

B. Giving International Training that Touches Nations for God

To whom should you teach this lesson? To trainers and trainers-to-be! That is, this is the second lesson geared toward the teacher who already has enough successful teaching experience that he can now begin to train others how to teach. In this lesson potential trainers will get suggestions for organizing and presenting effective teacher training seminars on a cross-cultural basis.

Teaching Materials that can enhance this lesson: A Bible and several items that represent different cultures—American, Chinese, African.

Introductory comments about culture:

- A culture is simply the way people live, think, and believe. Every group of people has a culture.
- All cultures, including our own, are made by fallible human beings.
- Therefore all cultures contain a mixture of good and evil.

Learn about your host culture:

Ask believers from your host culture what they consider the best points of their culture and what they consider some of the difficult points. Are some of them different from what you might expect? If so, think about why this might be true.

- Even the **Old Testament culture** of God’s chosen people was marred by incomplete human obedience and by downright disobedience and rebellion, as well as by flawed understanding.

Think about the Old Testament Biblical culture:

Can you give some examples of how God Himself gave certain parts of their culture? Examples of disobedience? Examples of flawed understanding? What do you think is the point in discussing this particular culture?

- **The Word of God stands as the standard of right or wrong above all cultural beliefs and practices.**

- Therefore all cultures are to be judged by the Word of God at each individual point.

Judging cultural practices by the Word of God:

To illustrate this, have someone hold an open Bible. One by one, bring the items that represent different points of culture before the open Bible to show that you are searching the Word for the mind of God on this subject. Some items keep, some throw out, some set aside for deeper consideration.

- This judging is best done by nationals who are thoroughly prepared in understanding the whole counsel of God, because they best understand their own cultures.
- Short term trainers should avoid directly judging a culture they may not understand, but may encourage nationals to examine cultural practices and beliefs in the light of Scripture.
- In such judgment, the principles of the Word should be considered, and not only direct commands.
- This can often be done by asking questions.
- In international training situations, your goal is not to change cultural practices except where they affect the training of children and are clearly treated in the Word of God.
- Issues often arise during question and answer times.
- Changing wrong cultural practices takes time and cannot be hurried. If a team encounters some cultural issue, often the best we can hope to do is to plant a seed. But remember, seeds have great power within them.
- Beware of directly confronting church policies which you have no authority to change and may not even understand fully. You can say something like, “Your church authorities will have to decide that. One thing they might think about in connection with this issue is...xyz..... verse or passage”. If people seem contentious or bothered about certain issues, encourage them to pray about the decisions their churches are making.

- We should always avoid giving an impression that we feel superior, since so many practices of our own culture are contrary to the principles of the Word of God.
- It is good to complement and genuinely appreciate whatever parts of the culture are praiseworthy. In Africa this might include some music, dance, art, weaving, wise proverbs, ability to listen, respect for authority, concern for extended family members, etc.

B.1 How can we learn about local customs that might affect our training?

Teaching materials that can enhance this discussion: Pictures of Americans talking with people of other cultures, a giant question mark, giant eye (be observant), giant ear (listen carefully).

- Remember that to nationals every custom is normal & usual.
- Ask, “How do you do this?”
- What does it mean when someone does this?
- Observe & ask questions.
- Visit the people in their homes, schools, churches, markets as opportunity allows.
- Notice things like touching, how close you stand, how directly you ask or answer a question, relations between men & women
- During the training, from time to time stop and ask, “What might hinder you from doing this?” Listen to the answers. Try to find solutions together, and adapt your teaching according to the hindrances discovered.

B.2 How can we adapt to local customs that might affect our training?

- Men & women sitting on opposite sides of the church
- Expectations in dress, especially for women
- Forms of worship
- Time
- Suggestions about gifts for nationals. If staying with a host family or teaching with a national partner, give a gift on the last day so there is no

expectation of returning the favor. It's best to give, or at least discuss, gifts with the host pastor. He will know who should be included. Ask for advice ahead of time from your host. Items should be small, inexpensive, and useful. Items we have used successfully are cameras, walkmans, music CD's, study Bibles, concordances, and books.

B.3 How can we avoid misunderstandings due to differences in language?

Use the same teaching materials as for B1.

- Example: Pastor? Madame? On phone
- Example: "Used to"
- Example: "laying off" workers
- Example: "muyungulu"
- Example: Male? Female? Or Neither?
- Listen to how they talk "Please" before a question
- Watch body language & facial expression.
- Constantly watch for signs of understanding or misunderstanding.
- Be ready to say you're sorry if misunderstood.
- Seek feedback. "What do you think?"
- Don't be easily offended, & forgive others if you offend them.

B.4 How can we organize seminars that meet the needs of the local people?

- Ideal—Evaluation trip ahead of the training (adds expense)
Ask lots of questions by email. Not yes or no questions, but what & how questions.
- Observe children's ministry if possible. Ask them not to do anything special or different.
- Afterwards, ask questions about anything you don't understand.
- Ask about known felt needs.
- Talk to as many people as possible & get many viewpoints.

- Let them choose from a list of workshops, yet include certain basics unless your observations show those have truly been covered.
- Ask what their most serious problems are, other than lack of funds. (Acknowledge that need for funds is always a given.)
- Usually you need to include some kind of motivational talk alongside “How to” training. (Importance of Children, etc.) This is best scattered throughout the lessons rather than concentrated at only one time as a single lesson.
- Alternate listening, talking and doing. Plan for some active times that engage the students in doing something and in thinking. Alternate with some lively children’s songs with motions.
- Ask about how children are treated at home, school & in church.
- Instead of telling them, “Do this, do that,” ask, “How would it be if you did this? Could that work? Could that help? Would that be acceptable?”
- Be adaptable—you may need to change plans after arrival. Think in terms of Plan A, Plan B, Plan C & Plan D. (Contingency)
- Common situations faced in Africa—crowded conditions, noise competition, distractions, uncomfortable seating or no seating at all, heat, humidity, insects, wandering animals, BATHROOMS, water, time
- Decide on a policy about giving out your address.
- Be careful not to make anything that may be construed as “promises” inadvertently unless you are sure you can fulfill them.

B.5 How can we work together effectively as a team?

(Thanks to Kidzana for allowing us to adapt many of the ideas of Sylvia Foth and Larry Williams for inclusion here.)

B.5a How can we get to know one another & bond so that we minister effectively as a team?

- Spend some time having fun & talking together informally.
- Take time to talk. Allow team members to share their strengths, gifts, and abilities, as well as how they hope God will use or stretch them. (The team leader should take note of these and find use to use each team member in ways that will fulfill them and stretch (but not snap) them.)

- Talk about personality types. Let each team member tell how he sees himself. Later, allow other members to interact on this.
 - Lion. This person is a decision maker. On the positive side, the lion is strong-willed and leadership comes easily to him. On the negative side, he can dominate the group leaving others out, and may be insensitive to the feelings and needs of others.
 - Beaver. This person is eager to work and accomplish a task. On the positive side, the beaver is organized, efficient and gets things done. On the negative side, he may find it difficult to adjust to the pacing and practices of other countries and cultures, and may show a critical spirit towards those whose contributions he perceives to be less than his own.
 - Otter. This person is fun-loving, easy-going, has a great attitude and enjoys being with others, all positive traits. On the negative side, he may have a difficult time focusing on the project, getting things done, preparing adequately, and organizing his day. Some otters may enjoy their fun at the expense of others.
 - Golden Retriever. This person is mostly concerned about relationships and is very sensitive to the needs of others, both positive traits. On the negative side, he can pursue peace at any cost and is less concerned with getting the job done than with maintaining good feelings all around. He can also be emotional and have difficulty putting aside issues.
- Spend some time talking about how each team member reacts to stress, anger, frustration, or emotion, and how you can support one another in these situations.
- Communicate! Make sure everyone knows the itinerary, expectations, changes in plans, etc.
- Depending on your situation, there may be work needed beyond training responsibilities (washing dishes, cleaning, reconfirming tickets...WHATEVER!) Discuss possible needs and lay an equitable plan for meeting those needs.

B.5b How can team members make suggestions?

- Team leaders should ask the group to discuss ways to make suggestions most effectively.
- In general, suggestions are better put as questions than as statements. Not “I think we should...” but “Is there a possibility we could...?” or “How would it be if we would.....?”
- Those who make suggestions should be prepared to explain their reasoning.
- All suggestions should be CONSIDERED, but not all suggestions have to be acted upon.
- If a suggestion is suggested, the leader should politely explain why another alternative was chosen.
- Sometimes effective compromises can be reached, or elements of several different ideas can be used.

B.5c How can we make decisions wisely?

- There has to be a leader, a final authority or decision maker.
- Decisions can be discussed by the group.
- Decisions should be explained.
- No pouting or sulking. Once a decision is made, every member should support it to the best of his ability.

B.5d How can we solve problems?

- Conflicts should be expressed in private to those concerned or those who have authority to address the issue, and always in a godly, respectful manner. NEVER IN PUBLIC!
- “As much as lieth in you,” personal disagreements should be set aside whenever possible for the sake of your common mission!
- Issues should be addressed early and not allowed to build up.
- Apologies are due if someone has been hurt.
- In solving problems involving cultural issues, we should include national staff.

B.5f How can we help & encourage one another?

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- Choose one person a day to be a special focus of group prayer.
- Everyone tell one good thing about the other members of the group.
- Encourage the team to leave one another notes of encouragement.
- Encourage each team member to give compliments where they are due.

B.5g How can we continue to encourage one another after the trip is over?

- Evaluations
- Reports
- Sharing pictures
- Team leaders need to keep in touch for awhile.
- Continue friendships.
- Pray for one another.