



The Cross-Cultural Model

You and I are the same, and yet different. Which one controls the other? That can be taken several ways. 1) Do our differences control our similarities? 2) Do our similarities control our differences? 3) Do you control me? 4) Do I control you?

The Cross-Cultural Model brings diverse individuals and groups together in following Jesus. To do so we need four sets of **A-D's**.

Awareness of Differences – this includes discovering the needs, likes, background, values, expectations, lifestyles, and orientation of those who are different than me/us.

Acceptance of Diversity – this involves being open to inclusiveness and embracing others. This may stem from curiosity, interest, need, or a foundation of personal security and broadened perspective.

Agreement on Direction – this might be a lengthy process, but the outcome focuses on working together to mutually meet needs. These could be for you or me or both of us or something beyond us.

Application of Design – this comes down to the practical sharing of experiences. History gets created at this point and adjustments can be expected over time.

Biblical Basis

The story of Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4) illustrates the Cross-Cultural

Model from God's perspective. The immediate needs were obvious. The disciples went to town to buy food. Jesus waited at the well with no means to draw water. The woman came to draw water when she thought nobody would be present. Hundreds of years of bad history, intensified by diverse worship styles and practices, would make even civil interaction a noble accomplishment. Yet God, in the form of Jesus, won the woman to his kingdom, and turned her into an evangelist to those who despised her, something Christ's disciples never seemed to consider.

In Old Testament history, God's call to Abram (Genesis 12:1-3) included leaving his own country and family to begin a new nation elsewhere, plus a promised blessing for him, his family, and through them a blessing to the whole earth. By the time of Moses, the promised blessings for obedience listed being the head rather than the tail, and always having the upper hand (Deuteronomy 28:13). Maybe the promise had a partial fulfillment during the reign of Solomon when people from every nation came to visit the wise king and to hear what God had shared with him (1 Kings 10:24). But by the next generation, the

kingdom split. Later God's people went into exile. By the time of Christ, nationalism kept them distracted as squabblers in a land occupied by Roman soldiers.

The New Testament presents Jesus, who reached out to both Jews and Gentiles. He was crucified by both, yet gave the Gospel Commission to make disciples of all nations. John later reiterated that commission when he described an angel from heaven proclaiming the everlasting gospel to every nation, tribe, kindred and people on the earth (Revelation 14:6-7).

Sadly, the model rarely works (or even gets tried). In spite of Paul's words that "in Christ" we are all one (Galatians 3:27-29), God's actions that take his people into cross-cultural settings often receive greater resistance from his followers than from those invited to come follow (Acts 10, 11, and 15).

The greatest and most profound evidence that Christ's followers truly belong to Him shines most profoundly when they love each other (John 13:35).

What It Looks Like

"Unity within diversity." That slogan shows up more on banners than in action. Security in one's identity enables a person to walk tall without being arrogant, and explore different perspectives without being defensive or intimidated. There must be give-and-take. Clarity on essentials would remove many barriers. Inquisitiveness and appreciation without forced replacement would open rather than close doors.

"Cross-cultural" can be different generations, ethnicities, countries, geographical areas within countries, socio-economic groups, educational levels, genders, religions, sexual orientation, political groups, families, schools, and even life experiences.

Find common ground. Seek understanding from another perspective. Withhold judgment for a time in order to better comprehend the reasons and foundations for differences. Affirm what you genuinely can. Consider your own background, practices, and reasons, as well as how they function in a broader sphere. Grow. Differentiate between essentials and non-essentials. Ask others to do the same. Re-evaluate. Find common ground on which you will need each other and work together. Repeat.

Keys To Make It Work

The first key to make the Cross-Cultural Model work is personal security of one's identity. All of us have certain elements that remain stable while others are in flux. Insecure people often find security through attempts to control their environment. This mitigates against cross-cultural experiences. Personal security can come from within or outside of one's self. Christ's acceptance of us "just as we are" provides security, plus the promise to change us into all He wants us to be (Ephesians 2:8-10). We are complete "in Him" (Colossians 2:10). Other keys include the "A-D's" listed at the start of the Cross-Cultural Model.

Obstacles

The major obstacle that prevents the Cross-Cultural Model from working is the individuals within the Body of Christ. This shows itself in the Body as a whole. The greatest segregations occur during worship. What's wrong with that picture?! If the only thing you have in common with another person is Jesus Christ, is that enough to bring you together? If not, then Jesus Christ isn't God. If so, then come together in Christ. When Jesus is not our "all in all" we fight and bicker and refuse to give up secondary identities, preferences, and "rights" and make a mockery of the Gospel.

Opportunities

The Cross-Cultural Model forces us to cling to Jesus as Savior and Lord, and to place everything else as peripheral. As the Apostle Paul testified (Philippians 3:3-11), all things, even very good things, are nothing but “dung” (KJV—figure it out) compared to knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. Utilizing the Cross-Cultural Model might be your avenue to salvation, as well as the road for others in your church and beyond.

