

Ministry to Minorities, Immigrants and Foreign Students

A Nation of Immigrants

The U.S. began as a nation of immigrants.

- * Initially and primarily from Europe, Inter-America, South America, Africa.
- * Numerous waves of immigration. Usually became a homogenous mix.
- * Minority groups from China, Japan, Philippines and other Asian countries.

Present population consists of large blocks of foreign immigrants, foreign students and minorities.

- * Largest language and ethnic group is Hispanic, with many national sub-groups.
- * Next is African-Americans.
- * Present surge of Asian immigration -- Chinese, Indian, Filipino, Samoan, Fijian, Korean
- * Smaller groups are Afghanistani, Ethiopian, Yemeni, Palestinian, Yugoslavs, etc.

Many of the new immigrants do not mix a great deal, but remain insular in language, culture and food.

Many U.S. cities today are composed of no one clear majority but of minority groups who often outnumber the stereotype of an American. (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant -- WASP)

- e.g. Fresno, California -- largest concentration of Hmong outside Laos and Thailand.
 Fremont, Hayward, Concord -- largest concentration of Afghans outside Afghanistan
 New York -- largest concentration of Jews outside Israel.

The Function of Culture

Culture: The structuring of cultures and assumptions at the root of customs which govern people's lives.

Historically, many react to other cultures like the monkey and the fish. They're friends. In flood season, the monkey climbs to a tree to save himself. He takes his friend, the fish, up into the tree to save him, but instead causes the fish's death. The way of Jesus is to honor other cultures, not to tear them down. Do you understand people from other cultures? And your own culture?

Pro/con -- Is American culture healthy and good? Or sick and debilitated?

A well-functioning culture provides organization, order, meaning, continuity with the past, guidelines for the present, etc. A well-functioning culture provides a high degree of physical, psychological, and spiritual security.

To what extent does U. S. society suffer from psychological illness and breakdown? Have people lost hope? Are they demoralized? Has selfishness and crime increased? Is there a breakdown in families, in business, in politics? Is there moral infection and psychological trauma?

There are signs of a sick society. Have you considered the following in American culture?

1. Judge your own culture -- not someone else's.
2. Western culture -- especially American -- shows the greatest quantity and quality of difference of any culture in the world. (This often makes it difficult for us to identify with or understand other cultures.)
3. Many anthropologists believe American culture is sick and in decline.
4. American and other western societies are highly visible, very wealthy, and very powerful.

(Is the Western wedding western or Christian? Is the funeral western or Christian? Christmas?)

Outside the US and western culture, there is a desire to combat the high prestige of the western way of life, especially in the minds of non-westerners. We in the west are in a prominent position not because of cultural superiority but because of gunpowder (military power).

Understanding Other Cultures

Select your target based on your own gifts:

1. Language
2. Proximity to people groups
3. Their openness to the gospel
4. God's direction for your life and witness.
5. Are the people of that group open to change and new ideas?

Are you sowing or reaping? (e.g. Islam, Buddhism, Roman Catholic, Hispanics, Korean, Filipino)

Characteristics of Individuals which Facilitate Change

1. A feeling of need
2. Openness to change
3. Freedom to pursue change
4. Belief in the possibility and advisability of change
5. Desire for gain in personal standing
6. Literacy

Characteristics of Donor Groups which Facilitate Change

1. Prestige of the donor group
2. Aggressiveness and enthusiasm
3. Ability to influence opinion leaders
4. Duration and intensity of contact

5. Friendliness of contact.

Suggestions for witness

1. Pray, Pray, Pray! The work of soul-winning is the Lord's!
2. Friendship works....not debate or argument.
3. Approach others as a searcher -- not as a superior to an inferior.
4. Spend time with your target group. Find out where they live. Learn to talk with them, to eat their food. Study their culture and their way of thinking. Go to them rather than say, "Come to my church."
5. Soul-winning is more love and less doctrine.
"Jesus moved among men as one who desired their good."
6. If necessary, arrange for assistance from one who understands the culture.
7. People tend to make decisions for Christ when there is the least amount of cultural and language change for them to cross.
8. Try to work with groups and opinion leaders -- not just with one individual.
9. How can you express the Gospel in the context of the target culture?
10. Remember that God gives the increase. His work is done by His Spirit....with our cooperation.
11. Remember that you are not alone. Read the literature and mix with others who have a similar mission.
12. Work closely with your church leaders in planting faith in the target community.

Bibliography

Charles Kraft. *Anthropology for Christian Witness*.