciation, and the grammar. That is the first level of frustration. Then you don't understand the context of conversations and their impact on language. This is about what happens when people interact in the culture. That is the second level of frustration. You will be frustrated at times by how slow the process is, the errors you make over and over as if you will never get it right. You will be frustrated because you want to speak but there is a wall that exists because of lack of vocabulary, lack of knowledge of the language, and of the culture. That is the third level of frustration.

If you persevere, little by little your willingness to pay the price will bear results. If you persevere and deal with your frustration, then little by little you will be able to speak with ease and confidence. Your vocabulary and knowledge of the language and culture will grow, and you will one day speak and not even realize that you have passed and become fluent.

Learning language is the goal and true language learning is about living in the context of the culture. That means committing yourself to making the changes in your life that will allow you to truly learn the language. That means changing your schedule to match theirs so that you will actually have contact with them to learn. It means changing your personal patterns and thinking so that you can become a learner and they can be your teachers at any moment and any place.

Are you understanding how important it is to learn the language? Are you understanding the commitment of time and energy needed? If you make the commitment and the sacrifices to truly learn the language, speak it clearly and understand what is spoken you will gain more than you have invested in the development of relations and access to the culture and its people.

The bridge

## Lifestyle – learning the routine way – fitting in

As if all the above is not enough you will have to learn to fade into the background. Not easy because everything about you shouts that you are different.

From the day you arrive you stand out. Your clothes are different or something about them is different. Your schedule and habits are different. What you buy at the grocery store is different, even weird to them. You didn't buy rice, or some key food, and you said you bought groceries. They wonder how you are staying alive without the staple food of their world.

You can't hide. You just can't hide. No matter how much you may look like others, you can't hide. And sometimes you can't even try to look like them, your size, skin color, eye color, and other physical features tag you, and immediately you are the outsider. This is not about race, it is not about color, it is about not fitting in, and you will feel it everyday for what feels like forever.

So, what do you do to learn the routine way of life, to learn how to fit in, and overcome what is obvious, so they and you can see the person behind the facade?

Like language learning it is a challenging task and will require the same level of commitment and sacrifice, and sometimes even more. With language learning you can easily measure how you are doing based on the number of words you know, how well you are pronouncing them, and how well you use them. This information is gained by your own awareness, comments of your helper (if he or she is willing to be honest with you), and how the people you meet day to day react to your presence and respond to your request for help.

There is no one way to make the transition from outsider - strange to member - normal. What there are is the existence of many avenues that could open the door.

Language is the most obvious and we have dealt with that. Consider the following.

**Children** – They create natural bridges into just about any culture. A mother or father playing with their kids in a park brings down so many barriers. You just have to risk taking them into the public. One thing to realize, when you do that, they are likely to learn the language and culture faster than you. It is just how it works. Watch, listen, and learn from them.

**Food** – this is not about what you eat in your home. This is about paying attention to the people and their habits. Do they spend time in coffee shops or small street cafes? Do they have open air markets where you can go and learn about their foods and interact? Vendors can be a great source of information, especially if you make friends with one and do most of your business with that vendor. Often, if they don't have what you want, they may tell you where to go (another friend or family) and even take you there. Just remember to be a faithful customer. Sometimes it is better to avoid the big supermarkets for a while. They are a temptation because they might have foods that you are used to or can adapt easily to your way of life. The goal at this point is not maintain mine but learn theirs.

**Housing** – where you live can isolate you or open doors to your community. The balance between feeling safe and being vulnerable or visible is not always easy to define. But no matter where you live be sure to learn about the organizations, associations, and activities that you can become a part of and join. They open doors to other groups and resources that are available to members of the community and until you are a member you will be restricted.

**Sports** – you may think about trying to continue to follow your favorite teams at home, but that will be a lonely activity. They have little or no interest in your team. Instead you need to learn about the local sports and teams of your community. Find out if there is a unique sport found only in your community and learn about it. Learn things like history, rules, and organization. If possible, find a chance to participate, either as player in the game or an observer. It is best to find someone to take you and help you navigate the processes involved in participating or observing.

**National days** – take time to ask about special holidays and events. Try to go and observe what is happening. Again, it is always wise to go with someone, so they can explain and guide you. There is a warning here. Be careful about your involvement in any activities that may have a religious base for what is being done. You can easily send mixed signals and even the wrong signal of approving what is being done.

**Home** – compare how you live with those around you. Observe if your possessions, attitudes, and activities are at the same social level as the people around you or are different. Difference is not bad but how you handle the difference when relating to others is important. Think about what you have in your house, your furniture, your decorations, and anything else you place in it. Will it make them feel comfortable if you invite them? Will it give the wrong impression of your financial status and create barriers? Learn about the rules for entering a home and make sure your home allows for them to follow those rules and be sure that you follow them in their homes if invited.

**Transport** – are you willing to use the same method of transport as they do? Is that even possible? If not take the time to learn about the transport system. It will be a good idea to plan some trips that will allow you to use it so you can learn about how it works and affects their lives and routines. Transport often plays a key role in defining what can be done and when. Especially true of family activities, inviting people to your home, and how special events are scheduled.

These are a few examples. There are as many doorways into a culture as there are people. Each person will have a unique focus or combination of preferences. As you understand this and discover them, they can become bridges into the culture and help you learn how to live there. The more of these you explore, the sooner it will be possible to move from outsider - strange, to member - normal.

It will be overwhelming at first. There is just so much to learn. Then it will become tiring. There is just too much to learn. Then it becomes frustrating. There is just so much more to learn. Then, slowly light will shine and you will begin to understand, and they will see the change and make you a member.

The Bridge

## Hear/See – Retraining the senses – filters

From our childhood we are taught to see and hear in culturally specific ways. If you live in the jungle you are taught to see the dangers around you, the plants, animals, and insects that can harm you. You learn to see and hear in a way that will keep you safe. You are taught how to speak by listening to your parents and others make the correct sounds to allow for communication.

If you live in a city you learn to see and understand its dangers and concerns. What the sounds of the street mean. Which horn is a bus or taxi looking for a passenger, which horn is someone greeting a friend, and which horn is warning or danger. Those and the sounds of an ambulance, firetruck, or police car. Here again you are taught the meaning of sounds, so you can speak to others and be understood.

In the same way we are taught visual signals, we are taught the meaning of odors, and even what tastes good. Day by day we are each trained to interpret a complex set of signals. Our senses become our radar to identify and interpret all that is happening around us. They tell us what is useful, dangerous, and normal.

I use the word radar because our senses work like that, constantly scanning to obtain information, interpret that information, and provide us with important information so we can live and move safely in our world. And radars can be set to gather information in specific settings, weather radar, air traffic radar, and surveillance radar. And like our senses, radar will only gather and interpret the information for the specific location in which is operating. Change the location and you will need to reprogram the radar, so it can understand and interpret the information based on the new location. You definitely don't want to trust a radar programed for London when you are living in Kathmandu. That would be disastrous. It needs to be programmed for the location where it is installed.

That is what we need to do. Our senses have been trained to interpret the information they received based on the culture we are part of and where we are located physically in that culture. Change the location and you will need to reprogram your understanding of the information being received. You will find that familiar sounds, images, and other sensory input may no longer have the same meaning or purpose or be used in the same way or context. Along with that you may discover there is a large amount of new sights, images, and input that needs to be catalogued and entered into your personal radar.

Walking or driving a street in your home culture was easy. You knew what belonged and what everything meant. If something new was introduced or something was changed you knew that something was different. Now you are in a different culture and that walk or drive down the street is filled with confusion and creates difficulty in knowing what belongs and is out of place. The meaning of the colors has changed and the actions of the people don't fit your image of normal. There are sounds and odors that are unfamiliar and you are not sure how to interpret them.

You are going to have to reprogram your senses with all of this new information so that you can understand what is safe or dangerous, what is normal and unusual, what belongs and what does not belong. This process will be both a conscious and unconscious process. Some aspects of this new world will be easily incorporated into your personal radar. Others will be difficult because it will take time to identify what is different, learn what it means, and finally fit it into your understanding of your environment.

The first day of walking down the street is unsettling. There is so much information to process that you become lost in it all. This is a dangerous time. You are vulnerable, and this vulnerability can be a potent force. How you handle it will be the difference between being able to make the changes needed to retrain your senses to this new environment or locking yourself in your room and refusing to leave. The key is to not try to take it in all at once. And it is important to select a place that is relatively safe to begin the process. Find somewhere where you can walk and observe without interfering in the activity of others and not overwhelm your senses. Or the other option is to be with others. Go with them to unfamiliar places. They will be your radar so that if you misinterpret or don't see, they will be there as a safety net.

The more opportunities you can provide times to retrain your senses the sooner you will begin to build a new map of your new culture. That means you can do a better job of asking questions about their life and understanding the answers they give.

I have used the idea of a street as an example, but this applies to every setting and context. Wherever you are, church, school, office, among a group of friends, in a crowd, or alone. They all involve retraining your senses, so you can accurately receive the information and interpret it.

Just take time to be aware that this is a critical part of building the bridge into their world, learning to see, hear, and sense the world the way they do.

## The Goal

### Building – Establishing Confidence

There are several hazards to be aware of as you work on establishing confidence with your national co-workers. These are found in your attitudes towards those around you in this new culture. They cannot be avoided, they are part of who you are, and are formed as a result of your culture and background. The source is in fact you and how you have been taught.

#### Prejudice

You judge people and their world based on your world. Differences are judged. This is not wrong, but how you use those judgments is the issue. And that is how you become prejudiced. You see a difference and decide it is unacceptable and begin to react in different ways. The differences can be simple things related to appearance, the obvious, to complicated areas like history, way of thinking, and perspective, not so obvious. How you react also has variety:

- Ignore – you ignore those that are different from you.
- Exclude – you do not include them in your activity
- Criticize – you criticize what is different without thinking

- Demean – you demean and belittle them for the difference
- Attack – you will attack and try to harm them
- Destroy – you will try to eradicate them for their difference

But there is a question to consider, is there any real difference between ignoring and destroying? Is not the result the same, to exclude them as much as possible from your world?

### Stereotypes

You take one image of a person you have met and then apply that image to everyone from that group. You take a behavior and believe that is how everyone in that group will behave and react. You take a preference and treat everyone in the group as if they all have that preference. You take the reaction of one person and live like that is how they will all react.

Stereotypes are strange structures. There are some things that generally may be true, the type of food, the type of clothing, the physical appearance, and others. These are often real. The problem is when you start to stereotype other areas. Areas like relationships, friendship, love, hatred, and other non-physical concepts from the one to the whole.

We make assumptions about a group of people and apply them to all the members of that group. So, if some behave in a negative or positive way then they all must behave that way. Why you do this is hard to understand. You don't do it in your family or social groups. If one person or small group behave a certain way you don't assume everyone in your family behaves that way. If a group of people like a certain food or music you don't assume everyone will, or do you?

That is why stereotypes are strange. You use them to group people and decide how to relate to the members of that group. It is not always right but you do it. You even do it in the family. When there is conflict, you may say, they are from your wife's family, or that is just the way your brother's kids behave. Think through how you use stereotypes to catalogue the people around you and how that can hurt those who are part of a group, but in reality, don't fit the stereotype.

From there consider how your stereotypes about other cultures and people, and their differences, will affect your ability to build relationships.

### Ethnocentrism

My way is always better. My culture is always better. My plan is always better. So, you are inferior. This means if you want to be part of my world or you want me to be part of your world, then you have to learn my way, my culture, and follow my plan.

This attitude has hurt the work of missions more than one realizes. Missionaries arrived and required people to wear their type of clothes, sing their music, organize leadership and programs in their way. The list is long. These people decided nothing in the new culture had value and so shipped all their furniture from their home to the new culture. If they didn't do this, then they taught people how to make what they wanted in the way they wanted. Even if they did make concessions it was always treated as inferior in some way.

They established rules and guidelines based on their way of living in their home culture and had little interest in adapting to the new culture. They may have valued the people and admired how they lived,

but always with the idea that my way and my world is better, so I will not change or adapt. If we do it their way, it will never get done or be done right.

This is a form of prejudice. It has a different point of reference though. It is from the perspective that my world is so much better that they will naturally want to change and be like me in every way possible. If they don't, then they don't know what they are missing and will never succeed.

These are key issues and attitudes that you need to be watchful for. If you are going to build a relationship with the people of the new culture you have entered, then you need to establish confidence in them. You need to learn that you are not always right. You need to learn that your way is not always better. You need to learn that, in fact, they may be able to succeed, using their knowledge and resources, when you would fail, because you were trying to do it your way.

You need to set aside your prejudices, your preconceived ideas about their world. You need to set aside your stereotypes about them and their abilities. You need to definitely set aside the idea that you are somehow better, if you ever hope to establish a relationship built on confidence in each other.

The key is your willingness to listen to yourself and how you respond to their ideas and way of thinking. You need to be capable of hearing your prejudices, stereotyping, and ethnocentrism and humbly accept their comments that reveal when you are letting your negative evaluation affect and control how you relate and work with them.

For this to happen you need to be honest with yourself. Everyone has prejudices, stereotypes, and are ethnocentric. Again, this is not wrong, unless you use them to control those around you and seek to make them live in your world and avoid adapting to their world. As you learn what they are, then you need to evaluate how they affect, negatively or positively, your relationships. Then you use what will affect you positively. With the negative you either alter your perspective on the negative and learn its positive value or if necessary, or admit you are wrong and ask for forgiveness.

You need to learn to believe in them and develop confidence in who they are before they will have any confidence in you.

The Goal

## Managing – making divergence a good thing

As you move away from the issues highlighted in the previous section, you can now begin to work on learning to build on and develop your new relations into a team. There are three words that describe what you should be working and watching for.

Integration

This is the process that happens as you move from yours and mine to ours. Marriage is a great example of this process as two people learn what it means to be one. Integration is not about creating a perfect overlay where there are no differences, and everything fits neatly into a box. That is not what becoming one or integration is about.

Integration is learning how to make two diverse lives function in harmony and purpose. It means adapting in some areas to create strength and confidence in others. In marriage lives and schedules are

adapted so that both can receive encouragement and help from each other. Roles adjust so that this is accomplished in a way beneficial to both. Each still has their unique abilities and personality, and these are integrated so that they help in the continued growth and development of the marriage and each spouse.

Integration is about blending two worlds and cultures so that both benefit and grow. It allows for each to change as needed, adapt as needed, and contribute to the whole from who they are within the context of growing in their understanding of the value of each other.

#### Interaction

The better you do at realizing a true integration the sooner you will learn how to interact. You will move past evaluation, judging, and criticism of each other and your differences to using those differences to create a new level of interaction. A level where the differences are seen as windows of opportunity to gain a broader and more inclusive understanding of what is being discussed and done.

Alone, your perspective tends to have an element of exclusion in it. That is natural because you are always limited in what you perceive. You only have knowledge about a topic based on your experiences, which are never sufficient to allow you to create the best plan or structure possible. It is as you interact with others that you can fill in the gaps and improve whatever you are working on, together.

Living in another culture will provide a diversity of thought and knowledge. Learning to interact with those of another culture is critical to accomplishing your goals. It is hoped that by now you have moved beyond thinking about your goals and are allowing the process of integration to allow you to interact with the culture and have your goals altered or blended with theirs to create a unified perspective and goal.

#### Potential

This word affects the entire process. It affects the goals you set, if you will enter the process of integration, and if you will allow for the meaningful interaction of others in your life and ministry, you will understand the potential in the relationship. If you do not see the potential or benefit in multiple cultures working together then you will not understand that divergence is good. You will simply fight for your way as the best and only way and be stuck in the issues of the previous section.

Potential is something that must be learned from the beginning and allowed to continually grow. You, in a real sense, are not the expert you thought you were. You may have great ideas, but they are often based on your perceptions and knowledge. They may still be great ideas but only if they have been submitted to others for scrutiny and revision.

Seeing the potential in another culture and the process of allowing divergence to be seen as positive will allow your possibly good idea to be adapted and become 'our great idea,' as divergent ideas, concepts, and culture explore together to see if that good idea from your world can be made a good idea in this combined world.

If you are willing to see the potential, then you will want to learn to integrate your two worlds so that you can interact and hear each other's perspectives and recommendations. If you are willing to take the next step and believe that the new, revised concept truly has the potential to accomplish the desired goal then you have gained not just co-workers but friends.

This is essential because it is in understanding divergence, and its value, that you become stronger and better able to manage the new world and culture in which you now live and hope to serve. That is what marriage does. It brings two divergent worlds together, so they can learn to manage life and learn to serve together. This is the goal, bringing your two perspectives and worlds together, so you can live and serve together.

And there are some ways in which you can identify how you are doing in this process. There are pairs of words that will help you see how well you are doing in entering the culture, becoming part of it, and learning a new way of seeing and thinking.

#### Irrational to Logical

When you enter a culture much of what you see and hear seems illogical. It doesn't make sense to you. But as you learn more and commit yourself to the goal of becoming a member, what once appeared illogical shifts and makes sense, it becomes logical. You begin to see and understand more of the why behind the what.

#### Ridiculous to sensible

These words look the same as those above but are they? The first is about how they think. These are about appearances. You may use words like absurd, bizarre, silly, and incredible to describe what you see. This is only because you are not accustomed to what you see or hear. As you grow accustomed to your new environment, you may find that it is not so absurd, or preposterous as you once thought. It actually becomes the sensible way to dress, to do the work, and live life.

#### Insignificant to significant

This is usually about what you think is valuable and what is not valuable. A gesture or a word appears insignificant to you. A mannerism or custom appears meaningless to you. When they take offence at what you have done or not done it confuses you. So, when you come together to work you don't see the value of the little things that are important to them.

So many times it is not the big issues that trip up the person trying to enter the culture. It is the little things, because they don't understand the significance of a gesture, an action, or a word. Unfortunately, if you don't learn this, they may feel that you consider them insignificant as well. You must learn what is significant in their world and make it significant in yours for you to learn to manage the divergence and build a stronger relationship.

The goal is to manage the divergence that exists and let it create something greater than either one by itself. In truth  $1 + 1$  in this case is much greater than 2.

## The Result

### Integration – A new identity: somewhere in between

This is the true goal of empathy. True empathy is not about becoming the other person. It is about getting to a place where the other person knows that you understand because you have walked with them and lived in their world.

That experience means you have been changed and they as well. You both have become a different person.

Truthfully no one can fully become part of the world of another person. You will never fully understand the culture and have a native person's use of the language. For that you have to be born in the culture and learn the language from birth.

And don't think that your children can do it, even those born while you are living in that culture. They will be a hybrid. A person of a third culture which is a unique mix of both yours and theirs. They will speak the language better and respond unconsciously in ways you can't. They are a good example of your goal, to gain a new identity by integrating as much as possible the two cultures.

It will take time. It will take sacrifice. It will take a willingness to be humble and be taught by others. If you make the commitment, then after years of learning, you will change and life will flow with the culture and you will be comfortable.

You have moved from outsider to member in good standing.

## Worksheets – Cultural empathy

### First Contact - Location

This set of assignments is about testing your senses and ability to describe what you have experienced. It will involve making a map of a specific area big enough to challenge you but not so big as to overwhelm you.

Choose a street reasonably accessible to you. It should include 10-20 blocks or about a mile. Depends on how the streets are laid out. It does not have to be a single street but could involve an area around which you walk. It also should not involve walking down one side of the street and then back down the other side of the street.

You will walk down this street several times over a week. Each time the goal will be to focus on one of your senses then come back and draw map where you record what you experienced and where you experienced it on the map.

#### Day one

Today it is about what you see as you walk. There is probably more to see than what you can remember. So the goal is to see what is different, to consider what catches your eyes as you walk. When you get home draw your map and include the things you can remember. Give each item a number, then in a notebook write a brief comment on that item and what you can remember about it.

Note: Before each of the following days be sure to review your map before taking your walk so that you can confirm that you have placed what you remember in the right place on the map. If you have made a mistake do not make a new map. Correct the map, by erasing, by crossing out things, or using white out. Then go to your comments for that item and below it write the letter E and explain why you made the change.

#### Day two

Today it is about what you hear as you walk. Again, it is not about what sounds normal but what is different. Work at focusing on the sounds around you and thinking about what they mean. When you get home update your map. If a sound is tied to a previous location add the letter S to the number on your map. For all new locations continue your numbering starting with the last number from the previous day. And add comments on each item in your notebook.

#### Day three

Today it is about what you smell as you walk. Are the odors the same or different? Where do the odors originate? Be careful to not get involved in judging whether they are good or bad, this is about learning to connect with the new environment you are now living in. Repeat the process. If it is tied to a previous location on your map add the letter O and add your comments. If not continue numbering as before and add your comments.

#### Day four

Today it is about touch and taste. Be careful with this one. To be honest you may not be able to touch or taste anything as you walk, but consider what you have seen, heard, and smelled from the perspective of whether you would like to touch or taste it. If someone is selling food and you are brave enough go ahead and buy some and taste it. Especially if it may be different from what you would normally eat. Just be careful that it is properly prepared and will not make you sick. Food from street vendors can cause problems. Hopefully by this time you do this activity you will have asked a local person or friend how safe it is to buy food on the street. When you get home repeat the process of numbering and commenting as in the previous days. In this case if it is tied to an existing number add the letter T followed by your comment.

#### Day five

Spend some time reviewing your map. Now go for your walk one more time with one specific focus to find something you did not see, hear, smell, or touch/taste on any of the other days.

When you return home add that information to the map with your comments and why you think you didn't notice it on the previous days.

### First Contact – Body sense and Cleanliness

In this lesson you are going to gather information about your environment and evaluate your perspective on issues like cleanliness, order, and organization. We will do this according to the topics in the material.

#### Day 1

##### Water

How is water provided in your community?

Which of these sources is safe?

How will you get safe water?

In your home

On the road

In the church

Other locations

What about water for bathing and washing laundry?

What about the beaches and rivers and other areas of recreation where water is involved?

Day 2

Food

Where will you buy your food?

List places and any issues they may have.

Do people have gardens?

Are there places that prepare foods you can purchase?

List places like grocery stores, restaurants, cafes, street vendors, etc.

Make two lists: one of food sources you are familiar with, one of those that are local

Gather information on who uses each type and if they feel they would be safe for you to use.

What will you need to do to make fresh foods safe to use, if necessary? Explore what the local people do.

Make a list of unfamiliar foods that you have seen and or been offered to try?

Which ones are appealing to you?

Which ones have you tried and how you respond to them? Like, okay, dislike, must learn to like

Day 3

Cleanliness – communal

What are the standards for cleanliness in the following locations?

Public parks

Streets

Offices

Restaurants

Church

Homes

Other

How is garbage handled in each location?

How do those standards compare to what you are used to?

How often do people clean the spaces associated to them?

Cleanliness – personal

How are clothes laundered?

What are the norms for bathing?

How do the people deal with body odor?

How do these compare to your practices and expectations?

Day 4

Clothing

What clothing is appropriate in the following settings

Park

Recreational activities

Office

Home

Church

School

Transportation

Do your ideas match those of the people around you?

Day 5

Home

Compare what you have in your home to what is common in the homes of others?

Furniture

Decorations

Rooms and size of rooms

How do they handle maintenance issues?

How often do they clean and what is used?

How do your standards compare to theirs?

Who is allowed in another person's home and when?

Do as much of this through observation first. Use your senses first and then when you have completed gathering the information find a person who will be willing to review it with and be honest enough to tell you when you have made a mistake.

If something does not appear above, do not be afraid to add or delete a category or area. Or even expand if needed.

### First Contact – Transport

This week you are going to use your mapping skills. The best option is to draw your own maps, but if you are directionally challenged then feel free to buy a map as needed or go online and print what is needed for each of the following. This mapping will be different from what you did the first day. That was about training your senses to observe. This is about learning where things are and how to get to them.

Day 1

Map – neighborhood

This is another chance to get better acquainted with your neighborhood. Map locations of houses, businesses, and things like bus stops, where taxis pass looking for passengers, and other key places you may need to go to. Check for the hours the businesses are open.

Day 2

Map – 1 mile from house

Now try to discover what is within a mile of where you are living. Look for main roads, and transport routes. Locate business that you may need access to. These are places that could reach if you needed to walk. As you work on the map consider what is not in this area near where you live.

Day 3

Map – key places

The challenge here is to learn where key businesses and facilities are that will require transport to access. Places like printing shops, food, government offices, and so on. Since you may not be able to go there you will need someone to help you develop your map. At this point it may be a struggle to draw your own map. So as part of this step see if you can find a map in a store, or online that you can use.

Day 4

Map – transport available

Today you need to learn what transport is available to get to some of the places you cannot reach on foot and may be easier to get to using public transport. If you have a car this is a good time to map out routes to these places. Find the bus stops, define their routes. Are there different sizes and plans for accessing them? Are there taxi routes? A taxi that runs a specific route. (they have these in Osorno, Chile). What about taxis? Do they use meters? Do you negotiate prices? Do they have specific pickup locations? Learn about all the types available where you live and how to use them to get where you are to at least 5 other locations, near and far.

Day 5

Map – key people

Today you need to consider where key people are. People like a doctor, your pastor, friends, coworkers, and others that you will be in contact with on a regular basis. Make a separate map for them. Give each item a number and on a separate sheet of paper list, name, direction or address, and phone number.

Think through how learning all this information relates to ministering where you are.

## First Contact – Safety

Day 1

Illness – spend some time learning what some of the common illnesses are in your country, area, and neighborhood. Flu, asthma, pneumonia, etc. in some countries you will learn about malaria, dengue, and others.

Medicines – each country can be very different in this area. In some the rules and availability are somewhat flexible and in others they can be very strict. For some types of medical conditions, you may need to have medicines shipped to you. Again, what are the rules about this. It can happen that the importation of a key medicine is prohibited without specific approval of a key office and/or person.

Day 2

Health care – each type of illness requires different levels of health care. Learn what is available in the way of doctors, clinics, hospitals, government health offices so that you know what to do for each. Also take time to learn about treatments for each of them.

Emergencies – find out what to do in the case of an emergency. Be sure to consider things from a cut that needs to be sutured to a heart attack, a broken bone, and others. You may find that what you do will be different. Prepare a list of locations, people, phone numbers (emergency and friends) to call, mode of transport, and other key issues.

## Day 3

Evacuation – there are two areas to consider and have a contingency plan for. Sometimes your organization will have this in place. even so you may need to review it and make sure it is up to date. This is not a pleasant topic but it is important to deal with and understand.

Medical – if an injury or sickness is severe enough that evacuation is required make sure you have the information you need when you talk with your local doctor and your organization. Who do you call, how do you know when to call, what will happen once this decision is made? Also how will you make this decision? Will you involve your local doctor or other medical consultant?

Political – social and political conditions can change rapidly. You need to be sure you have a main plan and at least one back up plan to leave an area that is dangerous and life-threatening. A key part of this is developing a list of key people in the country who can help you determine when it may be necessary to leave. This decision can occur at different level and you need a plan for each.

1. Community – If your community becomes unsafe where will you go? How will you get to a safe place? What will you need to take with you? How will you make what you leave behind secure? Who could you put in charge of your home?
2. Region – If your part of the country becomes dangerous where will you go? Repeat answering the rest of the questions under community.
3. Country – if the country becomes dangerous? Repeat answering the rest of the questions under community.

Methods of departure – consider what you would need to do if you had to use each of the following options

1. Walk – if the only way out is to walk. How far will be a critical aspect of you planning.
2. Public transport – if the only way is using public transport. Not the best option for many reasons.
3. Personal vehicle – if the only way out is to drive. More space to take what you need. More options for routes that can be used.
4. Air – an option if there are great distances to cover and the airports have not been closed.
5. Government evacuation – are you connected to the embassy so you can receive updates and information.

Factors to consider in your plan

1. Space available for personal effects
2. Time involved in preparation to leave
3. People to contact
4. Steps on making a decision –

## Day 4

Create a medical information file on all members of your family include the answers for the information found on page xxx in chapter 4

## Day 5

Security – today you need to locate the police stations that are nearest where you live. Find phone numbers for this office, emergency call numbers if any, and other phone numbers for key departments. This may be a good time to also research things like where the motor vehicle offices are, licensing process, and other issues related to the police and their work in your country.

If possible, it could be a good idea to visit the local police station and become acquainted. Ask your friends what they think before doing so. Maybe they would go with you to help in the process.

## First Shock – Cataclysm

### Day 1

Make a list of the things that make you excited about entering a different culture and learning a new language. Try to avoid the standard answers of being able to share Christ, visiting a new country, and so on.

### Day 2

Make a list of the things that make you nervous about entering a new culture. Again, avoid the obvious and standard answers. Being able to communicate, feeling strange or different, and being far from family.

### Day 3

Go back to the list for day 1 and evaluate what is on the list. Think about how those items will help you or hinder you as you learn about a new culture and language.

### Day 4

Go back to the list for day 2 and evaluate what is on the list. Think about how those fears can become bridges or barriers to becoming part of a new culture and learning the language.

### Day 5

Consider how entering another culture will change you. What areas might change and how could they affect you when you return home. Use your lists above and other areas as points of reflection.

## First Shock – Transplant

### Day 1

Relationships – take time to consider what critical relations you need to develop. What are ways that you can do this? how much time do you need to invest in them? Do different types of relations involved different levels of investment of your life and resources?

### Day 2

Social life

Observe what people do with their free time and who they spend it with. What options do you have for developing a social life? How much time and resources will you need to commit to them? How will they affect your schedule?

Day 3

Political/Religious

How will the politics and religion of the country affect your life? Learn what may be expected of you in relation to the government. How is the religion of the people related to or tied into how the government operates?

Day 4

Church and ministry – this will be a key area for you to understand. The expectations of those around you will play a key role in what you can or cannot accomplish. If possible, learn what the expectations are of you as a church: member, leader, missionary, or other key position or definition of role which could include spouse and parent.

Day 5

Routines – today take time to map out your routine from two different perspectives.

1. Map out what a normal week of activity would look like in your home country. This should include areas like shopping for food and other items, food preparation, time in transit to places if significant, time with children, time in office or at work, recreation time, time on social media, tv and so on.
2. Map out what a normal might look like in your new environment. Use the information from the previous days to help you do this. at this time your normal week might also include language learning and other cultural learning activities, including time spent on this manual.

Don't forget to include time for devotions, activities at church, and similar things that are part of your schedule.

Finally take time to evaluate what may have changed and how that could affect you as you adapt to the new routine.

### First shock – Behavior

Hopefully by now you have had sufficient contact with the people and culture that you can identify and explain at a fundamental level the following areas of behavior. If not then it is time to go back to lesson one and become more observant.

Day 1

Greetings – what is the standard form of greeting? How long could this take? Are there a set of questions that must be asked when greeting? If you see someone do you need to stop and talk or can you just nod your head and wave?

How is this altered by the following

Gender

Age

Relationship

Location

Other

Day 2

Gestures – make a list of gestures that you have noticed that the people use. Describe the action and then explain why this gesture means. You should list between 5-10. Now evaluate how you are doing at using the right gesture in the right context and how often you default to gestures that are part of your culture. How often does that cause confusion?

Day 3

Food – list the common foods that are part of the normal diet of the people. How often do they prepare this food? Is there variety? Where do they purchase the ingredients?

Now consider what foods are reserved for special events, visitors, family gatherings, religious and political events, and other key gatherings. Weddings, funerals, graduations, are a few examples. Try to learn information about the less common ones.

Day 3

Polite conversation – have you noted if there is a routine to the conversation of the people around you? Do they have common topics that are used to begin conversations? We often think of weather, health, sports events, and other such areas. Topics that are used to open the way to more serious topics.

What must happen first before you can go beyond greeting a person and asking the standard questions?

Day 4 and 5

Behaviors

This is such a big topic. On day 4 make a list of behaviors you have noticed. Write down your idea of what they might mean and what their function is. On day 5 find someone to review your list and thoughts to see if you are correct. Make corrections and use the time to get better acquainted with your helper.

## First Shock – Values

Now begins the more difficult challenges, understanding the why behind the behavior you observe. Each day you will look at a particular area of life and try to understand the value people place in that area.

Day 1

Family – how important is the family in defining a person's value and place?

Day 2

Work – how important is the work one does and how does it define their value and place in society?

Day 3

Key holidays – pick a holiday and explore the values it expresses and why people celebrate that event.

Day 4

Tradition – Explore a tradition of the people around you and what values one or two of them represent.

Day 5

Respect – Explore how and why people show respect. This also involves in answer who is given respect and why they are honored in this way.

Note: if you discover an area not in the list above that is critical to learning to understand, feel free to substitute it for one of the above topics and explain why it is so important.

### First Shock – Beliefs

An even more difficult area to understand is the area of beliefs. As in last week we will give you a topic and you are to explore what people believe about these areas of their life.

Day 1

Personal Rights – what do they believe about a person's right to choose.

Day 2

Spiritual world – what do they believe about the existence of a spiritual world.

Day 3

Fate – what do they believe about why things happen, good and bad.

Day 4

Gender roles – what do they believe about the roles of men and women.

Day 5

Taboos – what do they believe about what they can and cannot do. Seek to understand why this is true?

### First Shock – Process

It is time to do some evaluating and reflection on how you are doing. Each day you will look at an area and deal with how you are doing.

Day 1

Assumptions – Explore what assumptions you made when you begin the process of learning a language and learning to live in another culture. Make a list of a couple and how they affected your attitude and behavior. What changes have you had to make in your assumptions?

Day 2

Commitment – today evaluate your level of commitment to the following areas and how it is affecting your ability to adapt and become part of the culture:

Language

Relations with nationals

Culture learning

Family (yours)

Day 3

Support structures – evaluate how you are dealing with creating needed support structures in the new culture to replace your support structures that you had in your home culture. How are you dealing with the feeling of isolation that will occur in this process?

Day 4

Routines – evaluate how you are doing in adapting your routines and lifestyle to match that of the culture you are now living in. make a list of key areas that have changed and how the change is affecting you.

Day 5

Energy level – evaluate how you are doing in this area. Do you have the energy needed to learn a language and adapt to the new culture? What may be affecting your energy levels? If you are struggling what could you do to be revitalized?

### The Bridge – Basics

This group of exercises focus on your communication skills and how you are bridging the barrier of communication

Day 1

Errors – how do you feel when you make mistakes in your new language? How can you use your errors as a bridge? So often our fear of failure and shame can become a barrier.

Day 2

Unseen communication – reflect on how your facial expressions and body posture affect your communication and how people respond to you. Are you creating a conflicting message? You may need the help of an honest person to know what is happening.

Day 3

Contacts – evaluate who you are talking to and how many people you are talking to. Make a list of those who you speak to as part of your learning and practice process. Now make a list of those who help you understand the culture. After each name put at least one item of persona information you have gained through your contact with the person.

Day 4

Methods – consider how you are doing with the different methods of communication. Consider the following list and describe how you are doing in using them. Include in them what makes it easy or difficult to use that method of communication. Keep in mind this is in relation to the people of your new home and not with those back home.

Verbal

Telephone

Emails

Facebook

Chat (whatsapp, Instagram, messenger)

Video (skype, others)

Day 5

Where are you having the most difficulty in communicating? Can you make a plan for how to improve in this area?

### [The Bridge – Language](#)

This week we will consider how to evaluate our progress in language learning

Day 1

Review the five states of language proficiency. At what level are you currently? Explain how you came to this decision.

Day 2

How much time do you commit to language learning? Evaluate the value of each and its impact on your language learning.

Speaking with others

Studying on your own

Preparing materials to help with the learning process

Other areas

Day 3

Language helper – evaluate how effective your language helper has been. What changes may be needed to improve the effectiveness of this relationship?

List others who are helping you with learning the language and in what way they are helping you. (this is not about those you meet in your community to practice language, but about people you are building a relationship with, in the church, in the school of your children, or other areas.)

Day 4

Plan – Using your current level of language devise a 2-month plan for improving your ability in key areas and topics. If you have a copy of the LAMP manual, you find many ideas to work with. If not be creative.

Day 5 –

Take a break. Listen to a great song, do something you enjoy, and recharge yourself.

### The Bridge – Lifestyle

Time to evaluate a few of our habits and routines

Day 1

Food – list the new foods you have tried and if you like them or not. Also describe any attempts you have made to make them in your house.

Day 2

Home – how does where you live affect your ability to interact with others? What do you need to do to build relations with neighbors and others who are part of your community?

Day 3

Hobbies – is there a hobby or activity that you find interesting that can become part of your lifestyle? It could be something you already enjoy that people around you enjoy as well, like a sport. Or it could be something new that will open doors to more language learning and cultural adaptation. Describe the activity in the words and emotions of a neighbor.

Day 4

Fitting in – Evaluate how those around you perceive you and how you perceive yourself. What has changed in your life to allow you to begin to fit in?

Day 5

Go and participate in some activity in your community. Something not in the church or ministry related. Now describe the process of becoming involved, how people responded to you, and how you felt.

### Bridge - Retraining

This will be a repeat of the first lesson. Each day look at one of your senses and describe the differences between your first days in the new culture and now.

Day 1

Sight

Day 2

Smell

Day 3

Sound

Day 4

Touch and taste

Day 5

Draw a map of your neighborhood as you see it now. What differences does this map have from the map you drew back on day one?

### The Goal - Building

We are coming to the end of this material and it is time to review some key areas that affect our ability to build relationships and adapt.

Day 1

Prejudice – have you learned about any prejudices you have and how they can affect the building of relationships? Describe. Could be food, clothing, relations, and so on.

Day 2

Stereotypes – what have you learned about this word and its use in your life?

Day 3

Ethnocentrism – have you discovered this attitude in the way you respond to those around you? List and describe your attitude and how it affects others.

Day 4

Confidence – is there evidence that you are learning to trust people from the culture where you live and serve. List and describe.

Day 5

Relations – Describe at least 5 relationships you have developed. Include information about who it is with, what it involves, and how you developed this relationship.

### The Goal – Managing

This week you will look at how you are doing at moving from yours and mine to ours.

Day 1

Integrations – select at least two areas where you have seen this change from a yours and mine attitude to ours. Describe the process and what has happened.

Day 2

Exclusion/inclusion – are there areas where you have moved from excluding and keeping private some aspect of your life to including others. In the same manner is there an area where they have done the same. Describe the area and the process.

Day 3

Irrational to Logical – describe an area where you have changed your evaluation of how they live and think in this area.

Day 4

Insignificant to significant - describe an area where you have changed your evaluation of how they live and think in this area.

Day 5

Divergence – explain this word and its importance in living and ministering in another culture.

### Result – Integration

Only one assignment – evaluate how you are doing at becoming integrated into the culture where you are now living. How are you becoming seen as a valuable member of the community, church, and ministry?