

## CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

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### “BE SENSITIVE!”

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# Be Sensitive!

## *Cross-Cultural Sensitivity*

**C**ross-cultural sensitivity is the quality of being aware and accepting of other cultures. A culturally sensitive person seeks to understand another country's traditions and ways of life, and attempts to apply new understandings. Importantly, culturally sensitive people attempt to be free from prejudices and preconceptions about other cultures. Developing cultural sensitivity is important because what is acceptable in one place may be rude or derogatory in others. Our actions, in turn, affect our ability to develop relationships and further the Gospel.

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**The New Testament** (especially Paul's teachings) gives evidence of social awareness and cultural sensitivity, but never advocates conformity for conformity's sake. We must always read culture through the lens of the Bible's teachings. There are people groups who view everything in a given culture as "bad". It is important to realize there are things in each culture that are not honoring to the Lord, some things that are honoring, and some things that can be redeemed. We must pray for discernment to know the difference.

*Foreign to Familiar*,<sup>50</sup> is a book well worth reading. It is a book of cultural observations geared toward helping people identify the type of culture they come from, and the culture in which they'll serve, and how those cultures shape views of relationships, communication, identity, hospitality, priorities. Lanier has discovered during her life of mission service that identifying these categories provide handles with which to grasp basic cultural similarities and discover how to embrace differences.

The following is adapted from *Foreign to Familiar*. The overview of “hot- versus cold-climate cultures” is helpful. Depending on where your group is traveling, you may want to do more research about how the topics Lanier discusses influences the culture of the country you'll visit.

### **Hot-Climate and Cold-Climate Cultures**

“Hot-climate” cultures are relationship-based. These regions are “the Southern United States, Asia, the Pacific Islands, South America (one exception would be much of urban Argentina, which is eighty percent European), Africa, the Mediterranean countries (except the Jewish population of Israel), the Middle East and most of the rest of the world.

“Cold-climate” cultures are task-oriented. This includes “Canada, the northern US, Northern Europe (Switzerland and above), Israel (the Jewish population that came primarily from Europe), the white populations of New Zealand, Australia, and southern Brazil, and the white population of South Africa and any other countries or parts of countries largely settled by Europeans, such as Argentina.”<sup>51</sup>

One of the most important differences between hot- and cold-climate cultures in the work setting is the value of relationship for those from hot-climate orientation versus the value of task for cold-climate people. This is crucial to grasp: “All hot-climate communication has one goal: to promote a ‘feel-good’ atmosphere, a friendly environment. The truth can take a backseat to the relationship.”<sup>52</sup> This is not to say that hot-climate folks are liars; it simply means friendliness matters more than accuracy. For example – if you have a terrible hair cut, a hot-climate person will tell you that your hair looks nice. He or she will trust you'll find out your hair looks bad another way. This relational orientation means that people are the primary in every situation. In this context, task is combined with relationship, so getting the job done may be delayed by giving attention to the relationship.

For “cold-climate” cultures, “accurate communication is valued... personal feelings are kept separate from objective issues.”<sup>53</sup> Feelings are not considered in the

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<sup>50</sup> Lanier, Sarah A., *Foreign to Familiar* (Hagerstown, MD, McDougal Publishing, 2000).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 20

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 25

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 26.

communication process. What matters most is an accurate response. When a job needs to be done or a question answered factually, the cold-climate person is focused on the task. For example – if you have a terrible hair cut, a cold-climate person will tell you he/she thinks it looks bad. “It’s not about you. It’s about your hair.”<sup>54</sup> This task orientation means the job or the goal is the priority, and relationship is separate from the work to be done. In order to accomplish tasks, relationships may need to be “set aside”, feelings may be neglected.

It’s important to remember that most people think that everyone is wired the way they are. So, when a task person interacts with a relational person, offense may be taken by actions and attitudes and hurt may develop. If we understand the different orientations, then adjustments can be made as we interact with each other.

### **Some Points to Remember About Communication**

Hot-climate cultures communicate indirectly; Cold-climate cultures communicate directly.

#### **Direct Communication**

- Short, direct questions show respect for the person’s time, as well as professionalism.
- A ‘yes’ is a ‘yes,’ and a ‘no’ is a no.’ There are no hidden meanings.
- An honest, direct answer is information only. It does not reflect on how the person feels about you.
- You can say what you think (nicely), and it will usually not be taken personally.

#### **Indirect Communication**

- It’s all about being friendly.
- Every question must be phrased in such a way as to not offend by its directness.
- Use a third party for accurate information if you sense that a direct question will be too harsh, or not get the results you are seeking.
- A ‘yes’ may not be an answer to your question. It may be the first step in beginning a friendly interchange. Or verbal compliance may be required by the culture. Therefore, avoid yes-or-no questions.
- Avoid embarrassing people.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

- **Discuss:** What adaptations may you need to make after learning the differences between hot-climate and cold-climate cultures—with one another, with those you will serve alongside?



#### **What does the Bible have to say?**

As we think about cultural differences, how do we put the knowledge into practice? Philippians 2 gives us the place to start. Read Philippians 2:1-5. Ask the group to reflect on the following questions:

1. What characteristics of a follower of Jesus does Paul describe with “if” statements, found in verse 1? List them. Why do you think Paul uses these characteristics as the foundation for what comes next?
2. In verse 2, what does Paul call followers in Philippi to? What might this have to do with your team, with your mission?
3. Read Philippians 2:3-4 again. Paraphrase these verses. How do they connect with relating to people of another culture?
4. What does verse 5 challenge us to be?

#### **Putting it into practice**

Cindy Judge, writes:

**“Demonstrating your acceptance of the way things are done in other countries shows honor, respect, and the love of Christ.”**

“If we are to be servants with the humility and love of Christ, we need to show openness and acceptance to the way of life of our hosts. When it comes to doing a task, you may be tempted to think and act more like an American than a Christian. When you’re tempted to ask the typical ‘American’ question, ‘How can this job be done better or faster?’, you need to stop and remind yourself that this culture is operating with different values and that your question might be inappropriate or even disrespectful.”<sup>55</sup>

So remember:

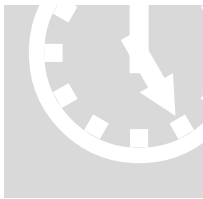
- Be open to learning why your hosts do things the way they do.
- It may not be important to introduce them to your favorite higher technology.
- You are trying to build relationships that honor the Lord, whom you represent.

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<sup>55</sup> Judge, Cindy, *Before You Pack Your Bag, Prepare Your Heart* (Wheaton, Ill.: Campfire Resources, Inc., 2005), 21-23.

- You have come to serve in whatever capacity is needed.
- You have come to learn from your new friends.
- You have come to accept and love brothers and sisters in Christ who are different from you.”<sup>56</sup>

**A little homework** for the team – memorize Philippians 2:3-4. Spend some time praying about openness to learning from a culture unlike your own.



### Country Lesson

It is time for a little lifestyle lesson about the country/region where you will be serving. The Team Leader (or someone in the group) should do some research on what life is like in the place you will be serving. What kinds of houses do people live in? What types of work do people do? What is family life like? What clothes do people wear? What religion(s) is (are) practiced in the country or in the area in which you'll be staying? How does religion impact daily life? What values are important to people in the country your team is traveling to?

### Cultural Radar

- Identifying values is important as you prepare to enter into another culture. Discuss with the team, what values are evident in North American culture?
- *Possible responses:* materialism, cleanliness, thriftiness, work ethic, guilt/shame, practicality, initiative, self-reliance, privacy/personal property, superiority of physical power, determination, opportunism, aggressiveness, concern for physical appearance, preparation for the future, fatalism, entitlement, idealization, pride.
- How do they relate (or not) to the culture in which the team will be serving? We, who travel, need to be aware of the cultural values that shape us, as we encounter differing values in other places (this can be true of domestic travel in the US, as well as international travel).
- Now, it's time to talk about some things the team needs to consider in entering into a new culture.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

**We serve a relational God—One who created us and desire us to be in relationship with Him and others. Therefore, we must live a life where our relationship with God and others come first.**

## **Developing Relationships**

Getting to know the people is the most important aspect of your mission trip. This must be of the highest priority. As you prepare and as you go, pay attention to the people around you and be intentional in getting to know others. It is good to build and fix things, but for your host, it is more important to get to know you. Therefore, loving and encouraging people are the greatest ministries you can offer. Manual labor and people ministries can be the context in which you build relationships.

The most important relationship you will have is with the pastor/director and church leaders of the ministry hosting your team. They are to be treated with respect at all times. Before your team travels, learn a bit about the ministry leadership you'll be working with, ask for prayer requests from them, and pray for them as a team. When you meet the pastor/director and church leaders, shake hands, nod, bow (or greet them in the culturally-acceptable manner).

In speaking with community and church leaders, be sure to address them in a way that is respectful. Learn and use titles that are appropriate to them. Listen to how other people speak to them and ask what is courteous.

Remember that what the pastor/director and church leaders set priorities for what should happen during the mission experience. Conversations about tasks and programs will all be dealt with before your team arrives. Yet, there are always changes to plans, given the way circumstances unfold. If you have concerns about priorities or schedules, you may respectfully voice a suggestion to the Merge staff or your trip facilitators. Let trip facilitators be the liaison with the local church leaders. Your group is there to fit into the agenda and desires of your host ministry. Respect is key to relationship with host leaders, families, and participants in the mission experience.

There are simple steps you can take to build relationships during your mission experience. 1) Spend time talking to people. Think about questions you can ask those you meet, even before you travel. 2) Plan time in your schedule to get to know people. Invite locals to work with you. Beware of multi-tasking. It's OK to stop what you are doing to talk with someone. 3) Accept invitations. If a pastor's family invites you to dinner, make it a priority to adjust your schedule to make it happen. Accept all invitations to eat with the church members at church or in homes. Eat what you are served. 4) Graciously accept all gifts and help offered. 5) Ask to look at your hosts' family photo album. Bring your own pictures to show them your family. 6) Invite hosts to participate in your cultural/tourist days. Know that when someone is a guest, whoever invited them is to cover all expenses (travel, meals, housing, etc).



## **Personal Conduct**

### **Flexibility**

- It is important to be flexible on your mission trip. This attitude is key to your effectiveness, group unity, and peacefulness.
- Ministry opportunities are your ultimate priority. Make changes in the original schedule, if necessary, to accommodate these opportunities.
- Do not feel the need to finish a work project. Most hosts are comfortable with unfinished projects. They care more about relationships than accomplishments.
- Make sure people are more important than work projects.
- Make excellence and interaction your goal in people ministries.

### **Clothing and Appearance**

- Our goal is to be as culturally sensitive to the people we are ministering to as possible. When wearing T-shirts decide whether what you are wearing is a good witness for Jesus Christ or at least neutral. In some countries, such as some Latin American countries, crosses and pictures of Jesus are seen as “a Catholic thing” so the Evangelical world here tends to shy away from wearing crosses and t-shirts with Jesus on them. Remember you are traveling, not as a tourist, but as a guest.
- For some mission teams, clothing restrictions are controversial. Cultural values are different between Christian and non-Christian people. Your ministry is compromised if your group is unwilling to follow the conservative dress of the local Christian people. The goal is not to push boundaries, but to make clothing a non-issue in your ministry. Many other countries already have the idea that youth from Western cultures are sexually loose by the clothing choices and sexual decisions they make, as seen on American TV shows and movies.

### **Opposite Sex**

- Problems often occur when members of the mission teams begin to focus on developing relationships with people they’re ministering to, whom they’re also attracted to. Do not allow boyfriend/girlfriend relationships to begin with someone to whom you are ministering.
- Sexual misconduct is a reason to send a group member home immediately.
- Flirting can send confusing signals to your brothers and sisters about the purpose of your trip. It can also be interpreted as a sexual advance and invitation for a more serious relationship. This can lead to serious consequences for your group and complicate ministry.

- Care should also be given to relationships among team members as well. The hosts will notice if your group is more interested in flirting with each other than in doing ministry.

### **Attitudes & Actions**

Remember that the culture you are entering is not weird or bad, just different. Your role is to discover the beauty of the culture.

- When driving or visiting any area it is best to look, but not point.
- When in a situation that is upsetting to you, try not to yell, scream, or make negative remarks. People understand a lot by the tone of your voice.
- Swearing is a negative response and a lousy witness.
- Ask about the appropriateness of 'leisure time' activities. Is it OK to play cards? If so, be sure to invite your hosts into the game. Don't gamble.
- Respect the church sanctuary - behave respectfully at all times.
- Avoid wrestling, roughhousing, and horseplay when you are with your hosts.
- Many of your hosts may know limited English, but sarcasm crosses the language barrier very easy. Avoid it!
- Watch what you say! The only thing you should promise is to pray...you can fulfill that promise.

### **Personal Touch/Boundaries**

- Restrictions should be made on dating couples going on mission trips. Physical affection and the need to always be together can cause disunity in groups, a lack of proper focus for ministry, and a loss of respect for the team by the hosts. Excessive touch between males and females is not looked upon positively. The best thing to do is for males and females not to hug or kiss in public. No back rubs in public either.
- Married couples should be cautious of their physical contact in order to be sensitive to the culture. Holding hands may be okay, but check with the mission host.
- When interacting with people during mission ministry, touching someone of the opposite sex over the age of 10 is discouraged. This can be easily misinterpreted.
- Young children can be hugged, but it is best by someone of the same sex.

### **Smoking**

- Your group must decide its own rules on smoking. Be aware that evangelical churches in many countries believe Christians should not smoke. In fact, smoking can be seen as offensive. Therefore we ask that you follow these guidelines:
  - No smoking on church property.
  - Do not smoke in a place where you can be seen by pastors, church members, or children.

### **Illegal Substances and Drinking**

- It may be tempting to participate in these activities, but they are absolutely wrong on mission trips.
- These trips are to be illegal substance free. No drugs!
- These trips are alcohol free. No drinking!
- If a member of the group is found in possession of drugs or alcohol, the group should send that team member home immediately
- Do not purchase alcohol even as gifts for family members.

### **Community Respect**

#### **Quiet Hours**

- Most likely your housing will be near homes of others. Therefore, to ensure the good reputation of the ministry please be quiet at appropriate times.
- Please be quiet until a designated time (around 7 am).
- Please be quiet after a designated time (around 10 pm on weekdays).
- Keep voices at a low volume in restaurants. Don't be loud & obnoxious foreigners.

#### **Photography and Videography**

- Taking pictures and video is acceptable in most cultures. Out of respect for the people to whom you are ministering follow these guidelines:
- Do not take photos or video until the last two days at your ministry site when you have developed the proper relationships.
- Do not take photos or video during a food distribution.

- Photos of children & adults in neighborhoods, at churches, and at children's homes are appropriate after relationships have been developed. Please ask for permission to take the photos.
- Many home churches want to see the “results” of your mission trip, but please be sensitive to not act like tourists. Different people (including the children) have said that they do not want pictures taken because they don't know where they are going or what they are for. Unfortunately, because of people who have put photos of kids on the Internet for their own benefit, people can be leery of picture taking, so always take great measures to be sensitive.
- Designate a team photographer for each day. Then you can share photos at the end of the trip. Rotate who takes pictures, so the photographer doesn't get pulled out of ministry opportunities the entire time.”

### **Shopping**

- Stay in groups of 3-4 people. Always have at least one male in each group.
- While shopping protect your wallets, purses and backpacks from theft.
- Bargaining is not only acceptable, but expected in many countries. Please be respectful in this, however. You may be able to get a rock bottom price, but what may that say about Christian tourists? Ask your hosts for advice in bargaining practices.

### **Donations, Gift Giving and Give-Aways**

- Giving donations or gifts is trickier than you may think in another culture. There are inter-personal, cultural, and ministry issues involved in gift giving that you may not understand. If you desire to purchase a gift for a national, be sure to check with your host first to find out if and what type of gift giving is appropriate.
- If the host missionary cautions you against giving gifts (i.e. toys to children who come to a program), please listen to them and respect what they have to say – and don't give gifts away.
- Purchasing a gift for the host pastor & family is appropriate. A recommended gift item is one that represents the area you come from (T-shirts, mugs, souvenir items, etc.) and something that they cannot buy.
- It is appropriate to give a gift to someone who has provided you with housing and meals, and the missionary host.
- Do not give money to anyone unless you have consulted with the host missionary first.

**Giving donations or gifts is trickier than you may think in another culture. Indiscriminate handouts are destructive. Equally destructive is the habit of making promises.**

- Do not give away personal items to individuals, such as watches or hats, because this may create jealousy or friction among those who have not received them.
- Indiscriminate handouts are destructive; but equally destructive is the habit of making promises. Do not promise any long-term favors (i.e. looking into bringing an individual home to the US for a visit or for schooling).
- Before collecting items, check with the host missionary to determine if it would be appropriate.
- Small gifts for friends made during the mission trip may be appropriate, but should be gifts of friendship that will not create begging or jealousy. If you make a bracelet for one person, make one for everyone. Photographs, bookmarks, even postcards from your home are nice gifts. They indicate a friendship rather than a demonstration of the difference between the haves and the have-nots.
- Determine in advance what you will do with your group's food or water. If you give a drink or snack to one person, you must be prepared to give to everyone!
- Having snack time, for the kids, at a children's program is appropriate.
- Inviting a pastor's family to eat with your group is appropriate.
- Orphanages need certain items, but rarely used clothes. Check with Merge or your trip facilitator about what is appropriate to donate.
- It is rarely appropriate to financially support a church, ministry or individual after your trip is over. Communicate with the host missionary or Trip Facilitator about the appropriateness of this type of support requests you may receive and how to implement it.
- Please don't expect to leave your junk at the ministry site when you leave.

#### **Tips**

- Locals are paid very low wages. Most survive off of the tips they receive.
- Tips for waiters should be 10% in many Latin American countries.
- Tips should not be given to beggars, street entertainment, etc.
- Do not give money to people on the street who wash your car windows unless you request for them to clean them. If they initiate it try to discourage them by waving your finger "no" and do not pay them.

## Teaching Through an Interpreter

Interpreters are very special people. They clarify and provide understanding. Here are some tips on how to best utilize your interpreter:

1. Interpreters handle translation in different ways, depending on their knowledge, experience, and comfort level. Some prefer simultaneous translation, while others are more efficient when sentences or a paragraph are spoken by the English speaker and then translated. Generally, simultaneous translation is less effective for training workshops.
2. Before you teach, review all technical terms and words important. Also, talk about nuances, key sentences and ideas to be covered. Discuss any explicit and implied meanings.
3. If using an overhead projector and handouts, be sure to ask the interpreter or someone fluent in the language to translate and prepare these before the workshop.
4. When using a chalk or white board, do some examples with the interpreter of what you intend to use. This lets the interpreter see how you handle the materials and where you will be positioned.
5. Interpretation usually means the English speaker will have about half the allotted time to share. So, if the time slot is 60 minutes, the spoken time for the translator will be closer to 30 minutes or less. Keep this in mind when preparing.
6. When working with a translator, be sure to watch the faces and eyes of the listeners. This will help you determine whether or not the subject, idea or illustration is being grasped. Be ready to repeat or rephrase something said.
7. When working with interpreters, English speakers are more effective when care is taken with word choices and how sentences are formed and expressed.
8. Do not rush through what you want to say or share. You want your listeners to learn with understanding and insight. And you can help learners discover a truth by using an illustration or anecdote. Decide ahead of time what is essential and important.
9. Some interpreters prefer to work from a manuscript. Be cautious about a word-for-word translation. Good interpreters grasp ideas and concepts to give clarity to what is being said. Translation is more effective and enjoyable when the English speaker and

interpreter are a synchronized team, as together they explain, explore, show and guide.

10. Interpreters must also be effective in handling translation from participants who raise a question, give comments and ask for clarification.
11. Interpretation is extremely demanding, so the English speaker needs to beware of overburdening the interpreter. If possible, the interpreter should have an alternate or backup person.
12. Never take your interpreter for granted. Always remember that without your mouthpiece—the interpreter—your words and ideas will remain beyond understanding and you will be out of touch with your listeners.



### **Life-Shaping Events**

It is time for a little history lesson about the country/region where you will be serving. To give context for the current life situation, it is helpful to highlight significant events for the country and its people. What national and global experiences have shaped the lives of people whom your team will serve?

Be sure to do some research regarding the place you will travel. What significant events happened 100, 50, 25, 10 years ago? What has happened recently that shapes the life of people in the country? Make time in training sessions to cover important markers in the story of the nation, so team members are a bit more aware of context as they get to know people and learn about life in this place.

As your team prepares to enter into new relationships in a new location, be intentional about developing attitudes that will help you make the most of your experience. You may want to study one “Attitude” each meeting.”



### **Cultural Attitudes**

#### **Attitude #1—The Guest**

#### **Group Discussion**

Think about and share answers to the following questions (in small groups or with the whole team).

- What is your favorite food? What is your least favorite food?
- What is your reaction when your least favorite food is placed before you?
- When you were young and you went to a friend’s house, what advice did your mother give you about how you should behave?
- Was her advice hard to follow? Why? or Why not?

- As you anticipate traveling to the country where our team will serve, what do you think will be most challenging for you as you think about being a guest in a new culture?



#### **What the Bible has to say**

The apostle Paul had quite a story... born a Jew, as an adult he was a model follower of Yahweh. There were lines drawn for faithful Jews – to stay clear of that which would make one unclean – and that meant staying away from Gentiles. Paul met Jesus on his way to Damascus, which completely transformed his heart and life. As if the transformation from faithful Jew to Christian wasn't enough, Paul was later called to share the Good News with Gentiles. As a Christ-follower, Paul's orientation and pre-conceptions were continually challenged. God expanded his understanding of love and grace, which extends to all people, everywhere. In responding to God's call on his life, Paul crossed borders and cultures to interact with people who were not like him. He learned to value people and places that were different from what he was used to and who he was. Through his personal transformation, Paul was able to be a bridge, seeking to heal the animosity between Jews and Gentiles.

Take a look at what Paul learned on his journey with Jesus in Ephesians 2:1-5; 17-22. Read the passage. And answer the following questions:

- What main ideas stand out in these verses?
- What does this text tell you about Jesus and his hope for the world?
- What is the goal, or end result, of being joined together with people from other cultures?
- What personal challenge, about interacting in new cultures, do you find from Paul's words?

Is it possible to conclude from this passage that, in order for any of us to experience ALL that Jesus Christ has for us, we need to be connected with others from around the planet? True connection is made up of love, respect, honor, care, peace, and unity.





## **Attitude #2—The Servant**

### **Group Discussion**

Break the team into small groups and discuss the following:

Describe a time when someone did something for you. How did you feel about it?

When you hear the word “servant”, what comes to mind? Is it a positive image? negative? mixed?

The second attitude that is essential on a mission trip is that of being a servant. We do not expect others to serve us; we are to serve them. A true servant asks, “How do you want this to be done?” rather than “Let me show you the right way to do this.” We go to another culture to assist them in what they consider to be important.



### **What does the Bible have to say?**

Now, have the small groups read one of these passages:

John 13:1-17

Philippians 2:5-11

Mark 10:35-45

Discuss and record reactions to these questions:

- What does this passage say about the attitude of being a servant?
- How is this different from the way most of the world functions?
- What would it look like if we applied it to our life together as part of this team?

### **Put it into practice**

Come back together as a large group and debrief the findings of each small group.

- What characteristics describe the heart of a servant?
- What do the opposite of these characteristics look like?
- Which three would be most helpful to us as a mission team?
- What is one characteristic you want to focus on developing this week in your life?

Close the session in prayer in small groups. Pray for attitudes developing within team members. Pray for the host country and the needs of the ministry that you'll support while on the trip. Pray for the missionaries who are working with the ministry now.



### **Attitude #3—The Learner**

#### **Group Discussion**

In small groups, talk through the following:

Describe a learning experience.

What attitudes does the person learning have?

How does learning relate to traveling to a new place?

Have the small group create a list of things you think are important to learn about where you are going, before you go. Give this information to the Team Leader.

#### **Demonstrating your acceptance of the way things are done in other countries shows honor, respect, and the love of Christ.” (p.21)**

With the whole team together – Read Philippians 2:3-4. “If we are to be servants with the humility and love of Christ, we need to show openness and acceptance to the way of life of our hosts. When it comes to doing a task, you may be tempted to think and act more like an American than a Christian. When you’re tempted to ask a typical American question, ‘How can this job be done better or faster?’, you need to stop and remind yourself that this culture is operating with different values and that your question might be appropriate or even disrespectful.

Demonstrating your acceptance of the way things are done in other countries shows honor, respect, and the love of Christ.”<sup>57</sup>

#### **Communicating in a New Culture**

Unless you have been fortunate enough to have had ongoing language study of some sort, you will be entering into a culture with little or no knowledge of the language. Your team’s efforts in learning the local language communicates to another culture that you care about them. It is a bridge-builder.

Important things to remember are:

- willingness to try the language
- willingness to laugh at yourself for language blunders
- willingness to learn all you can before going
- willingness to accept the fact that you probably will not be fluent! Dr. Tom Brewster, who has written books on language learning, said “learn a little, use it a lot!”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Brewster, Dr. Tom and Betty Sue Brewster, *Language Acquisition Made Practical* (Pasadena, Calif.: Lingua House, 1976), 6.



## Language Lessons

### Lesson 1

Practice learning the sounds of the alphabet, as well as the sounds of other letters not found in the English alphabet (i.e. ll, rr in Spanish).

Learn a simple chorus that has the same tune as one sung in English. Pick one with a few words and is repetitive.

Try to learn the pronunciation of each team member's name in the language.

### Lesson 2

- Practice the alphabet already learned.
- Introduce yourself using the pronunciation of your own name in the language being learned. "Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_."
- Begin to practice basic vocabulary for daily life. Include: "hello", "good-bye", "please", "thank you", "I'm sorry"
- Learn to count from 1-10.

### Lesson 3

- Review previous lessons – numbers (add 11-20), the song, phrases
- Have the team members work on a very simple introduction to themselves—their name, siblings and other relatives, job, where they live, what they like.
- Learn another song in the local language.

### Lesson 4

- Review the previous lessons – numbers (add 21-100), songs
- Have team members practice introducing themselves to each other, talk about where they live, family, etc...
- Develop a list of simple questions that can be learned --- What is your name? Where do you live? What is your work? How old are you? How are you?

### Lesson 5

- Review previous lessons – introductions, questions, songs
- Learn John 3:16 in the local language
- Develop a list of survival phrases: "Excuse me", "I'm sorry", "Good", "Bad", "Where is the bathroom?", "Jesus loves you"

- Learn vocabulary for the work the team will do while on the mission.

Remember that your sincere attempt to learn and use the language of the country will greatly encourage the people you are with, even if the pronunciation is not perfect. Learning a language is a way of learning the culture. A language is learned by speaking it – not just listening to it. Be bold and willing to try.

Set aside time to review language lessons. Review songs you may have learned already. Split the team up for practice conversations with one another.

### **Things to Remember**

1. Remember that team members are servants of Jesus Christ, called to be in ministry with the host team.
2. You are not in charge. You are God's servant.
3. Expect things to be radically different from home. Prepare for less comfort and a different diet.
4. Expect different ways of doing things. Understand that cultures are different, not superior or inferior.
5. Respect the host's religious faith. The expressions of faith may be different from those of team members.
6. Be supportive of the ministry that is going on in the area where the team is serving.
7. Look forward to meeting new friends and experiencing a unique Christian fellowship.
8. Expect to learn new skills and ways of thinking. Look forward to the experience of a lifetime.
9. Don't worry about time. Most of the people will not own a watch. It has been said in Latin American contexts, "In the US everyone has a watch, but no one has time. Here we don't have watches, but we have time."
10. Refrain from negativism and complaining when unexpected and undesired circumstances occur in travel and ministry.
11. Rejoice in the Lord always and be thankful for the diversity of God's people.