

Cross-Cultural Perspectives from the Director



Building Cross-Cultural Relationships

One of my fondest memories of missionary ministry is the relationships built with cross-cultural friends around the globe. Still today I make it a major concern getting to know people wherever I travel.

Here are some helpful tips in building cross-cultural relationships:

1. **Bond:** Each missionary needs to bond with his or her people. I'm not talking about throwing new missionaries in a village for a few weeks utilizing a sink-or-swim approach to missionary work. There are missionary groups that do just that. Deliberately forge relationships. They will provide strength in turbulent times.
2. **Balance:** In building relationships cross-culturally always endeavor to keep a balance. You can get too close. You can keep too distant. Which is good? Neither. Find balance.
3. **Brotherhood:** Always be on guard for superiority-syndrome. We can mistakenly give the impression we are better than other cultures. "In the USA we do it this way" are words that should seldom be heard on the mission field. Never build an "us" and "them" environment.
4. **Build:** Never belittle the culture of another. Mocking cultural practices could easily cause people to retreat, never express what is really going on, and hide feelings and fears from us. We should rather—in the spirit of love and truth—gently show the biblical culture. Guard against speaking condescendingly.

To be successful, each missionary needs to love his people. Someone has said, "If you don't love them, leave them." I would rather suggest, "If you don't love them, ask the Lord to give you the love needed to minister effectively." Build cross-cultural relationships that will last a lifetime and beyond.