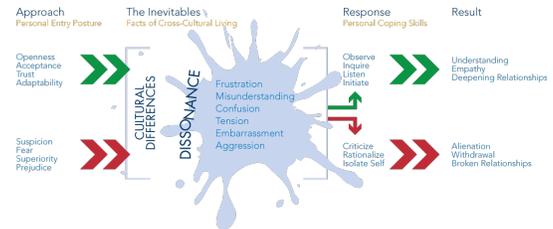




Prepare Your Entry Posture

Introducing the Approaching Differences Diagram (Part 1)

By Andy Kim



Summary: This Discipleship Cycle will introduce you to the Approaching Differences diagram, a tool that can help us love and work well across cultural differences. The focus of this cycle is on the left side of the diagram – a healthy entry posture – and can be used to prepare a group for ministry involving interacting with different people (New student outreach, retreat/conference, missions trip, urban plunge, etc).

Total Time: 45 minutes

Opening Discussion

Time: 5 minutes

- Think about the different situations in your community or in your ministry where loving and working well across cultures is most critical. Write each one down on a Post-it note.
- Arrange all your Post-its and group them. Discuss in pairs or as a whole group: Why did you write what you wrote? What surprised you about what others wrote? What patterns emerge?

What is Culture?

The particular beliefs, customs and values of a group. Cultural groups are fluid, overlapping and can be organized along many different categories: ethnicity, race, language, gender, religion/denomination, region (ie Southern, Midwestern, etc).

Hear the Word

Time: 10 minutes

In his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul uses Christ's example as a model for how Christians can relate to one another.

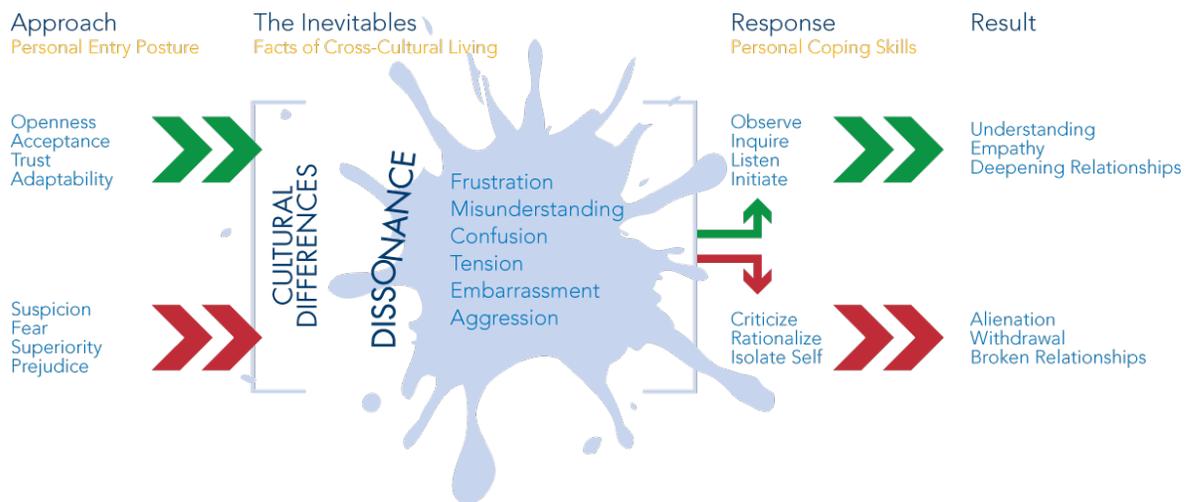
- Read Philippians 2:1-11 and answer the following questions, in pairs or as a whole group:
 1. Why do you think Paul specifically warns against “selfish ambition” and “vain conceit” in how the Philippians interact with one another? Why are they so dangerous for a community?

2. Describe, in your own words, the “mindset of Jesus” (vv. 5-11) that Paul says should characterize our relationships with one another.
3. How might this passage relate to the way we approach crossing cultures as Christians?

□ As a group, read the following introduction aloud:

The Approaching Differences Diagram

A concrete way to live out Philippians 2:1-11 in cross-cultural situations is by using a tool called Approaching Differences Diagram.



This diagram is available as a bookmark through the InterVarsity Store at tiny.cc/bkmk

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Anytime you experience a new culture, cultural differences are inevitable, inevitably creating dissonance and bringing up emotions like frustration, misunderstanding, confusion, tension, embarrassment, and aggression (see the middle section titled, “Dissonance”).

If left unchecked, dissonance will eventually lead to alienation, withdrawal, broken relationships, and a narrow, ethnocentric view of God (the red line/bottom line of arrows). The Approaching Differences Diagram helps us navigate through these emotions and move instead toward understanding, empathy and deepening relationships (the green line/top line of arrows) by encouraging us in two ways: (1) cultivating a healthy entry posture and (2)

learning healthy responses to dissonance.

The goal for using this tool is to practically and intentionally love those from different cultural backgrounds by taking a humble servant posture and “looking to their interests above our own” (Philippians 2:4). In other words, we want to enter into cross cultural situations on the green line and, when dissonance inevitably hits, stay on the green line.

This cycle's Respond Actively step focuses on the former: cultivating a healthy entry posture. The next cycle will address the latter: learning healthy responses to dissonance.

▶ Respond Actively

Time: 15 minutes

❑ SELF-DIAGNOSE YOUR ENTRY POSTURES. (10m, individual reflection)

Use the Entry Posture Worksheet to self-evaluate how you are doing when it comes to healthy and unhealthy entry postures. Which entry posture do you particularly struggle with? Which ones would you like to grow in?

❑ PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER (5m, in pairs)

Share what you wrote with one another and ask God for Christ-like humility as you cross cultures. Pray the words of Philippians 2:1-11 over each other.

Growing in Self-Awareness

Our tendency is to think more highly of our openness, trust and adaptability. Sometimes we aren't aware of our unhealthy entry postures until after we've experienced culture dissonance and blatant red-line responses.

🗨 Debrief and Interpret

Time: 10 minutes

Depending on the size of your group and how much time you have, pick one or two questions to debrief this experience, either in pairs or in a large group.

1. What is God teaching you? What are you learning about yourself, your community, God, others?
2. Have each person share a healthy green-line entry posture they want to practice.
3. What is one thing God might be inviting you to do next? What might God be inviting your community to do?

References

- Duane Elmer, *Cross Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting in Around the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

Entry Posture Worksheet

Review the following healthy and unhealthy entry postures and self-evaluate yourself based on how often you think you enter cross cultural situations with this posture:

(1) Very often (2) Often (3) Sometimes (4) Rarely (5) Never

Healthy Entry Posture	What it looks like	How am I doing?
Trust	A posture that assumes the best intentions behind others' behavior especially if I am unsure, confused or feeling dissonance. A posture of trust gives the benefit of the doubt as much as possible.	
Acceptance	Entering into a situation or relationship recognizing others for who they are and not demanding that they act in a certain way or in accordance to my cultural or personal preferences.	
Adaptability	A posture that is willing to adjust, for the sake of others, my expectations, my preferred ways of working/communicating, my comfort, etc. The ability to be flexible, especially when a situation or process or interaction doesn't go the way I planned or hoped.	
Openness	A willingness to be appropriately vulnerable and honest with others for the sake of relationship. A posture of openness means sharing my life, emotions and opinions in a way that invites deeper trust and relationship. Openness will look different in various cultures, but should be characterized by honesty, integrity and vulnerability.	

Unhealthy Entry Posture	What it looks like	How am I doing?
Suspicion	A posture that assumes the worst intentions behind others' behavior. I may have evidence to support my suspicion but it becomes unhealthy if it is my dominant posture. The opposite of trust.	
Fear	Believing that something or someone is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat. Previous experiences, stereotypes or even real danger may contribute to a posture of fear.	
Superiority	Believing that my way or my cultural values are inherently better than others'. I have a strong sense of being right in most everything, others are not different, they are wrong. Superiority can also be when I view my way as "normal" or "common sense" and cannot see other ways.	
Prejudice	The tendency to form an opinion, usually negative, about a situation or a person not based on reason or actual experience, but on perceived group membership. We can hold prejudice based on broader categories like race, ethnicity, gender, age and religion, but also on more subtle categories like beauty, height, weight, personality type or even things like academic major or preferred electronics.	