



Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting In Around the World

By Duane Elmer

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With the new realities of global interconnectedness comes a greater awareness of cultural diversity from place to place. Besides differences in food and fashion, we face significant contrasts of cultural orientation and patterns of thinking. As we travel across cultures, what should we expect? How do we deal with culture shock? And can we truly connect with those we meet? Experienced cross-cultural specialist Duane Elmer provides a compass for navigating through different cultures. He shows us how to avoid pitfalls and cultural faux pas, as well as how to make the most of opportunities to build cross-cultural relationships. Filled with real-life illustrations and practical exercises, this guide offers the tools needed to reduce apprehension, communicate effectively, and establish genuine trust and acceptance. Above all, Elmer demonstrates how we can avoid being cultural imperialists and instead become authentic ambassadors for Christ. Whether you are embarking on a short-term mission trip or traveling for business or pleasure, this book is both an ideal preparation and a handy companion for your journey.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Elmer has given us a tremendous resource for the twenty-first century. In this day and age people from different cultures and racial backgrounds are intersecting with each other more frequently now than ever before. This thought-provoking, insightful and practical book delivers excellent biblical references to support key principles. A must-read for Christians or non-Christians, local churches, Christian colleges and universities, mission organizations, and those connected to the marketplace." (Alvin C. Bibbs Sr., director, Extension Ministries, Willow Creek Community Church)

"It's a delight to learn how concerned for the right things we can be and yet still be so far from the mark, which is often the case. It will soon be, I am sure, an adopted, fresh standard of measure for new-candidate missions training, evangelism and even new-marriage counseling. All by their nature involve understanding our too-narrowed selves in crosscultural settings, which this book (get a good highlighter pen) clearly provides. . . . Elmer has successfully placed before us a 'working book' that, while wonderfully written and easily read, also begs you to underline scores of 'make-sense' insights and then tab the page so you can find them again." (M. L. Hillard, former vice president of people development, ServiceMaster)

"We live in a world of rapidly increasing cross-cultural connections, which raises the great dangers of misunderstandings, alienations and conflicts. Much has been written theoretically on how to make them constructive. Drawing on his wide personal experience and teaching intercultural communications to those ministering around the world, Elmer helps us to see that crosscultural relationships take place in the realities of everyday life, and shows us concrete ways to build relationships of understanding and trust across the cultural gulfs we encounter in global ministries. . . . Effective cross-cultural ministries begin with interpersonal relationships that bridge the cultural gulfs that separate people." (Paul G. Hiebert, professor of mission and anthropology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School)

"Starting with the story of a monkey 'rescuing' a fish from 'drowning,' Elmer shows the rest of us primates how to jump into the chilly waters of another culture and learn to swim with the fish. As one who has seen him do this effectively with business personnel, I am delighted that his insights are now available to far more who are making the plunge--especially those doing so for Christ's sake." (J. Dudley Woodberry, professor of Islamic studies and dean emeritus, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary)

"Elmer makes complicated and technical material easy and practical. He has a gift of connecting both theory and practice in such a way that they become usable. Although written with Western readers in mind, the book reflects Two-Thirds World thinking. It works both ways--for those who wish to cross the cultural limits from the West to the Two-Thirds World or vice versa. For this reason I recommend this book not only to the Western readers but also to Two-Thirds World peoples." (David Tai-Woong Lee, director, Global Missionary Training Center, Seoul, Korea)

"With his candid humor and personal applications, Elmer knows how to instruct adults. This is not just a book but a training manual that incorporates some good andragogical principles of adult education. . . . Elmer doesn't just take us to the field, but treats the oft-neglected topic of reentry. The appendix, while directed to a debriefing of a longer term cross-cultural experience, could well be a separate manual to debrief the many short-termers who need post-trip evaluation." (John H. Orme, executive director, IFMA)

"Elmer provides a valuable and timely tool for crosscultural work, especially as the face of world missions is changing. No longer is missions from the 'West to the rest,' but from 'everywhere to everywhere.' This delightful trend in missions makes Elmer's book even more significant. Today, Peruvians face culture shock in China, and Taiwanese are challenged to understand Sudan. Missionaries in multinational teams need to learn to work with their colleagues as well as with host-country nationals. *Cross-Cultural Connections* is filled with sound principles and fascinating stories. I will be sending copies of the book to each of our personnel directors." (Jim Plueddemann, international director, SIM)

"*Cross-Cultural Connections* will help you understand core values that determine how people in different cultures make decisions and interact in everyday life. I started and finished reading the book on my flight from the U.S. to China. I found many practical insights and a deep perception and appreciation coming from an author that is obviously a cross-cultural veteran. Although I live and travel constantly between different cultures, I was able to reflect on a couple sticky situations of my own with the wisdom offered by the book." (Janson Chan, president, CMR International Corp)

"Today's world demands the awareness, mindset and skills that Elmer delivers in *Cross-Cultural Connections*. Multicultural interactions, once reserved for the world traveler and missionary, are now everyone's experience. For success in missions trips, business trips and in a demographically changing U.S., every Christian needs the insights in this book . . . everyday." (Wayne Shabaz, cross-cultural business consultant and author of *The Corporate Genome: Unleashing the Power of Our Diversity*)

"Once again, Elmer has provided us with an excellent, insightful and interactive guide for preparation for cross-cultural ministry at home or abroad. The applications to interpersonal relationships are many. This is a must-read for any Christian anticipating wider involvement in service for our Lord. I only wish this very useful book had been available to me prior to my international involvement." (Howard Searle, M.D., executive director, Emmanuel Hospital Association (USA))

"This book will help us love our neighbors in ways that make sense to them." (Miriam Adeney, associate professor of global and urban ministries, Seattle Pacific University, and teaching fellow, Regent College)

About the Author

Duane H. Elmer (Ph.D., Michigan State U.) is director of the Ph.D. program in educational studies and is the G. W. Aldeen Chair of International Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. In addition to traveling and teaching in over 75 countries, he has provided cross-cultural training to Fortune 500 companies, relief and development agencies, mission organizations, churches and educational institutions. He has also conducted peace and reconciliation efforts in several countries. Recently, he led faculty development workshops at over 25 European and Middle Eastern schools on the theme of *Teaching for Transformation*. He has taught at Durban Bible College (Durban, South Africa), Michigan State University and Wheaton College and Graduate School.

His articles have been published in journals such as *Moody Monthly*, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, *Christian Education Journal*, *Discernment*, and *Christianity Today*. His books include *An Analysis of Hebrews: A Programmed Instruction*, *Building Relationships*, *With an Eye on the Future: Church and Development in the Twenty-First Century*, *Cross-Cultural Conflict* and *Cross-Cultural Connections*.

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