

Guiding Principles for Mission and Ministry Across Cultures in Urban North America

Prepared by The Multicultural Mission Committee of The Board for Home Missions

Introduction

Our Synod's activity in cross-cultural work in America, up to this point, has been due mostly to circumstances beyond our control. For example, our churches in central Milwaukee, pre-W.W.II pillars of WELS strength, found themselves floundering in the post-W.W.II rough seas of neighborhood racial transition. Those churches that survived the high waters came out of the storm determined to reach and to minister to their new neighbors and to include them in the work of the congregation. Some of these churches made significant changes in many aspects of their congregational life. Such periods of change were and are stressful, so much more for these central Milwaukee congregations because they had little guidance for determining and adopting change. It was a stressful time, but the Lord of the harvest taught them much through their process of trial and error.

The goal of this paper is to introduce strategies for developing a cross-cultural outreach and ministry to congregations whose neighborhoods are going through racial transition. Our prayer is that by offering these strategies, we can reduce some of the stress and turmoil that other congregations have endured. These strategies have been tested in and found effective by WELS congregations who are already working in culturally diverse neighborhoods. We will illustrate how these approaches work with case studies or anecdotes that are indigenous to the American urban context. More specifically, the case studies come out of experiences in the city of Milwaukee. This will limit the range of experience, of course, but the members of the Multicultural Mission Committee, who have experience in other cultures and in other parts of the world and America, feel that these case studies mirror their experiences fairly closely.

All of us on the Multicultural Mission Committee here profess and will profess throughout this paper with St. Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). Only the gospel brings people to faith in Jesus. Only the gospel can persuade people to trust in Jesus for eternal life. The inspired, inerrant Word of God is the fully sufficient and effective means by which the Holy Spirit leads people to see their individual sins as well as the sins common in their culture, to rely on Jesus to forgive that sin and to follow Jesus as he leads his people to bear fruits of repentance.

We also here profess and will profess throughout this paper with Jesus, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). The Bible is the only objective and universal truth. No culture of sinful mankind has produced this objective and universal truth. Jesus Christ revealed truth to us in the words of Scripture. It is the truth of Scripture that judges every individual human and every human culture. No individual human and no human culture may ever sit in judgment upon Scripture's truth, the inspired and inerrant word of God. It is because we WELS Christians are so committed to the word of God that we strive to communicate it in such a way that it will be clearly and correctly understood by all people from every culture. The fundamental premise behind the approaches and strategies we offer in this paper is that we cannot improve upon the gospel but we can and must make sure that the gospel is being heard and understood by the hearer in the same way it is spoken and intended by God, the only author of all Scripture.

This paper is divided into six sections. A brief introduction to each section follows:

1. *Cross-Cultural Respect or Ethnocentrism?* This section defines ethnocentrism and describes its effects on both the missionary and on the “host”¹ culture. Ethnocentrism prevents the development of the trust bond, a critical element to cross-cultural mission and ministry.
2. *Human Culture: Opinions About What Is Best and Beautiful.* This section offers a few definitions, attributes and limitations of human culture. Our objective as missionaries in a cross-cultural context is to teach and work toward a Christian culture based on the Bible. This Bible-based culture is contrary to all human cultures but provides the bond of unity among cultures.
3. *Our Goal: Transforming A World View.* This section demonstrates how world view as an aspect of culture affects communication, understanding and attitudes. The importance of transforming a human culture’s world view into a Biblical world view is introduced.
4. *Human Commonality.* In view of the tremendous diversity among human cultures, it is comforting to know that there is even more commonality between cultures. Even more importantly, Jesus has provided a commonality through his vicarious atonement of all the world. Cross-cultural mission and ministry is difficult but it is possible because of this commonality.
5. *Preaching, Teaching and Worship in a Cross-Cultural or Multicultural Context.* This section demonstrates why we cannot use the same sermons and the same model for mission and ministry wherever we go.
6. *The Missionary As Agent of Change.* The goal of this section is to wrap up all of the previous sections in such a way that a conceptual and initial approach to cross-cultural mission and ministry begins to take form.

1. Cross-Cultural Respect or Ethnocentrism?

My first task as the new pastor was to get to know the membership, fifty-two percent of whom were Black, the rest mostly of German, life-long Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod stock. I met the members in small groups over a period of five months. Each member was asked to respond to these questions: Who are you? What is your personal “faith” history? What direction do you think our church should be taking?

The very last group was the largest and happened to be composed entirely of Black members. Mr. Jagers, on my right, addressed the questions first. We proceeded around the large and crowded table enjoying the discussion and becoming comfortable with each other. Then it was Mr. Davis’s turn. He dropped the agenda proposed by the new, Caucasian, fresh-out-of-seminary pastor in preference for his own. “I only want to know one thing,” he asked. “Will you serve us?” The question was shockingly abrupt. But deep down inside, everyone was wondering the same thing. All eyes were on me. They were waiting for the answer. If Mr. Davis had known how unprepared his new pastor was for cross-cultural ministry, he would have been even more concerned.

Our Synod’s mission statement challenged us to plant ten cross-cultural churches in America before the year 2000. That means that we will be sending people to plant and serve churches in a different cultural context than their own. A survey conducted by our Multicultural Mission Committee in 1991 revealed that 400 of our existing congregations are located in multicultural neighborhoods. The purpose of this essay is, first, to demonstrate that those who will be sent to plant and serve these churches need special training for cross-cultural evangelism. This training, like all training for special ministries, is an important part of our synod’s program of continuing education for pastors and teachers.

Without this training, the missionary—no matter how sincere, intelligent or ambitious for God—will commit ethnocentrism. What is ethnocentrism? You will look in vain for this word in the 1971 edition of the Oxford English Dictionary. Anthropologists came up with this word to describe the tendency humans have to

¹ “Host culture” is virtually synonymous with the term “target culture.” The word “host,” however, conveys an appropriate connotation of respect that “target” may not. Host culture also expresses the idea that this culture will teach and serve the cross-cultural worker at least as much as he will teach and serve it.

levy a judgment upon another culture using their own culture as the standard of excellence. The word is new but the problem isn't. "Can anything good come from Nazareth" is an ancient example of the even more ancient problem of judging others on the basis of accent, occupation, skin color and other cultural factors. Especially for the person born and raised in a one-culture context, the conviction that "my culture is the best culture" comes naturally.

He (who is raised in a one-culture context) tends to learn and accept the one-culture, self-centered approach that identifies the one who speaks with an "accent" as an oddball and an outsider, and thus worthy of rejection. The average person uses a series of defense mechanisms to show this. The superior-inferior category quickly labels the other person as inferior when he differs in language and culture. Further, the right-wrong category convinces the person that his own way of life is right and that the other person's way of life is unsatisfactory or wrong. As a result, "different" becomes "odd." The person may react to another's speech and dress as strange. Divergence of thought and belief is classified as pagan or uncivilized... There is a sense that "we are the real people." Such an attitude blocks effective communication with others. (Mayers, 1987:xii)

An ethnocentric attitude is impossible to disguise. Ethnocentrism in Christians is more an issue of ignorance than malevolence. But ethnocentrism doesn't have to be malicious to be deadly. Consider this judgment given after church one Sunday by a long term Lutheran to a Black adult convert who had recently joined a WELS congregation.

I didn't mind that gospel song we tried to sing this morning. But you know, there really was nothing much to it. The tune was catchy, but the words didn't say anything. Just the same thing over and over again. Why are those little songs so important to you people anyway? They just can't compare to our beautiful Lutheran hymns.

Gospel songs and "Lutheran" hymns which come out of a European tradition are two different genres of hymns of praise to God. Some Christians prefer one genre in general over against the other. This is only natural. Ethnocentrism, however, pits one against the other, forcing one genre to be superior and the other inferior. There is room for both genres in the worship life of Christians, especially among those Christians who belong to a church with a Caucasian and African American membership.

Ethnocentrism can easily take its toll on a missionary. If a missionary does struggle under a burden of ethnocentrism, or, from his perspective, if people are not responding to his preaching, how long can he continue to suffer the frustration, isolation and inconvenience of living in this "inferior" culture? He becomes homesick and discouraged. He grows bitter toward the people he came to serve. Though he probably will not recognize that the lion's share of his loneliness is the by-product of his own ethnocentrism, loneliness is a heavy burden to bear nonetheless.

Think also of the challenges facing our teachers in a multicultural or bi-racial Lutheran elementary school. They will spend at least six hours a day teaching children from a different culture, another couple of hours involved in special activities and sporting events which will remind them just how different is this culture and, finally, another hour or two trying to communicate with the parents from this culture. What one expects in a classroom or in discussion with a parent on their child's progress or problems is largely the result of culture. If our teachers aren't as well prepared for that culture or cultures as they are for teaching math, they will experience great frustration. Ethnocentrism in this context may take the form of, "These children and their parents just don't know how to behave in our school!" We will discuss biblical expectations that will be applicable to any culture later on. At this point, however, this teacher may be frustrated because of an ignorance of the culture he or she is working in and a lack of understanding about how the teacher's culture is different from the student's culture. Differing but unspoken assumptions can cause great distress!

What is likely to happen? The frustrated and lonely missionary or teacher will be looking for the first call back to his own kind of people. Calculate the expense in terms of the pain of the people he is so anxious to leave. Calculate the expense in terms of wasted synodical dollars if the new church must be carried along financially or closed. Calculate the expense if the missionary can't wait for the first call out and decides to resign from the ministry altogether. Every pastor, missionary or teacher must first develop a sense of trust between himself and the people he is serving. To establish this trust takes time, a humble spirit and clear communication. Establishing trust is even more important, more difficult and takes longer in a cross-cultural situation.

Trust between people is always more important than the issues or difficulties between people. This is especially true of the trust bond between people who share faith in Jesus Christ! If the trust is there, the two parties can discuss the issues and resolve the difficulties. If there is no trust or until there is trust, effective communication and Christian ministry is, to say the least, greatly hindered. Once trust has been established, a cultural error on the part of the called worker will be forgiven. Perhaps more importantly, when the trusted worker does make a cultural error, the people whom he is serving will explain that error to him and help him understand how and why to avoid that error in the future. Trust allows the worker and his people to grow together and to work together as they carry out Christ's Great Commission in their cultural and ethnic context. Mistakes become learning opportunities instead of torpedoes.

If a missionary is going into a new field, it will take a long time to develop this trust bond between him and the people he is working to reach for the Savior. But the missionary must recognize that this trust bond is of the utmost importance. The host culture will naturally be inclined to tune out any message from a missionary that they do not trust. The importance of a trust bond in this situation is obvious. This trust bond is equally important, however, if a pastor is called to serve a church whose membership is of a different culture or cultures. Because these folks are Christians, they will recognize their pastor as one sent to them by God, they will recognize their already existing unity and trust bond in Christ and they will certainly be willing and anxious to develop that trust bond further through Christian fellowship and service. We must not, however, minimize the importance and the time required to develop that cross-cultural trust bond even between fellow Christians. Just being fellow Christians doesn't provide an automatic basis for communication and understanding. Being fellow Christians provides the foundation upon which communication and understanding can grow over time.

In my first year of teaching eighth grade confirmation, I was frustrated by the great deal of disciplining that I had to do throughout the hour. At one point, I became so frustrated at a student that I walked to the door, threw the door open violently and, with a twisted face, yelled, "Come with me!" The student got up very casually and said, "Just don't hit me in the face." Later, a parent explained to me that the most foolish thing I could do is to lose my temper and to appear to threaten the students. These students wait for buses on gang "turf" and have to deal with threats or fear threats on a daily basis. I had to understand that my physical presence and "aggression" would not achieve for me the classroom environment that I wanted. I also had to adjust some of my attitudes about that classroom environment.

The Multicultural Mission Committee is convinced that a multitude of excellent opportunities for effective cross-cultural evangelizing and church planting are to be found in existing WELS congregations. Many of our urban WELS churches find themselves in neighborhoods that have changed drastically over the years. There are no longer German immigrants in the houses and upper flats surrounding the church. There are Asians, Blacks, Latinos, Arabs and Indians. This reality raises a trust issue of the utmost urgency and importance.

What if the pastor and some leaders of a "traditional" WELS church adopt the vision to reach into their cross-cultural neighborhood in order to win souls to Christ and add souls to the care of their church? What if the pastor and leaders adopt the vision to become a church that is not only in their community but is also of the community? This will require the retooling of ministry and further research of concepts that this paper seeks to

introduce. But more importantly, this vision will require the trust of the *current* members of that traditional WELS church.

We openly admit and strongly insist that the “Our doors are always open to everybody” philosophy of outreach, a philosophy that assumes no change in worship style or cultural attitudes, must be rejected. It is an exclusivistic attitude that will almost always undermine cross-cultural mission and ministry. On the other hand, the current members of that existing WELS church need to trust their pastor and leaders to respect their culture and what has nurtured them in their church.

Before any changes can be made, the current members of that church need to understand the biblical mandates for outreach. The current members must be shown from Scripture that their church and school do not belong to them, but to the Lord Jesus Christ. With this mindset, they will receive the courage to evaluate what they are doing, how they are doing it and why they might make some adjustments in order to implement a cross-cultural mission and ministry. At the same time, these members need to be assured that their ethnic and religious culture will not be jettisoned for who knows what in the name of evangelistic fervor. In fact, before a congregation ever begins an outreach across cultures in the neighborhood, they should review their past, celebrate God’s presence in their history and decide very carefully what aspects of their heritage and tradition will be taught to the new culture or cultures they hope to add to their spiritual family.

This is especially important if a new pastor comes to one of our existing and “traditional” WELS congregations. He may see immediately that there is a vast and ripe cross-cultural harvest of souls in the neighborhood. But before he makes changes in the mission and ministry and worship of his new flock, he must first build a firm trust bond with the current members of that flock. When this trust bond is in place, they can together search out (as they are led by Christian brothers and sisters from the other culture) the necessary changes that have to be made in their outreach methods and in their proclamation and celebration of the gospel of Christ. This process is stressful and difficult. Any change seems difficult. But if the trust is there and if Christ’s Great Commission is understood and if a congregational heart for souls is nurtured, our current membership will not only be open for cross-cultural outreach in their neighborhoods, they will work for it, pray for it and clamor for it.

That the church’s ethnocentrism has hindered the growth of God’s kingdom is clearly evident throughout the pages of church history. That the church’s ethnocentrism has offended the precious “other sheep” of Christ is a painful but necessary confession to make. That we address the obstacle of ethnocentrism is mandated by God in his Scriptures (Philippians 2:3-7). The New Testament is full of examples of not only cross-cultural outreach but of the conflict that resulted from this cross-cultural outreach. But once this conflict was resolved, effective outreach and ministry ensued.

In Acts 6:1-7, we see that the “word of God spread” once the conflict over the daily distribution of food was resolved between the Grecian Jews and the Hebraic Jews. In Acts 8:4-40, we see Philip effectively evangelizing Samaritans and an Ethiopian. In Acts, chapters ten and eleven, we see God reminding Peter that circumcision and the Mosaic law were no longer in effect. Knowing this truth helped Peter grow out of his ethnocentrism in regard to Cornelius in particular and Gentiles in general. In Acts, chapters thirteen and fourteen, we see the church at Antioch send Paul and Barnabas out on their first world mission tour, a cross-cultural endeavor. In Acts 15:1-35, we see that the false understanding of circumcision and the resultant cross-cultural issues between Jews and these recently evangelized Gentiles had become so disruptive that a special council had to be called to resolve them. But note how the cross-cultural issues were resolved! The Gentiles were not told that they could become Christians as long as they lived and worshipped and ate as Jews! Nor were the Jews told to jettison their culture in preference for the Gentile culture. James directed each culture to work toward preserving the true preaching of the gospel and also to work toward preserving the bond of peace, patient understanding, and mutual respect between these cultures.

Paul deals with these same matters regarding the gospel and issues of mutual respect between cultures at length in his letter to the Ephesians. This whole letter is about Jesus who destroyed all barriers between God and mankind and also destroyed the barrier God had established between Jews and Gentiles. The blood of Christ has destroyed all barriers between people of different cultures though our sinful nature desires to raise them up

again. Ephesians celebrates the fact that God has removed these barriers! This letter also, along with other portions of Scripture, help us understand that only Scripture can make judgments about what is right or wrong in any culture. Scripture is the only objective truth. Scripture is therefore the only criterion for determining right and wrong. If we use our own culture as that criterion, we usurp the place of God and the authority of Scripture.

We may wrestle in humility with whether one culture or our culture has a better way of doing things. For example, we may conclude that using private flush toilets that empty into treatment plants is a better way of dealing with raw sewage than using the open streets that empty into the water table. As you begin to work with other cultures, people from these cultures will tell you what positive things they have learned from you and your culture. You will discover that they will have some better ways of doing things too. You will also discover that every culture does a lot of things differently from another culture that aren't better; they are just different. Different is not necessarily inferior. Different is only morally wrong when it is contrary to the objective and eternal truth of God's Word. In humility, in the spirit of love, in pursuit of peace and mutual respect between cultures, we will struggle with our natural inclination toward ethnocentrism. God certainly wants to assist us in this struggle. Meditate on these passages which speak directly to the issue:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. (Philippians 2:3-7)

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (I Peter 5:5)

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews... To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Love your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:27)

2. Human Culture: Opinions About What is Best and Beautiful

A young Black man had completed six lessons in our Bible information class. He had no religious background beyond a few visits to a variety of churches. "My friends," he stated, "are wondering why I keep coming to this white church to talk to a white pastor." This seemed to be more of a question than a statement. Taking the lead from Jesus in his discourse with the Samaritan woman at the well, I suggested that the important criterion in choosing a place to worship is not "what do your people say?" but "true worshipers worship the Father in spirit and truth." He thought for a time and then concluded, "I guess you can kneel and genuflect like a Catholic or you can jump and shout like a Baptist or you can sit like a bump on a log like a Lutheran. The important thing is that I love Jesus as my Savior."

Why do you sit on a chair usually instead of on the floor? Why do you use a fork instead of chop sticks? Why do you look a person in the eyes throughout a conversation? Why do you open doors for your wife when you are out on the town but just might on occasion let her carry in all the groceries by herself? Why do you behave the way you do in a worship service? Why are you impatient with others who have answered these questions differently than you? What is your opinion about what is best and beautiful? The answer: culture.

The term “culture” is like a very general heading over a complex collection of subpoints. Mayers offers a helpful short definition of culture: the norm “which is the foundation for expectation within society” (*Ibid.*, 78). Wendland’s definition shows us how deeply rooted, all encompassing and carefully transmitted this foundation for expectation is:

Culture refers to the sum total of a people’s system of beliefs and associated attitudinal as well as behavioral attributes—both verbal and nonverbal, symbolic and nonsymbolic, institutionalized and customary, material and immaterial—all of which are shared to a greater or lesser degree by all of the members of a given society and passed on from one generation to the next by means of explicit as well as implicit learning experiences. There are two primary focal points in this view of culture, which is always people- or group-specific. These pertain to: (a) their way of thinking, or *world-view*, and (b) their way of behaving, or *life-style*. These two aspects are, of course, very closely connected. (1990, 7-8)

As long as a person’s behavior and way of thinking fits within the norm of what his society expects, he will not be considered abnormal. As soon as he begins to react to situations or to act in ways that are beyond the acceptable alternatives established by his society, he will be labeled abnormal. In our society, it is quite normal to shake hands with a fellow church member when you bump into him at the grocery store. Another acceptable alternative is to smile and say, “How are you?” Were you to grab his head with both your hands and kiss him on the cheek, your friend would be surprised or irritated and would label you abnormal.

People need to maintain their sense of norm, that is, they need the security of acting according to the expectations of their culture. Mayers describes a zone of experimentation that allows us a limited range to act in excess of our norm and a zone of experimentation that allows for a certain deprivation of norm. When one acts in excess of what his culture allows, he will feel shame or guilt (Mayers, *Ibid.*, 81).

Our congregation once hosted the joint Metro-North and Metro-South pastors’ conference. The entire service featured gospel songs and our congregation’s cultural adaptation of Lutheran liturgy. Even the Gloria in Excelsis was a gospel song of praise. After the service, some fellow pastors expressed no small amount of discomfort with the songs and service. Some challenged its “orthodoxy.”

If one is deprived of his norm, he feels irritation or bitterness (Mayers, *Ibid.*, 81).

One communion Sunday a few years ago, I forgot to direct the congregation to kneel for the confession of sins. I didn’t think too much of this oversight until after the service. A number of the membership expressed great irritation because “a confession made standing up is no confession at all.”

In the case of forgetting to direct everyone to kneel for the confession, the pastor had made an honest mistake. People understand honest mistakes and can usually forgive honest mistakes fairly quickly. In the case of the gospel songs and culturally adapted liturgy, this was poor communication and preparation on the part of the host pastor. The point is not “Why can’t they be more flexible?” The point is, “How were they led to understand and to accept what one church does musically and liturgically and why they, in their pastoral conference, might be interested in experiencing the adaptations.” Without this preparation, depriving others of the expected norm—in terms of the conference worship experience—created irritation and bitterness.

Human culture is first taught to an individual in the home from one generation to the next. Human culture is reinforced and expanded by the broader community around the home. Human culture is a *widely held and binding opinion* within a specific people group. This is to say that people who live together in a broader but defined community will tend to think and to act the same. This broader community teaches the individual

norms: what to expect and how to act and what is best and what is beautiful. If these norms are exceeded, the individual feels shame and guilt. If the individual is denied the norm, irritation and bitterness result. After many years in one culture, it is not surprising that people develop strong opinions about what is best and beautiful.

But every human culture, in so far as that culture has developed apart from God's Word and without being transformed by God's Word, is just an *opinion*. Opinions in and of themselves, when these opinions have no influence or guidance from God's Word, may not become standards by which other opinions or other cultures are judged. Some may assert that Western culture has or had once been transformed by God's Word and developed under the guiding influence of that Word. If for just the sake of argument, we were to accept that assertion, Western culture is still just one opinion among a world of opinions except where Western culture's opinion is in agreement with the clear and objective assertions of God's Word.

We stress this point lest we make the same kind of mistakes cross-cultural evangelists have made in the past. The pages of church history show us that some missionaries to Hawaii or Africa or India or even to Native Americans in our own country were as eager to teach Western culture as they were the gospel of Jesus Christ. The assumption was that Western cultural opinions (such as what kind of shoes to wear or what kind of language to speak or what kind of musical styles were stirring or what kind of political and economic system to follow) were inherently or objectively superior to the respective cultural opinions of the host culture. This kind of cultural imperialism created and will still create unnecessary obstacles to the real message Christian witnesses bear.

So human culture alone as it has been developed by humans alone is just an opinion. But every human culture is a very complex opinion, consisting of different levels or layers. Think of human culture in terms of a large onion. The *exterior* layer consists of people's behavior. What do people do? What do they wear? How do they sit? What—if any—utensils do they use when they eat? This is the layer that we see. It is a mistake to make conclusions about a different culture just on the basis of what we see. What you see people do gives you little if any indication about what and how a culture thinks.

The *second* layer consists of the meanings and values behind the behavior. Each culture, when developed without the benefit of Scripture, has come to its own conclusions about what is good, beneficial and best. The second layer defines *why* people do what they do and explains why it is better to sit on the floor instead of on a chair. These meanings and values bind the people in that culture together by giving them a sense of identity, belonging and continuity.

The *third* layer of culture consists of beliefs. The beliefs behind the meanings and values define what is true. A community of people without God's Word is left to define truth for itself. Every human culture has developed its own "truth." We know that such culturally determined truth is not truly binding or objective or authoritative. In fact, culturally determined truth is no truth at all. Only God's Word is true and can give us truth. But until an individual is converted by the Spirit who then enlightens the individual with God's truth, that individual will strive to abide by his culturally developed understanding of truth. His version of truth will in the meantime be the "best" truth. For example, one culture believes that one is not stealing until he is caught stealing. As long as he doesn't get caught, he has not stolen. This is his culturally determined concept of truth. He will abide by that truth and prefer that truth until God's only and objective truth shows him the lie he had previously thought to be true.

The *fourth* layer, the very core and starting point of every cultural onion, is the world view which defines what is real. World view addresses such concerns as who are we? Where did we come from? Why do people get sick? Why do some people stay poor? Do demons control the world or do the spirits of my dead ancestors? What should my greatest goal in life be? Should I strive for wealth or respect? Though people in general struggle little with these questions in an organized or ongoing basis, "Every culture assumes specific answers to these questions, and those answers control and integrate every function, aspect, and component of the culture" (Greenway, quoting Winter and Hawthorne, 1981:364).

We state with emphasis that just as only God's Word reveals objective truth, so also only God's Word reveals objective reality. But when a culture does not have the benefit of God's Word, it is left to its own imagination to determine reality. Though it will be a concept of reality that is full of error when compared to the

Bible, that culture's concept of reality will nonetheless control every aspect of their culture, their behaviors, their beliefs, their values, their ultimate goals. People's visible culture—what they do—is motivated by their world view.

One's world view is one's motivation. Motivation is what distinguishes civic righteousness from a Christian's good works. For this reason, a Christian cross-cultural witness must come to understand the world view of his host culture. We cannot understand what people from a different culture are doing or what their values are or what their concept of truth is unless we first begin to understand their world view.

3. Our Goal: Transforming a World View

The world view of an unbeliever is conditioned by the broader social community that raised him (whether you define that social community in terms of geographic boundaries, race, ethnic heritage or even socioeconomic categories). Though empirical proof would be difficult to come by, we would go so far as to say that any culture's world view is the product of the human imagination. Even if Western civilization based in part its laws, work ethic and attitude toward the poor on the Bible, this does not make this civilization's world view Christian. If one were to make a judgment about how "Christian" a culture or society was by observing human behavior or reading its judicial code, how many tribal or Asian or Islamic cultures wouldn't look at least as Christian as America or northern Europe? On the other hand, how "Christian" or biblical or sanctified was the Jewish cultural world view in the days that John the Baptist preached repentance, in the days that Jesus proclaimed personally his saving message, in the days that Peter denied his Lord?

Every culture's world view falls short of and, in fact, is opposed to the world view taught by Scripture. This is true because unbelieving individuals who learn, adjust and pass on culture adhere to what Paul calls the "basic principles of this world" (Colossians 2:20) and provide the social platform for "the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). Even if an unbeliever does many things that look "Christian," his world view leads him to perform these deeds for purely unchristian reasons and from a purely unchristian motivation.

Therefore, the goal of Christian preaching and teaching—in our culture or across cultures—is to *transform* the world view of the hearer. The Holy Spirit accomplishes this transformation first by bringing the sinner out of the darkness of unbelief. Conversion, followed then by clear teaching in Christian sanctification, transforms the values, the belief system, the goals and the behaviors of the individual.

Our preaching must address the world view. If our preaching were limited to addressing the mere behaviors of people, we may only accomplish a modification of behavior. We know the dangers and emptiness of moralizing. Preaching that doesn't force a sinner to evaluate his inner thoughts and motives, that doesn't challenge his culturally developed answers to what is truth, why am I here, and how do I obtain peace with God becomes moralizing. In order to apply God's law and gospel to another culture's world view, we must begin to know and understand its world view.

Scripture knows only a conversion that drastically and dramatically alters our most inner being. Scripture doesn't use terms like world view, but it insists on a radical change of the inner being that has been conditioned and misinformed by the world view. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). And in 2 Corinthians, Paul says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (5:17).

As Lutheran Christians, we are committed to a proper distinction between and use of the law and the gospel. As Lutheran preachers, we were taught at the seminary to "preach from the pews." We have to know what sins our people are struggling with, what questions they are wrestling with and what hurts afflict them before we can properly use God's law and gospel. The "good" preacher is the one that knows his flock well. This is precisely the point in emphasizing why it is so important for a cross-cultural evangelist to learn the world view of the host culture. We may assume that these folks think like we do. So we preach to them as if they think like we do. Meanwhile, how many of their struggles, their questions and their hurts remain untended?

A knowledge of world view is crucial in order to provide a basis for what Reed calls “hearer-oriented communication” (1985:103). We cannot be satisfied to communicate the teachings of Scripture in ways and words that are meaningful to us. We must understand a culture’s world view before we can communicate the gospel in ways that are meaningful and relevant to that culture.

The purpose of communication is to pass a message from a speaker (the source) to a hearer (the receptor) in such a way that the hearer will understand that message in the way that the speaker intended to have him understand it. Any married person knows how difficult it is to make the message he is speaking to be received in just the way he, the speaker, wants it to be heard and understood! As communication experts tell us, it is almost impossible for the hearer to understand exactly what the speaker means. Some of the things that can get in the way of a clear communication of words are our body language, voice inflection, our attitudes about ourselves and our attitudes about the person to whom we are speaking. These barriers to clear verbal communication are called paramessages because they are communicated not only with whatever is coming out of our mouths but with our actions and attitudes at that time.

Now place yourself into a cross-cultural context. Some cultures wave their hands to signify, “Good-bye.” Other cultures wave their hands in the same way to signify, “Come here.” This is one small example of how our paramessages are culturally developed and culturally defined. If we have trouble communicating effectively in our own homes with our own people, imagine how challenging it will be to communicate effectively with people from different cultures whose paramessages—ones sent and ones received—are so different from ours. The way we speak can communicate even more than what we speak!

The point here is that we must understand a person’s culture before we can even begin to communicate clearly with that person. And before we can understand a person’s culture, we must peel the cultural onion down to the core of the world view. The challenge before us who wish to preach Christ across cultures is to accept the fact that the ultimate rendering or interpretation of what we say will take place in the mind of our hearers. We cannot presume that hearers with a different world view will automatically understand what we would understand if the same words were spoken to us. The speaker must learn how to communicate in a different culture so he can be sure, to the degree possible, that what he is saying and meaning is also what the person is hearing and understanding. This understanding is not likely to occur if we do not know the world view of the person or culture to whom we are speaking.

This conceptual framework (world view) acts like a filter to block out from any message that is communicated to the individual (or group) all information which may somehow contradict or call into question its underlying premises and assumptions, or even less rigidly held desires, impressions and opinions. Alternatively, this psychological screen may function to modify the content and tone of any instance of communication to harmonize with one’s predetermined perspective on the subject being discussed. In either case, the meaning of the message which was transmitted by the source is not the same as that which his receptors actually apprehend. Because of the culturally specific world-view which guides and directs their thinking, people tend to see, hear, and understand just what they want—or better, what they have been conditioned—to see, hear, and understand. (Wendland, *Ibid.*, 67)

In other words, we who preach Christ must try to understand the people to whom we are speaking even as we understand the doctrine we are speaking. We must be faithful to the communication system of the people to whom we are speaking even as we are faithful to the truth of the gospel that we are speaking. We just can’t preach the gospel in our terms and with our gestures and expect it to be understood automatically. Therefore, we better make sure that we aren’t shutting off the ears of those to whom we are speaking by our body language or other paramessages. We must make sure we know what that person or that culture is hearing while we think we are preaching the universal Christ.

Our congregation recently started an outreach program for neighborhood teenage boys. The director of this youth group set it up so that there would be a half hour Bible talk followed by ninety minutes of basketball or tutoring or some other activity of interest to the teens. We soon had a great turn out of teens who were anxious to play basketball without fear of bullets flying over head. After a few weeks, the youth group leader—a Black leader in our congregation, asked me—the Caucasian pastor of the congregation, to lead the boys in Bible study. I sat in a circle with the teens and tried to break the ice. We hadn't met before this night. They were respectful but aloof, trying to decide what to make of the white preacher holding up their basketball game. I started the discussion by asking them what criticisms they heard or had about Christianity. I expected to hear them tell me that Christianity was for weaklings or something like that. The first criticism they fired at me, however, was, "God is white." I explained that God is spirit and has no flesh of any color. The next criticism they offered was, "Jesus was white." Then I explained that Jesus wasn't white as this young man stated; or black, as a different teen suggested. I explained that Jesus was a Jew according to his human nature but also true God. As the God-man he lived a perfect life for us and then went to the cross to suffer our hell. The look on several of these guys' faces was something between surprise and relief. Our Bible study went on for another twenty minutes and nobody complained. After the Bible study, one young man who had just been beaten up by a gang the night before, went out of his way to tell me how much he appreciated our youth group. He and a bunch of his buddies are still coming.

Hearer-oriented communication takes place after the trust bond described earlier has been carefully developed. We can only develop this trust bond by sharing in that culture, being students of that culture, learning to think in the terms of that culture, and carrying out our life in the middle of that culture. As we strive to create a trust bond in this way, we will also discover just what the needs and questions and hurts are in the culture that we are trying to reach for Christ. Now here is effective communication! If people feel that we are sincere and honest, loving and concerned, humble and personal messengers of the Most High God, and if people hear us teaching God's answers to *their* questions and applying God's comfort to *their* wounds, those people will acknowledge that we are indeed messengers of the Most High God. More importantly, they will hear the gospel, and you know that "faith comes from hearing the message" (Romans 10:17).

The influence that our world view exercises over our daily life is exhaustive and goes way beyond just verbal or written communication between communicator and receptor. Lingenfelter and Mayers (1986) demonstrate why tension results when different cultures with different world views come into close contact with each other:

1. *Time*: There is a tension between time orientation (which wants to complete the proposed agenda within the announced start and finish time) in some cultures and an event orientation (which primarily desires that all participants have an enjoyable time together in the meeting) in other cultures.
2. *Judgment*: There is a tension between some cultures that make decisions on the basis of personal details or the individual's welfare and other cultures that make decisions on the basis of the integrated whole and how those decisions impact the society in general.
3. *Crisis*: There is a tension between cultures which plan for and anticipate a potential crisis and cultures which down play the possibility of crisis and avoid taking action to prepare for potential crisis.
4. *Goals*: There is a tension between task oriented cultures (i.e., getting the job done at any cost) and person oriented cultures (emphasizing relationships and interaction during the task more than completion of the task).

5. *Self-Worth*: There is a tension between some cultures where prestige is ascribed according to birth and social status and other cultures where prestige is attained through one's personal achievements.
6. *Vulnerability*: There is a tension between some cultures which want to protect self-image at all costs and deny culpability and other cultures which willingly expose weakness and error and are open to criticism in order to enhance personal achievement.

Reed offers the additional category of SPACE (*Ibid.*, 105). It would be difficult, for example, for a child raised in the wide open "Big Sky" state of Montana to understand a gang member fighting for his "turf" on the corner of 27th Street and Capitol Drive in Milwaukee's central city. Another example of the space tensions at work between cultures depends on the distance at which people talk, amount of eye contact and how they posture themselves.

We define culture to show its impact on the way we preach across cultures and why that preaching may or may not be heard across cultures. We don't pretend to offer an exhaustive treatment of culture here. But it is clear that missionaries who go into a different cultural context must study their host culture. This requires effort but it is by no means impossible. With study and Christian humility, we can celebrate cultural diversity rather than being intimidated by it.

4. Human Commonality

In spite of great human diversity due to culture, there is in the words of anthropologists, a great "human commonality" in four key areas (Kraft 1979, 81 ff). First, humans beings are *biologically* similar. Race and ethnicity does not determine or explain culture. But every race and every ethnic group needs food to eat, air to breathe, etc. All these needs must be met. How they are met is part of culture. Secondly, human beings are *psychologically* similar. Humans need meaning and purpose in life, freedom, safety, love, a sense of belonging and a sense of worth. Third, humans share a *socio-cultural* orientation. People need to feel that they are part of a group, that they belong to others who are like them. Finally, humans share *spiritual* characteristics. Every human has spiritual needs and will try in a variety of ways to meet those needs.

In this section, we will describe humanity's common spiritual characteristics, not from the perspective of secular anthropology but from the perspective of our Lutheran theology. First, we outline what Scripture has to say about the spiritual situation of every human being giving special attention to the universal atonement accomplished by the redemption of Jesus Christ.

Every human has a knowledge of God based on creation. "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

Every human has God's law written on their hearts. "Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts" (Romans 2:14-15).

Every human sins against God's law. "As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God'" (Romans 3:10-11).

Every human is born sinful, spiritually dead and blind because of inherited sin. "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5). "The mind of sinful man is death...The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (Romans 8:6-7).

Every human faces death because of sin. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Every human has been reconciled to God through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:19). "He (Jesus Christ) is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

God desires and invites every human to enjoy reconciliation with him through Jesus Christ. “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men” (1 Timothy 2:3-6). “For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Every one who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’” (Romans 10:12-13).

We place this familiar outline before you for two reasons. First, we are reminded that we would share the destiny common to all mankind of every culture—eternal suffering in hell—if not for the mercy of our Savior God. In spite of a host of cultural differences, there is one inescapable commonality we share with everyone in the world: we do deserve to be punished forever in the torment of hell.

But God is merciful! He sent his only begotten Son to live a perfect life for us, to suffer our hell in our place, to give up his life as a ransom for ours and to rise again from the dead so we could be sure of our deliverance from the hell we deserved. But for whom did Jesus accomplish this deliverance? It was for all people everywhere in all the world from every culture! Here is the most wonderful, exciting and important commonality of all. God is no respecter of persons. God has no prejudice in his heart for a certain people group or against a certain culture. His mercy extends to all. None deserve God’s mercy, yet it is extended freely to every person.

This teaching on the universal atonement of Jesus Christ and the objective justification he accomplished is the foundation of the Christian religion, the benchmark confession of the historic Lutheran church and the inexhaustible source of our personal comfort. If Jesus died for all the world, then Jesus died for me. We see also that the doctrine of Jesus’ universal atonement is also the cornerstone of what we are calling human commonality. What’s the point? In gratitude for the fact that God has lavished his love upon us by rescuing us from hell and the grave, and in view of the fact that God has redeemed all others from hell and the grave, we are compelled by our love for Christ to win souls for him from every nation, every race and every culture.

We are not only compelled to do this, we are able to do this. All authority has been given to Jesus so that we can count on his guidance and protection as we carry out what he has commissioned us to do. And he equipped us for our task by giving us his Word that convicts and has the power to convert all people. We have God’s law and gospel, the only tools he’s given us and the only tools we need, to reach in or across our culture and bring people to faith in Christ. We are all evangelists or witnesses or ambassadors for Christ, whatever job description you prefer. The only question is, what kind of witnesses are we? Are we the kind that would make Jonah feel a little more comfortable? Or do we want to become the kind of witnesses that Paul was who said, “From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view” (2 Corinthians 5:16).

The universal atonement of Jesus Christ is also the foundation for another human commonality. This commonality is not shared by every human, but by everyone who truly believes that Jesus is his or her Savior. Again, we want to outline a few basic teachings about the *Una Sancta* giving special attention to a kind of common Christian culture and world view which all of us in the *Una Sancta* share. Because it suits our purposes well for this discussion, our outline will follow the presentation in the “Essay On Church Fellowship” from *Doctrinal Statements of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (1970).

A, 1 Through faith in Christ the Holy Spirit unites us with our God and Savior. The unmerited blessing of this fellowship with God through Christ Jesus ought to thrill our hearts as it thrilled the heart of St. John when he wrote in Chapter 3, verse 1, of his first epistle: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (*Ibid.*, 16).

A, 2 This Spirit-wrought faith at the same time unites us in an intimate bond with all other believers. Yes, from the very moment that we sinners were received into this blessed fellowship with our God through faith in Christ our Savior, we also entered upon another fellowship that should likewise thrill our hearts (*Ibid.*, 16). All believers the world over, regardless of race,

nationality, age, sex and station in life, together with those who have already departed out of this life in faith, constitute one spiritual family with Christ as its Head. Its members may differ ever so much as to ancestry, education, habits, pursuits, and political convictions, yet a living faith in Christ binds them closely together. This glorious unity of the invisible Church, and that which all of its members have in common to unite them, is set forth with great fullness in Ephesians 4:4-6 (*Ibid.*, 17).

A, 3 Faith as spiritual life invariably expresses itself in activity which is spiritual in nature, yet outwardly manifest (Ibid., 19).

A, 4 It is God the Holy Ghost who leads us to express and manifest in activity the faith which He works and sustains in our hearts through the Gospel. Since one and the same God-wrought faith in the Savior dwells in the hearts of all believers, uniting them most intimately as the body of Christ, the common spiritual life will also manifest itself in joint activity. Together believers will express their faith, each integrating the activity of his faith with that of other believers, each serving the other in faith with his particular gifts (Ibid., 19-20).

A, 5 Through the bond of faith in which He unites us with all Christians the Holy Spirit also leads us to express and manifest our faith jointly with fellow Christians according to opportunity: as smaller and larger groups, Acts 1:14, 15; 2:41-47; Gal. 2:9; as congregations with other congregations, Acts 15...(Ibid., 21).

The quotes above clearly demonstrate the happy commonality we have with all true believers every where! It is assumed that our hearts will be thrilled with the Christian commonality that God has given to us with Christians from every age and culture. We are one with God and one with each other in the invisible church, the *Una Sancta*. We share common Christian goals and desires. We look forward to our eternal life with God in heaven. We strive to persuade others to be reconciled to God. We follow God's Word to become the kinds of husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters and sons and daughters that God would have us to be. We have a common love for each other and along with that a mutual respect for each other. We have a common concern for each other's well-being. We acknowledge the Bible as our only source of doctrine and the inspired, inerrant Word of God. This Word is for us the only objective truth. It teaches us the mind of Christ which is the only objective reality. Together we humble ourselves in confession for all our sins against God's law. Together we stand in celebration of the gospel which assures us of the forgiveness of our sins. In grateful appreciation for this forgiveness, we strive together to live according to God's law.

This does not mean that we will or should wear the same kind of clothing or eat the same kind of food. Nor does this mean that we all should forsake every aspect of the human culture in which we were raised. The Christian church is not a melting pot of human cultures. The church seeks to overcome human inclinations toward ethnocentrism. The church is the body of Christ which possesses the mind of Christ whose beliefs, values, reality and truth are drawn from the Word of Christ. Because of our spiritual unity, we can enjoy our cultural diversity and learn from each other's different ways of meeting common needs.

This common Christian world view and culture will alienate Christians from aspects of their own human culture. Christians are aliens on earth. We look forward to "the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10). The eleventh chapter of Hebrews points us to the ancient heroes of faith who were persecuted and even killed by people of their own culture as well as by people from other cultures. So our commonality in the body of Christ is not only a thrilling blessing but also that which provides the bonds of love and encouragement to help us endure the trials and persecutions of our faith.

5. Preaching, Teaching and Worship in a Cross-Cultural or Multicultural Context

A true conversion of a sinner—insofar as his new man is concerned—results in the total transformation of his world view, that is, his way of thinking, his values, his goals in life, his concepts of truth and reality. Cross-cultural witnesses will do everything humanly possible, therefore, to remove obstacles in communication that might subvert this transformation. Our witness will be hearer-oriented—but not just our witness. As we work to instruct the convert’s faith to maturity, our Bible translations, our sermons, our Bible study topics and the worship services we conduct must continue to focus on the needs, the questions and the hurts of the host culture. We must be hearer-oriented if we want to be faithful to the message of Scripture. We must be hearer-oriented if we want to be faithful also to our Reformation heritage!

Consider Luther’s great Reformation accomplishments: his translation of the original Hebrew and Greek into a clear German Bible, his cleaning up and reworking of the Catholic mass so that his German brothers and sisters could enjoy the benefits of a liturgy that were biblically sound and intelligible to German speaking Christians, his preaching that elevated the sermon in this liturgy rather than the gospel-slandering re-sacrifice of the Savior. Lutheran Christians still enjoy Luther’s hymns and still use Luther’s catechism to instruct young Christians in the faith and equip them for works of service. Our Reformation heritage asserts that what Luther accomplished for his fellow Germans, a cross-cultural missionary will strive to accomplish for his host culture. Our Reformation heritage challenges us to:

- *use translations that are faithful to the original but also speak clearly in the host language;*
- *proclaim sermons and lessons that speak clearly to the people in their culture;*
- *return to the Scriptures to search out and systematize theology so it speaks clearly to people in their culture;*
- *and institute a worship life that incorporates meaningful aspects of the host culture.*

Use Translations That are Faithful to the Original but also Speak Clearly in the Host Language

In many parts of North America, we cannot assume that everyone who lives in the shadow of our WELS churches speaks English. For many living in the shadow of our churches, English is a second language. We know of WELS pastors in every sector of North America who are already learning a new language in order to serve their neighbors who do not speak English. Language training is necessary so these pastors can provide and use Bible translations that speak in the mother tongue of the host culture.

The challenge facing a pastor serving in our home mission fields today is to learn a new language well enough to choose and then use a version of the Bible that has already been translated. Luther’s challenge was to provide a good German translation himself. His goal was not always to reproduce word for word the Hebrew and Greek into German. His goal was to provide a translation that communicated the Bible’s message in clear German, in words and phrases that spoke God’s Word clearly in his culture, with the result that his German words would have the same impact and meaning on Germans that the original speaker’s words and phrases had on the original audience. In a 1528 letter to Wenceslaus Link, Luther wrote:

We are sweating over the work of putting the Prophets into German. How much of it there is, and how hard it is to make these Hebrew writers talk German! They resist us, and do not want to leave their Hebrew and imitate our German barbarisms. It is like making a nightingale leave her own sweet song and imitate the monotonous voice of a cuckoo, which she detests. (*Luther’s Works*, Volume 35, 229)

In defense of his German version of the Greek of Romans 3:28, he clearly states his goal in translating:

Here in Romans 3:28, I knew very well that word *solum* is not in the Greek or Latin text; the papists did not have to teach me that. It is a fact that these four letters *s o l a* are not there. And these blockheads stare at them like cows at a new gate. At the same time they do not see that it conveys the sense of the text; it belongs there if the translation is to be clear and vigorous. I wanted to speak German, not Latin or Greek, since it was German I had undertaken to speak in

the translation... We do not have to inquire of the literal Latin, how we are to speak German. Rather we must inquire about this of the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common man in the marketplace. We must be guided by their language, the way they speak, and do our translating accordingly. That way they will understand it and recognize that we are speaking German to them. (*Ibid.*, 189)

Luther held to this same philosophy when he translated from the Hebrew:

Again in Psalm 68 we ran quite a risk, relinquishing the words and rendering the sense. For this many know-it-alls will criticize us, to be sure, and even some pious souls may take offense. But what is the point of needlessly adhering so scrupulously and stubbornly to words which one cannot understand anyway? Whoever would speak German must not use Hebrew style. Rather, he must see to it—once he understands the Hebrew author—that he concentrates on the sense of the text, asking himself, “Pray tell, what do the Germans say in such a situation?” Once he has the German words to serve the purpose, let him drop Hebrew words and express the meaning freely in the best German he knows. (*Ibid.*, 213)

Yet, there were times when Luther followed the original style closely if this approach was necessary in order to allow a proper interpretation of the text: In such situations, Luther would often explain the translation in his marginal glosses so that his German readers would not be deprived of the text’s meaning.

On the other hand I have not just gone ahead anyway and disregarded altogether the exact wording of the original. Rather with my helpers I have been very careful to see that where everything turns on a single passage, I have kept to the original quite literally and have not lightly departed from it. I preferred to do violence to the German language rather than to depart from the word. (*Ibid.*, 194)

This aspect of our Reformation heritage is alive and well in our African mission fields. E.R. Wendland has been working for years to provide a faithful and hearer-oriented translation for the souls our Synod is serving there. He writes:

We may instruct our students largely or even entirely in English (or some other trade language), but is this the language which they will use when communicating the Gospel message to their people? Even if it were possible, that is, to preach and teach the people in English, it would not be desirable for the following reason: Language has three primary functions: (1) the informative, (2) the emotive, and (3) the imperative function. We can readily see that English learned as a second language since it is the language of government, a widely used trade language, or the language of education, easily fulfills function number 1. It does *transmit* information. However, it seldom has *emotive* value for the non-native speaker; he does not express his inner feelings (joy, anger, hope, sorrow, etc.) by means of it. Likewise, English learned as a second language is often restricted in its *imperative* function. As bearers of the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ, we are very much concerned about the imperative function of language. We want our people to believe and *obey* the Gospel, that is, not only to “speak” the things which become sound doctrine, but to *live* them. And to accomplish this we must use the “language of the heart.” This is the language used when he wishes to receive or transmit the most important things in life. And it is this language which must also be used to bring the Gospel message to him. And so, it is one of our most important tasks to see to it that the students whom we instruct are able to convert the “sound doctrine” which they have learned into their own language, both idiomatically and

accurately. This is not always an easy thing to do. Many times we will be forced to give up the *form* of a word or expression in order to convey effectively its true *meaning*. (Wendland 1972)

In urban North America, there are many cultures and nationalities within reach of WELS churches whose mother tongue is not English. Current and future pastors in our home mission fields will have to learn a new language and use a Bible version in that language for all the reasons described above. This point is obvious! Our next assertion is built on the foundation we have provided to this point. It may not be as obvious as our last assertion but it is just as vital.

Proclaim Sermons and Lessons that Speak Clearly to the People in Their Culture

When Paul was invited to preach in the Jewish synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, he began with a brief history of Israel to lay out the human ancestry of Christ. He quoted Psalm 2:7 to prove that Jesus was also true God. Then Paul proclaimed that Jesus rose from the dead and “through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you” (Acts 13:38). In Acts 14:14ff., Paul begins his preaching to the Gentiles of Lystra by telling them to turn away from their worthless idols to the living God who made the heavens and earth, the God who showed them kindness by providing rain to raise their crops.

Paul had a great ethnic and religious heritage from which to draw as he planted churches throughout the world. But how he drew upon his Jewish culture depended largely on his context. Paul’s approach while preaching in the Jewish synagogues of Corinth (Acts 17:16 ff.) was to appear to be as “Jewish” as possible. But when the Greek Epicurean and Stoic philosophers invited Paul to speak to the meeting of the Areopagus (the group of Greeks who were considered experts on religion and made judgments about what new religions could be formally introduced into Greek culture), Paul drew on their pagan culture instead of his own Jewish culture. Paul always got to the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But he didn’t always get there in the same way.

As witnesses and missionaries who plow in cross-cultural fields, we will always want to get to the cross. We will always get to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We will get to the cross and resurrection as soon as we can. But our starting point, our examples and illustrations, the style of preaching we use and certainly the applications we draw will depend largely on our audience because we must speak in a way that addresses people in their culture. We may even be speaking a common English, but, drawing upon Luther’s concept of preaching for kids on the street and mothers in the home and common men in the marketplace, and drawing upon Wendland’s description of the imperative function of language, we stress the need to preach and teach lessons that use the symbolism and examples and figures of speech and make applications that are meaningful to our host culture. In this way, we will address the heart as well as the head.

As an example, we offer a section of a video-taped sermon on the family by Dr. Anthony Evans, a Black pastor of a predominantly Black congregation in Dallas, Texas in which he translates and explains the word, *happa’am* from Genesis 2:23 (“This is now bone of my bones”), when God first presented Eve to Adam:

You know what the Hebrew word for “this is now” means? It means, “Wow!” That’s what it is. It’s a great emotional expression. If Adam was Black, he would have said, “Ooowoo!” What he was saying was, “This is it, a bad mamma jamma! This is it!” He was beside himself.

We are not saying that a Caucasian preacher who stands in front of a Black or multicultural congregation should use the style or the words that Dr. Evans used above. Obviously, such an attempt could cause offense. But as we work with people from the host culture, we will want them to arrive at and use such translations and illustrations and figures of speech that are based on careful exegesis of Scripture and drawn from their own culture.

We offer more examples of culture-relevant and culture-specific illustrations and applications which come out of Bible studies with the leaders of Garden Homes Ev. Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

First, Clyde Smith uses an analogy to illustrate the story of the blood of the Passover lamb for people of his culture:

During Milwaukee's race riots in the late sixties, a lot of white folks living in the combat areas felt like captives. They couldn't leave their homes because angry "angels of death" were roaming the streets. Some of the white folks took paint and, in large letters over their doors, wrote: SOUL BROTHERS LIVE HERE. And so, their homes were saved from the angel of death.

Another Black member of this congregation, Gervis Myles, uses a simile to illustrate Matthew 7:24-27 (the wise and foolish builders) like this:

The teaching of Jesus Christ is like the bass in Rap music. Without the bass in Rap, there is no Rap; there is no music. There is no dance to Rap if there is no bass in Rap. A person who hears the words of Jesus and doesn't put them into practice is like Rap without bass. That's the trouble in our community right now. We have no bass.

We are convinced that the best examples, illustrations and applications will have to be given to us by those who are from and in the culture we are trying to reach. But we have to know how to get them. We have to know how to teach people how to compose them. Then we get them into sermons and Bible classes. "Nothing endears people to the church like good preaching," the Lutheran confessions tell us. Good preaching is that which heals and deals with the questions and hurts in our life and in the lives of our host culture. One book of even 5,000 sermon illustrations cannot serve both our culture and a different culture.

Return to the Scriptures to Search Out and Systematize Theology so it Speaks Clearly to People in Their Culture

The history of the development of systematized Christian doctrine consumes a significant portion of our seminary's curriculum. Throughout the process, we try to put ourselves in the shoes of the ancient church fathers as they hammer out a theology that answered questions such as: Who is God? Who is Jesus Christ? What is the nature of man? We try to put ourselves in Luther's shoes as he does doctrinal battle with Erasmus and Zwingli. We revisit the battlefields where Luther's successors defended and crystallized and codified the classic theology of the evangelical Lutheran church. Not long after our Lutheran forefathers came to America, more doctrinal statements and clarification resulted from the predestination controversy. More recently, our position on the unit concept of Christian fellowship was defined and developed. Now we are struggling to prepare a statement on the roles of men and women that will unite and guide our confessional church body.

Throughout this history, we see one constant theme. First, the church is confronted with a false teaching, a controversy or with some kind of problem. All of these drove the church back into the Scriptures. History shows the church using Scripture to defeat the attacks of false teachers. History shows the church deeply involved in Bible study to answer the many questions that have troubled the church in each new particular place and time. Our own Reformation heritage will always play a significant role in the development of systematic statements of Christian doctrine that is faithful in proclaiming Christ's universal Word. But the church will also always face new challenges as technology advances and as Satan's attacks increase and as social questions and problems arise. Even in our own WELS church and in our own familiar culture, we know that future confrontations and future challenges will force us to produce new confessional and doctrinal statements to clearly address each new situation or question that arises.

Preaching and teaching in a cross-cultural context will also force us back into the Scriptures. When the Lord begins to bless our evangelism efforts in a different culture, we will soon be confronted with questions and with threats from false teachers that we would never have encountered had we stayed within the comfortable confines of our own culture. Because of the human commonality we have already discussed and because the

development of systematized Christian doctrine took place over many centuries and in different cultures, we have much to share immediately with any culture. We must acknowledge, however, that we will not arrive in that new culture with a fully developed and systematized theology for all this culture's questions and all this culture's needs. We will soon discover that our confessional statements based on God's Word had been in some respects rooted in our own human culture. When we enter a new culture, we will find that some of their questions and problems had not occurred to us and have not been addressed by our confessional statements.

In a recent church council meeting, we were discussing plans to engage in fellowship and service activities with a sister congregation. The purpose of these joint activities was to build relationships and to develop sensitivity between two very different churches. Ours is urban. Theirs is suburban. Ours is African American in majority. Theirs is almost completely Caucasian. After about twenty minutes into this conversation, one man who had been silent up to this point broke in, "Pastor, why is all this necessary? Tell me, why? Why does one race of Christians have to help another race of Christians to be sensitive. Why do I have to go to work and face, every single day, the same kind of racism and insults and racial hatred? Why hasn't anything changed in our country since the Civil Rights battles? Why does God continue to allow this to go on, even in his church?" The brother went on like this, almost in tears, for a very long time. The rest of us knew better than to interrupt him. He wasn't arguing with our planned efforts. He wasn't against the goals of our efforts. He was just grieving over the fact that such efforts were necessary. Because I have been asked this very question so often, and the question is always accompanied by deep emotion, I have had to re-read my Bible almost as though I had never read it before. The result has been that old stories featuring Joseph and the Hebrews in Egypt and others have taken on a whole new relevance and importance. They have helped me and our leaders begin to find answers to this councilman's difficult questions.

Our Synod must send missionaries into our new North American cross-cultural fields who have a pastor's heart, a servant's attitude and discerning ears. We must prepare and encourage our missionaries to search out the hurts, the questions, the weaknesses, the rebellion, the needs and the strengths of the culture they will enter. Then, returning to the Scriptures, they will work with the people to apply the timeless truths of Scripture to the context of their culture and to state in their cultural signs and symbols the authentically biblical and distinctively Lutheran theology that addresses both universal needs as well as the local needs. We have the training to do this. We already have been given the tools, the exegetical abilities, to accomplish this. We already have the confidence in God's Word to provide every answer even to the questions we haven't yet thought to ask. We also need, along with this, the openness to acknowledge that when we enter a different culture with the gospel to win and nurture souls for Christ, we will have to go back to Scripture to uncover and systematize any required culture-specific theology. This will thoroughly equip the host culture to teach, to rebuke, to correct and to train within their own culture.

Institute a Worship Life that Incorporates Meaningful Aspects of the Host Culture

If a cross-cultural missionary is striving to start up a new church, he needs to be very flexible in developing worship styles together with the new converts from the host culture. Before the public services begin, he will teach his nucleus the principles of public worship according to Scripture and the basic principles or components of Lutheran liturgy. After these have been taught, he will work very carefully with these Christians from the host culture to develop worship and liturgical forms that are faithful to Scripture, to Lutheran liturgical principles as well as to the needs and style of the host culture.

The previous paragraph assumes too much to develop these thoughts much further at this time. The above paragraph assumes that there will be musically and artistically talented people among the early converts. It assumes that the missionary himself will have the skills necessary to develop this worship and liturgical

service. Will the host culture have any kind of Christian worship heritage of its own from which to gather and study patterns? In what language will these services be conducted? The biggest assumption of all is that our Synod will be soon sending out cross-cultural missionaries to conduct this kind of exploratory work from scratch. The first man to go out into a new cross-cultural field will have his hands full, just in terms of the worship life of the flock that God would grant him! This much, however, is certain. The worship life and style of that new start up must ultimately look and sound and feel like it belongs in and to the host culture.

The more immediate challenge, one that many of our congregations have had to face and are facing already, is the worship life of an existing WELS congregation whose membership is multicultural. In many of our congregations, we have a variety of cultures represented in the pews on Sunday morning. We want our worship services and our worship styles to be faithful to Scripture. We want our Lutheran liturgical heritage to be passed on and around. By this we mean that we want to introduce a worship service that features a confession of sins and absolution, a confession of faith and robust singing, a preparation for and celebration of Holy Communion, and a sermon, etc. But how does the final version sound and what kind of musical forms and styles are used and what kind of delivery does the pastor use in his sermon and what kind of feel does the service have when there is more than one culture attending these services? These questions are especially relevant if there is a concerted effort going on to reach people from one or more different cultures.

These are difficult questions. The danger is not that these questions will be asked and discussions ensue and compromises and mutually edifying solutions reached. The danger is that we will take our current liturgy and worship style and transplant it into a multicultural congregation that is trying to win and nurture souls in a multicultural neighborhood. No change, no discussion, no compromise, no effort to speak to the needs and acknowledge the style of the new culture or cultures coming into our existing WELS churches is the danger.

We must teach biblical principles of worship. We will teach the Lutheran principles of liturgy. We must also recognize that whether we are doing cross-cultural or multicultural mission and ministry, we will show respect for the local cultural styles, needs, tastes and patterns for celebration and praise. Just as every culture wants God to speak their mother tongue in a Bible translation, so every culture wants to worship God in a way that illustrates and recognizes their mother culture. No one argues that this won't be hard work. But it is vital work.

6. The Missionary as an Agent of Change

Every human culture is always in the process of change. Young people in almost every culture are pushing out and beyond the zone of experimentation. One of the attributes of human culture is that it is creative. Human culture must be creative because circumstances change, needs arise or abate, new pressures from technology or new influences from immigrants or television infiltrate that culture. Nothing stays the same for very long. Reed lists five incentives that expedite change within cultures:

1. *Prestige*: If people perceive that a new way of doing something will increase their prestige, they may be more open to that change.
2. *Release from Tension*: If new ideas can relieve tension, this can be a strong motivation to accept change.
3. *Deprivation*: If people lose something that they feel they have a right to, they can be open to change. An example of this is the success Christian missions have enjoyed among some refugee groups.
4. *A Way to Get More or Less of Something*: If change can be introduced for the reason of getting something valuable or avoiding something undesirable, this can facilitate the acceptance of change.
5. *Relief from Boredom*: In our own culture, the way cable TV and VCRs have enjoyed a quick and wide spread acceptance is an illustration of this incentive for change. (*Ibid.*, 121-123)

The missionary might use these anthropological observations to assist him in his efforts to communicate the blessings of the gospel to another culture in relevant terms. In other words, if a missionary understands the needs and hurts and questions that his host culture is struggling with, he can point out how superior all of Christ's answers and Christ's comfort is to anything they've known before. As the missionary makes applications from the gospel of Jesus, he would do well to keep the five incentives listed above in mind. Clearly Christ is a Savior not just for those who face death, but also for all of us who are struggling to live. Regardless of what applications the missionary may make in his preaching to the host culture, it is very important for the missionary to understand the dynamics by which human cultures are led to change.

Mayers states that the arena of culture is society, an integrated system that seeks equilibrium and exercises control over persons in that culture (1987: 94-100). A faithful missionary will certainly disturb the equilibrium of his host culture's society by his preaching of the Bible. But he need not create avoidable obstacles for himself by disturbing that equilibrium unnecessarily or by circumventing the normal system of control, hierarchy or the decision making process of the host culture. Preaching Christ will necessarily include a call to repentance. Preaching Christ in any culture will include judgments against any sinful customs and attitudes that are part of that culture's system that maintains equilibrium. But the cross-cultural missionary will want to understand that integrated system and how certain customs maintain equilibrium in that system before he begins to dismantle them with the law.

Even when we are working in our own culture, we know better than to begin by hammering away at an evangelism prospect because he is not married to the woman with whom he is living. If we can get such a person into an adult instruction class, it is possible that he will be led by Christ to make changes in his lifestyle before we even get to the Sixth Commandment. We understand that a person must have the Christian motivation to change his lifestyle before we give him all the details and demands of a Christian lifestyle.

This is no less true when we enter a different culture. To try to first learn about and understand the customs of people and what functions these customs serve in their society is not to condone customs that are clearly against God's holy will. A missionary going into an ethnic community in America will quickly begin to discover a variety of customs that militate against his own socioeconomic and ethnic background as well as the morality of the Scriptures. It is therefore very tempting and very natural to begin to attack those customs of the host culture before their historical development and role in that culture is understood.

To understand those customs is not to approve of them. But this understanding is vital if the missionary as an outsider will find ways to introduce change without erecting barriers to the gospel. Another way to say this is that we must do everything in our power to preach Christ and cultivate faith in Christ before we preach the specific fruits of faith that would disturb the equilibrium of that cultural system. We want to get to the heart of the individual and to the heart of the culture. When the gospel has transformed the world view of the individual, he will begin to re-evaluate his own cultural practices that are contrary to the Bible. Then the challenge of the missionary is to work with the converts of that host culture to find new God-pleasing customs that will still accomplish the cultural functions of the customs that were contrary to God's will.

For example, a new pastor of a church in the inner city of one of our American Rust Belt urban centers meets a young man on the corner of the church property who is listening to pornographic rap music on a boom box. The teen speaks first: "You the preacher here?" Keeping in mind that you want more than one chance to talk with him, how would you begin your witness?

Certainly this example is a bit obvious. Is it equally obvious, however, that we ask this, young man to explain to us the appeal and importance of rap music? The cross-cultural pastor/missionary in this example would need to understand the function of that genre of music. He wouldn't have to like it. He certainly would not condone rap music that was vulgar or promoted unchristian attitudes or actions. But he would need to understand the basic function that rap music provided for that teen and his associates.

Let's assume the new pastor asked enough questions of this young man about rap music to begin to understand the function of rap music in his culture. At least three important accomplishments might result over time. First, he would begin to have a personal relationship with this person who lives near his church. This relationship and growing trust bond would give the pastor a platform for a detailed presentation of sin and

grace. When the young man confesses his need for and faith in Jesus, the pastor could then provide—if still necessary—biblical guidelines that would help this young man be more selective about what kind of rap music he would buy and listen to. In other words, rap music doesn't have to be vulgar to fulfill its function in the young man's culture. Finally, rather than alienating a prospect with a general condemnation of all rap music or a premature attack on the specific rap song that this youth was listening to, we would find ourselves with an ally and a colleague who shares common Christian values and attitudes. This young man then could be very effective in discussing and judging various rap songs with his peers. Ultimately, the pastor in our example has evangelized a co-witness and equipped him to serve in his own culture group.

A knowledge of cultural systems will keep us from erecting unnecessary obstacles to the gospel. In the time it takes us to research and understand the functions of customs, we will also be developing relationships and enjoying opportunities for a general presentation of sin and grace. As hinted at in the previous paragraph, our knowledge of cultural systems will also help us to avoid unnecessary obstacles in terms of the agent through whom these changes will be introduced. Therefore, who is generally the best person to introduce change into a culture? This is a key question in our discussion on the missionary as an agent of change. The answer is that the cross-cultural missionary/pastor will usually be more effective in introducing biblical change if he doesn't try to introduce that change himself. Those who are already the recognized leaders in the host culture or society will be the most effective agents of change. One of the top priorities of every cross-cultural missionary/pastor, therefore will be the evangelizing and training of the natural leaders in the host culture.

The leaders in the host culture or society are going to be more familiar with their culture and the functions that customs serve in their culture than a cross-cultural witness ever could be. They will understand their culture's world view, their culture's basic "religion," their moral code, their goals and their fundamental philosophy about life. Coupled with their knowledge of their own culture, they have already won the respect of their culture. Once evangelized and instructed in the basic teachings of the Christian faith, they will be in a better position to judge their culture and to speak to customs and attitudes that are contrary to God's Word. They will also be the best resource people to devise new customs or to introduce modifications in customs. God willing, the result will be that the equilibrium of that society will not only be maintained but vastly improved.

Whom do we recruit to be leaders in the church? How do we train them? What do we train them to do? What is our role as a pastor of a church whose members are from a different culture and whose church is located in a community that is of a different culture? These are some of the most important questions a cross-cultural missionary has to struggle with. He would do well if he asked these questions of the people within the host culture! They know the systems of control and hierarchy. They know how decisions are made and handed down. They know through whom they would like to see changes introduced. They are not encumbered with all kinds of cross-cultural distrust. We must learn their answers to these questions and do our best to work within the rules of their cultural systems. Obviously, if the culture's leaders steadfastly reject the Christ of God, we will preach the gospel to and introduce change through those whom God would give us. But our first attempts will involve working with the existing cultural systems, not against them.

An urgent responsibility of missionaries in a different culture is to evangelize and then minister to a group of leaders who can then evangelize and minister and introduce biblical change to the flock that they will gather. They will do all this in a way that is consistent and effective within the context of Christian freedom and their culture. A key role of the cross-cultural pastor/missionary is that of a mentor to the leaders.

I was teaching two of our men how to make calls on members whose church attendance was less than faithful. We visited one young man who received us graciously. I was the picture of politeness. I addressed him as Mr. Member. I preached the Law with a smile, careful to say, "We all fall short." Then I asked Mr. Hart to close the visit with a prayer. He said, "Lord, help Mr. Member realize what great danger he is placing his whole family in. Help him realize that because of his spiritual laziness, his whole family could lose their faith and be destroyed. Move Mr. Member with your Spirit of love and mercy so that he can truly be called the man of this house because he leads his family to you." After that prayer, Mr. Member was in tears and I was

in shock. Here was one Black man ministering to another Black man and the only commodity was “in spirit and in truth.” He didn’t have to worry about coming off as “that white preacher who is trying to tell me how to live.” Mr. Hart’s only concern was coming off as a faithful witness for Jesus Christ.

If the cross-cultural pastor’s closest colleagues are the evangelized and nurtured leaders of that culture, they will together make sure that too many changes are not introduced too fast. We must be very careful to avoid pushing too hard too soon in too many directions. In many cultures, change—even biblical change—requires concentrated effort and great patience. More important than external change is the development of internal allegiance to Jesus Christ through an ongoing study of the Bible. Spiritually mature and biblically trained leaders from the host culture are much more likely to recognize in their people the difference between behavioral change in grateful response to all that Christ has done and mere adoption of some “new” customs.

Not long ago, I carried out a program in our church that taught the roles of Christian husbands and wives. I went into each home, focusing primarily on our newer members, with an outline and a couple of hours. For the most part, this program was appreciated and considered helpful. In one case, it was disastrous. One couple had just joined our church. The husband had absolutely no religious training before coming to our church. The only reason he had gone through our four month adult instruction class was because I insisted. I told him that since he had children in our school, the least he could do was find out what we were teaching his children. He completed our adult class. He was baptized. He and his wife became members. I assumed that he had been converted right down to the core of his world view. I was mistaken. Both the husband and the wife came from homes where there was no father figure. They both grew up in homes where the mother was the head of the house, domineering and basically disillusioned with the male gender (and said so often). The home life of this couple mirrored the attitudes of the role of a man with which they had been raised. Then I came along to introduce in a few hours and, in their case, two sessions, the biblical model of male servant leadership in the home. The subsequent catastrophic upheaval of their cultural equilibrium resulted in or at least expedited their divorce. The husband’s inner being, his world view had not been won over or perhaps did not remain won over for the Lord. He understood the Bible’s lessons on male servant leadership to mean male “I’m the boss” domination. His wife had never experienced male domination nor was she about to experience it now, not even in the name of “Christian” marriage.

Long before a missionary begins to apply these principles of changing culture, he must spend a good deal of time working with what Mayers calls the “tools of research” (*Ibid.*, 213-225). The Multicultural Mission Committee offers detailed assistance in the use of these tools. Tools of research include:

1. *Participant Observation*: This technique of cultural study requires the missionary to make observations of a culture from within the systems of the culture. This step comes after he has read everything he can on his host culture. After his reading, he must enter the culture, befriend an informant and check and build on his understanding of that culture.
2. *Interviewing*: This tool allows the missionary to dig deeper into a culture after he has observed it as a participant. With this tool, he asks questions or simply listens in order to let an informant make observations on his own culture. The informant will also be telling the missionary what questions he ought to be asking.
3. *Experimentation*: Once the missionary has gathered his observations and conclusions about the culture he is about to evangelize, he will want to test them through experimentation.

4. *Archiving*: This step involves the searching out for whatever studies have been made on the culture the missionary is studying. He can use the work of others to test or to reinforce his own conclusions.

But the missionary cannot be content with merely understanding the culture he will be evangelizing. There must be a strong trust relationship between the missionary and persons in that culture. The purpose of the tools as described and defined by Mayers is to allow the host members to “perceive themselves as fully human and their life-way valid when in (the missionary’s) presence” (*Ibid.*, 228). Again, guidance on how to use the above mentioned tools are available through our Multicultural Mission Committee. You are encouraged to take advantage of these materials.

As we read the Gospels, we see that these insights from research are in harmony with the way Jesus carried out his earthly ministry. Jesus didn’t save us from far off. He came down to this sin-polluted earth and took on the limitations of human flesh. He was born under the law and obeyed the law to redeem us who had forsaken the law. And in his ministry to particular people, we see a Jesus who knows nothing of a missionary compound mentality. He walked with the people and lived with the people and laughed and cried with the people and shouldered the daily burdens of the people to whom he had come to preach and to redeem. Even more specifically, consider how he worked and served so that his “hosts” could perceive themselves as people for whom he cared deeply. When the leper came to him in Matthew 8:1-3, Jesus didn’t pinch his nose, hold up his hands and shout, “Keep away! I can heal you from here.” No. “Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man... ‘Be clean!’” Jesus knows all his people intimately. Jesus wants to know us intimately. This is precisely why his ministry to us is always so perfect, so uplifting, so saving. Here is the chief lesson for us.

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