

Crossing Cultures

*You are going to a country where things will look very different from the way they do in College Station, TX. Try to let the visual differences remind you that there are cultural differences as well. Don't expect the same services, the same conveniences, the same responses you are accustomed to in America. Train yourself to think —**Things are not wrong, they are just different.** And always remember, in the eyes of those who look so different to you, YOU are the one who is different. Here are some tips on how to function in a different culture without offending.*

Communication

- English is NOT spoken everywhere in the world. There are many factors that may lead one to think that everyone speaks English, but this is simply not true. There are whole cities where no English is spoken. Never go out and get into a taxicab expecting the driver to understand English. Never go wandering off alone assuming you can tell someone the name of your hotel and will be guided back there.
- NEVER go out without the name and address of your hotel in the local language. Take a card from the hotel desk, or a matchbook, or SOMETHING that has the name, address, and phone number of your hotel in the local language.
- Having said all this about English NOT being everywhere, you should still observe the precaution of not talking about the locals or their culture in a negative way. As sure as you say something bad about your host culture, the one person in the entire province who speaks English will be the one standing beside you at the bus stop. So be careful about what you say walking down the streets. DO NOT assume you are not being understood.
- People may not be able to understand your spoken language, but they can read your body language and the expression on your face. Be careful that you always communicate respect and courtesy.
- Learn a few words in the native language of the country you are visiting. Visit www.byki.com online for a great way to learn some phrases and words to help you bond even better with the people to whom you will be ministering.

Cross Cultural Ministry

- You are NOT in America. You are a guest in another country.
- Most cultures are much quieter and more reserved in public than Americans are. Observe the host country's behavior patterns and conform to them.
- Temples and idols that are strange, repulsive, or frightening to you are worshipped by those in your host country. Try to mask your true feeling of distress or horror with a look of interest.
- Be prepared to be the object of stares. You are different and will be observed. All of your actions are watched. Keep a smile on your face.
- Remember that you are an ambassador of the King of Kings. Be sure your actions reflect that truth.

Food

- Food that is strange to you is daily fare in your host country. Your host is trying to provide well for you. Be a gracious guest. Eat what is put before you. (If you absolutely cannot get it down, move it around on your plate until you can slip it into your pocket unobserved.)
- Food that is bland and repetitive may be the only food available. Consider your host and eat hearty.

Culture Value Differences

United States	Some Other Cultures
Personal control over environment/ Responsibility	Fate/Destiny
Change seen as natural and positive	Stability/Tradition/Continuity
Time and its control	Human Interaction
Individual Independence	Group Welfare/Dependence
Equality/Fairness	Hierarchy/Rank/Status
Self-held Initiative	Birthright Inheritance
Competition	Cooperation
Future Orientation	Past Orientation
Action/Work Orientation	“Being” Orientation
Informality	Formality
Directness/Openness/Honesty	Indirectness/Ritual/“Face”
Practicality/Efficiency	Idealism/Theory
Materialism/Acquisitiveness	Spiritualism/Detachment