

50 WAYS TO  
**FALL**  
AS A CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARY  
by Sandy Simpson

© 2002 by Sandy Simpson

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, except for brief quotations for the purposes of review, comment, or scholarship—without the written permission of the author, Sandy Simpson, Apologetics Coordination Team (ACT) Publishing, P.O. Box 1759, Pearl City, HI 96782

Scripture quotations are from the NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION of the HOLY BIBLE Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society unless otherwise indicated.

Any other citations are noted in the book.

Manufactured in the United States of America by Fidler Doubleday Publishing.

**Acknowledgments:**

I wish to thank my mother, Juanita Simpson, and my sister, Angela Simpson Leuce, for their help in editing and their encouragement to me during the writing of this booklet.

I would also like to acknowledge the information and helpful hints gleaned from the book "Missionaries On Furlough" by Marjorie A. Collins. I highly recommend this book as a valuable resource for all missionaries on deputation.

*This book is dedicated  
to all present and future missionaries.*



**50 WAYS TO FAIL  
AS A CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARY**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	3
<b>Dedication</b>	4
<b>Table of Contents</b>	5-7
<b>Introduction</b>	9,10
<b>Chapter 1</b>	11-18
Before Going Out	11
#1 Do your own gift matching	12,13
#2 Ignore advice	14,15
#3 Only stay short term	16,17
<b>Chapter 2</b>	19-39
Shortly after arrival	19
#4 Live like a king	20-22
#5 Buy people off	23,24
#6 Be ultra-thrifty	26-28
#7 Speak in tongues - your own	29,30
#8 Talk behind people's backs	32,33
#9 Talk in front of people's backs	34
#10 Stifle your children	36, 37
#11 Don't discipline your children	38
#12 Lecture them	39
<b>Chapter 3</b>	41-72
The short haul	41
#13 Rely heavily on the written word	42,43
#14 Appeal mainly to the intellect	44,45
#15 Be a bad receiver	46,47
#16 Use your wristwatch as a weapon	49
#17 Fail at feasts	50,51
#18 Let hygiene demean	52,53
#19 Refuse the challenge	54,55
#20 Stay aloof	56

#21	Stay miserable	57
#22	Use all available vacations	58,59
#23	Let guilt be their guide	60,61
#24	Turn their other cheek	62-65
#25	Discount spiritual warfare	66,67
#26	Focus attention on yourself	68,69
#27	Expect change overnight	70,71
#28	Let them serve you	72
<b>Chapter 4</b>		73-108
	The long haul	73
#29	Turn contradiction into an art form	74,75
#30	Argue a lot in public	76,77
#31	Make them adopt your work ethic	78-80
#32	Change their culture to be more like yours	82-85
#33	Make them show you respect	86,87
#34	Fight your way to the top ...	88-90
#35	Hold tightly to your authority	92,93
#36	Forge ahead with plans anyway	94,95
#37	Play religious politics	96,97
#38	Never, ever take time off	98,99
#39	Buy lots of toys	100-101
#40	Use hypochondria	102
#41	Employ martyrdom	104,105
#42	Forsake meeting together	106
#43	Pray without creasing	107,108
<b>Chapter 5</b>		109-124
	Furlough/Deputation	109
#44	Don't rest on furlough	110,111
#45	Travel in style	112,113
#46	Church presentations - bore them!	114,115
#47	Question and answer sessions - ignore them!!	116,117
#48	Slide presentations - snore them!!!	118-120
#49	Always keep money in mind	122,123
<b>Chapter 6</b>		125-127
	If all else fails	125





# Introduction

Some saints, of the present and ages past, have frowned upon the idea that Christians can laugh at something that is funny. This unwritten notion quickly rises to the level of a law carved in stone when it comes to laughing at ourselves. But I have found that taking a humorous look at one's life can sometimes reveal truths that would otherwise remain hidden—buried in places we are afraid to unearth and expose to the light of laughter—for fear we may have to trample on holy ground to dig them up.

One prerequisite for anyone who wants to be a cross-cultural missionary is a sense of humor. At least I am hoping that those who read this little book will do so with a smile on their face, realizing that I wrote it with my tongue firmly imbedded in my cheek. I have personally found humor to be one of God's great gifts.

Perhaps this is a strange way to approach an important issue. But sometimes it is helpful to see a clear copy of a negative before proceeding with developing the entire picture—and often a picture is worth a thousand words.

This book was written from the perspective of a Western missionary sent to work in a non-Western country. But the advice in this booklet can be used in any situation. If you are a missionary from a non-Western country sent to work in a Western country, you may be able to use this book in reverse, read it upside down, or sideways. All joking aside, the principles laid out in each section are universal—because they are biblical.

The first paragraph of each of the fifty topics explains precisely how to achieve the main objective of this book—how to fail MISERABLY as a cross-cultural missionary. I have attempted to use the words "never", "always", "don't" and "do" as many times as possible. I believe that any missionary who uses these words over and over again will surely find himself/herself booted out on his/her aspiring missionary ear. Generalizations are also liberally employed throughout. They make it easy to quickly assign any animal, person, group, village, nation, or continent to a defined category, ready for rapid storage in some misguided

categorized filling cabinet in our minds. "That group of people are all just lazy.—He is never going to come to the Lord, he is just a drunk.—She is always talking behind people's backs". (I never understood why the speaker in this instance doesn't just include herself, since she is doing the very thing she is talking about). You get the picture. Generalizations are a quick way to make a sweeping error in judgment with regards to people within a group. Unfortunately, these hasty characterizations tend to get filed away and lost in our hearts and minds. Until some secretary comes in one day and starts to throw out old files (a new attitude)—or there's a fire in the office (a radically new attitude)—or the office closes operations (I think you can guess what that means). Follow the first part of each of the 50 topic areas and your goal is assured. Perhaps you can think of many more yourself If in doubt, improvise!

Once having covered what you should DO to fail as a missionary, you may choose to proceed to the second part of each topic—what you should NOT DO if you want to fail. Do not attempt the second part below the line unless you are prepared to stick it out on the mission field. Do not follow the second set of guidelines unless you wish to be asked to stay on for the rest of your life in some remote place far away from "civilization"—or to have other people begin to actually open up to you and share their deep, dark secrets—or to find yourself changing as a person and discovering that people don't all think alike and sometimes that's o.k. because God made us that way and loves every one of us. If you begin to get a little queasy reading about how not to fail as a missionary, you can always refer back to the first set of instructions for comfort. Some of the ideas in the second section of each topic may be hard to swallow.

So sit back. Smile a little. Groan a little. Agree a little. Disagree a little. Think a little—and try to put yourself into the shoes (or thongs) of a modern day cross-cultural missionary (hereafter referred to simply as "missionary" to save space).

# 1

## Before Going Out

A time of preparation. This is the time to put the kibosh on any possibility of having to give up the comforts of home. Follow the first section in each topic area and you will never have to make the BIG missionary commitment. Heed the second section in each area and I'm afraid there is a good chance you'll be sent out. It's your choice!

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #1 — DO YOUR OWN GIFT MATCHING

Before going to the mission field, compare the gifts you think God has given you with the place to which the mission has assigned you. If these don't match up perfectly, in all respects, don't go. After all, God would never put you in a situation where you had to learn a bunch of things from the ground up, cultivate new talents, and be open to new spiritual gifts from the Lord. God just doesn't operate that way. If the gifts don't match the field, God must not be calling. Look elsewhere.

---

*"The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." (Is. 58:11)*

Don't worry about matching every gift God has given you with the place to which He is calling you. Allow God to make the arrangements and take comfort in the promises of His Word. God created you and saved you. He is the giver of natural and spiritual gifts. He knows where you would best be able to use them in His Kingdom plans.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #2 — IGNORE ADVICE

Listen politely to advice from your leaders at the mission headquarters, then do what you were going to do in the first place. You will be on the mission field soon. What they don't know won't hurt them.

---

*"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you." (Heb. 13:17)*

Heeding the advice and counsel of our elders has gone out of fashion in this modern age. We have entered a period where we seem to value perceived "direct" revelation from God above being admonished by and "submitting" to those who are over us. The trouble with this concept is that God's Word indicates that advice from elders (1 Thes. 5:12-13), prayer (Luke 11:9), searching of the Scriptures (Jn. 15:7), and revelation by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2-9) all play a part in God's communication process with us. We should take seriously the counsel of those in authority over us, especially within the context of missions. This is because many mission directors and members of mission boards have been on the field before. We can greatly benefit from their prior experience, especially in the areas of cross-cultural ministry and pitfalls to be avoided.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

### #3 — ONLY STAY SHORT TERM

Plan to go to the mission field only as a short term missionary. The shorter the term, the better. This will give the people you were sent to only limited time to really delve into your character and perhaps even make you accountable to them (shudder!).

---

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." (2 Tim. 4:7-8)*

There are far more sprinters on our missionary rosters these days than marathon runners. As in track and field events, there is a place for both types of runners. But we are losing races in many areas because we are not sending out people who can go the distance. Don't be fooled—long term missionaries are in more demand today than ever before. Short term missionaries have had a very positive impact when it comes to areas like teaching, construction, evangelistic outreach, and other projects that need quick solutions. But even in those areas there is a need for long term, committed missionaries, in partnership roles with the national leadership, to provide a lasting basis of communication and trust. For instance, a short term teacher would greatly benefit from the help of a long term teacher who has been where they are going and has experience with issues such as classroom discipline and effective cross-cultural communication. Short term evangelistic teams often see, as they are leaving, the value of the long term missionary who will be there to follow-up long after the outreach team has gone. After all, we are not only to preach the gospel but to "disciple" people from all nations.

Too often, in this modern age, we are placing more value on short term ministries at the expense of long term commitment. Far too often we try to implement quick solutions for people groups

that need long term care and nurturing.

Ask yourself these questions: Are you willing to put in the time needed to carry out God's plan for your life and for those to whom you are being sent? Are you willing to commit yourself to a people different from you for as long as the Lord wills? Are you willing to dig in and take the time needed to plant deeply rooted friendships? Are you willing to spend the time to really learn everything there is to know about your mission field? These are questions only you can answer with God's guidance.

# 2

## Shortly After Arrival

Quick! Before you have to spend another minute in this remote, foreign place, put some of the ideas from each first section into action and watch the sparks fly. You'll be home again before you can say "Why did I get myself into this mess?". Avoid the second sections unless you want to get tied down on the mission field for a long time.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

#### #4 - LIVE LIKE A KING

Try to arrange it so you live apart from the actual community in some fashion—perhaps on a hill, overlooking the village from above. Or outside the village in an upscale house set apart for "outsiders". If you must live right in the middle of things, make sure your house is always a cut above anyone else's house in the area. Always display all the beautiful things you have collected over the years, especially expensive things that are well out of the reach of the average person's ability to purchase. This will show people that, when one becomes a Christian, one need not give up the finer things in life. In fact, one can expect to benefit financially from a relationship with Jesus Christ.

---

*"I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards ... I denied myself nothing my eyes desired... Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind—nothing was gained under the sun." (Ecc. 2:4-11)*

It might be wise to take our cue on this subject from a man who probably amassed the most wealth ever recorded in history. Even when "downsized" considerably to the level of the common man, we are still left with the same age-old problem—our need for comfort above all else. Some missionaries spend all their time on the field working on their living situation. They build a nice house, plant nice gardens, and decorate their home with things that the nationals could never afford. What they often fail to do is step back and watch the expressions on the faces of their neighbors. Expressions such as: "He must be very rich to have all that!—How can I get on his good side so he will give me some of it too.—"If he has so much extra he surely won't miss a thing or two". Missionaries who, either deliberately or inadvertently, set themselves up in such a way are eliciting trouble and even sin from those they hope to save. Let's look at a few scenarios:

Reaction 1: "If Christians are so rich, at least relative to my

circumstances, then I will become a Christian and we will see if the Lord will treat me to some goodies"

What this teaches: Wrong desires.

Reaction 2: "If I could just make friends with this person, I could benefit from handouts he is bound to give me at some point"

What this teaches: Wrong motives.

Reaction 3: Stealing.

What this teaches: Wrong actions.

Jesus told us not to worry about our living circumstances (Luke 12:22). Instead we need to be concerned about our living example (Luke 12:33-34). Everyday on the mission field is another day of displaying a "round-the-clock" living example of how being born again practically affects our daily life. Something to keep in mind. (See #39).

## #5 - BUY PEOPLE OFF

Along with the previous point, it might be a good idea to spread a little money around to garner friendship. This will "grease the skids" and make it much easier to control people. This comes in handy with situations where you need a little help—like personal construction projects, transportation to remote villages, clothes washing where there is no washer/dryer (gasp!), and other dirty little jobs that you just don't have time to deal with in your busy schedule. This practice will immediately endear you to your neighbors and you will find that people will literally flock to your door at the rustle of cash money. This can also help if you need a reliable translator for your messages. If you notice that your congregation is laughing a little too much during a dignified sermon, it might be time to spread a little more "grease" around.

---

*"But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life." (Rom. 6:22)*

*"... the overseer must be ... not a lover of money..." (I Tim. 3:3)*

The aforementioned activity of buying people off is most distasteful but it happens more often than you might think. There are also subtler versions of this ploy; such as giving people lots of gifts to make them feel indebted to you, or doing things for people so they will feel they have to pay you back at some point. Let's face it—it's bribery, pure and simple. But beneath the surface lies the true reasoning behind such actions—control. The theory is: if you don't have good leadership skills, if you aren't someone people naturally look up to, if you don't want to bother gaining respect; then a little cash outlay will go a long way toward gaining back control of your life. The trouble with this scenario is that GOD wants to control your life. He wants you to learn how to serve. He doesn't want you controlling other people,

either behind the scenes or in front of them. So put your money back in your wallet and don't show it again, unless it is to put it into the offering plate or donate it in secret to a worthwhile ministry project (Matt. 6:3,4).

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #6 - BE ULTRA-THRIFTY

On the other hand, you might want to take the opposite tack from the previous section and show everyone how thrifty you can be. Talk incessantly to everyone within earshot about how much money you saved last time you went shopping. Play the old "I got that cheaper than you" game every chance you get. Be sure to never miss an opportunity to point out to people where they could have bought something cheaper. This goes over especially well in Asian societies where there is a tendency to brag about how much they paid for something—just the opposite of Western cultures. This should teach them your more "correct" viewpoint on this subject.

---

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt. 6:19-21)*

Being thrifty is a good thing, but it might be a good idea not to knock people over the head with your thriftiness either. It is important to be a good steward of the offerings we receive from supporters and churches, but these should not be hoarded for ourselves, tucked away in foreign bank accounts or buried in the ground. (Matt. 25:14-30) Rather, the money we receive in the form of support should be made to multiply the ministry we were sent out to do. If this means saving it for an important building project, then the lesson of being a good steward will be learned by your church body in a very practical way upon completion of the project—without any nagging or standing on soap boxes. However, there may also be cause to "empty the storehouse" on another type of ministry such as giving to the poor and needy. Valuable lessons in faith await us around this corner. In any case, it's a win/win situation. Be faithful with the funds the Lord has

provided. He will take care of the rest!

## #7 - SPEAK IN TONGUES - YOUR OWN

Make feeble attempts at learning the language. Make it obvious that (a) you really don't intend to be there long enough to speak the language fluently anyway, and (b) you prefer to use those cute "local" words for talking about unimportant things—like the weather and fishing. Leave the impression that your mother tongue is just so much more "expressive" when it comes to important topics like Bible teaching, songs, and illustrations.

---

*"Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly, there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me." (1 Cor. 14:8-11)*

Of course we realize the above verses are referring to the subject of speaking in tongues—but that is our subject too, isn't it? In a sense, all cross-cultural missionaries should speak in tongues. But this issue of speaking in tongues is even deeper than the issue brought up in these verses. If you do not take the time to learn the language of the people to whom you are sent to minister, this tells them something about you. It tells them you don't really care about them! Language study is an arduous task, at best, and for those of us without the "gift" of language, it is pure torture. But you won't have the pleasure of seeing a certain special kind of glow on the faces of your congregation (Bible study group or school class) if you never attempt to preach a sermon in a foreign language! No matter how painful an experience it will be for you (mostly afterwards, with the laughter still echoing in your ears when instead of using the word for hammer, you use the very similar word for underwear), the light in the eyes of your church body will be filled with, not only joyous laughter, but also

beaming pride and respect. Respect means almost everything in cultures outside our Western world. People will not listen to you if you do not have their respect. Learn the language and gain the respect and admiration of the people group to whom you have been sent.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #8 - TALK BEHIND PEOPLE'S BACKS

Always use words like "natives", "locals", "yokels", or "those people who live in this country but don't have a clue as to what they are doing" when referring to those to whom you are ministering. Each of these terms, especially the last one, infers a false sense of superiority on the speaker and inferiority upon the recipient. This can work to your advantage—until you start hearing people shouting outside your house and throwing rocks on your roof. These words should usually be used in defense when words such as "haouli", "Yankee", "one of those smelly western persons", or "stupid" have been used against you. Attempt to cultivate the habit of using these words, and similar terms, in private as well. You never know who might be listening in the dark,

---

*"With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness." (Jam. 3:9)*

The longer you are on the mission field—having been thrown together with people who are different from you—the more your tongue will tend to get out of control. It must be some kind of unwritten law of missions. Apart from the fact that a loose tongue is a sin in and of itself (Job 15:5), you must realize that ears are everywhere. People are listening to you when you least expect it. If you think that people might be offended by something you are going to say, here's an idea—either (a) keep your mouth shut, or (b) don't say it. The Psalmist had something similar to say on this subject: "I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence." (Psalm 39: 1) Not a bad idea in the company of brothers and sisters in Christ either. If in doubt, muzzle it!

## #9 - TALK IN FRONT OF PEOPLE'S BACKS

If you are in an area where the nationals don't know your language at all, and you have had to learn enough of theirs to get by, it may sometimes be advisable to talk to your wife or other missionaries in your own language right in front of your national neighbors. This will allow you to quickly resolve a situation or make a side comment without having to explain yourself to everyone else. Anyway, "native" languages are many times too simple to express highly complex concepts, like the kind that often emanate from your mouth.

---

*"To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech." (Pro. 8:13)*

*"... the overseer must ... (not be) conceited..." (I Tim. 3:6)*

Aside from the fact that talking in front of someone else in a language they do not understand is just plain rude, it is also a sign of conceit on the part of the speaker. When other people are around, keep your conversation in a language everyone can understand. Otherwise, people will tend to think you are saying something negative about them or trying to hide something from them, which you probably are if you feel you have to resort to this type of activity. This does not tend to build up their trust in you. In fact, it can be easily viewed as another form of gossip, even though it is in front of their backs instead of behind them. Those who engage in this kind of rudeness can be assured that the Lord will not bless it.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #10 - STIFLE YOUR CHILDREN

Don't let your kids play with anyone but other missionary kids, if any are available. If your kids must play with "local" children and start to speak the "native" language (as they may be apt to do), forbid them to use it while at home. If this doesn't work, rush out quickly and buy a copy of the latest Peace Corps language course so you can tell what they are saying behind your back.

---

*"Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged." (Col. 3:21)*

One sure way to cause resentment in your children is to not allow them to play with national kids. Children can learn so much more from a multi-cultural experience than they would ever learn at home in a single-cultural environment. Children can rapidly learn languages, pick up on customs, assimilate new ways of viewing the world, master many different abilities, and gain valuable insights. These, in turn, can assist their missionary parents in understanding the culture in ways they would not normally be able to comprehend. This can be the experience of a lifetime for a child. Don't rob them and yourself of this precious gift.

## #11 - DON'T DISCIPLINE YOUR CHILDREN

Be sure to never discipline your kids, just like you would never do back home. Simply reason with them. Two year old children are especially malleable to this type of discipline. If your youngsters scream and yell and fight in church services, just act like "Oh well, that's the way kids are these days". Never spend devotional time with them either. After all, they get enough of that in all the church services in which you are committed to participate. Never ask what your kids are doing, where they are going, or who they are going with. You don't have time for this, and anyway, it might stifle their "creativity". If by some miracle your children do something right for a change, never compliment them or reward them. Stay on an even keel. This will give you more time to yourself, and give them more time to think of ways of getting back at you when they get older.

---

*"... the overseer ... must manage his own family well and see his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" (1 Tim. 3:4-5)*

Have you ever been to a church where, even though the pastor gave a great message, the behavior of his children completely eclipsed the sermon? This is becoming all too common in our world today. Yet, in the above verse it is clear that leaders need to start the leadership process within their own family. People will not view you harshly if you take some control of your children. In fact, they may respect you more for it. Don't worry about "stifling their creativity" or "suffocating their spirit". Children that come from a home where they have received adequate discipline at an early age are much more productive and less inhibited in adulthood. It takes very little effort to "train a child in the way he should go." (Prov. 22:6) It takes a lot more effort to rescue a child later from the clutches of depression, substance abuse, or suicide.

## #12 - LECTURE THEM

If you have come out to the mission field to be a teacher, then you are truly on easy street. No need to learn the language. No need to get involved in the church. No need to make any lasting friendships. No need to do anything other than stand at your lectern and teach. What a life! (Boredom can be a problem, however.)

---

*"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." (Jam. 3:1)*

Don't think you are off the hook simply because you have been sent out as a teacher. Teachers are examples, not only in word, but also in everyday life. Everything contained in this book pertains to teachers as well. At the very least, try to learn the language and interact with people outside of class. This will provide a springboard for even broader experiences. Involvement in the local church is also crucial to your witness, and to your own spiritual health.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

# 3

## The Short Haul

Okay. For some reason your tactics, so far, have not worked. It looks like you are going to be stuck on a foreign mission field, at least short term. Implement the following instructions in the first sections and it won't be too long before you won't ever have to see the place again. Using the second paragraphs, at this point, is a very dangerous gambit. It may mean they will ask you to stay on permanently.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

### #13 - RELY HEAVILY ON THE WRITTEN WORD

Be sure to prepare all your materials in formats such as literature, Bibles, tracts, lessons, and printed texts. Remember, your goal is to teach this society—that has passed down all of its traditions, songs, stories, and legends via oral tradition for hundreds and thousands of years—to begin to comprehend and digest all the new stuff you are throwing at them in a written form.

---

*"I may not be a trained speaker, but I do have knowledge. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way." (2 Cor. 11:6)*

It is most unfortunate for many non-Western cultures that the emphasis on Christian materials and helps have been so heavily in the area of the printed word. The reason there is a slow assimilation of printed materials in many cultures is twofold. First, there has been limited exposure to the print medium and secondly, information has been passed along in many cultures orally. We are now having to play "catch up" with the demand for other types of ministry aids in the area of the visual and auditory. In many ways, the Christian church has already missed untold opportunities in this regard. The secular world has filled the gap we left open with movies and music containing a lot of damaging material. Video is one of the biggest things to ever hit non-Western cultures in our century. The Christian church, for the most part, sat idly by and watched this happen. With our mandate to make the gospel "clear in every way", we are neglecting some obvious areas that could be a blessing to many. If you want to have an impact for Christ in other than Western cultures, you would be wise to supplement printed material with the use of as many visual and auditory helps as possible. This includes video, audio, visual arts, skits, illustrations—the possibilities are practically unlimited.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #14 - APPEAL MAINLY TO THE INTELLECT

Never use illustrations, simple parables, stories, or simple language in your sermons. Those types of techniques are for the simple minded. Use only cliched theological terms, missiological "buzz words", ill-defined antiquated Biblical phraseology, and other "high" ideas designed to "uplift" the audience, not to simply help them to understand and take to heart basic concepts.

---

*"Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants." (Deut. 32:2)*

Along with the previous category of visual and auditory aids comes the area of storytelling and illustration. As mentioned before, most of the history, legends, folklore and traditions of non-Western societies were passed down orally. People are generally used to assimilating information in this way. If you really want your message—jam-packed as it may be with intellectual jewels—to make its way from the brains to the hearts of your audience, then don't be afraid to use illustrations. The more personal or familiar to your audience your stories are, the better. Even in our culture, the best messages contain "teaching like rain" and "words like dew".

## #15 - BE A BAD RECEIVER

Never accept gifts of food or other homemade articles. This shows that you are practicing moderation in all things and teaches people to be thrifty with what they have. This will also help you not to pick up any of those germs that "locals" grow in their homes. Never barter. Always pay for what you want with cold, hard cash. If you can make a big display of your transaction, that works even better.

---

*"Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." (1 Tim. 6:18-19)*

Sharing is, at most, a forced civility in many Western societies. In others it is a way of life. In many cultures possessions are shared by everyone in the extended family, if not by the entire village. This developed out of necessity, since no one individual was able to own everything needed for autonomous survival. Each family might possess a couple of important things, while others would have different items. Duplication was deemed unnecessary and, in fact, a luxury. In many cultures, if someone wants to borrow something, they merely ask for it and may keep it as long as they like. They are fully aware that this is a reciprocal relationship and they will more than likely be required to relinquish control over another item in their possession in the future. No sweat! Westerners have difficulty with this. However, to survive and thrive in a non-Western culture, it is advisable to learn how to use the reciprocal systems, instead of getting upset by them. If someone wants you to lend him your shovel (permanently), then ask for something you need in return, when you need it. You will be surprised at how easy it is. Just try that in the West!

With regard to receiving gifts—learn how to be a good

receiver. Don't immediately attempt to return the favor. Bide your time and inevitably there will come a moment when you can return the favor with little fuss, embarrassment or shame on their part.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #16 - USE YOUR WRISTWATCH AS A WEAPON

Always arrive at meetings on time or ahead of schedule and shuffle your feet, frown, sigh, and look repeatedly at your watch as others arrive. This should teach people the highly esteemed western values of time consciousness, proper scheduling, a business style outlook on life, and stress.

---

*"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Pet. 5: 7)*

You are, more than likely, now living in a culture that is "event" oriented rather than "time" oriented. The event is the thing, not what time it starts or how long it lasts. People will notice you if you continue to be a nervous irritant factor in their midst. They will begin to think that you are more interested in what you have on your schedule than in them. Three words to the wise—take it easy!

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #17 - FAIL AT FEASTS

When at a feast, eat only bananas and fruit with peels. Never take one of everything and never actually eat most of it.

---

*"... the overseer must be ... respectable, hospitable..." (I Tim. 3:2)*

*"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you." (Luke 10:8)*

You are at a feast given in your honor. People are bringing with them their best food that took them more money than they should have spent to buy and longer hours than they should have spent to prepare. They are watching you as you approach the long table. You observe many delicious items of food you have never seen. You are amazed at delicacies you never imagined could exist. (Without going into detail, since food changes from place to place, what is meant here by "delicacies" is the type of stuff you joked about in high school to try to get other kids to say "gross"). What are you going to do? If you want to "win friends and influence people" you should take a small portion of each and every dish, if possible, sit down and eat it all! If you would like your name to be passed around later in conversation—in a good way—go back for seconds. The value of food and the perceived attitude of those who eat it should not be underestimated. This is part of your witness. This is a large part of your witness in some societies. Reject people's food and they may think you are rejecting them.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #18 - LET HYGIENE DEMEAN

Don't take baths very often and don't brush your teeth, unless you are in a culture that reveres such behavior. In that case, disregard this step.

---

*"... Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (I Sam. 16: 7)*

The second part of this verse is often the part that is stressed, but let's look at the first part for a moment. It is true. Man DOES look at the outward. He also smells the outward. In point of fact, you would be surprised to find out that many non-Western societies actually are much more concerned about hygiene than some Westerners. To them, we smell different, if not unclean. Proper action should be taken, then, to reduce this irritant. Take baths often. Use deodorant. Brush your teeth. Don't wear the same clothes you have been sweating in all day the next day. This may sound like old "dormitory" wisdom, but you would be surprised how lax people get in this area in some situations. If you don't want to get a nickname like "socks" or "stinky" or "outhouse" then keep yourself clean on the "outward".

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #19 - REFUSE THE CHALLENGE

Don't dignify challenges that are thrown at you, intended to prove your metal and courage, with any kind of answer—if possible. If that doesn't work, attempt to avoid situations where this might occur such as basketball courts, fishing outings, pastors' meetings where you have to sit on the floor for hours and hours without lying down, walks to a village that is more than half a mile away and then home again the same day, or confrontations with drunks outside in the dark by yourself where you ask them to return the next day after they are sober to hear the gospel.

---

*"Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect... " (I Tim. 3:8)*

This is a big one! If you expect people to listen to what you say and give you instant respect just because you have a degree, are ordained or come from far away, then think again. Non-Western cultures have many other tests prepared for you before they will listen to your advice. You must pass simple tests—such as those mentioned above—many times before people begin to get a feel for who you are and what you are made of. If you refuse these tests, then don't be surprised if people seem to doze off or politely nod when you are speaking to them—while you observe your words floating in one ear and out the other like smoke. One of the quickest ways to gain respect is to take on all challenges. Don't be afraid to fail. That isn't the point. The point is the courage you show in the attempting. Allow them to help you when you fall down. Get up, dust yourself off, and get back in the game.

## #20 - STAY ALOOF

Don't make any close friendships in the village. Stay aloof, indicating your spiritual superiority.

---

*"If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" (Ecc. 4:10)*

Falling down. A more practical word for missionaries you would be hard pressed to find! There are so many places to fall on the mission field. Apart from failing into the obvious rivers, swamps and animal pits there are other insidious stumblings awaiting you—such as a lack of understanding of the language and customs. You really need to make friends with people. If you don't, not only will you go through life as a missionary in a constant state of "shame-face", but you will also find yourself getting more lonely as time goes by. Since the main aim of a missionary is to tell people "what a friend they have in Jesus", we should also be living examples of the friendship that God has extended to man through His Son.

## #21 - STAY MISERABLE

Never ask for advice, especially from elder missionaries and national church leaders. This might bring to light your own weaknesses. It could also dissuade you from following your own agenda—the vision that you alone have been sent from God to tell the nations.

---

*"Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise." (Pro. 19:20)*

Face it. You have a lot to learn. You don't have a corner on the answers market. You're not perfect. Believe it or not, people don't really expect you to be either. One of the quickest ways for a pastor or missionary to suffer burn-out is to put on some kind of false front. You may also be surprised to find that some of the best advice you can get is from the people to whom you have been sent to serve. Open your eyes and heart. You may learn some valuable lessons you would not have been able to learn anywhere else. These lessons will stand you in good stead in your ministry.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #22 - USE ALL AVAILABLE VACATIONS

Be sure to take all the vacations the mission allows, as far away from your village or country as possible. This will help you to get your head back together and for your congregation to have a break from you. This will also show them that it is only God's elite who are allowed to have the money to travel far away for vacations. You might have to explain to your congregation what a vacation is, however, as many may not be familiar with this concept.

---

*"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:19)*

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with vacations. Let's draw a line here between what we will call rest and relaxation, and out-of-country vacations. Rest and relaxation are essential ingredients in your ministry. Vacations may be another story. If vacations are taken by other people in your church body, then it is perfectly acceptable to take them yourself. If, however, "vacation" is a foreign concept, then your leaving once a year or more for "time away" may confuse and mislead people. They may question if you really care about them. They may wonder if you really are a part of the community. They may begin to view you as having lots of money to spend on yourself, even if you don't. It is advisable to carefully consider the effect vacations will have on your ministry. Ask yourself why you need a vacation. Ask yourself why others don't. Ask yourself if you could use the money spent for more important projects. Ask. (John 16:24)

## #23 - LET GUILT BE THEIR GUIDE

In ministering to peoples from "shame" cultures (vs. our Western "guilt" culture) be sure to stress concepts like letting your inner "conscience be your guide"—especially before they become a Christian. Be appropriately dismayed and confused as to why no one confesses to stealing your prize chickens, when the family next door has been eating BBQ every day for the past week. Be amazed that, as soon as the sun sets, people say and do things they normally wouldn't do in the daylight. This should show them that you are behaving correctly as a slave to your socially/genetically infused guilt trip—whereas—they have a lot to learn about being guilt driven, coming from a background where people treat each other with civility and dignity, at least in public, in order not to make the other person lose face. What a foreign and therefore heretical concept!

---

*"If you argue your case with a neighbor, do not betray another man's confidence, or he who hears it may shame you and you will never lose your bad reputation." (Pro. 25:9)*

*"Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." (Rom. 10:11)*

Another difference between Western and non-Western cultures is that Western cultures come out of the Judeo-Christian mold. We are taught that we need to be guided by our inner conscience. Our sense of guilt will tell us if we are doing something wrong. Since we have been brought up with the Ten Commandments as a basis for our moral structure, we have a built-in code by which to measure sin. If our conscience is not in good shape and we are not walking with the Lord, then we need to allow the Lord to shape it back up so our conscience can do its job properly.

In non-Western cultures it is not unusual to find that there is a shocking lack of conscience as we would define it in the West.

Non-Westerners are driven more by shame. The difference lies in that there are few or no codes that make people feel guilty. Let's take the above example. A missionary buys one hundred chickens in the hope of having eggs from them. A few months later the flock has dwindled down to ten chickens. Meanwhile, the neighbors seem to be having a party every night featuring all types of chicken dishes.

The missionary notices this and stakes out his chicken coop one night. Sure enough, here comes the neighbor with a spear. The missionary jumps from his hiding place and confronts the neighbor. The neighbor apologizes. Weeks later, the neighbor brings a nicely prepared meal to the missionary's house. The missionary is forgiving but cannot understand why he would do such a thing. The answer? There was no guilt involved until the neighbor was shamed by being caught! The typical ethic involved is that, unless one is apprehended, stealing is o.k. Until one is caught, lying is justifiable. This also helps explain why using certain evangelism helps, the ones with a few steps one must go through to understand salvation, have been largely unsuccessful in some cultures. This is because people do not fully understand the concept of feeling guilty for their sins. They haven't been caught at them, so there is little guilt. There is no sin, in their thinking.

Of course this can change over time as the gospel is presented and the guilt of sin under the Law for which Jesus Christ paid the death penalty. Some have suggested that there should even be a sort of "double" gospel process—the first step being to bring people to the understanding of what sin is—the second to confess the now-understood and perceived sin and ask Jesus for his saving grace.

Believe it or not, there are a few advantages to shame cultures. People tend to treat each other with much more respect in public. We may have a lot to learn from them in that area. We also have the tendency to let our guilty conscience get such control of us that we become obsessed and "guilt driven". We get all stressed out and forget that Jesus said that he would bear our burdens for us. (Ps. 38:4; 68:19)

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #24 - TURN THEIR OTHER CHEEK

Don't let people get away with stuff! If your neighbor steals your chickens, embarrass him in public by pointing him out as the culprit. This will teach him the value of following the Law, and the punishment if he doesn't. If you can manage to slip a couple of derogatory adjectives into the process, that is even better. Your crowning achievement would be to choose just the right moment to spring all this—perhaps at the point where your neighbor has reached his limit of beer and barbecued chicken and is looking for something else to divert his attention. Before attempting the above, you might also want to schedule departure for your vacation before sundown of the same day. Just a hint.

---

*"The wicked man will see and be vexed, he will gnash his teeth and waste away; the longings of the wicked will come to nothing." (Ps. 112:10)*

*"May my vindication come from You, may Your eyes see what is right." (Ps. 17:2)*

*"Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay, " says the Lord." (Rom. 12:19)*

Many cultures have cultivated a very well developed sense of vengeance. Nobody knows who started it all, but the sin nature is certainly there. Killing a guy from the next village just because he is from the next village; head hunting as sport; cannibalism as the ultimate "thumbing your nose" at another clan—these are the signs of a culture rooted in sin and demonism. This is a lifestyle that runs deep and affects many aspects of people's lives. This also poses serious problems of trust in understanding what sin is all about. If you view "getting even" with someone as a "good" thing, then this is a big problem in perception. No one is going to feel guilty about something that his culture and worldview has

taught him is the "right" thing to do. The effects of this vary from place to place, of course. In one culture, there may be a high regard for human life but a strong sense that all personal property should be publicly owned or else divided equally. In this type of culture stealing is viewed as the "great equalizer" and is thereby seen as appropriate. In another culture, where property is viewed as the establishing legacy of an individual or clan, stealing might be viewed as a crime. But this same culture may also view people as less important than property and even harbor a low regard for human life. In this instance, killing may be viewed as fit punishment for perceived injustices such as stealing. The new missionary would be well advised to attempt to find out what sins and demonic strongholds there are in the culture that stand against biblical precepts. He should take this information, pray about it, think deeply though it, and ask the Lord to help him present the Gospel in a way that helps those to whom he has been sent to begin to deal with these problems themselves. It will not be easy. Things will not change overnight. (See #44)

I heard one story about a society where the lives of pigs are more important than the lives of people. There is a very low esteem for human life. Kill a pig, however, and you are in big trouble. The gospel was presented for many years with the typical accent on the death of Christ and His sacrifice for our sins. For some reason, this yielded few results. Can you guess why? Christ's death for people was not impressive to a culture that held human life and death in such low regard. One missionary finally caught on. One day he presented the Gospel story by telling them that Christ died to prevent Satan from attempting to steal eternal life from us. What a reaction that message got! People were murmuring and talking to each other in the audience. They couldn't believe it. How dare Satan try to steal our eternal life! Hooray for Jesus!! People finally understood Christ in a new way and many in that village were saved. Now they would be able to walk with Christ in a new life. Eventually, through their new life and relationship with Christ, they began to understand the sanctity of human life, and at that point they could be disciplined in such a way as to become mature in Christ.

Not long afterwards, one of the newly converted women was

able to go to the local hospital and help a woman from a lower clan to come to know the Lord. This was something formerly considered heretical in their society. The biggest part of her witness was her ability to show the mercy of Christ, now living in her, to someone whom she normally would not have been able to associate. Isn't it amazing how Jesus works when we keep our eyes open!

## #25 - DISCOUNT SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Never give in to the feeling of inordinate depression that has suddenly come upon you—or those painful fears that haunt you in the middle of the night—or the nightmares of your children—or the screams you hear outside the hut where you are sleeping in the village when there is no one outside—or the over-riding urge you have to argue anytime you are around fellow missionaries. These are simply signs of a little stress. Those stories of spiritual warfare on the mission field are vastly overrated.

---

*"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." (Eph. 6:12,13)*

Suit up! These verses on the armor of God are not just allegorical or some kind of intellectual exercise. They are there to give us the tools to deal with real spiritual warfare.

Westerners are often confronted with the sins of materialism, greed, sexual immorality and pride. But we rarely have to deal, on a daily basis, with the ramifications of a polytheistic pagan culture handed down through family and society. Western people can thank the Lord that at least some of their family members in the past worshipped Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Other people groups and cultures are not so fortunate. If you have never been exposed to a culture that goes back for generations in the worship of demons, you have no basis on which to base any criticisms you might have as a Westerner about non-Western cultures and real spiritual warfare. This stuff is inexorably intertwined and intermingled into the daily lives of most of the peoples of the world. People who have been dedicated from birth to demonic powers, had witchcraft medicines administered to

them from an early age, fallen in love and gotten married under the spell of love potions, and lived with the oppression and the threat of retaliation and death from these enemies, live in a very different world. When person after person gives accounts of spirits grabbing them in the jungle, of floating heads wandering through their homes, of eerie screams outside in the night, of demons in the guise of dead relatives coming to control their lives—you had better not slough it off as a mere fairy tale. These things are not only real to them, I have news for you—many times they ARE real! If you are in doubt, read your Bible again. This subject is not broached, in God's Word, to provide us with cerebrally pleasing discussion fodder. Biblical demonic episodes are not parables. The Word provides us with a very accurate picture of exactly what people are dealing with on a very down-to-earth level in their daily lives.

The armor is mentioned to give us the tools to be able to resist the enemy and to fight back when necessary. "Fight back", you say? Take a look at the weaponry mentioned. The helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith—all these are defensive weapons. But the sword of the Spirit, the feet fitted for the spreading of the gospel of peace, and prayer are not only defensive in nature but also offensive. With the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, we are able to defend and to conquer the enemy by returning, blow for blow, the temptations he puts in our path, just as Christ did in the desert. With our feet fitted to spread the gospel of peace, we are able to venture into Satan's territory and spread the news of the gospel as "peacemakers" (something the enemy hates, by the way). Last but not least, prayer provides us with advantages such as worship (Heb. 12:28), thanksgiving (Col. 4:2), requests (Phil. 4:6), unity (I Tim. 2:8), and prayers for healing (James 5:15,16). It also gives us powerful offensive weapons such as intercession (Col. 4:12, Rom. 12-12) and empowerment to preach God's Word (Acts 4:24-30).

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #26 - FOCUS ATTENTION ON YOURSELF

Always attempt to be the center of attention in every situation. Since you probably have a weird accent, a different skin color, a strange smell, and an unfamiliar demeanor this won't be too hard. Just make sure all the attention stays on you and doesn't drift off to other people.

---

*"Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfailing beauty of a gently and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight." (1 Pet. 3:3,4)*

*"Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widow's houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely." (Luke 20:46,47)*

Oh, brother. If you could only see yourself through their eyes. Running around sporting the latest shoes and designer clothes. Wearing lots of expensive jewelry. But there are also other obnoxious ways to be the center of attention—always talking at the top of your lungs with people so everyone within earshot can hear—always putting on a little show when you are *singing* with the choir in the national language—always sitting in the best seat. Sound a little pharisaical? That's because it is! Jesus asks us to have a quiet spirit, to be meek, and to have the heart of a servant.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #27 - EXPECT CHANGE OVERNIGHT

Expect people to quickly change their age old beliefs at almost the same instant you tell them what they should believe from your point of view. If they seem stubborn, don't let yourself be mistaken by the nod of a head, a friendly smile, or a kindly word. Press on till you know that all your points have been assimilated completely.

---

*"We were not looking for praise from men, nor from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her children." (I Thes. 2:6,7)*

People in any culture do not appreciate being lectured to. Just because you have been given the privilege of ministry does not give you the license to get on a raised dais to tell everyone how you think they ought to live. The truths of the gospel should be shared gently, in stages, just as a mother imparts her wisdom to her children.

## #28 - LET THEM SERVE YOU

Let others serve you. This way, you are teaching valuable lessons to your church about how to be a servant to others in the church, by using yourself as the example of a master. Letting them be the master and you the servant is out of the question. This would undermine authority and discipline. Revival might even break out.

---

*"Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:26-28)*

*"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." (1 Pet. 5:2,3)*

Of course, missionaries should be servants first. Especially in this day and age when many national churches are "nationalized" and the role of the missionary has changed from "pioneer" to "helper". But, even in areas where the church is being planted, we are still called to serve. One of the best ways to witness is not merely to proclaim the good news, but to be a living example of how it has changed our lives.

# 4

## The Long Haul

You really blew it! You have obviously not been following the beginning ideas on each topic in this booklet. This is your last warning. Don't shape up or don't ship out! If you follow the second parts of this section you will most likely end up being a lifetime cross-cultural missionary.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #29 - TURN CONTRADICTION INTO AN ART FORM

Be sure to interrupt people when they talk to you, butting in with your better commentary. This will show your command of the language (if by some quirk of fate, you have learned the foreign language where you are serving) and will convince others that they would be better off listening to you. If you can manage to contradict what the other person was trying to say, this is even better. This technique works especially well in "saving face" types of cultures.

---

*"He who answers before listening - that is his folly and his shame." (Pro. 18:13)*

It is not a very good idea to shame someone publicly on the mission field. Apart from the fact that this is not the best way to win converts, you may also put yourself in real danger. In "shame" cultures, the call for vindication and vengeance after being put to shame is very strong. It is better to listen, then answer if you must. Even in this case, sometimes it is better to delay a decision to give advice, counsel, or an answer till you have thought about it. There may be ramifications to a situation that would best be considered with adequate time, rather than making up something on the spot just to hear yourself talk. This is another lesson that Westerners can learn from many non-Western peoples. Let the whole picture sink in for a couple of days. Ask for advice from elder missionaries, if they aren't involved. Get on your knees and pray about it.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

### #30 - ARGUE A LOT IN PUBLIC

Arguing is a good technique to use to show that missionaries are just ordinary people too. Argue often and at length with other missionaries in public or at least within earshot of students or members of your local church body.

---

*"... the overseer must be ... not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome" (1 Tim. 3:3)*

*"The entire law is summed up in a single command.— 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other." (Gal. 5:14,15)*

There is a vast need on the mission field today for encouragement and unity within the body of Christ. It is so easy to get into an argumentative mood due to factors like: (a) living in close quarters with people with whom you have been thrown together on the field (b) irritations that arise from your lack of understanding of the culture you are living in and people's attitudes toward things (c) homesickness and loneliness (d) spiritual warfare of which you may or may not be aware. Hebrews 10:25 has a very good solution for this. Keep meeting together on a regular basis. Keep the lines of communications clear. Worship and pray together. Stress the areas you can agree on and avoid those areas on which you already know you will disagree. There is nothing wrong with disagreeing with someone. We all have different opinions and even varying secondary doctrinal beliefs. Yes, we are to totally agree on the core doctrines of the Faith, but none of us are perfect in every interpretation of the Bible. If we find that we disagree on a subject (as long as it is not harmful to the ministry), then we should avoid that area if possible and accentuate the unity we have in Christ. Remember—the eyes of the people are upon you. (See #42)

### #31 - MAKE THEM ADOPT YOUR WORK ETHIC

When dealing with "non-time oriented" societies, it might be a good idea to show people how to cultivate a proper Western work ethic. This is one you may not wish to tackle since it requires a lot of work and major martyrdom. This idea will entail hours of toil by yourself, in full view of the public. Moistened brows, labored sighs, sweaty armpits, brisk mannerisms, little or no prolonged eye contact, general nervousness, wristwatch checking, and a lot of midnight oil and early morning hyperactivity should have the desired effect. It will either convince people to shape up or convince them you need to shape up.

---

*'All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.'* (Ecc. 2:23)

*"The end of the matter is better than it's beginning, and patience is better than pride."* (Ecc. 7:8)

It is true that many non-Western societies seem to have a "mañana" attitude toward life. What doesn't get done today will still be there tomorrow, so there is no hurry. Time is not so important. The project will get done someday. This can be a problem for missionaries who are trying to complete one project so they can move on to the next before they have to return for furlough. It can also be a problem in administration. Hard work is actually a very good thing, and you will find that hard work is not a foreign concept where you have been sent either. The foreign concept is how LONG it is going to take to complete.

From your viewpoint ... once a decision is made to do a project, it should then be completed swiftly and efficiently. There should be decisions made at the start and these are used as a blueprint so that most of the effort expended from that point on will go into the completion of the project.

From their viewpoint ... a project is one long drawn-out

decision making process. Each step must be carefully talked over, even if it was talked about before and even if they come to the same conclusions as before. The main thing is that the project is done correctly and it meets with everyone's approval.

Advantages to your viewpoint: (1) The project is well planned from the beginning. (2) The project takes less money in labor costs due to it taking less time to complete. (3) The project gets done on time.

Advantages to their viewpoint: (1) The project is reassessed and reevaluated at every point. (2) The project materials cost less money than the original idea because of careful scrutiny all along the process. (3) The workers don't get burnt out so quickly.

This example should help you to see that there is much to be learned from others. Don't assume you have all the answers just because you have been placed in a position of authority. A skillful administrator will blend and marry these different elements in such a way as to satisfy everyone's criteria.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

### **#32 - CHANGE THEIR CULTURE TO BE MORE LIKE YOURS**

When you see a problem in the whole cultural structure, there are a couple of ways to react. (a) Place culture above all else. In this *scenario*, you would be saying by your speech and actions that all culture is God-given and must not be tampered with in any way. This lets you off the hook completely in terms of ever having to confront any cultural sins at all. (b) Ridicule the culture to which you were sent incessantly, but be sure to, at the same time, elevate your own culture. Never break down and confess any kind of weakness or sinful tendencies in your own culture. This could dangerously erode the whole basis of your Christian message from the foundations up.

---

*"So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with "unclean" hands?" He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are rules taught by men. You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." (Mark 7:5-8)*

*"See to it that no One takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic Principles of this world rather than on Christ. " (Col. 2:8)*

Culture. One of the world's pet "issues" today. Indigenous people's rights. Nations dividing up into ever smaller nations to accommodate each particular "racial" group. There is no doubt that we have major problems on our hands.

The first generation missionaries have sometimes been referred to as "great white fathers". These missionaries were the

early pioneers, and we owe a lot to their boldness, persistence, and faith in opening up areas of the world to the gospel. But this group, many times, also carried with them very strong cultural messages. Nationals were told that their cultures were "pagan" and that they must adopt Western Christian culture when they became Christians so they would not fall back into their old ways. Western culture was presented as being part of the answer. Unfortunately these early missionaries sometimes neglected to help the nationals see the evil sides to Western culture. When these evil elements were introduced from the outside, mainly by traders and merchants, they were welcomed as being all part of the same package.

The next generation of missionaries reacted against this mistake. Many books were written on the subject of being very careful not to interfere with indigenous people's traditions and not to glorify Western culture. Christians were advised to "contextualize" the message and find ways to make it fit into the existing culture with as little controversy as possible. Culture itself was not evil, but was rather "neutral". It was man that was evil. This approach, however, also had its down side. At this same time many liberal churches were beginning to question the "inerrancy" of the Bible and they began to use this concept to "rewrite" the Bible in the image of culture. Conservative evangelical Christians also had their problems in this area. The message that "where culture is wrong, let the Bible be the guide" was not stressed as often as it could have been, and indigenous leaders did not stand against sins in their cultural/traditional systems the way they should have. The gospel in some cases became syncretized, mixed with, and often mired in, the quicksand of worldly culture.

The newest breed of missionary is now having to deal with these divergent and confusing viewpoints from the past. Today, many national Christians are wondering what is the answer to this situation. Is Western culture really Christian? Upon viewing how the West advertises its sex, violence and voyeurism via video and television they quickly realize that Western culture is not more "Christ-like". Then is their indigenous culture better; as the liberal, "New Age", "Save the Planet" types of today would have

them believe? Well, that doesn't wash either, particularly in view of all the traditional pagan religious significance woven into every fiber of the culture.

The answer lies in the two passages above. We are to become a part of Christ's culture. We are no longer citizens of this or that country in terms of culture, but we have become citizens of heaven. Of course we must obey our earthly leaders where they do not force us to sin. But when it comes to culture, we must not be tied to traditions of the past that run contrary to scripture. We must stand firm on what Christ has taught us. If it fits into the culture, fine. If not, then we must oppose it. We should endeavor to stand where Christ stood. We should be steadfast in love, but also steadfast in the law. Sometimes this will involve great personal sacrifice. But if we truly love the Lord and our fellow man, we must fight for what is right no matter what the cost.

For missionaries, the only way to bring up cultural problems that we see in the society we have been sent to is to (1) gain a full knowledge of the culture (2) gain the respect and standing needed to even begin to talk about these issues and (3) be able to use negative examples from our own culture and illustrate positive solutions Christians have found on how we can take a stand for Christ against our culture when we need to.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

### #33 - MAKE THEM SHOW YOU RESPECT

For people to have respect for you, you should never act as if you have learned anything from a national. Remember, you as a missionary are supposed to have all the answers. Even if you have to get up out of the mud time after time from falling off a log crossing a ditch, don't let them try to show you how to do it properly. And most of all, don't join in their laughter.

---

*"Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king." (1 Pet. 2:17)*

*"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody." (1 Thes. 4:11,12)*

If you show respect to people, they will eventually show respect to you. Once you gain their respect, you will be able to, much more effectively, share the gospel message and help them grow in maturity within the body. 1 Thes. 4:11-12 presents a good formula for this. Be quiet. Be calm. Mind your own business. Work alongside people with your hands. Be someone they can look up to in very down-to-earth ways. This is the place to start.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

### **#34 - FIGHT YOUR WAY TO THE TOP OF THE MISSION LADDER**

Playing mission politics to get ahead is always a good idea. Be nice to people merely to gain upward mobility. If anyone gets in your way, slowly and carefully remove them from your path so you can move forward. Spread rumors about people. Do anything that has to be done to allow you to obtain the position you seek. This concept works well in the business world; why not in missions?

---

*"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. "What it is you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of there two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom. " "You don't know what you are asking, " Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "we can, " they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercises authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant... " (Matt. 20:20-26)*

Kingdom builders. Have you heard of this kind of missionary? He seems to come out to the field with a full-blown agenda and will not quit until he has accomplished "great things" for the Lord. The problem is, whose kingdom is he building? Missionaries of this type often do get buildings built, get vehicles bought, get big programs started.

Unfortunately later, just as often, those buildings stand idle from lack of use and those programs fade away for lack of participation. When the person who built the kingdom decides to

move on, what once was a grand idea usually gets left behind. There are a few easy ways to distinguish a "kingdom builder's" work. Does the Lord continue to bless it after the kingdom builder leaves? Is it continuing to produce fruit?

Moving up the ladder by pushing others aside in favor of your own agenda is a quick way to assure that the Lord will not be involved in the process. All you have to do is to look at any number of televangelists, their organizations and their subsequent demises to see this point vividly illustrated. A favorite illustration that I have borrowed from a friend of mine is that the world uses a pyramidal structure as its model for how to get ahead. You can view the apex of the pyramid as the top position that everyone is scrambling to reach. Turn the pyramid upside down and you will see a good model for the body of Christ. "But many who are first will be last, and the last first." (Mark 10:31) To attain "the top" position in the body, you must become the servant of all and go to the bottom. On the very bottom you will find Christ, who died for the sins of the world, supporting the weight of the rest of the structure. He is the Cornerstone and Foundation.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

### **#35 - HOLD TIGHTLY TO YOUR AUTHORITY**

Be sure to frown upon events that are planned and sanctioned by the congregation without your input. These kinds of events tend to bring a church together in such a way as to make your leadership somewhat questionable. Always keep a tight hold on the reins of your church body.

---

*" ... the overseer must be.. temperate, self-controlled... " (I Tim. 3:2)*

Let go. Control yourself first. Be quiet and listen to what people are telling you. Give suggestions. Your suggestions may not be implemented immediately. They may not be implemented for some time. They may not be implemented at all. Remember, Christ is in control of His church. Pray. Intercede if you see big problems. The Lord can work in ways beyond imagining.

### #36 - FORGE AHEAD WITH PLANS ANYWAY

If you find that your adopted church body won't take your advice on a particular project, go ahead with it anyway. Maybe they just don't understand the importance of the idea you have. Maybe they don't have the impetus to put it into motion and complete the job. Maybe they are short on funds. Maybe they are just waiting for you to step in and do everything for them, Maybe this is your big chance. Maybe now you can show them who's boss. Maybe you can show them who has all the truly creative and imaginative ideas here in our century!

Then again, maybe you are off your rocker.

---

*"In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us." (Tit 2:7,8)*

Forging ahead with plans, without the approval of the church leaders and people you are sent out to minister to, is usually not a great idea. If you do this, they will not feel that they have real "ownership" of the project. After you are gone, your project will more than likely be discontinued. For any project to work, that involves the church and outreach, it must be a vision that is held by a majority of the church. You may contribute creative ideas. You may contribute much of your time administrating the project. If you want it to succeed, however, it must be something that the people want. You also must not take any credit for the idea or execution of the project. Swallow your pride and let them own the idea and the credit. The idea, after all, is to further the kingdom of God, not some agenda of your own. If a project is very important to you, be prepared to give good solid reasons why you think so. In a quiet and meek way, lay out your ideas and allow others to give their input. Don't just jump in the first time someone says "Well, that sounds pretty good". Wait until people have really

made up their minds and have had ample opportunity to voice their concerns.

If some of your ideas are hopelessly mired in indecision or inaction, it might be a good idea to move ahead with other plans that are less threatening. Back off the first plans for awhile and pray that the Lord will enlighten yourself and others as to the advisability of your idea. Remember, it may be possible that you are wrong, or that the time isn't quite "ripe" for your idea.

The best possible course is to lead by inspiration. Endeavor, with the help of the Spirit, to inspire people to a higher commitment to the kingdom of the Lord. You can do this through communicating your personal excitement, sound teaching, and intercessory prayer.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

### **#37 - PLAY RELIGIOUS POLITICS**

Fawn all over the people you are ministering to in public, but in private play the old "oneupsmanship" game of religious politics with them till you get them to submit to your will. An alternative to this is to be politely courteous to them in public, but in private cry and pout until you get your way. Usually the first idea works best for men, the second for women.

---

*"... that when I come I may, not have to be harsh in my use of authority - the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down." (2 Cor. 13: 1 0)*

*"... Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited " (Rom. 12:16)*

Use of "power-plays" are routinely employed in the world but there is no Biblical basis for this at all within the Christian context. We are admonished to be servants to all, not to tear others down, and not to be conceited. In cases where people have abused their authority, there always seem to be negative consequences to deal with later on. If you find yourself building your life around controlling people, it may be time to stop and look at what you are doing, why you are doing it, and what drove you to it in the first place. It seems that the more insecure a person is, the more he/she tends to try to dominate and control others.

Remember that this is the LORD'S WORK, not your work. Let go and let God!

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

### #38 - NEVER, EVER TAKE TIME OFF

Don't allow yourself to learn how to enjoy the simple pleasures in life like family time together, walks, gardening, sitting and talking for hours with people, reading a good book, or working diligently on a project so it can be completed skillfully and with integrity. Better to reflect on and cultivate a desire for missed Western distractions such as TV, fast cars, movies, shopping malls, and short church services.

---

*"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that." (1 Tim. 6:6-8)*

Learn how to enjoy life again. You will find that the simple things are many times the most rewarding. Quiet time is important. Sometimes small things = big thoughts. On your time off, cultivate a talent in music, writing or the arts. Spend time with your family and/or friends. Laugh a little. Read a book you have been meaning to read for a long time. Here's a "biggie"—sit and talk with people. Get to know your newly adopted people, their thoughts, their feelings, their ways. If you really relax doing work, then work alongside someone you enjoy on a project that brings happiness. Be content with what you have. Be thankful. Practice love. Keep in touch with Jesus.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

### #39 - BUY LOTS OF TOYS

Buy lots of ministry tools (better known in the Western world as "toys") to help keep you alert and full of vibrant Christian energy. This can include things like boats, surf boards, skis, jet skis, and sail boards for those who live by the ocean; airplanes, four wheel drive vehicles, all terrain vehicles, and motorcycles for those who live in the mountains; and Mercedes, Jaguars, Rolls, diamond rings, and car phones for those fortunate enough to be ministering in the Beverly Hills area.

---

*"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness." (I Tim. 6:10,11)*

Be satisfied with what you have. Treasure the simple pleasures of life. You don't really need all that "stuff" to survive on the mission field. Many missionaries have found it very liberating to have to sell most of their possessions before leaving home for foreign lands. If you are one of these, don't start collecting all over again. You will just tie yourself down. You will fully come to understand this when it comes time to move to another place. Packing "stuff", trying to give away "stuff", shipping "stuff" and dragging "stuff" with you on the ship or plane will teach you to be less of a pack rat. Guaranteed! Especially when you have to pay the bill yourself.

Keep it simple. Buy only what you can really use in the ministry. Save your money for more important things. Your children will gain a new worldview on the subject of "stuff" if you live your life simply and to the Lord.

## #40 - USE HYPOCHONDRIA

Nurture and build on your natural tendency towards hypochondria. This can be used to your advantage when trying to get out of activities such as going to the village to witness, going on a ship to an outer island or going on some long drawn-out four-wheel-drive trip to the boonies. It will also get you out of preaching on Sunday morning, help you miss that class you weren't prepared for anyway, and almost any other distasteful chore you have to perform. This will show people how much you are suffering for the Lord. It will also remind them again and again just how much they are suffering to fill in for you.

---

*"For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God." (1 Pet. 2:19)*

Ask yourself, "What would Jesus do in this situation?" If you are really sick, go see a doctor as soon as possible. If it really is a serious illness, don't fool around till you are infested with worms, dying of malaria, or breaking out in boils. Get help. If you find yourself reacting on the basis of stress, and symptoms continue, get some counseling from your area director or a trusted colleague. Don't let the effectiveness of your ministry be hampered by a stress related illness. Push on through. Get your mind off of it. Go to God with it. Don't use your sickness as a sympathy-getting mechanism. Be a shining light for the Lord throughout, and your witness will bear much fruit.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #41 - EMPLOY MARTYRDOM

Spend long hours at the window facing the street where people can see you pining for home as they pass by. Look longingly out the window, staring blankly into the distance with a look of pain and suffering in your face. This will make people regard you as a martyr/hero figure who has come a mighty long way to sacrifice your life on the altar of missions. Of course it is also possible that this look might be mistaken for a case of round worms.

---

*"... the overseer must ... also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap." (I Tim. 3:7)*

*"... but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance ... " (Rom. 5:3)*

Would you be surprised to find out that there are actually missionaries who act out this childish play in martyrdom? Sure, things are tough sometimes. Certainly there are trials and tribulations, as there are anywhere in life. In this regard, think about what others have to go through back in your little hometown and maybe you will get a different perspective. True—you may be toiling away in some hot, humid jungle somewhere. Also true—the people who support you financially may be trudging through sloppy snow in freezing weather to get to a boring job. True—you may have to write letters to supporters till your hand feels like it is about to drop off. Also true—your supporters may be sending you money every month out of an already meager budget, and eating beans tonight. True—you may feel like you are all alone, out on the front lines of a battle. Also true—there are faithful people who are on their knees every night praying for you on the home front.

## #42 - FORSAKE MEETING TOGETHER

Business meetings take up so much of your time. You are far too busy to have fellowship meetings with fellow missionaries and church workers. This should be done within the context and confines of your regular meeting schedules at the church. Meetings of this type are usually a waste of precious time. Avoid them religiously. Keep to yourself. You are on the mission field to work. Fellowship with co-workers usually conflicts with work and is therefore useless.

---

*"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Heb. 10:24,25)*

The ministry of encouragement is one of the most important aspects of the Christian life. It is also a Scriptural requirement that is not being fulfilled on many mission fields. Missionaries get caught up in work and forget that God has told us that it is okay to encourage one another once in awhile. A little pat on the back, a comforting word in times of trouble, can mean more to your brothers and sisters than you can possibly know. Don't allow people to operate without support. If they aren't willing to encourage you, be an encourager yourself. Pray for them. You may find that others will eventually join you in your quest.

The best format for this is laid out in the above verse—to continue to meet together on a regular basis—to "interface"—to "keep the lines of communication open"—to study God's Word together—to fellowship together—to pray together. Jesus called for unity in the body. Refreshing from the Lord can never come about where there is discord and unforgiveness. Where there is unity in the Faith there will also be fellowship.

### #43 - PRAY ONCE IN AWHILE

Pray at meals. Pray at bedtime, most of the time. Pray when asked to in church. Otherwise, leave the job of real prayer to little old ladies back in your home church. Your time on the mission field is so much more valuable. If you are required to attend a prayer meeting, make sure all your requests are for your ministry, your family, your health, your welfare. Start and end your prayers whining to God, telling Him what you expect Him to do for you. Pray long prayers so others will realize how articulate you are. Never allow yourself to become emotional in your prayers. Emotions are of the devil. Keep your composure so others will know how true Christians should act.

---

*"Pray continually ..." (I Thes. 5:17)*

There are so many reasons to pray on the mission field, it would take a pile of books to cover the subject. But the most important thing is to DO the subject. Many people like to lecture about the importance of prayer. When it comes to the actual praying part, these people seem to always have more important places to be and things to do.

There is nothing more important than prayer. Biblical prayer truly does "change things". Prayer fosters unity in the Faith. Out of that unity great and mighty works of God always happen. Following is a short list taken directly from scripture. These are some of the things the Lord wants us to be on our knees praying about.

**Pray for your sins and those of others.** "...pray and God will give him life." (I John 5: 16)

**Pray for deliverance from evil.** "... pray that we may be delivered from the wicked and evil men ..." (2 Thes. 3:2)

**Pray for freedom to proclaim the gospel.** "... pray ... we may proclaim the mystery of Christ ..." (Col. 4:3)

**Pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ.** "... pray ... for

all the saints." (Eph. 6:18)

**Pray that we may escape the tribulation.** "... pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen ..." (Luke 21:36)

**Pray about falling into temptation.** "... pray that you will not fall into temptation." (Luke 22:40)

**Pray for your enemies.** "... Pray for those who persecute you ..." (Matt. 5:44)

**Pray for your city.** "... peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you ... pray to the Lord for it..." (Jer. 29:7)

**Pray for the people of your nation.** "... So Moses prayed for the people." (Num. 21: 7)

**Pray for Spirit filling to proclaim the gospel.** "After they prayed ... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly." (Acts 4: 31)

**Pray for everyone, including authorities. Pray for peace.** "... that requests, prayers, intercession ... be made for everyone ... for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives ..." (I Tim. 2:1,2)

**Pray for fearless preaching. Pray always.** "... pray ... on all occasions ... pray that I may declare it (the gospel) fearlessly ..." (Eph. 6:18,20)

# 5

## Furlough/Deputation

Furlough and deputation will afford you your best chance to get out of this missionary hole you've dug for yourself. Make the first sections work for you and people will be begging you to "do something else with your life - please!" Following the second sections will simply mean "it's back to the field for you!"



## #44 - DON'T REST ON FURLOUGH

You don't really have time to rest. If you relax, you may never be able to get back into that "workaholic mindset" you set up for yourself on the field. Go out on deputation immediately. Your family and friends will understand.

---

*"By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work." (Gen. 2:2)*

*"For anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his." (Heb. 4:10)*

It will be important for you to get rest on furlough—as important as visiting people—as important as getting further education—as important as speaking in churches. Yes, it is as important to rest as anything else. We obviously have the mandate from Scripture to rest from our work. We should also rest to regain hope (Ps. 62:5) and thereby renew our strength (Is. 40:3 1), revitalize our spirit (Jer. 6:16), retire our burdens (Matt. 11 -28).

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #45 - TRAVEL IN STYLE

Don't stay in people's homes. This might be a big burden on them. Be sure to rent a large expensive RV/camper and drive to all your destinations. Plan your deputation so that it takes up most of your furlough. Plan meetings so that you maximize your time by driving at least 700 miles to get there so you can have a meeting the same day. Don't plan any recreational stops in between. This might be misconstrued by churches and individuals as laziness on your part.

---

*"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house." (Luke 10:5-7)*

Stay with people whenever possible and when invited. This will give you a chance to meet those who support you, to catch up on old friendships, and make new ones. Take advantage of these opportunities the Lord has given you just like you would back on the field by encouraging and uplifting the lives of those you are staying with. Use the time to be light, salt, and peace in their midst. You can also use the time in helping people to understand what your circumstances are like and what prayer and financial needs you have. It is good advice not to talk about finances unless specifically asked. People will either become burdened or not on the strength of what you tell them in general about your work. God will provide for you. He has called, He will provide.

## #46 - CHURCH PRESENTATIONS — BORE THEM!

There are three good courses to take here. One way is to say very little about your field experience. Use very broad or very vague descriptions that leave your listener's minds numb. This will help them to see that you are very tired and will elevate you in their minds to the status of a martyr. Another way is to make this your crowning hour. Present every detail of your term as if it means as much to the listener as it does to you. Justify everything you did down to the minutest detail. Don't leave anything out. Leaving things out might lead to erroneous interpretations on the part of your audience. The best thing to do is to preach a sermon on some very controversial subject. This will show people your grasp of theology and how much you have learned on the field, including how to make friends and influence people.

---

*"Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance, in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as imposters; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed, sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything." (2 Cor. 6:4-10)*

Ride the middle here. Don't present too many boring details. But don't be too general either. Explain your ministry and pick out the highlights. Be truthful about how the Lord has taught you valuable lessons. Look at how the Apostle did it in the verses above when giving his field report. It is exciting, and truthful. It is poetic and uplifting. What people are looking for today is a little hope. Though there may be sufferings and trials, we can feel,

from what is said in the above verses, that God has triumphed in all and that the speaker is "none the worse for the wear" spiritually. This gives people the courage to take up their cross as well and join in the fray.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #47 - QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS — IGNORE THEM!!

Initially, if people don't have any questions, keep prodding them till they come up with some. Sometimes people are just a little shy. If this doesn't work, you might have to resort to asking yourself questions and then giving the answers, which can look a bit bipolar. If questions are asked, give detailed, complex, long drawn out answers. Don't leave anything to chance. If some "smart aleck" in the audience asks you a loaded question such as "Do you love your fellow missionaries?" or "How often do you have quiet time?", act like you didn't hear the question and move on. Avoid taking any more questions from that person and try to find one safe person to take questions from. When the session is over and questions have ceased, sit down immediately and let someone else close the meeting.

---

*"... Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander." (1 Pet. 3:15,16)*

Basically do the reverse of the section above. Additionally, be relaxed. Answer questions truthfully. If you don't know the answer to a question, admit to it. It's okay. You aren't expected to know everything. Try to help people catch the same fervor you have for your work. Promote missions in general. Do it all in a loving spirit, remembering that you are an ambassador for Christ wherever you are.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #48 - SLIDE PROGRAMS — SNORE THEM!!!

Don't worry if you were in a rush before the meeting and got a number of slides in the tray upside down. Don't worry if some of the slides are double exposed, fuzzy, or blurry either. People will understand. Don't use a microphone when describing your slides, but speak softly. This will help people to realize how meek you are. If using a pre-recorded tape, be sure to include a loud noise to indicate where to change the slides such as a buzzer, gong, or a knife hitting a drinking glass. Insist on operating the slide projector by yourself. Don't familiarize yourself too much with the equipment, so when the projector jams in the middle of the program you will not be held responsible. Always include one slide with a large group. Leave the slide on the screen for about 10 minutes while explaining the life story of each individual in the picture and their family relationship to others in the picture. Always include a number of slides with dead turtles lying on their backs being butchered for their meat, or detailed pictures of your bloody abdominal surgery from every conceivable angle. This will peak the interest of some members of your audience, especially environmentalists and doctors. Slides of bloated-bellied malnourished children are always a good tear-jerking tool, but only if they are from a non-Western country. Naked men and women dancing erotic ritual dances are also a nice attention grabber, and if you have video it is even more effective. Make sure there are plenty of pictures of yourself in front of the subject material you are talking about. Always use at least two 80 slide trays, if not more. If you are using video, be sure to include plenty of footage that looks like it was shot while you were jumping up and down on a trampoline. People want to see and experience every detail of your short missionary experience. Make a lasting impression by ending your presentation with a sunset picture.

---

*"Preach the Word - be prepared in season and out of season..." (2 Tim. 4:2)*

Again, reverse all the advice given in the above section. In addition to this, keep your media presentations short. Ten minutes is about all people can stand for slides, fifteen for video. "Leave them wanting more". Keep your speaking part short also, fitting well into the time limits given. Write out your shorter presentations so you can effectively cover the most important things in the time allowed.

Following are some suggested things you should have ready before furlough: a 5 minute presentation including slide program/video with speaking; a 10 minute slide/video presentation with wrap up; a 10 minute slide/video presentation with 10 minutes of speaking by you and your wife and 10 minutes of questions/answers for a 30 minute total. Also prepare some 20-30 minute sermons, with one about your work and others on various topics. You should also have a 10 minute Sunday school type program involving your wife and kids ready. If you have a special talent such as music or art, you should try to incorporate this into one of your presentations.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

## #49 - ALWAYS KEEP MONEY IN MIND

Always beg for money in your presentations. Mention it over and over again so people will not be able to forget your financial needs. Make people feel very guilty about their lack of giving. If, after all this, they actually do give you money, immediately give them another project to shoot for and lay a little guilt trip on them again so they will be reminded when you are gone. Mention your need for prayer only as it pertains to your financial needs or as a prelude to asking for donations. The main objective here is to keep people focused on the important issue ... namely, how you are going to pay for your furlough.

---

*"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or want. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:6,12,19)*

Asking for financial help over and over again is very rude. People are not stupid. It's a good policy not major on pleas for financial support unless specifically asked. Learn to sit back and watch the Lord work these things out in people's hearts. Don't push the issue. People will wonder if you have any faith at all if you keep harping on the subject of money. It is best not to even think in terms of what you can "get out" of a situation like visiting a church. Rather think in terms of how you can be a blessing and minister to their needs.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

# 6

## If All Else Fails

This section offers simple, one-step procedures to follow on the off-chance that the people you are ministering to have been just too forgiving. Follow this first part and you will find yourself beyond forgiveness in many instances and behind bars in others. Pursue the second part and you will, no doubt, have a book written about your missionary life.

## #50 - THE LAST RESORT

If all else fails in your bid to fail as a missionary, go back for a second term and start all over again at the top of the list. If that still isn't working, your last resort may have to be getting involved in some sort of immoral behavior. Getting a girl pregnant who goes to your church or school is a sure fire winner for single men. For women, getting pregnant yourself from one of the local gang members is the way to go. Other things like public drunkenness, profuse use of obscene language (especially in the "native" language), taking bribes, embezzlement of mission funds for personal "toys", lying to your mission to hide the fact that you really believe that all religions are one, and killing and eating your neighbor's pet dogs (a desperate act, to be sure!) will wend you on your merry way home in a hurry.

---

*"One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid,-keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city. So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God." (Acts 18:9-11)*

*"But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry." (2 Tim. 4:5)*

Be flexible. One of my favorite maxims for missionaries is a quote attributed to Rev. Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel. He said, "Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be broken." Paul had to be flexible in his plans at Corinth. On the advice of God, while under the fear of attack, he continued on there for a year and a half. On the mission field, missionaries must learn flexibility. This is one of the hardest lessons to learn, but one of the most valuable. Learning to not have your hard head knocked against the wall several times a week alleviates major headaches.

In the end, it is worth everything to give your all to Jesus.

Give up all claims on your life. Jesus Christ certainly did on the cross for you.

Sacrifice. Endure. Reach for your crown of glory. Make friends you will be able to spend eternity with in heaven. Give all the glory to Jesus. God gave you a grace gift of servant leadership. Let the Holy Spirit work in your life so that you will grow to maturity in Christ and can bring others with you.

## 50 Ways To Fail As A Cross-Cultural Missionary

*About the author ...*

*Sandy Simpson grew up in the Palau Islands, the son of missionary John Simpson, who died in a boating accident in 1967 while serving the Lord at Bethania High School in Ngaraard, Palau. His mother, Juanita Simpson, wrote a book about their missionary life entitled "Walking The Waves". Sandy, his wife Rose Marie and their children have been missionaries with Liebenzell Mission USA for many years and continue to serve the Lord in evangelism and discipleship of Micronesian islanders based out of Oahu, HI. He runs an apologetics ministry called Apologetics Coordination Team (ACT). Sandy has many years of pastoral, musical and discipleship experience in the Lord's work. He has written hundreds of articles on discernment and other issues and has been published in many newsletters, books and magazines. You can contact the author at:*

*Sandy Simpson  
P.O. Box 1759  
Pearl City, HI 96782*