

WORLD MISSIONS III

World Missions III: Syllabus

Notes —

CLASS #1:

I. Missions and Culture.

CLASS #2:

II. Becoming a Belonger.

CLASS #3:

III. Keys to Communication.

CLASS #4:

IV. Social Structure and the Gospel.

V. The Willowbank Report: The Bible and Culture.

CLASS #5:

V. The Willowbank Report. (cont.)

Exam

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World Missions III: Exam

Possible 20 Point Questions

- 1) Discuss the balanced model of identification that is seen in the life of Christ (p. 182).
- 2) Explain and describe the four levels of culture (p. 185).
- 3) Describe the advantages of immediate bonding for a new missionary (pp. 191,192).
- 4) Show how Jesus, Peter, and Paul adapted their messages for different world views (p. 200).
- 5) Define "concept fulfillment" and give one biblical example and one modern day example (p. 203).
- 6) What is an indigenous church (p. 209)?

Possible 10 Point Questions

- 1) Define the term "culture" (p. 181).
- 2) Describe "culture shock" (pp. 187,188).
- 3) What is the difference between "syncretism" and "indigenization" (p. 189)?
- 4) List 3 "more effective" roles of a missionary (p. 191).
- 5) List the 4 practical steps in the process of learning a language (p. 193).
- 6) Define world view and contextualization (p. 199,200).
- 7) List and define 2 types of social structures (p. 206).
- 8) In 2 or 3 sentences describe the problem of heterogeneous societies (p. 208).
- 9) What are the "3-selves" of an indigenous church (p. 209)?
- 10) Refer to one Scripture that shows an example of how people can reject the gospel because it threatens their culture (p. 213).
- 11) What is the difference between a "neutral cultural form" and an "evil cultural form" (pp. 215,216)?
- 12) Why is it true that to some degree, the Church must change culture? (p. 216)

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The World Missions Series of Courses:

There are three courses in the World Missions series. They are based on and adapted from the series edited by Jonathan Lewis. This series is available in Spanish and can be ordered from William Carey Library Publishers, P.O. Box 40129, Pasadena, CA 91114 (818-798-0819). These materials are “Used by permission.”

The three World Missions Courses:

1. World Missions I - The Biblical/Historical Foundation
2. World Missions II - The Strategic Dimension
3. World Missions III - The Cross-Cultural Dimension¹

I. Missions and Culture.

A. Course Introduction.

1. In the first two courses of this series we focused on the theological, historical, and strategic aspects of missions. In this course, we focus on the cross-cultural aspects of missions. First we must ask, What is culture?
 - a. Perhaps, the most basic definition of “culture” is “the way a group of people organize their world.”
 - b. “Culture” is a general term for those aspects (beliefs, values, traditions, and institutions) of a society of people that bind the people together and give them a common identity.
2. A missionary must be a student of culture. He must understand the dynamics and importance of culture and cross-cultural communication.
 - a. Identification with the people you are trying to reach is essential.
 - b. Jesus is our model for identifying with people (Heb 2:17).
 - 1) Identification results in compassion and understanding for the people you are ministering to (see Heb 4:15).
 - 2) The result of compassion and understanding is friendship and relationship (see Heb 4:16).

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B. Cultural Identification.

1. Two extreme viewpoints.
 - a. Cultural superiority (known as Ethnocentrism).
 - 1) My culture is superior to the culture of these people. I must teach these people to live according to my culture.
 - 2) North American missionaries have made this error for centuries.
 - b. Cultural rejection.
 - 1) I must reject who I am and become one of them. My goal is to live exactly like these people in all ways.
 - 2) This error will cause internal conflict, because we cannot deny who we are by pretending to be something else.
2. A balanced model (Jesus).
 - a. Jesus represents a balanced “identification”.
 - 1) He identified fully with man. He did become one of us.
 - 2) However, this did not mean that He rejected who He was. He did maintain His deity.
 - b. The goal of identification.
 - 1) It is not to copy step for step the lives, customs, beliefs etc. of another culture. Imitating certain aspects of the culture can be a method, but it is not the goal.
 - 2) The goal is to be effective in communication with another culture. It is to relate to the other culture so you can communicate within it.
 - a) This includes adapting to the host culture.
 - b) It does not include a rejection of who you are or of the reality and the importance of your own culture in your life.

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3. Practical insights about identification.

- a. You cannot deny who you are, nor should you want to. Although Jesus identified with mankind and became like us, He did not try to hide who He was. He showed in many different ways that He was God. In His identification with another “culture” He did not deny His own “culture”.
- b. At the same time, we must not allow our culture to prevent us from finding a point of contact in the target culture.
 - 1) It must not be a stumbling block for others, preventing them from accepting Jesus. Jesus must be the only stumbling block. The way we present the gospel must not stand in the way of the gospel itself.
 - 2) A missionary must identify with the people because a missionary must find how to present the gospel in a culturally relevant way.
- c. The power of habit would make it difficult for one to reject one’s culture of origin. Most things that we do are done unconsciously.

Author’s Illustration:

A European cannot walk like an Indian whose walk has been formed over many years of carrying heavy loads on his back. For the European to think that he should walk like the Indian is not necessary.

Insert Your Illustration:

- 1) The problem of trying to force an unnatural perspective of identification is that it is not realistic and it is not consistent with the gospel. The gospel is the gospel of reality and truth. Forced, extreme, and unnatural forms of identification are unrealistic and false.
- 2) There are limits to identification that should not be ignored. A missionary does no good to the spread of the gospel to deny the reality of these limits.

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- 3) The key is to relate to the people while accepting that you **ARE** different and that will not change, nor does it need to change.
 - a) This does not mean that we cannot die to ourselves in areas where we are able to do things differently in order to reach people with the gospel. In fact, it does mean that we will be willing to do things differently for the purpose of relating to the people. This willingness can come in many different areas (food, clothes, transportation, housing, etc.).
 - b) The goal of identification is not to be a great actor. It is to create a climate for communication and relationship in the midst of who you are, not in the midst of denying who you are.
- d. Paul wrote about identification in 1 Cor 9:22, 23.
 - 1) Paul identified with others for the sake of the gospel. He did not allow his culture to be the stumbling block. He destroyed these types of arguments and obstacles (2 Cor 10:5) by dying to himself and identifying with others.
 - 2) This does not mean that Paul was a great actor. It does not mean that he became a master of disguises. Paul was sincere.
 - 3) He accepted the fact that he was Paul while accepting the challenge to be willing to let go of his “rights” (1 Cor 9:4-6, 12, 18).
 - 4) The challenge of identification is not based on the ability to deceive others, but on the ability to die to yourself.

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C. Understanding Culture.

1. Levels of culture.

- a. The most obvious (and superficial) level of culture is **BEHAVIOR**.
 - 1) What do the people do? How do they act?
 - 2) What patterns can be observed with respect to how they do things?
- b. The next level of culture is represented by the **VALUES** of the people.
 - 1) What do the people think is good or beneficial?
 - 2) What do they think is best?
 - 3) What do they think should be done?
- c. The next level of culture is represented by the **BELIEFS** of the people. They ask, "What is true?"
- d. The most profound level of culture is the **WORLD VIEW** of the people. They ask, "What is real?"

Author's Illustration:

A person whose world view includes the belief that there is no life after death will believe that there is no judgment by a God after death. This can lead to hedonistic (very pleasure oriented) values, which will lead to hedonistic actions.

Insert Your Illustration:

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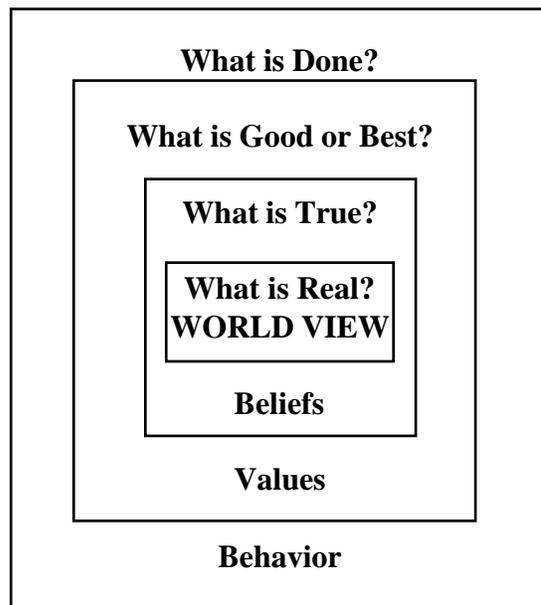
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Discussion Point

Use the following diagram² to help explain the different levels of culture. Consider how each level affects the previous level.

Provide examples of how a person's **WORLD VIEW** will result in certain **BELIEFS**. A person's **BELIEFS** will lead to certain **VALUES** and those **VALUES** will form a person's **BEHAVIOR** or actions.

How can the understanding of this progression help a missionary to present the gospel more effectively?



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2. Cross-Cultural differences.

- a. Consider the following common example of cultural differences.

Author's Illustration:

A North American missionary is told that a meeting is at 9:00 a.m.
He arrives at 9:00 a.m.

The Argentinean leaders who organized the meeting arrive at 10:00 a.m. They do not apologize for being "late" because in their culture they are not late.

Insert Your Illustration:

- b. How can cultural differences affect the work of a missionary? How can missionaries adjust to cultural differences? How can cultural misunderstandings be avoided?
- ## 3. Culture shock (frustration).
- a. Culture shock occurs when a person realizes that their cultural background is not relevant in their new setting. He begins to feel like a child who must learn the most basic things (language, proper etiquette, customs, etc.).
 - 1) The daily stress of being a stranger and the frustration of everything being unfamiliar affects the missionary negatively after the first months of living in the new land.
 - 2) He realizes that he must relearn many aspects of his lifestyle and that he must live in this "different way" for a long period of time.

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- b. Tourists do not experience culture shock for two reasons.
 - 1) There is excitement and adventure in experiencing new things, people, and places. Initially, the changes are positively perceived.
 - 2) There is always the understanding that they are only visiting. They do not need to adjust to the lifestyle of the culture. In this sense, short term missionaries must be careful. They can easily get a false perception of what it is like to be a missionary.
- c. The cure for culture shock.
 - 1) Avoiding the culture is not the correct solution.
 - a) It would be wrong to hide and create your own culture.
 - b) Although it is beneficial, necessary, and wise to retain a sense of your own culture, the missionary must not avoid the host culture.
 - 2) The solution is to challenge yourself to experience the culture and embrace it.
 - a) The missionary must be flexible.
 - b) He must be humble enough to accept and practice different ways of doing things.
- 4. The gospel and culture.
 - a. In the past, the mistake has been made of trying to force culture upon the “natives”. Missionaries must be careful to preach the gospel of the Bible and not the gospel of their culture.
 - 1) Again, the idea of the “stumbling block” (not letting your culture be a stumbling block) must be considered.
 - 2) Rejection of Christianity can actually be the rejection of the foreign culture if the gospel is not contextualized.

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- b. The missionary must understand the difference between syncretism and indigenization.
- 1) Syncretism uses a cultural form to express Christianity while retaining its former corresponding belief. This is not acceptable.
 - 2) Indigenization is acceptable. The new Christians deny the old belief while still using the cultural form. They fill the old cultural mold with new Christian beliefs as opposed to using a new Christian form and retaining the old belief.
- c. The missionary must be sensitive to unforeseen results of conversion.

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Author's Illustration:

What can a missionary do when new African Christians do not clean their village because their original incentive (thinking that evil spirits hid in garbage) to throw away garbage no longer exists?

What can a missionary do where polygamy is practiced? What happens to the three wives that a new Christian is ordered to give up? In many societies they will become slaves or prostitutes or will be killed.

Insert Your Illustration:

Discussion Point

Many times the answers to these situations are found in the principle of substitution or replacement. Cultural substitutes must fill the void left by changed or eliminated cultural practices.

How can you apply this principle to the two examples that are given above?

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D. Missionary: Agent of Change.

1. The missionary force, like any other ideological force, will produce change in a culture.
 - a. In the past missionaries have introduced positive educational and medical practices as well as helpful new technologies.
 - b. They have also helped to eliminate such negative practices as cannibalism, widow burning, child murder, slavery, and tribal warfare.
2. Christianity is “supracultural” (it goes beyond culture) in its origin and truth. It transcends culture.
 - a. However, the application of Christianity is done within culture.
 - b. Thus, the gospel message will always change culture because it changes men who then live out their Christianity within culture.
 - c. The key for the missionary is to allow the gospel to change the culture and not to force his own culture on the people.

II. Becoming a Belonger.

A. God’s Communicator.

1. Our attitude toward money, possessions, and lifestyle will affect our ministries because that attitude will communicate our beliefs to others.
 - a. A missionary must consider what a much higher standard of living communicates to the people he is ministering to.
 - b. How does the issue of ‘standard of living’ affect the concept of identification? How does it affect the presentation of the gospel?
2. God’s communicator must be flexible. He must be able to adapt the message to different situations.

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3. Communication roles.

a. A typical missionary might be described in his communication with others as a:

- 1) Teacher.
- 2) Seller.
- 3) Accuser.

b. It is more effective for the missionary to assume these roles:

- 1) Learner.
- 2) Trader.
- 3) Story teller.

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B. Bonding.

1. Establishing a sense of belonging.

a. The first months in the new country are critical.

Author's Illustration:

When a baby is born they are especially aware of their surroundings. The baby will be very influenced by those first hours and days of life. It is an key time of bonding between the baby and parents.

The same is true for the missionary. The situation that a new missionary is put into in his first few weeks on the field will influence their entire stay in that country. It is a key time of bonding between the missionary and the people to whom they will be ministering.

Unfortunately, as is the case with the birth of babies in Western hospitals, the new arrival is often separated from the new family.

In the case of babies, they are put in the nursery.

In the case of missionaries, they are put in the home of other missionaries. This important and influential time is lost.

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- b. A new missionary who is introduced immediately to the new culture has several advantages.
 - 1) When they first arrive they are uniquely prepared to immerse themselves in the culture. Their first experience with the culture will be a positive one. This will influence their attitude toward the culture.
 - 2) When they arrive they are especially ready to learn. If they live with a local family, they will have immediate opportunity to study, observe, learn, and practice the culture. This will influence their ability to adjust quickly and effectively to the new culture.
 - 3) Bonding will minimize culture shock because the missionary will feel less of a separation between themselves and the new culture.
 - 4) Bonding will result in an immediate opportunity for ministry.
 - a) The missionary can learn and minister while they are learning the language instead of making language learning a separate task.
 - b) This is consistent with the natural language learning process. It is more of a social process than an academic process.
- c. To live with the people is to know the people. To know the people is to be able to better minister to the people.
 - 1) There are a multitude of excuses and justifications for not living with the people.
 - 2) However, in the end our methods of ministry will be known by their fruits. A missionary who is not intimately linked to the people whom he is serving will not be able to serve those people. He will be excluded and he will exclude them.
 - 3) Of course, our example in this sort of incarnational missions is Jesus Christ Himself.
 - a) Jesus could have lived any lifestyle that he desired, but He chose to come as a poor, common, son of a carpenter. He lived with men. He did not separate Himself from men.
 - b) Meditate on all the implications of Jn 1:14.

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C. Language Acquisition Made Practical (LAMP).

1. Tom and Elizabeth Brewster (missionary trainers) have developed a proven method to learn languages. LAMP claims that anyone can learn a language if three rules are followed:
 - a. You live where the language is spoken.
 - b. You are motivated to learn the new language.
 - c. You know how to proceed with language learning, step by step and day by day.
2. Language learning is very natural. Children learn languages without taking any courses!
 - a. The more natural language learning is, the more enjoyable it is.
 - b. The more we are willing to humble ourselves to learn as a child, the more natural will be our language learning.
 - c. When we add the advantages of being able to be systematic as adults to the advantages of having an attitude of humility and a hunger to learn like a child, we can use the following process to learn a language.
 - d. People need help with many things, like taking care of children. With the LAMP method, your weakness is your strength. You can learn by helping others in simple ways. A language helper is usually needed.
 - 1) **Prepare** what you need for the day.
 - 2) **Practice** what you prepare.
 - 3) **Communicate** what you know.
 - 4) **Evaluate** your needs and your progress so that you will know what to prepare for the next day.

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3. Prepare.

- a. Obtain from your language helper the phrases of the message that you want to practice for that day.
- b. Ask your helper to evaluate your pronunciation.
- c. Write the message in a notebook, or on cards.
- d. Understand what you are saying.

4. Practice.

- a. Listen to your language helper as he speaks the words of the message for that day.
- b. Imitate your language helper. Allow him to correct your mistakes. Imitate, Imitate, Imitate!
- c. Produce the message yourself by memory.

5. Communicate.

- a. Search for people and situations in which you can speak the message.
- b. Be creative. Go to the market. Walk down the street. Go meet a neighbor.
- c. Most times, people will understand what you are doing and will be willing to listen to you.

6. Evaluate.

- a. Take notes of problems that you have.
- b. Consider how you can make the process more exciting, natural, and fun.

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7. Language acquisition summary.

- a. Each individual is different. There are many different successful ways to learn a language. The principles of LAMP can combine with other methods as needed.
- b. A personal example. One missionary began preaching and teaching in Lingala (an African tribal language) after four months of study. He accomplished the same with Spanish. The following is a general list of steps which can be used.

1) **Prepare.**

- a) Acquire a dictionary of the language. Prepare a list of 1000 of the most used words in any language.
- b) Focus on verbs and “connection words” (words that connect phrases, words that make transitions such as “and,” “but,” “also,” etc.).
- c) Try to find someone to help you understand words in the dictionary. Most importantly, this person could check your list so that you are not wasting time learning something that is wrong.

A Simple Memory Exercise:

Small note cards are most effective. Put the word in the new language on the top of the note card and the corresponding word in your language on the bottom of the note card. If you use small note cards then you can easily take them with you wherever you go.

Look at the new word while hiding the corresponding word in your language. Say the new word and try to recall what it means. Invert this process by looking at the meaning and trying to recall what the new word is.

Set a goal to memorize 100 words and use in conversation or phrases each week. These can be short words and phrases.

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2) Practice.

- a) Set a goal to memorize and use in conversation 100 words or phrases each week. These can be short words and phrases.
- b) Learn 20 words each day. Use the weekends to review.
- c) Try to obtain a grammar book and/or receive basic instruction from someone who knows both languages. Focus on verb conjugations and noun endings. Use the vocabulary that you have already learned to practice the grammar.
- d) Be careful of finding “too good” of a teacher-perfection is never the aim, communicating a message is. No one ever expects a child to be perfect - it is a process.

3) Communicate.

- a) Hire a local person to be your language partner. Set up a two month schedule that includes being together for 4-6 hours a day. Use what you have learned to communicate with your partner.
- b) The secret is variety. Ask God to help you to be creative in thinking of various different games, drills, activities, etc. to use. If you do not use a variety of activities you will soon be bored and frustrated. Here is a list of some ideas.

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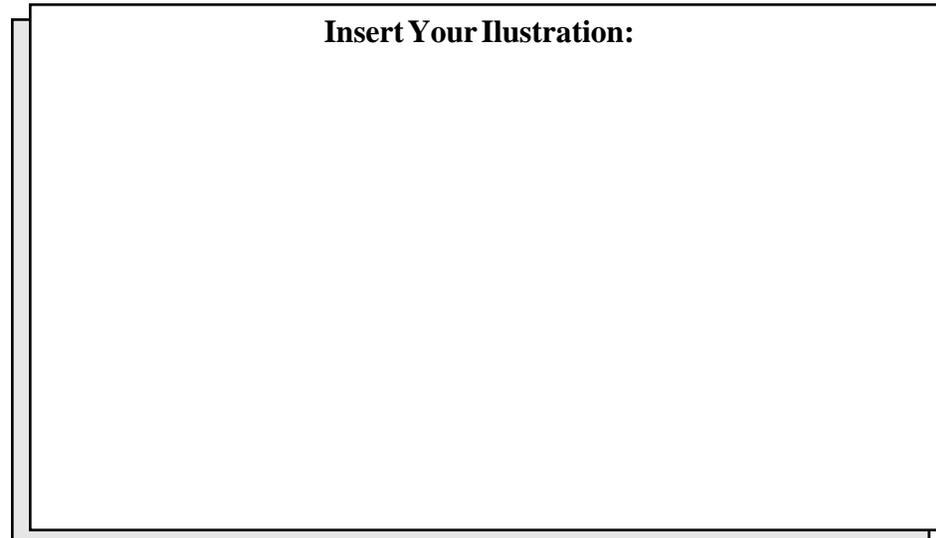
Author's Suggestion:

- Go to different places and describe what you see. Let your partner explain what you are seeing.
- Study the Bible together.
- Play "telephone" (pretend you are talking on the phone).
- Do skits of Bible stories.
- Do imaginary interviews with famous people.
- Do "role playing" of different types of people.
- Play "fill in the blank".
- Play "continue the story". One person begins telling a story. The other person must continue it from where the story stops.
- Play "store" or "bank" or "school".
- Play "guess a verse in the Bible".
- Give short sermons on various Bible topics.
- Play "translator". One person speaks in one language and the other person translates. Switch positions and languages (this can only be done if your partner knows your language).
- Play counting games and games where you make lists.
- Play "Simon Says" (a game of imitating).
- Play television game shows.
- Play "charades".
- Play "show and tell".

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Insert Your Illustration:



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4) Evaluate.

- a) How can your practice time be more effective?
- b) What communication drills with a partner seem to be most effective? Which are most fun?
- c) After two months with your partner, write out a basic sermon or teaching and present it to him. Allow him to help you with difficult words and phrases.

Author's Comment:

After following the four steps (Prepare, Practice, Communicate, and Evaluate), you should attempt to teach and preach in the local language. The first two months of this is difficult and frustrating. You will feel the frustrations of being limited in your communication.

List areas of difficulty:

What word did you not know?

What grammatical error do you consistently make?

Practice with your partner in the problem areas. Increase your vocabulary. Improve your grammar. After two months of consistent teaching and preaching in the language you should begin to feel a significant freedom with the language.

The goal is to start preaching and teaching after four months and to feel a significant freedom after six months.

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III. Keys to Communication.

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A. Intercultural Communication. The role of culture in communication.

1. In the modern world there are very few physical barriers to the gospel. There are very many cultural barriers, however.
2. The missionary is a secondary source. He cannot say the words of the apostle John (1 Jn 1:1, 2). He stands in the middle. He must take the message from the Bible that exists in various cultural contexts, and proclaim it to another culture. This is very difficult.
3. What makes it even more difficult is that neither of the two cultures (the particular one in the corresponding passage of the Bible and the one that the missionary goes to) is his own.
4. The missionary must take a message out of one culture and proclaim it to another culture without allowing his own culture to distort the message. He works in the midst of three cultures.
 - a) Thus, the missionary must first be a student of the Bible. He must be a student of Bible culture in order to interpret the Bible correctly.
 - b) The missionary must be a student of their own culture. He must learn how to communicate the message to others.
 - c) The missionary must be a student of other cultures. He must learn how to communicate the message across cultures. The key to success in this third step is to know the culture. The missionary must intimately know the people and the way they think.

B. Seeing Other Worlds.

1. World view and contextualization.
 - a. 'World view' is the way people perceive reality. Contextualization is the process of communicating or manifesting a message in a way that is consistent with, and therefore, able to be understood and received by a particular culture.
 - b. Because there are various world views, there are various ways to contextualize the gospel. Because there are various ways that various people understand things, there are various ways of presenting truth.

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2. Adapting the message to world view.
 - a. Jesus adapted His message to meet the needs, and open the ears of those in various cultures.
 - 1) In the case of the rich young ruler (Luke chapter 15), Jesus communicated with him and challenged him on a level that he could certainly understand. Jesus told him to sell what he owned and to follow Him.
 - 2) In the case of the Samaritan woman (John chapter 4) at the well Jesus spoke in terms of the water of life.
 - 3) In the case of Nicodemus (John chapter 3), He talked about the new birth.
 - b. Peter and Paul both adapted their presentations to the particular world views that they addressed.

Discussion Point

Compare Peter's messages that are found in Acts 2:14-36 and 10:34-43.

Are the presentations the same?

What two different groups of people was he talking to?

How was Peter sensitive to the different world views of the two groups?

Compare Paul's messages given in Acts 13:16-41 and 17:22-31.

Consider the same three questions for Paul, that we used for Peter.

- c. How can missionaries communicate from one world view to another?
 - 1) They can ask the unbelievers to adopt the Christian world view in order to make a decision about the Christian message. This is not a very realistic option. It usually does not happen.
 - 2) They can ask the unbeliever to "meet them halfway." The missionary communicates from his world view while he takes into consideration the world view of the listener.
 - a) This has been a popular method. It includes the study of "comparative religions" and focuses on using what the two world views have in common as a bridge.

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- b) This is often misleading because something that seems to be a common point may not be a common point when it is connected to the other parts of the world view.
 - 3) The missionary can adopt the world view of the unbeliever to understand how he thinks. Through this process the missionary may be able to present the gospel message in an understandable way.
 - a) This is more practical and effective. The missionary begins where the people are, not where he wants them to be.
 - b) This the way God works with all of us individually?
- 3. The missionary as source of the message.
 - a. As we have already seen, identification is not so much done through physically imitating the people as it is done through entering into the daily experiences with the people. It is not done simply by appearing like them. It is done by living with them and getting “inside” their lives so that you can communicate to them from within and not from outside.
 - b. It is not enough that the missionary knows WHAT the listener believes. He must know WHY the person believes that. Here we enter into the consideration of different world views.
- 4. World view and the substance of the missionary message.
 - a. It is necessary to realize and accept that the missionaries and preachers of the New Testament delivered the gospel message to different groups in different ways. The style and method of evangelism varied as did the substance of the message.
 - b. The basic contents of the gospel do not change (see 1 Cor 2:2 and 15:1-8). The way it is presented will depend on the particular needs and world view of the listeners.

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- c. For one person, the way the gospel message affects him is the idea of having meaning in life. For another person, it is the idea of knowing truth. For yet another, it is the idea of having relationship with God.
 - 1) The trained and gifted evangelist will be able to discern what way the gospel will meet the need of the listener.
 - 2) The trained and gifted missionary who frequently must cross cultures will be able to discern how to present the gospel in an understandable way (taking into account the world view of the person).
 - a) He must consider definitions of words and concepts.
 - (1) The word “God” in one world view might not mean the same thing in another world view.
 - (2) Thus, the missionary must learn to not rely so much on words for definitions. He must rely more on descriptions, comparisons, and contrasts.
 - b) He must consider the selection of parts of the gospel message.
 - (1) Truth is transmitted over a period of time and according to a hierarchy of priorities. Priorities are determined by the appropriateness and effectiveness of the particular selection regarding the listener’s ability to understand.
 - (2) In one culture it may be more effective to first focus on the idea of becoming a “new creation”, while in another culture it may be more appropriate to focus on the love and mercy of God.
 - c) He must adapt his message to his listeners.
 - (1) Initially, he must seek the examples and analogies that best relate to the people. He must focus on the specific felt needs of his listeners.
 - (2) He must be one that searches for bridges to use to communicate the gospel.

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d) He must apply the message to the particular lives of his listeners.

(1) The missionary must try to speak to the heart of the person.

(2) He must try to present the gospel in a way that the gospel can be seen to affect his life.

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C. Finding the Keys.

1. Concept fulfillment.

a. Different cultures have different concepts which exist within them. “Concept fulfillment” occurs when a concept is completely explained or fulfilled by a part of the gospel.

b. We might also refer to these occurrences as redemptive analogies.

1) In the Bible. For the Jews, the fact that Jesus was the lamb of God fulfilled their concept of animal sacrifice.

2) A Modern day example.

a) The Karen tribe in Burma has experienced incredible church growth. It all began with “concept fulfillment”.

b) The tribe had a legend that one day a teacher of truth would come. The legend said that this teacher would carry a black book under his arm.

c) When the first missionary came to the Karen tribe he had a black Bible and carried it under his arm. When he began to speak what he claimed to be truth, the people eagerly listened.

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2. Finding the eye opener (the connection from one culture to another that brings understanding).

Author's Comment:

Use the following examples to discuss the effectiveness of finding a connection between cultures to create a bridge for sharing the gospel.

Example #1

Study Acts 26:17, 18.

Notice that for someone to see the difference between darkness and light his eyes must be opened.

God, who gave this instruction, must provide the way to open others' eyes.

Example #2

The example of Jesus.

Study the account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in Jn 4.

What did Jesus use as an eye opener (means of connection)?

Notice that before he begins to address her sin problem (her marriage situation)

He first captures her attention by promising her living water.

How does Jesus use culture to capture her attention?

Notice that before Jesus begins to turn the woman from darkness to light,

He first uses a point from her culture as an eye opener.

Example #3

The example of Paul.

Study Acts 17:16-34.

What did Paul use as an eye opener?

How did Paul use culture to move towards turning the people from darkness to light?

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IV. Social Structure and the Gospel.

Notes —

A. Status, Roles, and Social Structure.

1. Social structure and church growth.
 - a. Social structure is the way in which people organize their relationships with one another.
 - b. It has been observed that churches grow most naturally when they are organized according to the same level within the social structure.
2. Status and role.
 - a. Status is the position a person has within the social structure.
 - b. Role is the particular part or job a person has within the social structure.
3. Perceptions of status and role (a common problem for missionaries).
 - a. Perceptions of the missionary and perceptions of the nationals regarding the missionary can be very different.
 - b. The perception of the nationals can often keep the missionary from ever being able to communicate effectively with the people.
 - c. Thus, the missionary must carefully consider what role he wants to portray. He must consider what his role should be with unbelievers, with Christians, and with the national leaders of those Christians.

Discussion Point

Discuss the possible roles that a missionary can take.
What are the advantages and disadvantages of each role?
Which roles are more appropriate with national leaders?
With unbelievers?

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4. Types of social structures.
 - a. Homogeneous.
 - 1) Most or all of the people participate in a common life. They do things in much the same way.
 - 2) A rural location is most likely to have this structure.
 - b. Heterogeneous.
 - 1) There exist within the structure many different cultures and ways of doing things.
 - 2) An urban location is most likely to have this structure.
5. Classes.
 - a. In general, we can refer to the upper, middle, and lower classes (although some societies have many more defined classes).
 - b. These classes vary in size and characteristics.

B. Communication and Social Structure.

1. Various approaches to communicating in a society:
 - a. The Roman Catholic approach.
 - 1) Initially, the missionary seeks to influence the upper class.
 - 2) Through the leadership of society, they seek to influence the lower classes.
 - b. The Communist approach.
 - 1) Initially, the missionary seeks to influence frustrated lower middle class intellectuals.
 - 2) They introduce them to able and motivated upper lower class people to start a revolution.

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- c. The Protestant approach.
 - 1) Concentration is put on the “bulk” of society. The lower middle class and the upper lower class are often targeted.
 - 2) As the effects of Christianity and the “Protestant work ethic” materialize the movement becomes “upwardly mobile”. In other words, as hard work, thrift and delayed gratification are sewn by a people, material benefits are reaped in crops, industry, wealth.
2. The structure of face-to-face societies.
 - a. Folk societies and primitive societies.
 - 1) The main difference between the two is that folk societies are dependent upon urban centers and primitive societies are not.
 - a) Folk societies trade with and are culturally influenced by the nearby urban cities or towns.
 - b) Primitive societies are completely independent of outside civilization.
 - 2) In these societies the difference between those who lead and those who are led is not substantial. The idea of different classes does not really exist.
 - 3) The structure of the society is formed by family groups and clans. The society is very homogeneous.
 - b. Communication in face-to-face societies.
 - 1) Effective communication must be based upon personal relationships.
 - 2) Initially, communication should be made with those who are naturally in the position to pass on information (chiefs, clan leaders, family leaders).

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- 3) Communication must be seen as a process. Time must be allowed for new ideas to be considered and approved.
 - 4) The implication of group decisions must be taken into account. Challenges to change and make decisions must be put before those who have authority to make those decisions.
3. The problem of heterogeneous societies.
 - a. Urban societies that contain subculture groups.
 - 1) The missionary must realize the importance and the necessity of using different methods of communication with the different groups within the larger society.
 - 2) The great effect of status in these types of societies must be considered. The higher status people usually have a great influence on the lifestyle of the people of lower status.
 - b. The church growth principle of homogeneity should be considered. People are often drawn to their own people.
 4. Summary for Social Structure.
 - a. The response to Christian evangelism can sometimes be influenced by a social situation more than by religious conviction.
 - b. Opposition to the Christian message may be influenced more by social factors than by religious factors.
 - c. Changes in social structure affect behavior.
 - d. Effective communication will generally follow established social structural rules.
 - e. A sensitive and wise missionary will consider how to communicate within the rules of a social structure.

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C. Social Structure and Indigenous Church Growth.

1. An indigenous church has often been defined as a church that is all of the following:
 - a. Self-governing.
 - b. Self-supporting.
 - c. Self-propagating.
2. These points are essential but can be misleading.
 - a. A church can be governed by nationals and still not be indigenous.
 - 1) If those nationals are simply copying the forms and methods that they have learned from the missionaries, then it is not an indigenous church.
 - 2) Somehow, the nationals must be encouraged to study the scriptures and conclude their own ways of organization and development.
 - b. For a church to be indigenous does not mean that it cannot receive funds from outside sources. Missionaries can help (and should help in certain areas) as long as three points are evident.
 - 1) The missionaries resist the temptation to mix control with giving. The idea must be to give something, not to buy control.
 - 2) The funds must be given with wisdom.
 - a) When we give freely, we must give to people who demonstrate faithfulness.
 - b) If we are to truly release what we give, there must be some evidence of godly character developing in those whom we assign the responsibility for what has been given.
 - c) However, this must be done with accountability, but not by controlling.

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- 3) The financial assistance should not support the daily, normal proceedings of the church. The funds should concentrate on areas that are beyond the reach of the indigenous churches (for example, mass publications of literature).
3. Implications for indigenous church development.
 - a. Missionaries may not be comfortable with how the indigenous church appears and operates.
 - b. It must seem good to the missionaries as it does to the Holy Spirit (see Acts 15:28 and its context) to give freedom to the local believers to make their own decisions regarding cultural questions.
 - c. Indigenous churches can not really be “founded”. They can only be planted.
 - d. Many times, true indigenous movements are not the direct result of foreign missions, but of nationals led by the Spirit spontaneously.

V. The Willowbank Report.

Author’s Comment:

The Willowbank report was the summary document created after the historic meeting of church leaders in Willowbank, Bermuda, in 1974.

A. The Bible and Culture.

1. The biblical basis of culture.
 - a. Because man is the creation of God, some of his culture is good and beautiful.
 - b. Because of man’s Fall, all of his culture is affected by sin and some of it is demonic.

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Discussion Point

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Study Gen 1:26-28 and discuss the following:
How are the commands of these verses the origin of human culture?

Study Gen 4:17-22 and discuss the following:
What forms of culture can we find in this passage? How are they affected by the Fall?

2. What is culture?
 - a. In general it is the patterned way in which people function together.
 - b. Perhaps the most inclusive form of culture is language; because many aspects about a culture can be found in a language.
 - c. Culture provides a basic need for all humans. The need for a sense of identity and security.
3. Culture in biblical revelation.
 - a. We must remember the important hermeneutical principle that the Bible was not written in a cultural vacuum.
 - b. The Holy Spirit did not avoid culture. He used culture to communicate truth even as the living Word of God, Jesus Christ, also did.
4. Understanding God's Word today.
 - a. The contextual approach.
 - 1) This type of Bible study considers the cultural context and original languages. It also emphasizes the importance of applying and obeying God's word.
 - 2) It considers the cultural context of the one who is studying the Bible while at the same time it considers the original cultural context and language.

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- b. The Bible does not specifically include teaching about all areas of life and culture.
 - 1) However, the Bible is sufficient for any topic of discussion or decision.
 - 2) Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the reader must apply the principles that are found in the Bible to all areas of culture even if that area is not specifically mentioned in the Bible.

B. Communicating the Gospel.

- 1. The Bible and the gospel.
 - a. In a certain sense, the gospel is found throughout the whole Bible (see Jn 5:39, 40; 20:31; 2 Tim 3:15).
 - b. It must be understood that the Bible proclaims the gospel in many forms. Different aspects of the gospel will appeal to different cultures.
- 2. Consider the following points of the gospel:
 - a. God is the Creator.
 - b. Sin is universal.
 - c. Jesus is the Son of God.
 - d. Jesus is the Lord of all.
 - e. Jesus is the Savior through His atoning death and resurrection.
 - f. Conversion is necessary.
 - g. The coming of the Holy Spirit and His transforming power.
 - h. The fellowship and mission of the Christian Church.
 - i. The hope of Christ's return.

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3. Cultural barriers to the communication of the gospel.
 - a. One major problem is the unavoidable fact that people may reject the gospel because it threatens their culture.
 - 1) Consider how this was the case in Acts 21:28; 16:21; 17:7.
 - 2) The Lordship of Jesus will always destroy some parts of any culture.
 - 3) However, there are many parts of culture that do not need to be destroyed. They need to be preserved and transformed or refilled.
 - b. A second major problem is that the gospel is often presented to people in foreign cultural forms.
 - 1) This can lead to resentment on the part of the receiver who feels like the sender's culture is being forced upon him.
 - 2) The gospel is equated (is associated) with this negative perception.
4. The character of the missionary.
 - a. The humility of the missionary.
 - 1) He must be humble enough to acknowledge the problems that culture can cause.
 - 2) He must be humble enough to learn and appreciate the culture of the people.
 - 3) He must be humble enough to accept people where they are and communicate with them from that point.
 - 4) He must be humble enough to confess that a trained local minister can do the job better than he can.
 - 5) He must be humble enough to trust in the Holy Spirit.

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- b. The Incarnation as a model for Christian Witness.
 - 1) Jesus said that His coming should be a model for our going (being sent out) (Jn 20:21; 17:18).
 - 2) Incarnational ministry begins with our attitudes and perspectives (see Phil 2:1-8).
 - a) Our attitude must allow us to renounce our status.
 - b) It also must allow us to renounce our independence.
 - c) It must allow us to identify and share life with the people.
- 5. Conversion and culture.
 - a. There is a radical nature to conversion. It is described in terms of re-creation and rebirth. The changes are radical.
 - b. Conversion involves a clear break with the past. Repentance means to turn and go the other way or to turn away from something. Yes, conversion is described in terms of death to ourselves and our old ways.
- 6. The Lordship of Jesus Christ.
 - a. The new convert's world view must become consistent with the Lordship of Jesus.
 - b. The new convert should reflect a change in behavior that will be based on the Lordship of Jesus.
 - c. The new convert's relationships will change. He will still be in the world, but he will not be of the world.
 - d. This does not mean that the new convert should reject his culture. He must live out his Christianity in the context of his culture.

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C. The Church in Culture.

1. In the past, missionaries have made the serious error of trying to make the national churches into copies of the churches “at home”.
 - a. Currently, there is a perspective that promotes indigenous churches. However, these churches sometimes result in nothing more than Western replicas. The trained leadership become the puppets of the missionaries.
 - b. National leaders must be given the freedom to develop their churches within their own cultures. Only they can give the church a truly indigenous form.
 - c. The national church must be allowed to grow naturally. The missionary must determine the proper time to relinquish leadership and leave. The church will grow naturally if allowed. Paul proved this 2000 years ago.
2. “Provincialism” must be avoided. National churches can not withdraw into their own cultures and separate themselves from the rest of the Church. There is a danger of beginning to worship culture instead of Jesus.
 - a. Each church is a part of the universal church, the body of Christ throughout the earth, time and eternity.
 - b. Each church worships the living God of every culture. We do not practice our culture because it is our agenda. We practice it because it is natural and real. When practicing culture becomes an agenda then we have placed culture in an unnatural and wrong position.
 - c. Each church should give and receive. They should be in partnership with others (Phil 4:15).
3. The danger of syncretism.
 - a. The church must discern between neutral cultural forms and evil cultural forms.
 - b. If the evil is by association only then the form should be refilled with Christian meaning.

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- c. If the evil is inherent to the form or if the association can not be avoided then the form should be rejected. The Holy Spirit can provide the creativity to replace the form with another cultural expression.
4. The Church's influence on culture.
 - a. The Church will necessarily influence culture. It will change culture. It must change culture.
 - b. The Church is ordered to take a stand against injustice and immorality.
5. The process of cultural change.
 - a. First, it cannot be forced. People change when they want to change.
 - b. Second, missionaries must respect the existing mechanisms that are used to initiate social change.
 - c. Third, the principle of replacement must be carefully considered.
 - 1) If there is change it must not simply come in the form of abolishment. It must come in the form of replacement.
 - 2) One custom must replace and fill the void of another custom that has been rejected because all customs have functions (even bad ones).
 - d. Finally, it must be realized that some cultural practices are based on theology and will only be changed when the theology is changed. Here, Christian doctrine must offer a more desired alternative.

Conclusion:

This concludes the mission series of courses. This series has provided an in-depth study of mission history (course #1), mission strategy (course #2), and mission cross-cultural communication (course #3).

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World Missions III: Endnotes

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¹Jonathan Lewis, ed. World Mission - Part III (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1987). The flow of the major points of the outline of this course are adapted directly from World Mission - Part III. Used by permission.

²Ibid., Fig. 11.4, pg. 17.

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