

## Understanding The Results of Cross-Cultural Interactions

### **How do we know if the Results are good?**

**Understanding** – In ministry, a level of understanding is needed to build relationships and share the gospel with those who you serve. Especially in cross-cultural ministry, where there will be inevitable dissonance, understanding will be needed to validate the feelings, emotions, and values of the culture that you are serving.

**Empathy** – Who showed more empathy than our Savior Jesus? No matter if it was the Samaritan woman at the well, his forgiveness of the Apostle Peter, or the rich man who asked about heaven. One should strive to have a Christlike empathy towards those you are serving. The more you connect and build bridges in those communities, the more your empathetic love will grow for the cultural norms and values of the people that you serve.

**Deepening Relationships** – If you respond appropriately to the dissonance of cross-cultural living, which is through observation, inquiry, listening, and initiating, the best result will be deepened relationships. Cross-cultural living and ministry are not easy, but with a strong relationship with individuals of that cultural group, God will use those relationships for His benefit.

### **How do we know if the Results are not so good?**

**Alienation** – The easiest and simplest way to recognize that your cross-cultural ministry efforts may have failed is noticing alienation of that community. The gospel is the most inclusive tool that you have to serve all people. When a cultural group feels like they are being alienated from your ministry, how can you properly share the gospel with those people?

**Withdrawal** – Withdrawal comes in a close second place to alienation. Some schools and churches make well-planned, huge outreach efforts to their community. Then if it fails or doesn't produce immediate results, they withdraw completely. They view that failure as a permanent indictment, so they stop their current efforts. Plans aren't readjusted; they simply are stopped without a plan to move forward.

**Broken Relationships** – Ultimately, cross-cultural living and ministry wants results that lead to deepened and strong bonds within the different cultural groups. Broken relationships happen when the Response to cross-cultural dissonance (Inevitables) is criticizing, rationalizing, and self-isolating. Excuses are made for why there is a disconnect. The result is a strained relationship that may lead to a completely severed, broken relationship with that cultural group.

### **In Conclusion**

In the end, it is a blessing to have an opportunity to serve in a cross-cultural setting. All cross-cultural interactions in ministry and in life are opportunities to serve God's people and diversify our ability to serve as many of God's people as possible. This means that we need the tools and the level of understanding to achieve the best Results possible to be effective in cross-cultural ministry. As I previously wrote, the Results will be positive if the Approach and the Response to the Inevitables of cross-cultural interactions are positive. Adversely, the Results will be negative if the Approach and the Response to the Inevitables of cross-cultural interactions are negative. These tools and understanding of cross-cultural differences will serve your ministry teams well!