

Short-term Mission Devotional Guide

Lesson 3: Cross-Cultural Ministry



Introduction

One of the great blessings of serving on a short-term missions team is interacting with people very different from you. You'll not only serve alongside people on your team who have diverse backgrounds, personalities, and gifts, but you will also experience the challenges of working with others from a completely different culture. The benefit of this experience is a broadened vision of the ways God is glorified and worshipped among a variety of people.

In addition to the benefits of these personal interactions, serving on a short-term trip also opens one's eyes to God's grace and love for every nation, tribe, people, and language (Rev. 7:9). God's Story is centered around his work to draw all people to himself. The goal of this devotional time is to reflect on the Scripture's teaching of this cross-cultural mission and heart of God.

1. What has your personal experience with people from other cultures been? What have those experiences taught you about yourself and God?
2. Describe some of the common obstacles one may face when relating to people from other cultures or countries. What Christian virtues might a person need to effectively build relationships across cultures?

Read & Discern: Paul's Cross-Cultural Motivation

READ 1 Corinthians 9:1-23.

1. What "right" does Paul claim to possess as an apostle? How does he justify this right?

2. Ultimately, does Paul claim or forego this right? What motivation does he give for his conviction?
3. Why does Paul preach the Gospel? What concern does he show in refusing his rights as a preacher of the Gospel?
4. As a minister of the Gospel, what attitude does Paul exhibit towards people from different religious cultures (e.g. Jews, “those under the law”, etc)? What is his primary concern?
5. How would you describe Paul’s missionary strategy with people from various religious backgrounds? How might it look to “become like” (vs. 20, 21) someone from a different culture?
6. Does adapting or “becoming like” a people necessarily mean we need to agree with all that they say or do? Why or why not?

Read & Discern: Paul’s Cross-Cultural Method

READ Acts 17:16-34. This passage provides a concrete expression of Paul’s motivation described in the passage from 1 Corinthians 9 above. Using the questions below, reflect on this extraordinary story and what it teaches us about cross-cultural ministry.

1. Describe the situation Paul finds himself in. Why did he come to Athens? What does he encounter there? Why is he distressed?

2. What do you learn about Athens culture from this passage? List some characteristics (i.e. religious life, values, customs) of this people group that come through in the story.
3. What was the initial response of the Athenians to Paul's preaching (vs. 18-20)? What may have caused their confusion at first?
4. In verse 22, we see Paul shift his communication strategy. How does he share the Gospel message in his speech to the Areopagus? What bridges does he use to communicate with the Athenian culture?
5. What was the crowd's reaction following Paul's speech? What do we learn about cross-cultural ministry from this passage?

Reflect & Respond

1. What are some of the ways you have been taught to share the Gospel in the past (e.g. 4 Spiritual Laws, tracts, "friendship evangelism" etc)? What have been the advantages or disadvantages of these methods?
2. What have these passages taught you about communicating with people from different cultures and backgrounds? How do you anticipate incorporating some of these lessons into your upcoming short-term missions trip?