

■ Cross-Cultural Activities

■ Code of Conduct

Depending on the size of your group, choose one, two, or three people to leave the room. The rest of the group then decides on a code for behavior that the people outside the room must uncover. For instance, the group may decide that everyone will be seated when the outside group returns. Every time someone from the outside group says the word “and” they will all stand up and then sit down again. It is up to the outside group to figure out what the “clue” is for the behavior. When they discover it, they join the inside group and others are sent outside. The code may be as simple or as complex as the group desires. In fact it is fun to start simple and increase the difficulty with each round. For instance, the second time around, the inside group could decide that every time someone in the outside group (or a particular person in the outside group) says “and,” they would stand up if they were sitting and remain standing until the word was said again. So, as the game continued, some people would stand up when “and” was said, and some would sit down when “and” was said. A third time around, the inside group could decide that every time someone in the outside group touched their head the men in the inside group would say “Alleluia” and the women in the group would say “Amen.” If the person actually scratched her or his nose, both men and women would shout together “Praise God!”

This game can be used to help folks understand that in the culture they are encountering, there are similar “codes” of conduct that they as outsiders do not see. The “insiders” of the culture know the code. They live by cultural norms and play by its “rules.” In some cultures, only women do the shopping in the market. In some religious traditions, only men enter the most holy places in the worship space. In some cultures, girls go bareheaded only until a certain age. In some cultures, boys wear hats and girls do not. As you enter the country and culture of your trip, discovering the “cultures codes” is an important part of your learning about the culture. It is also important to discover the “cultural clues” in language or gesture. For instance, to bow in a gesture of respect is an important means of honoring people in some cultures.

If you play this game as a group during orientation or as one of the early exercises during the trip, you can alert people to look for cultural clues and codes. A day or two later, take time to share the observations people have made. You may or may not be able to decipher all the clues or codes yourselves. Then it may be appropriate to ask your local host or guide for help.

■ Seeing Structure

This exercise offers a way of looking at the structure of society and how it functions. Begin by noting that it is often easier to find something if we know what we are looking for, which sounds like a simple statement. However, when we are in a new place and are overwhelmed by so many sights and sounds and smells and sensations, it may be difficult to sort things out. This exercise invites participants to look for particular things in the makeup of the society they are in.

Give each participant a grid that looks like this:

	Political Office	Religious Leader	Business Owner	Service Sector	Market Vendors	Office Workers	Add Your Own
Men _____							
Women _____							
Children _____							
Old _____							
Young _____							
Race/Ethnicity _____							

Ask participants to keep notes for a few days on who does what. Who holds political power and position? What seem to be the qualifications for a religious leader? Who owns the factories? Who sells vegetables in the market? Who else sells in the market? Who shops in the market? Who sweeps the streets? Who drives the buses? Who are the doctors?

After a few days, invite the participants to compare notes and talk about what they have seen. Acknowledge that each of you travels with a built-in set of blinders called "cultural assumptions" (learned in your own culture). Much will be hidden from you as an "outsider" in the country you visit. When the group thinks it has a picture of the social structure, check it out with your local guide or host.

■ Looking for Red Spades

Morton Kelsey, an Episcopal priest and counselor, tells a story called “The Red Six of Spades.” In an experiment, a red six of spades (card players will know that there is no red spade of any number in a card deck; they are all black) was placed in a normal deck of cards. Individuals were invited to look at several cards at a time and then taken to a second room and asked to tell a second researcher what cards they saw using number, suit and color. Everyone was shown a red six of spades; however, few said they saw a red six of spades. We tend not to see what we think does not exist, and we tend to interpret things so that they conform to our sense of reality.

Tell the story to the group. Select one thing (this will require you as a leader to have “found” such a thing in your careful observing before using this exercise) in the culture that may not appear in our own—and so people may “miss” it. Or select one thing that may appear similar to our culture, but which has a totally different meaning or function in another culture. Share this with the group, and ask them to explain it. It may turn out that something that looks simple has great depth and meaning, or something that looks ritually important is just a habit passed on from generation to generation with no real significance except that “they have always done it that way.” Talk about assumptions we make as outsiders in a culture. Invite people to do their own looking and to bring back examples to look at with the group. Ask persons who live and work in that place to help you interpret your observations.

Quotations for Reflection

The first day or so we all pointed to our countries. The third or fourth day we were pointing to our continents. By the fifth day we were aware of only one earth.

—Sultan Bin Salmo al-Saut†

There is, in fact, no other way to God for our time but through the enemy.

—Walter Wink†

People say, what is the sense of our small effort. They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time.

—Dorothy Day†

Who is a holy person? The one who is aware of others' suffering.

—Kabir†

Groaning in painful hope, God is giving us new birth, bringing us into ways of being who we are, empowering us to live our lives. God is drawing us into the terror and wonder of being human, of finding God in ourselves and in the world . . .

—Carter Heyward*

It is practically illegal to be an authentic Christian in our environment . . . precisely because the world which surrounds us is founded radically on an established disorder before which the mere proclamation of the Gospel is subversive.

—Archbishop Oscar Romero*

There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.

—A. J. Muste*

Prayer increases the volume of love in the world.

—William Temple*

I hope you come to find that which gives life a deep meaning for you. Something worth living for—maybe even worth dying for. I can't tell you what that might be—that's for you to find, to choose, to love.

—Ita Ford, M.M., killed in El Salvador, 1980*

To think that one small heart can experience so much, oh God, so much suffering and so much love. I am so grateful to You, O God, for having chosen my heart, in these times, to experience all the things it has experienced.

—Etty Hillesum, who died in a concentration camp in Germany*

Real prayer leads to involvement; real involvement leads to prayer. Deeper spirituality impels to action; action impels to deeper spirituality, and the circle continues and deepens. The mystic becomes prophet, the prophet becomes mystic.

—Katherine Marie Dyckman, S.N., J. M and L. Patrick Carroll, S.J.*

In our African language we say "a person is a person through other persons." I would not know how to be a human being at all except I learned this from other human beings. We are made for a delicate network of relationships, of interdependence. We are meant to complement each other. All kinds of things go terribly wrong when we break that fundamental law of our being. Not even the most powerful nation can be completely self-sufficient.

—Bishop Desmond Tutu†

. . . Justice is truth in action.

—Benjamin Disraeli*

A mission of reciprocity is a dance.

—Young Lee Hertig (quoted from a presentation given at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Dayton, Ohio, January 2000)

What you do is insignificant. But it is very important that you do it.

—Gandhi

Celebrating life when death is the norm is to be a community of resistance.

—Sojourners Community†

Like Jesus, we are called to a radical activity of love, to a way of being in the world that deepens relation, embodies and extends community, passes on the gift of life. Like Jesus, we must live out this calling in a place and time where the distortions of loveless power stand in conflict with the power of love.

—Beverly Wildung Harrison†

Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.†

If I go as a Hindu, I will meet a Muslim or a Christian. If I go as a socialist, I'll meet a capitalist. If I go as a brown man, I'll meet a black man or a white man. But if I go as a human being, I'll meet only human beings.

—Satish Kumar†

*Quotations found in Anne Broyles, ed., *Ways of Justice, Ways of Prayer: Words to Sustain the Spirit* (Washington, DC: Methodist Federation for Social Action, 1993).

†Quotations found in Tom Hampson and Loretta Whalen, *Tales of the Heart: Affective Approaches to Global Education* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991).