PPBC Missions Training Moment

In our last *Missions Moment* newsletter, we explored how different people groups view guilt, shame, and fear. We are all shaped by a worldview and understanding how a culture “thinks” is a key to introducing Christ. The Parkway Place Missions Team defines culture as “*referring to the total way of life for a particular group of people – their ideas, customs, traditions, language, belief system, social structure and norms.*” Sound daunting? If you’ve been reading our previous newsletters, we’ve tried to provide guidance on some of these areas within our definition of culture to help with your mission efforts. It’s appropriate we pause and consolidate the past few editions and summarize our learning up to this point.

One of the many guiding Bible verses of the Parkway Place Missions Team is **1 Corinthians 9:20-23**.

***“When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.”***

There is much to learn from one of the greatest missionaries in this Holy Spirit inspired passage. Let’s zero-in on three principles we should understand from Apostle Paul’s model.

Number one. **Find common ground**. What a simple, yet profound principle. Think about how much better the world (or your social media newsfeed) would be if everyone applied this idea. Isn’t it amazing that Jesus became like us without losing His identity! In the opening verses of the Book of John, Christ crossed a culture. ***“So the Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only son.”*** The Apostle Paul followed Christ’s example and became like those he served, sensitive to culture differences.

Number two. **Follow a given culture’s local lead**. Parkway Place’s mission approach is a *local strategy*. We’re *not* trying to plant Western Christianity and methodologies in the soil of another culture. We are simply presenting the good news of salvation to another culture. Biblical truth doesn’t change, but how it is expressed, sung, and worshiped *will be* different. Our mission teams strive to serve local leaders (secular and church) whenever possible. We encourage indigenous solutions to any issues that arise. Resist, “*Well, in America, or my church, we do it this way*…”

Number three. **Free yourself from prejudices**. Simply put, **most cultural differences are *not* wrong**. Unless it’s a moral, ethical, or legal issue, differences are not usually “wrong.” Embrace the differences! Mark Twain said, *“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness… Broad, wholesome, charitable views of people and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.”* To paraphrase Twain, missions should be fatal to prejudice. Perhaps said more succinctly, “*It’s not right or wrong, just different*.”

The potential stress from culture differences can be reduced if we follow Christ and Paul’s model. We’ll explore even deeper in our next edition!