

Cross-Cultural Servanthood

Xenos Summer Institute 2014

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What character quality do people from other culture find most offensive about Americans?

Actual _____

How we think about ourselves

Perceived _____

How others interpret our actions

The Story of the Monkey and the Fish

A typhoon had temporally stranded a monkey on an island. In a secure, protected place, while waiting for the raging waters to recede, he spotted a fish swimming against the current. This monkey had never seen a fish before but it seemed obvious to the monkey that the fish was struggling and in need of assistance. Being of kind heart, the monkey resolved to help the fish.

A tree precariously dangled over the very spot where the fish seemed to be struggling. At considerable risk to himself, the monkey moved far out on a limb, reached down and snatched the fish from the threatening waters. Immediately scurrying back to the safety of his shelter, he carefully laid the fish on dry ground. For a few moments the fish showed excitement, but soon settled into a peaceful rest. Joy and satisfaction swelled inside the monkey. He had successfully helped another creature. (Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections*, 14)

- In the story of the Monkey and the Fish, why did the monkey try to help the fish?
- What did the monkey assume about fish culture?
- How do you think the fish felt about the help it received?
- What advice would you give the monkey for future situations where he would like to help?
- In what way(s) might it be possible for you to act like this monkey?

I. Learning to be a cross-cultural servant is an intentional decision to follow Christ and be like him.

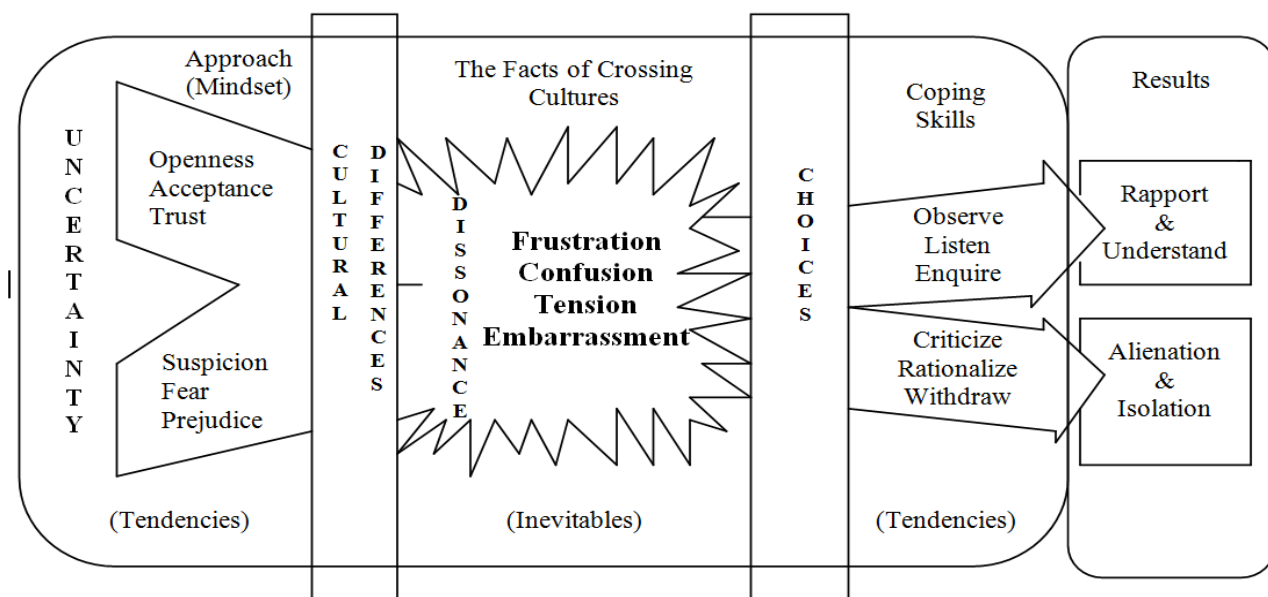
A. Jesus is our model of what a servant looks like.

- In his birth
- In his appearance
- In his upbringing
- In his ministry (related to all people)
- In the washing of his disciples feet
- In his death

“[Jesus], being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! **(Philippians 2:6-8)**

Notes:

Becoming a cross-cultural servant



II. Learning to be a cross-cultural servant is a process that involves both heart transformation and specific skills.

A. OPENNESS

Definition: the ability to welcome people into your presence and make them feel safe. (Elmer, Cross-Cultural Servanthood, page 39)

Skills:

- Learn how to greet people in a culturally appropriate way.
- Recognize, resist, and reject the practice of negative attribution by suspending judgment.
- Intentionally think the best of others
- Tolerate ambiguity
- Learn to avoid black and white categories when dealing with cultural differences.

“Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.” **(Roman 14:13)**

Notes:

B. ACCEPTANCE

Definition: the ability to communicate value, worth, and esteem to another person. (Elmer, page 58)

Skills:

- Language acquisition
- Wait patiently to understand
- Allow others to give.
- Develop flexibility and avoid dogmatism
- Avoid evaluative language

The goal is to practically communicate respect and dignity to each human being based on the fact that each is an image-bearer of God.

Notes:

C. TRUST

Definition: The ability to build confidence in a relationship so that both parties believe the other will not intentionally hurt them but will act in their best interest. (Elmer, page 77)

Skills:

- Clarify misunderstandings
- Admit when you are wrong
- Forgive when you are offended
- Learn how to communicate indirectly
- Accept non-Western means of conflict resolution
- Avoid means of building relationship that communicate distance; practice informality and spontaneity
- Accept time differences
- Take advantage of special moments in time

Notes:

D. LEARNING

Definition: the ability to glean relevant information about, from, and with other people.

“...But knowledge puffs up while love builds up.” **(1 Corinthians 8:1)**

Skills:

- Learning about others through classes, books, videos, etc.
- Learn from others by asking them meaningful questions that are open ended
- Learn with others
- Listen carefully
- Respond non-evaluatively by probing, interpreting, supporting, and expressing understanding.

Notes:

E. UNDERSTANDING

Definition: the ability to see patterns of behavior and values that reveal the integrity of a person.
(Elmer, page 125)

Skills:

- Stop complaining
- Look for the beauty of God and common grace
- Form the habit of asking yourself “Why”
- Don’t ask the question, “Do you understand?”
- Look for deeper levels of ethnocentrism.

Notes:

F. SERVING

Definition: the ability to relate to people in such a way that their dignity as a human being is affirmed and they are more empowered to live God-glorifying lives.

Notes:

How Western Are You in Terms of Traditional Values?

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Do you believe that it is good to be goal oriented and have specific goals that you can obtain? | Yes | No |
| 2. Do you think that there is more than one way of solving a problem & that creative solutions to problems should be encouraged? | Yes | No |
| 3. Do you believe that a competition business environment is best improving performance of companies and producing the best products? | Yes | No |
| 4. Do you believe it is okay to move many times if moving brings you better opportunities and a brighter future, even if it is far away from your extended family? | Yes | No |
| 5. Do you believe that it is good for children who marry to live separately from their parents? | Yes | No |
| 6. Do you think that you can make a decision for yourself without having to consult others? | Yes | No |
| 7. Do you think a person should <u>not</u> have a higher social standing <u>just</u> because they are older? | Yes | No |
| 8. Do you believe that your privacy is important and people should check first with you before stopping by your house? | Yes | No |
| 9. Do you think that it is better to keep an appointment with a friend and be on time rather than stop to chat for an extended time with a friend who happens to stop by? | Yes | No |
| 10. Do you believe that working children <u>do not</u> necessarily have to send financial support to parents who are not in need? | Yes | No |
| 11. Do you think it is intrusive to ask someone how much money they earn? | Yes | No |
| 12. Do you think that everyone's opinion should be heard in a group decision? | Yes | No |
| 13. Do you believe it is better to be direct and share with someone your concerns even if it might make them uncomfortable? | Yes | No |
| 14. Do you think that it's better to be self-reliant rather than be dependent on others for solving your problems? | Yes | No |
| 15. Do you think that it is better for children to become independent of parents as soon as they can after age 18? | Yes | No |

Scoring

# Yes Answers	How Western
15	You are thoroughly Western.
10 – 14	You are very Western.
5 – 10	You are a mixture.
1 – 5	You are either in a state of denial, live in another culture, or have rejected Western culture.

Form and Function

Form — the Gospel message must always be expressed in cultural terms in a language, cultural symbols and behavioral practices that will, in part, mold the message. Forms can change according to the culture.

Function — Universal principles and practices that transcends any one culture— the message functions need to be preserved and cannot change.

1. Is the gathering of believers on Sunday for teaching and fellowship an issue of form or function?
2. Are bread and juice part of the function or form of communion? Could fish and water or coconut meat and coconut juice be used instead? Is the use of unleavened bread for the Lord's Supper an issue of form or function?
3. Is reading the Bible out loud in church an issue of form or function?
4. Is reading the Bible weekly an issue of form or function?
5. Is abstaining from food sacrificed to idols, from meat from animals that have been strangled, and from sexual immorality, an issue of form or function?
6. Is calling for people to make a public decision to follow Jesus part of form or function?
7. Is the celebration of the birth of Jesus an issue of form or function?
8. Is the church meeting in homes an issue of form or function?
9. Is singing songs of praise during the corporate gathering of a church an issue of form or function?
10. Is baptism with complete immersion in water an issue of form or function?
11. Is baptism of believers (and not infants) an issue of form or function?
12. Must the Old Testament system of sheep sacrifice be used to explain the meaning of Jesus sacrifice if sheep are foreign to a certain group of people? Are Biblical types an issue of form or function?
13. If the phrase "bread of life" is translated instead as the "rice of life," has form or function being changed?
14. Muslims customarily kneel and pray five times a day. Is this an OK practice for a follower of Christ to continue, or should a Muslim-background believer be encouraged to avoid it? Is it an issue of form or function?
15. Can a Jesus follower worship God in a mosque? Or should s/he never go to a mosque again after beginning to follow Christ? Is it an issue of form or function?
16. Can a believer honor saints or martyrs that have lived sacrificial lives in the past by praying in front of pictures of them? Is praying like this an issue of form or function? If function, should new believers be discouraged from such practices?
17. At birth, if a child is given the name of a Hindu god, should he/she change his/her name after becoming a Jesus follower? Is changing the name a matter of Form or function?
18. Is wearing a head covering for women a matter of form or function?

How many of the 18 did you identify as forms? Functions?