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**THE IMPACT OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN  
CROSS-CULTURAL MISSION**

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## ABSTRACT

In this piece of work, the writer researched into various works on Gospel communication, culture, and missions. This is because the cross-cultural Gospel communicator faces lots of challenges; either because he/she does not understand the culture and world view of the target audience or more seriously because he ignores their felt needs. For example if a Yamba man says "I did not well sleep last night" does not mean that he needs a pillow.

This work was primarily a library research and the experience of the writer in intercultural Gospel communication for two decades has its bearing on it. It was discovered that culture, religion, language, the social context and the approach used in communication seriously affect understanding. There are communication principles and skills that preachers should know and apply if they will give relevant messages. The cross-cultural communicator has some challenges to deal with: working with interpreters, contextualisation and finding the right entry point for effective Gospel interaction.

It seems clear that the Gospel communicator has to consider the felt needs of the people as stepping stones to the real needs which can truly be met by Christ Jesus. He needs to stay in the community, learn from them by asking questions that reveal their world view and then presenting the message to meet an understood concept will have more lasting impact.

Therefore, the study concludes that the missionary should have sincere love for his target audience, participate in their daily life and then design, package and present the message conscious of their understanding. Dependence on the Holy Spirit is a condition

sine qua non and do his part faithfully. Paul says that he has become all things to all people so that he can win some to Christ (I Cor. 9:21-23); so true is this statement for committed missionaries.

## 5.2. CONCLUSION

From the discussion hitherto, the cross-cultural communicator needs to present the Gospel in ways that bring lasting results (fruits) thereby expanding the Kingdom of God. The last words of Christ in the physical body emphasised the cross-cultural mandate, “What you will get is the Holy Spirit. And when he comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world” (Acts 1:8 Message Bible). The missionary is not only involved in intercultural communication but also in cross-cultural relationships; in fact he is precisely involved in interpersonal relationship. He then needs to live peaceably with other people since everybody has his or her own peculiarities which can be a source of problem for other people.

Jesus made it clear that each one who follows him (disciple) would need to carry his own cross daily (Luke 9:23). This means great sacrifices, that is giving up ones rights, privileges, possessions, glory, pride, etc. to reach the lost, especially to the ends of the world with the salvation message of love as Christ sacrificed all he had in heaven to reach the lost yet rebellious man (you and me). Mark says “... the disciples went out and preached (communicated) everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed His word by signs that accompanied it” (16:20). This is also a contemporary mandate: going, communicating, and believing God to show His presence. Present day communicators lack nothing that is necessary to do God’s work. Let them only get those cutting blades sharp and expect miracles.

## 5.3. RECOMMENDATION

- *Adapt to the recipient’s culture.* Since there are vast areas of differences in cross-cultural communication, there is the dire need to adapt to the recipients’

culture. The way one reacts to issues is a test of how far he has adapted, for it shows that you accept or reject them. Accepting them makes them to reciprocate and opens them up for change.

- *Love them unconditionally.* Model the love of Christ to them, for when people hated Christ he loved them (Mk 10:21); when they abused him, he kept quiet (Mk14:60-61); when they crucified them he forgave them (Luke 23:34).
- *Have a good understanding and mastery of the factors that affect effective communication.* Reduce the barriers that will distort the message. Study their heart language(s). Know their verbal and nonverbal signals or symbols because only through it one can rightly communicate the true nature of the world's danger and the divine provision of salvation. This can be done by visiting, inviting, eating with them, going to work with them, etc. This writer has successfully used children below twelve.
- *Sow seeds of trust.* Build bridges of trust and not walls of separation. Always evaluate if what you are thinking, saying, or doing at any time is a potential for building bridges or walls for, "do not be deceived... a man reaps what he sows (Gal. 6:7).
- *Use interpreters.* Carefully select and train your interpreters while you are learning their heart language. They should be people who command respect. Discuss the message with them before delivery.
- *Properly disciple and train your first Christians to be mission minded and involved.* Indeed they know where their people are and will reach them better. Help them to remain culturally relevant and not create a third world. That is they should belong to the community and be agents of positive Gospel transformation than to create another culture between theirs and that of the

missionary. The latter would attract negative criticism and possible rejection of the Gospel.

- *Study rhetoric (the art of communication)*. While courses are taken in rhetoric, I highly recommend that Gospel communicators go to the market and see how the hawkers and salesmen advertise their various products which could even be detrimental to health yet people buy. Learn from their skills.
- *Pray, pray and pray!* You are only a tool God uses to convict, convince and convert people. You can never pray enough. It is imperative to totally depend on the Holy Spirit in the entire process of communication. Have a prayer network to sustain you and the mission.
- *Use the feedback regularly to adjust and relevantly repackage your message.* Always try to ensure that the message and means of communication fits the audience for which it is intended. You can set up a discussion group, ask questions or let the people question you, or still better combine them.
- *When using the extended voice (vocal media)*, do some sampling before the programme comes on the air. Also devise a means of feedback.
- *Consciously design, package and develop the message* in relation to the cultural and ethnic backgrounds (worldviews), lifestyle, taste, preferences and communication symbols of the audience. Start with their felt needs and go on to the Gospel. These needs are legitimate and are only tips of the iceberg of the inner (real) needs which only the living God can truly and fully satisfy. Look below the surface. The manner of presentation and the media have strong bearing on its potential for acceptance or rejection. The purpose of communication is to give meaning, therefore, help them.

