

Cross-Cultural Perspectives from the Director

Twenty-one Tips for Healthier Missionary Relationships

Part One

Ron Blue in *Evangelism and Missions* said, “Interpersonal relationships may be one of the most overlooked areas in world missions.” Whether working with other missionaries within a nation, or across geographical boundaries, it is imperative to cultivate quality relationships. I am writing concerning these relationships not because we have a problem anywhere in particular, but to assist in preventing problems and building healthier relationships. Here are the first ten of twenty-one tips to help:

1. Missionary Field Fellowships are needed in nations with multiple missionary staff. Consult the Foreign Missions Manual for details.
2. Work together as a team. Lone Rangers—not required.
3. Provide or request Job Descriptions that plainly explain duties of each missionary. These should be approved and signed by (where applicable) the Area Coordinator, Regional Director, and General Director of Foreign Missions.
4. Avoid “That’s my Program *Sim*-drome.” We should not create a hands-off, none of your business attitude in areas of responsibility. Foster accountability.
5. When in doubt, seek clarification. If you dislike confrontation go for its twin sister “clarification” to get a clearer understanding of the situation.
6. Look for the right time for “clarification.” Never confront in public.
7. Avoid the familiarity complex yet aim for a family relationship. Missionaries serve in fields far from families. Birthdays, anniversaries, and holiday greetings are quickly forgotten. Out of sight is out of mind. Fill in the gap. Seek a balance between providing a family environment with a working atmosphere. That’s easier said than done. It’s difficult being an Uncle, Grampy, or Brother and Superintendent, Principal, or Area Coordinator at the same time. Happy juggling!
8. Be kingdom-minded. The best for the kingdom of God should be placed ahead of personal preferences (Matthew 6:33).
9. What should missionaries do to each other? A quick look at the *PC Study Bible* reveals we should love, admonish, forbear (put up with), forgive, submit to, exhort, edify (lift up), and consider one another.

10. Be humble. “Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom” (Proverbs 13:10). It takes two to tangle, and in contentious times one, the other, or both have a problem—pride. Ouch! That’s a toughy! We will close with that, and pick up this discussion next time.