A MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Ministering Cross-Culturally

SHERWOOD G. LINGENFELTER AND MARVIN K. MAYERS

THIRD EDITION









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AND MARVIN K. MAYERS

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To Marvin K. Mayers (1927–2015), who became a spiritual mentor at a time when I had wandered far from faith, and whose scholarship, cultural insights, and practice of mentoring changed the course of my life. Marv freely gave the basic values framework for this book and his credibility as a published author to support this work for its initial publication. He invited me and my wife, Judith, to serve as faculty in the School of Intercultural Studies at Biola University, where this book was written. His life and legacy have touched the thousands of readers who have found this book a helpful guide for cross-cultural ministry.

—Sherwood Lingenfelter

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10

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Preface

The subject of this book is the tension and conflict that missionaries, pastors, and laypersons experience when they attempt to work with people who come from different cultural and social backgrounds. The vehicle employed to explore this issue is a model of basic values that points to personal and cross-cultural roots of tension in interpersonal relationships and assists individuals in mastering such tension. The model was developed by Marvin Mayers and first published in 1974 in his *Christianity Confronts Culture*. It grew out of his experience as a missionary with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Guatemala, as an educator at Wheaton College, and as a trainer in cross-cultural ministries with Wycliffe. Since 1974, Mayers has extensively refined the model and further elaborated on its application in Christian ministries.

Sherwood Lingenfelter is the primary author of this book and the source of the various personal reminiscences it contains. He first became acquainted with Mayers and the model of basic values at the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Norman, Oklahoma, in 1975. Using the model to analyze his own extensive experience in the Pacific Islands, Lingenfelter found that it very effectively explained the complex problems of social relationships he had observed in his fieldwork as a cultural anthropologist. After 1975, he served in various fields with SIL International as an anthropology consultant for translation and other related ministries. In these diverse assignments, he used the model of basic values to understand conflicts between missionaries and nationals and between one missionary and another.

Following this field service, Lingenfelter went to Biola University in 1983 to prepare students for cross-cultural ministry. He used the model of basic values to help students understand interpersonal conflicts between individuals from the same and different cultures. The students responded so enthusiastically that he began to present the model outside the university

setting in various churches in Southern California. Members of these churches found the model helpful in clarifying problems between them and their friends and coworkers in the community, between husbands and wives, and between coworkers in the church. From the success of these presentations in various churches grew the idea for this book. Because Lingenfelter is so heavily indebted to Mayers for the model and for criticism and development of the manuscript, Mayers is named as coauthor.

The key purpose in working with the model of basic values is to equip people to follow what Scripture says about how Christians should relate to others. This volume examines various scriptural materials to see what they teach about relationships. It then explores how these scriptural principles can be applied in concrete behavior as people relate to others in diverse cultural settings.

We intend to make it clear that individuals—the work of God's creative activity—differ greatly in their values and orientations, as do the societies of which they are members. Each society rewards and punishes individuals in accord with its own particular biases. Therefore, persons called to minister in another cultural setting must be acutely aware of the cultural differences they will encounter. By helping readers identify their own value biases, we hope to create in them an increased sensitivity to others. Further, we challenge our readers to adapt their personal lifestyles to build effective bridges of communication with those in their communities who are in need. Throughout the book we attempt to discern from Scripture principles for effective Christian ministry and to draw from those principles applications for the daily realities of interpersonal relationships.

While this book is targeted generally at individuals who expect to engage in cross-cultural ministry, such ministry is to be understood as any ministry in which one interacts with people who have grown up learning values and lifestyle patterns that are different from one's own. In today's world, cross-cultural ministry includes not only people going as missionaries to and from the Americas, Africa, Europe, Asia, and Australia, but also those who are trying to be effective witnesses in the major urban centers of their nation and the world. For example, the members of an adult Sunday school class in a church in Whittier, California, may be as engaged in cross-cultural ministry as people who go from the United States to Asia or Latin America. Consider as evidence the fact that in the records of Whittier hospitals alone, more than twenty languages have been listed as the principal language of

their patients. Further, Los Angeles has one of the largest Hispanic populations in the world.

Cross-cultural ministry, then, is something in which many thousands of ordinary Christians will engage. In colleges and Sunday school classes across the United States, Germany, Korea, China, and beyond, people have found the model of basic values to be a significant tool for understanding others in their own community and even for clarifying the tensions that exist in their own marriage or other relationships. One young Hispanic student at Biola University who completed a personal profile and listened to class lectures tearfully told us that for years she had felt there was something wrong with her because no one else seemed to share her personal values and lifestyle. She was overwhelmed to find that God had created individuals like her and that many cultures share her personal orientation to life.

Our objective, then, is to help readers gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the people with whom they live, and in the process to help them experience a deeper relationship with God and a more fruitful life of love and ministry to and with others.

The third edition of this book has been revised in several substantive ways, stimulated by questions from readers of the earlier editions. First, many mission and church leaders have used this book for training adults and youth for short-term mission trips. In order to speak directly to short-term challenges, I have analyzed two short-term mission case studies, applying the basic values to reflect on cultural challenges for this type of ministry. Second, other readers have asked how the model of basic values may apply in urban and multicultural contexts, where ministry may engage people from two or more cultural backgrounds. I have sought to address this challenge in two ways: first, by emphasizing learning from those around you who come from different cultural backgrounds with the purpose of adding to your personal cultural repertoire in multiple ways; second, by refocusing from “incarnational ministry,” which implies learning a single culture, to “radical discipleship,” which emphasizes following Jesus in whatever context God places you.

The major shift from “incarnational ministry” to “radical discipleship” was prompted by a paper given at Fuller Theological Seminary by J. Todd Billings of Western Theological Seminary in which he quoted from portions of the first edition of *Ministering Cross-Culturally* (pp. 13–25), which

presents the case that the incarnation of Jesus Christ is God's metaphor for those of us who hope to engage in cross-cultural ministry. I quote from Eric Landry's short overview of that lecture:

> Incarnational ministry, Billings suggested, "tends to conflate the unique incarnation with our process of learning a culture," framing the incarnate Christ as an example of coming to a new culture prepared to learn from and identify totally with the ones he came to reach. "Jesus was not, in fact, the model anthropologist," Billings remarked, pointing out that Jesus did not go home every evening to compile field notes on the day's observations of the first-century Jewish people. "The deity is not a culture because God is not a creature," so we cannot imitate the incarnation because it is not a human act, but a divine act—something only God can do. We must remember that Christ's mission is not identical to ours—his was redemptive, while we can only bear witness to that redemption. Billings stated, "The power in the incarnation is precisely in its uniqueness."[1]

I agree with his point that the incarnation is "a divine act—something only God can do" and that "the power in the incarnation is precisely in its uniqueness." As I have read back through my work, I would no longer write the phrase, "If we are to follow the example of Christ, we must aim at incarnation!" (2003, 25). To state that we should "aim at incarnation" is clearly sloppy language and gives people poor direction for ministry. I have never imagined that humans could become "fully incarnate" into another culture, as Jesus, wholly God, became fully human in our world. In fact, my metaphor of becoming 150 percent persons makes that very clear. We can never achieve "full identification" with people of one or many cultural origins different from our own.

At the same time, I continue to be moved by the power of the *metaphor* of how Jesus came into our world and became one of us. I find it particularly compelling as presented in Philippians 2:1–12. Professor Billings chooses to call this "ministry in union with Christ" (Billings 2011). As long as he uses the Philippians text as Paul did to describe this union, and then teaches us to let go of our cultural biases and to add to our repertoire the servant values and practices of those we serve, then he and I have no disagreement.

I want to note a significant omission in the first edition of this work and give special thanks to Stephen O'Brien, who developed the short form of the basic values questionnaire for this book. This short form was extracted from a much longer questionnaire that Marv Mayers used at Biola University.

I also want to acknowledge Kimberly Todd and Courtney Koelsch, who have read this revision and provided very helpful feedback. Finally, I want to acknowledge Jay Galligher and his team for their work in making the basic values questionnaire available online.

Visit
www.bakeracademic.com/professors
to access study aids and instructor materials for this textbook.

1. For more information see http://www.whitehorseinn.org/blog/entry/modern-reformation/2011/03/09/incarnational-ministry.

1

God's Metaphor for Ministry

Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God

In 1967 my wife and I and our two-year-old daughter flew from western New York State to the Pacific Islands. We landed on Guam, spent a couple days there, and then flew to Yap, a small island in the western Caroline Islands of Micronesia. For Americans, Yap is geographically in the middle of nowhere. It is almost a thousand miles from the nearest major nation, the Philippines, and in most other directions thousands of miles of ocean separate it from the rest of the world. It was here that we were to make our home for the next two years.

This began what has become a lifelong adventure for us in cross-cultural living, research, and relationships. I was a graduate student at the time, and our goal was to live in and learn about Yapese culture in preparation for my doctoral dissertation on the impact of twenty years of American administration on the Yapese and their culture. We were young and filled with ideals, and our hope was to apply this learning experience in a life of service to cross-cultural missions and ministry.

Many years have passed now, and as we reflect on that experience, we have a much deeper understanding of our failures and our achievements. The Yapese taught us as much about ourselves as they did about their own culture. The experience of learning was often painful and never easy, but out of those years we developed a new comprehension of who we are and how we can live and work more effectively with others in a culturally diverse world.

The objective of this book is to share some of the conflicts and struggles we experienced and to explore their meaning for the larger issues of cross-cultural living, work, and ministry. To do this, we must go beyond specific personal experiences to the underlying principles of culture and

communication through which we establish and maintain interpersonal relationships. The particular focus of this book is on priorities or values people use to order their lives and relationships with others. We will explore by means of both a questionnaire concerning basic values and case studies of how people within the same culture and in different cultures define standards and establish personal priorities that are often in conflict with those of others. Conflict arises not only from personal and cultural differences but also from the fact that people often attribute moral force to their priorities for personal behavior, and they judge those who differ from them as flawed, rebellious, or immoral. Personal judgments shared by many become social judgments, and society coerces individuals to follow its value system. Our goal is to help readers arrive at solutions to these conflicts and to suggest ways in which people moving within and across social and cultural boundaries can adapt to and draw on values different from their own.

A central thesis of this book is that the Bible speaks to all people and all cultures and that Jesus Christ is the only faithful example of divine love in interpersonal relationships and communication. Jesus is God with us—the reality of the love of God in human experience. As we explore situations of interpersonal conflict, we will continually return to Scripture to seek principles on which we can build more effective relationships and ministry within and beyond the boundaries of our homogeneous churches and communities. At the same time, we will use insights from the social and behavioral sciences to pose new questions and to develop new perspectives from which to understand more fully the implications of biblical truth. By focusing initially on cross-cultural experiences, we will be forced to examine our basic assumptions about life and to question every aspect of our relationships.

Jesus: The 200 Percent Person

When we arrived on Yap many years ago, the first question we faced was where to live. A Yapese man took me to his village and showed me two locations where I could build a house. One piece of land was situated on an isolated section of beach with a beautiful view of a lagoon and a coral reef. The other was in the midst of several houses where children littered their

yards with empty cans, and the voices and activities of mothers and children created a cacophony of sound from morning until night. Where should we live? The isolated beach was the dream spot that all middle-class Americans see in their fantasies of South Sea life. The lot in the village had all the characteristics that middle-class America tries to avoid—noise, litter, lack of privacy, and strange people all around. When I naturally chose the beach, my guide said gently to me, “If you want to learn to speak our language, the other place is better for you.” His words broke my romantic reverie and challenged my personal interpretation of the right way to live. With a twinge of sadness, I admitted he was right and agreed to the village location. As I expected, the place was noisy, littered, and public, but he was absolutely correct; within a year we had all learned to speak the language.

My experience in this village on Yap gave me a deeper grasp of what John meant when he wrote in his Gospel, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). We hold the incarnation as a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith: God himself became flesh and dwelt among humans. We seldom ask, however, what the implications of this incarnation are. What did it mean for God to become flesh? How did God plan and choose to live among us? In what manner did he come? Does his example have any significance for us as we are sent to others?

The first significant fact about the incarnation is that Jesus came as a helpless infant. In Luke 2:7, we read that he was born as Mary’s child, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and placed in a manger. It is noteworthy that God did not come as a fully developed adult, he did not come as an expert, and he did not come as a ruler or even as part of a ruling family or a dominant culture. He was an infant, born into a humble family in a conquered and subjugated land.

The second significant fact about the incarnation is that Jesus was a learner. He was not born with knowledge of language or culture. In this respect, he was an ordinary child. He learned language from his parents. He learned how to play from his peers. He learned the trade of a carpenter from Joseph and studied the Scriptures and worshiped in the same manner as did all young men of his time. In Luke 2:46, we read that Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the temple, listening to the teachers of the law and asking them questions. This is a profound statement: the Son of God was sitting in the temple, listening and questioning!

The implications of Jesus's status as a learner are seldom discussed, let alone understood or applied. God's Son studied the language, the culture, and the lifestyles of his people for thirty years before he began his ministry. He knew all about their family lives and problems. He stood at their side as learner and as coworker. He learned to read and study the Scriptures in his local synagogue and earned respect to the point that the people called him Rabbi. He worshiped with them in their synagogues and observed the annual Passover and other feasts in the temple in Jerusalem. He identified totally with those to whom he was sent, calling himself the Son of Man. Luke 2:52 tells us that he grew in favor not only with God but also with man.

The point is that Jesus was a 200 percent person. Philippians 2:6–7 tells us that Jesus was "in very nature God." He was and is 100 percent God. Yet Paul tells us that Jesus took "the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." He was 100 percent human. When he spoke of himself, he called himself the Son of Man, identifying completely with those to whom he was sent. Let us move our thinking one step further. Jesus was more than simply human; he was also 100 percent Jew. The Samaritan woman in John 4 identified him as such, and he accepted this identification at face value. (Note by contrast that when people tried to make him a king, he resisted.) His disciples and even the Jewish leaders often reminded him of his Jewishness and its attendant cultural obligations (ritual washings, Sabbath observance, avoidance of unclean people and places, etc.). At the crucifixion, Pilate had inscribed over Jesus's head the words "King of the Jews." In sum, he was 100 percent God and 100 percent Jew—a 200 percent person.

Cultural Context

Culture is the anthropologist's label for the sum of the distinctive characteristics of a people's way of life. All human behavior occurs within particular cultures, within socially defined contexts. For example, in America, worship occurs in a specific context with distinctive characteristics. A church building, chairs or pews, music, readings from the Bible, a sermon, an offering, and prayers are all part of that context. The social organization of worship includes pastors, musicians, ushers, a seating

arrangement by families, and a schedule of activities. If one were to go to Saudi Arabia, the context of worship would differ dramatically. The mosque would have no chairs, musicians, Bible, or sermon. Removing one's shoes, kneeling, prostration, and prayer would be the primary elements of worship. The sexes are carefully separated, and leaders and learning have only minimal significance. A Muslim entering an American church would not understand what happens there as worship. He may even deny that worship is possible in such a context.

Culture, then, is the conceptual design by which people order their lives, interpret their experiences, and evaluate the behavior of others. A Muslim sees men and women sitting together and interprets this as sexual behavior. He evaluates such a situation by comparing it with his past experiences in his own culture. By definition, the commingling of the sexes cannot be part of the context he calls worship. Therefore, to a Muslim, what happens in American churches is not worship. Similarly distinctive definitions, rules, and values are specific to each socially defined context, and these specifics make up the conceptual designs or culture in accordance with which all of us live.

It is fairly obvious, then, that communication requires effective use of contextual cues. When a Muslim removes his shoes as he enters a mosque, it is a cue that he intends to worship there. A cultural cue is a specific signal or sign that people use to communicate the meaning of their behavior. Each culture has literally thousands of cues that signal a change of context and a corresponding need to follow the rules appropriate to the new context.

On Yap, an invitation to chew betel nut is a cue to initiate conversation. This cue is equivalent to offering a cup of coffee in the United States. In the United States, guests terminate a conversation by suggesting they must leave, whereas on Yap the host terminates the conversation by saying that it is all right for the guests to leave. A failure to grasp the meaning of such cues results in misunderstandings, confusion, and oftentimes interpersonal conflict.

Personal Culture

One of the marvels of God's creation is that no two people are exactly alike. These personal differences arise out of our unique genetic heritage and

individual histories. Each one of us is born into a particular social context and family. It is within that context that we are socialized, or acquire what might be seen as our personal cultural heritage. For our purposes here, cultural heritage is the early learning a child unquestioningly accepts. This learning generally takes place before one is able to enter into dialogue with one's parents and make choices by conscious reasoning.

A human being is completely helpless at birth and lives through a period of near-total dependency on others that lasts almost six years. During this time, a child is subjected to the intensive influence of parents and a few other adults. During this intensive interaction, parents seek to teach the child certain forms of behavior, values, and modes of living. They do so through the process of reward or punishment, giving or withholding love. The child's personal temperament is also a factor. While the parents attempt to teach specific patterns of behavior, the child's temperament will to some extent counter the parents' teaching so that what they desire to pass on is rarely if ever accepted in full. Most parents will attest to the fact that children in the same family rarely share the same basic outlook on life, the same patterns of temperament, or the same values and goals. The personalities of children vary, even for "identical" twins. In addition, parents revamp their goals and methods of child rearing as time passes. As a consequence, each child emerges from childhood with a unique personal heritage.

Furthermore, every individual goes through a lifelong process of learning, or what anthropologists call enculturation. This larger process is the means by which an individual acquires the cultural heritage of a larger community. For children, this involves peer pressure and peer socialization, and learning in school and in play activities. By this time, the learning involves conscious dialogue both with adults and with one's peers, and this dialogue results in conflict and questioning as well as acceptance. In becoming more independent of one's parents, a child is increasingly influenced by persons outside the immediate family. The child develops an ability to choose what to accept and what to reject. At this point, peer-group influence becomes increasingly important in the child's life. As the child is exposed to new ideas and has an opportunity to select from among them, his or her choices are tempered by feedback from others who either accept or reject him or her. Through that acceptance or rejection the child begins to formulate a conception of his or her own world, a personal culture. The

individual will then tend to congregate with those who share similar ideas and interests and avoid those who do not, thus reinforcing his or her own personal choices.

Our personal culture as individuals, then, is unique; it is not the same as that of our parents or of any other individual. It is the product of the combination of (1) the personal cultural heritage acquired through socialization with our parents, (2) the broader cultural heritage acquired through enculturation and feedback from the community, and (3) our act of accepting or rejecting those forces. Each individual develops a personal lifestyle and a set of standards and values by which to order and organize his or her life.

Shared Culture

Despite the fact that we are all unique persons, we share common beliefs, values, and a way of life with many others around us. We not only share those beliefs but also reinforce them in one another and teach them to our children. The shared aspects of our personal cultures produce the common values, priorities, and standards for behavior that we apply in each social context. We begin to learn these things as helpless infants, and by the time we are adults, they shape much of what we are and do.

This shared culture has great value for us. Because of it, we are able to plan a career with a reliable expectation that we can actually accomplish what we envision. We are able to establish a family and friendships and to fulfill our mutual obligations to one another. When we find ourselves in situations of conflict with others, the standards and procedures of our shared culture furnish mechanisms for settling those disputes, and while the solutions are not always satisfying, the process is familiar and somewhat predictable.

In their collective sum, our personal cultures have enough in common with one another that outsiders look at us and see us as being alike, even though we find great differences among ourselves. These similarities may be reinforced by an institutional identity. We are German, Nigerian, Korean, Chinese, or American not because we are identical but rather because international custom defines nationality by one’s place of birth. Other parts of our identity we derive from our race, language, and the groups into

which we are born or with which we affiliate during our lives. The groups and institutions of which we are a part coerce us to conform to standards shared by a majority of their members. We learn these rules so that they become natural to us, and we assume that exceptions to our behavior are unnatural and illegitimate. Acceptance in our groups comes at the cost of exclusion from the groups of others. An attempt to belong to groups whose standards are in conflict with ours produces emotional stress within us and antagonism in our relationships with others. For this reason, most of us choose to belong only to those groups within which we find people who have standards and values similar to our own.

As a consequence of our choices, the communities we form include some and exclude others. These social arrangements become an important part of our shared culture. We include those people who reaffirm our values and relationships, and we exclude those who in some way do not measure up to our standards or do not fit within our prescribed sphere of social relationships. This pattern of inclusion and exclusion often prompts us to fear and even reject the very people with whom we serve.

Culture is always learned and shared with others, and in this process, people perceive and respond to one another in culturally conditioned ways. This composite of our personal and shared culture becomes our *cultural repertoire*, a body of knowledge and learned skills of relationship, which we employ in every aspect of our daily lives.[1] Edward Hall (1976, 85) suggests that this is useful to us because it allows us to screen out information that is not essential and protects us from emotional and intellectual overload. Further, it allows us to predict, to some extent, the behavior of others in our own culture. At the same time, the screening process, grounded in the bias of our cultural repertoire, produces a blindness to cues from cultures not our own. A Muslim cannot accept a Christian church service as worship, nor can a Christian accept a Muslim's prayer in a mosque as worship. This cultural blindness makes us ineffective communicators in alien contexts and leads us to assume that the problem lies with others rather than with ourselves.

The cultural bias we share with others in our communities becomes a consensus we use to protect ourselves from others. Through this consensus, we regulate the behavior of our members and reject those who refuse to conform. We become certain that our way of doing things is the proper way, and we are blinded to the possibilities of doing things differently or of

engaging in new behaviors that might be beneficial to our community. Our very agreement becomes a distortion of the reality of our experience, a defense against other peoples and other ways of life. The comfort of our community becomes a bias toward others and blinds us to pathways for viable relationships that differ from our own.

It is because of cultural blindness that we must begin as learners in the other culture and adopt many of the priorities and values of the people we wish to serve. We must begin as a child and grow in their midst. We must be learners and let them teach us before we can hope to teach them and introduce them to the master Teacher.

The incarnation of our Lord is a mystery of God that occurred once in human history, yet the incarnate Lord Jesus tells us, "follow me." In this sense, then, his radical incarnation into human flesh and culture becomes the metaphor for our radical discipleship. Since we are born of the flesh, into a human culture, we can only become like Christ through our "dying to self" and taking up a new life of discipleship in Christ. The first essential step toward breaking our cultural habit of excluding others is a willingness to learn as if we were helpless infants. Missionaries, by the nature of their task, must become personally immersed with people who are different. This means adding significant new things to our cultural repertoire, being socialized all over again into one or many new cultural contexts in which we live and work. Even though we are adults, we enter a culture as if we were children—ignorant of everything, from the customs of eating and talking to the patterns of work, play, and worship. Moreover, we do this in the spirit of Christ—that is, loving our neighbors as ourselves, so much so that we adapt their way of life, inasmuch as we are able, as our own.

A Personal Inventory

Take an inventory of the various cultural labels that apply to you. You might be, for example, 100 percent German, Nigerian, Korean, Chinese, or American. You might also be classified as a 100 percent southerner, easterner, or midwesterner, and more specifically as an Arizonian, Californian, or New Yorker. Theologically, you might be evangelical, fundamentalist, or liberal; denominationally, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Brethren, or Free Church.

When I arrived on Yap, I was a Pennsylvania-born preacher's kid who had learned to say "Yes, sir" and "Yes, ma'am" in Virginia, who had enjoyed Charles Dickens and Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with black classmates in Ohio, who graduated from Wheaton College and married one of Wheaton's many distinguished English majors. I had received excellent Christian teaching, was licensed as a Grace Brethren elder, and had been trained at the University of Pittsburgh by internationally renowned anthropologists. I was clearly a 100 percent middle-class, evangelical American. I was definitely not Yapese!

What kind of persons should we become when we enter alien cultures? We can find some direct instructions in Scripture. In Philippians 2:5, Paul says, "have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." First Peter 2:21 states, "Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." Through the Great Commission, Jesus sends us out into all the world, and as his messengers we are to follow his example and practice our ministry in union with him. Since Jesus did indeed set the example, it was my responsibility to love my Yapese neighbors, learn their values and traditions, and live among them as Jesus loved and lived as a Jew with the Jews. How is this possible?

Adding to Your Cultural Repertoire

Malcolm McFee (1968) uses the concept of "150 percent person" to describe Black Foot Indians who are enculturated into white American society. He argues that they are still 75 percent traditional Black Foot, but they have also learned to adapt to and follow the larger American culture to the point at which some are 75 percent white as well. In essence, they have added to their cultural repertoire and become bicultural, 150 percent persons, yet somehow less than 100 percent of any culture.

Like these Native Americans, people committed to effective cross-cultural ministry will never become 100 percent insiders in another culture or subculture. The only way that is possible is the way Jesus did it, to be born into that other culture and to spend a lifetime in it. However, it is possible to "follow God's example," as Paul commands in Ephesians 5:1, and to "walk in the way of love" (v. 2) in the culture in which we hope to minister. Our goal should be to become more than we are, submitting to

Jesus our Lord, and to the people and culture(s) to which he sends us for ministry. For me the challenge was to become at least part Yapese, even if that meant being less than 100 percent American.

To become a 150 percent person is more than an ordinary challenge. Discarding or setting aside something of one's national or one's social or church identity is almost sacrilege to many people. Our way of life is often equated with godliness, and we defend vigorously its apparent rightness. As such, this way of life has become our prison. We forget the example set by Christ, who, "being in very nature God," did not cling to that identity but instead became not only a Jew but also a servant among Jews (Phil. 2:6–7). We must love the people to whom we minister so much that we are willing to enter their culture as children, learn how to speak as they speak, play as they play, eat what they eat, sleep where they sleep, study what they study, and thus earn their respect and admiration. In essence, we must leave our prison, enter their prison, and become reasonably competent participants within it.

The excitement of becoming 50 percent Yapese was one of the highlights of my life. I will never forget the ecstasy of my first complete conversation in the Yapese language or the deep admiration I felt upon grasping their custom of sharing their personal possessions. I also remember the anxiety when I felt unwanted or burdensome to my host, the isolation when my speech was so poor that people did not want to be bothered by me, and the frustration and boredom I felt with the hours of what seemed to be trivial conversation. The lesson here is that becoming a 75 percent person in another culture will be a trial by fire, a test of inner strength and of personal faith, and most of all a test of the veracity of one's love. An individual who is not ready to give up aspects of one's personal culture for a time and to begin learning as a child is not ready for the challenge of cross-cultural ministry. Even short-term mission ministry requires cultural learning and adding new patterns of behavior to effectively serve others.

I have never become a 150 percent person, competent in two cultures; perhaps I learned enough to be 50 percent Yapese, but I doubt even that. But the most important thing I learned in Yap was humility. After two years of intensive language and cultural study, I was probably as culturally competent as a twelve-year-old boy, needing another ten years to become a mature person in that culture; my only hope was to keep on learning. This became a very valuable insight, which served me well in short-term

ministries among the Deni in Brazil, the Yamba in Cameroon, and the Laka in Chad, and then in sixteen years among the faculty at Biola University. Each had a different culture, and unless I accepted the role of listening and learning as a child, I was doomed to remain an outsider. In every situation, the best that I could hope for was that local people would accept me as a "good student" of their way of life. However, I know missionaries of whom local people say "that missionary is one of us." They have earned this compliment through years of learning, loving, and identifying with the people they served.

If we are to follow the example of Christ, we must aim at radical discipleship. Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves" (Matt. 16:24). These acts of self-denial are in fact the first steps of freedom in Christ. We must consciously release our attachments to home, income security, convenience, significance in work or ministry, and even comfort of family. We must enter a new community of strangers, often without many, if not most, of the comforts and symbols of home, and begin as children, learning at the feet of those we have gone to serve. We must be willing to continually add to our cultural repertoire and become at least culturally sensitive and responsive as "world" rather than "national" Christians. The challenges will shape us; the changes will trouble us. Our bodies will get sick; our minds will suffer fatigue; our emotions will sweep us from ecstasy to depression. Yet the love of Christ will sustain us so that we can identify with Paul, who said, "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings" (1 Cor. 9:22–23).

"World" Christians on Short-Term Ministry?

A few years ago I led six men and two women, students at Biola University, on a three-week drama ministry to Southern Chad in North Africa. While we clearly did not have time to learn the local Mbum or Laka languages, we faced all of the other challenges of cross-cultural ministry. Nobody really knew what it meant to "suffer for Jesus in Chad" until we got there. We expected the situation might be tough, but lacking experience we had no clue of what to expect.

We knew that Chad was a hot place, but we had no idea that it was also a cold place. The first night in the village where we were ministering, most of the team slept outside and discovered that the one wool blanket we each had was inadequate to keep out the 50-degree cold night air coming down on us. We expected that the toilet facilities would be different. We didn't expect we would have to walk so far, and that there would be such little water for personal bathing. For those who were sick, fifty yards every half hour during the night was no fun.

We knew we were eating African food, but no one knew what it was like to have millet mush and goat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Grasping the millet paste with our fingers and dipping it in the greasy goat gravy became an almost impossible trial for some members of the team. Upset stomachs, fever, diarrhea—everybody got sick at least once and some were sick for most of the time we were in Chad. There was no privacy—wherever we went we were a spectacle and people gathered to watch us. On some occasions 150 to 200 people surrounded us and stood for hours just watching.

Sin was often at our door! Our sinful attitudes were expressed most frequently in our joking behavior. We were most discontent about the food. We made jokes about eating at Taco Bell and the Olive Garden, and planning began early for a big celebration at HomeTown Buffet. We were not thankful for the food, nor grateful to our hosts. Most of us, if not all of us, at one time or another grabbed selfishly for the best pieces of meat in the pot. Some took more than their share. If we had the power, we would have surely turned the millet into pizza! We had critical spirits—sometimes we made jokes about the people, and we made jokes about one another. All of our jokes covered subtle resentments and rejections of one another and the local people. I was surprised at my own joking and realized that it was at times subtle criticism of team members. This was not the leadership to which Christ called me.

By the third day of our stay in the village of Nzoro we realized that we were neglecting our focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. Several members of the team voiced a desire for a greater commitment to prayer, for collective worship, and for a renewal of commitment to our purpose. As we focused anew on our purpose for being there—to share the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ—we experienced the freedom that Peter promises in 1 Peter 4:1. We began to arm ourselves with the attitude of Jesus Christ, and as we suffered,

we determined to be done with sin. We had begun our journey of adding to our repertoire, recommitting to “follow Jesus,” and becoming more than 100 percent Americans.

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1. Repertoire is commonly used to describe a collection of musical pieces or plays that a performer knows and regularly performs.

2

A Model of Basic Values

Usually the first step for adding to one's cultural repertoire is learning the language. For most missionaries, learning a second language is a difficult and consuming challenge. Language school usually occupies the first year of a missionary term, and that schooling only begins the process of language learning. Fluency is generally two or three more years down the road.

Many people mistakenly believe that when they have finally mastered a language, they have also learned the corresponding culture. The tragedy is that because they operate with this misconception, they never learn what Edward Hall calls the silent language of culture. He observes that language is but one of ten primary message systems found in every culture (1973, 38–59). The others are temporality (attitude toward time, routine, and schedule), territoriality (attitude toward space and property), exploitation (methods of control, attitude toward the use and sharing of resources), association (family, kin, and community), subsistence (attitude toward work and division of labor), bisexuality (differing modes of speech, dress, and conduct between males and females), learning (by observation, modeling, or instruction), play (humor and games), and defense (health procedures, social conflicts, and beliefs). Each message system has rules that govern relationships and communication; each has a structure, a pattern, and variations that must be learned. Knowing a language, therefore, opens up only roughly one-tenth of what one could learn about a lifestyle, a culture.

Furthermore, language itself is, in effect, a vast oversimplification of the world around us. For example, when we talk about "a chair," we have an image in our minds. However, that single lexical category covers a vast quantity of different objects. The particular objects in our experience can be

identified only by the use of modifiers such as red, yellow, folding, molded, wooden, plastic, reclining, and rocking. Language, then, does not communicate a specific reality or experience but only a conceptual model of that which we experience.

A Model to Understand Culture

The purpose of this book is to examine experiences in interpersonal relations, using a conceptual model that will provide an understanding of our underlying priorities or values and those of the people with whom we interact. It is important to understand that when we talk about a model, we are talking about something that approximates reality. A model of an airplane is not an airplane. A model of a house is not a house. The model of values presented here is an approximate representation of priorities; it is not a definitive explanation of experience. It should also be kept in mind that these priorities, which identify what is more important and what is less important in one's experience, may be unique to a person or may be shared and thus reflect the cultural values of a group.

The model of basic values, which was first proposed by Marvin Mayers (1974), contains twelve key elements. These elements are presented in the form of six pairs of contrasting priorities for social relationships.

- Time and event orientation
- Dichotomistic and holistic thinking
- Crisis and noncrisis orientation
- Task and person orientation
- Status and achievement focus
- Vulnerability as a weakness or as a strength

Each pair may be viewed as opposite poles on a continuum or plotted on a more complex matrix. The remaining chapters probe the distinguishing characteristics of each basic value pair and explore the complex tensions that arise as people and cultures actualize one or many of these priorities in social behavior.

The model of basic values will, like language, produce an oversimplification of the reality of our experience. But at the same time, it should help us understand something about that reality, just as when we talk about "a chair" we distinguish that object from a couch, an airplane, and other dissimilar objects. We can communicate essential ideas about our experience in such a way that others with the same language can generally understand what we are talking about.

To help you get a better grasp of how insights from the model may be applied to your own life and ministry, we encourage you to plot your own personal basic values profile. To aid in that process, a questionnaire has been included in the appendix. Better still, you may take it online (visit www.bakeracademic.com/ministering-cross-culturally for more information). The online version automatically computes your profile and provides a report for you. There are no "right answers" for the questionnaire. Rather, it is designed to help you see your value preferences and then to understand how you are similar to and different from others at home and abroad.

Applying the Model for Ministry

Whether you do the questionnaire now or later is not so important as learning the purpose and application for discovering your basic values. Most of the routine decisions in our lives and much of our daily behavior are prompted by the basic values we have learned in our childhoods. Such decisions are as simple as the time we choose to leave for work, school, or church, or whether we decide to finish a task or begin a conversation. We rarely think about how our choices may or may not reflect a pattern of life that we have adopted, and that is precisely why we need such a model to help us.

The purpose of the basic values model and the self-assessment tool is to help you to begin reflection on who you are, the choices you make in some of these routine areas of life, and how your choices may help or hinder you as you seek to follow Jesus and minister with others who may not share your values. In the paragraphs that follow I suggest four action steps that you may take in response to this book that will help you become more effective in your ministries with people who are different from you.

Action 1: Understanding Yourself. As you read the following chapters that unpack the meaning of each of the six basic value pairs, I encourage you to ask, "What does this value set mean in my life? Where do my values cluster on the graph that illustrates the broad range of options open to people?" For example, does task or relationship prevail in your daily work and relationships, and how do you prefer to live within this tension? Is "time" money to you, or does "time" yield to other priorities in your life? Being able to answer these and other questions about yourself will give you new and needed insights into how your routines of life may be a hindrance or a help for effective ministry. By taking the time to read each chapter and to reflect on where your priorities fall on the basic values graph, you will gain significant new self-understanding essential to effective ministry with others who are different.

Action 2: Understanding Others. As you continue reading about each of the basic values, you will discover quickly that people groups around the world have very different cultures and basic values. You will also discover that those values vary significantly and that your own values often stand in contrast to the people described. It is important to ask, what does this culture reward or punish, and how is that different from my culture? You will also begin to look at these values in the light of Scripture and discover a diversity there that you could not see before. By just reading this book you will begin the adventure of discovering how different the people around you can be.

An important second step, even while you read, is to ask questions: How well would I fit in that culture? In what areas will the values of these people create tension and distress for me? Which of these differences seem to contradict my understanding of the Bible? By asking these questions you will dig deeper into your self-understanding and grow in your perception and appreciation of others.

Action 3: Adding to Your Repertoire. As we discussed in chapter one, the big challenge for people who want to minister cross-culturally is to learn new ways of dealing with common cultural problems. I describe that process as adding to your repertoire of cultural values and behaviors. The basic values model provides a useful tool to describe differences in cultural behaviors as a way to reflect on possibilities for change in one's personal preferences and practice. For example, suppose you are the kind of person who likes to plan carefully and organize your activities in such a way that

you can minimize surprises. Using the basic values tool, you would describe your default value settings as crisis oriented (advanced planning is very important) and "dichotomistic" (sorting and organizing so that things go together well). You discover that you are in a culture like the one I lived in on Yap, where the vast majority of the people are noncrisis, meaning they do not plan in advance for crises and are very flexible in how they manage their time and work. In this setting you must ask yourself the question, How can I increase my options and tolerance for what seems to me to be irresponsible behavior?

You begin with Scripture, such as Philippians 2:1–5, to help you rehearse how you want to have the same attitude as Christ Jesus, and then you prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to add to your cultural repertoire some of the Yapese flexibility and tolerance for ambiguity. It always helps to ask a local person how they would work to accomplish the ministry that you have committed to do with them. In that way you focus on the ministry and seek to learn from them new ways of doing something that would be done very differently in your home setting. In the two case studies of short-term ministry described in later chapters, you will see many situations in which the ministry team struggled to learn new ways of doing ministry, adding to their cultural and ministry repertoire.

Action 4: Breaking Default Habits. This final action step is perhaps the most difficult one, giving up aspects of self that keep you from ministering well in another cultural context. This step requires successful completion of the first three actions described above, but it goes deeper. Why? Perhaps because the basic values we hold are rooted so deeply in our personality and our lifelong experiences. The role of personality is important; children of the same parents who grow up in the same home often have very different personalities. One likes a clean and ordered room while another prefers to live in clutter and chaos. How do we explain this? Personality is one aspect, another is the people we choose as our friends and confidants, and still others include the pressures of parents, peers, and the people at our school and work. Over the years of our lives, we find a pattern that fits who we are and how we feel comfortable to live our lives. Then suddenly we go on a short-term ministry trip and the local people with whom we have to work break many of our rules and patterns of life.

One of the most surprising things is that our frustrations are most often about very basic things, such as food and privacy. When local people have

very different food habits, and when they have no understanding of our ideas about privacy, that often precipitates deep emotional stress for us. When we find ourselves angry with people, frustrated with their resistance to our plans and ministry, and annoyed beyond comfort with their behaviors, we need the help of the Holy Spirit to be able to reframe our expectations and find a balance that rests in our relationship with Christ and his love for us and for others. Bringing the Word of God into our thinking and behavior is critical, and we do this by prayerfully seeking the help of the Holy Spirit to break the default habit that holds us in its grip.

In the pages that follow we will explore the tensions implicit in each of the six sets of basic values. As you read about each one, I encourage you to think first about the experiences in your life and the particular situations in which you have felt tension related to some violation of your expectations. Name the tension, and then reflect on your value preference. As you continue reading, you might take the next step and put yourself in the place of the other person. What do you imagine they were feeling at that time? Could their behavior have come from different value assumptions or preferences? What can you learn as you read about how you have dealt with such value conflicts in the past?

3

Tensions about Time

The building of the Yap Evangelical Church was used for two services each Sunday morning. A Palauan-language service began at half past eight, and a Yapese service followed at eleven. On one particular Sunday, the senior pastor and head of the churches of Palau had come to Yap to speak to the local Palauan congregation. Because of the special nature of the service, he was not finished when it came time for the Yapese service at eleven. A dear German sister, veteran of thirty years on Yap and Palau, bustled around impatiently at the bottom of the hill until she could contain herself no longer. Abruptly she ordered a Yapese girl to go up and ring the bell. Needless to say, the Palauan pastor was deeply embarrassed; he quickly closed his sermon, and the Palauan congregation rushed out of the church. When the Yapese pastor realized what had happened, he was mortified and apologized to the Palauan pastor and people as they came out. Then during the Yapese service he publicly rebuked the sister in a very gentle way, saying, “We Yapese don’t care when the service begins; we are happy to wait until our Palauan brothers are finished. For us, time doesn’t matter; we just want our Palauan brothers to enjoy their fellowship here in our church.” A half hour was not important to the Yapese congregation. They would have waited two hours without feeling imposed upon or becoming angry. Americans and Germans, on the contrary, have a very short time fuse and experience anxiety when there is a delay of five or more minutes.

The concept of being late varies significantly from one culture to the next and from one individual to the next. I can recall waiting in the car for my wife outside the library of the state university where she worked; invariably she was late. If she was only five minutes late, I excused her without hesitation. However, sometimes she was as much as fifteen minutes late,

and on those occasions I greeted her with a demand for an explanation, thus producing tension between us. On a few rare occasions, she was as much as twenty to thirty minutes late, and I must confess that I was enraged to have been kept waiting for so long. On those occasions communication between us was nearly impossible because of the hostility the long wait had aroused in me.

Yapese people would find my anger unacceptable and quite puzzling. In their scheme of things, one is not late even if he or she arrives two hours after the appointed time. Missionaries who have worked in Latin America report a similar attitude there, although the Latin American definition of "late" entails a shorter period than does that of the Yapese. Most North Americans will begin to experience tension when others are fifteen minutes late; most Latin Americans will experience tension when others are more than one hour late; Yapese will not experience tension until the expected party is about three hours late.

Marvin Mayers suggests that Americans and Germans belong to time-oriented cultures, whereas Latin American and Yapese cultures are more event oriented. People who are time oriented express great concern about punctuality, the length of time expended, and utilization of time to its maximum potential. People who are event oriented show concern that an activity be completed regardless of the length of time required, and they emphasize unscheduled participation rather than carefully structured activities.

Table 1
Concepts of Lateness

	Lateness Excused	Tension	Hostility
Yapese	2 hours	3 hours	4 hours
Latin American	½ hour	1 hour	2 hours
North American	5 minutes	15 minutes	½ hour

To gain an understanding of the characteristics of time and event orientations, we will examine them first as conceptual opposites. While characteristics of each are extremely different, human behavior rarely falls at either extreme. Rather, most people are caught in a tension between the two poles. In some circumstances we yield to the pull of one side of the

continuum, while in other circumstances we yield the other way. We speak of time orientation and event orientation to indicate which side of the continuum or matrix dominates individuals and cultures. Each side has many consistent behavioral manifestations.

Consider this illustration. Over a period of several years I participated in candidate-orientation sessions for a mission organization in the United States. The first leader to invite me said that we would gather each day to discuss whatever the candidates or I wanted to discuss but would follow no fixed schedule. We began sometime after breakfast, broke for meals or relaxation, and finished in the afternoon or evening as our interests and ability to concentrate dictated. A few years later another man was given the responsibility for the program. This second leader devised a schedule of forty-five-minute periods with a specific subject matter assigned to each period. These two men illustrate very different types of persons: the first is event oriented, while the second is clearly time oriented. Both orientations are valid. Some people, however, are happier when there is no set routine, and others feel more comfortable with a precise schedule. It is noteworthy that two people in the same organization and from the same cultural background had such different ways of dealing with time.

Time-Oriented Persons and Cultures

Time-oriented persons and cultures exhibit a high concern about schedule and punctuality within that schedule, and this concern is manifested in a variety of ways. American schools, businesses, and homes often have a clock in every room, and nearly everyone carries a cell phone that connects to a very precise global time standard. Each day is organized into time periods of specific length, and the use of each period is carefully planned. Meetings, work periods, and breaks are set by the clock, and individuals use their cell phones to keep a personal and work calendar of scheduled activities. For some time-oriented persons, anniversaries, dates, and historical chronologies have special importance.

Another aspect of time orientation involves scheduling toward a goal. Time-oriented persons typically have specific objectives they want to accomplish within a given period. They will set a time within which they must finish a job or carry out a specific activity. People with this orientation

often fill their time to its maximum potential. Their lives take on a frantic pace and are so filled with appointments that nothing can be done on the spur of the moment.

In time-oriented cultures, a careful utilization of time is often associated with reward. For example, we may tell a child, “Give yourself twenty minutes to do that assignment. If you push yourself to finish it in that time period, then you will have the entire evening free.” My grandson has always had a difficult time working in this way because by nature he is more event oriented. He would rather read, play a computer game, or continue whatever he is doing at the moment with little regard for how much time a task may take afterward. He will often rush around in a panic on a school morning trying to accomplish everything he could have done easily in a few minutes the night before with zero pressure. A personal goal, however, can motivate him to change his pattern of action. For example, his dad telling him “I’m going for a convertible drive in fifteen minutes, and if your room is clean you can come along” will motivate him to clean his room in minutes, when he may have “tried” for days to accomplish it without the pressing objective.

Table 2
Time and Event Orientations

Time Orientation	Event Orientation
1. Concern for punctuality and amount of time expended	1. Concern for details of the event, regardless of time required
2. Careful allocation of time to achieve the maximum within set limits	2. Exhaustive consideration of a problem until resolved
3. Tightly scheduled, goal-directed activities	3. A “let come what may” outlook not tied to any precise schedule
4. Rewards offered as incentives for efficient use of time	4. Stress on completing the event as a reward in itself
5. Emphasis on dates and history	5. Emphasis on present experience rather than the past or future

Event-Oriented Persons and Cultures

At the other end of the continuum, event-oriented people are concerned more about the details of what is going to happen than about when it begins and when it ends. The event-oriented mission director was concerned about what happened to the candidates in their training, but he did not care when it happened. He had no specific agenda for any of the scheduled sessions. Rather, his primary interest was in what happened in the process of training candidates and whether this experience proved meaningful to them and prepared them to do their jobs more effectively. He was concerned that learning occur, but the schedule we followed and the amount of time we took mattered little to him. Time-oriented people cannot understand this lifestyle, for to them a person can learn only by keeping to a tightly controlled schedule. Any other way of learning is seen as inefficient and conducive to laziness.

For event-oriented people, it is more important to complete an activity than to observe arbitrary constraints of time. Baseball is one activity in American culture that still follows event-oriented rules. A ball game has no fixed time limit; it will continue through as many extra innings as necessary. Church services among some ethnic groups (black, Hispanic) also operate on an event-oriented schedule. Some rarely begin on time and frequently last two, three, or more hours.

Event orientation produces a “let come what may” outlook unbound by schedules. Event-oriented persons will often be late to time-structured meetings because the event in which they were previously engaged was not completed on time. For them, meetings begin when the last person arrives and end when the last person leaves. Participation and completion are the central goals. For event-oriented people, playing the game is indeed more important than winning. They also differ in their style of managing problems or crises. Whereas time-oriented people will quickly grow weary of discussion and call for a vote, event-oriented people will exhaustively consider a problem, hearing all issues and deliberating until they reach unanimous agreement.

Finally, for event-oriented people, the present is more important than either the past or the future. History is a matter more of sequence than of exact dates. The Yapese have no idea of their specific dates of birth, but they do know the chronological order of the birthdates of everyone in their villages. The issues of history are of little consequence to them; their primary preoccupations are with things that have relevance now.

A Biblical Perspective

It can be argued with reasonable conviction that Jewish culture during the life of Christ was predominantly event oriented. The concept of *hour* as used in the New Testament was an approximate measure, marked technically on a sundial but reckoned by most people by the general position of the sun in the sky. Daytime was divided into quarters, beginning at dawn, then marked at midmorning, midday, and midafternoon, and ending at sunset. The night was also divided into four parts—the evening, midnight, cockcrowing, and morning watches (Miller 1983). These time periods were loosely drawn, and the evidence presented in the Gospels suggests little or no concern for punctuality or scheduling.

In fact, the evidence found in the Gospel of John, although meager, suggests that Jesus, enculturated as he was in Jewish culture, was event oriented in his personal life and ministry. The opening drama of Jesus's ministry reports how two of John the Baptist's disciples came to spend the day with Jesus (John 1:39). It was an unplanned encounter. Some commentators (e.g., Brown 1970) suggest that it may have been late Friday afternoon, and the two men may have had to decide whether to rush home or to spend the entire Sabbath day with Jesus. Whether or not the Sabbath was involved, they abandoned their previous plans in order to enjoy fully this encounter with Christ.

Other texts show a similar disregard for schedule. John 3:2 reports that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night but indicates no displeasure on Jesus's part at giving an interview at such an unusual time. In another incident (John 4:4–42), Jesus, tired from his journey, sat by Jacob's well in Samaria, waiting for his disciples to bring some food. When they finally came back with provisions, Jesus showed no interest in the food but continued his teaching. Because a number of villagers believed in him, he agreed to disregard his plan to continue his journey, and he and the disciples stayed there two more days. Later Jesus received a message that his friend Lazarus was sick. Although he knew Lazarus was already dead and Mary and Martha were grief-stricken, he did not hurry but waited two days before doing anything (John 11:6).

This is not to say that Jesus cared little about time, only that he was fully incarnate in the culture of his day. He lived and ministered in a manner common among the Jews. However, when time became important in God's

plan, then Jesus pressed others into action. For example, in John 4:35–36, Jesus rebukes the disciples for neglecting the pressing needs of the people and admonishes them that God's harvest time is now! In Matthew 4:17, we read that the time had come for Jesus to preach, and in Matthew 16:21, the time had come to explain his suffering, death, and resurrection. Note, however, that "time" as stressed in these texts refers not to a schedule but to opportunity (McConnell 1983, 61–70).

Implications for Cross-Cultural Ministry

What do these New Testament examples mean for our relationships with others and for our ministry? In our scheme of thought and behavior, are we time oriented or event oriented? The case of the two mission leaders described earlier illustrates how people in the same culture may have very different attitudes toward and approaches to time. Often people who are so different become frustrated with one another and even reject one another, to the point that it is impossible for them to work together effectively. When the orientation of an entire culture conflicts with that of a missionary, attempts at cross-cultural communication and ministry may become characterized by hostility and strife.

It is fairly obvious that American culture at large values time orientation. For example, if a movie does not start on time, the audience soon stomps, yells, and hisses as people express anger about the delay. Some people in the audience, however, like the event-oriented mission leader, might not be agitated by the tardiness as much as dismayed at the impatience of their fellow Americans. We can observe similar responses in church and mission activities. If a church retreat is not organized and on schedule, some participants will grumble about wasting time. The event-oriented leader is not following a culturally approved manner of scheduling. In such a case, the demands of American culture for efficient use of time outweigh the personal preferences of any of the participants.

Time in Short-Term Ministry

Other cultures are quite different in their orientation toward time. In our five-day drama cycle in Southern Chad, the local church leaders arranged

an open schedule for the team to present the same drama in five different villages each day. We had prepared three Old Testament dramas and two New Testament dramas for mime interpretation, and church leaders had translated our French script into the Laka language for narration.

Since most on the Biola student team were traveling by bicycle from one village to the next, our arrival time was always uncertain. We began in the morning after an early breakfast, with the team biking about ten miles to the farthest village (no. 5). A truck followed, carrying the sound equipment and the church leaders. After our arrival, the leaders sent out word, and people gathered while we set up the sound system. When local leaders told us the people were ready, one pastor began the narration of the Bible story in the local language. Members of the team did dramatic mime to create a visual enactment of the story as it was told. After the narration was finished, a local pastor took time to speak about the story and to invite people to consider God's message for their lives. Starting times and ending times were never the same.

When the event was finished, we packed up the sound equipment, and the bikers started the reverse journey, riding about two miles to village number 4. When we arrived there, the local leaders in village number 4 sent out word, and the people gathered. We repeated the same routines that we had done in village number 5 in this place, and when the event was finished, we packed up the equipment for the short journey of two miles to village number 3. We arrived at village number 3 about midday, where, following the dramatic presentation, these people had prepared a meal for the team. After eating, we proceeded to village number 2 for the fourth presentation, and ended our day with an early evening drama in village number 1. And so each day followed this rhythm.

To be effective in cross-cultural ministry, one must adapt to such differences in the view of time. The Biola team in Chad learned quickly that a good part of each day was spent waiting for people to gather. If this difference leads to frustration, compensating strategies can be adopted. One can read one's Bible, sit in quiet conversation with one another, or try to communicate in sign language with local people. On our trip, some just went for a walk in the villages.

There are a number of ways in which the American and Chadian attitudes toward time differ. First, Americans have a sense of urgency about time. We feel that time is valuable and that it is running out. American young people,

particularly, fear that time might pass by before they can experience all of life. We have a sense of urgency about getting a job done and about planning what to do next. We cannot wait until our vacation or the weekend or the last day of school. We focus our attention on the next event. Chadians, however, do not feel this time pressure. Time to them is not nearly as valuable as we believe it to be.

Another aspect of the American attitude, as Edward Hall points out (1973, 152–55), is the need we feel for variety in our experience. We like to do different things. My Biola team in Chad found quickly that there was very little to see and do in these five villages. After the first day, the only novelty in the area was the team itself. In the evenings after a long day, children from the villages would gather around the team camp and sing by the fire late into the night. By the third night these singing children were no longer a delight but a disturbance to a team fatigued by the long days of drama performance.

While Americans seek change and new experiences, Chadians are accustomed to monotony and routine. There is little to do in these villages that has not already been done many times before. There are few places to go, and one meets with the same people and follows the same routines over and over again.

Another characteristic of many Americans is what Hall (1973, 153) calls monochronism, or single-minded use of time. For example, if I begin a building project, I work on it continuously until I complete it. Then I may move on to writing an article or preparing for a lecture or some other intense activity. I have difficulty doing more than one thing at the same time (this is not true for my wife or our son). Keeping two projects going at once is troublesome for some Americans. Many of us prefer to focus our energies on a single activity. Many American executives refuse to take vacations or to disconnect from the office if they are on vacation, fearing the loss of power, influence, or disconnect from a significant business decision (Feintzeig 2014).

Again, Chadians and Micronesians tend to differ in this regard. They feel no pressure to get things done. Several of us on the Biola team took the option of setting our cots and mosquito nets inside an unfinished church building, which had a partial roof and had been sitting that way for months. I watched a Yapese man take two years to build a house. He would work on the house for a day or two, then go fishing for a few days to provide protein

for his family's diet. Then he might take a few days to help others or to do no work of any kind at all. He was not in a hurry because he did not have winter to worry about, and the place where he was staying gave him shelter from the rain. He wanted a new house, but, like the Chadian church, it was something for which there was little haste.

Discordant Individual Behavior

We have examined how cultures manifest either a time or an event orientation. However, there are individuals in every culture who are at variance with the pattern of the whole. In my doctor-of-ministry classes in an evangelical seminary in 2014, some students always came late to classes, they did not submit their papers on time, and they came late to sessions because they were on their cell phones—all of which reflects event orientation. These students are often living in conflict with the expectations of their culture. At times they are frustrated by it, and at times their cultural peers are frustrated by them.

Some have suggested that college and seminary students are late with their assignments and generally not committed to keeping a schedule because they consider themselves to be free from rules; they constitute what has been called the "me" generation. Although education in the recent past has placed greater emphasis on individual self-realization, I do not think this explanation is adequate. Children in the same family often have significantly different attitudes toward time. One child does not accept the constraints of time easily but must struggle to learn the discipline of schedule, whereas other children in the same family submit very readily to time constraints. Each child learns to yield on occasion to the demands either of time or event, but the event-oriented child finds the cultural system rankling and must work to adapt to it. On the other hand, time-oriented people may rationalize some of their attitudes with the arguments advanced by their culture, but these are not adequate explanations for their personal behavior. The precise causes of their behavior are probably more complex than anyone understands.

The point is that individuals vary greatly within a culture, and there are no simple explanations for those differences. As each culture selects and emphasizes its particular values, there are always people who are frustrated.

Some Yapese and Chadians are frustrated by event orientation and find that their attitudes are disapproved of by their culture just as we disapprove of those who deviate from our cultural norms. Some people simply do not fit into their culture because their basic personalities are in some way different.

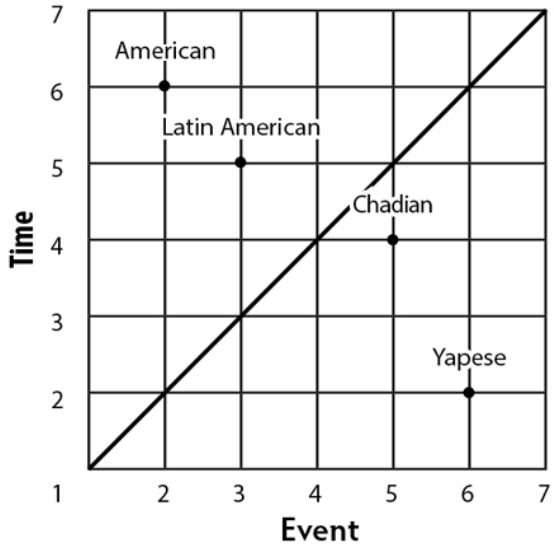
Unfortunately, many otherwise well-meaning Christians label the discordant person as rebellious or carnal. A child may be chided, threatened, and coerced and thus build up deep inner frustration, self-rejection, and a despairing sense of inability to please others and God. An adult may be accused of rebellion or may be denied a useful role in a group primarily because of the frustration others have with his or her attitude toward and utilization of time. The critics fail to see that these same persons may often be out of step because they have taken time to help their neighbor (notice Luke 10:30–37). The qualities that make them poor time-oriented personalities allow them to give other people high priority in their values. We may well wonder how Jesus would have responded to the demands of many churches and mission organizations today for detailed weekly or monthly reports. What modern preacher can adjust his schedule and stay an extra two days in a town where people show an unusual interest in his teaching?

Godly Priorities?

Figure 1 shows that cultures vary greatly in the emphases they assign to time and event. For American culture, which frequently emphasizes the constraints of time over event, the priority rating of the event might reasonably be plotted at 2 and the priority rating of time at 6 (2, 6). The Yapese seem almost a mirror opposite culturally, allowing an event almost always to take precedence over time. We may plot Yapese culture at (6, 2) on the grid. Chadians and Latin Americans fall somewhere in between these two extremes. Since Chadian church services tend to last from two to four hours, which is longer than those of Latin Americans, let us hypothesize that Chadians fall at (5, 4) on the grid and Latin Americans at (3, 5). Individuals in any of these cultures may vary greatly from these points.

Figure 1

Values Assigned to Time and Event



Some might wonder which of these people are more godly in their priorities. To answer this question we must recognize that our way with time is not God's way. In fact, no culture has God's priorities, for in God's scheme the emphases on time and event exist together in complete harmony. William McConnell suggests that time is "a gift from God, and that his priorities can always be fulfilled in the amount of time we have been given. . . . God is lavish with his gifts, so that there is always enough time to do what Jesus calls us to do" (1983, 89). Following this suggestion, we cannot plot God's priorities on the matrix since God's priorities are not bound by space and time, and God's priorities for us meet us at our points of weakness and need. Jesus demonstrated his Father's priority when he went into the wilderness to pray and the crowd pursued him so that he could not get away. Rather than reject them, Jesus gave them his time, healing them, teaching them, and feeding them, and when evening came he sent them away. Only after all their needs had been met did he continue by night into the wilderness, where he prayed alone until he walked on the water to meet his disciples in the fourth (or morning) watch (Matt. 14:13–25). Few of us have the strength or will to follow this example. Yet, as we walk in his Spirit, he will empower each of us in different ways to balance the tension

between the multitudes and our need to be apart to recharge our bodies and souls.

An important key to effective cross-cultural ministry is an attitude of love and submission toward people with different values about time and event—we must add to our repertoire and adapt to the time and event priorities of the people with whom we work. When we Americans enter other cultures, however, we often bring a cultural blindness to this issue. We feel the urgency of time and orient our lives to reflect our own culture. God commands us, however, to do nothing out of self-centeredness but to consider others better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3–5). Our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, to satisfy the time and event priorities of others before considering our own. With such a goal, we will move toward a more effective ministry to persons whose cultural values are different from our own.

4

Tensions regarding Judgment

After I had learned to speak the Yapese language, I asked some of the old people to tell me stories about the origin of Yap and about Yapese cultural history. As I listened to these accounts, I began to sort them into an integrated whole. One story told about the first family on Yap and how they had settled and had children, who were the founders of the modern clans. Another story told about the great flood that had come to Yap, washing away the central mountain and destroying all of the island except for one family with seven children. The seven all settled in different places and began producing children of their own. I asked, reminiscent of the age-old question as to where Cain got his wife, where these people got their spouses, since they did not marry one another. The Yapese answered that they did not know and that it was not important. They insisted that I did not understand the meaning of the story. I persisted with another line of questioning. The Yapese have about thirty matrilineal clans, and each has a story of its origin. For example, the porpoise clan, the rope clan, and the mushroom clan all have separate accounts of their origins, so I asked how these stories fit with the flood story. My informants shook their heads in despair. “These have nothing to do with the flood story. Why do you insist on putting these things together? They are completely different.”

My problem in interviewing the Yapese was that my nature and my training encouraged me to line everything up in rows. I want to have everything sorted, systematically organized, and fitted into its proper place. I like to divide everything into constituent parts and then re-sort them into a clear pattern. American culture generally rewards this type of thinking.

Science, social science, and theology are all organizing and systematizing disciplines. The Hebrews, however, were not systematic, and apparently as

God revealed himself to them, he did not insist that they become so. They expressed their comprehension of God in independent narratives, life histories, and prophecies. The Old Testament nowhere attempts to put everything together in a systematic way. Someone who likes to see everything in clearly outlined relationships might call the Hebrews disorganized. But they communicated in a narrative or holistic style. They did not worry about sorting everything into a comprehensive system; each point was part of a distinctive and separate whole. In contrast, our Western, Greco-European tradition seeks an Aristotelian comprehension of the universe, one in which everything fits into a logically cohesive worldview.

When I insisted on combining all the Yapese stories into a systematic mythology of Yapese culture, the people despaired because I had failed to comprehend that each was a distinctive, separate whole—meaningless out of context. I was approaching their cultural history in a segmented way. I sought to create a unified system, to sort all the pieces and to combine them into a systematic whole. The Yapese, on the other hand, were concerned about the integrity of each story and the social and political lessons and arguments that it contained. The parts of one story could not be added to the parts of another. Each story was complete in itself.

Dichotomistic Thinking versus Holistic Thinking

Marvin Mayers identifies two distinct orientations in thinking patterns: dichotomistic and holistic. Dichotomistic thinking is a pattern of segmental thinking in which people exhibit great concern for the particulars of a problem or situation and tend to reduce them to right and wrong options. A person with this type of thinking examines and sorts the details and then reasons on the basis of perceived ordered relationships among them. Examples of such thinking include phonetic reading techniques in which words are broken into their syllables, pastimes such as Scrabble and crossword puzzles, and study techniques such as biblical word studies, sentence diagramming, and outlining. Holistic thinking is a pattern of thinking in which particulars are not separated from the context of the larger picture. A holistic thinker insists that the whole is greater than the parts and reasons on the basis of perceived relationships within the whole. Examples of such thinking include global look-and-say reading techniques in which

words are learned as whole units, games such as checkers and chess, and study techniques such as memorization, imitation, and learning by participation (e.g., as an apprentice).

In every human population, one finds dichotomistic, holistic, and blended patterns of thinking, which affect the way people make judgments. Some people are reluctant to make a judgment about someone based on a specific behavior, preferring instead to evaluate a person's total behavior. Others, in contrast, make a judgment based on a specific behavior. We tend to evaluate others according to our predominant mode of thinking, a point illustrated by the following incident. An executive in a well-known evangelical school was caught in his office with his secretary sitting on his lap. For some members of his constituency, that act destroyed his ministry and tainted everything he had ever done—he was an immoral person, he was worthless, and his career was finished. These people reacted from what we would call a dichotomistic value orientation. The issues were black and white, and this man was judged on the basis of that single incident. The holistic thinkers who knew about the incident saw things differently. They evaluated this man not on the basis of that one act but on the basis of his entire career. Further, they pointed out that all are sinners and that each of us falls at one time or another. They asked, "Has he repented of his sin?" When they saw that he had repented, they recommended him for a different job in another Christian organization. From the perspective of the holist, this man's failure at one particular point in his life did not destroy a life of ministry in Christian service.

Table 3
Dichotomistic and Holistic Thinking

Dichotomistic Thinking	Holistic Thinking
1. Judgments are black/white, right/wrong—specific criteria are uniformly applied in evaluating others	1. Judgments are open-ended—the whole person and all circumstances are taken into consideration
2. Security comes from the feeling that one is right and fits into a particular role or category in society	2. Security comes from multiple interactions within the whole of society—one is insecure if confined to particular roles or categories
3. Information and experiences are systematically organized; details are sorted and ordered to form a clear pattern	3. Information and experiences are seemingly disorganized; details (narratives, events, portraits) stand as independent points complete in themselves

4. Abstraction and analysis are valued thought processes	4. Analogy and synthesis are valued thought processes

Dichotomistic thinkers tend to categorize people into specific roles. Once a person is labeled, the label defines his or her character and place, even though the label may not be a valid assessment of the person. People might be labeled good just because others do not know the faults or negative things in their lives. Holistic thinkers, in contrast, tend to withhold both approval and disapproval. They are somewhat suspicious of people who appear faultless and are more tentative about condemning the faulty.

The Yapese are quite holistic in their evaluation of others. In a series of extensive interviews with nearly one hundred men and fifty women, I asked each to name one person on Yap whom he or she admired. The most frequent response was “no one.” As an American I was puzzled, and so I asked for an explanation of this response. The typical explanation was that everybody, without exception, had done something bad. If someone praised the governor for what he had accomplished, someone else would say, “Yes, but you know what he did to his wife!” or “What about that incident when he was young? You see, he’s no better than the rest of us.”

Both holistic thinkers and dichotomistic thinkers may make negative value judgments about others but for different reasons. The dichotomist may reject a person because of a particular mistake, while a holist may say that all people are flawed because of any number of mistakes. Both may use their value orientation to reject others. The key moral issue here is not the way of thinking but what we do with the way we think. The Christian who rejects and maligns a fellow worker because of personal flaws or sins, whether thinking dichotomistically or holistically, is taking the matter of judgment into his or her own hands. Such a critical and judgmental attitude is a divisive and destructive force in any community.

Thinking Patterns in Particular Cultures

Many anthropologists view culture as a collective product created by individual minds. With this understanding of culture, we might, as we compare the differences between Western and non-Western (e.g., Hebrew) cultures, say that the development of culture in the West has been largely

influenced by people whose thinking has been analytical and dichotomistic, while Hebrew and other non-Western cultures have been largely influenced by people whose thinking has been synthetic and holistic.

Anthropologist Thomas Gladwin (1970) contrasts Westerners' solutions for navigational problems with those of the Puluwat (of Micronesia). The Puluwat navigators employ visual sightings of stars, the sun, and birds and listen to the varying sounds of waves on the hulls of their canoes to set their course, but they cannot verbalize the solution arrived at or the reasoning used to reach it. Western navigators, in contrast, use a magnetic compass and a sextant to determine an abstract location and a course of direction on a grid of the earth, and they can freely verbalize the logic and rationale behind actions taken. Anthony Paredes and Marcus Hepburn (1976) argue that the Puluwatese employ synthetic holistic thinking and the Western navigators use analytic dichotomistic thinking, which they have learned from their respective predecessors.

A similar explanation might be given for the difference between prophetic writings in the Old Testament and in the Pauline Epistles. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets describe specific historical incidents or concrete pictographic visions in great detail for their readers. Paul, in contrast, argues in abstract, often difficult logic (e.g., Rom. 4–5) to convince his readers of his point. Paul uses the verbal, abstract, and rational thinking that was characteristic of Greek philosophy rather than the pictorial, concrete, and emotional thinking that was characteristic of the Hebrew prophets.

The tradition of systematic theology grew out of the Greek philosophical perspective, which was analytical, as opposed to the holistic orientation evident in the Hebrew texts. John Levinson (1999) details the way in which Greco-Roman thought stimulated a significant shift in Jewish views and writing. The inspiration of Scripture, seen as an ecstatic, noncognitive process by Old Testament writers, was viewed as an engaged, cognitive process by Josephus and Jewish writers of the New Testament period. The analytical methodology of systematic theology employs mechanisms of sorting, comparison, and contrast, which theologians use to take apart texts and put them into constructed systems of theological thought. Some contemporary scholars have reacted to the traditional analytical methods and the distortions to the biblical text that sometimes result. First biblical theologians (Conn 1984) and then narrative theologians (Loughlin 1996;

Cook 1997) sought to conduct theology using more holistic methods, treating texts as complete narratives that must be considered in their own right. Those conducting narrative theology took a further step, arguing that the church is comprised of distinctive cultural communities, and each community must engage the narratives and interpret them in light of its own contemporary cultural context.

Cultural preference for one kind of thinking over the other tends to limit the creativity of individuals and communities. All human populations have diverse individuals who express the full range of human brain capacities and patterns of thought. Western analytic schooling and religious denominations may suppress the concrete, emotional, and synthetic thinkers, while some non-Western cultures such as Yap, Truk, and other traditional societies may suppress their analytic and abstract thinkers. This cultural preference for holistic thinking may be one factor in the rapid spread of Pentecostal Christianity in Latin America at the expense of Catholics and Protestant evangelicals, who give priority to rational and analytic approaches to knowledge and faith.

A Biblical Perspective

The challenge facing those in missions and ministry is to learn to think in accordance with the mind-set and culture of those with whom they work. Once again the life and work of Christ provide the example for us. We have already observed that Jesus grew up in the culture of his day and participated in the learning and living activities common to the people around him. He was so ordinary in this regard that people in his hometown refused to accept the power of his teaching and ministry (Matt. 13:54–58).

Jesus mastered the content of Jewish life and culture. He understood clearly the contemporary social structure, with its distinctions between rich and poor, its political and religious parties, and the hierarchy of leadership within these groups. He had a thorough grasp of the religious traditions and of the way the leaders abused those traditions for personal prestige and economic gain. He knew the Scriptures better than they did, not because he had magical insight but because, as he studied and learned the Scriptures, his understanding was not clouded by personal sin.

Jesus not only grasped the content of Jewish life and culture but also discerned the workings of the minds of the people. None of the twelve disciples whom he chose was of the educated elite. Only Paul, an apostle after Jesus's death and resurrection, came from that stratum of society. The twelve disciples were commoners and, to the best of our knowledge, were trained only in the workplace of their occupations. From the evidence presented in their writings, the disciples were generally what we have described as holistic thinkers.

The evidence is circumstantial, but the Gospel writings suggest that as Jesus taught, he utilized pictorial, concrete, holistic, and analogic strategies rather than verbal, abstract, dichotomistic, and analytic thought. One of the techniques used throughout Matthew, for example, is that of concrete analogy. Matthew 5:13–14 compares the believer to salt and light. Salt without flavor and a light under a basket are worthless. In Matthew 16, Jesus uses the metaphor of yeast to describe the teachings of the Pharisees. The Gospel of John reports that Jesus spoke of himself as the good shepherd, the living water, the bread of life, and the vine—all significant analogies that communicated the truth about himself. The objects that Jesus chose as analogies were common, everyday aspects of Jewish culture, familiar to everyone who heard his message.

The parables are a more complex form of analogy. Jesus created stories to illustrate and teach particular truths. Each story portrayed incidents from the ordinary cultural life of the people of his day, such as sowing seed, removing weeds from the wheat, paying laborers in a vineyard, and attending a wedding. If the point of the story was not obvious to the hearers and to his disciples, Jesus sometimes explained its meaning to his disciples.

Another technique Jesus used involved focusing on issues of his day to teach spiritual truth. In Matthew 9, he uses the issue of fasting to emphasize that his teaching cannot be poured into traditional Jewish cultural containers. In Matthew 12, he raises the issues of plucking grain and healing on the Sabbath to teach God's priority of mercy and his own lordship of the Sabbath. Time and again he addresses the social injustices of contemporary life. In the Sermon on the Mount, by focusing on internal motives rather than external acts, he attacks the legalistic application of the law; he levels the charge that anger is murder and lust is adultery and insists that truth replace oath-taking and mercy replace the principle of an eye for an eye. He addresses taxes, marriage, divorce, prayer, care of the elderly,

and the struggles for political and economic power at the expense of "the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness" (Matt. 23:23). In addressing each of these issues, Jesus uses powerful concrete illustrations and verbal images to drive home his point: "You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel" (v. 24); "You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence" (v. 25).

The other predominant method of teaching employed by Jesus is the personal object lesson. In Matthew 8–9, a series of case studies portrays Jesus's healing ministry. In the story of the leper, Jesus touches and heals a man labeled by society as untouchable. In the story of the centurion and his servant, Jesus marvels at the centurion's faith and with a spoken word heals a man who is not physically present. With a touch Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law, and he forgives the sins of a paralyzed man before he commands the man to take up his mat and go home. In each of these incidents, we see in concrete actions the deity, humanity, and personal work of Christ.

The impact of the Gospel narratives is concrete and holistic. Jesus drives home his message with one powerful image after another, using illustrations from nature, tradition, and daily life. The learner is challenged to think with geometric intuition rather than algebraic analysis. Jesus asks questions and refuses to give the answers. He refutes the accepted knowledge of his day (e.g., Matt. 22:41–46) and confronts his hearers with penetrating insight as to how the Scriptures apply to their daily lives.

Charles Kraft (1983, 28) succinctly summarizes Jesus's approach as "receptor-oriented and personal," a model that should be our goal as we attempt to communicate in Christian ministry. If Jesus were to go to Yap, he would learn to think as the Yapese think. He would listen to their conversations, observe their society and culture at work, and internalize their world- and life view. Then he would communicate and teach as the Yapese teach, using parables and case studies to illustrate particular truths, sitting with them in discussion, asking them questions, debating the answers, and drawing from their experiences, traditions, and beliefs the illustrations and analogies that would open their eyes to God's truth and would challenge their unbelief and resistance to him.

Holistic Short-Term Evangelism

Drawing from the insights of Charles Kraft (1983) and Tom Steffen (1997, 2006), I chose a narrative approach for evangelism in villages of Southern Chad that local pastors reported were strongholds of African traditional religion and resistant to the gospel. After preparing dramatic presentations of five biblical narratives in the United States, we traveled with these pastors and our missionary colleague, Tom Stallter, to the village of Nzoro on Saturday, January 4. On January 5 we reviewed our dramas and spent some time rehearsing the first Jesus story that we intended to do later in the week. On January 6 we began our ministry.

For the next five days we left Nzoro at about 7:30 in the morning. Six or seven men rode bicycles and the rest of the team members and the African pastors rode in Stallter's truck for ten miles to the village of Konne. At about 8:30 in the morning, our pastor narrator told the story of Adam and Eve in the Laka language, and the team members provided a visual picture of the story for the people to see and comprehend. None were actors, and their role-playing at times was puzzling and often hilarious to our African audiences. And yet each day the people came to hear the stories. We told the story of Adam and Eve, of Cain and Abel, and of Abraham and Isaac. Each of the stories emphasized the terrible cost of sin, and God's requirement of a blood sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people. On the fourth day, we dramatically portrayed the story of the birth and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. The crowds loved Holly's portrayal of a pregnant Mary, Hans's portrayal of an exuberant leper who had been healed, Brad and Gardner's portrayal of the disciples tossed and fearful for their lives on the Sea of Galilee, and Tim and Hans's portrayal of the two demons who met Jesus and the disciples in the region of the Gadarenes.

On the last day we told the story of the crucifixion and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Chris played the role of Jesus, and as Kurtis and Brad beat him, kicked him, spit on him, and then bound him and nailed him to a cross, most of us watching had tears in our eyes, and the villagers watching laughed with their deep anxious laughter that characterizes moments of crises in which the outcome is certain to produce injury and even death. But the story did not end there, Ernestiene and Holly portrayed the joy of Mary and Mary Magdalene as they came to the tomb on Sunday morning to find the stone rolled away.

This was and is the profound story of the gospel. Our team portrayed it in story and mime before their very eyes—God in Christ reconciling the world to himself; the Lamb that was slain dying on the cross; the resurrection from the dead that gives us hope. These truths they heard and saw on January 10, 1997. One hundred and twenty-three people responded to the invitation of the pastors to receive Christ or to renew their commitments. That evening in the village of Nzoro the team worked with Tom Stallter to set up the *Jesus* film and to portray through another medium the stories that we had been telling on Thursday and Friday. More than one thousand people came, and only the Lord himself knows how many responded to his story.

Implications for Cross-Cultural Ministry

We have considered at some length how people differ in the use of their brain capacities. Some demonstrate dichotomistic, analytic thinking styles; others demonstrate synthetic, holistic thinking styles. Further, we find that these differences in thought patterns produce significantly different and often opposing value orientations. Many dichotomistic thinkers demand clear-cut, black-and-white answers, insist on the universal application of principles, and cannot feel secure unless their perceptions are recognized as correct. This particular pattern of thought was common among the Jewish leaders who challenged Jesus repeatedly during his ministry (e.g., Luke 20:1–8). It was also common among the many missionaries who challenged Hudson Taylor's innovative lifestyle and ministry in China during the last century.

Holistic thinkers, on the other hand, see most issues as gray (open for debate) rather than black and white. They believe that each situation is unique and are uncomfortable with standardized procedures and rigidly applied rules. They resist being pinned down to a particular position on an issue or to a particular social role. This pattern of thinking characterized Jesus's treatment of those religious leaders who insisted on rigid adherence to traditional Jewish law. For example, in Luke 20, when Jewish leaders questioned the source of Jesus's authority, he broadened the question to include the authority of John and the character of the questioners (vv. 3–4, 9–19). He forced them to consider other related issues by overturning their

traditions (such as buying and selling in the temple) and quoting Scripture to show their hypocrisy (Luke 19:45–46). Hudson Taylor made similar demands on his missionary colleagues, forcing them to consider Chinese expectations and showing them how their acceptance of Chinese ways opened the Chinese people to the gospel.

A short- or long-term missionary entering another culture must realize that people evaluate others in different ways. Many Muslims will judge outsiders by applying a rigid cultural interpretation of the standards and rules of Islam and its teachings about an outsider's specific role among them. Most Yapese will evaluate someone from another culture not on the basis of role but on the basis of the total person. They will watch all the activities and interactions of the newcomer. No matter how good a job one does, the Yapese will be quick to play up faults and weaknesses.

The Yapese pattern contrasts sharply with that of American culture and society. Americans tend to evaluate others primarily on the basis of their role performance. Teachers are considered good or bad not on the basis of how they treat their families but on the basis of how they perform for the brief time in the classroom. In America, we find out very little about others as persons because we do not take the time or have the opportunity to observe them. We do not see how others treat their children or spouse, what they do when they get up in the morning, or how they behave in private. We see each person as playing a specific role. Dichotomistic thinkers probably like or dislike someone on the basis of the specifics of his or her performance, while holistic thinkers withhold judgment until they feel they know the person.

The way we think predisposes how we will judge others. Dichotomistic thinkers will reject the muddy ambiguity of their holist peers, accusing them of softness, lack of principle, and inconsistency. Holistic thinkers will reject the rigidity of their dichotomist peers, accusing them of legalism and callous inhumanity toward others. Such personal rejections, however, come only from limited perspectives. This is why Christ warns in Matthew 7:1, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged," and Paul says, "I do not even judge myself" (1 Cor. 4:3). Jesus, in contrast, knows our hearts, and he alone, Paul tells us, will be the judge of people (Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:4–5) and of the effectiveness of a particular ministry.

One of the biggest problems in our families, churches, and missions is that we often insist that others think and judge in the same way we do. We

do not accept one another in love; rather, we try to remake those around us into our own image. This tendency is the negation of the principle of radical discipleship, which requires that we learn to think in the style of our neighbor. We must remember that each person, each part of the body, is important to God and that the unity of the whole is pleasing to him (Ps. 133; 1 Cor. 12:12–13).

5

Tensions Associated with Handling Crises

One Saturday morning on Yap in 1979, I was reading and listening to background music on the radio when the announcer interrupted the program to say that early that morning there had been a typhoon in the Woleai area, several hundred miles east of Yap. The storm was moving toward Yap and was expected to arrive sometime Monday morning. Remembering the typhoon we had experienced there twelve years earlier, I set the book aside to find my wife and give her the news. A half hour later the radio announcer repeated the warning, spurring me to go through the village and warn some Yapese friends who were working at a sawmill they had built on the beach. Because two of these men had jobs in town during the week, they worked hard on Saturday cutting lumber. When I informed them about the typhoon and its expected arrival on Monday, they reacted by saying, “No problem! We’ll get ready for the typhoon tomorrow.” They continued working, and I returned home.

After lunch I tuned in again to hear the announcer report that weather-tracking stations had found that the typhoon was moving faster than anticipated and would reach Yap sometime Sunday afternoon. My anxiety increased somewhat, and I went to my neighbor and asked if he had heard about the coming typhoon. “Ah,” he said, “there’s no typhoon coming. You can’t believe what you hear on the radio. Don’t worry about it. When there’s a typhoon, I’ll let you know!” So I returned home while my friends and my neighbor continued their activities. I had less peace of mind than they, however, so I sat down on the porch where I could watch the surf, remembering that during the last typhoon the waves at high tide had

breached the crest of the beach, flooding the land on which our houses were built. Ordinarily, high tides lap close to the crest but never go over.

About half past four that afternoon, as I sat on the porch and watched, a wave washed gently over the crest. Without hesitation I ran into the house and told my wife to grab what she needed—the typhoon was here! I jumped into the car to move it to high ground. I had not gone a quarter of a mile before the sea surged inland and I was driving through salt water. After driving the car to safety on higher ground behind a friend's house, I rushed to the beach. There I found my friends working frantically in waist-deep water to remove the sawmill engine from its mounts. By the time we got the engine to a pickup truck, the waves were pounding us, and water flooded the motor of the truck. Miraculously, the truck started, and we managed to move it to the high ground behind the house. Meanwhile, the sawed lumber floated in every direction. My neighbor, who had said he would let me know when there was a typhoon, never had the opportunity. He, like everyone else, was working frantically to salvage what he could from the water.

After the storm, I remembered that on Friday evening, when I had passed the Coast Guard's Loran Station high on the plateau, all of its windows had been battened down with plywood. The Yapese and I had ignored this, since we had as yet heard nothing about a storm. The Coast Guard, however, monitored long-term weather forecasts in the area and even before the news broke on the radio had received the early warnings and had taken all the necessary precautions. While we were struggling frantically in the wind and water, the men at the Coast Guard station were watching a movie secure in their concrete buildings in the highlands.

Crisis Orientation versus Noncrisis Orientation

The typhoon incident illustrates two different attitudes toward potential crises. The Coast Guard strategy exemplifies what Marvin Mayers calls a crisis orientation, and the Yapese strategy represents a noncrisis orientation. The mission of the Coast Guard is to look for potential problems and to solve them before they happen or to bring existing crises to a swift resolution. The Coast Guard has a manual of procedures that specifies the decision to be made in various situations. The manual is authoritative and

limits the officers to specified steps they should follow for each type of crisis discussed. An officer who fails to follow the manual is reprimanded. Because of their crisis orientation, the men at the Coast Guard station were free to relax and wait out the typhoon in the security of their quarters.

The Yapese are familiar with precautionary procedures, since the district government has a similar manual regarding typhoons. Most Yapese, however, have a noncrisis orientation, and so they ignore these procedures. Like my neighbors who told me not to worry and continued their activities, most Yapese downplay the likelihood of a crisis and avoid taking action on an issue as long as possible. When a crisis is imminent, they derive their solutions from whatever alternatives they perceive in the situation. Whether to save the pickup truck and/or the sawmill engine or to chance losing both is a decision they make during the storm as they struggle against the wind, waves, and other dangers. All of this is not without a measure of humor; while we were carrying the sawmill engine, we stopped and laughed at the sight of a house floating down the road.

While the Coast Guard's strategies seem more practical to the American mind, the Yapese also have sound reasons for their behavior. Although two or three storms have been known to strike the island in a single year, the last typhoon they had experienced was in 1967, twelve years earlier. Yet each year Yap receives warnings of at least twenty typhoons. Since these storms are so unpredictable, the Yapese are skeptical of weather bureau warnings and refuse to expend the effort necessary to clear everything from the shoreline and to get their homes and boathouses ready to withstand a possible storm. Their attitude is to wait until the typhoon is a reality, then do what they must to cope. Sometimes they are caught completely unprepared, and then it takes them about five days to clean up. However, if one considers the amount of labor saved by not responding to the warnings regarding the storms that ultimately veer away, over the long term the Yapese come out ahead. They may lose a few things in the process, but they are willing to accept that cost.

The Yapese extend this noncrisis orientation to many areas of life and typically ignore potential problems until they happen. For example, when a child is having difficulty in school, many parents do not admonish the child or inquire at the school until something happens to precipitate a crisis. The complex reasons for this are rooted in Yapese ideals regarding parent-child relationships. The Yapese community stresses that parents are directly

responsible for the behavior of their children. In return for parental nurture, children are expected to give unquestioning obedience and respect. As a consequence, many children feel a sense of shame and failure when they cause trouble or do poorly in school. When parents become aware of a child's problems, they are afraid to get involved, believing that the child might feel such great shame that he or she will stop going to school altogether or will run away. Some children have even attempted suicide when their shame was excessive. Fearing such dire consequences associated with becoming involved, the Yapese try to downplay personal crises and wait for problems to work themselves out.

Two Styles of Crisis Management

The procedures for managing actual crises also differ. Those individuals with a crisis orientation emphasize precise authoritative procedures geared to a specific situation. For example, Coast Guard officers follow an operations manual that spells out the correct procedures for most of the situations for which they may someday be responsible. Officers follow those procedures exactly and expect them to work. Although personnel changes year after year, Coast Guard operations and crisis management remain consistently the same. This pattern of crisis management is characteristic of the entire American military system. A navy friend of mine, Jim, was in charge of the nuclear firing devices on a particular vessel and was responsible for the security of the area. In practice drills, his commanding officer would frequently violate this forbidden area to test Jim's ability to respond to crisis. Each time Jim managed to "kill" his commanding officer, his performance was rated satisfactory. If he failed, he received a demerit. One night, a couple of drunken sailors from another ship overcame a guard, took his gun, and entered the prohibited area. The alarm sounded, and in less than two minutes, Jim was out of his bunk and had subdued and disarmed the men. He had practiced this procedure so many times that it had become automatic. Repetitious drilling had effectively prepared him for the real crisis when it happened. This type of crisis management reflects an extreme crisis orientation. The Yapese would never dream of introducing that kind of procedure into their culture, although they can learn it, just as we can and do.

The noncrisis orientation is experience focused; when a crisis arises, those with this orientation choose from among multiple options for resolving the problem. The way the Yapese respond to typhoons serves as an illustration. From their experience, the Yapese know that far more warnings than actual storms come to Yap. Further, when a storm does come, its direction determines its major effects. If a storm brings high water, the Yapese rescue items such as the sawmill engine. If, on the other hand, the wind is severe, they endeavor to secure objects that may blow away or injure others. They tackle the problems unique to each storm, protecting material possessions most immediately affected. For example, in 1967, my new house was saved because a few men worked in the water during the storm, shoving logs away from the house before the waves could turn them into battering rams.

Declarative Lifestyle versus Interrogative Lifestyle

Individuals as well as cultures differ in their orientation toward and management of crises. Those with a noncrisis orientation tend to take things as they come; they do not expect or look for problems. Those who are crisis oriented, however, tend to examine every activity for potential flaws or problems. The noncrisis-oriented person tends to be optimistic; the crisis-oriented person, pessimistic.

Crisis-oriented persons embrace what Mayers has termed a declarative lifestyle. In their view, crises should be avoided when at all possible, and careful planning is done to anticipate problems. Declarative persons seek out expert advice and are single-minded in applying that advice when they face crises. When a crisis does arise, they work rapidly to resolve the issue. Further, once they have identified an efficient procedure, they use it repeatedly rather than try something new or different.

Table 4
Crisis and Noncrisis Orientations

Crisis Orientation	Noncrisis Orientation
1. Anticipates crisis	1. Downplays possibility of crisis
2. Emphasizes planning	2. Focuses on actual experience

Crisis Orientation	Noncrisis Orientation
3. Seeks quick resolution to avoid ambiguity	3. Avoids taking action; delays decisions
4. Repeatedly follows a single authoritative, preplanned procedure	4. Seeks ad hoc solutions from multiple available options
5. Seeks expert advice	5. Distrusts expert advice

Noncrisis-oriented persons follow what Mayers has termed an interrogative lifestyle. Their brand of crisis management is experience oriented, and they choose from multiple procedures and options. Such persons decide between alternatives that emerge from each new situation, and their style of management is open-ended. They can tolerate considerable ambiguity in their lives and do not push for an early resolution of conflict. Further, seeing themselves as qualified by their own experiences to manage each situation, they are skeptical of experts.

Crisis Management and Cross-Cultural Ministry

Churches and mission organizations attract both types of people. Noncrisis-oriented administrators have an abundance of new ideas and interests, as well as an optimism that everything can be done with the present staff and resources. They ignore both potential and real problems and often refuse to seek advice from experts. The crisis-oriented persons on their staff shake their heads in dismay at the lack of planning and predictability. Crises arise with startling frequency, and the crisis-oriented individual rebels at the lack of preparation and the unpredictability of the situation. Individuals in conflict begin to question the spiritual commitment of one another as the stress of the situation takes its toll on their emotional and physical well-being. Some individuals leave the organization because the style of management produces more stress than they can endure.

Crisis-oriented administrators have a different problem. For them, plans and procedures supersede the needs of the people concerned. The workings of the organization are tightly regulated, and growth and change are planned years in advance. When a problem occurs, the contingency plan is implemented quickly, with expert direction, to bring resolution as soon as possible. Individuals who are not capable of working within the plan or who

are out of step with it are bypassed, overruled, or even dismissed from the organization.

When national church leaders and foreign missionaries attempt to work together, these differences may be further exacerbated, for cultural conflicts add to the problems caused by differences in management style. This tension is illustrated by the following incident.

A typhoon on Yap did some damage to the youth center of the Yap Evangelical Church, peeling up a section of the roof and exposing an area used as a classroom for children. The mission teacher was very much concerned because her school materials were located in this area, and if it were to rain, they could be damaged. So she told the Yapese pastor that this was an urgent matter. The pastor agreed and said that he would send word to Andrew, who was in charge of maintenance, to repair the roof. The teacher waited for a couple days, but Andrew did not appear. She began to be very anxious, thinking that it might rain at any time. Further, she did not want to conduct school until the roof was fixed. She discussed the matter with some other missionaries, and they decided to contact a Filipino construction group. Men from this group came the next day and quickly made the repairs.

Shortly thereafter Andrew heard about the Filipinos' work and was deeply hurt. From his point of view the matter had not been urgent; after a typhoon there is usually a period of a couple weeks without rain. His house had suffered considerable damage in the storm, whereas the roof of the youth center had sustained only minor damage. Since it had not rained, no further damage had been done. He complained to the Yapese pastor, "I have built every building in this place. I've made every repair that has ever been needed, and I would have made this one. Why didn't they wait for me and trust me?"

The conflict between missionary and national arose because of their different orientations with regard to crisis. If it had started to rain, Andrew would have dropped whatever he was doing and would have gone to town immediately to repair the roof. But each morning he studied the sky and, after concluding that there would be no rain that day, continued to work on his house. To him, until it started to rain, there was no crisis; besides, in just a couple days, he would have been ready to work on the roof anyway. But the teacher, compelled by a crisis orientation and a need for resolution,

could not tolerate her uncertainty about his coming and her anxiety about potential disaster.

For crisis-oriented missionaries and other outsiders, the noncrisis orientation produces not only frustration and anxiety but also serious breakdown in communication and mutual support. Another example from Yap illustrates this problem. An American pilot working with Pacific Missionary Aviation on Yap was flying a patient in from the island of Ulithi. The patient was hemorrhaging badly, so the pilot radioed to the hospital requesting an ambulance. The ambulance attendants were noncrisis-oriented Yapese who seldom got calls for an ambulance and hardly ever experienced a genuine crisis. When the pilot landed at the airport, there was no ambulance, and the patient died in the airplane. When the ambulance finally arrived about a half hour later, the pilot was livid and threatened to maim the driver. A Yapese mechanic, seeing the pilot's anger, ran to the driver and said, "He's so mad at you that he's going to kill you; you'd better get out of here!" At that point the driver fled back to town in the ambulance, leaving the pilot to get the body to the hospital.

If we are involved in Christian ministry, we must expect that our sense of urgency may not be shared by others. We must ask ourselves, is the problem as critical as we believe it to be? How much damage will really occur if the job is not done? What options are open to us should the expected crisis occur? In the case of the teacher, a simple way to alleviate anxiety would have been to move her classroom materials, because much of the roof had not been damaged. In the case of the pilot, however, the very real crisis ended with the death of his patient.

In regard to the pilot's case, it is easy simply to criticize the ambulance attendants and to exonerate the pilot. The pilot, however, had failed to establish a relationship with the attendants prior to the incident. He had failed to communicate with them, and thus they did not know what kinds of radio messages he might send to them during flight. He had not prepared to handle a critical situation within a noncrisis-oriented culture. The message he conveyed during the crisis seemed urgent to him but not to those who received it. He assumed the Yapese would understand him and respond as he (and people from his own culture) would respond. When they did not, he became enraged at them for not understanding him, although he had never made a serious effort to understand them or their particular orientation with regard to crisis.

Crisis Management in Short-Term Ministry

Every leader of a short-term ministry knows that the team will experience some kind of crisis, even in a one-week trip, and members on that team will have different attitudes about and responses to the crisis. The following story relates the frustration of a construction team in Mexico in 2013.

> We arrived in Mexico to surprises! After surveying the job, we quickly realized that the pastor had not purchased the supplies and tools he had promised. Second, the pastor had hired local labor to work on the church using money we had sent for materials. These unskilled men worked without good supervision, with results that were not acceptable to us. The studs for the walls were not set properly, so that installing 4' x 8' sheetrock could not be done without cutting and sizing each piece. Further, most of the lumber for the walls had been salvaged from another building.
>
> Because the pastor had not purchased nails, lumber, and some of the inexpensive tools we had recommended and funded, the work was much more difficult. As team leader I (Bill) felt I had to reorganize the whole project to get it done properly. I began by assigning some team members to tear out the poor studs on two walls and repair this unacceptable work of the local laborers. At that point the pastor objected, and we had a crisis of relationship between the pastor and members on the team. In the pastor's view, any work completed, no matter how poor, should not be redone. In contrast, the volunteers on the ministry team wanted to do work that would be satisfactory for their church or homes in the United States.
>
> As a consequence, the week unfolded with continuing tension between the team, me, and the pastor. We were frustrated because he had spent the advance money to give jobs to local men and did not buy the materials we needed. He was frustrated about our criticism of work that he and his people felt adequate for their church building. My task was to manage the frustration between the experienced volunteers on my team and these local people. To complicate matters further, the pastor continued to invite local people to work with us. We did our best to get the work done with the salvaged materials and unskilled helpers, and we pushed the pastor to drive forty miles to the nearest city to get some of the supplies we felt critical for the job.
>
> On day four of this five-day ministry trip, the team declared their disappointment with the project. They pointed to gaps in the sheetrock around windows, doors that did not close and latch properly, and plaster that looked like it had been done by amateurs. For the team, they had not achieved their objective of a finished church building that was ready for paint and worship services. Many grumbled about the pastor, complaining that he had kept them from correcting the poor work of local people and did not support them to get the job done well.
>
> We finished on day five with a time of worship and celebration; but they and we could not erase the tension that had built up in the week of struggle to get this job done. We had accomplished much, yet somehow we had failed to meet our expectations for this ministry project.

A common error in cross-cultural ministry is assuming that people understand us when they hear our words. We fail to see that differing personal orientations can prevent mutual understanding. In this case, the pastor was most concerned about the local men in his congregation and honoring their needs and work in the project. Mayers would describe his

approach as an interrogative lifestyle, tolerating a high degree of ambiguity, hiring local men, waiting to buy materials until they were needed, and accepting the work done as good enough. The team leader, in contrast, had a declarative style of leadership and management, requiring that every task be completed as scheduled and to his standard of satisfaction. Further, the team leader and the pastor each assumed that his personal style of decision making and crisis management was the best one.

Whether for a short-term or long-term mission objective, we must ask whether it is more important to do it our way or to work together with the people around us, building mutual understanding and cooperating to make decisions and solve crises in a manner acceptable and beneficial to the entire community. Crisis-oriented and noncrisis-oriented persons have much to contribute to one another, but this can be accomplished only when there is an attitude of mutual understanding and acceptance.

A Biblical Perspective

Many missionaries, pastors, and lay workers tend to judge issues only in spiritual terms and fail to see the cultural dimension. They can readily cite Scripture to support their own viewpoint as to how things ought to be done. However, they may be blind to scriptural evidence that another way might also have biblical precedent and support. When we examine the life of Christ, for example, we find that Jesus often demonstrated a noncrisis orientation. The Jewish leadership, on the other hand, had a crisis orientation to issues of the day. The law and traditions were their authoritative guide, and, pointing to this guide, they sought to coerce Jesus to resolve issues quickly. But Jesus responded with questions rather than with answers (e.g., Luke 20:3) and with parables that raised issues rather than brought resolution. Moreover, he slept in a boat during a storm, taught and healed until it was so late that people had to be fed, delayed en route to the respective homes of Jairus and Lazarus (so that in both cases the ill person died), and walked calmly into the hands of his betrayer.

The implication is that although Jesus demands a firm decision when we commit ourselves to him, we must be open-minded in our ensuing service. In Luke 9:23, he warns, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” According to this

statement, there is no room for wavering or for delay. Yet in the very next chapter (Luke 10:1–12), Jesus instructs those he is sending out to accept whatever circumstances arise as they follow him. He commands them to make no advance preparation but to stay wherever they are welcomed, eat whatever they are given, minister to those in need, and teach those who will listen.

For the Christian laborer, then, the challenge is to have an unwavering declarative commitment to the gospel and an open, questioning, noncrisis-oriented lifestyle and ministry. Paul charges Timothy, “Be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2). The command to be prepared suggests that a crisis orientation is needed so that the servant is ready for preaching and teaching opportunities, whereas the instruction to serve “with great patience” suggests a noncrisis orientation in personal life and ministry to others.

As Christian workers, we cannot escape Paul’s challenge that we are to be like Christ, taking the very nature of a servant (Phil. 2:5–7). Such servanthood requires that we become all things to the people we serve (1 Cor. 9:19–23). If some people think in ways different from ours, we must learn to think as they think. If some people respond to crises and make decisions in ways different from ours, we must add to our repertoire and learn their crisis-management style. Our goal must be to build up the unity and fellowship of the body of Christ. To achieve that goal, we must always consider others better than ourselves. Our role is to be that of a servant, empowering others to be who they are and to serve in the ways that best fit their gifts and values.

6

Tensions over Goals

A Yapese man in my village asked several of his friends and relatives to help him do some work. He set the date and requested that they come at ten in the morning. Understanding how Yapese view time, I went at eleven to see what was happening, and as I expected, I found a few men sitting around and talking. By noon some other men had trickled in, and we continued to talk. At about three in the afternoon, one man excused himself, saying he had other obligations, and soon another had to leave. At that point one man joked that they had come to work but had not done a thing. They all laughed and then decided that they would not bother to begin working that day but would come back the following Thursday. Gradually they dispersed, having spent most of the day in conversation.

The next Thursday they gathered again, some men coming as early as nine o'clock and others around ten. By half past ten there were enough to begin working, so they worked a little while and then stopped to talk and chew betel nut. A couple of other men appeared; they worked for nearly an hour and then sat down to talk and chew betel nut. This routine was followed all day. By late afternoon the men had worked the equivalent of four hours and were satisfied that they had accomplished a good day's labor. As they left they agreed to work again in a couple of weeks.

An American might react to this work pattern with the comment, "No wonder things take years to get done!" But those Yapese men were quite happy with both of those days. Their goal, their objective, was not so much to complete the task as to enjoy the interaction, their coming together and talking to one another. On the first day they enjoyed their socializing so much that they ignored the task. On the second day the organizer did want

to make progress on his project, but interaction was still an important part of their activity.

People from other cultures who have worked on Yap generally have not adopted Yapese work patterns—indeed, these workers have often found them incomprehensible. Korean and Japanese men employed there, for example, were renowned as hard workers and greatly impressed the Yapese with how much they could accomplish in a day as they repaired cars or labored in other jobs. However, these immigrants were paid on the basis of the quantity of work they completed; they were dependent on wages for their livelihood. Their economic needs often forced them to make the completion of their tasks their highest priority. The economic needs of the Yapese, in contrast, were met by subsistence agriculture. Group cooperation, which involved enjoying and building relationships with others, was as important to the maintenance of agriculture as was individual effort. As a consequence, the primary goal of the Yapese was not task completion but rather interaction with other people for mutually beneficial ends.

Task Orientation versus Person Orientation

Individuals who are task oriented find satisfaction in reaching their objectives and completing their projects. Their lives are motivated and directed by an unending succession of objectives. Frequently they aspire to complete a greater number of tasks than is humanly possible in the time they allocate; as a result, their lives take on a frenetic pace filled with activities. Many become workaholics, allowing tasks to so dominate their lives that other people are viewed as merely a part of their work schedule.

The social life of task-oriented individuals is often merely an extension of work activity. At social gatherings their conversation is limited primarily to problems or concerns associated with their work. Other subjects (except for those that focus on another of their objectives) bore them. Task-oriented people consider social activities a drain on their productive time and often prefer the solitude of working alone and uninterrupted. To achieve is more important than to build social relationships, and they are willing to endure social deprivation to reach their goals.

Individuals who are person oriented find their satisfaction in interaction with others. Their highest priority is to establish and maintain personal relationships, and they enjoy the social interaction required to sustain these relationships. Some take every available opportunity to meet new people and to cultivate an extensive network of personal contacts.

Table 5
Task and Person Orientations

Task Orientation	Person Orientation
1. Focuses on tasks and principles	1. Focuses on persons and relationships
2. Finds satisfaction in the achievement of goals	2. Finds satisfaction in interaction
3. Seeks friends with similar goals	3. Seeks friends who are group oriented
4. Accepts loneliness and social deprivation for the sake of personal achievements	4. Deplores loneliness; sacrifices personal achievements for group interaction

People who have interaction as a goal need the acceptance and stimulus of their group of associates. They must spend a significant amount of time and energy fulfilling the obligations of group membership and maintaining personal ties. They work hard to promote group interests and interaction, often sacrificing their own personal goals for the interests of others. Failure to accomplish a task is less critical to them than a gain in the quality of personal relationships.

Task Orientation in Ministry

Missionaries, pastors, and lay workers who are task oriented are well equipped for administrative responsibilities, teaching, preaching, and Bible translation. As long as they are able to schedule their own activities and to work independently of others, they will be effective in their service. Their frustrations lie with their fellow workers. They are intolerant of others who show less commitment to the task at hand than they do, and they experience great aggravation with those who spend time in apparently frivolous conversation and whose lives are not organized around a list of objectives.

When task-oriented individuals serve as missionaries in a person-oriented culture, they often fail to grasp the importance of interaction in the daily

work routine and become extremely judgmental of their national coworkers. For example, Americans in Micronesia may notice their national colleagues talking for long periods during the workday and may accuse them of being lazy and unproductive. These Americans, however, have failed to comprehend that social interaction is part of the Micronesian daily routine of working and has been so for hundreds of years. Further, they have failed to see the same pattern in the New Testament, even though it occurs there repeatedly. They have been blinded by their own cultural values.

Person Orientation in Ministry

Micronesians are not the only person-oriented people. Many Americans, in fact, have personal relationships as their central goal, and, conversely, many Micronesians focus primarily on tasks to be accomplished. In both cases, these individuals are pushing against the current of the values of their culture. American society views negatively the highly social but less productive person, while Micronesian societies disapprove of the individual who appears to be hard, unkind, and striving. For mission work, these differences suggest that the most productive Americans may not be the best people to send to person-oriented non-Western cultures and that the most productive nationals may not be the best candidates for church leadership.

The Western educational system is not designed to reward individuals who are person oriented. These students often struggle to meet the schedules and demands of learning and are unwilling to sacrifice interpersonal ties for long hours of study. Their academic records may be poorer than those of their task-oriented peers. It should be evident by now, however, that performance in school is not always a reliable indicator of potential success in ministry.

Another problem is that success in ministry is difficult to define. Since task-oriented people with high academic credentials are often the leaders in churches and mission organizations, success is often defined in terms of objective goals. The person-oriented members of their organizations often fall short of such goals, yet may have excellent relationships and a strong personal ministry. Sometimes leaders exert great pressure on person-oriented coworkers to conform to the expected pattern and may even view them as having a spiritual problem of resisting authority.

It should be apparent that we need to offer more encouragement to those among us who by nature are person oriented. They bring a special gift to ministry that others must struggle to learn. We also need to reassess the standards by which we select missionaries and nationals to be church leaders and by which we recognize them for service.

Conflict over Goals

When Micronesians get together to work, their social interaction is just as important to them as getting the job done. Unfortunately, many task-oriented missionaries fail to comprehend or accept such a value. As a consequence, they end up rejecting the very people to whom they feel called to minister. From their value perspective, work and interaction do not belong to the same process. Micronesians, on the other hand, believe that work without significant interaction is selfish and unsatisfying.

My own response to some Palauan men who constructed my house on Yap in 1967 is a good illustration of how a task-oriented person responds to the interaction-oriented Micronesian work pattern. A Palauan signed a contract calling for four men to construct my house at a cost of several hundred dollars. The contract specified that if the job took more than fifteen days, they would forfeit 10 percent for each day over the limit; if it took less than fifteen days, they would receive the full amount.

On the first day of work I went out to observe and found that instead of four men there were six. I thought, “Good. They will get the job done faster.” But as I watched, they worked for an hour and then rested for an hour, a pattern they continued all day. By the end of the day I was really upset. I thought that they would never finish in fifteen days. I complained to the Filipino businessman who had arranged the contract. I wrote a letter to my uncle, a carpenter in California, expressing amazement at how the Palauans worked. Having spent only three weeks on Yap and never before having been exposed to another culture, I was astounded as these men sat and chewed betel nut and talked, working only roughly half of an eight-hour day. Yet unbelievably, six days later they finished the house.

I could not comprehend their strategy. Why did they bring two extra men? Why not use four men, work all day, and make more money? I later came to understand that for Micronesians a major incentive in doing a job is

interaction. If they cannot enjoy themselves and talk to one another, there is little reason to work. Their goal is not to make all the money they can. Indeed, the six had other jobs, and the day they finished my house, they went back to their regular employment, where they made an hourly wage. They were concerned more with the interaction than with the pay.

Task and Person in Short-Term Ministry

In the case of the short-term church construction project in Mexico, discussed in chapter 5, the local pastor, like the Yapese, was person oriented. Knowing that many of his men lacked jobs, he had compassion on them as he planned his project. When he received advance funding from the US church for the building project, he decided to give employment to the people in his church who needed it, regardless of their skills. Instead of purchasing new lumber, he found salvage lumber available and paid them to clean it and bring it to the church site. Together they completed the structural shell of the church with these materials before the US team arrived. When the US team leader, Bill, began to dismantle some of their work, the pastor was distressed for his people and feared that these Americans would destroy his relationship with these local men. The quality of the building was clearly secondary to his relationships with these local men and their economic and spiritual well-being.

The short-term mission team leader, Bill, was clearly task oriented. After he discovered what he termed “junk materials” and poor-quality work by local laborers, he took control of the work from the pastor and organized his team to get the job done on his schedule and according to his standards of quality. He broke trust with the pastor and humiliated the local men by dismantling some of their work. When the pastor insisted that the US team include the local men on the job, the US team reluctantly included them, but they were clearly marginalized. And the US team set the work routine to minimize social interaction with these local men, except for scheduled time for “ministry events” like the final celebration. At the end of the ministry week, the US team could not celebrate the completed work because it did not measure up to their expectations.

The tragedy of this conflict is that these dedicated volunteers lost a wonderful opportunity to work alongside of and mentor these Mexican men

in carpentry and in spiritual life. If this team had seen the work of discipleship as their primary objective, and the building project as the means of helping unskilled Mexican men grow in the Lord, they could have had a completely different ministry experience. First, instead of judging and condemning their work, they could have expressed gratitude and asked, how can we best be of help to you all? Then Bill might have asked the pastor how his volunteers could share their testimonies and teach carpentry skills to these local men while doing a week of work with them. If they together had sought to build up the body of Christ while working together on the building, the week would have gone in a completely different direction.

Many Western pastors and missionaries believe that we must dichotomize our work and our social interaction. In industrial societies, the coffee break or interaction time is clearly separated from the work time. Many missionaries have asked me, a self-confessed task-oriented person, how I could adjust to the change. My response is based on two principles. First, I accept the fact that I am what I am and that God wants me and will use me as I am. Second, I try to obey the admonition in Philippians 2:3: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves."

This issue is important to any cross-cultural worker but is fundamental to the followers of Jesus. Jesus sends his disciples out to minister to people, to serve them, to communicate God's love for them. Building relationships is central to ministry. A person sent by God on mission must devote his or her time and life to personal interaction. This means the task-oriented individual must consciously allocate significant amounts of time to sit and talk with people, for without a conscious effort, tasks will exhaust all available time and energy.

For the workaholic, casual conversation can be more difficult than a hundred chores. While such people may outwardly appear to be listening, inwardly they are thinking of all the things they could be doing instead. They find it extremely difficult to concentrate on people when there is so much to be done. Their body is present, but their mind is somewhere else, working on some other task. This is a critical problem for missionaries because people are sensitive and are often aware of this rejection.

It is important for task-oriented people to recognize that their striving after objective goals is a character flaw if the compulsion to work becomes

obsessive. As Christians, we want to reach people for Christ, but we often push people out of our activities. It does not matter how many buildings we build or how many reports we submit. If we are not meeting people and loving them through interaction, we have lost sight of the Great Commission and our activities have lost significance. We can sit at a desk and pour out our lives into a Bible translation or other Christian work, but the people out there in the world will never see that we love them. At a desk, we rarely talk to them, we rarely interact with them, we seldom show them that we care. We do not go out and work at their side. It is important to realize that, although we might be doing a work of love with our hands or heart or mind, unless we show people our love in a personal way by interacting with them as individuals, our work will mean nothing to them.

A Biblical Perspective

"As apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her little children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well" (1 Thess. 2:6–8). Paul's example is one that we should admire and look to as a guide for our own lives and ministries. We know from his letters that he did not impose the strict discipline of the Jewish lifestyle on his gentile converts. Further, he saw the necessity of sharing his life, not just the gospel message.

Each of us has different talents. Some have a gift for interacting with people. Others have a gift for achieving objective goals. All of us who aspire to Christian ministry and service must seek to increase our concern for and interaction with others, or, in Paul's words, we must seek to share our lives. We need to develop a habit of evaluating our priorities, and we need to recognize that the tasks we think are so critical are not more important than the people God has entrusted to us.

The life of Jesus furnishes powerful evidence of the importance of persons in the kingdom of God. The incident described in Mark 6:30–46 illustrates how Jesus managed the tension between task orientation and person orientation. The story opens with the account of a schedule so filled

with needy people that Jesus and his disciples did not even have time to eat (v. 31).

Let us try to imagine the emotions Jesus felt. He and his disciples were obviously overwhelmed by work. He had recently been rejected by the people in his hometown (Mark 6:1–6). He may also have felt threatened by Herod (see Luke 9:9). He needed time to rest and to be alone to pour out his frustration to his Father over an unbelieving hometown and an evil king who had murdered John the Baptist, who was both herald of and kinsman to Jesus. In his place, most of us would probably have said to the crowd, "Can't you leave me alone for a while? I must have some time to myself. I need to think and pray."

Mark tells us, however, that when Jesus saw the large crowd, he did not engage in self-pity but "had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd" (6:34). Apparently this was not just a "whistle-stop" visit either, for the text says that "late in the day" the disciples came to him and urged him to send the people away to the villages so that they might find food. Jesus again showed his compassion (and his power) by feeding all the people who had followed him (the number of the men alone was five thousand). Finally, after he had taught and fed them, he returned to his first objective, which was to seek solitude and prayer. He sent the disciples away in a boat, dismissed the crowd, and then "went up on a mountainside to pray."

This story powerfully teaches that no goal or task is of greater importance than the people to whom God has sent us to minister. Jesus achieved his goal, but the time he gave to himself was from dark until the hours just before dawn (Mark 6:48). He gave the people to whom he ministered the best hours of his day; he served them in the hour of their need. This pattern occurs throughout the Gospels as time and again Jesus gives priority to a person in need instead of to his own tasks and goals. Consider, for example, the data in table 6, which shows that in Luke 4–9, Jesus on sixteen occasions gives priority to people in need and on only four occasions to a principle or task to be performed.

Table 6
Jesus's Priorities in Luke 4–9

Task or Principle	People

1. Declaration that no prophet is accepted in his hometown (4:24–30)

2. Declaration that he must preach to other towns (4:43)

3. Refusal to see his mother and brothers—declaration that those who hear his word and practice it are his true family (8:19–21)

4. Settlement of the argument as to who is greatest—whoever is least (9:46–48)

1. Healing of the sick and demon-possessed (4:31–41)

2. The call to Simon to be a fisher of men (5:1–11)

3. Healing of a leper (5:12–14)

4. Healing and forgiveness of a paralytic (5:17–25)

5. Eating with sinners (5:29–32)

6. Statement that as guests of the bridegroom the disciples need not fast (5:33–35)

7. Picking grain on the Sabbath (6:1–5)

8. Healing on the Sabbath (6:6–11)

9. Healing of the centurion's servant (7:1–10)

10. Raising of the widow's son (7:11–15)

11. Forgiveness of the sinful woman (7:36–50)

12. Healing of a demon-possessed man (8:26–39)

13. Raising of Jairus's daughter and healing of a chronically ill woman (8:40–56)

14. Feeding of five thousand (9:10–17)

15. Healing of a demon-possessed boy (9:37–43)

16. Refusal to curse hostile Samaritans (9:51–56)

Mark 6 and many other texts show Jesus meeting personal needs at whatever time they occurred; he delayed all other tasks until these needs had been met. This principle is of critical importance to Western task- and time-oriented missionaries. The Christian who is both task oriented and time oriented rarely has time for personal ministry. A classic example is a missionary couple I observed on a Navajo reservation. They were so frustrated that the Navajos came with needs or demands at any time, day or night, that they refused to answer the door except during a three-hour period

each afternoon. Navajo people told me that this couple had little interest in them personally; the missionaries' only concern was to have a good attendance at their worship services.

We cannot hold office hours for the people to whom Christ has called us to minister. We must adjust our time schedules, balancing the tension between meeting their needs and accomplishing our tasks, even if it means some of our priorities are not met. Paul tells us in Colossians 3:12 that we are to clothe ourselves "with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

Radical Discipleship

Christians are challenged to "follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:1–2). We cannot accept the challenge of missions and ignore this admonition from Paul. Our aim should be to imitate Christ, a goal toward which we strive yet cannot attain, except as his Spirit enables us in union with Christ. Toward this end, we may strive to give persons our highest priority in love and balance the essential tasks.

Although perfection is beyond our reach, we still can strive for the lesser goal of adding to our repertoire the goal orientation and values of the culture of those we serve. If we are working with person-oriented Micronesians, then we must certainly give persons top priority in our thinking. On the other hand, if we are working with task-oriented Chinese or Koreans, an orientation to people at the expense of productivity in our tasks may win us friends but may also lead to disrespect. In these cultures, person-oriented missionaries must give higher priority to accomplishing appropriate tasks. In essence, we need to move from a position comfortable to us and our culture to a position approximating the goals of the culture to which we are sent. Wherever we serve, our objective should be to live in such a way that we respect, love, and share our very lives (including our priorities and goals) with those with whom we seek to minister.

7

Tensions about Self-Worth

When my family was on Yap the second time, our daughter Jennifer washed her blue jeans late one afternoon and hung them on the line. About seven that evening she went out to see if they were dry and discovered that they were gone. The clothespins were still on the line, but the jeans were gone. She came storming into the house, demanding, “Who took my jeans?” None of us had any clues.

The next morning we visited our Yapese neighbor and related the story of the missing jeans. Without hesitation she said, “Catalina—Catalina is the one who took them.” We asked, “How do you know?” She replied, “Catalina goes home past your house every night, and she’s a thief.” Not convinced by this bit of character assessment, we looked for evidence that from our perspective was more substantial.

That same evening we went into the town of Colonia and attended a basketball game in which the high school boys from our municipality were playing. Catalina was also there, dressed in a pair of jeans that fit her perfectly. She was about four inches shorter than Jennifer and quite a bit smaller, but her jeans had a telltale green ink stain on the back of one pocket—right where Jennifer had once sat on a pen. Jennifer’s jeans had apparently been cut down and sewed back together and were now a nice fit for Catalina. By this time the story of Jennifer’s jeans had circulated widely, and several girls sarcastically asked Catalina where she had found them. Later that evening people in the village admired her new jeans, subtly indicating that they knew where she had obtained them.

The sequel to this story occurred about a week later when I was interviewing a woman fifteen miles away in Southern Yap. After the interview itself and just as a matter of conversation, I told her the story of

the jeans. Unable to picture Catalina, she asked who her mother was. When I answered, “Tinan,” her eyes brightened in a flash of insight. She burst out, “Oh, that explains the whole thing. Tinan is a thief, so Catalina would be a thief.”

When the Yapese ask who someone is, they want to know who the person’s mother and father are, because they believe that one’s character closely resembles that of one’s parents. Identity, personal prestige, and worth are determined on the basis of birth. Family background is more important than personal accomplishments (or lack thereof).

Status Focus

Yap is a status-focused society, what Marvin Mayers (1974) categorizes as prestige-ascribed. Cultures and individuals with this orientation are concerned primarily with a person’s birth and social rank. Respect is given to individuals on the basis of their social position.

Another example of this orientation is found in the Gospel of Luke. Apparently, in the Jewish culture of Jesus’s day, prestige was assigned to, rather than achieved by, a person. Luke opens his narrative with a detailed description of the family background of John the Baptist and Jesus and includes a complete genealogy of Jesus in chapter 3. Throughout the Gospel, we find references to prominent Pharisees and doctors of the law. These men were given places of honor at weddings and religious festivals (Luke 14). Their prestige apparently derived from (1) their genealogical heritage, (2) their membership in the leading religious societies, which involved rigorous training in the Jewish Scriptures and law, and (3) their inclusion among the prominent ruling families of Judea, who intermarried with one another and controlled considerable wealth.

Most individuals who find their basic identity and self-worth in the prestige ascribed to them enjoy playing the role assigned to their particular position in society. They relish the titles bestowed upon them, such as Reverend or Doctor or Rabbi. They derive satisfaction from public rituals in which their particular position is formally honored. To sit at the speaker’s table at a banquet is a contemporary example, while the seat of honor referred to in Luke 14 was a common means of recognition in first-century Jewish culture.

Further, such individuals prefer the company of their equals and shun or minimize contacts with those perceived as inferior. In the Gospels, Jewish leaders remark time and again about Jesus's persistent habit of associating and eating with the lower elements of society—namely, publicans and sinners (Luke 15:1–2). This behavior not only annoyed them but also caused them to question the legitimacy of Jesus's status as Rabbi. In American society, this same pattern is manifested when people buy homes in certain neighborhoods or join certain country clubs or particular church denominations that reflect their ascribed prestige. People who refuse, as Jesus did, to play their role in the prescribed way become outsiders in the social system and may be denied rights, privileges, and promotions by those in control.

Achievement Focus

In other cultures, prestige is not ascribed on the basis of social rank but is achieved. In societies with this orientation, an individual's identity and self-worth are bound up with personal performance. The dominant question is what the individual has accomplished. People with this value orientation scoff at titles and formal rituals of recognition. For them, success is the measure of their worth. This success may be defined in many ways. Some seek it in economic terms, measuring achievement by accumulation of property, income, and net worth. Jesus gives an illustration in the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13–21). Others seek success in the moral quality of their life and measure achievement in terms of personal righteousness. An example is the ruler who claimed to have lived a good life, having kept the commandments since he was a boy (Luke 18:18–30). Still others strive to achieve through a life of service, doing good deeds for family, church, or community.

In cultures in which prestige is ascribed, such prestige tends to be permanent. Not so in cultures in which prestige must be achieved. Athletes are praised for their recent performances but are quickly forgotten when someone younger surpasses them. Businessmen are lauded for their latest deal, but they become the object of condescending whispers when they fail to continue to succeed. Writers are praised or damned for their latest book, or lack of one, and so on. Respect is given to success that is current and

continuing. Consider the Corinthians' treatment of Paul. It seems that a faction praised Apollos, who ministered among them after Paul and impressed them regularly with his oratory, so that they lowered their estimation of Paul, who, after his original success with them, had disappeared from the scene and had failed to return as promised.

People who have achieved prestige often develop a highly critical attitude toward themselves and others. They are seldom satisfied with their own achievements and struggle continually to do more. They quickly forget past achievements and strive to accomplish new goals. Like Martha (Luke 10:38–42), they look at others who are doing less than they are and judge them as inadequate or lazy. This critical outlook may produce both deep envy and low self-esteem in those less gifted than others. On the other hand, it drives the successful to pursue higher and higher goals and to scorn those whose talents are less than their own.

Achievers enjoy and respect other achievers. They do not pay attention to family heritage or personal rank. Apollos, a Jewish disciple of John the Baptist, was accepted readily by the new Greek Christians (Acts 18:24–28) because of his achievements in knowledge of the Scriptures and his powerful ability to expound that knowledge. Americans, too, love successful people. Jay Leno produced one of the longest-running shows on television by building it around interviews with successful people from all aspects of contemporary life. The versatile, the proficient, and the expert delight in diverse associates who, like Leno's guests, stem from different family, ethnic, and religious backgrounds and from every walk of life. The common basis for their interaction is their accomplishments and their mutual respect for others who are achievers.

A Biblical Perspective

It is imperative that cross-cultural workers be aware of their own conception of the basis of personal identity and self-worth. Then they must determine the attitude of their adopted culture on the same issue. Table 7 summarizes the two basic orientations: (1) status focus—prestige is ascribed on the basis of family background and social standing; (2) achievement focus—prestige is acquired through recent

accomplishments. You may be surprised to learn that Jesus rejects both orientations as inadequate.

Table 7
Status and Achievement Focuses

Status Focus *(Prestige Is Ascribed)*	**Achievement Focus** *(Prestige Is Acquired)*
1. Personal identity is determined by formal credentials of birth and rank	1. Personal identity is determined by one's achievements
2. The amount of respect one receives is permanently fixed; attention focuses on those with high social status in spite of any personal failings they have	2. The amount of respect one receives varies with one's accomplishments and failures; attention focuses on personal performance
3. An individual is expected to play his or her role and to sacrifice to attain higher rank	3. An individual is extremely self-critical and makes sacrifices in order to accomplish ever greater deeds
4. People associate only with their social equals	4. People associate with those of equal accomplishments regardless of background

Jesus rebukes those who find their self-esteem in ascribed rank and public honors. In Luke 14:7–11, he warns those who seek places of honor that their self-aggrandizing will end in humiliation. He admonishes them to take the low places rather than the high.

A common practice then and now is entertaining guests in one's home. Jesus advises against inviting only our friends, relatives, and people of our own social class, occupation, and neighborhood (v. 12). How many of us who are middle class and financially secure actually live among the poor or even invite to dinner the common people to whom we minister? Most of the mission compounds I have visited in the third world have reflected a standard of living equal to the highest level of that particular society. In these compounds, the poor have not been the guests; rather, they have been the servants. But Jesus commands us to make the poor our guests of honor (vv. 13–14).

In Luke 14:26, Jesus strikes at the heart of Jewish social tradition. The prestige afforded by a noble ancestry, the honor attained by making an advantageous marriage, and the wealth and power gained from membership in a prominent family were the hallmarks of worldly success for Jews. When Jesus said to the crowd, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate

father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple," he repudiated the fundamental assumptions of their social life.

In striking contrast, the career Jesus prescribes for his followers is one of service. In Matthew 20:25–27, Jesus says that anyone aspiring to leadership in his service must be a servant, and the person aspiring to the top position must be a slave to the others. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:5–7 that Jesus himself set the example: "Being in very nature God . . . he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant."

Individuals whose lifestyle reflects prestige ascribed to them because of their social position find servanthood a very uncomfortable career. Such people tend to rationalize their standard of living and have good arguments for maintaining the mission compound or for living in a culturally homogeneous suburb. They are so busy with the requirements of living their role that they have no time to entertain the poor as guests; the poor may even become their servants. It is extremely difficult for such people to become doers of the Word and not just hearers.

Others, however, take pride instead in their accomplishments. They may be like Martha (Luke 10), engaged in perpetual service to Christ, or like the rich young ruler who could say that he had kept all the commandments (Luke 18). They perhaps have a selfish need to do good and be good and look down on those who fall short of their performance.

The rich young ruler said to Jesus, "All these [commandments] I have kept since I was a boy" (Luke 18:21). He knew the rules, and he was an achiever, living the righteous life according to all the standards of his culture. How many missionaries and Christian workers are like this, confidently fulfilling their standards of righteousness and being seemingly flawless in their daily lives? Even though they may acknowledge their sinfulness in God's sight, their lives seem exemplary in contrast to the sin around them.

To the rich young ruler Jesus gave a simple command: "Sell everything you have and give to the poor. . . . Then come, follow me" (v. 22). Jesus asked of him something that was impossible for him to do. We often fail to see how this command applies to us, but Jesus's disciples saw its clear implication. They asked, "Who then can be saved?" (v. 26). They realized that Jesus was asking the impossible of all of us. If we have not sold all that

we have, given it to the poor, and followed Jesus, we have not done enough!

Yet we continue to seek self-worth through our performance. Like Martha, we become evaluators of the less-than-perfect people who live and work with us. We look down on the inefficient, lazy, wasteful, and carnal national Christians who do not take care of the mission property, who steal from us (the wealthy), who lie to us to please us (the powerful), and, when compared with us (the righteous), who are less than exemplary morally.

Jesus rebukes Martha, saying, "Martha, Martha, . . . you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one" (Luke 10:41–42). Jesus does not say in this text what that one thing is. Rather, he says that Mary "has chosen what is better" (v. 42)—she sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his words (v. 39). People who think they can attain true self-worth through their accomplishments should bear in mind what Jesus says in Luke 14:26: unless one hates "even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple."

Self-Worth in Short-Term Mission

The Biola team in Chad was the recipient of tremendous hospitality. Everywhere we went, African believers greeted us with love, fed us the very best of their food, offered us their homes to sleep in, and responded to our every need. This was a reflection of their self-worth. The greatest sin among these people is to be stingy, and it is a great honor to be generous. We never heard a grumble or complaint among them. Their spirit was infectious, and we found ourselves loving them and desiring to share our hospitality with them. Some of our greatest sacrifices were giving away a precious energy bar or a granola bar, knowing that the only other alternative was millet and goat.

At Nzoro, Holly and Hans were particularly touched by a crippled and naked boy who came to our camp every evening. I noticed in the middle of the week that the boy had clothing. He was wearing a T-shirt and shorts that had been worn by Holly and Hans earlier in the week. Since I had limited the luggage for each person on the team to sixteen pounds, these gifts were indeed a sacrifice.

Yet despite the hospitality of these Africans, several members of the team developed a critical spirit toward the local people. Some of this emerged from the difficult physical and emotional challenges of strange food, lack of sleep, sickness, and culture shock. But at the root of this spirit, we discovered in ourselves attitudes of superiority, looking with scorn at the poverty of life, the lack of education, and the "inferior patterns of worship" among these local peoples. Early on, the choice of music for team worship became a source of contention, and two men took over team worship, insisting that their form was best. During the five intensive days of drama performances, frustrations from fatigue, food, and sickness brought to the surface attitudes of disgust and longing for the superior foods, comforts, and entertainments of the United States. The poverty of Chad had become a subject of ridicule and of people not being worthy of our respect and honor.

When we arrived back in the city at the end of our first week of drama ministry, we attended a local church service led by one of the pastors who accompanied us in the villages. Some left the service ridiculing the music and the worship of these local people. After church, Ernestiene asked if we could talk about the undercurrent of criticism and mocking among team members. Together Ernestiene and Holly shared their concerns and their observations. Together we identified some patterns of selfishness that had become part of our attitudes and actions. Each individual member spoke about his or her own attitude and need for confession and prayer. We talked together, and we prayed together, and the Lord healed our wounded spirits and renewed our commitment to him and to his mission for us.

I probably had as much growing to do as any other member of the team. Although I had lived and worked cross-culturally for more than thirty years, I was at times impatient with young people who somehow couldn't get it right. Their struggles and failure somehow became a challenge to my self-worth. I didn't like my jokes, and I found myself being sharp and impatient with individuals on the team when they didn't see things my way. When I confessed this matter to the Lord and to members of the team, I experienced their love and forgiveness.

True Self-Worth

We feel a sense of self-worth when prestige is ascribed to us because of our social position or when we think we have achieved prestige through our accomplishments. Each culture defines its own paths to recognition and self-fulfillment. Yet this pursuit of significance stands in opposition to the career of servanthood that God has for all believers.

The biblical estimate of self-worth is summed up in Romans 3:10–12: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." Despite the fact that many Christians know this text by heart, very few take it seriously in evaluating their own self-worth. Rather, we continually measure our performance vis-à-vis that of others around us.

However, despite our inherent worthlessness and empty self-righteousness, God finds worth in us. The parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15 emphasizes the longing that God has to bring us to himself and the joy that fills heaven when we repent from our self-directed way. Repentance, however, does not make us worthy; rather, it opens us to receive the gift of worthiness from God. Paul explains in Romans 3:21–24, "Now apart from the law the righteousness from God has been made known." This is not a self-worth that can be obtained by human effort. "This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." Furthermore, whereas human attempts to find identity and self-worth divide us from one another and result in humiliation and subjugation of the weak, the gift of God's worthiness creates within us the servant attitude of Jesus, even to the point of giving our lives for others (Phil. 2:5–8).

The follower of Jesus, then, has to recognize that self-worth comes through neither ascribed nor achieved prestige and that one must be a servant in the pattern set by Christ. Yet the practical requirements of day-to-day living compel us to acknowledge and respect the cultural standards around us. Indeed, Paul reminds us in Titus 3:1–2 that servanthood requires that we be subject to rulers, authorities, and social norms (this, of course, reflects the standards of a culture in which prestige is ascribed). And at the same time he stresses that those who have trusted God must "be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good" (v. 8; a reflection of the standards

of a culture in which prestige is achieved). To live a life consistent with the self-worth we have in God, we must be sensitive both to who we (and others) are and to what we do.

8

Tensions regarding Vulnerability

I was watching a baseball game on the island of Yap, not suspecting that I was about to have a lesson in Micronesian culture. During the third inning, one of the teams had a hitting streak and kept scoring runs. As the twelfth run crossed the plate, the pitcher threw down his glove and walked off the field. His teammates, expressing the same frustration, gathered their equipment and left for home. The game thus ended abruptly as the team in the field, humiliated by the high score, thought it fruitless to play any longer. I was amused at this behavior but did not understand its full significance until later.

A similar incident occurred on United Nations Day, October 24. On Yap, this day was always a cause for celebration. People gathered from all the municipalities on the island to engage in various athletic and cultural activities. The footraces were particularly interesting to watch, since each area entered its best runners, and the spectators cheered on their local favorites with great excitement. I noticed that in one race after another, the lead runners looked back as they ran. Knowing that this slowed them down, I asked some Yapese for an explanation and received an unexpected answer. The Yapese runners were worried not that someone would catch them but rather that they would get too far ahead. If their lead became too great, the others would quit and walk off the course, and the leader would cross the finish line alone. The spectators would then ridicule the winner for showing off and embarrassing the others. To be too good was much worse than being not quite good enough. One must be concerned about the vulnerability of others.

Concealment of Vulnerability

Marvin Mayers (1982) characterizes Yapese society as a culture that perceives vulnerability as weakness. Individuals and cultures with this perspective try to avoid failure and error at all cost. The racer who runs far ahead makes the other runners look weak by comparison. A Yapese would rather not run than appear inept. The same pattern applies in other contexts. A Micronesian student would rather not take an exam than take it and fail, or would prefer to not turn in a written assignment than to demonstrate an inability to write. The Yapese simply do not want to make mistakes, and when they do, they try very hard to cover up their errors or to excuse them.

The achiever is a threat to those who are less competent. The American teacher who makes the mistake of publicly praising a Micronesian student has sentenced that student to such severe peer criticism that the student may purposely fail in his or her work for weeks to come. The A student is seen as showing off, making the others look bad. The peer group resents such insensitive behavior, which exposes the shortcomings of others.

Persons who feel that failure and vulnerability are weaknesses also strongly defend their positions and behavior. They feel threatened by anyone who disagrees with their point of view and are quick to assert that the others are in error and to deny any mistakes on their own part. It is essential for them to be right about an issue and to point out that others are wrong. Anything new or unusual is immediately suspect because it is not part of their experience and opens them to uncertainty. They do not like to enter new situations or take part in unfamiliar activities; such events produce anxiety for them, since the unknown context does not allow them to control their performance and thus to conceal their vulnerability.

Willingness to Expose Vulnerability

Americans, by contrast, often demand that people expose their vulnerability and risk failure. In sports, for example, Americans insist that games be played to the end, regardless of the point spread. Baseball games must go the full number of innings, even if one team is twenty runs ahead. Football must be played the full sixty minutes, even if the score is 74–0. The losing team is admonished to endure, to complete the game with as much dignity

as possible. The important thing in American competition is completion of an event—did we finish the race, endure to the bitter end? Endurance, even in defeat, is evidence of personal strength in failure.

Table 8
Concealment of Vulnerability versus Willingness to Expose Vulnerability

Concealment of Vulnerability	Willingness to Expose Vulnerability
1. Protection of self-image at all costs; avoidance of error and failure	1. Relative unconcern about error and failure
2. Emphasis on the quality of performance	2. Emphasis on completion of event
3. Reluctance to go beyond one's recognized limits or to enter the unknown	3. Willingness to push beyond one's limits and enter the unknown
4. Denial of culpability; withdrawal from activities in order to hide weaknesses and shortcomings	4. Ready admission of culpability, weaknesses, and shortcomings
5. Refusal to entertain alternative views or accept criticism	5. Openness to alternative views and criticism
6. Vagueness regarding personal life	6. Willingness to talk freely about personal life

Quitters or those who refuse to push themselves beyond their own limits are scorned in American society. On the other hand, individuals who can laugh at themselves, joke about their failure, and jump back into the thick of a contest win admiration and respect. The most successful sports heroes do not allow failure to depress or paralyze them but bounce back with new strength.

Persons who are willing to expose their vulnerability are relatively unconcerned with error, either in themselves or in others. They enjoy learning from others, even when it puts their own weakness on display. In argument or debate, they can readily entertain a view other than their own and are open to criticism and suggestions from others. They are generally willing to try new ways of solving old problems or to explore areas that are unknown or untried.

A Biblical Perspective

A careful examination of New Testament teaching shows that each of these orientations—the concealment and the exposing of vulnerability—has both positive and negative aspects. In Luke 14, Jesus teaches that there is wisdom in guarding one's weaknesses. Using examples of a man who wants to build a tower and a king who is about to go to war, Jesus commends estimating the cost and weighing one's vulnerability (vv. 28–33). To fail to consider one's weakness is foolish and opens one to public ridicule and error. To see vulnerability as weakness, then, is a wise thing. Jesus challenges his followers to choose the path of humility, which ultimately leads to honor (vv. 10–11).

At the same time, this value orientation contains pitfalls. The frequent dialogue between Jesus and the Jewish leaders provides many illustrations, one of which is a reluctance to grapple with difficult questions. When Jesus asked them if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath, they refused to answer (vv. 3–4). They did not want to discuss an issue that raised questions about the validity of their theological and practical position.

Another pitfall is a propensity to argue persistently for one's interpretation of an issue. The argument that the Sadducees presented in Luke 20 against the resurrection was an attempt to confound Jesus and to justify their own position. When he refuted them, they stopped asking questions (v. 40) but did not change their minds. The ultimate danger in such behavior is the covering up of errors and the denial of mistakes. When the Jewish leaders challenged Jesus's authority, his response caught them in their vulnerability (Luke 20:1–8). When he asked them about the authority of John's baptism, he ensnared them in a dilemma: "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet" (vv. 5–6). So they simply answered, "We don't know," a refusal to admit the shakiness of their position.

Scripture is filled with paradoxes. Among them is its teaching regarding the issue under discussion, for while Jesus clearly taught that there is wisdom in taking one's vulnerability into account and guarding against failure, we also find in Scripture that there is wisdom in accepting and exposing one's weaknesses. This is particularly evident in the writings of the apostle Paul. Focusing on his own life experience (2 Cor. 12:7–10), Paul writes that recognition of one's weaknesses results in dependence on God and his power. "That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in

insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (v. 10).

Paul argues that vulnerability is potentially a great source of strength to a believer. Just as Christ was crucified in weakness yet lives by God's power, so believers "are weak in him, yet by God's power . . . will live with him in our dealing with you" (2 Cor. 13:4). Personal vulnerability also helps us find strengths in others. Paul says he is glad when he is weak but others are strong, and he prays for their perfection (v. 9). To accept one's vulnerability is to be open to the strength and support of others. Further, seeing weakness as an opportunity to impart strength prompts one to build others up rather than tear them down. All too often people see weakness and failure in the church as something to be destroyed. Paul not only accepted weakness in himself and others but also wrote to the Corinthians that the Lord had given him authority "for building you up, not for tearing you down" (v. 10).

On the other hand, a society that encourages a willingness to expose one's vulnerability and to risk failures is subject to the pitfalls of self-righteousness. By exposing the weaknesses of others, we may develop a condescending attitude toward them. Some of the Corinthian Christians saw Paul's public speaking ability as less than impressive and looked down on him for this weakness (2 Cor. 10:10–12). A related danger is that of developing a critical attitude toward those who do not see things our way. The factions that developed in the Corinthian church between the followers of Paul and those of Apollos were the result of such attitudes (1 Cor. 3:4). The greatest danger is that of self-centered arrogance, a casual and careless attitude concerning the weaknesses and failures of oneself and others (1 Cor. 4:18–5:2). Whereas accepting one's weaknesses should lead to dependence on the power of God, it may, if one focuses on self rather than on God, result in a casual attitude toward sin.

It should be evident from the discussion above that no biblical mandate supports one of these value orientations to the exclusion of the other. Neither pattern of behavior has the unqualified blessing of God. Both can be used for good or evil. For example, people who fear exposing their vulnerability may exercise wisdom and care in planning so that they do not overextend their resources, and they may show concern and sensitivity regarding the weaknesses and needs of others. At the same time, such people may deny their own vulnerability, cover up errors, and defend their position with an uncompromising fervor that on the surface is godly but

underneath is nothing more than self-protecting. Some will refuse to admit a mistake, even though doing so might save others from trouble and conflict.

On the other hand, those who risk themselves feel free to expose the weaknesses in their personal lives and do not worry unduly about making mistakes or failing. However, if they expose errors in a society such as that of the Yapese, in which great anxiety surrounds mistakes, their behavior is cruel and hurtful. There is also the danger that personal freedom may develop into an attitude of condescension toward and criticism of others.

Further, a willingness to expose vulnerability may lead to carelessness in one's personal life and activities. One might, for example, make comments such as, "Why worry about that mistake? We all make them" or "You can't do great work all the time!" or "I don't care if things fall apart; you win some and you lose some." Such comments reflect an orientation to self rather than to others and a manipulation of values to serve selfish ends.

Avoiding Confrontation

During my research on Yap, I was faced with the unpleasant task of firing a Yapese man. He was part of a group being trained to administer an islandwide survey, and I discovered that he had made up the responses on survey forms he had returned to me. He was obviously having difficulty understanding my objectives, so I decided I could not employ him any longer.

Knowing that the Yapese generally cover up weaknesses, I determined to handle the matter as gently and as privately as possible, hoping to help the man save face and to maintain a positive relationship with him. I called him aside one afternoon, and as gently as I could, I told him he had lost the job. Because of the way I handled the situation and because I paid him for his work, which was of no use to me, I thought I had managed the situation in a generous and Christian manner.

To my chagrin, the young man, while very polite, took the matter very hard. He had indeed lost face, and from that time on, no matter what I tried, he refused to have anything to do with me. If I had been interested only in my work, I could have dismissed the matter, but as a Christian I felt I had lost the opportunity to communicate the love of Christ to an unbeliever.

Some time later I experienced difficulty with another Yapese employee who was fabricating responses on the survey. Wanting to avoid, if possible, the alienation I had experienced with the first man, I asked a Yapese pastor friend for advice. Without hesitation he said, “Send somebody to talk to him.” I was astounded. How could I do that? It was completely against my nature to take the cowardly way out. But my pastor friend persisted and persuaded me that it was the only way to handle the problem.

I asked one of the older men working for me if he would take my message of reprimand to the errant worker, and without hesitation he agreed to do so. We drove to the worker’s village, where my colleague went alone to the man’s home and in a very tactful but effective way told him of my frustrations with his work and of my intent to fire him if the problems were repeated. We then returned to the office and for a period of two weeks waited to see how the man would respond. When he returned to the office with a new batch of questionnaires, he greeted me as a long-lost friend. We engaged in warm and lively conversation, and our relationship appeared more solid than ever before. His work was not merely acceptable, it was excellent, and he became one of my most reliable and helpful employees.

I was puzzled as to why the second worker had responded so positively whereas the first man had rejected me so completely. My pastor friend explained the matter quite simply. On Yap, to tell a man to his face that he has failed is to treat him like an immature child. Sending a messenger to the second man meant that I considered him an equal or a superior and that I could not rebuke or expose his weakness to his face. He accepted the respect that my act of sending the messenger had shown him, and he returned that respect by giving me the quality of work he knew I desired from him.

This pattern of avoiding confrontation is characteristic of many non-Western cultures. Mediators are essential in such cultures to build relationships or to repair the breaches that conflict has torn in the fabric of social relations. My American upbringing denies the validity of such mediation. As a leader I should accept the unpleasant obligation to reprimand in person. To send someone else is to abdicate my authority and responsibility.

The lesson of this case study is that we must practice the methods of confrontation appropriate to the cultures in which we minister. Many of my Christian friends protest, referring to Matthew 18:15, which says a person

should show an offending brother his fault “just between the two of you.” My answer is that the second Yapese worker did in fact see my message as being between the two of us exclusively. The use of a mediator was merely a means of delivering it in a way that showed my respect for him.

In Jewish culture also, private messages were often sent by intermediaries. Perhaps the most pertinent example is that of the centurion who asked Jesus to heal his servant. Matthew 8:5 reports that “a centurion came to [Jesus], asking for help.” Luke 7:3 reports that “the centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant.” The Gospel writers are not disagreeing with one another. The matter is simply a case like the one I described. The centurion did indeed come to Jesus, by way of mediators, to show that he felt Jesus was equal or superior to him. The text shows that he respected Jewish custom and did not ask Jesus to violate it by entering a gentile’s house.

As servants of our Lord ministering in non-Western cultures, we must be sensitive to the issue of vulnerability. Exposing the weaknesses of others by confrontation can destroy our witness and the evidence of the love of Christ in the gospel. We must relearn how to manage conflict and, when necessary, how to rebuke in gentleness and love. We might even learn to use mediation effectively to build the bonds of love and fellowship.

Vulnerability in Short-Term Mission

In the case study of the church construction project in Mexico, the members of the US team grounded their self-worth in their achievements as skilled managers and carpenters. Quick to judge the work of local men as inferior, they then set out to correct what they deemed inadequate. Justifying their actions on their own criteria of quality, they ripped out the “unsatisfactory work” that local men had completed. For these men, bad work was unacceptable on a job, and the only way to deal with it was to start over.

This American team did not hesitate to expose the flaws of the work of the local Mexican men. Confrontation is an ordinary part of their work routines, and on a construction job in their culture you accept the criticism of the boss, you fix it, and get on with the job. For team leader Bill, vulnerability was a strength, and he took pride in fixing things that were not done right.

The Mexican pastor was very angry with Bill and his team. When Bill insisted that the work was poor, he humiliated the pastor and the local men who did the work. As a pastor in Mexico, he expected and was given honor and respect for his role in the church and the community. In his role, he had both authority over this project and spiritual authority over the people, and no one would question him. When Bill took charge, he usurped the pastor's authority on the project and undermined his authority as a spiritual leader.

The misunderstanding between the team and the local people on their conflicting values of self-worth and vulnerability completely undermined this short-term ministry project. Instead of being "servants" of the Lord Jesus Christ in that context, the ministry team became "experts in the law" of carpentry who placed burdens upon the poor that they could not carry. The team could not see how their actions flowed from their emotional needs to establish and uphold their self-worth as skilled carpenters. They could not hear the pain of the pastor when he objected to their ripping out walls built by his local people. They wanted a building that would be acceptable at home and did not see how their actions were destroying relationships between members of the body of Christ.

Vulnerability and Radical Discipleship

We often fall into the trap of utilizing the ways in which our home cultures manage authority and conflict, even when those ways trample on others, wounding and alienating them from us. Paul shares with us in his letters a better way, the way of adding to our repertoire, adapting to the culture of the people we serve: "To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). His empathy with the people to whom he ministers is so great that he experiences in his own emotional and spiritual life the pain of their weakness and their shame and sorrow at failure (2 Cor. 11:28–29). He charges those of us who are spiritual leaders and servants of Christ "to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up" (Rom. 15:1–2). Rather than pursue a course of critical evaluation of others and confrontation to punish them or coerce them into line, Paul calls us to love, affirmation, and empathy, not tolerating sin but embracing the sinner. The

writer of Hebrews says that one qualification of a priest (or, we could add, of any spiritual leader) is that "he is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness" (5:2). We must always be aware of our own weaknesses so we can remind ourselves to deal gently with the vulnerability of others.

Christian workers, then, must be aware of their perspective with regard to vulnerability, the predominant values of the culture in which they work, and the orientation of each individual to whom they must relate. They must be keenly aware of the potential of each orientation for building up or tearing down the body of Christ.

We must remember that God has chosen the weak (1 Cor. 1:27). This means that all those around us who regularly fail to meet our expectations are individuals God has chosen to do a job. It is our responsibility to work with them and to build them up (2 Cor. 13:10).

Perhaps even more important, we must recognize that we ourselves, and all of God's servants, will continue to be weak (1 Cor. 4:10). Our natural motivations are basically selfish, and our abilities are generally less than adequate to meet all the demands of a situation. Unless we are willing to accept this fact, we will continually fall into the traps of self-righteousness and condescension toward others. Jesus warns us to carefully consider our own weaknesses (Luke 14:28, 31) and to choose the path of humility (vv. 10–11).

Finally, we need to apply the principle that Paul gives us in Philippians 2:3–4: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." As we reflect on Yapese or Asian or African attitudes regarding competition and failure, we must be sensitive to the vulnerability of these people and not force our values on them. So often in our cultural arrogance we scoff at what we perceive as the weaknesses of those to whom we minister. Tragically, they in turn scoff at what they see as weaknesses in us. This attitude of vain conceit creates walls of rejection between us and greatly impairs the work of the body of Christ.

9

Ministering Cross-Culturally

The Gospel, Culture, and Ministry

Throughout this book, we have considered American, German, Yapese, Chadian, or other national cultures as collections of shared ideas and values, not all of which are held by each person from that nationality. In fact, each person's value profile is unique, and there is often great variation among us in terms of our orientations. At the same time, we are all participants in a shared cultural community. These communities are made up of people, rules, regulations for behavior, structures that organize and coordinate social behavior, and structures that exclude some people and assign greater or lesser roles to members.

Each cultural community rewards individuals for certain kinds of behavior. Further, individuals are sometimes frustrated by their own culture, as when it puts pressure on them to do things or behave in ways that are not natural or agreeable to them. A major purpose of culture is to coerce individuals to live together in society. It pressures people to submit to one another and to live together in a social framework. Yapese society, like all societies, is coercive, pressuring Yapese to live together under a common set of rules. And those rules, like ours, can be used for good or evil purposes. In the first edition of this book, I suggested that the system of culture was in itself neutral, but the people within the culture were moral or immoral. I no longer hold this position. I believe that the system of culture, like the people within the culture, is both moral and immoral.

In the book of Romans, Paul speaks of people and communities as being controlled by the flesh. The flesh (*sarx* in Greek) is not merely an internal psychological sin nature, as it is translated in most contemporary English

versions, but also refers to cultural standards with regard to circumcision, eating customs, observance of special religious days, and a whole host of regulations that were part of righteousness in Jewish culture and society. Paul concluded that Jews and gentiles alike live in prisons of disobedience (Rom. 11:32), and he challenged his readers not to be conformed to their cultural standards but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds in Christ.

It is important, then, to recognize that culture, like language, is a powerful tool for communication and interaction. Scripture tells us that out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing (James 3:10). We can use the English language to bless someone or to curse someone. And cursing and blessing come not only from the individual heart but also from the standards and the customary practices of a social community. People often use the rules of a community to justify some forms of cursing and to condemn others. The standards we share are not merely personal but collective, and people are guilty of both personal and collective sin.

Paul draws a sharp contrast in Romans 8 between living "in the flesh" and living "in the spirit." In the ordinary state of human affairs, individuals and communities live in the flesh. Through the power of the gospel, people may be liberated from the bondage of the flesh, empowered to live as individuals and communities in the Spirit, and transformed by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. In his Letter to the Galatians, Paul challenges followers of Jesus to abandon a quest for righteousness achieved through the rules and regulations of their communities of the flesh and to follow Christ and live in the power of his Spirit. But he does not require Jews to abandon their culture. Instead, Paul argues that both Jews and gentiles are prisoners of their ways of life and that God extends his mercy to both. God's mercy, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, sets both Jews and gentiles free from their laws of sin and death and enables them to fulfill the hope of their cultures through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Vernon Sterk (1992, 47–51) suggests that God brings about transformational change in Jewish and gentile cultures by affirming and fulfilling, through Christ, God's law and promise as they have been revealed and sustained in each.

When individuals and communities seek to follow Christ and live as he lived, their values and rules are transformed as people apply them in such a way as to honor him and to love others. Miroslav Volf (1996, 64–68)

suggests that such a community embraces even its enemies and is characterized by forgiveness. In contrast, communities of the flesh exclude others, promote self-seeking and self-interest, and treat outsiders with disrespect and violence.

Culture in its complexity, then, is positive, negative, and sometimes neutral in regard to a relationship with Christ. For example, an individual who hides personal weakness and an individual who is willing to expose it may honor the Lord and love others, though they do so in different ways. And a person who regards prestige as a matter of social status and a person who sees it as a matter of achievement may submit their status or achievement concerns in humility to Jesus Christ and refrain from judging themselves or others. The keys for successful personal relationships in ministry are obedience to the commands of Scripture and accepting that others have a viewpoint that is as worthy of consideration as our own. Obedient Christians create communities of inclusion and embrace, to follow Volf (1996). Such communities stand in contrast to the communities of exclusion and rejection that are typical in the world's cultures.

God's plan and purpose for us are that we be perfected in Christ Jesus and that we gather as his church, people, and communities filled with the Holy Spirit. As a result, ministering cross-culturally places special demands on us; we must, to paraphrase Paul, become all things to all people so that by all possible means we might win some (1 Cor. 9:22). As we live and interact with people of another culture, we must add to our repertoire and adapt to their ways.

Most Christian workers wonder how to define and identify sin in other cultural contexts. We must understand that sin is both personal and social, a complex interaction between individuals in a community. Sin may be individual, it may be collective, and it may be systemic within the structure of a community. Some Yapese distort the status focus of their culture (prestige driven) to exert tremendous power over people or to destroy someone's reputation. These obviously evil actions flow from personal and collective motives. When individuals or groups do these things, they are usually supported by others in their community and engage in collective actions that are often destructive. However, other Yapese may act from the same cultural values to build people up and to be generous and kind. The same value orientation may thus be used for good or evil.

It is important to understand, then, that the issues of time versus event, crisis versus noncrisis, or vulnerability concealed versus vulnerability exposed are not in themselves righteous or unrighteous. These value orientations are part of a more complex set of structures that are used either to exclude or to include, to embrace or to destroy. The structures of inclusion and exclusion, and the will of the people employing them together result in individual and communal sin against others and against God.

Gaining Self-Awareness and Other-Awareness

Attempting to belong to groups whose standards are in conflict with ours produces both emotional stress within us and antagonism in our relationships with others. For this reason, most people choose to belong only to groups whose members have standards and values similar to their own. Our cultural prison is a comfortable place to be. Missionaries and others who accept the challenge of cross-cultural ministries, however, must, by the nature of their task, become personally immersed with peoples who are different. Following the example of Christ means undergoing drastic personal and social reorientation. As we observed in chapter 1, cross-cultural workers must add to their repertoire in a new cultural context. They must enter a culture as if they were children again—helpless, dependent, and ignorant of everything from customs of eating and talking to patterns of work, play, and worship. And they must do this in the spirit of Christ.

The essence of radical discipleship for mission is entering the cultural prison of others and submitting to it for the sake of the gospel. For an adult, beginning over again as if a child can create great stress and emotional conflict. One must change patterns of thinking and living that have been developed over a lifetime.

The purpose of the model of basic values (see the appendix) is to help us gain self-awareness of our cultural values by assessing our fundamental orientation and how it structures personal behavior and evaluation of the behavior of others. The profile furnishes a tool with which we can critically examine the role of our own underlying values in interpersonal relationships and conflicts.

Once we have an understanding of who we are, we must then focus on other-awareness by investigating the values of others. Of course, it is often

not possible to use questionnaires, and in some cultural situations it would not be appropriate to do so. Over the years as I have taught hundreds of students, many have asked me, “Can you help me understand the values of people in Malaysia, or in Sudan, or in Brazil?” My response was always, “I can teach you how to learn these values, but I can’t send you to a book that will outline those specific values for you.” Thanks to Geert Hofstede, that is no longer true.

About the same time I met Marvin Mayers, IBM gave Geert Hofstede the opportunity to analyze a large body of statistical data it had collected from its employees around the world. In 1980 Hofstede wrote his first book based on this data, *Culture’s Consequences*. This began a lifelong work for Hofstede of gathering and analyzing statistical data from IBM employees and then partnering with other researchers. Together they have analyzed data from government workers, employees of international corporations, consumers, civil servants, and even airline pilots from nineteen nations. By 2005 Hofstede had substantive data from seventy-six countries or regions of the world. From this data he constructed national cultural profiles of values and leadership behavior based on statistical analysis and correlation coefficients. In his most recent work, Hofstede et al. (2010) present summaries of the national cultural preferences of leaders, staff, employers, and employees from these seventy-six nations and regions of the world, incorporating into his analysis data information for all of the value pairs presented in this book.

Adding to Our Repertoire

Mission in the twenty-first century has undergone a radical shift; the momentum of mission has shifted from the West to the South and the East. African, Asian, and Latino churches are sending missionaries to Europe, America, and around the globe. Pascal Bazzell (2015) has challenged us to rethink our task. Mission today is mission “with” rather than mission “to,” or mission “among,” other people groups. Whether short- or long-term cross-cultural ministry, our challenge is to fulfill God’s mission with the people God has already touched in whatever place around the globe the Holy Spirit sends us.

As a consequence, to do effective ministry "with" God's people in any culture, we must learn to adapt to it. To do so, we need to construct from our observations a hypothetical profile of its values, or draw from Hofstede's data when it is available, and then compare our own values (our questionnaire responses) to that profile. From this comparison, we can identify areas in our value orientation in which we must adapt and change to be effective in our ministry. If, for example, we are strongly time oriented, we will struggle in a culture that is just as strongly event oriented. We must, if we are to "become weak for those who are weak," reassess and modify our values and behavior regarding time and schedules. We will need to develop new strategies for living. This reorientation will cause inner stress, and we will probably experience guilt and frustration over our failure to live up to the values instilled in us by our native culture. At issue, however, is the question of submission to God and his will for us to consider others better than ourselves and to yield to those to whom we minister.

In each segment of the profile of basic values, we will probably find differences, great or small, between our values and the values of those around us. The challenge is to accept differences in others and to walk from our own culture into the culture of others and to live their way rather than our own. This is not a simple task, for it requires a significant change in our pattern of learning. For most of our lives, we have learned within the given context of our native culture. We probably have rarely, if ever, questioned the context but assumed that it alone was the correct one. People in other cultures have learned in contexts that are defined differently. Therein lies the conflict. Before we can begin learning within a different culture, we must accept the change of context. We must believe that the new context is valid and potentially good. We must recognize that our understandings from our native culture are now inadequate, and we must begin to learn in the new context as children learn, yet with the speed and wisdom of adults.

150 Percent Persons or What?

As conveyed in chapter 1, the goal of every follower of Jesus engaging in cross-cultural mission should be to add to our cultural repertoire whatever is needed for effective ministry. For long-term cross-cultural ministry, I would

aspire to become a 150 percent person, and for local short-term mission I would seek to do what it takes to love my neighbor as myself. It is humanly impossible to enculturate 100 percent into another culture. As finite human beings, we are constrained by the limitations of our minds, our life histories, and our personal abilities. Few of us have the emotional strength to endure the changes that even 75 percent participation in another culture would require, and it is very challenging to add even 25 percent of another culture to one's repertoire. We are weak people, yet God has made it clear that he loves the weak and uses them to accomplish his purposes. Therefore, the goal of adding to our repertoire from the culture of those to whom we minister is, by God's grace, within our grasp.

We must begin this process by accepting without reservation the fact that God made us and that what he has done is good. Our life history, our personal trials and triumphs, and our weaknesses and strengths are the materials that God is going to use to continue his creative work in us. If we do not accept the goodness of his past work in our lives, we will likely not trust his future work in us. Chronic self-rejection is the greatest barrier to becoming "weak, to win the weak" (1 Cor. 9:22) in another culture. If we do not accept as good God's shaping of our person and life in our own culture, we will never be able to accept his work in the lives of others who are culturally different from us.

The second step is to accept the host culture as a valid, albeit imperfect, way of life. It is useful to remember that culture is basically a set of conceptual tools and social arrangements that people use to adapt to their environment and to order their lives in the pursuit of food, shelter, and family and community relationships. Each culture is the product of peculiar historical forces that have served to define a people's uniqueness in terms of personal and group identities. While every culture is imperfect and, in fact, a prison that holds people in bondage, each one is at the same time the integrating point of reference by which people comprehend themselves and others. We must understand that transforming a society does not mean moving people from their prison into ours but rather helping them to know Christ and be transformed personally and communally into people and communities of the Spirit. If we are to minister successfully to the members of a different society, therefore, we must learn about and participate in their culture.

It is important to remember that Jesus was fully human and fully enculturated into Jewish culture and life, yet was without sin. Becoming enculturated in another culture does not demand or imply a loss of moral integrity. On the contrary, most missionaries who become genuinely immersed in another culture experience a heightened sense of moral and ethical responsibility. They become aware of areas of sin in their lives to which their own cultural prison had previously blinded them. They also become conscious of legalistic attitudes and behaviors that before the cross-cultural experience had "an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility" (Col. 2:23). Such persons now find that regulations by which they once lived are unable to restrain their carnal nature or to promote spiritual growth and maturity.

The key to growth and maturity in cross-cultural ministry is achieving other-cultural competency with complete submission to and dependence on God. When the Jews accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath, of violating their communal norms, Jesus replied, "The Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (John 5:19). As Christians, we are also children of God, and the Father is likewise our source of direction and power. Becoming competent in another culture will lead to sin only if we lose our sense of dependence on and unwavering trust in God and his Word. For all of us, the process of becoming culturally appropriate involves becoming more than what we already are.

The first and most important step in gaining cultural competency is recognition that culture defines the contexts for daily activities and relationships, and that in the world there are hundreds of contexts, all of which are valid and useful to the people who share them. Once we have grasped this fact, we must take the more difficult step of acting on this belief. We must suspend our commitment to the context in which we have lived all our lives (at best a comfortable prison), enter into a cultural context that is strange to us (and a prison to them), and see that new context as the framework for our life and ministry. Peter speaks of this as being aliens or strangers in the culture to which God sends us. By doing so we will experience a reintegration in our lives, yet we will not lose our prior identity or personal culture and history. This significant change in our thinking will allow us to enter into relationships with people whose values and lifestyles are fundamentally different from our own.

The goal of this book has been to show that Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, has set the example for us and commands us, “Follow me.” Numerous Scripture passages demonstrate that Jesus’s ministry among the Jews reflected and harmonized with their culture, and he commands us to follow his example. If we desire to be obedient to Jesus’s command, to carry the good news of his resurrection to the world, we must be willing to add to our repertoire and perhaps for some to even become 150 percent persons. We must accept the value priorities of others. We must learn the definitions and rules of the context in which they live. We must adopt their patterns and procedures for working, playing, and worshiping. We must become willing participants in their culture and make them our family and friends. We must do all this empowered through faith and freedom in Jesus Christ, living in the Spirit and not in the flesh.

Appendix

Basic Values Questionnaire

Determine to what extent each of the following statements describes your thinking and approach to life. If the statement is *not at all* descriptive of you, write the number 1 in the blank space. If it is *very* descriptive of you, write the number 7. Write the number 4 if the statement describes you only somewhat. Use the numbers 2 or 3 for items that are less descriptive of you and the numbers 5 or 6 for those that are more descriptive. Respond to all statements with a number from 1 to 7.

Not at all descriptive			Somewhat descriptive			Very descriptive
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

____ 1. Working for a large company would make my work feel fragmented; I wouldn't get to see the whole process from start to finish.

____ 2. I enjoy seeking out friends and talking about any subject that comes up.

____ 3. I avoid setting goals for fear that I might not reach them.

____ 4. When evaluating myself, my accomplishments rank higher in my self-critique than the social status of my family of origin.

____ 5. I get annoyed when people leave before an event is over (such as worship, a concert, a banquet, or a wedding reception).

____ 6. I feel things are either right or wrong; discussing "gray" areas makes me uncomfortable and seems to compromise the truth.

____ 7. I don't feel the need to seek out expert advice when solving a problem.

____ 8. When I set a goal, I dedicate myself to reaching it, even if other areas of my life suffer as a result.
____ 9. I'm usually one of the first to try something new.
____ 10. I tend to associate only with people of the same social status.
____ 11. I feel strongly that time is a scarce commodity, and I value it highly.
____ 12. I try to avoid crises by planning my activities before I get started.
____ 13. I like performing before an audience because it pushes me to perform better.
____ 14. I tend to evaluate people on the basis of their performance, rather than their position, degree, or job title.
____ 15. When I tackle a problem, I try to sort the variables into a logical order until I find the correct solution.
____ 16. I gather information from experts to find solutions to issues of importance to me (e.g., attend lectures, read books and articles, watch videos).
____ 17. If an important job opportunity involved moving to another city, I would go even if it meant leaving loved ones.
____ 18. I find it difficult to relate to people who have a significantly higher occupational or social position than mine.
____ 19. I refer to my watch or cell phone regularly so I won't be late.
____ 20. I feel frustrated when someone's view of me is overly simplistic.
____ 21. I tend not to worry about potential problems; I wait until a problem develops before taking action.
____ 22. When waiting in line, I tend to start up conversations with people I don't know.
____ 23. I do not accept any task or ministry that is outside of my comfort zone.
____ 24. It bothers me when someone stops a discussion to push the group to make a decision, especially if everyone hasn't been given a chance to express their opinion.
____ 25. I'm annoyed by interruptions to my schedule or routine.
____ 26. I don't take sides in a discussion until I've heard all the arguments.

____ 27. Completing a task is almost an obsession with me, and I cannot be content until I am finished.
____ 28. I enjoy breaking out of my routine occasionally and doing something totally different.
____ 29. When involved in a project, I tend to work on it until completion, even if that means being late on other things.
____ 30. Being trained to do something correctly or having a manual puts my mind at ease.
____ 31. I tend to be fully attentive to the moment, without putting much thought toward what I'm doing later.
____ 32. I can usually tell what a person will be like if I know who their family is.
____ 33. I feel that when making a decision, there's usually one "best" option.
____ 34. I have no problem sharing my blunders and even failures with others.
____ 35. I argue my point to the end, even if I know I'm wrong.
____ 36. I don't feel that what I've done in the past matters much; I have to keep proving myself every day.
____ 37. When starting a new job or endeavor, I work especially hard to prove myself.
____ 38. When introducing important people, I include their occupation, title, or degrees (e.g., Dr. Morrison).
____ 39. I find that relationships are the most important part of work or ministry, even more important than getting the job done.
____ 40. I avoid participating in games at which I'm not very good.
____ 41. Even if I'm in a hurry running errands, I'll stop to talk with a friend.
____ 42. I have specific goals for what I want to accomplish.
____ 43. I like to be active with many things so that at any one time I have a choice of what to do.
____ 44. I research what people are saying about a product before I make a major purchasing decision.
____ 45. I approach a problem like it's a motion picture with many scenes, actors, shapes, and colors; if any part were highlighted, removed, or changed, it would distort the meaning and significance of the others.

____ 46. I feel uncomfortable and frustrated when a discussion ends without a clear resolution of the issue; nobody wins the argument.
____ 47. I resist a scheduled life, preferring to do things spontaneously.
____ 48. When leading a meeting, I make sure it begins and ends on time.

Analysis of Answers

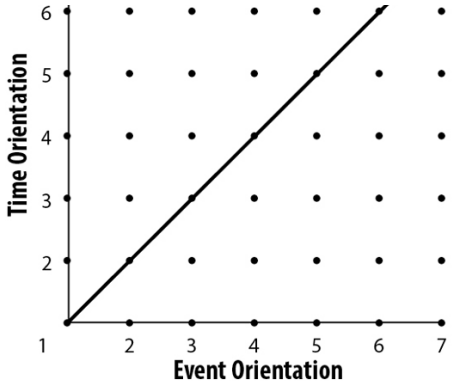
To determine your personal profile, fill in your response to each of the corresponding statements in the questionnaire. (If, for example, your response to statement 1 was 5, enter 5 in the first space in box 1 after “Holistic thinking.”) Then add the four numbers in each line and divide the total by four to obtain your average score for each trait.

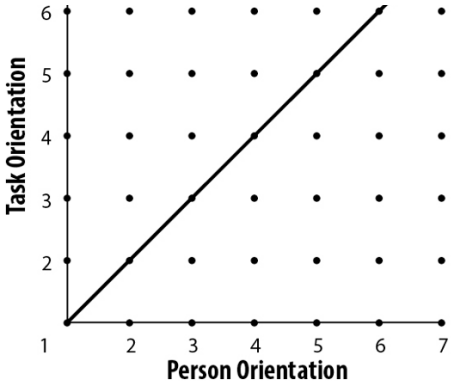
					Total	Average
1. Time orientation	☐ 11	☐ 19	☐ 25	☐ 48		
2. Event orientation	☐ 5	☐ 24	☐ 29	☐ 47		
3. Dichotomistic thinking	☐ 6	☐ 15	☐ 33	☐ 46		
4. Holistic thinking	☐ 1	☐ 20	☐ 26	☐ 45		
5. Crisis orientation	☐ 12	☐ 16	☐ 30	☐ 44		
6. Noncrisis orientation	☐ 7	☐ 21	☐ 31	☐ 43		
7. Task orientation	☐ 8	☐ 17	☐ 27	☐ 42		
8. Person orientation	☐ 2	☐ 22	☐ 39	☐ 41		
9. Status focus	☐ 10	☐ 18	☐ 32	☐ 38		
10. Achievement focus	☐ 4	☐ 14	☐ 36	☐ 37		
11. Concealment of vulnerability	☐ 3	☐ 23	☐ 35	☐ 40		
12. Willingness to expose vulnerability	☐ 9	☐ 13	☐ 28	☐ 34		

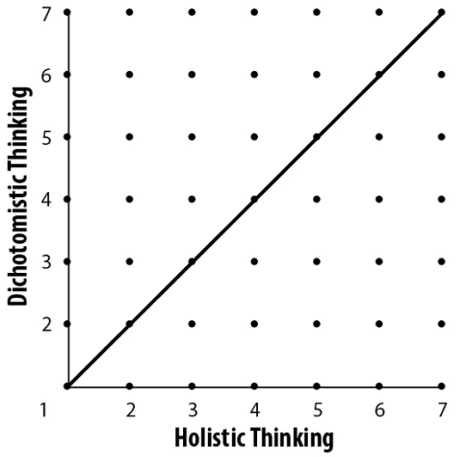
Personal Profile

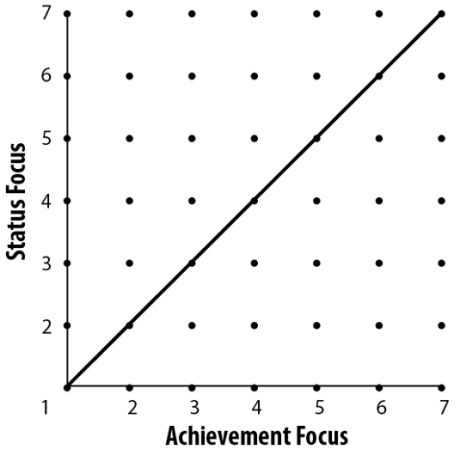
On each axis, find your average score for that orientation. Then plot on each grid the point where the two average scores intersect. This point indicates your basic tendency.

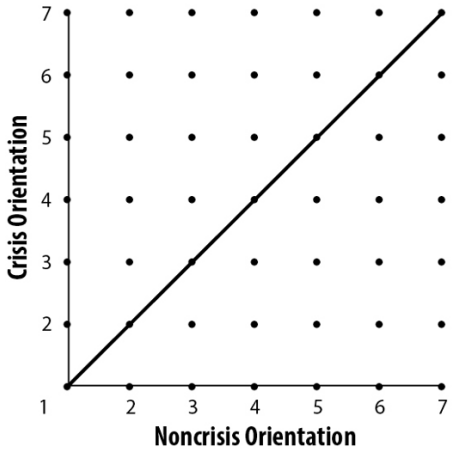


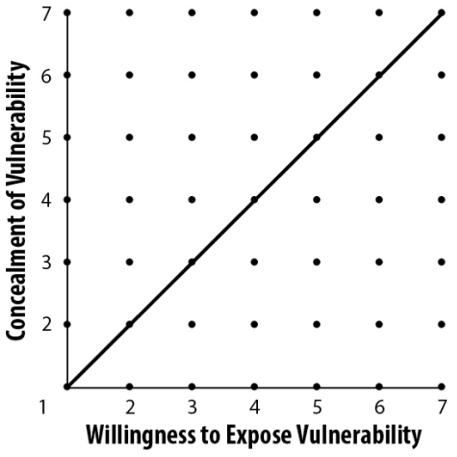

Time Orientation
Event Orientation
1
2
3
4
5
6
7


Task Orientation
Person Orientation
1
2
3
4
5
6
7


Dichotomistic Thinking
Holistic Thinking
1
2
3
4
5
6
7


Status Focus
Achievement Focus
1
2
3
4
5
6
7


Crisis Orientation
Noncrisis Orientation
1
2
3
4
5
6
7


Concealment of Vulnerability
Willingness to Expose Vulnerability
1
2
3
4
5
6
7

The personal profile of basic traits is an approximate representation of the motivations behind an individual's actions within his or her culture. The matrix format in the figure above presents the contrasting traits as concurrent forces pulling in different (but not necessarily opposite) directions. The scores on each matrix indicate the relative strength of each particular trait as one makes decisions and interacts with others. A score of (2, 6) on the first grid (i.e., "event" has a priority rating of 2, "time" a rating of 6) suggests that the constraints of time exert a far stronger pull on the decisions and actions of the individual than does commitment to completion of the events in which he or she participates. A score of (2, 2) probably means that neither trait is exerting a strong influence.[1]

Your personal profile of basic values can be applied in several ways: (1) It should serve as the basis for reflection and increasing self-awareness about your personal priorities in common social situations; (2) it may also serve as a radar signal as to how you might respond to others when they in some way come into conflict with a priority that is very important to you; and (3) it can also serve to provide insight into areas in your life and work where you might want to expand your repertoire and learn how to achieve more biblically appropriate interactions with other persons who are different from you. We will see that by carefully choosing our responses to people and cultures whose orientations differ from ours, we can reduce or even resolve tensions in interpersonal relations.

The basic values questionnaire can also be completed online. For more information visit www.bakeracademic.com/ministering-cross-culturally.

1. The scores for the graph are created by averaging one's response to each scenario. Sometimes an average score distorts the picture. For example, if a person gave two 6 and two 7 responses to the time situations, the average score would be 6. That is a meaningful number since the scores cluster close together. However, if the person gave one 6 response, one 7 response, and two scores of 1, the average score would be 3.7. This is not helpful, because the answers are polar opposites, and the average just obscures their differences. The more important question is why did the person have such different responses; 6 and 7 scores show a very high priority for time, and the two 1 scores show a very low priority. The person should ask, how are these situations so different that two of the four situations are not me?

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