

**ENCOUNTERING  
MISSIONARY LIFE  
AND WORK**



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# ENCOUNTERING MISSIONARY LIFE AND WORK

*Preparing for Intercultural Ministry*

TOM STEFFEN AND  
LOIS MCKINNEY DOUGLAS

  
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*From Lois McKinney Douglas: To the memory of Ross Alan Douglas*

Our six years of marriage became a honeymoon as we shared our lives and activities together, among them the initial stages in the development of my chapters for this book. My prayer is that the tears that became intermingled with the writing process after God took you home will be transformed into joy for readers as they begin their missions journey.



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# Preface

## WHY THIS BOOK?

Two popular and significant textbooks on missionary life and work have spanned the twentieth century: Arthur J. Brown's *Foreign Missionary* (1907, 1932, 1950) and J. Herbert Kane's *Life and Work on the Mission Field* (1980).

### *Arthur J. Brown (1856–1963)*

Arthur J. Brown served as the administrative secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Mission for thirty-four years (1895–1929). Throughout his adult life, he had continuing leadership roles in international missionary conferences and made frequent overseas trips to mission fields, including two long tours to Asia. He insisted on the importance of missions being centered in the national church. During his 106-year life span, he authored fourteen books, among them *The Foreign Missionary*. This work appeared in three editions, the first in 1907, the second in 1932, and the third—with extensive revision—in 1950 (R. P. Johnson 1998, 94).

He states the purpose of his book as being “to describe the missionaries who incarnate this great work, who and what they are, their motives and aims, their policies and methods” and praises the foreign missionary as “the incarnation of the worldwide mission of the Christian Church” (Brown 1950, xiii):

Whether one sympathises with that mission or not, no thoughtful person can be indifferent to a movement of such magnitude and character. Statistics do not adequately express its significance. Exact figures are soon

out of date. Suffice it here that there are approximately 30,000 foreign missionaries and 153,000 native workers. Evangelists are preaching the Gospel of Christ in hundreds of languages and in every part of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Educators are teaching in 55,000 schools of all types from kindergartens to universities. Physicians and nurses are ministering to the suffering in 1,100 hospitals and 2,300 dispensaries. There are asylums for lepers and the insane, special schools for the blind and for deaf-mutes, homes for rescued girls and hundreds of orphanages. Boys and girls are taught useful trades and household duties in industrial schools. Young people are trained for Christian service in their own country in theological seminaries, medical colleges, nurses' training schools, teachers' normal schools, and agricultural colleges. The Bible and Christian books are translated and widely distributed. (ibid.)

In his introduction to the same volume, Samuel M. Zwemer reminds readers of the dramatic changes in the missions world that occurred between the 1907 and the 1950 editions. In 1907, Brown noted, nearly "one-half of Asia, ten-eleventh of Africa, and practically all of the island world are under nominally Christian [colonial] governments" (1907, 264). By 1950, Zwemer comments,

Nearly all of Asia and large areas in Africa are independent. Nationalism is in the saddle and Imperialism has lost its hold. . . . Politics are in confusion but people are still there. The Church is still very much alive and Christ is still on the field of battle.

It is therefore not less, but more, important and urgent to understand the foreign missionary's tasks; what his qualifications are, what he is trying to do, what difficulties must be overcome and what are the human conditions for that success in the realm of the spirit where, in the last analysis, all depends not on man's device or wisdom but on the power of the Holy Spirit. (viii)

### ***J. Herbert Kane (1910–1988)***

Born in Canada and naturalized a US citizen, Herbert Kane and his wife sailed for China with the China Inland Mission in 1935. There they worked in the Anhwei province until they were forced to evacuate in 1945, after staying during most of the Japanese occupation. They returned to Anhwei in 1946 and had to evacuate again in 1950, nineteen months after the Communist domination of the country. After returning to the United States, Kane taught missions at Barrington College, Lancaster Bible College, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He has been described as having an encyclopedic knowledge of missions (Covell 2000b, 534) and as one of the most productive and influential American evangelical missiologists of his time (G. H. Anderson 1998, 353–54).

Kane authored several books that have been used extensively as missions texts, among them *Life and Work on the Mission Field* (1980). His insights related to missionary preparation and meeting the demands of missionary life and work were filled with practical suggestions related to raising financial support, keeping in touch with the home church, adapting to the culture, maintaining health on the field, educating children, coping with loneliness, and other important topics.

## **ABOUT THIS TEXTBOOK**

Writing this text was a double challenge. The two textbooks we described above were written by missions giants of the twentieth century, and there was no way that we could replace or substitute their work. Rather, we have tried to stand on their shoulders, build on their insights, and incorporate their passion for missions into this new textbook. The second challenge was to help prospective missionaries prepare for their life and work in the midst of so much change, so many options, and so much uncertainty. The world is in constant flux, new missions strategies are continually being developed, and prospective missionaries are changing as well.

How, then, could we write a book that would not be obsolete before it got into print? How could we be certain that we were aware of newer issues arising even while we were trying to wrap things up? It is encouraging to remind ourselves in the midst of such disequilibrating change that there are still constants. God has allowed us to participate with him in what he is doing in the world through his church. However much the world is changing, it still needs Jesus Christ. We are his messengers to that world. Regardless of how disorienting changing contexts may be, these eternal truths are still our compass.

When we began collaborating on this textbook, we soon discovered how different our personalities, perspectives, and experiences were. Tom was of German descent; Lois's ancestors were Irish. Tom's field experiences were mostly in tribal areas in the Philippines; Lois had worked largely in urban contexts in Portugal and Brazil. Tom's thinking style was more linear, analytic, low context, and time-oriented. Lois was more global, intuitive, high context, and event-oriented. Tom was making significant academic and field-based contributions to the development of missions strategies; Lois was celebrating fifty years of active ministry in theological and missions education. Tom was rooted in the Southern California missions culture; Lois was immersed in the missions culture of the Midwest.

We shared our insights and celebrated our differences as we worked together in the development of this textbook. Our prayer is that God will use our efforts to help you prepare spiritually, personally, and vocationally

for missions in a changing world, and that he will fill your hearts with joy and peace as you follow and serve him in the years to come.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

*From Tom Steffen:* I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to a number of people for helping make this book become a reality. First, Baker Academic deserves a big hand for their collective wisdom in recognizing the need to update foundational missions textbooks for the twenty-first century. My colleagues at the School of Intercultural Studies, Biola University, also deserve special thanks. Thank you Marla Campbell, Katrina Green, Doug Hayward, Judith Lingenfelter, Kitty Purgason, and Dean Doug Pennoyer for your continual encouragement, wise insights, and tolerance of my sporadic appearances on campus. I would be remiss not to mention my dear coauthor, Lois. Losing her loving husband, Ross, during the writing of this book slowed the process but produced a stronger, more spiritual woman. Thank you, Lois, for your friendship and scholarship. Last, I would like to thank my lovely wife, Darla, for all her patience as this book took shape as well as the hours of library research she conducted on its behalf. I could not have done it without you.

*From Lois McKinney Douglas:* I am grateful to my colleagues Tom Steffen and Scott Moreau for their encouragement, patience, and helpful suggestions throughout the book-writing process. The active involvement of the editorial team at Baker Academic is also appreciated.

Special thanks are extended to the students in my DME 842 “Intercultural Communication” course at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School during the fall semester of 2005. Since many of my assigned chapters were also topics in this course, interacting with them as they were being developed became an important class activity. Many of the suggestions growing out of these discussions have found their way into this book. I am especially grateful to David Ngaruiya, who spent long hours in the Trinity library tracking down bibliographical information for me, and to Jennifer Stadelmann, who helped me to bridge the language and culture gap as I (a septuagenarian!) was attempting to write for missionaries in the twenty-first century. Both David and Jennifer contributed personal insights and field experiences that helped to enrich this textbook.

My thanks are also extended to my patient friends and colleagues in Brazil, who so graciously accepted my long absences from my ministries there while I was in the United States immersed in this book. My wish is that it will soon be adapted and translated into Portuguese for them. Last but not least, special thanks are due to my Doberman, Jeannie, who gave me such warm welcomes each time I returned home and stayed beside my desk while I was writing.

## Personal Readiness

Women most suited for work in Calabar are “consecrated, affectionate women who are not afraid of work or of filth of any kind, moral or material. Women who can nurse a baby or teach a child to wash and comb, as well as to read and write; women who can tactfully smooth over a roughness and for Christ’s sake bear a snub, and take any place which may be open. Women who can take everything to Jesus and there get strength to smile and persevere, and pull on under any circumstances. If they can play Beethoven and paint and draw and speak French and German, so much the better; but we can want all these latter accomplishments if they have only a loving heart, willing hands, and common sense. Surely such women are not out of our reach.”

Mary Slessor (1848–1915) (Livingstone 1916, 135)

**T**he moment has finally arrived. You may have been dreaming of becoming a missionary for a long time, perhaps even since you were a child. You have already shipped several boxes of books and personal items ahead of you to your overseas destination and are packing suitcases to take on your flight.

As you look at the piles of clothes, toiletries, keepsakes, documents, books, and papers stacked all over the room, you may be tempted to throw them out the window. Or, less drastically, you may wish you could

bypass the sorting process by scooping up armloads of your belongings, cramming them into suitcases, and sitting on them to make them close. But you know it is not that easy. Important decisions must be made. So you start by sorting out the things you will need on the flight, making sure that necessary documents and valuable items will be taken on board. Once your carry-ons are ready, you begin filling the suitcases that will accompany you. It does not take long before you realize that you are trying to take far too many bags along and that they weigh far too much. You will need to get rid of the excess baggage.

Packing bags provides a good metaphor as we look at issues related to personal readiness for missions. Throughout your life, God has been helping you to develop attitudes, values, traits, and skills that can become important intercultural competencies. These are valuable; you will want to take them with you in your “carry-ons.” But you may also be weighted down with “excess baggage” that will make it difficult for you to adapt to another culture, develop healthy relationships, and engage in effective ministry with people who are different from yourself. You will need to lighten the load before you travel.

Our purpose in this chapter is to help you to keep cultivating the intercultural competencies God has given you as you get ready for the missions assignment that lies ahead. It will also encourage you to recognize and deal with issues that may become excess baggage on your overseas journey.

### **THE “CARRY-ON” LIST: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO TAKE WITH YOU?**

“Of the making of books there is no end.” This well-known quote from Ecclesiastes 12:12 could be applied to descriptions of intercultural competencies as well. Hundreds of lists and scores of scales have been developed by international businesses, government agencies, and nongovernment organizations. The global missions movement has also been concerned with intercultural competencies. Sending churches, mission agencies, and host churches often prepare lists of the qualifications they are seeking in missionaries. Even the apostle Paul filled his letters with descriptions of traits, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that the Lord’s servants need.

Many academic textbooks and reference works provide descriptions, lists, and scales to aid in the assessment of intercultural competencies. Three helpful examples of these efforts are Carley H. Dodd’s textbook, *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication* (1998), L. Robert Kohls’s *Survival Kit for Overseas Living* (2001), and Sherwood Lingenfelter and Marvin Mayers’s *Ministering Cross-Culturally* (2003). Dodd includes scales

**SIDEBAR 5.1****TIMOTHY, MY SON . . .**

The apostle Paul's two letters to Timothy are packed with instructions about preaching the Word (2 Tim. 4:2), confronting false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3–4), and handling a broad range of church issues including worship (1 Tim. 2), the roles of overseers and deacons (1 Tim. 3), and advice related to widows, elders, and slaves (1 Tim. 5:1–6:2).

But Paul's concerns do not end with Timothy's ministry. As the following texts illustrate, they extend to a special interest in him as a person.

- “Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience” (1 Tim. 1:18–19).
- “Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).
- “But you, man of God, flee from all this [false doctrine, quarreling,

and a love for money] and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness” (1 Tim. 6:11–12).

- “You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. . . . Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:1–3).
- “Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22).

**REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

1. What traits, attitudes, values, and skills is Paul asking Timothy to take with him?
2. What does he want him to leave behind?
3. Which of these do you especially want to take with you on your mission assignment?
4. What “excess baggage” do you want to leave behind?

for assessing personal communication worldview (103–4), perceived homophily (216), monochronic-polychronic time orientation, ethnocentrism, interpersonal comfort, self-confidence, dogmatism, and rigidity (264–72). Kohls lists sixteen skills he considers important (tolerance for ambiguity, low goal/task orientation, open-mindedness, nonjudgmentalness, empathy, communicativeness, adaptability, curiosity, sense of humor, warmth in human relationships, motivation, self-reliance, strong sense of self, tolerance for differences, perceptiveness, and ability to fail) (110). Of these, he believes *the* most important are a sense of humor, low goal/task orientation, and an ability to fail. Lingenfelter and Mayers focus on conflicting values that create tensions in relation to values, time, judgment, handling crises, goals, self-worth, and vulnerability. They include a basic values questionnaire (29–35).

## **PREDICTORS OF INTERCULTURAL EFFECTIVENESS**

Muriel I. Elmer (1986) analyzed research related to intercultural effectiveness. Several predictive indicators were uncovered. These became the foundation for the development of the Intercultural Competency Scale, which assesses twelve competency factors through a forty-item instrument (M. I. Elmer 1988). The predictive indicators that Elmer identified through her literature review provide an outline for this section of our chapter.

### ***Accepting People Who Are Different (Tolerance)***

Shortly after a couple arrived in a European country, cleared customs, and received warm greetings from their expatriate missionary colleagues, one of the men on the team suggested going out for dinner. His wife protested, “You are not going to make them eat in a local restaurant their first night here!”

A missionary who grew up in a bilingual, bicultural community on the Mexican border still remembers the day she came home late from school. Her grandmother asked where she had been. She said she had been playing in a Mexican friend’s home. Her grandmother panicked, pulled her into the bathroom, checked her hair for lice while she ran bathwater into the tub, and scolded, “Don’t you ever go inside a Mexican home again!”

Incidents like these are not the rule, but unfortunately they are not the exception either. Missionaries are not exempt from stereotyping, prejudice, ethnocentrism, and judgmental attitudes. Sometimes they may have been raised in homes where they experienced harsh punishment, love was dependent on “good” behavior, and there was rigid moral education, status-based relationships, negative stereotyping of out-groups, and a hierarchy of authority in the family. These factors can combine to create an adult who demonstrates what some have called an “authoritarian personality” (Adorno et al. 1982). These people are unquestioningly submissive to authority, legalistic and rigid in their behavior, closed and tight in their belief system, and prone to reject out-groups. Attitudes like these must be transformed into tolerance, openness, and freedom from prejudice if the missionary is to be effective (Brislin 1981, 55–56).

### ***Responding to People and Their Needs (Sensitivity)***

Sensitive people are empathetic. They are able to perceive people’s feelings and understand situations from other people’s points of view. They treat others in ways that make them feel valued and important. They pay attention to what others are saying and understand what is

**SIDEBAR 5.2****INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY**

Below we present predictive indicators and descriptions of factors related to intercultural competency. Read these carefully and then rate yourself (using a scale of 1 to 5; 5 is high) on each item.

**PREDICTORS OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY**

*Adapted with permission from Muriel Elmer (1988)*

An analysis of the literature reviews in Elmer (1988) revealed that several predictive indicators of intercultural effectiveness have been identified in precedent research studies.

- *Tolerance*: The inclination to be accepting of people who are different and situations that are ambiguous.
- *Sensitivity*: The tendency to be responsive to people and their needs.
- *Security*: A self-confidence that is expressed in various behaviors that strengthen relationships with others.
- *Flexible Perspective*: Cognitive skills that expand understanding and develop insight into experience.
- *Enterprise*: The disposition to attempt the difficult or untried venture.

**THE INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY SCALE: A DESCRIPTION OF THE FACTORS (FORM E)**

*M. I. Elmer 1988 (used with permission)*

- *Approachable*: Establishes contact with others easily.
- *Intercultural Receptivity*: Interested in people, especially people from other cultures.

- *Positive Orientation*: Expects that one can be a success living and working in another culture.
- *Forthrightness*: Acts and speaks out readily.
- *Social Openness*: Inclined to interact with people regardless of their differences.
- *Enterprise*: Tends to approach tasks and activities in new and creative ways.
- *Shows Respect*: Treats others in ways that make them feel valued.
- *Perseverance*: Tends to remain in a situation and feel positive about it even in the face of some difficulties.
- *Flexibility*: Open to cultural learning.
- *Cultural Perspectivism*: Able to imaginatively enter into another cultural viewpoint.
- *Venturesome*: Inclined toward that which is novel or different.
- *Social Confidence*: Tends to be self-assured.

**REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

When you have finished your self-rating, take some time for thoughtful and prayerful reflection:

1. What have I learned from this self-assessment about my personal strengths?
2. What have I learned about my personal weaknesses?
3. What can I do now to keep these weaknesses from becoming “excess baggage” when I cross cultures?
4. What can I do to keep growing in strong areas, so that they can become even more useful “carry-on” items?

being said. They enjoy learning about groups of people who differ from themselves in their beliefs, values, and customs. They like being with others and make friends easily (M. I. Elmer 1986, 159–60).

These relational skills are important in interpersonal and intercultural communication. Some of us tend to be self-centered. We enjoy doing all the talking and may be so wrapped up in ourselves that we are clueless about what others are thinking and feeling. At the other extreme, we may tend to be shy and withdrawn, finding it hard to bridge culture gaps and feeling awkward in relating to people who are different from us. Communication patterns like these are learned early in childhood and can be difficult to change. But with awareness, prayerfulness, help from friends and counselors, and a desire to keep growing, these self-centered or shy traits may be transformed into gifts that God can use as we cross cultures.

### *Expressing Self-Confidence (Security)*

Self-confidence grows out of a strong sense of who we are. It helps us to accept challenges, handle crises, be courageous and frank, and accept ourselves as worthwhile, capable human beings. We will take the initiative in starting discussions, tackling problems, and making contact with others. We can express what we are really thinking and feeling and face opposition to our ideas and actions without exploding in anger. As we look forward to an overseas experience, we expect that, even in the middle of difficult adjustments, it will be enjoyable (M. I. Elmer 1986, 161–62).

Once again, childhood experiences can make a difference. A retired missionary still remembers her father with gratitude. While she was growing up, girls still faced quite limited career options. They were expected to become secretaries, nurses, or elementary schoolteachers. But her father had higher aspirations. Over and over, he told her, “You’ve got what it takes. You can do anything. You can even be a doctor or a lawyer.” He often reinforced his affirmation by telling stories like the one about a mountain climber who got caught in a storm, ran out of food, and could hardly keep from sliding back down the steep, rocky slope. But—in spite of all the obstacles—he kept on going and made it to the peak. His daughter didn’t become a lawyer, but she did become a missionary!

Even if your earthly father was not this affirming, your heavenly Father is. He wants you to run life’s race well. You do not need to be weighted down and held back by a negative self-image. He will often bring friends, family, small groups, professors, pastors, or counselors into your life to help you to keep growing and changing as you look toward intercultural ministry (Heb. 12:1–2).

### ***Expanding Understanding and Developing Insight (Flexible Perspective)***

To live cross-culturally is to live in the midst of intellectual challenges. You are sure to be confronted with different ideas and beliefs. You may have studied world religions and feel that you can dialogue with a Muslim, a Hindu, or a Chinese person, and still not be ready to handle the challenges of day-after-day encounters with people whose beliefs are different from yours. You may not know how to respond when a Muslim taxi driver angrily talks about Christians and Jews killing his people while he is driving you home. After you have shared Jesus's promise of eternal life with a Hindu, you may be taken aback by his reaction to what you have just said: "Eternal life! That's the last thing I want. I'm sick and tired of being reincarnated over and over again." Or, after you have shared the many changes Christ has brought in your life with a Chinese friend, you may be frustrated by his culturally attuned response: "If Jesus brings good luck to your life, maybe I can worship him and he will bring me good luck and prosperity too."

A flexible perspective allows us to view the expressed beliefs of others as valid even when they differ from our own. We enjoy working out alternative answers to new questions. We can see similarities in divergent pieces of data. We are curious about what is going on around us. We tend to notice things that are not obvious and other people often overlook (M. I. Elmer 1986, 162–64).

Some missionaries have experienced upbringings in which ideas are either right or wrong and categories are narrow. Flexible perspectives will often be difficult for them to acquire. But if they are concerned about intercultural effectiveness, they will need to develop problem-solving, inquiry, and observational skills that will embark them on a lifetime journey toward ever-expanding understandings and insights. Intellectually rigid missionaries can make both themselves and the nationals and missionaries they interact with miserable. Developing flexible perspectives can be challenging, transforming, and stimulating, not only for us but also for the communities in which we are involved.

### ***Attempting the Difficult or the Untried (Enterprise)***

The history of modern missions has been punctuated by the stories of venturesome, enterprising missionaries. Among these are William Carey, J. Hudson Taylor, and Charlotte "Lottie" Diggs Moon, who have already been introduced in chapter 1. William Carey challenged the church at the end of the eighteenth century to a radical reassessment of its role in world evangelization, discarding the idea that missions stopped with the apostles and affirming a continuing role for the church on a global

scale and in every generation. The Bible translation, evangelism, church planting, education, and medical and relief strategies that he developed during his forty-one years as a missionary in India became a basic model for missions around the world and across two centuries.

Half a century later, J. Hudson Taylor shattered traditional Protestant missionary precedents by adopting a cross-cultural lifestyle to the point of wearing Chinese clothes, shaving his head, and dyeing his sandy pigtail black. He founded the China Inland Mission (now Overseas Missionary Fellowship), which departed radically from the practices of other missions. All the missionaries were to live “by faith,” with no solicitation of funds. Missionaries with blue-collar backgrounds and without formal education were welcomed.

Still later, as the nineteenth century bridged into the twentieth, Charlotte “Lottie” Diggs Moon was a Southern Baptist missionary in China. Her mother’s model of independence and a strong will rubbed off on her and was evident throughout her ministry. She quickly tired of her initial assignment (teaching children) and found herself embroiled in issues related to equality in policy making and ministry opportunities for women. She used the power of the pen to challenge mission tradition, recruit new workers, and solicit funds.

Even though our own stories are unlikely to become a part of missions folklore, our disposition to attempt something difficult or get involved in an untried venture is still part of an effective missionary’s profile. It is important that we persist in undertakings, even when there is difficulty and opposition. We will need to be able to switch leader/follower and teacher/learner roles easily, change the ways we speak and act as the situation around us requires it, and enjoy doing things differently in order to keep learning and growing. We will intentionally build relationships with people who are different from ourselves, both in their values and their lifestyles (M. I. Elmer 1986, 164–65).

Some people are persevering, adaptable, experimental, and enterprising by nature. Others are more cautious. We may tend to give up easily, hesitate to challenge the status quo, or be afraid to risk relationships with those who are very different from ourselves. Even when we feel weak and afraid, we can claim God’s promise that

Those who hope in the LORD  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:31

**SIDEBAR 5.3****AN EAGLET NAMED VICTOR***Lois McKinney Douglas*

A newly hatched eaglet was snuggling in his nest in the cleft of a rock, high in a rocky mountain range. His mother and father had dreamed of a son who would become strong and courageous and learn to soar majestically in the sky. So they named their newborn “Victor.”

At first, Victor was brave and adventurous. Every day he flew a little higher. But, little by little, he started becoming afraid of heights and feeling tired when he spent long periods of time in the air. Things kept getting worse until, finally, he refused to leave his nest. His mother and father did all they could to help their son, but to no avail. Victor had been overcome by fear.

There were frequent earthquakes in the region. One day, while the rest of the family was soaring high in the sky and Victor was alone in his nest, a strong shock made the mountains tremble. A landslide rolled into the cleft where Victor was perched and buried him under rocks, dirt, and debris. Alone and terrified, he began to cry out to his father with a muffled eagle call.

His father, who loved Victor, was already close by. He heard his son’s cry

and flew quickly to the rubble where he was buried. With strong talons, he dug through the rocks and dirt until he reached his son and gently lifted him out of the nest. Then he covered Victor with his wings and flew him to safety on the mountains’ highest peak. It was not long until the little eaglet’s soul was restored, and he began to fly again—this time “Victor-iously” with the strength, courage, faith, and hope that came through that salvific encounter and the continued presence of his Father.



- I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself (Exod. 19:4).
- Hide me in the shadow of your wings (Ps. 17:8).
- He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge (Ps. 91:4).
- Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not be faint (Isa. 40:31).

**EXCESS BAGGAGE: WHAT DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE BEHIND?**

The taxi Lois was expecting did not arrive. By the time she was able to arrange for another one and the driver had fought his way through heavy traffic to Chicago’s busy O’Hare Airport, she had only two hours left before her flight back to Brazil. She was loaded down with three large suitcases and a carry-on crammed full of things she wanted to take back with her. Her frustration mounted as she nudged her way through crowds of people both inside and outside the terminal to find

a luggage cart. None was to be found. Nor were baggage attendants anywhere to be seen. Rumors were flying that things were stalled because security was on high alert. And there was Lois in the midst of it all with four bags and only two arms to pull them. The moral of this story is clear: When you are going on a long trip, try to avoid excess baggage.

By the time you reach this point in the chapter, and especially as you analyze the case studies below, you probably recognize some of your own attitudes, values, and traits that could become excess baggage when you cross cultures. You may even feel discouraged and wonder if you have what it takes to become a missionary. There is good news for you. Your load can be lightened, and even transformed, through self-evaluation, help from others, and help from God.

**CASE STUDIES:  
EXCESS BAGGAGE**

LOIS MCKINNEY DOUGLAS

The case studies below tell true stories of missionaries who took “excess baggage” to the field with them. As you read each case, try to answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of attitudes, values, traits, and skills did these missionaries take along with them that got in the way?
2. What kinds of experiences in their backgrounds might have created this kind of unwanted baggage?
3. What could they have done before they crossed cultures to help prevent these sad experiences from happening?

**CASE 1. “BUT, PROFESSOR . . .”**

After years of preparation and eager anticipation, a missionary from North America arrived in his host country. He

spent a short time in language school and then began teaching Christian education in a seminary. He held a doctorate in religious education from a prestigious theological school and was eager to pass on his knowledge to the students.

The experience quickly turned into a disaster. His language acquisition was so poor that students struggled to understand him. Even worse, his only goal seemed to be to import religious education models from the United States. Almost from the first class, the students began to challenge him: “But, Professor, what you are teaching will not work in our churches. Here we do things differently.” The missionary became hostile and defensive. He had spent ten intensive years developing competence in his field. And these students, most of whom were taking their very first education course, were confronting him in class! The

## *Self-Evaluation*

There are a variety of tools for self-evaluation. Three we suggest are assessing your strengths and weaknesses, becoming aware of your basic values, and keeping a journal.

### ASSESSING YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The Predictors of Intercultural Competency and the factors in the Intercultural Competency Scale (see sidebar 5.2), together with other similar lists and instruments, can help you assess your strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies for personal growth.

### BECOMING AWARE OF YOUR BASIC VALUES

Many of the stresses and conflicts in cross-cultural living grow out of the tensions created by differences in basic values. Lingenfelter and Mayers (2003) describe several of these. Remember that these values

situation went from bad to worse, and at the end of the term the host-culture director of the seminary dismissed him from his teaching role.

#### **CASE 2. REAL WINE**

When a couple arrived in France for language study on their way to a French-speaking African country, they looked forward to attending their first worship service with French believers. They visited the church on communion Sunday. How beautiful it would be to celebrate the Lord's Supper with believers from another culture. But the shock came when they received the cup. It held real wine! They had both made firm commitments never to touch alcoholic beverages. Taking even a sip of wine in a communion service violated their convictions. They solved their problem by staying away from church services on communion Sundays for the remainder of their time in France.

#### **CASE 3. HERESY**

A missionary couple arrived on the field eager to begin planting churches in their adopted culture. They developed language fluency extremely quickly and were soon in the midst of their ministry. All went well until they discovered that virtually all the national pastors and leaders in the denomination they were working with embraced amillennialism. To the couple, this was gross heresy. The same denomination in their home country was premillennial, and they personally held a strong premillennial position. It wasn't long until they had resigned from their sending mission and decided to stay in the country to combat heresy through their own church planting movement. Needless to say, this created confusion, misunderstanding, and division within the national churches that were affected.