

# The Billy Graham School

# COMPASS

## Navigating Ministry & Missions

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April 2008

### The World among Us

Dear church leader,

Think about these statistics for a minute:

- By 2050, it is expected that half of the U.S. population will be of a different ethnicity than non-Hispanic white.
- Of all of the Southern Baptist churches started in 2005, 59% were African-American or ethnic.
- More than 70 nationalities are represented in Louisville, KY, where Southern Seminary is located.
- According to the Census Bureau, about one of every two people added to the U.S. population between July 1, 2005, and July 1, 2006, was Hispanic.
- From 1970 to 2006, the foreign-born population in the United States rose from 4.7 to almost 13 percent.



*“ministry is going to be cross-cultural at some level.”*

- 312 different people groups are represented in the United States, according to the Joshua Project.

Here’s the growing reality for all of us: ministry is going to be cross-cultural at some level. Even Jerry Rankin, the president of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, has said, “More and more, we are finding that the people groups of the world, which are the focus of our international mission efforts, are also represented among our own population in the United States.”

This reality hit home for me recently as I was driving through a section of Atlanta, GA. For more than ten miles of one highway, all I saw were ethnic restaurants, shops, and other places of business. Seldom have I so strongly sensed that the world has come to America as I did during that short drive.

Given these realities, this edition of the Compass focuses on cross-cultural communica-

tion. Our prayer is that your church will (1) be even more sensitized to the needs around them; (2) be more equipped to tackle cross-cultural challenges; and (3) pray more intentionally for people groups in your area. I pray God’s blessings on your work.

Chuck Lawless  
Dean, The Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth

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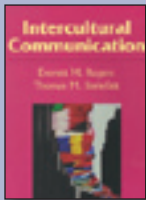
FOR THE TRUTH. FOR THE CHURCH. FOR THE WORLD. FOR THE GLORY OF GOD



## Recommended Resources

Topic of the Month:

### Cross-Cultural Communications



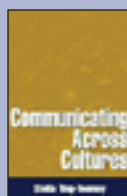
Everett Rogers & Thomas Steinfart, *Intercultural Communication*

Craig Storti, *The Art of Crossing Cultures*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.



Sarah Lanier, *Foreign to Familiar*

Stella Ting-Toomey, *Communicating across Cultures*



David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

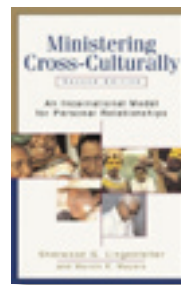
Books can be found at:  
Lifeway.com or Amazon.com

## *Ministering Cross-Culturally:*

### *An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships*

## Book Review

*Ministering Cross-Culturally* explains that cross-cultural ministry occurs anytime one interacts with someone who has grown up learning values and lifestyle patterns that differ from one's own. Because this interaction occurs when overseas or here in the States, every Christian needs to learn how to be incarnational ministers of the gospel to people who are unlike them. Lingenfelter and Mayers explain different tensions that regularly arise when people from different cultures interact with each other, including tensions regarding judg-



ment, time, goals, self-worth, crisis management, and vulnerability. The book also includes a short questionnaire to help readers better understand their own basic values. This book is a great, short read for all Christians desiring to communicate the gospel to an increasingly pluralistic culture.

By: Kevin Hall

**Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal***

***Relationships*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.**

## Intercultural Communication

You cannot not communicate; everything you say or do is communicating, whether it is what you mean to communicate or not. Cultures communicate in many different ways, and the effective witness for Christ is the person who can share the gospel in a way that his or her hearer can understand and embrace.

The world is filled with thousands of people groups that interact and communicate in culturally unique ways. Many breakdowns in relationships, from wars to divorces, give witness to how difficult it is to clearly communicate with people. The more unlike two people are, the greater the likelihood of miscommunication.

All cultures use many different systems for communication. We not only use verbal language, but we also employ many other systems to convey information, such as color, time, space, eye contact, gestures, etc. Every ethnolinguistic group has its own verbal language and its own system for communicating in all the other systems. This often results in confusion. In the same way that it would be pointless to preach in English to non-English speakers, it would be confusing to

utilize our other communication systems when communicating in another culture.

Harmless gestures in the United States may be offensive in another culture. For instance, during his second inaugural parade, President George Bush flashed the "hook'em horns" sign to the University of Texas marching band. The next day newspapers in Europe expressed shock and dismay. In their cultures, that same gesture is the sign of a Satan worshiper. Clearly, some miscommunication had occurred. While in the United States the peace sign, the victory sign, and the "okay" sign (making a circle with the index finger and thumb) are all understood and acceptable gestures, they are highly offensive in other cultures.

One Asian culture uses red to communicate good fortune, while another uses it for death. Our culture wears white to weddings, while another uses white for funerals. One culture values privacy and individual rights, while others value inclusion and fitting into the collective. The fact that you are a guest who has been left alone all evening in your hotel room com-

municates respect to you among one people or an insult if done by another.

Advancing the kingdom and glorifying Christ occurs most effectively through culturally appropriate ministry. Culturally appropriate ministry is sometimes as simple as being sensitive to people from other backgrounds. For instance, if you want to win your Muslim neighbors, you will want to avoid having an afternoon barbecue during the month of the Muslim fast or serving pork if you invite them over at other times. Failure in this would communicate an offense to them.

Learn some of the cultural characteristics of the group you are trying to reach. Engage in culturally appropriate ministry if you want them to hear your gospel message. Remember: you cannot not communicate; everything you say or do will communicate something to others, whether or not it is what you meant to say.

By: Dr. David Sills

*Professor of Christian Missions and Cultural Anthropology; Director of the Great Commission Center, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*

# CHURCH HEALTH 101



Statistics show that the United States has the third-largest Hispanic population in the world, and Hispanic-Americans are already the largest minority in America. By 2050, it is projected that there will be 102.6 million Hispanics living in the United States. More and more people speak Spanish and have a Hispanic cultural background. In fact, more than 1 out of 10 U.S. residents currently speak Spanish at home.



If you want your church to be a healthy church, consider reaching out to the Hispanics in your area. Here are a few websites to find more information about reaching Hispanics:

- [Hispanic Spotlight](#)
- [Reaching Hispanics Magazine](#)
- [Understanding Hispanics](#)
- [Hispanic Church Planting Guide](#)

## PURPOSE SIX

**Think about using one of these ways to pray for ethnics in your area:**

1. Make contact with the pastor of an ethnic church in your area. Invite him to give his testimony at your church, and then commit to interceding for him.
2. Adopt a local ethnic church, and enlist church members to pray for each of that church's ministries (e.g., worship, students, children, preaching, etc.).
3. Working with your local association or district, pray specifically about helping to plant an ethnic church. Consider opening your building for a new ethnic congregation.
4. Find out where ethnics live in your area, and challenge your church to do "drive-by praying"—that is, drive through the community and pray for their needs. This kind of praying is often a beginning to a greater burden for ethnics.
5. Discover who is teaching English as a Second Language courses in your area, and pray for that ministry. Some of your members might even join the ministry.

## RESEARCH SHOWS

Most understand that people from different cultures communicate differently and have different values. Sarah Lanier has helpfully categorized people into hot- and cold-climate cultures.

### Hot-Climate Cultures

*Relationship oriented:* Relationships are key; "other things will get done when they get done."

*Indirect communication:* Saving face for both communicators is highest priority; it's all about being friendly.

*Group identity:* My identity is tied to the group; the opinion of the group matters; belonging is important.

*Inclusion oriented:* Everyone is included in all matters; possessions are shared; group-oriented.

*Hospitality:* Often spontaneous; home is always open, and guests are a priority; offering food and gifts is common.

### Cold-Climate Cultures

*Task oriented:* Getting the task done is priority; the clock rules the day, often with little regard for relationships.

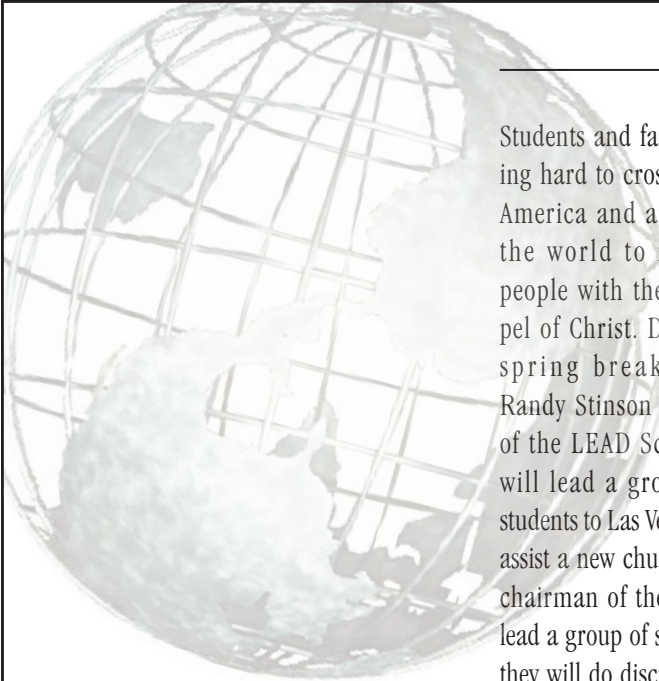
*Direct communication:* Information transfer is highest priority; feelings are less important; "yes" means "yes."

*Individual identity:* Individuals are important, each with an opinion; "I can do it on my own."

*Privacy oriented:* "It's my business, not yours"; privacy is cherished; individual ownership is important.

*Hospitality:* Usually planned for, with advance notice expected; guests may be important, but they assume they will pay for their food and lodging.

## Missionary Matters



Students and faculty at Southern are working hard to cross cultural barriers in North America and around the world to reach people with the gospel of Christ. During spring break, Dr. Randy Stinson (dean of the LEAD School) will lead a group of students to Las Vegas to assist a new church plant. Dr. George Martin, chairman of the missions department, will lead a group of students to West Africa, where they will do discipleship and training for new



believers. During the entire spring semester, the Great Commission Center also offers many ministry opportunities through "Reaching Out Louisville." ROL offers short-term and long-term ministries in the Louisville area, including after-school programs, language partner work, refugee assistance, athletic ministries, and volunteer work with ethnic churches. Please say a prayer for these cross-cultural opportunities.

**BGS HELPS**

### Find out about the people groups in your area:

[www.peoplegroups.info](http://www.peoplegroups.info)

### The Dehoney Center for Urban Ministry Training

We have recently started a center for training ministers to reach the cities. If you are interested in the center or our Certificate of Urban Ministry, please contact us at [UrbanTraining@sbts.edu](mailto:UrbanTraining@sbts.edu).

### Biblical Church Growth: The Blog and Writings of Dr. Chuck Lawless

Blog, Articles, Books, MP3s, Recommended Resources, Book Reviews, Links  
<http://www.biblicalchurchgrowth.com>

### The Great Commission Center

<http://www.sbts.edu/greatcommission>

### North American and International Missions

[www.namb.net](http://www.namb.net) and [www.imb.org](http://www.imb.org)

### Know others who might be interested in receiving this e-newsletter?

Send their contact information to [bgsinfo@sbts.edu](mailto:bgsinfo@sbts.edu).

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