In an era when short-term missions are exploding, *Serving with eyes wide open: Doing short-term missions with cultural intelligence* is a timely and outstanding book. Its author, David A. Livermore, is the executive director of the Global Learning Center at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary and is also the co-founder of Intersect, a ministry that provides leadership training and consulting to emerging leaders in ministries around the world.

In this new and much needed book, Livermore examines the assumptions that drive most of the cross-cultural work done by Americans. He describes the major challenges and difficulties of short-term missions and presents some of the pitfalls involved in this great Western Christian enterprise. The author then points the way forward by engaging and challenging those thinking and planning to do short-term missions to seriously consider various perspectives and experiences before embarking in this noble endeavor. He urges everyone to engage in short-term missions with cultural intelligence.

*Serving with eyes wide open* is intended for those wanting to engage in effective cross-cultural mission, be it abroad or even at home. It is mostly, though, for people engaging in short-term mission trips, but it would also benefit career missionaries serving in cross-cultural contexts. The book is an attempt to open the eyes of Westerners (mostly Americans) engaging in cross-cultural mission abroad. The author’s intentional engagement with the “majority worlds” is worth mentioning; he not only attempts to dialogue and hear what the national church leaders have to say, he also aims to make Westerners more aware of the need to be respectful and mindful of the global Christian church and what it has to offer. In this way Livermore gives voice to the non-western church leaders at the receiving end. In doing so, the author has attempted, with a great deal of success in my perspective, to listen to what the global church has to say.

The book is divided into three parts. The first section helps the reader to understand the world
in which we live and interact—its realities, challenges, and opportunities. The second part, with its six chapters, provides very different perspectives with its conflicting images seen from one side by Americans and from the other by nationals. These conflicting images continually reappear in most short-term missions and fit under six categories: motivation, urgency, common ground, the Bible, money, and simplicity. The third part integrates various aspects of cultural intelligence theories into the planning and practice of short-term missions.

Livermore states, “The biggest problems for most short-term mission teams are not technical or administrative. The biggest challenges lie in communication, misunderstanding, personality conflicts, poor leadership, and bad teamwork” (14, 155). Because these issues have to do with humans relating to humans it is imperative that anyone engaging in short-term mission trips do it with intentional planning and preparation, and with some clear guidance and wisdom from those who have traveled this road hundreds of times before, like Livermore.

In the “heart of the matter” (163-176) the author offers ten suggestions for doing short-term missions with cultural intelligence: (1) God’s a lot bigger than your short-term mission trip; (2) stop petting the poor; (3) be yourself; (4) seek to understand; (5) on second thought—think again; (6) try, try again; (7) actions speak louder than words; (8) give up trying to see who’s in and who’s out; (9) incorporate short-term missions as part of your seamless missional journey; and (10) love God, love others.

The appendix with its various recommended resources is an excellent feature in this book. The types of references provided include practical trip-planning guides, devotionals, cross-cultural training tools, follow-up tools, global awareness, cultural intelligence, and biblical theology of missions.

Serving with eyes wide open: Doing short-term missions with cultural intelligence is a book that must be read and studied by all who want to engage in short-term and cross-cultural missions. Nevertheless, it will also be of benefit to the career missionary, churches, mission agencies, schools, and other supporting church ministries “that continually grapple with the issues of cross-cultural interactions” (13).

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