PPBC Missions Training Moment

In our inaugural *Missions Moment* newsletter, a bold statement was made. **We believe that every member at Parkway Place is a missionary.** We also shared that missions, whenever possible, should be a *church-to-church* endeavor. Wherever missions take place, the local church in the area being served should be hero with God receiving the glory. Our desire is to see enduring and reproducible transformation in a local community!

Perhaps a spark has been ignited and through prayer, God has placed a missions opportunity in your heart. Or you may just be curious as to how Parkway Place’s Missions Team spends time learning to cross a culture. Over the next couple of newsletters, we’ll explore how to reduce cultural stress. Keep in mind that many of the principles we’ll unfold apply if you are reaching your neighborhood or partnering with a church overseas.

**Spend time researching and understanding cultural differences.** The stress from culture differences can impact the effectiveness of your mission. The best way to overcome potential problems is to prepare yourself for those differences before you start. This cannot be underestimated; it takes considerable time and patience to learn a new culture. Even after you research a culture or people group, you will make mistakes. Trust God and His grace. Whether it is your neighbor, a community across town, or half-way around the world, people of different societies will appreciate the attempt to understand their culture. When researching, pay particular attention to:

**Concepts of time.** People of Western cultures (especially with a business background) don’t like small talk and tend to be quick to the point. Getting right down to business in many other cultures is considered rude. In many cultures taking a road trip means planning on visiting family and friends along the way. For most Americans, it means, “*What is the shortest route*.”

**Rules of relationships, family, and status.** Asking someone their age, especially a woman, in Western culture is considered impolite. However, age is very important in other cultures. In many non-Western cultures, being called “fat” is a high compliment. Carrying a few extra pounds around the waist is often a sign of wealth and power. In many cultures guests will sit at a meal is based on their status and/or age.

The concept of “family” in America tends to focus on parents, spouse, and children while other cultures would include *all* extended relations and even deceased ancestors.

Cultural differences will dictate how people introduce themselves. In Western cultures we tend to use first name and occupation. Some cultures will emphasize last name and family heritage, yet others will highlight full name and title.

Piqued your interest in learning how to cross a culture? Stay tuned for much more in the next newsletter! The Parkway Place Missions Team has a saying, “*It isn’t necessarily right or wrong, it’s just different.*” Our God is amazingly creative!