PRINCIPLES OF CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY
Facilitator’s Guide

Purpose: To develop an understanding of and sensitivity for cultural differences within urban communities, and learn how to live and/or minister contextually within these communities.

Learning Objectives: The new staff person will be able to:

1. Interpret a model for understanding culture and make practical applications to Christian life and ministry.
2. Articulate the biblical mandate to minister cross-culturally and motivate others using biblical principles.
3. Understand the cultural differences in your ministry area and take practical steps to build relationships within those cultures.
4. Learn and apply skills for adapting quickly to cultural differences.

Preparation Assignments:

1. Read article: “Understanding Culture” by Lloyd E. Kwast. Answer the two study questions at end of the article. Then write 3 to 5 implications of this model for ministry in your target area.
2. Complete the Bible Study: “What Does The Bible Say About Culture And Ministry?”
3. Research the demographics of your city overall and for your specific target ministry area. You may use the Internet, chamber of commerce, library, newspaper, interview other staff, etc. Be sure to include:
   - Ethnic diversity
   - Geographical distribution [neighborhood groupings?]
   - Income levels
   - Employment/Unemployment figures
   - Percentage living in poverty/homelessness
   - Percentage working poor
   - Educational statistics

4. Do the exercise on “Personal Cultural Values.” (a) Rank order your personal values, (b) Have five people in your target audience (as you minister with ministry partners) complete the “Personal cultural Values” list on
themselves. Then transfer their answers along with yours on to the chart listing the “Personal Cultural Values.”

5. Read article, “A Servant’s Heart: How to Serve and Be An Encourager” by Jim Green. Complete the three study questions at the end of the article.

Instructions for Facilitator:

Please read over the entire study guide and articles before you begin to prepare to lead a session. It is equally important that you complete both the preparation assignments and application assignments ahead of time. Your group times are based upon a clear understanding of the concepts as well as completing the practical application projects. This session is designed to encourage group interaction, to hear what they have learned and bring about some debate. Feel free to ask additional clarifying questions as needed. There will be little need for lecture in these sessions.

Session Outline:

I. What is culture?
   (25 minutes)

   A. Interpreting Kwast’s model of culture:
      In what ways do you agree or disagree with Dr. Kwast’s model of culture with its successive layers? Please explain.

   B. David A. Noebel defines worldview in his book, Understanding The Times: “The term worldview refers to any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement, or religion that provides an overarching approach to understanding God, the world, and man’s relations to God and the
1. Reflect on what forces have shaped your worldview, write out your reflections in a paragraph or more. Be prepared to share your reflections with your coaching group.

2. How important do you think it would be for you to understand the worldview of those with whom you are ministering?

3. How important do you think it would be for you to understand the worldview of those to whom you are ministering?

II. Understanding my culture and the culture of my ministry audience.
A. Awareness of Target Audience Demographics (20 minutes)

1. As you research the demographics of your target audience, what did you learn about the makeup of the people? Please be specific.

2. Did you find any surprises as you researched your area as compared to demographics of the city overall? If so, what were they?

3. What were some of the most effective ways you found to gain information about your target audience?

B. Knowledge of Personal Cultural Values vs. Others’ Values (20 minutes)

1. What differences have you noticed between you and others on your chart?

2. How might these differences (similarities) help or hinder your ability to work with and communicate to people in your target audience?

3. What generalities or principles can you infer from your findings?

C. Awareness of Contextualization as a strategic approach to mission (20 minutes)

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1 David A. Noebel, Understanding The Times (Colorado Springs, 1999), p.4.
Contextualization is the process of making the gospel accessible within a particular cultural context in an understandable and culturally meaningful way, without losing the truth and integrity of the message. See I Corinthians 9:19-21.

People respond most easily to situations and relationships in which they feel most comfortable, including their cultures’ customs, language, and traditions. Having a learner’s posture is a key part of contextualization, as the urban missionary opens up himself or herself to their own or a different culture. However, in the process of contextualization, the urban missionary must communicate the gospel and biblical truth without compromising Christian orthodoxy.

Group Exercise on Contextualization:
1. Have each member of the group read a paragraph of the sheet on “Contextualization with American Ethnic People.”

2. After reading through all the points, briefly discuss some possible implications for ministry with the urban poor. As the facilitator, you would want to think through some of these beforehand.

*Note: Additional resources on contextualization in mission will be made available on the website at a later date.*

D. Having A Servant’s Heart
(20 minutes)

1. Discuss with your training group the article, “A Servant’s Heart,” and their answers to the Bible questions.

2. Discuss how they might apply principles of servant-hood as they minister among their target audience.
III. Application

A. Principles Learned. (25 minutes)

1. In light of what you learned from the articles, the Bible study and experience, what principles of cross-cultural ministry have you formulated or had reinforced? List them in the chart below. Add principles to the list from our group discussion.

2. Rank order the level of importance you would give each principle. Explain.

3. To which principles will you give attention in the next few months?
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What Does the Bible Say About Culture and Ministry?

The Great Commission is a global and cross-cultural mandate. The word “nations” found in Matthew 28:19 is the Greek word, ethnos, meaning “peoples”. God’s heart is for all the peoples—ethnic groups and cultures of the earth.

In fielding the group responses to the following questions, elements of the key answers written below are sufficient. As facilitator, you most likely have additional insights to explore with each of these questions. Our basic desire is for new staff to demonstrate an essential understanding of the cross-cultural and contextual implications of the Great Commission.

   a. What is the command in this passage?
      The words “Go” [lit. Gk. “while going”], “baptizing”, and “teaching” describe the key activities involved in carrying out the command, “... make disciples...”. The prepositional phrase, “of all nations” certainly clearly indicates the global scope of the command that the disciples were given.

   b. What are some implications of the Great Commission for urban ministry in the United States?
      • As a pluralistic nation—many ethnic, cultural and religious groups populating our shores, especially our urban centers, carrying the gospel will demand the same approaches and sensitivities used in missionary work in other nations.
      • The importance of an understanding of culture, ethnicity, and contextualization should not be underestimated. Our training materials will provide further study in contextualization as a missiological principle. (cf. I Corinthians 9:20-23).
      • Building relationships is a critical key to understanding cultures and crossing cultural barriers. This also involves cultivating listening and observational skills.
      • The urban church, especially the African-American church, has been present throughout generations as a testimony to the gospel and is a key agent with which to work as we obey our Lord’s command.

   c. How might these verses impact your ministry among the urban poor?
      • Poverty itself has cultural implications. We will examine the culture of poverty.
      • Poverty is not limited to one or a few ethnic groups.
      • Depending on the region of the country, we may encounter migrant workers or political refugees among the urban poor
      • other implications

2. God’s promise to Abraham in the Old Testament also conveys His heart for reaching all the nations (peoples) of the earth. *Read Genesis 12:1-3.* Abraham no more understood the idea that the Redeemer would come
through His descendants than He could foresee the extent to which the nations of earth would multiply from his day to the 21st Century.

a. If you could give Abraham an updated list of how, through him, all the families of the earth have been and are being blessed, even today, what would you share?
   • Perhaps discuss ways in which the gospel has spread historically, since Pentecost.
   • Research specific stats on how certain groups in your city or elsewhere are being reached.

b. What implications do you think this promise to Abraham has for your ministry in Here’s Life Inner City, among those living in poverty?

3. Serving in cross-cultural ministry is to serve in the role of an ambassador. 
   Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

   a. What is the role of an ambassador?

   b. What factors make an ambassador effective in the nation/culture where he/she serves?
      • Knowledge of own identity and calling as an ambassador representing his own sovereign/president or government
      • Extensive knowledge of the nation—culturally, socially, politically, etc.
      • Having respect for the national people.
      • Identification with the people

   c. List skills or knowledge that you believe would make you more effective as an ambassador of Jesus Christ in your target audience.

   d. Indicate which areas you would like to see development/growth in the near future.

   e. Share your list with your trainer/mentor and determine some action points.
Going Further:

Following is a list of materials, resources, and learning activities for staff to use, if they choose to pursue their learning on the topic of Cross-Cultural Ministry.


