

Katie J. Rawson

CROSSING

CULTURES

with JESUS

Sharing Good News with Sensitivity and Grace



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*Sharing Good News with
Sensitivity and Grace*

Katie J. Rawson



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To the honor and glory of
Father, Son and Holy Spirit



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Introduction

The Challenge and Opportunity of Crosscultural Evangelism

I STROLLED SLOWLY AROUND THE TABLES at the fall international fair at North Carolina State University. It was my first semester as an international student specialist with InterVarsity, and I hoped to meet international students interested in learning about God. Soon a young Asian man responded to my friendly greeting, and we found seats in a quiet corner of the exhibit hall. Tao, from Thailand, seemed excited about talking with me.¹ He wanted to practice his English, but I was bent on sharing the gospel. Tao paid close attention to every word I spoke, and his face demonstrated great eagerness when I shared an invitation to invite Jesus into his life. Overjoyed, I coached him to repeat after me as I prayed a prayer of commitment.

But the next time we met I noticed no change in his life, no desire to know God, only an interest in continuing the relationship with me. Tao had not become a Christian when we prayed earlier. I had mistaken eagerness to understand my words and a desire not to embarrass either one of us for spiritual readiness. When I later learned about cultures like his, I realized that I had put my new acquaintance in a situation of not wanting to say no, forcing him to say a prayer that had no meaning for him. These blunders occurred because I had as-

sumed that Tao was like me and the international students I had interacted with previously.

I began campus ministry with no crosscultural training but some crosscultural experience; I had been an international student and camp counselor in France. Later, while researching material for a dissertation in French literature, I had become involved with InterVarsity's French sister movement and had several opportunities to share the faith and journey alongside seekers of truth. But all the people I had interacted with expressed themselves directly; I had not yet learned about less direct cultures like Tao's. More importantly, I had approached the international fair with prideful zeal for quick results, not in prayerful listening for the Lord's direction or a desire to make new friendships. I was definitely *not* good news to Tao, and my attempt to share good news backfired. As I remember the incident, I pray that my insensitivity did not permanently scare Tao away from Christians, and that even now a Christian will share the good news with him.

THE HANDS, FEET AND BACK OF JESUS

Fast forward about thirty years. One hot spring afternoon I decided to take a walk around the time the schoolchildren get off their buses in my neighborhood in Raleigh, North Carolina. I was headed home when I caught sight of a young teenager trudging slowly uphill with a large and apparently very heavy plastic bag on her back. I picked up my pace, came alongside and offered to take the bag for a while. She refused, mumbling that she wasn't allowed to talk to strangers. But I continued to walk beside her, and soon she relented; the bag was truly too heavy for her adolescent frame. Once we started talking, I immediately suspected that she had been born overseas or had parents born overseas. Hoping to calm her fears about letting a stranger carry her bag, I told her that my work was serving international students and sharing Jesus with them. The name Jesus elicited no reaction

whatsoever, but she seemed to understand that Christians believe in caring for people.

As we walked slowly—the bag was almost too heavy for me—the middle-schooler shared parts of her story. Her mother had come to the United States from China after a second marriage to an American man. Her stepfather spent all his time in New York City, leaving his wife and her daughter in a small apartment in my neighborhood. Her mom, who knew very little English, spent her days at home alone. When her apartment complex came into view, my new acquaintance insisted on taking the bag back and quickly walked away, determined that her mother never know that she had allowed a stranger to carry her bag. Thoroughly exhausted from the unexpected detour on a hot day, I prayed that God would send someone—perhaps a Christian peer in her classes—to love this teen.

My mission that day was to be the hands, feet and back of Jesus for this young woman, to carry her burden for a bit, and to pray that one day she would meet Jesus and give him all her burdens. When I chose to overtake her and offer to carry the bag, I had no idea she was Chinese; Jesus inside me would have done it for anyone. And when I mentioned Jesus to her, I had no intention of trying to share the gospel, but I did want to give Jesus a good reputation with her, trusting that other Christians would water the tiny seed I planted. Even though I couldn't *share* good news that afternoon, in a small way I had *been* good news.

CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

These two incidents illustrate both the challenge and the opportunity of crosscultural evangelism. Without proper crosscultural understanding and dependence on God's Spirit, it is possible to do more harm than good, as I did with Tao. But with such understanding and dependence on God, Christians of all ages may reach people who have never heard of Jesus, people like the young woman I met on my

walk and her mother, without crossing borders. There are 45.8 million migrants, including more than 1.1 million international students and scholars, in the United States today.² Canada, Europe, Australia and many other nations also host large numbers of migrants.

Displaced peoples are more open to the gospel than they would be at home, and new converts from migrant populations have global connections through which they can spread the gospel. When one new friend encounters Jesus, that one witness can, like the Samaritan woman of John 4, touch a whole family or even a whole people group. In *You Don't Have to Cross the Ocean to Reach the World*, David Boyd tells stories of Mongolian-heritage Nepalese from some of the least-reached Mongolian and other people groups coming to Christ through the Jesus Family Centre, a multicultural congregation in Caramatta (Sydney, Australia). Their connections and influence later resulted in churches in remote Nepalese areas, Nepal's capital, Kathmandu, and among Nepalese living in London.³ This urban church, deliberately planted in an immigrant community, affects multiple unreached peoples by loving their neighbors.

Recent events in the Middle East have brought more Muslims to our cities than ever before. People from many nations have come to places where Christians live; now is the time to act. Who will reach out to the young Chinese woman I met on my walk? Will a church in my neighborhood start an English class that meets the needs of her mom? I believe that God sees the sojourners living in our towns and cities and says, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8). Or perhaps you are a displaced person residing in another country by choice or necessity; could it be that God has placed you in the midst of a different people group so that you can be and share good news with them?

JESUS: COMPANION AND GUIDE

As we reach out crossculturally, how do we avoid mistakes like the one

I made with Tao? We certainly need knowledge about crosscultural differences, but knowledge is not enough. We also need a companion, guide and model. We find all these in Jesus, the greatest culture-crosser. He desires to accompany, empower and transform us through the Spirit as we live in union with him. In John 20:21-22 Jesus tells us how he plans to reach the world: “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”

We are sent into the world by Jesus just as he was sent by the Father. With the Spirit of the Father and Jesus inside us, we display Jesus to the world, just as he embodied and displayed the Father. As Jesus entered our world and drew us into his world—the community of Father, Son and Spirit—we are to enter the worlds of those around us and draw them into the community of Jesus.⁴ God is already carrying out his mission in the world through the Spirit, and we are to go out as participants in his mission, led by the Spirit, just as Jesus was. And our motive is the same motive Jesus had: to display the glory of the Father to all the peoples of the world so that every people group might join in never-ending worship of the Trinity.⁵

John 1:14 in *The Message* perfectly captures the impact of Jesus’ incarnation: “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.” The Creator of the universe took on our flesh and came near to us in the incarnation. Following Jesus’ incarnational model provides the key to fruitful outreach across cultures: *enter* the frame of reference of new friends, exhibit Jesus’ character to them as the Spirit empowers us and *draw them into* Christian community that also demonstrates the nature of Jesus. To “draw in” means to *embrace* and *include* in the work of the community.⁶

Often we do not practice crosscultural evangelism in this grace-filled way. Some of us may be so eager to get people into the kingdom that we don’t take the time to love them. Instead we treat them as evangelistic projects, as I did with Tao. Others may form deep rela-

tionships but hesitate to share spiritual matters for fear of losing the friendships or being judged. Still others are so busy with work, family and church activities that getting to know non-Christians from other cultures seems impossible. I have been at all these places at times. But Jesus still commands us to go out as he did (John 20:21). He is eager to teach and empower those who will obey.

WHY I WROTE THE BOOK

During the years that separated my encounter with Tao and my meeting with the Chinese middle school student, I ministered in both North Carolina and California. While studying missions at the Fuller School of Intercultural Studies in California, I researched conversion patterns among East Asian students in the United States.⁷ Some of the testimonies of the twenty-eight converts I interviewed disturbed me. Their conversions seemed shallow; these students had not changed at the worldview level. Additional years of observation led to the conclusion that helping people understand how the gospel affects them culturally is critical for conversions to be deep and transformative. The *crosscultural* part of crosscultural evangelism must not be ignored.

Additionally, during the years between these two encounters I learned to live and do ministry *with* and *in* Jesus, not just *for* Jesus. Jesus, through the Spirit, is still crossing cultures. By listening to and depending on him, I can join in the work he is already doing and receive guidance from the Spirit in understanding cultures. This approach, abiding in and depending on Jesus to produce fruit in us, takes the stress out of crosscultural evangelism (see John 15:1-8). The fruit of the Spirit enables us to be good news, and sharing our faith becomes a normal part of living in union with Christ.

What can we learn from Jesus about crosscultural evangelism? Chapter one discusses God's pattern of entering and drawing in as seen in Eden. Part one, "Entering," and part two, "Drawing In," show how the model works. Jesus entered our world in dependence on the

Spirit (chap. 2), praying and exercising authority over evil and illness (chap. 3). He built relationships of trust (chap. 4), and discerned and challenged worldviews and value systems (chaps. 5-6). Jesus drew people in by forming a community of blessing and involving people in the work of the Father (chaps. 7-8). He lived and shared good news in ways that were completely appropriate for his audiences (chaps. 9-10). And he made disciples in community as his apprentices participated with him in the Father's work (chap. 11).

PRACTICES THAT HELP US BE AND SHARE GOOD NEWS

The most crucial lesson I learned during the years between my first mistake with Tao and now is that *who we are* in our relationships gives credibility to *what we share*. Being, doing and speaking must align. Most of us need help in abiding—continually living—in Jesus, and practice in crosscultural interaction. So each chapter of the book concludes with five biblical texts for personal meditation, passages the Father can use to do his pruning work in us as we live in Jesus (John 15:3). There are also reflection questions, group discussion guides and application exercises to lead your group into crosscultural ministry.

Group discussion times use the principle of accountability to enhance individual and group growth. Each discussion session begins with members sharing their experiences in doing the previous session's exercises. This discipleship cycle, patterned after Jesus' interactions with his disciples in Luke 10:1-23, involves hearing the Word, obedience and debriefing that obedience for further learning.⁸ If you are reading the book on your own, prayerfully invite a friend to join you in the reading and meet weekly, by phone or video if necessary, to share what God is doing as you respond to the questions and do the exercises. As you faithfully reflect, discuss and obey, watch how God transforms you and your group into people who live out and share his good news. And expect adventure and joy as you begin to cross cultures with Jesus.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Personal Reflection

1. The following are some attitudes toward evangelism mentioned in the introduction:
 - depending on Jesus to empower and guide us
 - seeking to establish genuine relationships and enter the worlds of our friends
 - seeing people as evangelistic projects rather than potential friends to love
 - fear of losing the relationship or being judged if we share our faith
 - feeling too busy to reach out

Which of these attitudes do you identify with? In what areas are you hoping to grow as a result of reading this book?

2. *Lectio divina* passages. You will find a guide to *lectio divina* in chapter two. Read slowly, meditate on the texts and ask God to speak to you from them.
 - Colossians 1:15-19
 - John 15:1-8
 - Luke 8:11-15
 - Galatians 2:20
 - John 1:9-14

Group Discussion

1. Spend time getting acquainted, sharing your thoughts from the personal reflections you did during the week.
2. Establish a group covenant that will help you know what to expect from one another. The following are some elements to consider:

- Write down the purpose or vision of the group. Do *not* worry much about the wording.
 - How often will you meet, and for how long? Where?
 - What commitment do you want to make regarding attendance and reading the chapter ahead of time?
 - Are you committed to doing the personal reflection questions and personal or group applications?
 - Describe your commitment toward one another, for example:
 - pray for one another during the week
 - be open but not domineering during discussions
 - encourage people to share, but don't pressure people who aren't ready
 - encourage each other to put into practice what you are learning
 - keep confidential what is shared in the group
 - speak the truth in love to one another
 - describe how you will celebrate together when you have finished the book
3. Share about your cultural background. What things about your culture do you most enjoy?
 4. What experiences have you had with people from other cultures? What was enjoyable, and what was confusing or hard?
 5. What questions do you have about the introduction? What did you like and not like?

Group Application

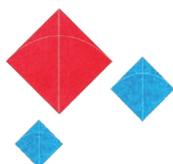
Commit to doing the *lectio divina* with the suggested passages this week. Come prepared to share next time how the Lord spoke to you.

Suggested Resources

- *Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission* by J. D. Payne. Want more information about migration worldwide and how God is using it to spread the gospel? This book contains statistics, inspiring stories of God at work among the diaspora, or scattered peoples of the world, and an introduction to diaspora missiology, the study of mission among these groups.⁹
- Crossingculturesbook.org. Check this book's website for resources connected with each chapter, including links to suggested books and websites and several free downloads.

Love at the Heart of the Universe

A Completely Good and Beautiful God



CORRIE APPROACHED THE INTERNATIONAL residence hall at North Carolina State University on a late summer day. She had just returned from a summer mission to Taiwan and had a letter written in Chinese that she couldn't read. Corrie climbed the steps to the women's floor; about halfway down the hall there was an open door. Seeing a petite Asian woman, she entered the room and said, "Can you read Chinese?" About three weeks earlier Shao-Leng had come from Taiwan to study accounting, and she certainly knew Chinese. She took the letter and started translating. Toward the end of the letter Shao-Leng read a reference to buying sweets in the market of her hometown. This mention of a place so dear to her was too much for the homesick young woman, and she started to cry. Corrie, touched by her new acquaintance's tears, began crying with her. So a friendship between the two women began.

Corrie visited Shao-Leng in the dorm regularly and listened non-judgmentally as she shared about her background. If Shao-Leng wasn't home when Corrie came by, she would slip a note with an

encouraging Bible verse under the door. Having lost her mother at the age of seventeen, Shao-Leng was yearning for love. She believed that the gods and ancestral spirits could bring bad luck and death if one displeased them; in her mind, thoughts of God were associated with fear. But Corrie loved Shao-Leng and spoke of a God who was 100 percent love. Corrie made a deep impression on Shao-Leng. “She was the happiest person I had ever met,” Shao-Leng commented later. When Corrie’s parents came for a visit later that fall, she introduced them to Shao-Leng. They were happy people too, and Shao-Leng enjoyed cooking a big Chinese meal for them.

When Thanksgiving came Corrie invited her new friend to come home with her for the weekend. There Shao-Leng encountered something she had never experienced before: a Christian family. The interactions among family members were so beautiful that Shao-Leng could only admire and wonder. She felt included and had a strong sense of belonging and blessing. She appreciated the easy laughter and spiritual strength she sensed in Corrie’s mom. Shao-Leng realized that this was the kind of family she would like to have one day. The love she received from Corrie and her family was already beginning to heal Shao-Leng, and she wanted what they had. So Shao-Leng decided to become a follower of Jesus. Corrie had entered her world; she and her family had drawn Shao-Leng into their world and then into the family of Father, Son and Spirit. The words James Bryan Smith uses to describe God in his book *The Good and Beautiful God* became real to her.¹ Unlike the gods she grew up fearing in Taiwan, the God revealed by Jesus—and by Corrie’s family—was completely good, loving and beautiful.

THE PRIORITY OF RELATIONSHIP

People in every society place a high value on relationships. We seek to honor and care for parents, children, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews and cousins. We long for husbands or wives, boy-

friends or girlfriends. We desire good, trustworthy friends. Shao-Leng understood that loving relationships are crucial to life, and Corrie's family had them. The loving interactions in that family showed her how life was meant to be lived. We were created for relationships, and Shao-Leng had seen relationships that worked. Genesis 1–3 reveals that God designed humanity for relationships, and the Bible provides the first example of entering and drawing in. Delving deeply into these chapters will provide new understandings of the gospel and help us see why it is such good news in every culture.

Love at the center. Relationship—the love relationship between Father, Son and Spirit—lies at the heart of the universe. Genesis 1:1–2 shows all three persons of the Trinity active in creation: the Spirit was hovering over the waters (v. 2) and the Father spoke repeatedly, bringing forth the various elements of creation through his word. John 1:1–17 identifies God's Word, through whom he made the world, as Jesus. Building on this truth that the world was made through Jesus, Colossians 1:17 teaches that all things are sustained in him: "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." Where Jesus is, the other two persons are also. John Ortberg describes the Trinity as "a community of greater humility, servanthood, mutual submission and delight than you and I can possibly imagine."² The perfect love for which all humans yearn exists in the Trinity, and it holds the universe together. The love at the heart of the universe manifests itself as *honor*. Frontier missiologist Steve Hawthorne observes that a bookload of truth is contained in the title of Fawn Parish's book *Honor: What Love Looks Like*.³ This mutually honoring love of Father, Son and Spirit flowed into the creation of people capable of loving God because they were made like him. Human beings are personal, created in the image of the three divine persons. God's personhood includes the relatedness of the Trinity.⁴ To be a person—to be human—is to be in relationship.

God's original intent: Shalom. Genesis 1–2 picture God's intent for

humans and the earth: shalom, the reign of right relationships.⁵ God's love for Adam and Eve enabled them to love him back. He allowed his creatures to know him personally, revealing his love by entering into an intimate relationship with them. Receiving honor from relationship with God, they were at peace with themselves and with each other. They ruled over creation. The shalom—peace and wholeness—we see in Eden shows us the good news of the gospel. In Ephesians 6:15 Paul refers to the gospel as the gospel of peace; the sidebar on *shalom* explains more about that peace.

SHALOM

The Hebrew word *shalom* can mean “peace,” “prosperity,” “wholeness,” “well-being”; it has relational content:

- peace with *God*: a gift experienced in his presence
- peace with *others*
- peace with *self*
- peace with *creation*

Later on, the Old Testament gives us another picture of shalom. In Numbers 6:24-26 God instructs the high priest Aaron and his sons to speak a certain blessing over the Hebrew people:

The LORD bless you
 and keep you;
 the LORD make his face shine on you
 and be gracious to you;
 the LORD turn his face toward you
 and give you peace.

The highest blessing one can receive is to see the face of the Lord; that kind of intimacy gives shalom. Just as God blessed and honored Adam and Eve in Genesis 1, Aaron and his sons were to bless the

people. Shalom received in the presence of God spills over into peace and harmony in other relationships. The promise of true shalom makes the gospel powerfully attractive. Murad Lazar surveyed over thirteen hundred Muslims to discover the deepest desires of their hearts, and he wrote gospel stories based on their answers. The desire for true peace ranked highest in the surveys, and Lazar's first booklet addresses that yearning.⁶

Intimate relationship with God. Christian apologist Jay Smith believes that Genesis 3:8-9, which refers to God walking in the garden in search of the first couple, is a “hermeneutical key” or secret to understanding crucial truths about God: “The man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’” Smith notes that God lowers and limits himself to search for Adam and Eve. God calls out even though he knows where they are. But these verses also remind us that Adam and Eve were used to being in God's presence. The idea that the Creator of the universe would enter into intimate relationship with his creatures—an act of amazing humility—seems shameful and shocking to the Muslims Smith interacts with.⁷ The intimacy God offered Adam and Eve is unlike anything the gods of other religions can give. Here is love that does not hesitate to enter the world of creatures in order to draw them into the love and joy God has in himself as Father, Son and Spirit.

Shalom shattered. Adam and Eve broke the perfect relationship they had with God, and the image of God in them was marred but not destroyed. Shalom was shattered: relationships between people and God, within human hearts, among human beings and with creation were all broken. God desires to restore shalom to individuals, groups and all creation, and his method is entering and drawing in. The entering and drawing in of Eden foreshadow the incarnation of Jesus and model crosscultural ministry. Theologian James Torrance

uses the image of a hug, the Father in the center using his two arms, the Word (Jesus) and the Spirit, to draw us into his embrace:

When we hug somebody whom we love, there is a double movement. We give ourselves to the beloved, and in the same act, by putting our arms around the other, we draw that person close to our heart! That is a parable of the double movement of grace, the God-humanward and the human-Godward movement in the priesthood of Christ and the ministry of the Spirit.⁸

In Jesus, who is both divine and human, we receive the Father's embrace. Having been drawn in to the fellowship of the Trinity, we then extend the hug to others. We embody the Father, Son and Spirit as the Spirit enables us to love with his love, to be good news to others and to bring shalom wherever we go.

Repeated entering and drawing in. Genesis 1–2 show us how entering and drawing in work together to reveal the true nature of God. As God interacted with the first couple, entering and drawing in happened repeatedly. The same can be true in our relationships. As we enter the worlds of our friends by listening and asking questions, we begin to see the world through their lenses. Our desire to understand their contexts often elicits a similar desire in them. I have seen many relationships with international friends deepen as we explored cultural differences and similarities together.

Groups can also enter the lives of other groups and draw them in. Some Myanmar Christians who were formerly Buddhists were appalled at the treatment of the Muslim minorities living near them. A few of them chose to enter some nearby Muslim villages in order to share Jesus. They built relationships and provided relief. Because Muslims are at the bottom of the totem pole in Myanmar society, the villagers felt honored by these Christians, and some of them came to Jesus. These new believers joined other converts from Islam already in the villages, and the formerly Buddhist Christians disciplined

leaders for a growing community from both sets of converts.⁹ The Buddhist-background Christians took risks and made sacrifices to enter the Muslim villages, but their actions enabled the formation of an attractive community of Jesus-followers. Entering led to drawing in. Although we examine entering and drawing in separately in the upcoming chapters, it is important to remember that they build on each other, entering allowing us to draw in, followed by more entering as we seek to truly understand new friends. Each act of entering leads to deeper understanding and greater capacity to be and share good news.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Personal Reflection

1. What were you taught about God and love when you were young? What shaped your view of each, even if one or both seemed absent?
2. How do you respond to the idea that a completely good and beautiful God wants to draw you into an intimate love relationship?
3. *Lectio divina* passages:
 - Romans 8:1-4
 - Romans 8:9-13
 - Romans 8:14-17
 - Romans 8:26-30
 - Romans 8:31-39

Group Discussion

1. What questions do you have about this chapter? What did you like and not like?
2. Discuss your experience of *lectio divina* from the passages you read this week. What did the Spirit open up to you?

3. What does the author say about the Trinity that shows that “love is at the center”?
4. Where is God inviting you into his beauty and goodness more deeply? What keeps you from saying yes?
5. What would a community—neighborhood, fellowship or society—be like when shalom (human flourishing) is truly present? Take five minutes for each group member to write their ideas before sharing.

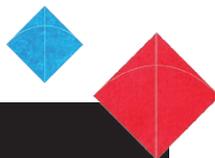
Group Application

The author repeatedly connects love with the power of the gospel. Think of a neighbor, coworker, classmate or service person whom others might overlook. What practical act of kindness might you do for this person to give him or her a taste of God? Put that into practice.

Suggested Resources

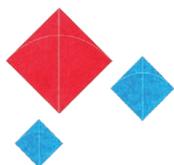
- *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows* by James Bryan Smith. Who do you believe God is, and how does that match with Scripture? Whether explored in a small group or on your own, this book can help you live out Jesus’ example.
- *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering* by Timothy Keller. It can be difficult to see God as good when bad things happen. Keller provides biblical and practical responses to this age-old question.

Part One



ENTERING

Keeping in Step with the Spirit



ON THE UPPER LEVEL OF the student center of a large Southern university, I waited on a soft couch, grateful for a quiet and comfortable place for a conversation about spiritual matters. Sri, a seeker from India, arrived on time for our evening appointment. I had met Sri the previous month at our annual evangelistic weekend. One month later, Sri's roommate Thomas, the other Indian Christian Community (ICC) members and Dave, the local campus minister, all felt that Sri was ready to follow Jesus. But they wanted *me* to invite him to commitment. In response to my email, Sri had readily agreed to share with me some of the difficulties people from Hindu backgrounds face in coming to Jesus.

Touched by the lives of his Christian friends and roommates, and the deep worship and fellowship experienced in the ICC, Sri was already spending a half hour with God each day. He sincerely desired to follow Jesus. "But I can't get the Hindu thinking to completely leave my mind. I don't have perfect faith yet," he confided. Sri had reached a stage of near desperation. "Actually, today I decided to fast and pray because I want so badly to be rid of all this Hindu thinking."

As I listened to Sri, a picture of an earthenware cup with a few

specks of dirt in it and a pitcher of sparkling water came to mind. “Sri, suppose you had some clean water and a cup that was mostly clean except for a few specks of dirt. You might think, *I don’t want to dirty the water by putting it in the cup.* But the only way you can clean the cup is by introducing the water. *You* can’t remove all the traces of Hindu thinking that are still in your mind. But if you let God introduce the water of his Holy Spirit, the Spirit can clean your mind perfectly.”

Sri’s eyes indicated understanding, so I turned in my Bible to the text that had also come to mind, Mark 9:14-27. I asked him to read the story of the father who said to Jesus, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (v. 24). This man brought his combination of faith and doubt to Jesus, and Jesus freed his son from an impure spirit. “You don’t have to have perfect faith when you come to Jesus. Just bring him the faith you have.” The picture of the cup and the Scripture overcame Sri’s difficulties: that night he welcomed Jesus into his heart and invited the Spirit to fully cleanse his mind.

When Sri first shared his obstacle to faith, I had no idea how to respond, but the Holy Spirit inside me knew exactly what he needed. Fruitful crosscultural evangelism requires being led by the Spirit as Jesus was and his followers have been through the centuries. In the incarnation Jesus took on human limitations and had to receive direction from his Father, as we do, by the power of the Holy Spirit. So Jesus frequently sought solitude to be with his Father. Jesus praises Mary of Bethany for this same kind of devotion, telling her sister, Martha, that in listening to him instead of being distracted by other busyness Mary has chosen something better (Luke 10:38-42). Jesus’ example and teachings in the Gospels contain crucial lessons on intimacy and listening, practices that will enable us to “keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).

INTIMACY WITH GOD

Like Martha and Mary, we need intimacy with Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 the apostle Paul portrays the results of habitually spending

time with Jesus and looking to him in prayer: “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

The verb translated “contemplate” also means “reflect.” Like Moses, who was radiant after spending time alone with God on the mountain (Exodus 34:33-35), when we gaze on Jesus in prayerful meditation we are transformed into his likeness, according to Paul. Through the Spirit we can experience an intimate relationship with Jesus that enables us to reflect his character to others.

Intimacy and reflecting Jesus. Jesus entered fully into the human experiences of grief and joy. He wept at the death of Mary and Martha’s brother Lazarus (John 11:35). But he also provided wine for a wedding, was the guest of honor at feasts and experienced “joy through the Holy Spirit” (Luke 10:21). Owel Hansen, a bank manager in Winnipeg, Canada, during the dark days of the Great Depression, exhibited the joy of Jesus to a stranger when he encountered Bakht Singh at a YMCA. The student from India noticed that Hansen had a shining face, so he asked Hansen to describe his happiest experience in life. Hansen answered, “That was when I received Jesus as Savior and Lord. But not all people who are called Christians are real Christians.” Singh explained that he had an experience of Jesus’ presence eighteen months previously and was eager to learn about the living Lord. So Hansen gave Singh a New Testament. After reading it for three days straight, Singh had a strong sense of Jesus’ presence again, knelt in sorrow over his sin and shame, and heard Jesus’ words of forgiveness. When Singh returned to India after being discipled by a strong Christian family, he started a movement that led tens of thousands of people to Jesus.¹

Hansen’s visible joy brought fruit that he could never have imagined. But Jesus desires *communities* as well as individuals to reflect his char-

acter by their love for one another and overflowing joy (John 13:34-35; 15:9-10). Paul tells the Ephesians that their diverse fellowship is becoming a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22). We contemplate the Lord *together* through Spirit-led worship in such groups. This kind of deep worship and the love and joy of Sri's friends in the Indian Christian Community drew him toward Jesus.

Intimacy, bearing fruit and power in prayer. Intimacy with Jesus also enables us to bear fruit and be effective in prayer, as Jesus teaches us with the image of the vine and branches (John 15:7-8). His stark words "Apart from me you can do nothing" and picture of withered branches being burned (John 15:5-6) warn us to beware losing close connection with him. Whether Jesus is referring to the fruit of the Spirit or to fruitful ministry, the lesson is clear. We must stay connected to our life source.

Intimacy also enables power in prayer. The incident in Mark 9:14-29 also demonstrates that closeness to God attained through prayer is necessary for authority in spiritual conflict. The disciples are unable to cast out an impure spirit from a boy, but Jesus does so. When the disciples ask why they were not able to free the boy, Jesus answers "This kind can come out only by prayer" (v. 29). Jesus' practice of solitude and prayer had prepared him for difficult spiritual battle.

LISTENING TO GOD

Jesus' intimacy with the Father enabled him to see the Father's work in the lives of others and hear the Father's direction for each moment (Luke 6:12-15; 22:39-44; John 5:19, 30). Intimacy led to listening. The third servant song of Isaiah pictures Jesus the Messiah as a listener:

The Sovereign LORD has given me a well-instructed tongue,
to know the word that sustains the weary.
He wakens me morning by morning,
wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.

The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears;
I have not been rebellious,
I have not turned away. (Isaiah 50:4-5)

The time Jesus spent in prayer gave him instruction and words for others. Listening with humble, obedient hearts will enable *us* to hear God's leading for our relationships and receive Scriptures and images for our friends, as I did for Sri.

Sometimes God gives us actual knowledge about our friends' lives, as he did when Jesus was interacting with the Samaritan woman (John 4:17-18). One day when I was ministering in Los Angeles in the 1990s, our ministry team decided to skip lunch and pray for our seeker friends. As I was praying for Dr. Zhen, a Chinese scholar friend, God brought to mind the Scripture about Jesus' easy yoke (Matthew 11:28-30). I recorded the verse beside his name and prayed it for him. Six months later we chose this text for our weekly Bible study. After several months of not attending the meetings, Dr. Zhen and his family came that night! I could read deep interest in his eyes as the discussion of the text progressed. Afterward, when I told him that I had written down that verse for him while praying six months earlier, he was so touched that he nearly cried.

Jesus insisted that his sheep would recognize his voice and promised that the Spirit would be our Counselor to teach us all things, enable us to live in him and guide us into all truth (John 10:4; 14:16-20, 26; 16:13). Hearing from God should be a normal part of our experience as disciples. Church growth specialist Peter Wagner asserts that "the key to world evangelization is hearing God and obeying what we hear."² I continually experience the truth of that statement as I reach out across cultures.

Learning to listen and hear. The Holy Spirit will teach us to listen if we ask. Each fall I ask my prayer team to pray that God will direct Christian students to newcomers who are already seeking

God, just as Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch when directed by the Spirit (Acts 8:26-40). God answers this prayer repeatedly, and the people we meet through these divine encounters almost always come to Christ.

Sometimes the Father arranges these meetings even when we haven't prayed. When she noticed my fish necklace, Mitsuko, a Japanese graduate student, introduced herself to me at a welcome party for international students. A seeker, Mitsuko knew that the fish was a Christian symbol and assumed I was a follower of Jesus. I had attended the party because of my French friendship partner, but God had plans for Mitsuko and me. Nine months and a lovely friendship later, Mitsuko declared that she was a new Christian. Being available to the Spirit involves adventure, surprise and delight.

Two crucial lessons in listening. But how do we hear from God? When I first attended a workshop designed to give us practical experience in listening prayer, I heard very little during the exercises. But I kept seeking to listen, and the Spirit led me through a gradual learning process. I still don't hear from God as often or clearly as I would like, but I now recognize his voice much more easily and often receive clear direction in personal or evangelistic situations. My listening journey has taught me two crucial lessons.

First, the Spirit inspired the Scriptures and delights to bring them alive for us. The main way God has spoken to Christians through the centuries is through the Bible. Hearing God *specifically* often comes from first hearing God *generally*. In other words, God reveals himself primarily through the Bible. As his character and truth and our obedience to what we read begin to transform our minds, we find ourselves hearing more specific words. We really know our friends when we exclaim, "I knew what you were going to say!" So it is with God—we share life together and begin to know what he is thinking and learn to recognize his thoughts when we have first immersed ourselves in prayerful reflection in his Word.

The simple habit of beginning every Bible reading time with the prayer “Father, speak to me through your Word” has brought rich rewards. Sometimes the Spirit applies the texts very personally; other Scriptures clearly speak to groups I belong to. The ancient practice of *lectio divina*, a way of prayerfully meditating on Scripture that enables people to hear from God, greatly aided me in learning to listen (see the sidebar “Lectio Divina”). For several years I did a *lectio* each morning, going through the movements of listening for a word or phrase that seemed to invite me in, meditation on the word or phrase, and responding in prayer. This practice, more than any other, accustomed me to hearing from God.

LECTIO DIVINA

- *Prepare.* Quiet your mind, take three deep breaths and get in touch with your emotions. Bring yourself honestly before God; invite the Holy Spirit to speak through the Word. Remember the truth in Revelation 3:20: “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person and they with me.”
- *Lectio divina.* *Lectio* traditionally uses texts shared with one’s community. If your church or community does not have a daily Bible reading guide, choose one from a group like the Gideons or the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.
- *Read and listen.* Read the text for an overview, being aware of the context. Then slowly read it aloud several times, listening for a word or phrase that invites your attention.
- *Meditate.* Repeat the phrase and think about it slowly and carefully, digesting it like the spiritual food that it is. Reflect on *why* this particular phrase stands out to you.
- *Pray.* Respond appropriately to what God has said to you. What is God calling you to experience or obey?
- *Contemplate.* Be still and enjoy God’s presence, knowing that he finds joy in being with you (see Zephaniah 3:17).

Second, practicing the presence of God and praying throughout the day greatly increase my ability to be tuned in to the Spirit. Choosing to focus on God and pray while preparing meals, driving or doing household chores enables me to listen more consistently. I've often received insights about how to pray for friends while walking or washing dishes. How can we remember to practice God's presence in the midst of busy days? A habit that I have found helpful is placing a rubber band on my wrist to remind me of God's surrounding presence. Other options include setting your mobile device to remind you to pray or praying during a repeated activity like running, walking or taking a study break.

Judging what we hear. As we listen, how do we judge what we think we are hearing? The following questions provide a good place to begin:

- Is it in agreement with the Word and the character of God?
- What do other mature Christians think about it?
- Do you have a sense of peace about it?³

If answers to the first two questions are positive, then I sometimes go ahead in a spirit of adventure. What happens next often suggests that I was hearing from God. When a Bible verse or picture comes to mind for friends, I share it tentatively, asking if it has meaning for them. For those desiring more detail on discerning the voice of God, Dallas Willard's book *Hearing God* contains excellent counsel.⁴

Four people listening to God propelled my friend Sri into the kingdom. Dave and Thomas, both men of deep intimacy with Jesus, were listening when they asked me to invite Sri into the family. Years of prayer, listening and immersion in the Scriptures had prepared me for the evening. And Sri himself chose that day to cry out to God through fasting. When we seek God through habitual intimacy and deliberate listening, the Spirit is free to work and cultural obstacles to faith may vanish.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Personal Reflection

1. Look at Psalm 115:3-8, the first *lectio* text for this chapter. Any kind of idol in our lives can keep us from seeing or hearing what God wants us to see or hear. Ask God to show you any idol in your life that might prevent your hearing from him.
2. Practice listening prayer on your own as described in the following group discussion. If you haven't done listening prayer before, don't worry about doing it right—simply entrust these moments to the One who seeks to speak more than you seek to listen.
3. *Lectio divina* passages
 - Psalm 115:3-8
 - Read slowly the hymn “O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus” (easily found on the Internet)
 - John 5:19-24
 - John 14:23-27
 - John 15:9-17

Group Discussion

1. From this past week, describe how you extended kindness to someone who needed it, giving them a taste of God. What did you learn about yourself, or about God?
2. What questions do you have about this chapter? What did you like and not like?
3. Have a group-listening prayer time for group members and friends (see “Listening in a Group” sidebar).
4. How do you respond to the phrase *Seek intimacy with God*? In what ways have you and your community sought this, and what has happened as a result?

LISTENING IN A GROUP

- Bring yourself before the Lord and confess anything that would separate you from him.
- Quiet yourself for thirty seconds, breathing silently the Jesus Prayer a few times—“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me.” Praise is appropriate.
- In the quiet, an image, Scripture, word or feeling may occur to you. If it remains and doesn’t conflict with Scripture or good sense, receive it as from the Spirit. It may be a word for you, a person for whom you are praying or your community.
- Distractions may pop up. Don’t worry about them! Return gently with thanks to the One you are paying attention to. You are not taking a test or performing on some stage.
- When a word or image does come, there is an expectation from God that you will act on what he speaks.
- Share in the group what you are experiencing, even if that is nothing. The Spirit will often make clear a discernible unity in what is being spoken to each person individually. Respond in obedience, celebration or intercession.

5. Imagine yourself at your kitchen table, at a coffee shop or walking down a road and meeting Jesus there. What are your feelings and thoughts? Share with the group as you feel comfortable.
6. What practices have been most helpful for you to connect with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

Group Application

Spend time together listening to God and interceding for friends you are reaching out to across cultural lines, or, if you don’t have any yet, for God to lead you to them.

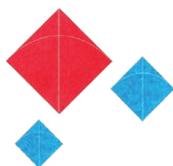
Suggested Resources

- *Spiritual Equipping for Mission: Thriving as God’s Message Bearers* by Ryan Shaw. Learn more about how the Spirit equips us to keep

going as crosscultural witnesses for the long-term.

- *Opening to God: Lectio Divina and Life as Prayer* by David G. Benner. Following the framework of *lectio divina*, this book leads toward greater communion with God. This journey may include praying with imagination, with music and creativity, in contemplation and in service.

Praying and Exercising Spiritual Authority



DURING MY YEARS IN LOS ANGELES a Chinese couple with a five-year-old daughter became regulars in our international fellowship. I began practicing English with Jiling, the mom, and met their beautiful daughter, Cindy. One week Jiling asked for help: Cindy was about to start kindergarten, but she had terrible temper tantrums that the couple feared would be a problem at school. “Jiling, I would love to have a group of the women in the fellowship pray with you and Cindy about this,” I responded. “Why don’t you two come to the meeting early next Sunday so we can all pray and talk together?” Having heard women praying during our regular small group Bible discussions, Jiling willingly said yes even though she and her husband, Meng, were not yet followers of Jesus.

I pondered what I knew about Cindy’s past: Meng and Jiling had adopted her. A conviction grew in me that a demonic spirit had somehow entered Cindy during the trauma of abandonment. But Cindy had been attending Awana, a children’s program at the local evangelical church, and was learning about Jesus. I asked many people to pray for our time together and prepared through prayer myself.

That Sunday evening we listened to Jiling, and some of the moms in the group gave parenting counsel to her. Then I asked if she and Meng were open to Cindy's deciding to follow Jesus.¹ "Oh, that would be fine with us if she wants to become a Christian. It's very hard for us because we've been taught that God doesn't exist, but it's not so hard for her." So I addressed Cindy, "Cindy, you have been learning about Jesus in Awana. Would you like to have him in your heart?" Cindy's small face lit up with expectation and hope: the answer was yes. So I asked her to sit on my lap and led her in a simple prayer of welcome for Jesus. Then, placing my hand lightly on her shoulder, I asked the Father to fill her so full of the Holy Spirit that there would be no room for anything else.

Two weeks later I visited the family for our usual English lesson, and Meng approached me. "Katie, thank you so much. Cindy's temper tantrums have stopped." Cindy entered kindergarten with no problem, and both parents eventually became followers of Jesus. I don't know for sure that the source of the tantrums was demonic, but I do know that Jesus makes a difference when he enters human hearts and that he wants us to pray for healing and freedom for our friends. Our teams continued the practice of praying for seekers and believers when they expressed needs, and we saw some deep emotional healings take place.

Why are prayer and exercising spiritual authority so essential? The apostle Paul answers this question as he describes his evangelistic ministry in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4: "Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Satan, the god of this age, blinds unbelievers and prevents them from seeing that Jesus is God in the flesh—they cannot see in Jesus the good and beautiful God we know. Paul describes those who don't know Jesus as subjects of the kingdom of darkness (Acts 26:17-18; Colossians 1:13). Because of this darkness, all evangelism automatically involves us in

a spiritual conflict that can only be won through prayer. But when our friends worship idols, consult shamans for good luck or wear amulets for protection—as is often the case with people influenced by folk religions—we are venturing deep into enemy territory. We must accept our authority in Christ, pray for and with our friends, and exercise authority over the enemy in Jesus’ name.

FOLK RELIGIONS: MEETING EVERYDAY NEEDS

- *High or formal religions* answer questions of ultimate origins, purpose and destiny of the world; *folk religions* address the daily lives of individuals.
- Many peoples practice *mixtures* of the two: ancestor veneration with Buddhism for example.
- Folk religions deal with *meaning* in life and death, *good luck, healing guidance* and *maintaining the moral order* of the community.
- Practices include *seeking help from shamans or witch doctors*, appeasement of local or ancestral spirits and the use of amulets for protection.
- Relationship with spirits is *magical*.

PRAYING FOR: INTERCESSION

The Gospels give us only glimpses of Jesus’ prayers for people. Matthew tells us that he had compassion on the crowds “because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). As the true good Shepherd, I’m sure he prayed that his hearers would be good soil for the seeds of the word he was planting in them. And we know that he prayed for his disciples, anticipating Peter’s denial (Luke 22:31-32), and for all who would follow him through their mission (John 17). Jesus continues this ministry of intercession today as our high priest in the Father’s presence (Hebrews 7:25), and we have the privilege of joining him

in prayer. One of the prayers I sometimes pray is “Allow me [or us] to enter in to the intercessions of Jesus, to know how he is praying for my friends today.” We can learn how to pray from Jesus and those who imitated him.

Learning from Jesus and Paul. Jesus’ pictures of prayer in Luke 11:11-13 and Luke 18:1-8 teach us boldness and persistence. His model prayer for disciples (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4) suggests several requests that are suitable for non-Christians. For example, pray that God’s kingdom would come in your friends’ lives. Envision what his will being done in their lives would be like. Pray that they be enabled to forgive when necessary.

The first request in Jesus’ prayer presents a challenge. In order to hallow or set apart God’s name as sacred, a person must first clearly see the true nature of God. We have already seen from 2 Corinthians 4:4 that Satan prevents unbelievers from seeing that truth. One of Paul’s prayers for the Ephesian believers addresses this blindness and provides a model for praying for seekers as well as believers:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. (Ephesians 1:17-19)

The Holy Spirit cannot dwell inside nonbelievers, but he *does* convict them of sin (John 16:8-11) and works in their hearts to bring about the new birth (John 3:8). I often pray that the Spirit will take away my friends’ blindness and bring forth life, just as he did when hovering over the waters at creation (Genesis 1:2). Here Paul prays for the Ephesians to know God better and to know the hope they are called to. Seekers need to see both the true character of God and the

true identities they are called to receive in Christ. Strongholds that blind their minds must be toppled.

Tearing down strongholds. The apostle Paul discusses our spiritual conflict in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5:

Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Paul refers here to the reasoning of false apostles who are influencing the Corinthian church. But the term *stronghold* also applies to the lies people believe about God and self that keep them from seeing the truth of the gospel. Satan is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). Our everyday conflict in evangelism involves discerning the lies that keep our friends from Jesus, and praying and working for them to be torn down. Prayer, teaching and modeling scriptural truth, and doing kingdom works are three powerful weapons in the battle against strongholds.

The most powerful strongholds often involve beliefs about the character of God. Benjie, from Japan and a student in central California, was so hurt from a painful relationship with a distant father that he could not relate to God the Father at all. Instead, he always prayed to Jesus. Benjie found it hard to believe in both the goodness and power of God, expressing many fears of evil spirits. When Benjie made a commitment to Jesus, he needed careful discipling and special healing prayer in order to deeply understand the true nature of God.

Beliefs about identity can also be strongholds. Our group in North Carolina once attracted a grad student couple from Taiwan. Huang Yi, the wife, knew Jesus, but Lo, the husband, saw himself as excluded from the kingdom. So his language partner from the fellowship re-

peatedly told him, “Lo, you were created in the image of God for God.” Scripture and scriptural truth are the Spirit’s sword in the battle to tear down strongholds. The whole leadership team prayed that Lo would realize the truth. After many months of prayer and specially chosen Bible studies, we saw this stronghold tumble: Lo joined Huang Yi in the family of God.

PRAY THE SCRIPTURES FOR YOUR FRIENDS

- For understanding into the strongholds keeping friends from Jesus and for those strongholds to fall: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.
- For friends to have insight into God’s character: Ephesians 1:17-19; 3:14-19.
- For God to turn on the light so friends understand who Jesus is: 2 Corinthians 4:4-6.
- For the Holy Spirit to hover over a person, group or situation, bringing life: Genesis 1:1-2.
- For God’s will to be done and his kingdom to come in a person or group: Matthew 6:10.
- For the salvation of a group or family: Romans 10:1.

FASTING

Fasting greatly assists us in listening and intercession. Following the leading of the Spirit, Jesus fasted before the beginning of his public ministry (Matthew 4:1-2). Jesus’ disciples did not fast while he was with them, but he clearly stated that they would fast when he was no longer present (Mark 2:19-20). The church in Antioch sent out the first missionaries as a result of the Spirit’s leading that came while their leaders were fasting and praying (Acts 13:1-3). And with fasting and prayer those missionaries appointed leaders of their newly established churches (Acts 14:23). Fasting prepares us for spiritual battle and enables us to access greater spiritual authority. Fasting seems to overcome obstacles that nothing else can.

My experiences of fasting and prayer for non-Christians with ministry teams go back many years. In most cases we simply chose one day of the week to skip lunch, find a quiet place and pray alone, everyone praying during the same lunch period. One spring semester the very first student leadership team of the North Carolina State international fellowship prayed like this for our Malaysian “little brother,” and God graciously answered our prayers when he came to Christ on the last day of InterVarsity summer camp.

Years later our areawide campus ministry team chose to skip lunch and pray weekly for lists of students from several schools. A few weeks into this experiment, a Chinese grad student on our prayer list suddenly announced that she intended to be baptized, somewhat to the surprise of her campus minister. A volunteer talked to her, and her testimony at the baptism made it clear that she had indeed come into the kingdom. This same ministry team always spends two to three hours in prayer together, skipping lunch, before our annual evangelistic retreat. No matter when we schedule the prayer meeting, retreat registrations always increase after we’ve prayed. One year registrations were so low that one of the campus teams held two additional fasting times. This became such a pattern that my supervisor refused to worry about low registrations, saying “The registrations always come in after you pray.”

Why does God often use fasting to help establish his purposes? Fasting is *not* a way of controlling God or a magical evangelistic silver bullet. On the contrary, fasting helps us humble ourselves and worship God without distraction, acknowledging his sovereignty and our dependence on him in evangelism and everything else. I believe it helps us tune in to God’s voice and hear how to pray or act according to God’s will. The Acts texts associate it with decision making. My calling to enter full-time ministry among international students became clear soon after I devoted part of a day to solitude and fasting.

I now have some physical difficulties that make fasting from food

unwise, but there are other ways to fast. I usually skip a favorite television show and devote the time to prayer instead; others may choose to forgo media of some kind for a certain period. Fasting requires us to give up something we normally need or enjoy in order to seek after God. He has promised to reward those who seek (Matthew 6:17-18; 7:7-8; Luke 11:5-13).²

STARTING OUT WITH FASTING

- If you have a health issue, or as an alternative to fasting from food, consider *fasting from media*—such as TV, the Internet and handheld technology—to spend time focusing on God.
- *Start small* by skipping just one meal. Keep hydrated by drinking plenty of pure water.
- Instead of eating, *spend time in prayer, Scripture reading, listening, worship and intercession.*
- *Record any insights* you receive while listening.

PRAYING WITH AND EXERCISING AUTHORITY

Jesus entered our world preaching, teaching, healing and casting out demons. In him the kingdom of God came near to people, making forceful advances against the kingdom of darkness. When we enter the lives of our friends and draw them into our communities, love sometimes compels us to pray for their healing or release from bondages. Jesus has already provided for us; the authority that he exercised to heal, resist the enemy and cast out demons is available to disciples who draw close to him.

Praying with. When people are seeking after God, it is appropriate and useful to pray with them. First, simply let seekers listen in on your individual and group prayers. You will model a dynamic, trusting relationship with God that may contrast greatly with the fearful or magical prayers they are familiar with. The reverent and intimate

worship of the Indian Christian Community played a key role in attracting Sri to Jesus. *Be careful to demonstrate true respect for God; our informal—sometimes casual—prayers could shock Muslim or Hindu friends who pray with great reverence.*

Next, offer to pray for your friends' concerns. Recently my Indian friend Raina emailed to say she was too sick for our planned evening together. I was praying for her when the phone rang: she was calling to make sure I got the message. We had prayed together in my home, so I ventured a request. "Raina, I know that praying on the phone is probably new to you, but I really want to pray with you for healing." She said yes, and I prayed a few simple requests, asking for deep peace, rest and healing for her migraine headache. She emailed again a little later, thanking me for the prayers, and I sensed that she was touched by Jesus in some way. We postponed our meeting for twenty-four hours, and the migraine subsided. There was no instant healing, but my prayers conveyed love and invited Jesus into her situation. A sense of Jesus' presence in prayer often touches people, whether or not there is a dramatic healing.

If there *is* a dramatic healing, we need to be careful that our friends don't get the impression that Jesus is a powerful shaman or magician and commit to following him in hopes of having every prayer answered positively. People who believe that the gods must be controlled by making promises or offering the proper sacrifices may not understand that the God of the Bible is very different. Deep conversions occur when people understand that relationship with God is dynamic and living, not magical.

Praying against: Addressing the demonic. Praying with also involves addressing demonic issues. People with Western worldviews may read stories about demons in Scripture as an ancient way of describing mental illness. Some may assume that demons, although real during the time of Jesus, are no longer active in the world. But we learn differently from Bible scholars, missionaries and pastoral counselors. In

Powers of Darkness, Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters New Testament professor Clinton Arnold elaborates a biblical theology of demons, principalities and powers, and argues convincingly that demons are real and that the kind of demonic activity described in the Scriptures has not ceased.³ Jesus delegated his power over the spirit world to groups of disciples (see Mark 3:13-15; Luke 10:17-20). Followers who were filled by the Holy Spirit after Pentecost healed people and exercised authority over demons in addition to preaching the gospel.

A number of authors argue that the word *possessed* in Scripture, such as in Mark 1:32, is better translated “demonized.” *Possessed* implies complete control; not all the instances cited in Scripture fit that description.⁴ Although Scripture, church history and current experience do bear witness to cases of complete possession, they also describe other situations that I prefer to call oppression.⁵ Oppressed people are not completely controlled by the enemy, but enemy spirits may be afflicting them. The crippled woman whom Jesus freed on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10-17) comes to mind. The people I have ministered to are better described by the term oppressed.

Missionaries working in many different countries describe both demonic activity and the impact of ministries that set people free.⁶ Practical theology professor Neil T. Anderson learned through experience to minister to Christians oppressed by the enemy and founded an organization to train others to do so.⁷ His books *Victory over the Darkness* and *The Bondage Breaker* provide paths to freedom from enemy influence through discipleship and counseling.⁸

So Bible scholars, experienced missionaries and pastoral counselors all bear witness that demons are real. People involved in crosscultural evangelism should not be surprised to encounter demonic influence and should learn how to minister in these situations. But we should postpone praying for the deliverance of friends until they submit to Jesus as their Lord, as I did with Cindy. Jesus teaches us in Luke

11:24-26 that those freed from the demonic must be filled with something better, the Holy Spirit, or there is a risk of even greater bondage.

How can followers of Jesus have demonic spirits living inside them? The term *demon possession* causes unnecessary confusion. Certainly Christians can't be totally *possessed* by evil spirits. But they can be *oppressed* and need deliverance ministry to gain freedom. Missionary and experienced deliverance minister Ed Murphy lists several causes of oppression among Christians, including generational sins, abuse experienced as a child, curses and participation in occult practices.⁹

There may be demonic barriers to conversion. Mary, an Indian Christian friend in North Carolina, taught me about the spiritual empowerment of physical objects such as amulets or personal shrines. In the name and authority of Jesus, we should pray that the empowerment of such objects be broken. Mary persuaded Partha, a seeker with whom she was sharing, to take off his lucky charm and give it to her for safekeeping. Then we prayed together that the Holy Spirit would hover over Partha and bring forth life. Partha never put the charm back on; instead he found a new source of power in Jesus.

I learned how to combat the demonic from a wise and experienced fellow church member in my early days of ministry in North Carolina. I brought students and friends to Joanna and participated as she led them to freedom. This apprenticeship made my first experience of ministry without her much easier. See the document at crossingculturesbook.org/breakingfree for resources on helping people break free from bondage.

ENTERING NEW TERRITORY

Spiritual conflict may be especially intense when we enter new territory with the gospel. I began chapter two with the story of Sri's conversion but did not describe the work of prayer that preceded it. When Dave first arrived at the university, he and his faculty adviser began praying weekly for God to raise up a ministry among Indians.

Two years passed before God brought Indian Christians with a heart for their Hindu peers. For months the Indian Christian Community members fasted and prayed weekly before Sri came to Jesus. Other conversions from Hinduism followed Sri's initial decision. Dave, the faculty adviser, Thomas and the other ICC members gained new territory for the gospel by paying the price in prayer.

In addition to prayer and fasting, works of service that bring shalom to a situation can be an important weapon in conflict. A development organization run by Christians in an Asian nation entered an unreached people group steeped in demon worship by constructing latrines and providing safe drinking water systems. In one of the villages seven people, including the husband of the local witch doctor, came to faith. Now everyone is praying that his wife will follow.¹⁰ Practical service opened the door to a new people group.

Worship and praise lead powerfully into intercession. Paul and Silas chose to sing hymns in a Philippian jail; an earthquake freed them from chains and the jailer's whole family came to faith. Jenny Mayhew intercedes for nations through worship, recorded song and praying Scripture. When she heard that Afghanistan was experiencing a three-year drought, Jenny went there with a friend and found a place to stay. The two worshiped and prayed day and night for seven days. After they finished, it rained for twenty-four hours straight.¹¹ Together, praise and prayer had secured a breakthrough.

A multiethnic group of InterVarsity students and alumni at a large Los Angeles university decided to move into a private dorm filled with international students and people involved in drugs and alternative lifestyles. Residents pooled their money for meals and worked together to maintain the dorm and prepare food, so there were many opportunities to build relationships. Tanya, the first woman who moved in, was immediately hit with nightmares and difficulty sleeping. Sensing a spiritual attack, the group prayed for her each evening until the nightmares stopped. The students quickly began a nightly prayer

meeting for their team and a weekly worship and prayer meeting for all the Christians in the dorm. Recognizing the intensity of the spiritual opposition they were facing, they began their second year with a prayer offensive. They walked through each floor of the high-rise, praying as they walked, and ended on the roof. They freed up one of their rooms for a twenty-four-hour prayer vigil with an emphasis on the world.

The group also did works of service. They sat in the section of the cafeteria usually occupied by Chinese students and sought to make friends there. They met weekly for conversation with people desiring English practice. When conflict arose over a meal prepared for the Chinese New Year, they wanted to make peace. The advertising planned for the dinner had not materialized and a number of non-Chinese students missed the meal. One of these students posted a letter sharply criticizing the meal organizer, and soon non-Chinese were pitted against Chinese. The non-Chinese were angered that their money had helped pay for an expensive meal enjoyed by several Chinese guests but not by many of them. Group members approached this racial rift indirectly. To celebrate the last day of Chinese New Year, dumpling festival day, they got non-Chinese and Chinese friends to join them in preparing tiny gift packets for every resident of the dorm. Each packet contained some Chinese candy, a fortune cookie (a Chinese American treat) and a note explaining the festival. The note added that the gift was from Chinese and non-Chinese. After residents discovered the packets in their mailboxes, a sense of peace returned to the dorm. Both Chinese and non-Chinese students felt affirmed; the group had brought a tiny bit of shalom into their world.

Group members studied the Gospel of Mark with interested people and offered an easy English Bible study. During a two-year period they welcomed six international students into the kingdom, and Tanya, the woman who had been attacked spiritually at the beginning, had the greatest impact of all. Their friendship and service

attracted people to Jesus, and their aggressive and persistent prayer secured the spiritual authority needed for victory.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Personal Reflection

1. What Scriptural prayers would be appropriate for my friends? What lies might they believe that keep them from Jesus? What idols keep them from seeing the truth?
2. *Lectio divina* passages
 - Matthew 6:7-13
 - Luke 10:17-20
 - Ephesians 1:17-23
 - Ephesians 2:1-10
 - Ephesians 6:10-20

Group Discussion

1. What have you learned about God and his speaking as you have practiced listening prayer?
2. What questions do you have about the chapter? What do you like and not like?
3. What authority do we have in Christ with regard to the spirit world? On what do you base your answer?

Group Application

This next week, choose a common time to skip a meal or forgo something normally enjoyed to pray for friends and to debrief.

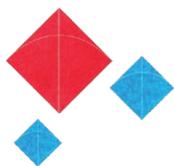
Suggested Resources

- *Experiencing Healing Prayer: How God Turns Our Hurts into Wholeness* by Rick Richardson. This book helps us find the sources

of our emotional and spiritual wounds and shares how we can pray for others who are hurting.

- *Spiritual Warfare in Mission* by Mary Anne Voelkel and Jack Voelkel. This booklet provides an introduction along with help in preparing for and defending against attacks while doing cross-cultural ministry.
- *Pray for the World: A New Prayer Resource from Operation World* by Patrick Johnstone. An informative prayer guide to the nations of the world.
- “The Flaw of the Excluded Middle” by Paul G. Hiebert, in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 4th ed. This article describes the needs filled by folk religions and suggests biblical ways to address them.
- *The Bondage Breaker* by Neil T. Anderson. This book contains specific steps to break bondages.
- Freedom in Christ Ministries, ficm.org. Founded by Neil Anderson, this international group can provide training in inner healing and deliverance.
- Restoring the Foundations, <http://rtfi.org>. Founded by Chester and Betsy Kylstra, this is another international organization that can provide training.
- Crossingculturesbook.org/breakingfree. This article contains steps to help international students and others break free from personal and family bondages, a prayer from *The Bondage Breaker* in simplified English, and suggestions for thinking through how to handle questionable cultural practices.

Developing Trust Relationships



As ALICE WALKED INTO the small music practice room on the campus of a large Midwestern university, she wasn't sure what to expect. She was familiar with Western music from years of piano lessons and high school chorus, but participating in a traditional Chinese choir was definitely outside her comfort zone. A Caucasian campus minister desiring to better understand the Chinese students on her campus, she had somehow made the cut during auditions. Now she was plunging in to a world of lyrics written in Chinese characters and music indicated by numbers rather than notes on a scale. The student choir director conducted rehearsals in Mandarin only, and Alice knew barely five words of the language. All these difficulties began to dampen her enthusiasm for entering incarnationally into the choir.

But Alice chose to persevere through the difficult rehearsals. New friends whispered instructions and wrote out Chinese words for her in *Pinyin*, the phonetic spelling system for Mandarin. Alice listened to the music repeatedly while driving from place to place. One weekend she spent five or six hours at a Chinese dumpling party held by the choir, learning from the experience of being hosted by international students rather than hosting them.

When February arrived, the choir was invited to sing at a citywide Chinese New Year celebration, and Alice only knew about half of the words they were to sing. In spite of her fear of performing poorly she lined up with the other choir members in their traditional choir clothing and sang and lip-synced her way through the fifteen minute concert. Alice, who describes herself as a perfectionist, was humbled at having to lip-sync. But she was also grateful; God had used her efforts at incarnation to increase her understanding of and open doors into the Chinese community at the university.

By spending a semester learning to sing traditional Chinese music Alice showed love and honor for Chinese culture and built trust with an entire people group on campus. After that semester Chinese students, remembering her as the American who had learned to sing their music, were more open to relationship. Alice had to leave her comfortable Christian community and her familiar Western music behind and enter fully into a new world for a few hours each week. Her effort required persistence, sacrifice and humility, but she was motivated and empowered by Jesus.¹

JESUS ENTERED OUR WORLD

Jesus left the joy of the Father's immediate presence, entered in fully to our earthly experience and identified with our pain. Embodying the goodness and beauty of the Trinity, he demonstrated love and honor for humankind. He entered our world as a humble learner, growing up as a child subject to parents and teachers. Taking the role of a wandering rabbi, he displayed humility, acceptance, integrity and servanthood. He was good news, and he preached good news: being, doing and sharing were perfectly aligned in his life. Jesus was a genius at building trust. He developed trust with his disciples, with a larger group of followers that included a number of women and with the crowds that followed him. He went fishing with the fishermen, had the tax collector host a dinner for him and frequented the home of

Mary, Martha and Lazarus. He told stories using everyday elements from the experience of his listeners. As individuals and groups got to know him better over time, trust bonds developed.

Sometimes when Jesus entered the life of one member of a family or community, it opened doors to an entire group, as with the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42). The trust he built with the woman led to an opportunity to enter her village. And after two days with Jesus, the townspeople told her, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world” (John 4:42).

**BUILDING TRUST WITH THE SAMARITAN WOMAN:
JESUS' EXAMPLE (JOHN 4:1-42)**

- Entering Samaria, Jesus crossed cultural and religious barriers (vv. 3-4).
- He risked his reputation by speaking to an outcast woman (v. 7).
- He took a posture of humility and need in relating to the woman (v. 7)
- Jesus showed respect to her as a woman by giving her spiritual teaching (vv. 10-24).
- He was authentic with her and revealed his identity (v. 26).
- Jesus' transforming acceptance enabled the woman to become a witness to her village (vv. 28-30).

You may not be able to plunge into another culture by crossing a border or even by spending a few hours a week learning a new language and music. But you can always enter the frame of reference—the mental and emotional world—of new friends.² Start by asking questions about their lives and families, and answering similar questions about yourself. As you enter their lives, your first challenge is to develop trust.

BUILDING TRUST

Building trust begins with entering our friends' worlds. It continues as we ask the one question that should have priority over all others in crosscultural relationships: *Will what we plan to do or say build or undermine trust?*²³ Developing trust across cultures requires discernment; what builds trust in one society might undermine it in another. In France I built trust by spending time with friends at cafes discussing deep philosophical and spiritual questions. Some friends from seminary developed relationships in Japan by being actively involved with people. They started a nonprofit organization to involve Japanese in short-term service and learning experiences in Cambodia. Many board members of the nonprofit and most of the people who go to Cambodia to serve are not followers of Jesus. But my friends build trust with them as they work together.

In one nation talking together builds trust; in another, working together is important. How can we discover how to develop trust in a new culture? One crucial practice is seeking partners from the cultures we are trying to enter. As is now well known, the center of gravity of the Christian world has shifted to the south and east. Both numerical growth and spiritual dynamism characterize the church in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Similar growth and dynamism abound in the nonwhite churches in the West. Caucasians working with international students and immigrants often have multiple potential partners.

Seek partners. Look first for partners in the Christian community: is there an ethnic church nearby or ethnic Bible studies on campus? Connecting with fellow believers who know the language and culture should be a priority. When I first began ministry, my friend Daniel Ming became a valued cultural teacher (*informant* is the anthropological term) for me as I entered the world of the only eight Chinese scholars in Raleigh. Daniel, whose family had come to the United States from Taiwan when he was young, spoke fluent Mandarin, and

he knew how to respectfully challenge the middle-aged researchers we were tutoring in English. He introduced me to the pastor of the local Chinese church and helped me get Bibles in Chinese, something that wasn't as easy in those days. And when the first scholar decided to follow Jesus, Daniel was there to confirm that he was ready and to pray with him in Mandarin.

Carolynn Hudson, a campus minister who spent years partnering with Chinese fellowships and churches in outreach to scholars from China, presents the arguments for partnership well:

When internationals see equal partnerships among westerners and Christian internationals, the argument that Christianity is a western religion loses weight. When we, through our equal partnerships, encourage internationals to be involved in a context where Christianity is modeled out in their own cultural style, the very real danger that hampers reentry, the taking on of so much of western Christian culture, is lessened. Because partners from other cultures understand things about their culture we can never hope to, partnership is the only thing that makes sense.⁴

Partnership with insider cultural informants is also crucial when working with immigrant populations, so persevere in developing partnerships. Be sure to show respect for the pastor or leader, and emphasize your desire to learn and serve. Of course children of immigrant parents and children of missionaries make great cultural informants, so you may discover that the best partners are already members of your group. If finding partners locally is difficult, contact a denominational mission board or campus ministry with international links.

Practice acceptance and honor. Missionary anthropologist Marvin Mayers states that acceptance of the other is an integral part of the trust-building process.⁵ Acceptance doesn't necessarily imply

agreement, but it does imply respect. We can disagree with peoples' behavior or beliefs, but still communicate respect for them. Westerners who aren't accustomed to thinking in terms of honor and shame don't fully comprehend the power of honor and respect to show love to individuals and groups. Both the Old Testament and New Testament words for blessing include the notion of honoring; the reverse is also true: to honor is also to bless.⁶ So when we honor a friend's culture by taking it seriously, we bless that person and show love that can lead them to the blessing of Jesus. Jesus often honored people with his attention and presence. When he invited himself to a meal at Zacchaeus's home (although no meal is mentioned in the text, hospitality customs of the times demanded it), he demonstrated acceptance to a Jewish outcast, a hated tax collector. Just a few hours in Jesus' presence transformed Zacchaeus; unconditional love and honor brought the ultimate blessing of salvation (Luke 19:1-10).

While trying to show acceptance, we must be careful not to inadvertently communicate rejection by negative evaluations of our friends' work, ideas or group. Since people from group-oriented cultures often think holistically, they may not be able to separate themselves from their work or ideas. So criticism of their work or thoughts may be taken as rejection. And we can hurt peoples' feelings by expressing disapproval of their governments, religions or cultures. No matter how well-deserved the criticism is, it can cause great offense. Many people do not know the facts about their governments' bad actions in the past but are very aware of the misdeeds of Western nations. It is wise to never say anything that reflects poorly on the government, religion or culture of a new friend.

One of the best ways to honor people is to inquire about their families and cultural backgrounds. I have a world atlas on my coffee table; when new groups of international students come for dinner, everyone shows the group their hometown on one of the maps in the atlas and tells a bit about their city and region. Students sometimes

share so enthusiastically that I feel like I am watching competing travelogs, but they feel loved, and I learn more about their countries.

GIVING AND RECEIVING HOSPITALITY

Basic hospitality in many cultures assumes that every guest, even one who stops by for a moment, will be served snacks and beverages. These may be as simple as water and crackers, if that is all you have. But you must honor guests by serving them. The following are some tips:

- When anyone enters your home, serve them drinks and snacks. If you fail to do so, it may give the impression that you are upset with them or that you don't value them.
- If your guests don't eat or drink anything, don't worry. They are not required to eat. The only requirement is that you serve.
- Don't ask, "Can I get you something to drink?" because they may say no. Their culture may require them to say no because they can't demand to be served. Just serve something.
- Simple drinks and snacks to have on hand include tea, water, soda, dried fruit, nuts, cookies and crackers.

A few other suggestions:

- Greet people when they enter the room, even if it interrupts a conversation. Walk them to the door when they leave, and stand at the door until they leave the driveway.
- Anticipate the needs of your guests. Watch for empty cups or glasses and fill them.
- Always say yes when friends invite you into their homes, and enjoy their hospitality. It will build the friendship and ensure that giving is two-way.

Note: Thanks to Beth Lindahl for preparing the material in this sidebar.

When there are only one or two folks present, the Internet can help us enter their contexts. I first met Raina, from India, at a welcome dinner for international students. We shared a mutual interest in the field of communication, so I invited her to my home for dinner to get better acquainted. After the meal Raina found lovely pictures of her

hometown and boarding school online. My admiration for the beauty of what she showed me communicated honor. Later on in the friendship we watched an Indian movie together. By that time Raina knew the kinds of things I would enjoy, and she chose a film full of natural beauty and Indian dance. I was delighted, and she was pleased to share with me as I had been sharing with her. Allowing people to teach and give to us shows both honor and love.

When you first invite someone to your home, don't be surprised if they bring along a small gift. Gift-giving is an important way to build relationships in many cultures, so when *you* visit new friends, don't arrive empty-handed. Bring a snack or other small present. If unsure of an appropriate gift, ask someone who is an insider in the culture. Lebanese-born evangelist Fouad Masri encourages giving copies of the New Testament to Muslims. He tells the story of a Spanish couple who hosted and became friends with Haytham, a devout Muslim who was vacationing in Europe. Haytham experienced Christian hospitality from this couple and was eager to read the New Testament they gave him. Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God," changed Haytham's life, and he was baptized a year after meeting the Spanish couple.⁷ Hospitality and gift giving built horizontal trust, and the gift itself led to trust in God.

Learn. As we enter our friends' lives with an honoring attitude, we become culture learners. Learning even a few words of a language can provide insights into a culture. Consider asking a new friend for a language exchange partnership that would involve spending half of your time together teaching and learning both languages. You may learn valuable lessons about culture as you learn the language, and you will enter the experience of your new friend in a special way.

If learning the language is too difficult, you should at least learn some new vocabulary. When Chinese and Korean friends taught me different words for younger and older brother and sister, for example, I began to understand things about family relationships that I hadn't

seen before. Every time I serve as a conversation partner or just make friends with a student or scholar, I make sure to learn something from

THE FIRST MEETING

- Learn the person's *true name*, not the Western nickname they may have chosen.
- Write down a phonetic spelling of that name, have them repeat it several times and *practice until you can pronounce it correctly*. Addressing a person by their home country name shows a desire to get to know the real person.
- If you realize that you are really not pronouncing your friend's name very well after much effort, ask what name they would prefer for you to use.
- Come prepared with a small map of your friend's home country or find one online and have him or her *show you their hometown*; do the same for your hometown.
- Ask to see *photos of family members*; perhaps your friend can take you to a social media platform for his or her country; do the same for your family.
- Ask about your friend's *field of study or line of work*.
- As soon as the time with your friend is done, *make some notes* of what you learned so you can pray specifically and remember family names and details for next time.

them about their history or culture. If you are not naturally fascinated by cultural differences, ask God to give you his love for diversity. Alice acknowledged that it took a while for her to really appreciate traditional Chinese music, but her time investment eventually brought true enjoyment.

Approach differences as learners. As we build relationships cross-culturally, we may experience discomfort. Susan, an American Christian student at a small college in the Midwest, was busy washing dishes after having prepared a meal for a large group of international students. Kevin, an international Christian member of her fellowship,

approached her and said, “Fetch me some water.” Susan was shocked; couldn’t Kevin see she was busy and exhausted? What right did he have to boss her around? But, remembering Jesus’ example of serving, she got the water for him. Later she asked a woman from Kevin’s home country for a clarification of Kevin’s behavior. “In our country, women always serve people, especially men and the elders,” explained the friend. This gave Susan the information she needed to share with Kevin how she had felt about the incident.⁸

When we begin relationships with people from other cultures or enter a new workplace, school, or neighborhood, we will encounter differences caused by differing values. Our attitude toward those differences will determine how well we are able to flourish in the new environment. What will we do with the frustration, confusion, stress, embarrassment or tension we feel? The “Approaching Differences” diagram in figure 4.1 depicts two ways we could respond.

The upper track of figure 4.1 suggests four coping behaviors that will lead to greater understanding: observing, inquiring, listening and initiating. Using even one of the strategies can be extremely helpful. Crosscultural trainer Duane Elmer, one of the original designers of

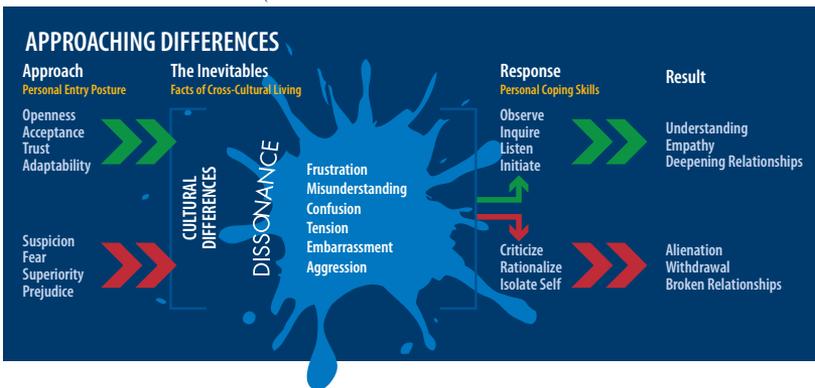


Figure 4.1. Approaching differences

this diagram, gives the example of nearness in conversation. If I am uncomfortable because it feels like people are standing too near me to talk, it is good to observe when that behavior occurs in the new environment. It could be a sign of the desire to build a friendship. Elmer cites a Middle Eastern proverb that speaks of friendship as “sharing of one another’s breath.”⁹ Respectfully asking an insider to explain behaviors we find confusing—as Susan did when upset by Kevin—can help us overcome frustration.

The lower track of the diagram gives responses to differences that will hurt relationship building. We will inevitably experience some of the feelings listed in the center section of the diagram if we enter into another society deeply. And friends entering into our society will as well. But choosing the behaviors described in the lower track—criticism, rationalization or isolation—will slow the development of relationships and cultural understanding. Responding to differences with humility and openness, as the upper track choices allow us to do, will enable us to love, learn and develop trust. We can ask the Holy Spirit to help us realize when we’re headed in the direction of the lower track and change course. We can also share this diagram with friends entering our society; there is an inexpensive bookmark picturing the two tracks that makes a good welcome gift.¹⁰

UNDERSTAND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Awareness of a few basic cultural differences that impact relationships will also help us build trust more effectively (see the “Cultural Differences That Affect Relationships” sidebar). Like all generalizations about culture, the sidebars in this book should be treated as pointers to prayerful thought and discussion, not statements of 100 percent fact. It’s also crucial to remember that most individuals and groups *belong somewhere on a continuum* between the two poles of individualism and collectivism rather than at the extremes.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES THAT AFFECT RELATIONSHIPS	
Majority US Culture^a	Many Non-Western Cultures
individualist thinking	collectivist (group-oriented) thinking
short-term friendships	long-term friendships
low obligation friendships	high obligation friendships
time orientation	event orientation
goal orientation	relationship orientation
equality emphasis	hierarchy emphasis
mixed gender friendships	mixed gender friendships less common

^aI use the term "Majority US Culture" because I don't want to make assumptions about other Western nations.

Individualism and collectivism. Individualism and collectivism lurk just below the surface culturally, but they exert a strong influence on thinking and behavior, determining where people get a sense of identity. Collectivists, group-oriented people, get their identities from membership in a group: family, nation or community. Individualists get identity from what they do. Entering the frame of reference of collectivists requires us to get to know the friends and family of new acquaintances. Collectivists may feel more comfortable in pairs when they enter new settings; they may bring friends along to social occasions and Bible discussions. So always have more than enough food or Bibles. When a new friend brings friends to meet us, a certain degree of trust has usually already been built. In every society there is a percentage of people who exhibit the opposite cultural pattern, and globalization and the Internet encourage individualism, so observe and listen carefully to discern how strongly collectivism influences your friends.

Getting to know family members of collectivists will build trust. One Christmas my Indian friend Raina was headed home to see her mother, and I had a strong sense that I should send a present to her

mom. Thinking this might be a leading from the Lord, I wrapped up a beautiful crystal candlestick and wrote a short note to her mom telling her how much I appreciated my friendship with her daughter and honoring her for parenting such a delightful friend. There was no exaggeration at all in the note; Raina had become very dear to me. This act of honoring led to an email friendship with Raina's mom, and my relationship with Raina grew.

Individualism and collectivism also affect how *groups* practice hospitality and outreach. When Bette moved to a city on the US-Mexican border, she quickly discovered that her Latino home helper, Lola, was a sister in Christ and began a friendship with her. One fall the two women discovered that both of their churches were planning fun festivals for children. The person in charge at Bette's church asked all the parents to donate candy and let her know in advance how many children they would be bringing. She carefully planned a series of game stations. Thirty-five children came, and each went home with a bag of candy. Lola's church did things differently. This is how Bette tells it:

The next time I saw Lola, I asked how *her* church event went. It was a huge success, she said. Over one hundred children came. Word of their party spread through the neighborhood and a lot of children who never went to church showed up. I wondered how Lola's church fit all those children in their tiny facility. She admitted it was very crowded. I wondered if her church had enough candy for all the children. Well no, she admitted. At the last minute, though, someone showed up bringing a cake. So there was enough for all the kids to go home with sweets.

Two churches, two successful events and two very different ways of achieving—and viewing—that success. The women in my church would have panicked if a hundred children showed up at their party. Not Lola's church. It never occurred to them to register children ahead of time and tell families to bring only

that number of children. How mean. What if some children got left out? What if whole families got left out? If one family in the neighborhood decided to come, all their cousins might be visiting and want to come, too. Latino church members just invited everyone they could think of, welcomed all comers, adapted on the spot, and rejoiced at the wonderful turnout from the neighborhood.¹¹

Collectivist hospitality enabled the Latino church to touch many in their neighborhood. Their desire to include everyone and their relaxed attitude toward food enabled them to draw in newcomers in ways the Anglo church could not.

Short term, long term. Since friendships in non-Western cultures are often long-lasting, it is wise to focus on one or two crosscultural friendships rather than many. When you meet a number of people, ask God to lead you to one or two he has in mind for you to know deeply. How do you discern which person to build a relationship with? In Luke 10:5-7 Jesus commanded his disciples to stay with people of peace, families who would welcome and provide for the wandering preachers he had sent out by twos. People of peace demonstrate openness to us and to Jesus, want to welcome us into their lives, and have potential to impact their families and friends. Invitations to meals and parties should be made to entire groups—including group members you haven't met. But make other plans for coffee or tea with one or two people. Once you are sure of the people God wants you to connect with, plan regular time with your new friends and seek to discover what will help the friendship grow.

As you begin developing a new friendship, it is wise to spend time in your friend's home or community and become acquainted with his or her friends or roommates. This conscious effort to relate to the community will help to minimize the possible resentment group members might feel about the extra time you spend with their friend.

If you stop by to visit, bring fruit for the entire apartment or family. Being friendly and hospitable with the friends of your friend could open up the hearts of the entire group.

In an international student context, you may be paired with someone through a friendship partner or language tutoring program. If your new friend shows no sign of being a person of peace, then God may intend for you to prepare the soil or plant a seed that others will water. Mitchell, a campus minister in North Carolina, recently shared this experience:

Shaodong has attended every social event, been to our house for Thanksgiving twice and stayed at our house last Christmas. However, she never showed interest in spiritual things. To my great surprise she came to our last Bible study this semester. With a big smile, she hung on every word and clearly allowed the Holy Spirit to plant a seed. I gave her a Chinese New Testament and an evangelistic book called *The Journey*. She took them with excitement on her face. I said goodbye to Shaodong yesterday as she is returning to China. Let the seed grow, Lord. Grow it deep.

Mitchell and his wife's unconditional love for Shaodong planted a seed that someone else will water.

Obligation. As you get to know people well, don't be surprised at requests for help in areas that are beyond your ability. In many group-oriented societies friendships involve high obligation, and people get things done through connections. One of the first Chinese scholars I became close to in 1980–1982 later asked me to get a scholarship for his niece to attend university here, something I couldn't do. With the help of the Christian community, however, I have sometimes been able to extend help in difficult situations. When a Chinese friend and new believer was cited unfairly with a pedestrian traffic violation a few years back, a lawyer from my church volunteered her time to do

some research and got the case dismissed. This act of love and the care of dear friends I had asked to accompany my friend to court led to unprecedented openness to the gospel on the part of his mother. So, if a new friend asks for help, prayerfully consider whether someone you know can help, even if the request is something you yourself cannot handle. Always pray for discernment about requests that are out of the ordinary. In some cases you may be asked to do something that is immoral, illegal or both. Saying no may end the relationship, but your relationship with God must never be sacrificed for the sake of ministry.

Goal and time orientation. If you are involved in a weekly language exchange or Bible study, avoid the temptation to be too goal oriented in your time together; remember to spend good time simply catching up with your friend each time you meet. Alice tells of an evening Bible study she had with her Thai friend Nahm at Nahm's apartment. Nahm wanted to find out about Alice's life and share about her own before starting the study, but Alice, aware of her time limitations, sought to begin the study after about ten minutes of sharing. Eventually Alice realized that sharing about their lives was a crucial part of the relationship. If you are visiting an international friend's home, plan on spending more time than you initially think is sufficient. Accepting hospitality from or receiving something from our friends strengthens the relationship by adding the crucial component of mutuality. When visiting friends or attending a cultural event, Westerners will often need to let go of our time orientation and become more event oriented, relaxing when things seem to happen later than announced and using the time to communicate with our friends.

Equality and hierarchy. In the United States and some other Western nations we emphasize equality among people of different social statuses and downplay the distance between those in power (parents, teachers, professors, pastors, political leaders) and those with less power. Our informal ways with those in authority may shock

people from non-Western nations. When we enter the worlds of non-Western friends, we need to keep power distance in mind and show proper respect for elders and those in authority. And we need to know how we ourselves are viewed on the power-distance continuum: as teachers or Bible study leaders we might well be seen as deserving such respect that people would never make us lose face by asking questions we couldn't answer. And when some non-Westerners start thinking about God, hierarchical thinking may help them realize his greatness and glory but keep them from understanding his desire for intimate relationship.

Mixed gender relationships. In cultures where one-to-one friendships with members of the opposite sex are less prevalent, both men and women need to remember that actions that might communicate simple friendliness in one culture could be inappropriate in another culture. Asking informants about proper behavior between sexes will prevent missteps.

One-to-one friendships with members of the opposite sex are not appropriate in some cultures, especially Muslim cultures. When a group is engaging another group, it is fine for women to invite groups of men and women to group meals or parties. But one-to-one meetings with a Muslim of the opposite sex can be confusing and hurtful. A few years back, Dottie, a student leader in an InterVarsity group, agreed to spend time with Ali, a Palestinian friend with some interest in Christianity. Early on, Ali made it clear that he was mostly pursuing Christianity because he had romantic feelings for Dottie. I urged her to get a Christian brother involved with Ali and stop seeing him alone. Ali did meet once with the local InterVarsity campus minister but did not follow up. Meanwhile Dottie continued seeing him in hopes of leading him to Jesus. After some months she made it clear that she had no intention of pursuing a dating relationship. Ali was hurt; he had investigated the faith because of her, and now she was leaving the relationship. There was pain on both sides, and he stopped

exploring Christianity. Women, if an international man is not willing to seek the faith with the help of a Christian man, do not think that you can lead that man to the Lord. Men, please get a Christian woman involved with any international woman seeker. If seekers are not willing to meet with someone of their own gender, then they are probably not true seekers. Following this simple guideline will help you avoid much misunderstanding.

ASSUME UNIQUENESS

Awareness of cultural differences like those previously outlined could cause us to fall into cultural stereotyping, assuming that all our friends from a certain society will follow the same cultural script. Instead of assuming that every person from the same society is like every other, it is wiser to assume that each person we meet is *unique*. And seeking to bring our assumptions and the assumptions of our friends to the surface will increase our cultural understanding and help us avoid the confusion that slows trust-building.

We have already seen how Susan and Kevin's differing assumptions about women's roles brought confusion to Susan. She easily could have decided that Kevin was self-centered and inconsiderate—a misattribution. Instead she investigated to discover Kevin's assumptions about hospitality and was able to avoid potential conflict. Exploring our assumptions and those of our friends can be critical in the trust-building process. Discussing some of these cultural differences with a language partner can help both partners understand each other more deeply.

TRUSTING CHRISTIANS: THE FIRST STAGE OF CONVERSION

As you deliberately seek to deepen the relationship through spending time together, becoming a learner and engaging in activities that enable you to receive, trust will grow and so will your joy in the relationship. At some point you will realize that your friends have reached

ASSUMPTIONS AND ATTRIBUTIONS

- *Assumptions* are the basic building blocks of a worldview, and differing assumptions lie behind most *crosscultural misunderstanding*.
- When interacting with members of our own culture, we often make the *assumption of sameness*.
- When interacting crossculturally, it may be wiser to make the *assumption of difference*.
- Each individual is unique, and there are *generational, geographic and minority culture variations* in every nation.
- Therefore when meeting people from different cultures, we should *assume that each individual is unique*. New friends may or may not be like others you've met from the same country.
- Words and actions carry different meanings in different societies. So we may *attribute* character or motives to others that are not true, and they may do the same for us.
- *Misattributions*, often negative ones, occur when people incorrectly assume they understand the words and actions of others.
- When you encounter *confusion* or *conflict* in crosscultural situations, try to determine the *underlying assumptions* of each person or group involved. There may be misattributions due to different assumptions. *Surfacing assumptions* will become the first step to resolving the problem.^a

Note: I am indebted to Lisa Espineli Chinn for the basic outline of this sidebar.

^aSee Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), for help in understanding and resolving conflicts.

what Don Everts and Doug Schaupp call the first threshold or stage of postmodern conversion: trusting a Christian.¹² Chapter eight will describe all five stages described by Everts and Schaupp, but establishing trust is the critical first stage.

An English teacher in a refugee resettlement agency in a Southwestern city, Peter learned to play soccer when he first started getting to know refugee families. He also learned how to say hello and

goodbye in Burmese, Farsi, Arabic, Bantu, French, Congolese, Thai, Korean and Chinese. Though he sometimes mispronounced the words and made his friends laugh, his efforts to acquire even a few words began to build trust. From his short-term mission experience Peter knew that observation was critical when entering new cultures. After a month in his job at the agency he noticed that the Americans employed there went to restaurants or went home for lunch, but the resettlement workers who were refugees themselves would bring their lunches and eat together in the agency break room. So he decided to pack a lunch and join them each day.

Within two weeks Peter had heard peoples' immigration stories, seen pictures of their children and enjoyed a few jokes. After three weeks he no longer had to bring lunch because his friends wanted to share their food with him; their tasty lunches were a lot better than peanut butter and jelly! He became an informant for his coworkers, explaining aspects of American culture they found strange. Shamin, one of his lunch friends, asked him to pray for physical healing for her husband. When her husband improved she continued to ask for prayer; a door was opened to share about Jesus with this couple. Peter's friends from the break room eventually asked him to advocate for the needs of the refugee community with the local municipality, a sign of how much they trusted him. Peter's choice to spend time eating with his refugee colleagues five days a week—hearing their stories and entering their worlds—developed trust with an entire community.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Personal Reflection

1. Think of a time when you have entered another culture. What was your experience like? Use figure 4.1 to explain your answer.
2. *Lectio divina* passages. Imagine yourself as a character or spectator

in each of these stories about Jesus crossing cultural or gender lines. What do you feel or think? Why?

- John 4:4-15
- Luke 7:1-10
- Matthew 15:21-28
- Luke 7:36-50
- Luke 19:1-10

Group Discussion

1. Debrief how your fasting or other activity done for the sake of prayer happened. What did you notice?
2. Which of the markers of cultural differences mentioned in the chapter do you notice in your fellowship or workplace?
3. What ways of building trust suggested by the author will you pursue in a crosscultural relationship of yours?

Group Application

Enter another community for a few hours: attend a cultural celebration or association meeting, eat at an authentic restaurant where another language is spoken (best done in pairs). If possible, get an insider cultural informant to accompany you.

Suggested Resources

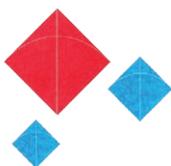
- *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* by Duane Elmer. This practical book illuminates cultural conflict situations and provides effective strategies to deal with them.
- *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility* by Duane Elmer. How do you communicate respect and build trust with people from other cultures while avoiding misunderstanding?
- *Crossing Cultures Here and Now: Friendships with International Students* by Lisa Espineli Chinn (available at tiny.cc/cchn). This

booklet provides a good introduction to building trust relationships with international students.

- *Figuring Foreigners Out: A Practical Guide* by Craig Storti. This self-study workbook helps people from all cultures prepare to encounter cultural differences.
- *Daughters of Islam: Building Bridges with Muslim Women* by Miriam Adeney. This book provides helpful insights for building friendships and sharing the faith with Muslim women.
- Crossingculturesbook.org/chinese. This article by Carolynn Hudson sheds light on the cultural value of obligation.

Examining Worldview Lenses

Logs and Specks



IN THE EARLY DAYS OF the international fellowship at North Carolina State, an American grad couple involved in the group struggled to live on the husband's small research assistant pay. More than once Frank and Susan found envelopes containing cash on their doorstep. We eventually learned that our Malaysian "little brothers," Andy and Ben, the recipients of generous stipends to study poultry science from a well-known fried chicken company, were behind the mystery envelopes. Ben was a new Christian already experiencing the joy of sharing.

My Indian friend Raina grew up in a home that doubled as an office for her father, a homeopathic doctor. Patients would wait their turn to see him, sometimes for hours. "We didn't have a lot of money, but we provided meals for them," she said. "There's a saying in India, 'Treat your guests as if they're gods.'" I observed the same kind of sacrificial generosity among Raina and her friends; they liberally shared apartment space, cars and food with each other. Every time I see such kindness among international friends, I am faced with my own tendency to keep what I have rather than give freely as Jesus commanded.

My friends—Christian and non-Christian alike—find it easier to practice generosity because of their group-oriented backgrounds. Interacting with them over the years is helping me deal with a worldview cultural blinder: preoccupation with my own needs and the belief that I and everyone else should be self-reliant. As we enter crosscultural friendships, we need to have our cultural blinders removed. As we seek our friends' help to see these cultural blinders, they may follow our example and discover some of *their* blinders as well.

CULTURE, WORLDVIEW AND LENSES

The Father, Son and Spirit see reality without distortion, but human beings see through the lenses of our own cultural values and worldviews. These lenses influence our understandings of God, Scripture, the Christian life and evangelism, highlighting certain truths and obscuring others. Prayerfully learning about our own and others' worldviews may enable us to see how our various cultures reflect and fall short of the image of God. We will also understand the Bible with less distortion and view the gospel in new ways.

Jesus likened culture, worldview and value systems to healthy or unhealthy eyes. He first mentions them in the context of attitudes toward money:

The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. (Matthew 6:22-24)

The Greek words for healthy and unhealthy imply generous and stingy. Our cultural values may enable us to see reality clearly or walk in

CULTURE AND THE IMAGE OF GOD

- *Culture* may be defined as a shared system of meanings and values that shapes the attitudes and behavior of a group.^a Culture structures human relationships and relationships with the earth.
- God's command to fill, subdue and rule over the entire earth in Genesis 1:28 is a command to create culture: this is *the cultural mandate*.^b
- *As representatives of and rulers under God*, Adam and Eve were to relate to God, self, others and the earth in ways that reflect the image of God.
- When the image of God in the first couple was marred by their disobedience, all their relationships were marred; the cultures they created reflect both *God's image* and *the distortion of that image*.
- *God honors human cultures and culture making* by including both in the new creation (see Revelation 21–22).
- We are to *look for* the image of God in cultures, *work for the healing* of those places where God's image is marred, and *develop societies and cultural creations* that honor God.

^aThis definition elaborates on one given by Patty Lane in *A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 16.

^bSee Andy Crouch, *Culture Making* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), for a discussion of the implications of this command.

blindness. In Matthew 7 Jesus refers to eyes when warning against judging others:

Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (Matthew 7:3-5 NASB)

We may think we see a speck, a misunderstanding of truth, in an international friend's worldview, but Jesus warns us to make sure that there

are no logs in our own eyes before trying to correct the vision of a friend.

When I visit my eye doctor, she looks for a set of lenses that will correct my vision 100 percent. The exam includes identifying a set of lenses that, taken together, lead to good vision. I repeatedly choose between lenses until a good combination is found. Many lenses are necessary to arrive at the prescription. Interacting with people who see the world through different lenses can help correct our cultural vision problems. As we get to know new friends crossculturally, our hidden assumptions may rise to the surface and we can—under the leading of the Holy Spirit—adopt new lenses (assumptions) that are closer to God’s. My eye doctor rarely arrives at a prescription that will give me 20/20 vision, but she often comes close. In the same way, our multicultural communities won’t allow us to see God’s truth 100 percent correctly, but they will help us see more clearly than we would otherwise.

Because many parts of worldview are neutral, following Jesus does not entail a complete change in worldview, but it does require the adoption of worldview assumptions that are in agreement with God’s truth. Surfacing our underlying assumptions is critical to reading Scripture correctly and understanding the Christian life and evangelism with fewer cultural distortions.

THREE LAYERS OF CULTURE

Understanding culture and worldview will help us identify our worldview logs more easily. A diagram from *A Beginner’s Guide to Crossing Cultures* pictures culture as an iceberg with three layers (see fig. 5.1).¹

The aspects of culture we can easily see—clothing, food, language and mannerisms—make up *objective culture*; this changes the most easily and quickly when a person enters a new environment. *Subjective culture* includes beliefs, values and feelings that people are not always conscious of but become clear to them when they come into contact with people who hold different beliefs or values.² When we looked at our own assumptions about God (chap. 1) and at strongholds that

keep friends from faith (chap. 3), we were dealing with assumptions at the subjective culture level. *Worldview*, the underlying assumptions about what is real and what is ideal, which determine *how* we think, lies at an even deeper level. Worldview is the layer of culture that is the most difficult to bring to the surface of our minds.³

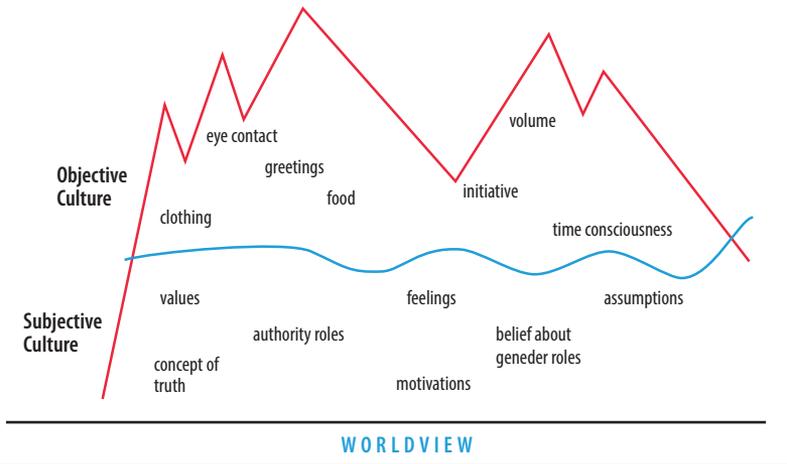


Figure 5.1. Layers of culture

The iceberg image warns us that cultures—both our own and those of our friends—may blind us to truth and shipwreck crosscultural relationships. Surfacing assumptions from the bottom layers will enable us to see our own cultural blinders and navigate crosscultural relationships more easily. This chapter focuses on deep-level worldview assumptions; chapter six examines value systems that are just below the surface.

Surfacing worldviews. Social scientist Richard E. Nisbett has identified two thinking patterns that span millennia: *Western*, particularly Greek, symbolized by Aristotle; and *Eastern*, represented by Confucius. Eastern thought focuses on relationships; thinking is concrete and pictorial; relationships define reality. Nisbett and his colleague Taka Masuda showed students at the University of Michigan and Kyoto University (Japan) eight animations of underwater scenes

with fish in various environments. When asked to describe what they had seen, similar numbers of American and Japanese students referred to the fish, but Japanese students mentioned the environment 60 percent more often. Equal numbers of both groups mentioned movement among active animals, but the Japanese students made almost twice as many references to relationships involving background objects.⁴ Nisbett describes a number of additional studies that demonstrate that East Asians notice environments and relationships more often than Americans.⁵ These thought patterns result in radical differences in subjective culture and worldview.

EASTERN AND WESTERN THOUGHT CONTRASTED

Western Thought

Rules define reality

Universal focus

Control is internal and desirable

Analytical: see objects and divide into categories

Abstract: think in concepts

Future oriented

History is unimportant

Eastern Thought

Relationships define reality

Particularistic (in-group) focus

Control is external

Holistic: see the whole

Concrete: think in pictures

Past oriented

History is foundational

Note: Carolyn Hudson, author of the main article at crossingculturesbook.org/chinese, helped formulate this material.

Our definition of worldview starts with assumptions about what is *real* for a given society. Western thinkers see objects in isolation and place those objects in categories. We construct rules that describe the relationships between objects; these rules define reality for us. Knowledge of these rules gives us a sense of control.⁶ Eastern thinkers see relationships—including relationships with nature—at the heart of reality. There *are* rules about how to live harmoniously in those relationships, but nothing can be completely controlled. Easterners

are also past oriented, which means that history affects them much more than it does Westerners. Seeing everything as constantly changing, Eastern thinkers realize that many things are beyond human control.⁷ Nisbett states that in general the farther West one goes from East Asia, the more individualistic thinking becomes. Some of the characteristics of Eastern thought also hold true for many other collectivist societies, such as those in Africa and minority subcultures in the West.

There are strengths and weaknesses in both of these lenses. Since the Trinity is at the heart of the universe, relationships define reality and give each person identity; Eastern thought understands this crucial truth correctly. But God wants us to get our core-level identity from relationship with *him* rather than with groups. Since individuals are each made in the image of God, then we should honor each person whether or not they have a particular connection to us. In this case, Western universal thinking is more biblical. But the Bible does command families to care for their own and believers to give particular attention to the needs of other believers; these commands represent in-group thinking.

Traditional, modern and postmodern worldviews. Worldviews also determine *how* we think: how we decide what is true and what kind of evidence matters to us. Traditional or premodern worldviews—such as those found among older generations in many non-Western countries—look to tradition for truth and accept the experience of the community as handed down by the elders. People holding modern worldviews look to science to discover truth and want experimental evidence. Postmodern people look to *individual* rather than group experience for evidence. People with both traditional and postmodern worldviews give priority to relationship. Some individuals, especially those who have received a Western education in the sciences, may have traditional assumptions in one area, modern assumptions in another and postmodern assumptions picked up from global media (see

fig. 5.2). When interacting with these individuals, we may notice the postmodern outer layer first and not realize how much the middle or core level assumptions influence them.

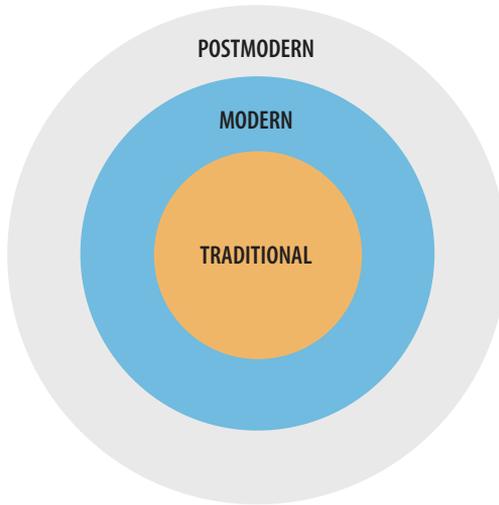


Figure 5.2. Worldview layers

Or people may be in rebellion against the traditional assumptions common in their nations. Many younger people in China are now rejecting the responsibility of caring for parents, a critical aspect of the Confucian ethic of filial piety. Parents are actually suing their children for support in the law courts. But the assumptions we rebel against have a strong pull on us, and people can and do revert to those assumptions as they grow older.

A family may include (1) grandparents or great-grandparents with traces of a traditional or small-town perspective, (2) parents influenced by a modern worldview, which emphasizes the individual and reason, and (3) children captivated by a postmodern outlook. Under the influence of postmodern thinking, many Westerners have adopted some aspects of Eastern thinking. If you are a Westerner who prefers

certain parts of Eastern worldview, rejoice—that will make crossing cultures easier. But remember there is an individualistic emphasis in postmodern thinking that may be underneath the surface.

Western worldview logs. Because our worldview assumptions are often very different from those of the biblical writers, Westerners sometimes misread Scripture. *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* by E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien provides much food for thought for those wanting to dig deeper.⁸ Here I focus on how one deeply hidden assumption we have already noted—the belief that rules define reality—affects our practice of evangelism.

If rules define reality, then we should be able to identify a set of rules and a method for evangelism. I was required to take a church-growth course in seminary; the class taught us how to measure and enhance the numeric growth of churches. That semester I also studied worldview and began thinking about the underlying worldview of the United States. The overlap of topics helped me see clearly how thoroughly American church-growth thinking is. Measurement, methodology and pragmatism characterize basic church-growth teaching. My midterm paper identified some American worldview themes in the movement. This exercise was the first of many efforts to critique my own worldview.

When we understand church growth and evangelism as human activities that can be accomplished by the use of rule-based methods, we may forget that mission is God's activity, and we participate in mission because we share in the life of God. We may prioritize *programs* designed to attract large numbers of people rather than *relationships* where life is shared. More importantly, we may depend more on our research than on the power of God, hoping to control the results by developing a research-based method. There is nothing wrong with doing research and seeking more effective ways to share our faith; programs that facilitate authentic relationships can be extremely fruitful *and* draw large

numbers. But we must remember that this is God's work, and no human methods can control how the Spirit moves. We need to be careful not to allow numbers to become an idol or model reliance on methods rather than on God in our international communities.

Our worldview definition also includes what is *ideal*—what is most highly valued by a society. In prophetic language we might ask what is the idol worshiped by a society. Richards and O'Brien assert that the deep, underlying belief of majority society in the United States is "It's all about me."⁹ Viewed through this lens, the Christian life is seen as a means of self-fulfillment; at a hidden level self is on the throne. People anxiously search to discover God's will for their lives and hope that God will help them succeed and be happy. A veteran missionary to Myanmar observed that current worship music in the United States often reflects this *me*-centeredness. She notes that missionaries leading worship need to choose songs carefully because many societies remember songs more easily than they do Scripture.¹⁰

One part of my dissertation research involved evaluating Bible study guides and other media tools for their usefulness in discipling new converts from East Asia. Because there were very few guides written specifically for international students, I assessed a number of guides designed for Americans in hopes of discovering some that would work well crossculturally. The most memorable observation I made in that part of my research is that not one discipleship guide designed for Americans mentioned the topic of suffering. Scripture, of course, gives a very different picture of the Christian life; Jesus warned his disciples that they would be persecuted (Matthew 5:10-12), and Paul speaks of the fellowship of sharing in Christ's sufferings (Philippians 3:10). For years I studied 1 Peter with international Christian groups because the topic of suffering is so prominent there. But up until recently Americans have been blind to this critical aspect of following Jesus. We don't see pain as part of the Christian life and attempt to flee it. Our brothers and sisters from the rest of the world

have discovered joy in the midst of suffering. Mark Labberton speaks of his friend David Zac Niringiye, an assistant bishop in the Church of Uganda. Zac and his family suffer often, risking their lives to fight against government injustices. Yet Zac rightly asserts that the church in the East and South can teach Western Christians about joy in the midst of suffering.¹¹ In our American search to avoid suffering, we may also be missing joy.

Our abundance of possessions in the United States encourages self-reliance in both individuals and communities. A number of years ago I became acquainted with the general secretary of InterVarsity's sister movement in Ethiopia. Eager to receive the gift of cultural critique, I asked him to honestly tell me what he as an outsider saw about InterVarsity that we probably didn't see. He had just participated in national leadership training meetings with us. "You all are so rich in resources and skills," he said. "I am amazed at how much you have. But it's like you have all this firewood and no fire." I burst into tears. He was speaking truth, enabling me to see our fellowship as I believe God saw us at the time. Our very abundance of resources was keeping us from deep dependence on God. Our deep underlying assumption was "God's work is all about us: our methodology, resources and skills." Just as with my Indian and Malaysian friends, I had glimpsed a large log in our organization's eye through the gift of my Ethiopian brother's eyes.

Surfacing assumptions in community. As we bring to the surface worldview assumptions that are contrary to God's truth in our own cultures, we can model this kind of work for our friends. A campus minister in California realized that the Chinese scholars with whom she related needed to become aware of their hidden worldview assumptions before they could understand the gospel at a deep level. So she encouraged conversation about issues where she could discuss weaknesses in American culture. She brought for discussion an article about corruption in American politics, and this led the scholars to

think critically about why corruption is so prevalent in their own country. Observing her critique of US culture in the light of her Christian beliefs helped the scholars differentiate between Western culture and Christianity, and enabled them to surface some of their own underlying assumptions. One of the Christians in her discussion group began to see how a weakness in Chinese worldview was affecting him. He later shared his thoughts about this in a Chinese Bible study. The campus minister says:

Several months ago I sat in a Mandarin Bible study (someone translated for me) and listened as the mainland Chinese leader said, “We Chinese never think about whether or not a leader deserves our obedience. Rather than cause a problem by disagreeing, we just follow. Only God deserves that kind of obedience. First we must obey God, and after that we can obey man.”¹²

Our friends may become more able to look at the specks in their eyes as they see us dealing with the logs in ours.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Personal Reflection

1. In what ways might you and your community be misreading Scripture because of your worldview lenses?
2. *Lectio divina* passages:
 - Revelation 21:22–22:5
 - Colossians 3:1–11
 - Matthew 6:19–21
 - Matthew 7:1–5
 - 1 Peter 1:3–9

Group Discussion

1. Debrief your crosscultural outing from last week. How did it help you become aware of some of your own cultural assumptions?
2. What questions do you have about this chapter? What did you like and not like?
3. How does the author describe the differences between Eastern and Western worldviews? Where have you seen these differences?

Group Application

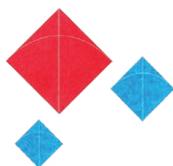
Observe current advertisements targeted at the general public and consider their underlying values (print advertisements are easier to use). What does the ad appeal to? What is really being sold? How does that reveal something about our cultural values?

Suggested Resources

- *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting In Around the World* by Duane Elmer. What attitudes and skills help in approaching differences? Which values often get expressed differently among cultures?
- *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* by E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien. What cultural blind spots might cause Westerners to misread the Bible?
- *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently . . . and Why* by Richard E. Nisbett. This book describes thought differences from the perspectives of history and cultural psychology.
- *Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis over Israel and Palestine* by Colin Chapman. Provides historical background.
- *China: A New History* by John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman. Includes the entire sweep of Chinese history.

Understanding Value Systems

Honor, Innocence, Joy and Power



YILING, A YOUNG CHINESE WOMAN sitting in my Los Angeles living room, was eager to embrace the Christian faith, but there were a number of points she wanted to understand more deeply. The most difficult one was sin. I knew that it wasn't enough to tell her that the Chinese word used to translate sin, a word that implies crime, wasn't a completely helpful translation. From previous conversations I had learned that obedience to the letter of the law had a much higher value for me as a US citizen than for many of my international friends. Presenting sin as a violation of God's law would not resonate with Yiling. So I told a story, a paraphrase of Jesus' parable of the lost son and generous father in Luke 15:11-32.

There was once a family with a loving father, two sons and many hired workers who lived on a large farm. One day the younger son announced that he wanted his share of his inheritance. This was a shocking demand because the father wasn't dead yet. Can you imagine how insulted and hurt the father must have felt? But, strangely enough, the father gave his son the property. Then

the young man went to a distant country and spent his inheritance in wasteful living. When he had nothing left, he got a job feeding pigs. This was really shameful work in the eyes of those hearing the story, because pigs are unclean animals for Jewish people. When he became so hungry that he was ready to eat the pigs' food, the son started thinking about home. He realized that even his father's servants were better off than he was. So he decided to return to his father and planned his speech in advance: "Father, I have sinned against heaven [which is a respectful Jewish way of saying I have sinned against God] and against you. I don't deserve to be called your son anymore; make me one of your hired servants."

As the son nears his home, what does he see? His father, ignoring his long, flowing robes, is running out to meet him, a most undignified thing for someone of that age. The father embraces the son and hurries back home with him. The son begins to speak, but the father interrupts before he has a chance to mention being a servant: "Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. . . . Let's have a feast and celebrate." The father honors the son with his own robe, a ring and sandals. What an amazing turn of events!

After telling the whole parable I returned to the point in the story where the son leaves his father and family: "Let's think of as many words as we can to describe the son's attitude toward the father." We began to list some adjectives: *rebellious, independent, selfish, disrespectful, disobedient*. When we couldn't think of any more, I said, "This attitude that we have described, the son's failure to honor the father, is a picture of what the Bible calls sin. God is our Creator and King, and our failure to honor him, our refusal of relationship with him, is the heart of sin. That attitude toward God leads to various sins, but

sin itself is an attitude, a matter of being, not doing.” Yiling’s eyes lit up with understanding. “Oh, now I see why Christians think sin is such a serious thing. It is breaking relationship with God. It *is* a serious thing.” That conversation was a breakthrough in Yiling’s journey to faith.

As we enter new relationships crossculturally, we need to discern the underlying value systems of our friends. Value systems lie just below the surface of consciousness, in the subjective culture part of the cultural iceberg. When we correctly identify our friends’ primary value systems, we can both be and share good news more fruitfully. Previous conversations with Yiling had clued me in to her relational value system, so I chose a parable that would enable her to see sin in terms of dishonor. With other friends, I might look for ways to share good news around themes of power, joy or innocence.

Roland Muller, a longtime tentmaker missionary in the Middle East, observes that after their disobedience, Adam and Eve experienced guilt, shame and fear in place of the innocence, honor and power they had known beforehand. According to Muller, people in various societies today tend to view the world through one of these three lenses: innocence-guilt, honor-shame or power-fear.¹ Benjamin Hegeman, a missiologist and former missionary to Benin, West Africa, adds a fourth lens: joy-pain.² Hegeman argues that Jesus, who shows us the image of God, embodies all four qualities. He supports his view by quoting the Song of Moses and the Lamb in Revelation 15:3-4. Marvelous deeds (power), just and true ways (innocence and integrity), glory (honor) and worship from all nations (joy) are ascribed to the Lamb in these verses.³ Asserting that people *fear* all four negative experiences, Hegeman uses the terms *power-weakness* instead of *power-fear*. He insists that individuals and societies have been pursuing and valuing innocence, honor, power and joy ever since these four qualities were lost in Eden. Although many recent treatments of value systems omit them, I have chosen

to include joy and pain because of the many references to them in the Scriptures and because they resonate strongly with younger generations worldwide. Some definitions and descriptions of these values—inspired mostly by Hegeman—will be useful.

UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR VALUES

Innocence is a sense of integrity, justice and righteousness. *Guilt* or *condemnation* is a sense of having done wrong or disobeyed moral law. In societies that rank innocence highly (e.g., US society in most of the twentieth century) people are motivated by obeying the law or avoiding a guilty conscience.

Honor includes glory, respect and a good reputation. Honor can be *ascribed*, given to a person because of who they are or who they are related to, or *achieved* (earned). *Shame* or *disgrace* is a sense of being deeply flawed or having lost honor in a moral sense. In societies where honor is the leading value (e.g., most East Asian and Middle Eastern societies), people are motivated to increase or protect the honor of the group or self and avoid shame in the eyes of others or in their own eyes. In many honor-led societies people are motivated to save *face* (image or reputation) for others, themselves or the group.

Power is the ability to rule self and others, win battles, and obtain success or good luck. *Weakness* or *fear* is a sense of powerlessness or slavery in the presence of evil powers, including spiritual (evil spirits), domestic (abusers) or political powers. In societies dominated by power (totalitarian and tribal), people are motivated by the desire for power and fear of government authorities, spirits or ancestors.

Joy includes delight, pleasure and adventure. *Pain* or *futility* is a sense of emotional or physical distress or yearning for an unattainable joy. In societies dominated by joy-pain (e.g., France), people are motivated by seeking joy or pleasure and avoiding pain.

Table 6.1 elaborates on these values.

Table 6.1. Values of highest priority

People seek after and desire	People fear and avoid
Acceptance, respect, purity, honor or face	Rejection, shame, impurity or disgrace
Power, victory or success	Weakness, defeat or slavery
Justice, integrity or innocence	Guilt or condemnation
Joy, beauty or pleasure	Pain, despair, emptiness or boredom

Source: Adapted from Benjamin Hegeman, "The Flight of the Swans: Discerning Hidden Values in Global Cultures," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (April 2010): 167. Used by permission.

Different societies—Eastern and Western, past and present—and different individuals rank the four values differently. All collectivist societies rank honor-shame highly, but not all societies heavily affected by honor-shame are collectivist.⁴ Two value systems often interact with each other inside a nation or individual. Governments may use honor to deflect their citizens' attention from government weaknesses by stirring up nationalism, using national honor to maintain their power. Being ashamed to admit the need for help or to share pain can leave people addicted to various substances: shame resulting in weakness, fear and pain. In Old Testament societies the honor of a nation's god depended on the god's ability to bring victory in battle or produce supernatural signs: power in the service of honor. In the story of Samuel's birth (1 Samuel 1), Hannah felt so much shame over her barrenness that she refused to eat: shame leading to pain.

Table 6.2 suggests a geographical distribution of predominant value systems. Note that the secondary value may actually be dominant in certain aspects of life or among certain subgroups of a given society. Sub-Saharan Africa has traditionally been included in the power-weakness category, but missionaries are now recognizing the pervasive influence of honor-shame there.

Inside a given nation, there may be differences between rural and urban people, and among generations. Villagers in Central Asia, for example, might value power more highly than honor. Cultural ob-

server Andy Crouch suggests that North Americans, particularly the younger generations, are caught up in a *fame-shame* culture. In traditional collectivist honor-shame cultures, everyone seeks to prevent others from losing honor or face. Fame-shame is an individualist form of honor-shame in which people vie for public approval through social media and there is less or no thought about saving the face of others. Some people deliberately shame those they disagree with, and everyone desperately wants to be included. Like other honor-shame cultures, fame-shame culture offers an opportunity to explore how the gospel is good news to the shamed and to those longing for authentic community.⁵

Table 6.2. Distribution of values

Society/Nation	Primary Value	Secondary Value
North America, Northern Europe, Australia, New Zealand	Innocence-Guilt	Honor-Shame (Southern and small town US) Fame-Shame (postmodern)
Asia, Middle East, Africa, Latin America Most Old Testament societies	Honor-Shame	Power-Weakness (fear)
China, tribal societies, South Asia	Power-Weakness (fear)	Honor-Shame
France Some members of younger generations worldwide	Joy (pleasure)-Pain	Innocence-Guilt Honor-Shame
Asian American immigrants, Southern Europe Roman society in the New Testament	Honor-Shame	Innocence-Guilt

There are both godly and ungodly ways to seek the positive expressions of the four values; individuals and groups can pursue God’s approval and honor rather than human honor or fame, for example. No one value system is more pleasing to God than the others.⁶ Jesus experienced all the negative conditions while on earth, but, as we have

seen, he embodies the positive. Discerning which values influence our friends most will help us learn how to interact with them lovingly and share the gospel in ways that make sense to them.

As well as being *values*, honor, shame, guilt and innocence are *objective moral realities* in the eyes of God and people. Shame and guilt also are *moral emotions*. In the Old Testament God often uses shame to call his people to account; Jeremiah 6:15 and 8:12 reproach Israel for not blushing over sin. Daniel, confessing the sins of his ancestors, acknowledges that they experience the shame of banishment from the land because of their disobedience (Daniel 9:3-14). Since they are crucial in determining morality, it will be helpful to consider the differences between shame and guilt. Table 6.3 summarizes aspects of the two that are common across most cultures. Shame is experienced and perceived differently in different cultures. People in the Middle East compete aggressively for honor and attack someone else when an act of shaming occurs; East Asians may withdraw or take their own lives. Generalizations—including those in table 6.3—must be treated with caution.

Table 6.3. Guilt and shame contrasted

Guilt	Shame
Doing (actions)	Being (flawed, impure or defiled)
Not obeying	Not measuring up, missing the mark
Losing innocence	Losing face, honor
Resolved by taking punishment or making amends	Resolved by inclusion, adoption and transformation

Romans 3:23, “All have sinned [doing] and fall short of the glory of God [being],” shows how sin includes both guilt and shame. With their disobedience Adam and Eve brought shame on God, breaking relationship with him. They immediately lost the honor they were clothed in and realized their nakedness. The shame they felt was *godly*, but they did not respond in a godly way by taking their shame to God. Once relationships were shattered, *unhealthy shame*—shame

UNDERSTANDING FACE

- *Face* is another word for the objective moral and social reality of *honor*. Subjectively, it is the sense of self-respect or dignity a person has in interacting with others, a kind of glue that maintains social relationships.
- Face is a *universal* phenomenon that differs from culture to culture, as does honor-shame.
- In *collectivist* societies, maintaining the face or honor of self and others often ranks as the highest value.
- Some ways of *giving face* include
 - ◆ enjoying a meal with an individual or group
 - ◆ helping to surface the strengths of an individual or group, as in development projects that focus on assets
 - ◆ acts of mercy that lead to physical health or the improvement of personal appearance
- Frequent *causes of loss of face* include
 - ◆ stating or implying *blame*
 - ◆ suggesting someone has made *an error*
 - ◆ making a request *the other person can't say yes to*
 - ◆ Saying *no* directly to a request
- Common ways to *lose face* include
 - ◆ not living up to certain goals
 - ◆ not fulfilling another's expectations
 - ◆ losing in some kind of competition
 - ◆ directly admitting a need

Note: The information in this sidebar comes from Christopher L. Flanders, "Face," in *Global Dictionary of Theology*, ed. William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 308-9; Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame and Fear Cultures* (n.p.: HonorShame, 2014), 68-69; Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 55; and Patty Lane, *A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 89. Thanks also to Jackson Wu for reminding me about the objective nature of face.

that comes from living in an imperfect world or being sinned against—surfaced. Today there are often so many layers of unhealthy shame that individuals never sense the bottom layer of healthy shame. *Godly shame* (which is also healthy) comes from an awareness of our sinfulness and results in repentance. We experience it through sensing guilt or impurity. *Unhealthy shame* comes from the circumstances (appearance, race, class, gender, etc.) or events (being abandoned or victimized, performing poorly, etc.) of our lives.⁷ Unhealthy shame often presents obstacles to conversion or growth because our attempts to cover or run from it keep us from the truth that would set us free.

Because shame is about being, it affects people at the identity level and causes them to take on false identities as cover-ups. Growing up in the shame society of a Southern American small town, I developed identity around academic achievement in order to cover the shame I felt at being overweight. People living in a new country sometimes lose their sources of honor; academic achievement may become more difficult; a refugee who was an engineer in his home country may need to work as a security guard in the new country. Loss of honor and status brings shame, so it is crucial to honor people as image bearers of God and not unintentionally cause a loss of face.

VALUE SYSTEMS IN THE BIBLE

God honored Adam and Eve with his presence and with a special relationship. As representatives of God, they ruled the earth (power) and walked in integrity and righteousness before him (innocence). The presence of God gave them joy; the word *Eden* means “delight.” Perhaps we could even say that they were *dressed* in robes of innocence, honor, power and joy. Since their disobedience, people live with guilt, shame, weakness and pain, and continually seek to regain what was lost. All four values are woven throughout the Bible. But the people to whom both the Old and New Testaments were addressed valued

honor-shame more highly than the others. Our failure to notice honor-shame themes in the Bible is one of the largest blind spots in the Western worldview. The other three value systems are often interwoven with honor-shame, so tracing honor-shame themes through Scripture will also shed light on the others.

Honor-shame themes in the Bible. Instead of giving a comprehensive description of all the honor-shame themes in the Bible, I will focus on a few that relate directly to the good and beautiful God who desires shalom for his creatures and creation.⁸ Missiologist Steve Hawthorne observes that cultural preoccupation with honor stems from the honor shared in the Trinity:

This astounding truth, that honor is exuberantly exchanged amidst the Spirit, Son and Father . . . means that the relational realities of honor should not be reduced in our thinking as facets of particular cultures. . . . Love that honors is a reality that pre-dates the foundation of the world.⁹

Honor began with God and flowed into the creation of humankind. When his creatures shamed him and themselves by breaking relationship, shame and its death-dealing dynamics entered the world.

Patterns for controlling shame. After Adam and Eve dishonored God they realized that they were naked and tried to control their shame by making clothing for themselves from fig leaves. A pattern of shame, fear and control began that continues to this day.¹⁰ The rest of history records the efforts of individuals and societies to cover ourselves, literally and figuratively, in clothing of our own making. We deal with our fear of exposure and shame by various means of control. But God is the only one who can adequately cover shame, so the shame-fear-control pattern plays out repeatedly in individual, group and international relationships. Guilt, pain and weakness cause shame, so we also strive to cover up or control guilt, pain and weakness. These efforts to hide from the truth form strongholds that the enemy uses to keep

non-Christians from coming to Christ and Christians from fulfilling God's purposes for them.

Means of controlling shame. Three common responses to shame include *banishment*, *payback* and *deception*. When an act of shaming or being shamed occurs, there is always a *banishment* or threat of banishment, as there was in Genesis 3. It may be banishment through death, as when business executives take their own lives after financial calamities bring disgrace to their companies or relatives kill a woman who has been raped.¹¹ Or it may be a simple emotional distancing, as when a friend stops seeing another friend who has caused her to lose face. In all these cases, banishment is a way of controlling shame. *Payback* also serves to control shame.¹² Murdering the perpetrator of the shame is one form of payback (see Cain and Abel in Genesis 4). But in many societies a murder must be avenged by family members, thus continuing the payback cycle indefinitely. Because forgiveness is either unknown or is seen as nonsense in cultures not exposed to Christian teaching, there is no way out of these cycles.

Deception can be manifested several ways. Later in Genesis we see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob engaging in deception out of shame, fear, greed or the desire for honor. Today, individuals may embellish or falsify their résumés because the practice is so common in their countries that it seems to be the only way to get a job. Sri and other members of the Indian Christian Community struggled with this issue as they neared graduation. Deception can become such a way of life that the entire structure of a society revolves around it.

When we see these dynamics at work in the world today, it is easy to weep over the disorder and destruction brought about by flight from shame and pursuit of worldly honor. But God has been working to restore shalom to the world through Jesus' incarnation, life, death, resurrection and exaltation. Among other metaphors, the Bible pictures God as a jealous and holy lover pursuing an unfaithful wife.

HOLY LOVER: TRACING HONOR-SHAME IN THE BIBLE**Act 1: Honoring Love**

- The Father, Son and Spirit, a community of mutual honor and love, created human beings and *shared honor and glory* with them.
- Scripturally, the word *glory* refers to the *worth, beauty and value* of God, human beings and created things (Psalm 96:3; John 5:44).^a
- God, *the high king over creation*, honored the first man and woman by making them rulers over the earth.
- Adam and Eve *responded to God's gift of love, glory and honor by giving it back to him*.

Act 2: Love and Honor Lost

- The first man and woman *dishonored God* and were banished from his presence, losing the clothing of honor they had received from God and experiencing shame.
- Adam and Eve sought to cover their shame with clothing of their own making, and their descendants continue to do so today.
- Humans *began seeking their own glory* (Genesis 11:1-9) and *began worshiping idols*. This idolatry led to more shame and disordered relationships (Romans 1:21-25).

Act 3: A Pursuing Lover

- God began a restoration process by entering into a *covenant or special relationship* with Abraham. He promised to *bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham, thus identifying himself with all nations* (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1-22).^b When Abraham's descendants brought shame on God by more idolatry, he chased them with jealous love and promised that a suffering servant anointed with the Spirit would die for them (Hosea 1-3; Isaiah 42:1-4; 52:13-53:12).

Act 4: Jesus: Bearing Shame for Love

- In becoming human, *Jesus*, the promised servant and descendant of Abraham, *dishonored himself but honored humankind* (Matthew 1:1; John 15:13-15; Philippians 2:5-6).
- Jesus *turned cultural notions of honor and shame upside down* by associating with outcasts (Luke 7:36-39; 15:1-3; 19:1-9) and criticizing the religious elite who were more concerned about receiving glory from people than from God (John 5:44).

- Jesus *brought glory to his Father on the cross*, restoring the face his Father had lost when his creatures shamed him (John 12:27-28, 32-33).
- He *bore our shame, guilt, pain and weakness, and was honored by his Father in the resurrection*. His blood and righteousness are the only adequate covering for our shame (Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Philippians 2:8-11; Hebrews 2:9).

Act 5: Honor Restored

- Jesus' incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation are the ultimate *reversal of honor status*: from glory to shame to even greater glory (Philippians 2:5-11).^c
- When we submit to Jesus as Lord and King, *we are adopted into God's family*, are welcomed into the Father's presence and receive the high status (honor) of adopted children (Romans 8:12-17, 28-30; Hebrews 2:10-13).
- Jesus shares with us the honor that he has received from the Father, and *the glory Jesus gives is better than the glory human beings give* (John 17:20-26).
- As younger brothers and sisters of Jesus, we become part of a *family that honors God with our words and lives* (Hebrews 2:11-12).

Act 6: Honor Shared

- Our love for one another *brings glory to God and reveals to the world his true nature as the Holy Lover intent on marrying a bride who is pure and holy* (John 17:20-26; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:6-8).
- Since *the honor Jesus gives is the only eternal honor*, the best way we can honor our family and friends is to introduce them to Jesus so that they can share in that honor forever.

^aSteven C. Hawthorne, "The Story of His Glory," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 3rd ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 34-35.

^bJackson Wu, *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2012), 197.

^cFor more details on honor status reversals, see Werner Mischke, *The Global Gospel: Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World* (Scottsdale, AZ: Mission ONE, 2015), 181-204.

Romans 1:21-25 recounts how the first human beings refused to thank and glorify God, worshiping created things rather than the Creator. This early idolatry led them into deception and darkness; they exchanged the truth of God for a lie (v. 25). If we don't worship God, we will worship something or someone else, but idolatry always leads to shame. The people building the tower of Babel worshiped their own *name* or honor, but God ended their efforts to gain glory apart from him by introducing language differences (Genesis 11:1-9). Missiologist Jackson Wu points out that Genesis 11 pictures sin in a collectivist context; he believes that it and Genesis 4 (Cain's murder of Abel) are better places to start illustrating sin for honor-shame societies than Genesis 3.¹³

Soon afterward God began to reverse the effects of shame by entering into a covenant with Abraham, honoring him with relationship and the promise that all the nations of the world would be blessed through him (Genesis 12:1-3). God used his great power to bring glory to his name (reputation) by making Abraham's descendants victorious over their enemies. He liberated the Israelites from Egypt through signs and wonders (power), reversing their shameful status as slaves. He gave them the law, the Ten Commandments, which involve honoring God and people, and taught them about his holiness through purity laws.

When Israel fell into idolatry and disobedience, God sent prophets to call them back, often using the image of a jealous husband or lover. The story of the prophet Hosea and his unfaithful wife, Gomer, pictures God as redeeming a prostitute slave and drawing her into the wilderness for a second betrothal. When the relationship between God and his people is restored, shalom will return to the land as well, says Hosea. Warfare will be banished, and the earth will bring forth grain, new wine and oil (*joy* [Hosea 2:14-22]). What will bring about this restoration? Isaiah 53-54 promise that a despised and suffering servant will die for infirmities (*pain*), sorrows and transgressions, and

that Jerusalem, pictured as a barren wife (a situation of great shame) abandoned in her youth, will be restored. Isaiah 61 (which Jesus applied to himself in Luke 4) pictures the Spirit-filled Messiah setting captives free, giving joy to those who mourn, dressing them in garments of praise and giving them a double portion to replace shame. The Servant Messiah gives freedom to slaves, joy to those in pain, forgiveness for transgressors and honor to the shamed (Isaiah 53:12; 54:4; 61:5-7).

In his incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation Jesus fulfills all these prophecies. His life on earth demonstrates God's honor-shame priorities. Jesus honors the poor, widows, those needing healing or freedom, and outcasts who are hungry for God. He gives face by sharing meals with tax collectors, touching impure lepers and restoring them to society. He shows respect for women by giving them spiritual teaching (Mary and Martha, the Samaritan woman). He teaches his disciples that the way to gain honor is to become the servant of all, and he models servanthood. Jesus promises both joy and persecution to his disciples (John 16:24, 33) and undergoes the pain and shame of the cross for the joy set before him (Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus' death and resurrection reveal God's nature of sacrificial love. Lifted up on the cross, Jesus draws all people to himself, enabling the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that all peoples of the earth would be blessed through him.

"Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." . . .

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. (John 12:27-28, 32-33)

The night before his crucifixion Jesus prays that the unity of believers will show the world that he truly came from the Father:

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. . . .

Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them. (John 17:20-23, 25-26)

Jesus is praying that the mutual love and honor between God and humans we saw in Eden will be restored after his death and resurrection. He wants that love to reveal his true identity and the glorious, loving nature of the Father to a watching world. Now we have the privilege of being part of the answer to Jesus' prayer. One day Jesus will marry a pure bride (Revelation 19:6-9). A new heaven and earth will manifest restored shalom, and people will see the face of God. People from every tribe and nation will bring their cultural treasures into God's city as offerings of worship (Revelation 5:9; 7:9-10; 21-22).

Jesus offers a better, more lasting honor than the honor available in our human communities.¹⁴ People who receive honor from him may be enabled to share it with their families and groups so they too might receive a better, eternal honor. Thus receiving honor from Jesus can become the first step in helping those we love obtain an honor that never ceases. Presenting these gospel truths may help remove some of the most serious barriers to faith for those from honor-shame soci-

eties: the reality that individuals' conversions to Jesus may bring dishonor to their families and cause them to be banished or even killed. And understanding that God desires his own glory to be revealed so that his nature of holy love will be revealed to the world grounds our lives in the calling to "glorify God and to enjoy him forever" (Westminster Shorter Catechism).

BARRIERS AND BRIDGES

Although shame can alert us to our need for God, the enemy too often makes it a barrier to faith. Self-acceptance is the beginning point of change, so shame, which by its nature prevents self-acceptance, can also prevent deep change.¹⁵ Self-acceptance involves acknowledging who we really are, and shame often causes us to cover our weaknesses with layers of denial that make it difficult to realize our need for God. Mission trainer Duane Elmer points out that sharing the gospel with people from another society implies that *their* faith is defective, causing a feeling of shame.¹⁶ Elmer suggests that we share our personal testimonies, including our awareness of sin, which puts us in a place of shame, and use collective language when referring to sin. "We have all sinned," works better than "You too are a sinner."

Shame, guilt, weakness and pain can all prevent faith, causing a sense of exclusion from God's grace or anger at God. Earlier I told the story of Lo, the student from Taiwan who felt ineligible for God's family. When we discern an obstacle to conversion, we can share Scriptures that address that obstacle, as the North Carolina fellowship did with Lo. Jesus may also desire that we enter into experiences of shame, pain, weakness or guilt with our friends by listening nonjudgmentally to their stories and praying for and with them. When our women's group prayed with Cindy, the Chinese child afflicted with temper tantrums, Jesus showed his power over Cindy's anger, and she was set free. Our communities must treat people with the honor due to all of God's image bearers. The respect we give them can go a long

way toward healing any unhealthy shame that hinders them from coming to God and enable them to eventually experience the godly shame that leads to repentance.

Our work of turning barriers into bridges involves prayerfully discerning the primary value system favored by an individual or group. Sometimes our friends' preferred value systems will become obvious as we discuss cultural differences. After over a year of building trust with my Indian friend Raina I asked her to share an honest critique of American culture. She thought about the question and was ready the next time we met. "There is one thing I can't understand at all about American culture," she began. "That is how people can put their parents in institutions when they become old. I will definitely have my mother live with me when she's no longer able to live alone." In traditional collectivist cultures, taking elderly parents into one's home is normal. In individualist cultures, self-reliance is prized, and many parents do not want to "be a burden" to their children. But Raina was getting at something more than individualism and collectivism; taking parents into one's home is crucial to properly honor them in her society. That conversation confirmed my sense that sharing the gospel with Raina in terms of honor would resonate with her, and that proved to be the case.

The lost son story that so greatly impacted my friend Yiling contains hints of all the value systems. In the spring of 2012 our regional evangelistic weekend focused all large and small group times on that parable. Our Hong Kong-born speaker masterfully brought out the honor-shame themes of the parable, including stories from her own family, which resonated with the students. But she called attention to power and joy as well. A video clip of a woman sharing how she had forgiven and cared for her teenage son's teenage murderer showed the power of forgiveness to deal with guilt.

We also looked at the second part of the parable. By refusing to attend the feast, the older son dishonored his father as much as the

younger had done. And by leaving his guests to talk to the older son, the father shamed himself a second time. The parable ends with no resolution; Jesus leaves it open-ended as an invitation to the scribes and Pharisees to do what the older son had not done, join God's rejoicing that sinners were coming to Jesus. Many in our audience could identify more with the older son than the younger. They were moral, hard-working people, not like the wasteful, wild-living younger son. Self-sufficient, they had never thought they needed God. But here was a loving God chasing after them and inviting them into a joyous family.¹⁷ Although honor-shame values were primary in the sharing of the story, attention to the other values provided a more complete picture of the shalom God desires for us. As a result of that weekend, four East Asians eventually came to Jesus, wooed and won by the honor, power, goodness and joy of the Father.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Personal Reflection

1. In what value system or combination of systems were you raised? How has that affected how you see God and your relationship to him?
2. *Lectio divina* passages:
 - Psalm 21
 - Psalm 32
 - Psalm 91
 - Psalm 30
 - Psalm 25

Group Discussion

1. If you haven't already, debrief your work on identifying cultural values from examples of advertising you evaluated.

2. Evaluate Mark 5:21-33 from honor-shame and power-weakness perspectives. What new insights have you gained by viewing it this way?
3. Prayerfully think about your non-Christian friends. Which of the positive values (honor, innocence, joy or power) do they desire? Do you see them running from shame, guilt, pain or weakness? How do these desires or painful conditions either close or open doors to the gospel?

Group Application

Share insights you received in your prayer time and listen to God as a group about possible next steps to share the hope in Jesus with your friends. Make a commitment to have a conversation this week with one friend.

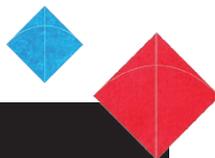
Suggested Resources

- *HonorShame: Resources for Majority World Ministry* (www.honorshame.com/blog). The blog is updated often and you can find great resources for reaching the majority world, including videos that present the gospel from an honor-shame perspective.
- *The Global Gospel: Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World* by Werner Mischke. This book illuminates the honor-shame dynamics in the Bible and offers ways to communicate the gospel that better resonate with honor-shame cultures.
- *Doing Theology. Thinking Mission*, a blog by Jackson Wu (www.jacksonwu.org). This blog provides many thought-provoking articles on honor-shame and helpful material on understanding and evangelizing Chinese. Search the blog archives for a gospel presentation from the honor-shame perspective.
- “The Power of Honor,” *Mission Frontiers*, January-February 2015, www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/archive/the-power-of-honor. This issue devoted to honor-shame includes descriptions of honor-

shame in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, a list of honor-shame subcultures in the United States, an article on sharing with Muslims using honor-shame and more.

- *A Muslim's Heart: What Every Christian Needs to Know to Share Christ with Muslims* by Edward J. Hoskins. This brief, practical book includes material on honor and shame.
- *The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross: Insights from an Arab Christian* by Nabeel T. Jabbour. Includes examples of sharing the gospel using honor-shame and purity.
- *Magdalena: Released from Shame*, The Jesus Film Project, magdalenamovie.com. A film about Jesus and women that presents the gospel from an honor-shame lens.
- *Jangled*, Jesus Film Media, http://jesusfilmmedia.org/2_529-0-jangled. A six-minute video that introduces the idea of sin from an honor-shame perspective.
- Crossingculturesbook.org/keywords. Provides keywords for tracing the four values in the Bible.

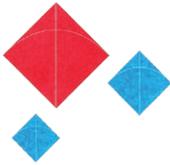
Part Two



DRAWING IN

Communities That Draw In

Living and Sharing Good News



WHEN FRANÇOIS CAME FROM CAMEROON, a French-speaking nation in West Africa, to study at an East Coast university, he was overwhelmed by the language barrier and by cultural differences. He described his experience like this:

I could not understand simple things such as my own name. I could not have a conversation with people, and I stayed by myself most of the time because speaking was a challenge.

It was also very difficult to connect with people because in Cameroon, everyone knows everyone and we have access to everyone's house at any time, but here it was different because I did not even know the names of all my classmates or my neighbors.

François' first months at the university were miserable, but God had plans for him. He moved into a house with several other international men and an older Christian man, Stephen, who headed the household and loved and served the students there. Stephen demon-

strated such unconditional love that all the residents wanted to be like him. None of them had ever met a person who was so Christlike. François began attending an international Sunday school class at Stephen's church, and there he met some women from China who lived in a house for women led by Miriam, another church member. The two houses served as minicommunities where the Christian house leaders demonstrated good news in daily life. And the Sunday school class allowed greater community and a chance to share good news. In these communities François found the warm relationships he missed from home, and he also met Jesus. Some months later he was baptized along with four other people from the two houses.

For people from collectivist backgrounds, loving community is a magnet. After entering our world, Jesus drew people into his world, creating a community that displayed the nature of God. A pivotal verse in the Gospel of Mark provides a clue to Jesus' evangelistic strategy, "He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons" (Mark 3:14-15). Like François' house leader, Stephen, Jesus developed community by the force of his presence. Before the disciples preached, cast out demons or realized who Jesus was, they simply spent time with him. They went through a conversion process while participating in the community he developed.

THE COMMUNITY OF JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES

Many Westerners are used to thinking of conversion in terms of a dramatic encounter like that of the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. But evangelism professor and practitioner Richard Peace argues forcefully that the Bible gives us a second model for conversion, the experience of the disciples as described in Mark.¹ Analyzing Paul's conversion, Peace identifies *insight* into who Jesus is, *turning* to follow Jesus and *transformation*, a change in behavior, as three critical elements in all true conversions.² Peace then considers the experience

of the disciples as described in Mark, finding the same elements: insight into Jesus' identity and examples of turning (faith and repentance). The end of the Gospel leaves the disciples ready to experience the resurrection and true transformation.³

If the disciples weren't fully converted until after the resurrection, then that means Jesus involved them in the works of the kingdom—healing, casting out demons, feeding the hungry—before conversion. He drew them into community with himself and his Father, and demonstrated good news to them. Not only did he *enter* their worlds, he *drew them in* to his—the second aspect of incarnation is drawing in. And Jesus drew them in by forming a community. People who would have been natural enemies, zealous haters of Rome and tax collectors who had worked for Rome, lived together in Jesus' community because he was there. They got along well because of the atmosphere of love in the group. The experience of the disciples in Jesus' community models for us the most common conversion pattern in both collectivist and postmodern contexts, a gradual conversion in the context of a community marked by shalom.

COMMUNITY FIRST

The older modern idea of transformation places evangelism first, followed by discipling and incorporation into community. Since community is so crucial in collectivist societies, many collectivists need community involvement (a form of discipleship) before they are ready for an explanation of the gospel and a challenge to commitment. Roland Muller, writing from his experience among Middle Eastern Muslims, observes that once these Muslims trust a Christian and begin to see credibility in the gospel message, they will try out the Christian community to see if it meets their relational needs. They will experiment with the forms of the community, including practices like saying a sinner's prayer. Such behavior does not indicate conversion, only interest.⁴ But Western Christian communities often do

not measure up to the standards of Muslim societies. Community in the Middle East centers on tribe or extended family and is the place where one seeks a job and marriage partner. In Muslim communities people believe that it is their responsibility to care for one another, and the religion itself is a community of communities.⁵

Postmodern Westerners also prioritize community. As long ago as 1997 Jimmy Long identified conversion (attraction) to community before conversion to Christ as the normal postmodern pattern of conversion.⁶ Whether it is a small group or Sunday school class connected to a larger fellowship or church, some kind of community is essential in drawing postmodern people to Jesus.

How do communities developed for and by Westerners adapt in order to draw in non-Westerners? Many may not be ready for a worshipping, studying fellowship. But we can create community in an English class, sports or wives group. One fall an InterVarsity group in Southern California invited international students to join them for a Friday evening soccer game. Students from four continents responded, and weekly games drew forty or more people. Attracted by the love of the Christian students, international students attended weekend retreats and heard the gospel. Brazilian and Vietnamese students became Christians, and six Middle Eastern men bonded with the fellowship. Sewing and cooking lessons can also be attractive. The founder of the North Carolina State ministry among international students taught a sewing class for international wives for many years. She and other Christian volunteers developed relationships and created community, demonstrating the gospel with their lives. Communities developed around English, sports or learning a skill can build trust, eventually drawing people into actual fellowship meetings where they will experience more of God's shalom.

Multicultural communities will attract many people, especially in urban settings. But some people groups need to see how the faith would work out in their cultures and realize that coming to Jesus

doesn't require giving up all their cultural distinctives.⁷ Learning about the faith in the Indian Christian Community made that clear for Sri. International student ministries can train international leaders to lead evangelistic discovery groups for peers from their home countries and encourage them to use their heart language for discussion and fellowship.⁸ Overseas, when there are several minorities in a nation, starting groups for each minority may be advantageous. The formerly Buddhist Christians who reached out to the Muslim villagers in Myanmar, for example, realized that the new Muslim background Christians needed their own communities. So they trained leaders to help develop those communities.

SHALOM COMMUNITIES

God wants to restore the shalom that was shattered when the first couple broke relationship with him. Communities centered on Jesus reflect the peace and harmony he came to bring. They demonstrate right relationships with God, with people of diverse cultures, with self and with creation. The messianic picture of the lion and lamb dwelling together shows us God's intent for our fellowships. Communities that enable reconciliation among people groups draw individuals to Jesus in powerful ways.

At an InterVarsity conference for international students a group of Japanese learned the history of what their nation had done to other Asian nations during the Second World War. They made a public apology for these actions to the students from those countries in one of our plenary sessions. As the leader read this apology, the other Japanese students, who were standing in the aisles of our meeting room, all bowed toward the assembly in a gesture of humility and regret. A seeker from Taiwan was so affected by this display of remorse that she made a commitment to Jesus that evening.

At another one of these conferences an international student working in the cafeteria of the residence where our group was housed

was shocked as she observed the table fellowship between students of different races in our group. So she asked some students from her country who were seated at one of the tables what kind of group this was and why they were mixing so freely. The students explained that we were a group of Christians from around the world and then told her about Jesus the great Reconciler.

Developing shalom communities composed of diverse people groups requires hard work. Eric H. F. Law states that most white people perceive themselves as equal to others and believe that inequality should be minimized; they think in egalitarian terms. Most people of color, on the other hand, accept inequality (hierarchical thinking) and feel somewhat powerless in groups dominated by whites.⁹ Law encourages white people to practice a spirituality of the cross in multicultural communities, deliberately giving up power and listening rather than doing all the talking. People of color, on the other hand, should practice a spirituality of the resurrection, asking for the strength of the Holy Spirit to say or do what is needed.¹⁰ Leaders in international fellowships can benefit from Law's exhortations. Westerners need to deliberately hold back on sharing their ideas and draw out the thoughts and gifts of non-Westerners. Leaders from non-Western backgrounds can remember that they are actually honoring the others in the group by sharing their insights. This kind of mutual respect helps communities become true shalom communities, characterized by welcome, honor, justice, power and joy.

WELCOME

In our early fellowship days at North Carolina State, I occasionally had people from Taiwan and China, Iran and Iraq in my living room while their nations were at odds or involved in all-out war. They all felt welcome and got along well because of the atmosphere of Christian love in the group. We communicate welcome in both tangible and intangible ways.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

- *Diverse leadership*
- *Personal greetings*: hosts and leaders should greet each guest upon arrival, if feasible, and say goodbye when each one leaves
- *Personal follow-up* after the first visit and when friends miss a meeting
- *Food* that pleases people from many cultures
- *Honor* for every person and every culture represented
- *Freedom* to ask questions and explore without pressure to commit prematurely
- *Security*: unconditional love that communicates how much we appreciate our friends and want them in the group
- *Service* to group members and others
- *Context*: décor and surroundings that reflect many cultures (e.g., flags, maps)
- *Multicultural worship*
- *Joy and fun*

Food, music and décor that communicate warmth help create an atmosphere of welcome. François, the soccer player who came to Christ through his house community, recounts how deeply touched he felt the first time he saw the flag of his country flying in America, and how completely at home he felt the first time he heard a worship song in French. But the intangible aspects of community are even more important.

Honor. Communities honor individuals by developing and calling out the best in them. At the very beginning of his relationship with them, Jesus told Nathanael that he was a man without deceit, and called Simon a rock (Peter) before he became a rock (John 1:42, 47). He involved his disciples in doing the works of the Father before they knew who he was. We can involve people in our fellowships in ways that develop them. Serving as emcee or greeter,

for example, develops communication skills and increases self-confidence in a new language. When the Lord shows us who a person can become when they follow Jesus, we can share that vision with them. Communities can honor cultures by giving members opportunities to share parts of their cultural heritage, celebrating significant holidays and incorporating food and music from many cultures in group activities. When we honor our friends' countries, we are also honoring them.

Power. Shalom communities also demonstrate the other values. God's *power* may be manifest in answers to prayer and dramatic healings like the disappearance of Cindy's temper tantrums (see chap. 3). Groups that give their members both *security* and *freedom* empower them to make decisions to follow Jesus at the appropriate time. People need to feel secure in our unconditional love and free from obligation to us. This combination of high freedom and high security will make our communities attractive. Obligation is so high in some collectivist friendship groups that people can feel trapped, but they are secure. American society offers high freedom but low security because our individualist mindset causes us to break covenants easily. God's covenant community provides the security of being loved by God and others, and freedom to overcome evil influences in our lives. Christians in the community love and serve unconditionally, and let their friends make spiritual progress without pressure, maintaining an atmosphere of both freedom and security. Western groups used to individualism may need to work at communicating high security to people from collectivist societies, continually reminding them that they are wanted and valued in the group.

Justice and joy. Communities also need to value God's justice. Several international fellowships involve their members in inner-city missions and use holidays such as President's Day to talk about God's view of justice for the poor and enslaved. The Christian faith

of many of the 1960s civil rights leaders first attracted my Japanese friend Mitsuko to the faith. Joy is also critical in attracting people to community; we must show that Christians can and do have fun! Whether it is through folk dancing, karaoke, games, skits, men's nights, ladies' nights or outings, international friends need to experience fun in community. In the midst of the fun they may sense a deeper joy in our lives and in our worship. Zhang, a young Chinese architect, moved to Angola to do some design work. There he met some Angolan Christians. "They didn't have many possessions, but they took me in and loved me. And they had so much joy that I could hardly believe it," he observed later. These Christians impressed Zhang so powerfully that he opened up to the faith. The joy of Jesus enabled this community to quickly welcome and enfold a stranger.

Two graduate students from China, Chen Wei and his wife, Liyan, spent six years in the North Carolina State international fellowship. Liyan participated enthusiastically in one of the women's groups. Soon she was praying aloud in the group and experiencing answered prayer. She made a commitment to Jesus after about four years. Chen Wei had many intellectual questions and struggled to believe. But the community involved and honored him; he was a frequent emcee, growing in articulation and social skills, and sharing about Chinese culture on special occasions. He and Liyan were always there when the fellowship celebrated weddings and births and served members with special needs. When Chen graduated I held a party for him in my home. That day he read to us one of the acknowledgments in his dissertation: "Thanks to the International Bible Study, which has become my family away from home." After graduation Chen and Liyan moved to New Jersey and got involved in a church there. A few years later he was ready to become a follower of Jesus. Two welcoming communities drew him in, and he eventually came to know the person at the center of the communities, Jesus.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Personal Reflection

1. Consider your own conversion or major turning point in your spiritual journey. How were the three elements present—insight into who Jesus is, turning to follow him and transformation of behavior?
2. *Lectio divina* passages
 - Isaiah 2:1-4
 - Mark 6:7-13
 - Acts 2:42-47
 - Romans 12:9-21
 - 1 Peter 2:9-12

Group Discussion

1. What questions do you have about this chapter? What do you like and not like?
2. Which aspects of your fellowship or church would be most attractive to non-Christians? Least attractive?

Group Application

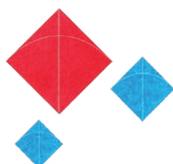
Consider all aspects of your community: worship times, smaller gatherings, teaching. Put yourselves in the shoes of people from another culture visiting your fellowship. What might be difficult for them? Brainstorm ways to make the community more inviting and incorporate them into your next gathering. Make a commitment to discuss the best ideas with leaders of the fellowship. Alternatively, jointly plan and run an event that would be genuinely welcoming to others outside of your culture. Seek help from cultural informants as you make your plans.

Suggested Resources

- *Friendship at the Margins: Discovering Mutuality in Service and Mission* by Christopher L. Heuertz and Christine D. Pohl. When we practice hospitality and welcome and develop true reciprocal relationships, we create communities in which justice and reconciliation can happen.
- *The Messenger, the Message and the Community: Three Critical Issues for the Cross-Cultural Church Planter* by Roland Muller. This book examines fear, guilt and shame-based worldviews, Muslim evangelism, biblical community, and more.

Conversion in Community

Five Stages



ELINA, A NOMINAL MUSLIM WOMAN in a Central Asian nation, wanted desperately to come to the United States for graduate school. She prayed, promising she would search for God if he enabled her to attend her first choice university. Her prayer was answered, and she arrived at a well-known institution in the Midwest. Soon Elina met some Christians through a furniture giveaway. Although she was suspicious of their motives, she remembered her promise to look for God in the United States. Right away she connected with Esther, a volunteer in the Christian group whose three children were the same ages as her three children. The two moms began sharing about raising children, and soon a trust relationship developed.

Elina also began attending the large group Bible studies sponsored by the Christian group and felt great peacefulness during the meetings. This peace she sensed in the community made her curious about the Christian faith. In the meantime she was experiencing tension with the husband she had left behind. Esther challenged her to treat her husband better. Observing relationships that worked in Esther's family and in the fellowship, Elina wondered if God could transform

her, and she became open to change. Throughout that whole school year Elina put into practice Esther's counsel and began to interact more gently with her husband. Seeing that following Jesus' teachings was improving her marriage, she became a sincere seeker. One night a Bible study clarified the difference between relating to God as a slave and relating to him as Father. That insight led her to the point of conversion. She experienced the Father of Jesus as her Father and knew the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Elina had found the God she promised to search for in the United States through interaction with a shalom community.

FIVE STAGES OR THRESHOLDS

Elina's journey involved five distinct stages or *thresholds*: trusting a Christian, becoming curious about Jesus, opening up to change, seeking after God and entering the kingdom. In their book *I Once Was Lost* Don Everts and Doug Schaupp describe these thresholds. Experienced evangelists in the college context, Everts and Schaupp identified these stages through two thousand interviews with post-modern people who came to Christ.¹ The five thresholds are valid crossculturally, but they work out differently in different cultures.

As with any Western attempt to describe relationships with rules, we will discover exceptions to the five threshold pattern. In the journeys of some people we may discern only two or three stages, or we may see six or more! Or we may observe sudden conversions; when this happens, we need to ask what is really happening. The complete absence of conversion stages should cause a warning buzzer to go off in our minds; the growth that happens during the various stages is critical to transformation later.

WHEN WE DON'T DISCERN STAGES: DECISION OR CONVERSION?

My interviews of East Asian converts included a number of people

who came to Christ quickly after dramatic experiences of his power; the traditional layer of their worldview mix gave them a magical view of Jesus as a powerful shaman. They did not understand the true nature of God or of relationship with him. Conversations with these students left me feeling disturbed that our evangelism wasn't reaching deep enough to transform people.

People with traditional assumptions about God in the inner core of their worldviews can easily make a surface level *decision* to follow Jesus as a divine miracle worker and relate to him magically in the same way they were previously relating to local gods or ancestors. Because their hidden assumptions about the character of God and the nature of relationship with him have not surfaced, they miss out on the dynamic, interactive relationship that our personal God desires. True *conversion* occurs when friends change their deep level assumptions about God and about relationship with him. They will then bow to Jesus as Lord of the universe and relate to him in a personal way. Their deep level assumptions about the lordship of Jesus will affect all the other layers of their worldviews and result in genuine change. Figure 8.1 depicts the difference between a surface-level decision and core-level conversion.

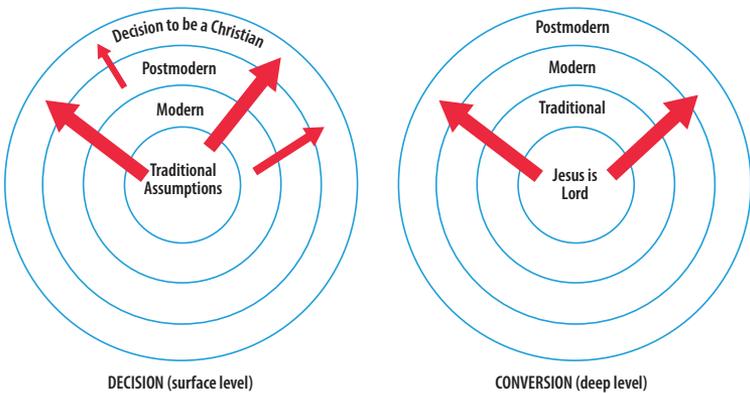


Figure 8.1. Surface-level decision versus core-level conversion

God does enable people who start out with a surface-level decision to move to the point of core-level conversion, but that requires perceptive discipling and does not always occur. Too many returnee converts to China have not given much evidence of conversion after returning home; part of the reason may be that they were never really converted in the first place.² Our history of crusade-type evangelism in the United States may compound the problem, sometimes causing us to ask people to become followers of Jesus before they are ready to do so, as I did with Tao. Understanding the five thresholds will help us refrain from making such invitations too soon, stay faithful in friendship, and know how to pray and interact at different stages of our friends' journeys.

JESUS THE FARMER

Jesus saw himself as a farmer planting gospel seeds. Everts and Schaupp believe his parable in Mark 4:26-29 reveals two crucial truths about evangelism.

[Jesus] said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

Growth is *mysterious*: some seeds that we thought would grow well don't; others we were unsure of do produce a harvest. The same will be true of our non-Christian friends. Ultimately God is the one who controls what happens to the seed. This truth should set us free from the urge to try to control what happens with our friends. This passage also emphasizes another truth: growth is *organic*: each seed has similar seasons of growth, and a pattern can be discerned. We can recognize those seasons (seed, stalk, head, full kernel and ripeness) and know

when to reap a harvest.³ Understanding the stages people usually go through on the way to commitment will enable us to be helpful guides through each part of the journey.

THE FIVE THRESHOLDS IN CROSSCULTURAL CONTEXT

The five thresholds play out differently in each cultural context because the reasons for distrust and cultural strongholds to be overcome are different. Community normally plays a greater role in the conversion process of non-Westerners. Individuals must come to trust an entire group, whether it is a campus fellowship or small group of some kind. These groups need to build trust with the communities of the individuals they attract, asking about and caring for family and friends near and far. As groups draw people from a certain cultural background, group leaders should prayerfully reflect on the conversion process for that cultural group. The sidebar “Five Thresholds in Cross-cultural Evangelism” contains some questions to aid that reflection. I suggest a few answers to these questions later. But do your own prayerful research and thinking. Discussing these questions in leadership meetings can help you discover how to relate fruitfully to the people being drawn in to your group.

Threshold 1: Distrust to trust. Stereotypes of Christianity may cause distrust of Christians and Christian groups. Often the Western culture exported by our movies and other media is seen as Christian culture. Externals such as dress and dietary habits may offend. When Sarai, a Muslim student at a Midwestern university, became acquainted with Liz, Sarai’s parents feared that Liz, a Christian, would corrupt their daughter with loose living. But Liz built trust with Sarai’s parents by always wearing long pants and covering her arms when she visited them, and speaking freely of how she honored her own parents.⁴ Build relationships with Chinese through genuine, unconditional friendship. They may distrust Christians because of previous experience with high-pressure

FIVE THRESHOLDS IN CROSSCULTURAL EVANGELISM

1. Distrust to Trust

- What perceptions of Christianity or Western culture make trust difficult for this group?
- What attitudes and habits build trust with this group? How can we best learn from, affirm and welcome them?

2. Apathy to Curiosity

- What keeps this group from curiosity?
- What role does religion or spirituality play in their culture?
- What actions or questions will provoke curiosity in them?

3. Curiosity to Openness

- What spiritual strongholds have we observed in this group's culture?
- What reactions might they receive from their community if they converted?
- Is there anything in our community that might keep them from openness?
- What challenges will speak to them?
- In what areas might they feel pressure to change their culture when it isn't necessary? How can we address this?

4. Openness to Seeking

- Where can God's shalom bring healing to the individual or people group?
- What are helpful questions to guide seekers from this group?

5. Entering the Kingdom

- What indicators of readiness for commitment have we observed in this group?
- What words would people from this group use to describe their conversions? What was the final decision like for them?

Note: I am indebted to Sarah Akutagawa for this material.

Christian groups in either Chinese or Western settings. Or they may believe that Christianity is a Western religion and be very aware of the association of missionaries with the shameful treatment of China by Western nations in the nineteenth century (see crossingculturesbook.org/chinese). So both individuals and communities must offer Chinese the security of being cared for and freedom to investigate the faith only when they become truly interested.

Barriers for Hindus are usually cultural; Christianity may be seen as a low-caste religion spread by evangelists who are greedy for money. For many years the Hindu students who came here were positive that our only motive in serving them was gaining converts. To develop trust with them, we must offer authentic unconditional friendship. Authenticity involves being clear about our identity as Christ-followers and building relationships of dialogue and reciprocity.

The order of the thresholds may vary for Muslims, and the ideal is that a group—family unit or small group of friends—goes through them together so that individuals are not extracted from their communities. Trust is difficult in many Muslim societies, so be patient and take the needed time to build it. One important aspect of trust building is making your identity as a follower of Jesus clear from the start.

If we have entered our friends' worlds and built trust (described in previous chapters), many friends will have already passed from distrust to trust. But if the community draws in new people, group members must enter their worlds, develop friendships, learn what misconceptions or past experiences cause distrust and address them. When trust with one member is built, it becomes easier to transfer trust to the community as a whole, as we saw with Elina and Esther. Participation in the community will also build trust; as non-Christians become involved in the fellowship, barriers fall away. Cooking, greeting, emceeding or even watching over the shoes at the door allow people to feel needed and wanted in a group.

Threshold 2: Apathy to curiosity. A person may trust Christians and even a Christian community but not be curious about their faith. Chinese may ask a lot of questions about your faith and experience, but don't mistake this kind of curiosity for deep spiritual interest. Patiently answer their questions and ask them some questions in turn. Chinese young people struggle with family of origin issues. Fellowships might offer biblically based, culturally sensitive workshops on counseling topics like reconciliation with parents, building strong marriages, forgiveness, emotional health and identity development. Asian speakers who are experts and role models in these areas can arouse curiosity. Those who struggle with the existence of God will benefit from contact with highly educated Christians who integrate the faith into their lives.⁵

Hindus may have never thought deeply about their faith; asking open-ended questions and sharing a relevant verse, story or experience may develop curiosity. Muslims may not have had a chance to discuss faith with Christians. Apologetic discussions about the divinity of Christ or reliability of Scripture will probably not be effective with them at this stage. Instead, share answers to prayer and tell stories from Scripture. With all people groups we must speak and live in ways that make them curious, sharing briefly how our relationship with God affects our lives. When I mentioned to my Indian friend Raina that I wrote worship poems, I could tell her curiosity was piqued. The poem that I shared with her later gave her insight into my devotional life, and our spiritual conversations took on a more personal tone afterward.

Threshold 3: Curiosity to openness. This may be the most difficult threshold of all. Changing religions can bring great dishonor on self and family, leading to death threats. Prayer for our friends is critical at this point; fear is a powerful stronghold. We should also pray *with* friends who are considering change. Jasmine, a law student, shared with her friend Ellie that she loved how Jesus interpreted the law in

the stories they had been reading together. “So what do you think about following Jesus?” Ellie inquired. “I’m not sure about following Jesus. It would be very hard for me to get a job in the courts back home if I were a Christian” was Jasmine’s response. Ellie helped Jasmine think clearly about the cost of following Jesus and process her fears, praying with Jasmine about them in the name of Jesus, thus opening the door for her to hear directly from God.⁶

In this threshold people begin to count the cost of following Jesus and anticipate how it would impact them and their communities. Chinese people will ask if the faith could possibly be relevant for them. At this point developing critical thinking and bringing underlying worldview assumptions to light is crucial. Discussion groups that enable the discovery of these assumptions will help them understand the change of viewpoint and behavior that following Jesus would involve (see chap. 5). Reduced job possibilities because of becoming a Christian could make them less able to meet the needs of family and others in their web of relationships. But life in Jesus offers hope for healed relationships with family, friends and self. Pray with and for Chinese students as they consider the changes following Jesus might bring.

For Muslims and Hindus, culture and religion are closely interwoven, so following Jesus may feel like a betrayal of both culture and family. It is important to help people discern between spiritual necessities and cultural traits. Muslims who follow Jesus don’t have to start eating pork, and vegetarian Hindus don’t have to eat meat. And no one must stop honoring parents, although obeying Jesus has to come first.

Hindus may struggle with abandoning their gods, but they have infinitely more to gain in Jesus. Opening up to change may involve an experience of Jesus’ power. It might be healing, answered prayer, worship or other ways. Ask God to display his power and love to them. Muslims also need to experience the transforming power of Jesus. Many have shared dreams or visions of him, but the everyday

love of Christians living their faith in hard circumstances can also have an impact. After Muslims experience Jesus in a tangible way they will be much more open to trusting the authority of the Bible.

Threshold 4: Openness to seeking. In stage four people eagerly desire to learn all they can about Jesus. They need safe places to seek him without being pressured to commit too soon. We must carefully discern what is behind the questions people ask at this stage. The question, How can I believe in Jesus? *may* be about intellectual obstacles, but it may also be about experiencing God. In John 7:17 Jesus declares “Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.” Based on this promise, we can encourage seekers to experiment with obeying Jesus’ teaching, expecting God to reveal himself to them. Steps of obedience like serving others or praying about daily problems can lead to experiencing God. Ending Bible studies with next-step challenges helps seekers take concrete actions in their pursuit of God.⁷ Having recent converts share their testimonies with the group is especially helpful to seekers; it gives them a picture of what change might look like for them. Much of what we do during this threshold is similar for all cultural groups, working to help them get their questions about Scripture answered and giving them opportunities to experience God.

Threshold 5: Entering the kingdom. At a certain point seeking can reach such a level of intensity that resolution is needed. People cannot remain seekers forever, and those who do not commit may lose their keenness to seek. Having chosen to fast in his seeking after God, Sri, the Hindu student who was part of the Indian Christian Community, was at that level of intensity the day I shared with him. Thomas and Dave had discerned that Sri was ready. They asked me to speak with him because they knew I had a great deal of experience in helping people cross the line. When we recognize that someone is close, we must extend an invitation to follow Jesus. If obstacles remain, the

invitation will surface them so they can be addressed. If not, then we can help our friend enter the kingdom.

Invitations provide opportunities for our friends to publicly respond to the Spirit's wooing with surrender and commitment. Even if the Spirit has already ushered them into the kingdom, openly confessing Jesus as their Lord seals in their hearts the reality of conversion. I often share Romans 10:9-10 with people at this point:

If you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (NASB)

Joy always seems to overtake people who choose to verbally acknowledge Jesus as Lord. I remember seeing many radiant smiles once these words tumbled out of my friends' mouths.

Giving an invitation also allows any remaining blocks to surface. Sometimes we are able to deal quickly with those blocks. People from backgrounds that emphasize merit and virtue may think that they must reach a point of perfect faith or become worthy of Jesus before following him. The account of the father who said to Jesus, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24) and then saw Jesus set his son free from a demon usually speaks powerfully to people like Sri who want to feel 100 percent prepared before making a commitment.

What should a "sinner's prayer" look like crossculturally? I hesitate to provide printed prayers because people can so easily treat them as magical, but in general they should express sin in terms of breaking relationship with and dishonoring God, and repentance in terms of coming home to God and pledging allegiance or loyalty to Jesus. Use words like *Leader* or *King* to describe Jesus' lordship. And include a request to be filled with the Holy Spirit. If at all possible, people should pray this first prayer in their heart languages. At our evangelistic retreats we always try to have a partner or two who

speaks Mandarin join us for prayer times with seekers, since so many of our seekers are from China. This enables new converts to hear prayer in their heart languages and encourages worship in that language later.

How long might it take for our friends to go through all the stages? God is sovereign over conversions. Huang's story is a good example of the mysterious and organic process of coming to faith. On the bus in his Chinese city Huang was strangely attracted to a book in a stranger's hands. He looked at the title: "Holy Bible." He was driven to read that book. He inquired about where to find such a book and, on his day off from work, he took two buses to get there. So Huang was already reading the Bible when he came to North Carolina State University to study engineering. The international student fellowship sponsored a tour of the city, and there Huang and his wife, Yan, first met Christians. They were soon part of the fellowship, and Huang was happy to discuss this book he'd been reading. Trust and curiosity developed quickly. Yan loved the women's discussion group and demonstrated a seeker's heart early on. At the March evangelistic retreat two years later she invited Jesus into her life.

Openness to change was harder for Huang, although he met weekly with campus minister Andrew to study the Bible. Huang was active in the community, often emceeding the Friday meetings. He and Yan participated as the group cared practically for members and friends who were moving, marrying or having children. Members of the fellowship interceded regularly for him, and I mobilized extra prayer from a couple who support me financially. Two years later Huang and Yan attended the March retreat again; we had invited Huang to lead the Saturday hike just to be sure that he would be present. The first night Huang shared openly in his small group about what a stubborn person he was and how he would never make a decision unless he was convinced it was what he should do. Our speaker, a young Chinese pastor who had come to Christ after arriving in the

United States, shared his testimony of coming to faith as a biologist, and things began to budge inside Huang. On the second evening the pastor gave an invitation to follow Jesus. Finally Huang was ready, and the pastor was happy to pray with him. Eight years after first setting eyes on the Bible, he made Jesus his Lord and King. He had consistently received the Word and begun to put it into practice. Participation in the community for years helped Huang pass through the mysterious but organic journey into the kingdom.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Personal Reflection

1. Consider your own journey to Jesus or that of a new Christian who you know well. What stages or thresholds described in this chapter can you discern?
2. *Lectio divina* passages:
 - Psalm 40:1-10
 - John 1:43-51
 - John 3:1-16
 - 1 Timothy 1:12-17
 - Revelation 3:14-21

Group Discussion

1. Discuss and debrief the community event that you planned from the last chapter.
2. What questions do you have about the chapter? What did you like and not like?
3. What steps or thresholds does the blind man in John 9 go through in his journey toward Jesus? How does Jesus change in his (healed) eyes?

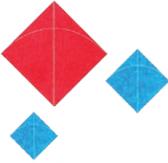
Group Application

Prayerfully consider your crosscultural friendships. At what stage is each of your friends? Use the reflection questions in the “Five Thresholds in Crosscultural Evangelism” sidebar to think through what you can do to help your friend move to the next stage. Meet your friend for coffee or dinner and try out some of your ideas.

Suggested Resources

- *I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us About Their Path to Jesus* by Don Everts and Doug Schaupp. This book introduces the five stages of conversion.
- *Song of a Wanderer: Beckoned by Eternity* by Cheng Li. This conversion story of a Chinese intellectual contains apologetic material especially appropriate for those with many intellectual questions.
- *Reaching the Current Generation of Chinese Students*, available at http://afcresources.org/contents/en-us/d240_New_Resources.html. This booklet summarizes recent research on Chinese generations. Read with a Chinese Christian friend.
- Answering Islam, answeringislam.org. A library of articles on Islam.
- *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* by Nabeel Qureshi. Contains helpful answers to questions.
- Yeshu Samaj, yeshusamaj.org. Material for Hindu-background seekers and disciples, written by believers from Hindu families. Includes articles, testimonies and common faith objections and answers.
- Naya Jeevan, nayajeevan.org/resources. A website focused on welcoming the Hindu immigrant community with articles and media links to help them acclimate to life in the United States and introduce them to Jesus.

Communication That Connects



ONE SUMMER A CHURCH NEAR a beach on the East Coast created flyers inviting seasonal guest workers, students from other countries, to a welcome event. They advertised free food and asked for online registration. Even though the church was located only five minutes away from the residential area where the guest-worker students lived, very few people attended. François, the soccer player who came to Christ through a Christian housemate and international Sunday school class (see chap. 7), was working for another church that was located further away. But François walked up and down the beach, getting to know the guest workers. He found out how he could serve his new acquaintances and gave personal invitations to a dinner. Later François called his friends to say how much he wanted them to attend the meal. Turnout for the second church's dinner was much higher, even though it took longer for the students to walk there than to the first church. What caused the difference?

The first part of the answer is obvious. Through François the second church was communicating a desire for relationship and personal connection. But there is another reason as well. As François explained to me, the advertisement of free food by the first church was sending

an unintended and insulting message to students from certain cultures. The message was, “You will come just for food. We don’t need to have a relationship with you to get you to come, just offer food.” To attend a dinner just for free food could be seen as lack of integrity in some cultures, according to François. The church nearest the beach failed to take into account the frame of reference of their receptors. To communicate well with people, we need to connect personally and fit our message to their worldviews. This is what we see Jesus and the apostle Paul doing.

JESUS AND PAUL AS COMMUNICATORS

Jesus communicated appropriately with each individual or group. He used the indirect language of parables to coax people to seek more understanding, and often spoke directly and strongly to Pharisees who needed a prophetic warning. The unfinished story of the older son in Luke 15 invited the scribes and Pharisees to join in the joy of the Father over repentant outcasts. Jesus connected personally with his dialogue partners, fitting his message to their circumstances. He called fishermen to become fishers of people, and told stories with agricultural and commercial themes taken from everyday life. He bested the lawyers in their honor-seeking debating games, sometimes answering questions with questions and demonstrating deep understanding of the law. He built trust in the crosscultural encounter with the Samaritan woman.

Paul also knew how to connect personally and fit his message to his hearers. Acts 17 recounts how he did his research in Athens, discovering an inscription to an unknown God. Invited to speak to Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, he addressed beliefs of both groups and used the inscription he had found to tell them about the true God:

For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UN-

KNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. . . .

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. “For in him we live and move and have our being.” As some of your own poets have said, “We are his offspring.” (Acts 17:23, 26–28)

This sermon actually contains quotes from two Greek poets; Paul used material familiar to his hearers to make his points. We can read novels, watch movies or learn proverbs from our friends’ cultures and connect what we learn to the gospel. My Indian friend Raina shared the saying “Treat your guests as if they’re gods” with me when explaining hospitality in her culture. “Unfortunately now it’s just a tourist slogan,” she added. Later, when I shared with her about honoring God and people, I alluded to those words. God wants us to honor every human being because each one bears the image of God.

For people with more understanding of the true God, Paul started at a different place, his own testimony. His defense before King Agrippa in Acts 26 begins with a compliment, expressing confidence in the king’s knowledge of Jewish teachings and customs. He then shares his own story of transformation from persecutor of Christians to preacher to the Gentiles and ends by directly appealing to Agrippa to consider the gospel.

RECEPTOR-ORIENTED COMMUNICATION

Like Jesus and Paul, we need to be personal and authentic, and adapt our communication to those who will receive it. This adaptation requires understanding others’ communication patterns, learning styles and worldviews. We also need to communicate in a way that enables

our hearers to discover things for themselves.

Sharing ourselves. Jesus shared his life along with his teaching. Even before the disciples realized who Jesus was, he spent time with them, allowing them to observe his relationship with the Father, which caused them to ask Jesus how to pray. Jesus' example intrigued the disciples, and he wants our lives to intrigue people. We should share openly with our friends about our relationship with God, briefly mentioning our joys, struggles and answers to prayer. If we have developed trust with them, our authentic sharing will provoke curiosity.

It is crucial that our friends see how our faith affects our approach to life's struggles. I shared freely with my Indian friend Raina about certain health issues and my prayers to God for healing, and my vulnerability deepened our friendship. People will respond to our stories when they are not yet interested in the entire gospel story. As we build trust we should pray for opportunities to share how we came to Christ and how that has changed us. If we have prayerfully entered the lives of our friends, the Spirit will help us identify aspects of our experience that speak deeply to them.

SHARING YOUR STORY CROSSCULTURALLY

- Prayerfully *consider your audience*. What values do they pursue or experiences do they run from? Ask God to show you what in your story will speak deeply to them.
- Briefly *describe your life* before Jesus was important to you.
- What *events, conversations* and *people* helped you learn more about Jesus? Be specific about what attracted you.
- Describe *how you decided* to trust in and make Jesus your leader. Use everyday words and avoid language that only Christians understand.
- How has knowing Jesus *changed your life*? Be specific.
- End with a *challenge* for your audience to take a next step toward Jesus.

Communication patterns: Indirect or direct. As we connect personally with people, we need to understand their cultural communication patterns. Crosscultural trainer Craig Storti stresses that cultures differ the most on the degree of directness.¹ Indirect communication works well for people who place a high value on honor. We may even encounter it in nations that are considered individualist. But indirect communication is ingrained in East Asia. It enables people to maintain relationship and avoid loss of face because it permits a “no” message without the use of the word *no*. I did not understand that my Thai acquaintance Tao wasn’t ready to become a Christian after I shared the gospel, because I knew nothing about indirect communication. His saying no to my presentation would have caused a loss of face for both of us, so he said yes.

In collectivist societies, people know each other well and do not need to spell out their meanings directly; responsibility for communication lies as much with the message’s receptor as the sender. A number of different techniques indicate displeasure or a no response: changing the subject, making an understatement, saying nothing, telling a story or praising one small aspect of something one dislikes.² For example, I once asked a colleague from an indirect-communication culture what he thought about my choice of Ephesians as a follow-up book for international discipling groups. His response was “I like that it’s one book and not a topical series.” Ephesians would not have been his choice, but he communicated that indirectly. Two years later I found myself wishing I had inquired about what book he thought was best. Nonverbal communication is easily understood when everyone is from the same background. In this case, I failed to understand my colleague because I incorrectly assumed that he had adopted a more direct communication style.

Indirect communication works well in *high-context* societies. *Context* includes surroundings, dress, process (how an invitation is given or event carried out), shared history and worldview, and body language.

In the high-context societies of the non-Western world, contextual factors communicate powerfully. Dressing up for church demonstrates respect for God's house. A special banquet with decorations and certificates provides proper recognition for the achievements of a person or group. *Low-context societies* downplay context and place all the weight of communication on words. So pay attention to the environments you create and the ways you invite and welcome people. More importantly, pay attention to body language and behavior that might provide clues about what high-context friends are trying to tell you indirectly.³

In building relationships and sharing the gospel, indirect communication poses special challenges. When my friend doesn't want to question or challenge ideas I share for fear of making me lose face, true dialogue cannot occur. Especially in situations where one person has a higher perceived status (e.g., Bible study leader, pastor or older friendship family member) an international friend may never ask their true questions.

In highly face-oriented societies, asking a question may indicate ignorance (loss of face for the questioner) or cause the person queried to lose face if he or she can't answer it. Several East Asian students I interviewed for my dissertation mentioned this issue as one that slowed their progress to faith. Talking with people alone in relaxed settings, anticipating and answering questions before they're asked, starting a Bible discussion with "What are your questions?" and creating an atmosphere where questions are encouraged all help. Invitations—especially invitations to follow Jesus—must be made with care. I always try to provide a way for people to say no easily. "I'd really love for you to come to my church cantata on Sunday. I think you would enjoy the music. Do you think you could come, or are you too busy right now?" If they really don't want to come, they can say, "I'm too busy."

Thinking/learning styles. We have already seen that most non-

Western people think and learn in pictures rather than in concepts. A third way of learning or knowing is the intuitional or mystical. East Asians traditionally prefer pictorial thinking, the kind Jesus used in telling his parables. Dreams and visions—intuitional learning—have played a role in the conversions of many Muslims, just as they did for Cornelius the centurion, the first Gentile convert (Acts 10). People who have been trained in Western abstract thinking, particularly scientists, may need logical reasoning and theology at some stage in their conversion journeys, but they usually learn in one of the other ways as well. Pictorial thinkers may enjoy material in cartoon format, Bible story books or videos. Knowing the general tendencies of different cultures can help in planning events for crosscultural groups and in praying. But we need to get to know our friends in their uniqueness; God can use any of the three ways of knowing with anyone. I have known a number of East Asians who experienced supernatural dreams during their journeys toward Jesus.

When we discover our friends' preferred styles, we can adapt our communication to them. My friend Raina, a communication major, enjoyed ballet, drama, music and art. So I first shared my poem with her, then some gospel diagrams in story form, a movie presenting Jesus with honor-shame themes and an Easter service at my church. Each of the media I chose affected her, and they built on one another as I observed where she was spiritually and asked God for the next step.

Worldviews. We must always take our friends' worldviews into account as we communicate. Whether making invitations to dinners or sharing the gospel, attention to the receptor is critical. At the subjective culture level, *beliefs about God, about human beings and how humans relate to God* or the gods vary immensely from society to society. Unless we work hard to clarify biblical truths first, people will understand our messages about God in terms of how their societies view and relate to the gods. I was sharing the gospel with Lihua, my Chinese friend Zhang's mother, when Zhang, who was

translating, stopped me. “Katie, you have to understand that my mom is used to going to the Buddhist temple and praying to the god, and then doing something good for the god when the prayer is answered.” God had answered a big prayer of Lihua’s for her son, and now she was talking about going to a Christian church and doing some service for God there.

In power-weakness societies people seek the help of gods or ancestors in difficult situations. When a prayer is answered, the gods must be thanked or repaid in some tangible way. Recognizing this pattern in what Zhang shared with me, I turned to Acts 17. Zhang, Lihua and I read and discussed Paul’s words about the Creator God not living in temples made by human hands or being served by human hands. We talked about the differences between the God of the Bible and the kinds of gods Lihua believed in. I did not challenge Lihua to become a follower of Jesus but encouraged her to read the Bible and keep seeking. If we allow people to make commitments to Jesus before they understand deeply the true nature of God and of relationship with him, they may become disappointed when unanswered prayers mount up and decide to try another god. It is critical for us to help our friends bring their underlying worldview assumptions to the surface before and as we share good news with them. Doing so will employ discovery learning.

Learning through discovery. Learning in traditional cultures often happens through the use of parables, fables and proverbs containing the accumulated wisdom of the community. Younger members learn through reflection and experience the joy of new insights: discovery learning. Truths that we figure out for ourselves stay with us longer and enable transformation. Discovery learning enables us to absorb both content and the relevance of the content to our lives.⁴ Throughout the five thresholds, relationships with Christians and Christian community help people see more and more clearly the impact Jesus can have on them. But when we start addressing worldview assumptions

and sharing from the Bible, conscious use of discovery learning is critical. Cultural discussion groups, Bible studies and telling Bible stories all enable discovery learning.

Cultural discussion groups. Discussion groups centering on cultural differences are powerful tools to help people surface hidden worldview assumptions. A missionary team tutoring Turkish students who were preparing to come to the United States encouraged debate on controversial local issues. This taught the students critical thinking, a skill they would need in the United States, but also got them into the habit of thinking for themselves instead of passively accepting everything they had been taught.

International campus ministers at a Virginia university planned a series of weekly discussions on relationships for their spring semester meetings. Each discussion guide contained questions designed to surface assumptions or encourage thought on spiritual issues. Presidents' Day discussions included a look at the Civil War and slavery, literal and metaphorical. The story of Saint Patrick returning to a nation where he had been enslaved introduced questions on forgiveness. A session at the end of the semester focused on peace between nations and peace within individuals. This kind of series helps people develop trust in Christians, provokes curiosity and surfaces hidden assumptions.

Bible study. Inductive Bible study allows readers to discover the meaning of a Bible passage through careful observation and interpretation that includes attention to the historical background and immediate context of the Scripture. The application phase focuses on how the text applied to the original audience and how it applies to current readers. Because it uses analytical logic, inductive Bible study can feel tedious and boring to concrete thinkers. There are a number of ways to address this issue. Varying the learning channel by having people mark observations on typed out versions of the text, draw cartoons to illustrate them or act out a text can make observation

more fun. But we have to remember that Muslims have such reverence for holy books that writing on typed out texts of Bible passages—indeed any marking of the Bible—will most likely seem disrespectful to them.

Developing a culture within the discussion group that values questions communicates the crucial lesson that God wants us to use our minds. And challenging friends to put into practice what they have learned involves them in obedience that can lead to faith.

STUDYING THE BIBLE CROSSCULTURALLY

- *Community.* Establish a family atmosphere where each individual and culture is valued; spend time eating and sharing before or after the Bible discussion.
- *Discussion dynamics.* Sometimes what is not said is just as important as what is said. Does someone look puzzled? It might be a clue that there is a misunderstanding of the text or vocabulary.
- *Inclusion.* Invite everyone to share—sometimes friends wait to share their thoughts out of respect for the leader or to make space for others.
- *Observation.* Make observation a game by saying things like “Let’s look at Genesis 2–3 and make a chart of all the differences we see after Adam and Eve disobeyed” or “On your copy of the text, draw a circle around all the requests in Jesus’ model prayer” or simply state an obvious observation and go on to interpretation.
- *Questions.* Value questions and handle them wisely:
 - ◆ Begin by recording everyone’s initial questions; choose which ones to answer in the discussion.
 - ◆ Anticipate questions people might have but wouldn’t ask: How could a virgin possibly have a baby?
 - ◆ Postpone questions that don’t relate to the text until after the discussion; be sure to return to them, at least with the persons raising them.
 - ◆ When someone gives an obviously incorrect interpretation, direct attention to parts of the text that reveal the correct interpretation, ask what others think or say, “I never heard an

idea like that before.” Find an indirect way of bringing out the truth.

- ◆ Admit ignorance and promise to research questions you can't answer.
- *Culture.* Share the cultural background of the text and bring out areas where it is similar to that of group members. Or use opening questions that bring out culture and link directly to the text: “How do children relate to fathers in your country?” to introduce the Lost Son story.
- *Learning channels.* Have the group act out the text (kinesthetic learning) or draw small cartoons to illustrate it (pictorial learning). Introduce the study with a video clip (auditory and pictorial) or take turns telling each other the story (auditory).
- *Application.* Prayerfully consider what applications are appropriate both for seekers and believers, and challenge people to put into practice what they learned in the discussion.

Note: Some of these suggestions are from the online tools associated with “Starting ISM: Journeying Towards Jesus,” InterVarsity, June 19, 2014, <http://ism.intervarsity.org/resource/starting-ism-journeying-towards-jesus>.

Storytelling. Learning through story comes naturally to people from oral cultures such as West Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and South Asia. A well-told story can change peoples' assumptions; Jesus used parables for that purpose. His surprise elements could bring flashes of insight; consider, for example, how he redefined neighborliness in the good Samaritan story. When we discern the values of our friends, we can choose and tell stories that open their eyes to new truth, as I did with Yiling and the Lost Son story.

Christine Dillon, a church planter in Taiwan, has discovered the power of story to attract non-Christians and gradually draw them to faith. Her book *Telling the Gospel Through Story* contains practical instruction on storytelling. Her suggestions on storytelling with both educated and less-educated people, and leading follow-up discussions are excellent.⁵ She shares two sets of discussion questions that have

TELLING BIBLE STORIES

- *Discern worldviews and value systems.* Prayerfully decide what value systems affect your friend.
- *Discern barriers.* Observe what worldview differences might keep your friend from deciding to follow Jesus (“God is not personal—he doesn’t care about us humans”).
- Read through *stories in the Bible that address these value systems or barriers* and notice the feelings and details of the story.
- Think through the *cultural background and vocabulary* needed for your friend to understand the story, *choose details* that will impact him or her and *practice telling* the story.
- *Follow up* with one or more *thought-provoking questions*: “If Jesus were to touch and heal an outcast in your village back home, how would people react?”
- Consider doing a *chronological story series*, including the Old Testament background that helps us understand Jesus, or develop a *series tailored to challenge barriers* you have discerned.
- Make *discussion* an integral part of storytelling. Try these questions:
 - ◆ What *questions* do you have about this story?
 - ◆ There are some things about this story that people might not like. What are they?
 - ◆ What do you like about this story? Why?
 - ◆ What do we learn about God from this story?
 - ◆ What do we learn about people from this story?
 - ◆ What lesson from the story can we put into practice this week?

Note: These questions are inspired by Christine Dillon, *Telling the Gospel Through Story: Evangelism That Keeps Hearers Wanting More* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 113.

been used by church planters worldwide. I have used the first set fruitfully in Bible studies, whether or not the studies involved stories. One version of them that has worked well for me is included in the sidebar “Telling Bible Stories.”

Remember François and his church that was fifteen minutes away from the beach? He continued to meet international guest workers, find ways that his church and other churches could help them adjust to life in America, and give personal invitations to weekly dinners. Eventually those dinners attracted four hundred people weekly, including members of ten local churches. As he got to know the student guest workers, François crafted Bible studies that presented the gospel to them in culturally appropriate ways. Church members led table discussion groups around the studies that François wrote, and developed friendships with the students they met in the groups. Students from China and the Middle East came to Christ and returned home to share the gospel with others, using the Bible study material that François had prepared. Because François and the church members he mobilized entered in to the lives of the guest workers, got to know them personally and tailored their communication appropriately, people from several continents were impacted for Jesus.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Personal Reflection

1. How can you share your own story (testimony) in a way that brings change to your listener(s)? Prayerfully make notes and practice telling your story.
2. How have you been sharing your life, including how God is involved in it, with your friends?
3. *Lectio divina* passages:
 - John 4:7-30
 - John 4:39-42
 - Luke 10:25-37
 - Luke 18:10-14
 - Acts 17:22-28

Group Discussion

1. Debrief in the group the conversation you each had with your friends (see “Group Application” of chap. 8).
2. What questions do you have about the chapter? What did you like and not like?
3. Work through Paul’s testimony before Agrippa in Acts 26:1-23. What elements are present here? How could your own testimony authentically reflect some of these elements?
4. Consider what new spiritual understanding would help your friends along in their spiritual journeys. Is there a movie, drama, set of song lyrics, poem, photo, painting, video or app that might help provoke thought?

Group Application

Share your testimonies with each other, explaining how you shaped your testimony to fit your friends. Make a commitment to share your story, or part of it, as appropriate with your friend(s).

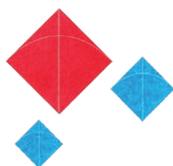
Suggested Resources

- *Intercultural Communication for Christian Ministry* by Frank Tucker, www.interculturalcommunicationresources.info. Comprehensive intercultural communication textbook with helpful illustrations and a website with much additional material.
- *Telling the Gospel Through Story: Evangelism That Keeps Hearers Wanting More* by Christine Dillon. This book includes counsel on training others and adapting stories to different audiences.
- *The Bible Study Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide to an Essential Practice* by Lindsay Olesberg. This book is a readable, comprehensive guide on how to do inductive Bible study and help groups get excited about the Scriptures. Details on using manuscripts, printed versions of the text, are included.

- *Jesus with Dirty Feet* by Don Everts. Great for Hindu and other seekers.
- *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* by Sally Lloyd-Jones. This children's (but not childish) Bible is enjoyed by Hindus and other non-Westerners.
- *Storyteller's Bible Study: From Creation to Christ in 12 Lessons* by Bill Perry. This book introduces the Bible and gospel using a storytelling approach.
- Aradhna, aradhnmusic.com. Aradhna performs worship songs to Jesus using India's traditional devotional melodies with instruments from East and West.
- *Overseas Campus*, an excellent Chinese language magazine available from Overseas Campus Ministries, oc.org. Check their website for online apologetics material and their WeChat platform (WeChat is an instant messaging app popular in China).
- *Unlocking the Mystery of Life*, La Mirada, CA: Illustra Media, 2003. The first in a video series of interest to the scientifically minded.
- International Student Ministry, <https://store.intervarsity.org> (click on "International Student Ministry" for global music and DVDs)
- Multi-Language Media: www.multilanguage.com. Scripture and Christian books in many languages.

Stories That Bring Change

Understanding and Sharing the Gospel



I LOOKED AROUND THE SLIGHTLY darkened room and saw faces from several countries. Our regional evangelistic retreat had attracted a more diverse group than usual. In addition to East Asians there were South Asians, including one Hindu, two Muslims, and students from Africa and Eastern Europe. “I hope those of you who attended the relationship seminar this afternoon found it helpful,” I began. “We have to offer some form of this seminar every year because relationships are so important to people.” I continued talking about the value of relationships in life. “We are right to value relationships because we were created for relationships. The Bible teaches us that God is at the heart of the universe, and *God is love*. Out of love God created human beings in his image—like him—so he could have persons to love who could love him back.” To picture God as love, I showed a slide with a large heart containing many small hearts.

“But we struggle in our relationships, whether it is in dating or marriage or with our parents or friends. Everywhere we look we see broken relationships and we long to see harmony.” The next slide

portrayed broken human relationships, and I mentioned some of the broken relationships among people groups described earlier by our speaker. “Why is the world like this? The Bible tells us what happened.” The harmony of Eden was depicted in the next slide, and I talked about relationships of mutual honor. “God honored Adam and Eve with his presence and words. He commanded them to rule over and manage the world. Adam and Eve did not need clothes because they walked in God’s honor. The Bible says they were naked and not ashamed. And they had great joy in God’s presence.”

I continued the story by talking about the impact of the first couple’s dishonoring of God: shame and guilt entered the world; Adam and Eve suddenly realized they were naked. “The Bible calls what Adam and Eve did in dishonoring and breaking relationship with God ‘sin.’ Sin is the heart attitude that puts self first; from that attitude come all the actions that we call sins. Sin is dishonoring God, ourselves, other people and the earth. One definition of sin is ‘missing the mark,’ not reaching the intended goal. Just as Adam and Eve missed the mark of what God made them for—relationships of honor and harmony—we also miss the mark in our relationships. We long for the harmony and peace Adam and Eve had.

“We all need love, and no longer getting it from God, we seek it from people. We struggle in our relationships today because we look to human beings to give us the perfect love that only God can give. We put human beings in the place of God and make them our idols. And we struggle to forgive people who can’t love us fully, because we aren’t connected to God, who is love. But no human being is capable of loving perfectly. Only God is.”

I watched the students’ faces; they were following my words attentively. “This first act of dishonoring led to death. Dishonor always leads to a death of some kind.” I mentioned people taking their lives after failing exams, and breaking relationship when they have been shamed. “And payback entered the world; people react to being dis-

honored by paying back the other person some way. Forgiveness does not seem possible.”

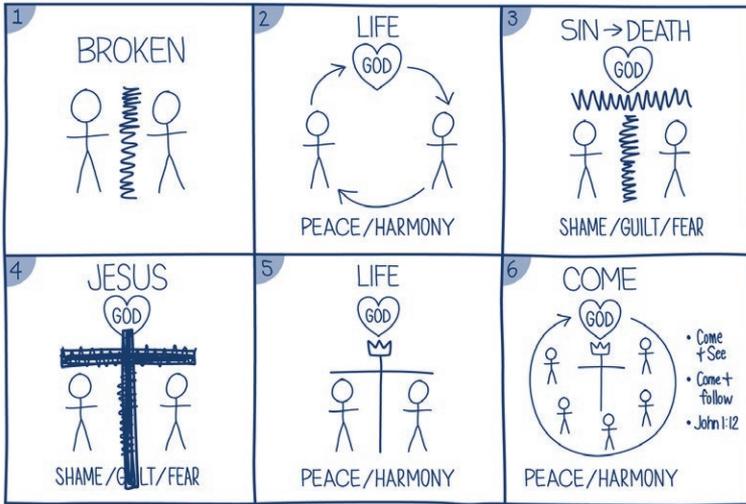


Figure 10.1. The Broken diagrams

I continued the story, putting up additional slides that depict how Jesus honored humans by becoming human and dying on the cross, taking on our shame and guilt. (Figure 10.1 contains the latest version of the slides I used.)¹ “Because of that one death for shame and guilt, no other deaths have to occur.” I then explained how the Father honored Jesus in the resurrection, and how Jesus offers us life in place of death and harmony instead of guilt and shame. I used details from the stories of changed lives shared by four international students at various times earlier in the retreat to illustrate the changes Jesus brings. The last slide pictured a community restored to God and each other through the cross of Jesus. “Today members of Jesus’ worldwide family are working to bring harmony to our world and heal all kinds of relationships.” Then came the invitations: to become a sincere seeker after God, or to follow Jesus: “Join Jesus and his family in

bringing harmony to this broken world. Become a follower of Jesus and child of Father God.”

We passed out response sheets with a variety of next steps—including several for people who were interested but not ready to become seekers or followers—and gave people quiet time to consider them. Students desiring to pray with us about next steps were invited to join the prayer team downstairs.

A Chinese woman from Virginia descended the stairs in no time. “I was very moved by what you shared,” she declared. I probed a little bit: “Which slide did you like the best?” She pointed to frame 5, which pictured the life Jesus won for us on the cross, and then to the last frame where the two invitations were laid out. Before the evening was over, Liying had said yes to Jesus’ invitation to follow. The next morning a Chinese man from North Carolina used almost the exact same words as Liying to describe his reaction to the gospel story: “I was deeply touched.” Later that day Zhiming had also entered the kingdom. Other students at the retreat showed interest in less public ways, buying Bible story books and small booklets. Communicating the gospel through a culturally appropriate story and diagrams had provoked curiosity in some people and brought two seekers to commitment.

UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL

But what *is* the gospel? We must be careful not to equate Western formulations of the good news with the gospel itself.² When he used the term *gospel* or *good news*, Jesus always talked about the kingdom of God. Mark 1:14-15 records his first public teaching: “After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!’”

God’s good news or gospel is that the rule or reign (kingdom) of God has come near in the person of Jesus. When we share the gospel we should always clarify how Jesus is good news for our hearers, and

how they need to change their thinking and behavior (repent) in response to King Jesus. But clarifying how the gospel is good news requires both knowing our friends well and understanding the many facets of the gospel that we find in the Bible. “Holy Lover” is one way of viewing the gospel from an honor-shame perspective. The following is a brief gospel story from a power-weakness viewpoint:

Knowingly or unknowingly all human beings are in the kingdom of darkness, blinded by Satan to the truth of Jesus, slaves to sin and to the fear of death. Jesus triumphed over Satan and evil spirits in the cross and resurrection, and sits in the heavenly places with them beneath his feet. Although Satan is still waging war, Jesus has already conquered him. The gospel call is to surrender to Jesus as king, renounce the enemy, give up all ungodly means of power and receive God’s freedom from fear, sin and the influence of evil spirits.³

Most readers are familiar with gospel stories told from the guilt-innocence lens. One of the last century’s best known summaries of the gospel, “The Four Spiritual Laws,” begins with “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” God greatly used this tool because it was so well-adapted to the individualistic, rule-oriented thinking of the American audience. But it captures only a small part of a much bigger gospel that involves the kingship of God, groups and individuals, and freedom from shame, weakness and pain as well as guilt.

ELABORATING ON THE “BROKEN” DIAGRAMS

The story told by the Broken diagrams (see fig. 10.1) may be titled “Shalom Restored.” It includes aspects that speak to both collectivists and individualists. In frame 1, we set up the story by discussing the state of the world today. Even though there is nothing in the figure to represent broken relationships inside people and with the earth, we

can include them and talk about the lack of peace in the world. Frame 3 introduces the word *sin*. Sin is translated “crime” in Chinese and Japanese, so be sure to clarify that sin is a heart attitude. You can elaborate on ways we miss the mark today, choosing those that fit the value systems of your audience. I talked about how we often try to make people be what only God can be because so many of the students we work with are preoccupied with finding a marriage partner. Gospel storytelling should always expose the preferred idol of the hearers so they understand exactly what repentance means.⁴ Some seek honor for themselves through achievement; many strive for wealth in hopes that it will give both power and honor.

Frame 4 introduces the work of Jesus. Why would he leave the joy of heaven to come to earth? Human beings were helpless to properly honor God. If the broken relationship were to be healed, the movement would have to come from God. So Jesus became human to help us in our powerlessness. Elder brothers are responsible for younger siblings in many cultures, so likening Jesus to an elder brother will speak to many groups. In coming to earth Jesus lowered himself (a shameful thing) and shamed himself even more by dying on the cross. Jesus bore our shame, guilt, pain and weakness; he died to set us free from slavery to sin and to the devil (*fear* [Hebrews 2:14-15]). Talk about those aspects of Jesus’ death that will speak most to your friends.

Frame 5 introduces the honor-shame reversal. The Father honored Jesus in raising him to life. Hebrews 2:9-11 uses the language of crowning:

We do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. Both the one who makes people holy and those who

are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

Risen and reigning even now, Jesus offers life, honor and freedom to those who acknowledge him as their King. Peace and harmony are available to replace shame, guilt, fear and pain. Describe the blessings of shalom using peace or harmony, or both words, depending on your audience.

The script for frame 6 offers the invitations with an option that enables “no” without saying no. And since “Come and See” can be understood in several ways, you can make that invitation in a form that fits most of the thresholds. People can come and see by getting to know the community better (thresholds 1, 2, 3), studying the Scriptures (thresholds 3, 4) or by praying something similar to the seeker’s prayer suggested in the script. Ask the Lord how to present the “Come and See” option. If your friend is not in the openness or seeking stage, explain “Come and See” as an invitation to explore the community.

Even though the invitations are expressed with an option that allows “no” easily, friends skilled in indirect communication may know from our faces how much we want them to say yes, and some might do so just to keep us from losing face and to preserve interpersonal harmony. If you are not sure that your friend is ready for some kind of “Come and See” invitation, you can simply make a general statement describing the kinds of things an interested person could do to learn more about Jesus. When presenting the invitations in a retreat setting, we always schedule a brief reflection time afterward, give students response sheets with options appropriate for various thresholds and suggest some verses for them to read. This quiet time gives them a chance to listen and respond to the work the Holy Spirit might be doing in them. Yes responses will be made to God and not to us.

Although I provide a suggested script, the best way to use the diagrams is to tell them as a story and fit them to your audience, as I did

at the retreat. The italicized words in the script capture the main point of each diagram. If you are sharing the diagrams with a friend or in small groups, use the questions provided for some frames to make the story more of a dialogue.

USING THE BROKEN DIAGRAMMS

Frame 1: Broken. When using frame 1, make the following points: *When we look around the world we see broken relationships everywhere:* between nations, people groups, families, friends, inside ourselves and even with the earth (see. fig. 10.2).

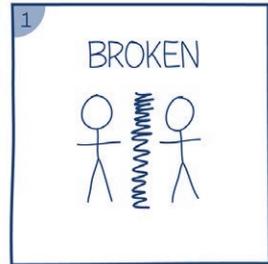


Figure 10.2. Broken

- Where have you seen examples of broken relationships in the world?
- What do you think a world without broken relationships would be like?

Frame 2: Peace-harmony. We deeply desire that world without broken relationships; we yearn for peace and harmony (see fig. 10.3).

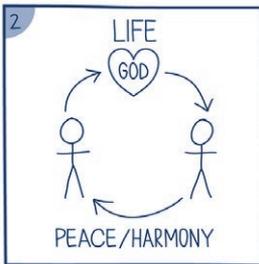


Figure 10.3. Peace-harmony

The fact that we can imagine this world and yearn for it is a clue that we were made for it. In fact the Bible teaches that there is a *God of love at the heart of the universe and that he made human beings for relationships of peace and harmony with him and each other.*

Human beings received life directly from God; relationship with God gave them life. God honored them by giving them an intimate relationship with him and making them rulers over the world he had created. The Bible tells us that Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, were naked and yet not ashamed. Although they wore no physical clothes, they were clothed with the honor of God. They

honored God with their hearts and they honored him by living in perfect obedience to him. So they both received honor from God and gave honor to God and to each other. Relationships between the couple and God, between husband and wife, inside their hearts and with the earth were filled with peace and harmony.

Frame 3: Sin and death. But the peace and harmony the woman and man enjoyed were broken. When they disobeyed and dishonored God, relationship with him was broken, and soon the relationship between the two of them was broken as well (see fig. 10.4).

When the relationship with God was lost, the man and woman also lost the honor they had received from God; they realized they were naked and hid from God, feeling shame, guilt and fear.

Since then, human beings continually dishonor and break relationship with God and with each other. The Bible’s word for this dishonoring is *sin*. *Sin is the heart attitude that puts self first, thus dishonoring and breaking relationship with God and people.* From this heart attitude come the individual thoughts and acts that are “sins.”

Through sin Adam and Eve lost life; they were sent away from God’s presence and learned that they would die.

Frame 4: Jesus. Ever since Adam and Eve dishonored God, human beings owe a debt of honor to God that we cannot pay. Only God can make the relationship right again and set us free from shame, guilt and fear.

In families in some parts of the world, the older brother is responsible for the younger brothers and sisters and must seek them if they are lost. *Jesus became a human*



Figure 10.4. Sin and death

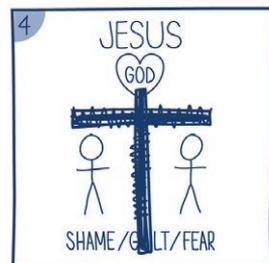


Figure 10.5. Jesus

being to be like an elder brother: to seek after people and reunite them with God the Father.

Jesus humbled (shamed) himself to become a human being and *lived a life of perfect obedience* to the Father, paying the honor debt people owe to God.

In dying on the cross for human beings Jesus revealed God’s character as holy and loving, restoring the honor God lost when Adam and Eve sinned. He took our shame, guilt, fear and pain on himself (see fig. 10.5).

Frame 5: Life. But Jesus did not remain dead. *The Father honored Jesus’ obedience by raising him from death to life. We place a crown over the cross to represent the honor Jesus received when he rose to life.*

In the cross and resurrection Jesus triumphed over all God’s enemies, including death, and he is now reigning with the Father in heaven.

Jesus offers life to everyone who will follow him and become part of God’s family. *When we commit ourselves to Jesus, he gives us honor for shame, forgiveness for guilt, peace for fear, and harmony instead of broken relationships (see fig. 10.6).* He sends the Holy Spirit to

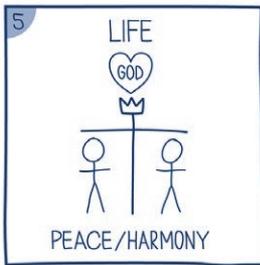


Figure 10.6. Life

live inside us and help us honor God. The Spirit also begins to heal our relationships with ourselves, others and the earth.

This is the main message of the Bible.

What questions do you have?

Frame 6: Come. Today there is a worldwide family connected to God and each other. *Members of that family are working to bring peace and harmony to the many broken relationships in our world.*

Jesus offers two invitations (see fig. 10.7):

- *Come and see.* Learn about Jesus through



Figure 10.7. Come

reading the Bible, praying, doing what he says and spending time with his people. Become a sincere seeker after God.

- *Come and follow.* Join Jesus and his family in bringing harmony to this broken world. Give your allegiance, your loyalty, to Jesus and become a child of Father God. John 1:12 tells us how: “To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” To “receive” Jesus means to welcome him into your life as King and Teacher. To “believe in his name” means to trust in him deeply.

Jesus is making these invitations today. Are you ready to answer one of them or do you need some more time to think about it?

Invite people who want to commit to being sincere seekers to pray something like this: “God, if you are real, please reveal yourself to me. If you do, I will make you the Leader and King of my life.”

Those desiring to become followers of Jesus could pray something like this: “Father God, I have been living independently of you, but I want to come home to you. Thank you for sending Jesus to bring me into relationship with you and set me free from sin. I want to make Jesus my King and Teacher. Please fill me with your Holy Spirit, help me to honor you above all things and be faithful to you all my life. Thank you.”

No one set of diagrams can capture all the facets of the gospel. But after discussion with colleagues who focus on several different groups, I decided to make the tool as flexible as possible by including in it several aspects of the good news. The basic outline of the story is “Shalom Shattered” and “Shalom Restored.” I never use the word *shalom* because it is a Hebrew word (potentially offensive to Muslims) and not a part of everyday vocabulary. *Peace* speaks to just about everyone, and we can elaborate on the word *peace* to give it all the richness of *shalom* when explaining frame 2. *Harmony* will speak more powerfully to East Asians. We added the word *fear* to the

bottom of frames 3 and 4 to address people with a sense of weakness, powerlessness or slavery. To take advantage of the flexibility of the diagrams, it is good to meditate on the biblical passages that underlie them. Knowing these texts and reading the Scriptures with the four values in mind will enable you to prayerfully choose those emphases and Scriptures that will connect best with your friends. One good way to share the diagrams is as a five or six week Bible study, focusing on one frame per week.

BROKEN DIAGRAMS: BIBLE STUDY MATERIAL

Frame 1: Broken^a

Mark 7:9-23; Romans 1:29-31
Romans 8:19-22

Frame 2: Peace-harmony

Genesis 1-2
Numbers 6:24-26
Psalm 8
Acts 17:24-28

Frame 3: Sin and Death

Genesis 3
Romans 1:18-23
Romans 8:20-22

Frame 4: Jesus

Philippians 2:5-11
Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Hebrews 2:9-15

Frame 5: Life

John 3:13-18
1 Corinthians 15:1-9, 20-23

Frame 6: Come

John 1:10-13
John 1:35-51
Romans 10:9-13

^aThis is background material; discussing the current state of the world may be more effective for this frame.

I pushed aside all the books on my coffee table and took out a sheet of paper and black pen. My friend Raina and I had just caught up each other on our lives over a meal, and dessert would come later. Raina had agreed to be a guinea pig for the diagrams I was field testing; she knew all about my work as a resource developer for international student ministry. I started out by admitting that this was more than just a field test. "I really value you as a friend and want to share the most important things in my life with you. And these dia-

grams are one way I can do that.” Raina nodded to show me she understood, and I began talking and drawing.

In our last spiritual conversation Raina had expressed deep reverence for the one perfect God she sought. I sensed then that she was a true God seeker but wondered how the Trinity would ever make sense to her. She was a philosophical Hindu, or monist, and for her perfection meant oneness.⁵ But, having prayed for direction and knowing how greatly Raina valued relationships, I felt that I should focus on relationship as I shared with her. So I began with frame 2 in the “Broken” diagrams and talked about relationship being at the heart of the universe: the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit. I continued with the other frames, talking about shame and death, and how Jesus died so that no other deaths have to happen again because of shame.

Raina followed my words intently. I mentioned the invitations in frame 6, but did not share them with her in great detail. At the end I waited nervously for Raina to object to the notion of God as Trinity, but she did not. Instead she smiled and said, “I love the idea that relationship is at the heart of the universe, and I believe it must be true.” My story had brought about a change in her view of what was honorable and beautiful. She saw love and beauty in the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity, and was attracted toward this God of love. Just as Jesus’ parables often brought a flash of insight and change of viewpoint for his listeners, this story had changed her mind about what a truly good God would be like. And Raina had a question about what I had said about honoring human beings as God’s image bearers. “How do you honor someone who has taken advantage of you?” she asked. Raina was considering how to put honor into practice. Repentance includes both a change of mind and behavior. Raina’s thinking had changed, and she was considering the consequences of obedience. Sharing the diagrams resulted in greater spiritual interest in Raina. By listening to her and to God, I had crafted a story that brought change.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Personal Reflection

1. Read through the diagrams and study the accompanying Scriptures. What new understandings of the gospel have you received?
2. What frames of the story would most connect with your friends? Why?
3. *Lectio divina* passages:
 - Psalm 8
 - Philippians 2:5-11
 - Hebrews 2:9-15
 - Romans 8:14-21
 - Revelation 7:9-12

Group Discussion

1. Debrief in the group how each of you shared your testimony/story with your friend(s) from last time (see “Group Application” in chap. 9).
2. Review with each other your work this week on the Broken diagrams. Where do you still have questions?
3. How would each of you tell the story for your friends? Which emphases would speak most to them? Is there a way you could use the diagrams in a group context (e.g., Bible study series or group event)?

Group Application

Share the Broken diagrams or a variation with a friend from another culture and seek feedback from him or her.

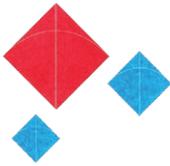
Suggested Resources

- Broken diagrams tools, crossingculturesbook.org/broken. Find

downloadable diagrams, including a fill-in-the-blank diagram that can be used as a handout.

- *The Father's Love* booklet, thefatherslovebooklet.org. This is a gospel presentation using honor-shame themes and the Lost Son story. It has been effective with Muslims.
- Gospel presentation tools, evangelism.intervarsity.org/how/gospel-outline. Get the app and learn how to share the “Big Story” gospel presentation, plus find many other evangelism resources, including answers to tough questions.
- “The Creator King” by Jackson Wu, <http://jacksonwu.org/tag/the-creator-king>. This gospel presentation will be especially effective with East Asians.

Making Disciples in Community



ABOUT ELEVEN MONTHS AFTER making his commitment to Jesus, Sri, the student who came to Christ through the Indian Christian Community (ICC), shared his testimony at our annual evangelistic weekend. He spoke with great articulation and feeling. As he talked, I became more and more amazed. Scriptures flowed from his mouth, not only clearly woven into his talk but also into his life. He told of leading a close friend to the Lord over the phone a few days after his decision and of spending hours taking in the Word. When he finished, I was delighted and curious; what had enabled Sri to grow so quickly? I later questioned both Sri and Dave to find the answer.

Soon after Sri made his commitment to Christ an older Indian Christian friend of the Indian Christian Community challenged him to *tithe* his time to the Lord. So Sri rearranged his life to devote 2.4 hours per day in prayer, the Word or Christian community. He spent part of that time listening to Bible Broadcasting Network in his lab and as he drove from place to place, so his graduate studies did not suffer because of this commitment. He also worshiped and attended Bible studies at a local church that welcomed international students.

Much of Sri's growth occurred in the Indian Christian Community

itself. He shared his commitment with ICC early on, powerfully affecting the other students in the fellowship. The ICC helped him experience some of the strengths particular to Indian Christians, devotion and sacrifice; Hindi-language worship music and fasting were already part of his life. And he and the other ICC members—Christians and Hindus alike—processed together the challenges of following Jesus in the Indian workplace. Sri’s amazing growth as a disciple had come through taking in large quantities of the Word and digesting it in a community that was aware of both the strengths and weaknesses of their cultural background.

JESUS THE DISCIPLER

In Luke 10:1-23 Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples in pairs with instructions to find welcoming homes, heal the sick and preach the nearness of the kingdom of God. When they return and report what happened, Jesus helps them understand their experiences and gives them deeper insight about himself and his mission. This sequence: hearing a command from God, obeying it and then debriefing the experience in community has been called “the discipleship cycle” (see fig. 11.1). Group Bible discussion and group listening prayer offer

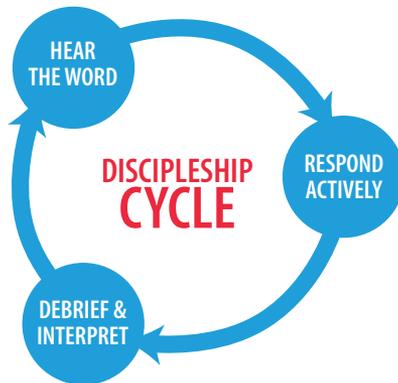


Figure 11.1. The discipleship cycle

perfect chances to use the discipleship cycle.¹ A group studies the Scripture, decides on an application and then lives it out the following week. When they gather again they share their experiences in seeking to obey and learn more through the sharing. Mutual encouragement and accountability make practicing the discipleship cycle a powerful means of growth. This pattern of hearing, obeying and debriefing happened naturally in Sri's fellowship.

It is possible to practice the discipleship cycle in a way that emphasizes knowledge and behavior but omits the crucial affective (emotional) dimension of life. For people from Confucian backgrounds that emphasize virtuous behavior and self-perfecting (see crossingculturesbook.org/chinese), use of the discipleship cycle could result in a subtle misunderstanding of the Christian life. Disciples must understand that we don't live just *for* Jesus but *in union with* Jesus.² In the Gospel of John we see Jesus modeling life lived in dependence on the Father through the power of the Spirit. John 15:1-7 introduces the command to abide or live continually in him. Jesus desires that we live in him in the same way that he lives in the Father (John 17:20-25).

So, when we use the discipleship cycle with people from cultures where self-perfecting or obtaining merit is emphasized (those influenced by Confucianism or Buddhism), we should begin by choosing applications that lead disciples into relationship with God, such as practicing various kinds of prayer and *lectio divina*. And when groups select applications to put into practice, they should pray together for the strength to obey. Disciples also need to be careful that the motivation to obey is love for Jesus rather than fear of losing face in the eyes of one's peers or discipler. True accountability occurs when there is deep trust and mutual desire to love Jesus.

Discipleship cycle discussions should be led with great sensitivity. It is critical to avoid situations where people feel obligated to be vulnerable when they're not ready to do so. Model open sharing of thoughts and feelings, but do not push people to share. Sharing

before one is ready can cause a sense of lost face and lead people to abandon the group later because they have made themselves too vulnerable. Emphasizing discussion guidelines like “We encourage everyone to share but do not expect people to share when they’re not ready” may help.

Using the discipleship cycle with people from nations where persecution might result from open profession of faith (e.g., certain Muslim nations and China) requires wisdom and discretion. Groups of people from the same background must develop trust carefully. It might be wise to have an older person who is in touch with the situation back home lead the group. It is critical that no one—whether a group member who is unaware of the danger or an outsider friend—reveal the identities of new Christians from sensitive nations.

Jesus made disciples through communities: the inner circle of Peter, James and John; the Twelve apostles; the women who followed him; and the seventy he sent out to preach the kingdom. All of these groups had the chance to be with Jesus, receive deeper explanations of his teachings and practice obedience. The time the disciples spent together with Jesus was a crucial part of their conversion process; Jesus trained them before they came to full belief and understanding of him and his mission. This same principle holds true for seekers drawn in to our fellowships; one reason Sri grew so quickly was the practices he had already integrated into his life as a seeker: daily time in the Word and worship in the Indian Christian Community.

Jesus gave special attention to his inner circle: Peter, James and John. These three watched him raise Jairus’s daughter from the dead (Mark 5:22-43) and were with him when his glory was demonstrated in the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-13) and when he suffered in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42). On these special occasions they observed Jesus’ power, honor and suffering. Jesus cared tenderly for Peter, predicting his denial in advance. His words in Luke 22:31-32 demonstrate great compassion: “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you

as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” And after the denial, Jesus deliberately gave Peter a chance to reaffirm his love (John 21:15-22). Like Jesus, we are to make disciples in community, spend time in smaller groups or one-on-one to address special needs, and intercede for disciples in training, anticipating the challenges they may face.

ASSESSING NEW DISCIPLES

Jesus knew his disciples so well that he could give them the specific attention they needed at each point of their training, but we may not have such clarity. How can we discern where individuals are in their conversion and discipleship journeys?

Elements of conversion. In his book *Beginning Well* theologian Gordon T. Smith identifies seven crucial aspects or elements of a full-orbed conversion, according to the New Testament.³ Experience of these elements is not necessarily a linear process; different people begin with different elements.⁴ Our InterVarsity campus ministry team in the Carolinas and Virginia examined the lives of several new converts who had reached an unusual level of growth and found all seven of Smith’s elements. We also discovered one additional element common to all the students, time spent with Christians from their home cultures,⁵ and one that seemed critical for some, renunciation of previous allegiances and deliverance from spiritual oppression.⁶

All of the more mature converts we observed had significant experience with Christians from their home country: either in our fellowships, with a discipler or by attending a church that worshiped in their heart languages. Sri’s time with the older Indian “uncle” who was a friend of ICC was critical to his growth; this man challenged him in a way no American could have. Time in both same-culture and multicultural contexts promotes growth. The multicultural community may facilitate the unearthing of worldview logs as students digest

Scripture together. The same-culture fellowship enables the discovery of cultural strengths.

ELEMENTS OF CONVERSION

- Incorporation into community life
 - ◆ Significant exposure to same-culture Christians
- Belief in Jesus
- Repentance: acknowledgment of and turning from sin
- Trust, assurance of forgiveness and joy (emotional element)
- Commitment/allegiance/devotion
 - ◆ Renouncing previous allegiances and deliverance from spiritual oppression
- Water baptism
- Experience of the Holy Spirit

Note: Adapted from Gordon T. Smith, *Beginning Well* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 138-41. Two subpoints were added, and the order listed here reflects our experience with international students.

Spiritual autobiographies. How can disciplers benefit from Smith's list of conversion elements? Start by reflecting on how these elements played out in your own journey and how they might be expressed in the cultures of new converts. Then ask young disciples to share their spiritual autobiographies with you and listen carefully. If one or more elements seem to be missing, probe gently for more understanding. This process can help you identify areas that need attention in discipling.

When listening for insight about the *belief* element, it is critical to discover what new converts believe about God and the nature of relationship with him. If they see him as a powerful healer or giver but not as Father and King, then something is wrong. If they see relationship with him as slavish or magical, then they need careful teaching about the true character of God and the true nature of relationship with him. Asking new converts how they understand the

gospel can also shed light on their conversions. As a part of their growth in Christ, disciples will benefit from understanding the gospel through different lenses. They may have been taught a Western innocence-guilt version of the gospel and not understand deeply the implications of the good news for their own honor-shame or power-fear societies. Be careful to look for *repentance* and turning from sin in terms of your friends' value systems. What idol has occupied the place of God in their lives?

Seek to discover how new converts understand baptism. If they see it as a magical ritual that washes away sin, work to help them understand the difference between magic and sacrament. Humans resort to magic in an effort to control God or the gods. Receiving baptism and Communion are obedient responses to God's gifts. Unlike similar rituals in Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and Kazakhstan, baptism is a one-time identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus.

With international students, find out how well they were prepared for baptism. When I was ministering in California, our team prepared students from the fellowship for baptism several times. We used Scripture about John the Baptist to talk about confession of sin and repentance. Then we encouraged students to confess their sins against God, self and others privately. A number of students chose to actually tell us the sins most on their minds, and we prayed with them, thanking the Lord that these past sins would no longer have any power over them. Baptismal preparation is also a good time to have new converts renounce spiritual allegiances that may have been made for them by parents or grandparents, and to get rid of all objects related to magic.

Decisions about baptism may need to be made with family networks in mind. My Japanese friend Mitsuko prayerfully postponed baptism because of her parents' concern that she could never find a husband if she identified herself publicly as a Christian. When God provided a wonderful Christian fiancé, then Mitsuko was baptized.

The delay showed her parents that Christians do honor their parents and that Mitsuko's God was faithful.

Smith asserts that growth in all seven of these elements should continue after conversion, understanding, repentance, trust and all the others deepening over the passage of time. Participation in Communion is the sacramental element corresponding to water baptism.⁷ Smith's elements can be used fruitfully to assess growth as well as conversion. We should look to see how they are displayed in both communities and individuals.

PROMOTING SHALOM

One of God's goals in sending Jesus was to restore the shalom of Eden to individuals, groups and creation. Communities and individuals who reflect shalom give glory to Jesus. Walking and talking with God brought shalom to Adam and Eve; our communities are called to be dwelling places for God through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22). Or, to use another image from Paul, we need to struggle in prayer to see Christ formed in our groups. When Paul says, "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" to the Galatian Christians (Galatians 4:19), I believe he is primarily talking about the character of Christ being displayed *in the community*. Of course, the individuals who make up the group must reflect Christ in order for the group to do so. So community leaders need a double focus similar to that of Jesus, discipling both the group and its individual members. As Christ is formed in the community and its members, the characteristics that clothed Adam and Eve in Eden—honor, innocence (integrity), joy and power—will be visible.

Discipling with shalom in mind involves paying attention to the relationships that were shattered in the fall: with God, self, others and the earth. Communication specialist Viggo Søgaaard added a fifth relationship to the list: church.⁸ InterVarsity's *I-DIG* discipleship

guide for international students devotes the first three sections to relationships with God, self and others; the “others” section includes relationships with family, church and world.⁹

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Paul prays for the Ephesians to know God better (Ephesians 1:17-19) and to be rooted and grounded in his love (Ephesians 3:17-19). Like Jesus and Paul, disciples must intercede for disciples in training. All the blindness to spiritual truth caused by the enemy does not disappear immediately at the point of commitment; Paul specifically asks for enlightenment in Ephesians 1:17. Rather than letting up on our prayers when a person makes a commitment, we need to continue and even intensify them. Cultural and family backgrounds may provide barriers to growth.

Cultural and family strengths and weaknesses. Cultural backgrounds may affect a new convert’s relationship with God in both helpful and harmful ways. Reflecting on her own culture, Shao-Leng, the woman from Taiwan who came to Christ through Corrie and her family, observed that Chinese people were raised to value sacrifice and feel a great sense of obligation to those who sacrifice for them. She felt that this sense of obligation prevented some Chinese missionaries she knew from receiving all the joy the Lord intended for them. This value of sacrifice, a great strength, can become a weakness. And people from cultures that value filial piety (honor for parents and ancestors) may have such respect for God, the ultimate Father-King, that they sense more distance from him than he desires. In this situation new converts need to take in deeply the unconditional love of the Father.

Family backgrounds make a difference as well; those with distant or absentee fathers, or those who were abused by parents, may need much healing before they can relate joyfully to God the Father. A younger generation raised by affluent parents and given everything

they want often has the opposite problem. Rather than honoring God, they may regard him as a Santa Claus. For them the good aspect of the good and beautiful God must be emphasized; God is holy, pure and always to be honored, not treated as a blessing machine.

Relating to Father, Son and Spirit. Missionaries I got to know in France said that they first established new converts in routines of private worship. Having been trained in the value of morning Bible study and prayer by InterVarsity, I was surprised at the emphasis on worship. But worship is our love language for God; it builds relationship with him and enables us to glorify and delight in him. Prayer as petition naturally flows out of worship as Jesus' model prayer in Matthew 6 shows us.

Appropriate worship varies from culture to culture and generation to generation. I remember with a smile the exuberant joy I have often seen in African sisters and brothers dancing before the Lord, and the quiet reverence spent in silence with my Japanese prayer partner in seminary. How can we help new disciples discover modes of worship that fit them well? Perhaps we could identify and highlight for them the many expressions and postures of worship described in the Bible. Appropriate ways of practicing other spiritual disciplines may also differ from culture to culture, and some groups will find certain disciplines especially attractive. I continue to be amazed at the capacity for generosity I see in many Chinese friends, and the relative ease of fasting for Indian friends. One way to help people discover spiritual disciplines that will fit them well is to study the historical traditions of the faith and share about them with new disciples. Richard Foster's *Streams of Living Water* describes six of those traditions and gives both biblical and historical examples.¹⁰

Disciplers need to pay attention to new converts' relationship with each person of the Trinity. Taking in the Word enables new disciples to grasp more deeply the true character of all three persons. So address obstacles to Bible reading. My Japanese friend Keiko had been

told by her mother at a young age that she would never be a very good reader. We asked the Lord to heal this memory, and Keiko found new freedom in reading both Japanese and English and eventually graduated from seminary.

Scripture reading should begin with the Gospels. New converts need to internalize the truth of Christ in us and us in Christ. We don't just do evangelism with Jesus as model and companion; we live the entire Christian life that way. Mark is good when time with disciples is limited; John appeals to more philosophical thinkers. Luke and John will help new disciples understand the role of the Holy Spirit. For international students, try hard to find a translation in their heart language that is easily comprehensible; ascertaining which translations are used by churches back home can be useful as well.¹¹ New disciples also need a sense of the sweep of biblical history and understanding of the gospel in the light of their favored value systems; international students often ask for Bible overviews even before they come to faith. The points elaborated under "Holy Lover" in chapter six could provide material for a yearlong Bible study series. How can nonliterate and orally oriented peoples take in Scripture? Bible storytelling and individual memorization of Bible stories, texts and theologically rich worship songs may be much more effective than Western-style personal devotions based on reading Scripture.

New disciples may need to replace practices from folk religion with biblical alternatives and learn to think of God in dynamic, relational ways rather than magically. Once disciples are well grounded in Scripture, teaching them how to do individual and group listening prayer can be a great help. Listening to God will help in decision making and provide direction in healing prayer times.

Understanding the Christian life. Our understanding of the Christian life deeply affects our relationship with God, so disciplers need to teach about it biblically. Jesus predicted that we would have

trouble in this world (John 16:33). Paul and Barnabas told the churches that “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Disciples need to realize that trials, temptation and suffering are normal parts of life in Jesus. Studying Jesus’ temptations in the wilderness, James 1 and the entire book of 1 Peter will provide needed understanding. But testimonies are critical too. Peter and Julie are a North Carolina couple who have been friends with international students for thirty years. Grandparents now, they have often spoken on family life at our retreats. One year Julie gave her testimony of God’s strength in the midst of a prolonged struggle with breast cancer. Her peace in a situation with an unknown outcome spoke powerfully of the difference Jesus makes when we go through trials with him.

Spiritual conflict is another aspect of the Christian life that new converts need to understand. Studying the entire book of Ephesians is a helpful way to address this topic. If international students are returning to places where ancestral and local spirits are regularly worshiped, for example, more teaching and preparation will be needed. We can help new disciples think through the situations they may encounter in their parents’ homes and in the workplace, and prayerfully consider how to deal with them. The book of 1 Peter, which reflects some of Peter’s special experiences with Jesus and has many honor-shame themes, provides helpful understandings of suffering, glory and spiritual conflict.

Finally, new disciples need to see the Christian life as a journey or race that resembles a marathon rather than a sprint. In the past Westerners have understood growth as a linear process, a gradually ascending line; but Jimmy Long insists that *journey* is the best analogy for a postmodern world.¹² Looking back to the heroes and heroines of the faith listed in Hebrews 11, and keeping our eyes on Jesus as Hebrews 12 encourages us to do will hearten all of us through the long marathon of the Christian life.

RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF

When considering relationship with self, we must reflect on identity in Christ, ethnic and cultural identities and emotional intelligence.

Identity. Since we are in Christ and Christ is in us, we are beloved children of God just as Christ is. Seeing ourselves as beloved children anchors our identities in relationship with God. Identity in Christ leads to oneness with others of different ethnicities and backgrounds, as Paul makes clear in Galatians 3:26-28: “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Our deepest identities are grounded in membership in God’s family rather than in human families or races.

Although identity in Christ is primary, disciples also need to embrace their ethnic and cultural identities. Contact with Christians from our friends’ cultural backgrounds may acquaint them with ways their culture reflects the image of God. If finding Christians from the home country of international students is difficult, seek to arrange video calls with returnees. Biographies of role models like Bakht Singh can provide literary mentors for students. Embracing and enjoying one’s cultural identity is critical since culture will be part of the new heavens and new earth (Revelation 7:9-10; 21:24). As Andy Crouch teaches us, we are intended to *make* culture.¹³ My architect friend Zhang, for example, is called to design uniquely Chinese buildings and open spaces that glorify God.

Exposure to people from other cultural backgrounds who are seeking to get the logs out of their eyes will facilitate the process of discovering cultural blind spots. The Indian Christian Community did this work for themselves, but not all same-culture fellowships engage in this kind of reflection. One way to encourage the search for blind spots is to incorporate cultural reflection into Bible studies that involve multicultural groups.

Emotional intelligence. I first heard the term *emotional intelligence* from a Chinese friend in seminary who said, “We Chinese don’t have enough emotional intelligence.”¹⁴ I believe that emotional intelligence is a part of cultural intelligence, something we *all* need in order to live faithfully in our globalized world.¹⁵ But because honor-shame (face) often requires people to hide their true feelings to preserve the face of both parties, emotional honesty, a crucial component of emotional intelligence, may be very difficult for East Asians.¹⁶ The youngest Chinese generations, not having been taught relational skills or emotional honesty by parents who are wounded from *their* past experiences, have particularly deep needs in this area.¹⁷ Because collectivist assumptions are the cultural air they breathe, the alienation and woundedness that many feel from their parents cause much pain. At the same time, globalization and the Internet pressure them to develop individualistic identities, something that is difficult given the insufficient relational and emotional resources they received from families of origin.

Helping new disciples from face-oriented backgrounds become aware of their true emotions may present great challenges to disciples. C. S. Lewis felt that true prayer requires unveiling ourselves, the true *I* coming present to the true God.¹⁸ Lack of awareness of our true emotions leaves us open to being sabotaged by them. In this age when bad news spreads instantly through the Internet, being able to respond to both global and personal situations with emotional intelligence is a critical skill.

Assisting disciples to internalize their identities as adopted children of the Father can begin the process of healing their pain, weakness and shame. Disciples need to learn to take all their emotions to God. They should replace cultural standards of what is honorable and shameful with God’s standards. Bringing godly and unhealthy shame, guilt, weakness and pain to God rather than denying, avoiding or hiding them must become habitual. Biblical role models include

Hannah, who poured out her pain to the Lord (1 Samuel 1:9-16), and David, who acknowledged shame, guilt, pain and weakness (Psalm 25). Disciplers can share biblical examples, model honesty with the Lord and offer special healing prayer times when needed. Joy in Christ will gradually bubble up as the disciple's relationship with him deepens.

As they receive emotional healing and develop identity in Christ, Chinese young people with pain from family-of-origin issues can begin reconciliation with their parents by sharing Jesus with them. These parents will have different obstacles to conversion; one disciple who was attracted to Christ by loving community shared an apologetics book with his mother, realizing that the existence of God would be a greater barrier for her than it had been for him. Impressed by the positive changes in her son, the mom began reading the book, pursued her interest at a nearby church and eventually came to Christ herself. Now her husband is investigating the faith. The son's newfound joy in Jesus is bringing transformation to the entire family.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS AND WITH CREATION

Relationships with family, friends and even coworkers will be affected by a commitment to Christ. New believers will need to process how to honor and share their faith with nonbelieving parents; the community may be encouraging here. Testimonies of older believers who have continued to honor their parents and have seen them become open and even come to Jesus will give hope.

Forgiving family members and others for past hurts may be one of the first great challenges of discipleship. Although there are hints of grace in the Old Testament, the fullest understanding of grace is found in Christianity. Forgiveness may seem nonsensical and unfair to people influenced by Buddhism, Hinduism or Islam. Yet Jesus' teaching and example leave his followers no option. Disciplers may address this issue in one-to-one settings.

My friend Keiko needed to forgive a grievous wound from her

non-Christian days, and I had recently experienced something that also required deep forgiveness. So we spent one evening literally on our knees imploring God for the grace to forgive from the heart. During that evening we both processed some of our pain, and God graciously enabled us to come to a sense of closure. Forgiving this past hurt was a critical step of obedience for Keiko that opened the door for rapid growth afterward. Expressing forgiveness directly to the one forgiven may not always be wise in indirect cultures; new disciples should be encouraged to pray for wisdom about this. In some situations a mediator may be needed; Western disciplers who are called on to mediate conflicts will benefit from reading the chapter on mediation in Duane Elmer's *Cross-Cultural Conflict*.¹⁹

Sharing the faith with family members and friends who see embracing Christ as a betrayal and shaming of culture and family presents a challenge. New disciples should continue to honor parents in every way they can. My Indian friend Mary and her Hindu background husband Ravi waited several years before becoming engaged in order to get the blessing of both sets of parents. And they prayerfully planned a Christian wedding that incorporated as much Indian culture as possible in order that both sets of families would feel comfortable. When doors are opened to actually share the gospel, disciples can make clear that Jesus offers better honor than that we can receive from friends and family. Being part of the multicultural group that praises God around the throne and bringing our cultural gifts to worship Jesus gives the best possible honor to our cultures and families: the eternal honor of relationship with the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 7:9-10; 21:24-26).

Right relationship with the earth can be modeled in small things like encouraging recycling at retreats and being careful not to waste food. Disciplers should also challenge disciples to use their fields of study or work to design things for God's glory and the well being of creation. And enabling people who have lived in cities all their lives

to enjoy and appreciate God's creation will introduce a bit of shalom into their lives.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

As soon as they become spiritually grounded, new disciples need to become equal partners in the community. Giving them ownership and leadership will equip them for lifelong service wherever God leads them. In order to get international students into leadership Western disciplers will have to fight both our own urges to stay in control and cultural tendencies to honor elders. I once visited a fellowship in central California and was placed in a small group for Bible discussion. As soon as we got settled, the student leader turned to me and said, "Will you lead us?" I refused, insisting that I was in the group to learn and observe. He smiled and then led the group very skillfully, having properly honored the visiting campus minister with his request. I had to squelch my own love of leading, but that is a small price to pay when I consider the places where he may lead in the future.

Christian communities give international students practice in outreach to their own and other cultures. Asking Chinese and Indian Christians to plan special events for their own people groups helps them develop a heart for witness and consider how best to touch their peers. Heart language groups may share the faith with peers and think through discipleship issues. Disciplers should encourage such groups to anticipate the challenges of living out the faith after reentry in the home country. But final decisions about how to respond to certain cultural issues should be postponed until students can find out how mature Christians back home view them. International communities are a great place to cast vision for the entire world; one of our student leadership teams planned and executed a Middle Eastern Night in hopes of attracting Muslims to the fellowship.

Communities also provide a chance to understand and process cultural strengths and weaknesses, as we have already seen. Sri and

other Indian Christian Community members prepared résumés to seek jobs in both the United States and India as graduation neared. The non-Christian members of the group insisted that embellishing résumés was necessary in order to have a chance at getting a job. Everyone in India does it, they reasoned, so we must do so as well. Sri resolutely refused to do so; he understood that God requires truth in our innermost being (Psalm 51:6 NASB). Months passed and everyone waited to see what would happen. At last Sri got an interview and a job. God rewarded his integrity, and the community witnessed it. Sri's faithfulness, born out of deep conviction from the Word and critical engagement with his culture, spoke powerfully to the non-Christian members of the group and brought glory to God.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Personal Reflection

1. What have been the most helpful practices for you in your life as a disciple of Jesus? Describe what or who caused you to change over the time of your being Jesus' follower?
2. *Lectio divina* passages:
 - Psalm 19:7-14
 - Isaiah 61:1-7
 - John 15:1-12
 - Ephesians 3:14-21
 - Ephesians 4:20-32

Group Discussion

1. Debrief in the group how you shared the Broken diagrams with a friend (see "Group Application" in chap. 10).
2. What questions did you have about this chapter? What did you like and not like?

3. Where are you in the process of planting, watering and reaping with various friends? What next steps might be appropriate for them?
4. How will we celebrate finishing our group work together? Do we want to continue as a group?

Suggested Resources

- *The Good and Beautiful Community: Following the Spirit, Extending Grace, Demonstrating Love* by James Bryan Smith. Learn how to bring spiritual formation and community engagement together.
- *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* by Greg Ogden. This workbook for small groups or individuals provides essential Christian teaching on twenty-five core topics.
- *Bakht Singh of India: The Incredible Account of a Modern-Day Apostle* by T. E. Koshy. This biography will inspire disciples from all cultural backgrounds.
- *Daughters of Hope: Stories of Witness and Courage in the Face of Persecution* by Kay Marshall Strom and Michele Rickett. These contemporary stories of persecuted Christian women around the world can encourage disciples to persevere during trials.
- *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course: It's Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature* by Peter Scazzero. This book will help disciples assist individuals and groups to develop emotionally healthy life in Christ. Scazzero's New York church has seventy-three nationalities.
- *I-DIG: International Disciples Group* by Katie Rawson, Krista Martin and Eric Wu, <http://ism.intervarsity.org/resource/idig>. This twelve-week introductory discipleship curriculum for multicultural groups provides resources for intercultural communication, Christian growth and reentry to the home country for international students.

Does your group want to continue? Consider working through one of the following books:

For devotional meditation on relationship with Jesus:

- *Luminous: Living the Presence and Power of Jesus* by T. David Beck. What needs to happen inside us so that we can become the embodiment of Jesus and show his light to the world around us?

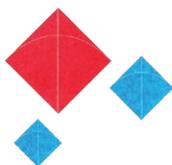
If you are building relationships crossculturally in North America or a Western context:

- *A Beginner's Guide to Crossing Cultures: Making Friends in a Multicultural World* by Patty Lane. This introduction to cultural differences includes examples and practical help for building relationships that will also benefit those who are not brand new to intercultural communication.

If you are headed abroad for mission:

- *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting In Around the World* by Duane Elmer. How do you approach differences and adjust to new cultures? What attitudes and skills help? Which values often get expressed differently among cultures?

Conclusion



JESUS EXPERIENCED BOTH joy and pain during his time on earth; venturing out with him to share good news will bring both to us. Sometimes our friends leave after having reached the curiosity stage. We miss them, keep in touch and continue to pray. Other times joy is delayed. Yesterday I spoke on the phone with a Chinese scholar I met thirty-five years ago in Raleigh. After twelve years and repeated visits by my colleague Daniel, this gentleman came to Christ—what a joy to hear his voice!

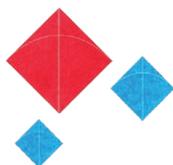
Like the farmer in Jesus' parable of the soils, we plant, water and wait for a harvest. Sometimes all we do is prepare soil, trusting that God will send others to plant, water and reap. But all we do, we do *in union with Jesus*, and we receive joy from his presence, not from the harvest. Jesus received his joy from relationship with the Father and the Spirit, and he once told his disciples not to rejoice in the spiritual power they saw in their ministries but in the assurance that their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:20-21).

When we enter the worlds of individuals or groups and seek to draw them in to Christian community, we can never predict the results. Shao-Leng, the student from Taiwan who came to Christ

through Corrie and her family, moved into an apartment with Corrie and began participating in an international fellowship and the local Chinese church. All these settings enabled her to acquire knowledge of the faith that she lacked at the beginning. After graduation Shao-Leng moved to California. Her apartment was very near the local university and she got involved with international students there. Within a couple of years Shao-Leng became a great-grandmother in the Lord. (Someone she led to Jesus led someone else who led someone else.)

Shao-Leng returned to Taiwan to visit family many times and introduced several family members there to Jesus, including—after many years—her elderly father. She eventually left a secure job as an accountant to become a marriage and family therapist. In that role Shao-Leng has provided pastoral care for her church's missionaries in both Asia and Africa through short-term mission trips. Corrie and her parents could never have imagined what would happen when they entered Shao-Leng's world and drew her in to theirs. The same is true for you and your community; there is no limit to what God can do through you! When we cross cultures with Jesus, he may enable us to have impact that multiplies across generations and borders. May the Father, Son and Spirit bless you and your community with joy and grace as you venture out to share Jesus crossculturally.

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share her research questions for understanding cultures better; they will be found in the online resources. Carolyn Hudson dialogued with me about Eastern and Western thought, Confucianism and the content of the Chinese ministry document at crossingculturesbook.org/chinese, and wrote and revised that document during a time of great personal and family stress. Thank you, Carolyn, for demonstrating true friendship.

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Notes

INTRODUCTION

¹All stories shared in this book are true, but names and some details have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals discussed.

²Missio Nexus infographic email, July 23, 2014. The number of international students and scholars includes students, scholars and intensive English program students, as reported in *Open Doors 2014*, Institute of International Education, 2015, www.iie.org/Who-We-Are/News-and-Events/Press-Center/Press-Releases/2014/2014-11-17-Open-Doors-Data.

³David Boyd, *You Don't Have to Cross the Ocean to Reach the World: The Power of Local Cross-Cultural Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

⁴Jesus discusses this desire to pull the disciples into union with the Father in John 17:20-25.

⁵See John 12:27-33 and Revelation 7:9-10. See also John Piper, "Let the Nations Be Glad!" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 64-69.

⁶This understanding of Christ's incarnation, which includes entering and drawing in, is based on C. S. Lewis as elaborated by Leanne Payne in *Real Presence: The Glory of Christ with Us and Within Us* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995). See especially p. 23, where Payne discusses Lewis's principle of "transposition."

⁷East Asia includes China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Japan and Korea. See Katie Rawson, "Evangelizing East Asian Students in the United States with Special Reference to Media Tools" (DMiss diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999).

⁸James Choung, *Real Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 227-30.

⁹Including works as suggested resources or citing them in endnotes does not imply agreement with everything they contain.

CHAPTER 1: LOVE AT THE HEART OF THE UNIVERSE

¹James Bryan Smith, *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

²John Ortberg, quoted in Dallas Willard, *Living in Christ's Presence: Final Words on Heaven and the Kingdom of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 99.

³Steve Hawthorne, "To Love the Glory of God," *Mission Frontiers* 37, no. 1 (2015): 27.

⁴Kelly L. Dearborn, "Trinity," in *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 543.

⁵Viggo Søgaaard, *Research in Church and Mission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1996), 236. Søgaaard credits William Dyrness, *Let the Earth Rejoice: A Biblical Theology of Holistic Mission* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary, 1983) as the inspiration for his description of shalom as the reign of right relationships.

⁶Murad Lazar, *Yearning for Peace* (Colorado Springs: WorldChristian, 2013). Lazar confirmed to me by email on March 1, 2015, that peace ranked highest in his surveys.

⁷Jay Smith, "The Hermeneutical Key (Genesis 3:8-9)," Debate.org.uk, May 1995, www.debate.org.uk/debate-topics/theological/hermkey.

⁸James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1996), 66–67.

⁹I am indebted to Drs Susan S. and Court W., veteran missionaries to Myanmar, for this information.

CHAPTER 2: KEEPING IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT

¹T. E. Koshy, *Brother Bakht Singh of India: An Account of 20th Century Apostolic Revival* (Secunderabad, India: OM Books, 2003), 82–85.

²C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1992), 44.

³These questions are adapted from Katie Rawson, Krista Martin and Eric Wu, *I-DIG: International Disciples Group* (Madison, WI: InterVarsity International Student Ministry, 2013), 49.

⁴Dallas Willard, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

CHAPTER 3: PRAYING AND EXERCISING SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

¹I usually use the expression "become a follower of Jesus" with people because

the word *Christian* has cultural or legal meanings in some countries, indicating what is written on a person's identity card or a family background.

²See Lynne Baab, *Fasting: Spiritual Freedom Beyond Our Appetites* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), for more guidance on fasting.

³Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness, Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1992), esp. 167-82.

⁴See Ed Murphy, "We Are at War," in *Wrestling with Dark Angels: Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Supernatural Forces in Spiritual Warfare*, ed. C. Peter Wagner and F. Douglas Pennoyer (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1990), 56-57, for a discussion of translation issues.

⁵The Gerasene demoniac of Mark 5:1-20 seems to be completely possessed. For a Christian psychiatrist's accounts of individuals he considered in the possessed category, see William P. Wilson, "Hysteria and Demons, Depression and Oppression, Good and Evil," in *Demon Possession: A Medical, Historical, Anthropological and Theological Symposium*, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1976), 223-31.

⁶See the articles by Ed Murphy, F. Douglas Pennoyer, Donald R. Jacobs and J. Dudley Woodberry in *Wrestling with Dark Angels*. These authors describe demonization in Latin America, among a tribe in the Philippines, in East Africa and among Muslims influenced by folk Islam.

⁷Freedom in Christ Ministries. See their website at www.ficm.org.

⁸Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness: Realize the Power of Your Identity in Christ* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2000); *The Bondage Breaker* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2006).

⁹Ed Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 435-62.

¹⁰The development company founders are known personally to me; their identity must be kept confidential.

¹¹Mary Anne and Jack Voelkel, *Spiritual Warfare in Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 23-24.

CHAPTER 4: DEVELOPING TRUST RELATIONSHIPS

¹Alice's story is featured in the InterVarsity International Student Ministry video *Starting ISM: Power of Presence*, which can be found at <http://ism.interVarsity.org/resource/starting-ism-power-presence>.

²Charles H. Kraft, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 145.

³Marvin K. Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture: A Strategy for Cross-Cultural Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 7.

⁴Carolynn Hudson, “Ministering in Partnership with Internationals,” paper presented February 11, 1999, CORE99 Reentry Consultation, Fairfax, VA.

⁵Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture*, 41–57.

⁶See David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 67–68.

⁷Fouad Masri, *Connecting with Muslims: A Guide to Communicating Effectively* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 62–63.

⁸This story is shared in the International Student Ministry video *Starting ISM: Navigating Differences*, which can be found at <http://ism.intervarsity.org/resource/starting-ism-navigating-differences>.

⁹Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting In Around the World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 74, 77. Elmer was one of the original designers of this diagram; it was revised to fit international student transitions by Lisa Espineli Chinn. The wording used in figure 4.1 is copyright 2011, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA, and used by permission.

¹⁰The “Approaching Differences” bookmark is available online from the InterVarsity Store: <https://store.intervarsity.org/catalogsearch/result/?order=relevance&dir=desc&q=approaching>.

¹¹Many thanks to Rebecca Cerling Powers for this story.

¹²Don Everts and Doug Schaupp, *I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us About Their Path to Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 27–48.

CHAPTER 5: EXAMINING WORLDVIEW LENSES

¹Patty A. Lane, *Beginner’s Guide to Crossing Cultures: Making Friends in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 106.

²*Ibid.*, 18–22.

³See E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O’Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 16. The three layers they identify roughly correspond to the layers in Lane’s iceberg diagram.

⁴Richard E. Nisbett, *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently . . . and Why* (New York: Simon & Schuster: Free Press, 2003), 89–92.

⁵*Ibid.*, 86–99.

⁶*Ibid.*, 10.

⁷Ibid., 45.

⁸Richards and O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*, 157–75.

⁹Ibid., 192–210.

¹⁰Susan S. credits anthropologist Miriam Adeney with teaching her this lesson about worship songs.

¹¹Mark Labberton, *Called: The Crisis and Promise of Following Jesus Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 127–28.

¹²Carolynn Hudson, “Ministering in Partnership with Internationals,” paper presented February 11, 1999, CORE99 Reentry Consultation, Fairfax, VA.

CHAPTER 6: UNDERSTANDING VALUE SYSTEMS

¹Roland Muller, *Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corp, 2000), 19.

²Benjamin Hegeman, “The Flight of the Swans: Discerning Hidden Values in Global Cultures,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (April 2010): 166–71.

³Ibid., 168.

⁴Jayson Georges describes several flavors of honor-shame in “5 Types of Honor-Shame Cultures,” *HonorShame* (blog), April 22, 2015, <http://honorshame.com/types-honor-shame-cultures>.

⁵Andy Crouch, “The Return of Shame,” *Christianity Today* 59, no.2 (2015): 32–41.

⁶Hegeman, “The Flight of the Swans,” 167.

⁷Steve Breedlove, Sally Breedlove, Ralph Ennis and Jennifer Ennis, *The Shame Exchange: Trading Shame for God’s Mercy and Freedom* (Colorado Springs: Nav-Press, 2009), 54–56. This book uses the term *heaped on* shame for unhealthy shame.

⁸See Werner Mischke, *The Global Gospel: Achieving Missional Impact in Our Multicultural World* (Scottsdale, AZ: Mission ONE, 2015), for a comprehensive treatment of honor-shame themes in the Bible.

⁹Steve Hawthorne, “To Love the Glory of God,” *Mission Frontiers* 37 (2015): 27–28.

¹⁰Chester Kylstra and Betsy Kylstra, *Restoring the Foundations: An Integrated Approach to Healing Ministry* (Hendersonville, NC: Proclaiming His Word, 2001), 355.

¹¹Mischke notes that East Asians attack self when shamed, whereas people in West Asia and the Mediterranean Basin attack the other. See his *Global Gospel*, 76–78. In *Now They Call Me Infidel* (New York: Sentinel, 2006), Nonie Darwish explains that the honor of men in Arab Muslim society depends on the chastity of their female blood relatives. “Chastity” involves avoiding even the appearance of improper behavior. Her chapter four sheds helpful light on the impact of

honor-shame on marriage and family dynamics in Arab Muslim societies.

¹²I am indebted to my friendCarolynn Hudson for helping me understand the payback mechanism more clearly.

¹³Jackson Wu, personal email correspondence with the author, February 2, 2015.

¹⁴Hawthorne, "To Love the Glory of God," 28.

¹⁵Marvin Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 32-33.

¹⁶Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting In Around the World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 177-78.

¹⁷For more details on the cultural background of the parable, see Kenneth E. Bailey, *The Cross and the Prodigal: Luke 15 Through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

CHAPTER 7: COMMUNITIES THAT DRAW IN

¹Richard V. Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

²*Ibid.*, 25-26.

³*Ibid.*, 279-81.

⁴Roland Muller, *The Messenger, the Message, the Community: Three Critical Issues for the Cross-Cultural Church Planter* (Saskatchewan, Canada: CanBooks, 2006), 277-78.

⁵*Ibid.*, 273-77.

⁶Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 206-9.

⁷"Insider" movements attempt to accomplish this goal with varying degrees of cultural adaptation (contextualization). An evaluation of these movements is beyond the scope of this book. For more details see articles 109-11 in Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 663-76. A more critical view of insider movements may be found at the Biblical Missiology website, particularly in the article "Muslim Follower of Jesus, Is This Possible?" *Biblical Missiology*, August 8, 2011, <http://biblicalmissiology.org/2011/08/08/muslim-follower-of-jesus-is-this-possible>.

⁸International Students, Inc.'s M28: Global Discipleship Initiative introduces groups of seeking students from the same cultural background to Jesus through weekly discovery Bible studies. Training and materials in Chinese and Arabic are available at www.isim28.org.

⁹Eric H. F. Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1992), 19-25.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 41-43.

CHAPTER 8: CONVERSION IN COMMUNITY

¹Don Everts and Doug Schaupp, *I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us About Their Path to Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008).

²Justin Lee, “The Opportunity, the Tragedy, the Mission,” presentation to re-entry consultation, Birmingham, UK, April 2014.

³Everts and Schaupp, *I Once Was Lost*, 18-23.

⁴Sarai’s story is told in the video “Starting ISM: Journeying Towards Jesus,” InterVarsity, June 19, 2014, <http://ism.intervarsity.org/resource/starting-ism-journeying-towards-jesus>.

⁵Lu Zunèn, *Reaching the Current Generation of Chinese Students* (Paradise, PA: Ambassadors for Christ, 2015), 1-8. Available at the AFC Bookstore website: http://afcreources.org/contents/en-us/d240_New_Resources.html.

⁶Jasmine’s story is also told in “Starting ISM: Journeying Towards Jesus,” InterVarsity, June 19, 2014, <http://ism.intervarsity.org/resource/starting-ism-journeying-towards-jesus>.

⁷Some of these ideas come from Eva Liu Glick, “The Five Thresholds as They Play Out in the ISM Context,” an InterVarsity ISM training paper that incorporates ideas from Dan Gonzaga.

CHAPTER 9: COMMUNICATION THAT CONNECTS

¹Craig Storti, *Figuring Foreigners Out: A Practical Guide* (Yarmouth, ME: Inter-cultural Press, 1999), 91.

²See *ibid.*, 101-3 for a list of these techniques.

³Patty Lane, *A Beginner’s Guide to Crossing Cultures: Making Friends in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 48-49.

⁴Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979), 163.

⁵Christine Dillon, *Telling the Gospel Through Story: Evangelism That Keeps Hearers Wanting More* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012).

CHAPTER 10: STORIES THAT BRING CHANGE

¹These diagrams are a revision of the diagrams that appear in Katie Rawson, Krista Martin and Eric Wu, *I-DIG: International Disciples Group* (Madison, WI: InterVarsity International Student Ministry, 2013), 39-44. Laura Li-

Barbour designed both the original and revised versions.

²For explanations of the gospel for guilt, innocence and fear societies, see Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame and Fear Cultures* (n.p.: Honor Shame, 2014). Georges notes that there are historical atonement theories that correspond to all three value systems, although Westerners have focused on guilt since 1800 (*ibid.*, 49-52).

³This story will be effective with Hindus; to adapt it even more for them, talk about the cross in terms of the final blood sacrifice for our debt of karma and the body of Christ as the true temple where God lives through his Spirit.

⁴I am indebted to Jackson Wu for this crucial insight and for suggesting several modifications to make the Broken diagram script more appropriate for the honor-shame value system.

⁵Monism is the philosophy behind Hinduism, Buddhism and the New Age. Monists believe that original perfection is a changeless unity that is the ground of everything, and that we suffer because of the *illusion* of diversity. Monism is *not* the same as monotheism, the belief that there is only one God.

CHAPTER II: MAKING DISCIPLES IN COMMUNITY

¹Readers who have participated in the group discussions and activities at the end of each chapter will already be familiar with the discipleship cycle. For more information, see James Choung, *Real Life: A Christianity Worth Living Out* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 227-30.

²See Gordon T. Smith, *Called to Be Saints: An Invitation to Christian Maturity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 47-57.

³Gordon T. Smith, *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion and Authentic Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 138-41.

⁴*Ibid.*, 138.

⁵Anecdotal evidence to support this observation can be found in Andrea D. B. C. Dickson, "Coming Home: A Study of Values Change Among Chinese Postgraduates and Visiting Scholars Who Encountered Christianity in the U.K." (PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2013), 272-75.

⁶David Boyd mentions omissions in this area as an issue in the failure of returnees to hold on to faith after returning home in *You Don't Have to Cross the Ocean to Reach the World: The Power of Local Cross-Cultural Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 162. See the document at crossculturesbook.org/breaking free for biblical material on renouncing past allegiances and a prayer to help people do so.

- ⁷Smith, *Beginning Well*, 152-53.
- ⁸Viggo Søgaaard, *Research in Church and Mission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1996), 236-38.
- ⁹Katie Rawson, Krista Martin and Eric Wu, *I-DIG: International Disciples Group* (Madison, WI: InterVarsity International Student Ministry, 2013), 6-7. This guide may be ordered at InterVarsity's International Student Ministry webpage <http://ism.intervarsity.org/resource/idig>.
- ¹⁰Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1998).
- ¹¹Check the Biblica (www.biblica.com) and United Bible Societies (www.unit-edbiblesocieties.org) websites.
- ¹²Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 175.
- ¹³Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 10.
- ¹⁴See Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 1995).
- ¹⁵See Soong-Chan Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010).
- ¹⁶Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 46-55.
- ¹⁷See Lu Zun'en, *Reaching the Current Generation of Chinese Students* (Paradise, PA: Ambassadors for Christ, 2015), for details.
- ¹⁸C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Harcourt, 1964), 20-23.
- ¹⁹Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 65-79.

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About InterVarsity ISM



Katie J. Rawson

The author and several others who contributed to this book are part of InterVarsity's International Student Ministry (ISM). This group of more than one hundred staff and volunteers reach out to the roughly one million international students and scholars studying at U.S. colleges and universities. They welcome them, connect them to campus community and introduce them to Jesus with sensitivity and respect. They also encourage Christian international students to grow in their faith and equip them for ministry wherever God leads. Many international students come from countries that do not allow open proclamation of the gospel, so their time in the United States may be their first and best opportunity to understand and follow Jesus. A significant percentage of international students go on to occupy influential positions in government, academia and the marketplace. InterVarsity ISM partners with churches and other ministries, both locally and nationally, to reach this stra-

tegic group of future leaders, but more workers are needed. For more about InterVarsity ISM, including campus group locations and hundreds of resources to help you reach international students (many free online), visit ism.intervarsity.org

InterVarsity ISM (like this book's publisher, InterVarsity Press) is a department of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA (intervarsity.org), a movement of students and faculty active on hundreds of college campuses in the United States. InterVarsity is a member movement of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (ifesworld.org), which has a presence in more than 150 countries.

ISM Director Marc Papai wrote the reflection and discussion questions for this book. Associate Director for Communications Brian Hart researched the resources suggested at the end of each chapter and is managing the book's website, crossingculturesbook.org.



Marc Papai



Brian Hart

Praise for *Crossing Cultures with Jesus*

“This is the book I wish I’d had when I began international student ministry thirty years ago. A clear, thoughtful and biblical analysis of how to relate to students with very different cultural backgrounds from our own. Katie Rawson has provided us with a treasure trove of ideas and motivation for acquiring the necessary skills for sharing Christ with and discipling international students, helpfully illustrated with many examples from her own ministry. With lots of questions for reflection and Bible passages for meditation it can be read alone, but even more helpfully as a small team or group wanting to encourage one another to grow in their Christian maturity and effectiveness as disciples. A wonderful resource that I commend wholeheartedly—not just to the international student worker but to anyone wanting to share the gospel with someone from another culture.”

Richard Weston, former national director, Friends International, UK

“Katie Rawson has made a much-needed addition to the resources of those of us in cross-cultural ministry. Her insights and personal stories make it an easy read but at the same time offer depth and honesty to topics seldom ever addressed—the elephants in the cross-cultural room. She has called out some of our fallacies and misconceptions and done so with gentleness and truth. And she has not stopped there, but has given us real tools and insights that will assist us all to be better friends and followers of Jesus. This book is a real treasure.”

Patty Lane, director of intercultural ministries, Baptist General Convention of Texas, author of *A Beginner’s Guide to Crossing Cultures*

“This is a one-of-a-kind and much-awaited book in the field of cross-cultural evangelism. With thoroughness and insights from Scripture, scholars and stories, Rawson gives us a strong case that in Jesus, we have the model of the ultimate culture-crosser. This book combines her love for Jesus, dependence on the Holy Spirit, evangelistic zeal, academic credentials, many years of experience in international student ministry, devotion to prayer and commitment to sound Bible

study. It is a must-read guide for anyone desiring to share Jesus across cultures.”

Lisa Espineli Chinn, former national director, International Student Ministry, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

“Rawson helps us move across cultures in God’s love. This book is very practical, with many real-life examples. Small groups will appreciate the helpful discussion questions at the end of each chapter. Rawson’s ideas have been tested and refined through more than thirty years of real ministry experience. Please enjoy this thorough and practical guide to crosscultural ministry.”

Doug Schaupp, associate national director of evangelism, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, coauthor of *I Once Was Lost* and *Being White*

“These are exciting days. God is allowing people from all cultures to travel around the world. Believers now have opportunities to share Jesus with people from places we will never travel to. This book equips us through multiple true stories so that we will be much more effective in sharing Jesus. Each chapter also has excellent discussion questions.”

Christine Dillon, crosscultural evangelist and storyteller, author, *Telling the Gospel Through Story*

“These are interesting times for we Christians who live in an increasingly multicultural country. On the one hand, it can be tempting to share the good news of Jesus with great zeal but little crosscultural savvy. On the other hand, it can be tempting to relate crossculturally with great sensitivity and grace but never get around to sharing the good news. In *Crossing Cultures with Jesus* Katie J. Rawson shows us that it is possible to share the good news of Jesus and still be gracious and sensitive as we relate crossculturally. This is such an important book for the times we live in. *Crossing Cultures with Jesus* is thoughtful, biblical and thoroughly practical.”

Don Everts, author of *Go and Do*, coauthor of *I Once Was Lost*

“A thorough and engaging tool, useful for anyone wanting to understand the gospel and crossing cultures. This book dives deep into Scripture and illustrates sophisticated academic topics with real-life stories. Practical, insightful and very helpful. This book was written with transformation of the heart and transformation of ministry in mind.”

Nikki Toyama-Szeto, IJM Institute, coauthor of *More than Serving Tea* and *God of Justice: The IJM Institute Global Church Curriculum*

“*Crossing Cultures with Jesus* fills a gap in the literature for international student ministry (ISM). Although numerous small publications address specific needs

within ISM, Rawson gives us a much more comprehensive work that finds the heart of ISM in the heart of God. Sound biblical teaching undergirds each chapter, enhanced by appropriate principles from missions and cultural anthropology. Stories from ISM—many of which are from the author’s own experience—provide examples of how the principles can be applied in multicultural contexts. Chapters include sections for both personal reflection and group discussion. *Crossing Cultures with Jesus* will be a valuable resource for ISM staff members and interns. In addition, this book can provide church missions personnel with a strong rationale for supporting ISM in their own communities.”

Carmen J. Bryant, ISM specialist, Campus Ambassadors, adjunct professor, Multnomah University

“Katie Rawson’s book confronts every believer with a heart for crosscultural ministry and every current or prospective message bearer (missionary) with the question of what we are truly producing in those we minister among. Are we really producing disciples who have had their previous worldview transformed by the values of Jesus and the kingdom of God? How often in crosscultural ministry is this not the case. This problem can relate to the great strongholds and spiritual oppression that keep these precious people bound in darkness. Katie deals with these issues head-on and with lots of wisdom and personal experience. I encourage every believer with a heart to see Jesus’ transforming power across every culture to read this book. I wholeheartedly recommend it.”

Ryan Shaw, international lead facilitator, Student Volunteer Movement 2, author, *Spiritual Equipping for Mission*

“We live in a world of neighborhoods, businesses, schools and churches that are increasingly diverse. To communicate a contagious faith in Jesus requires that we engage with those who are of very different cultures and worldviews. Katie Rawson provides a clear path through the many complex issues that we inevitably face while doing so. The book is filled with concrete and helpful tips on what to do and say in a wide variety of situations, but best of all, it is written with a deep sense of expectation of and dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit—the master of crosscultural communication.”

Charles Davis, former director of TEAM, author of *Making Disciples Across Cultures*

“Grounded in years of missions experience and biblical teaching, Rawson provides a powerful primer on understanding culture, developing crosscultural relationships, and communicating across cultures. A must-read for anyone hoping to serve and to share the gospel in crosscultural contexts!”

Tom Lin, vice president, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, director of Urbana

“Combining her extensive experience, great stories, disciplines of spiritual formation and thought-provoking reflection exercises, Katie Rawson has given us a go-to guide for training in crosscultural understanding, friendships and outreach. She helps the reader understand crosscultural conversion, worldviews and values, and spiritual warfare. This is a read-this-book-first resource for those who want to cross the street to befriend a Muslim neighbor, invite an Asian international student to their home or prepare for a short-term mission trip to India.”

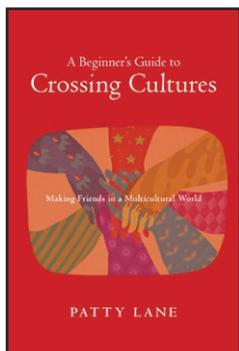
Paul Borthwick, senior consultant, Development Associates International, author of *Great Commission, Great Compassion*

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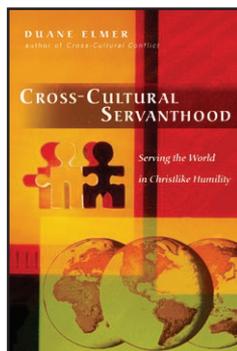


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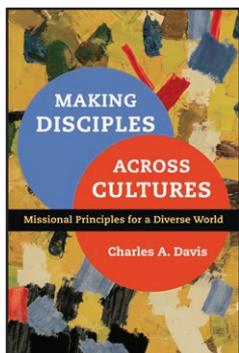
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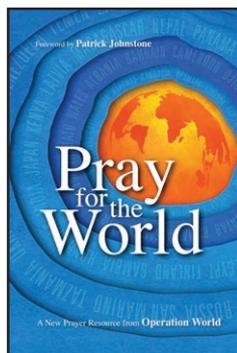
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