

COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURES

Reader 1:

Introduction to Intercultural Communication:

Fall 2021

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SECTION 1.1 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION OVERVIEW

1.1-1 Communication

The United States has undergone population changes over the last decade, creating cultural shifts in ethnic and racial diversities, immigration patterns, lifestyles, generational distributions, religious makeups, workforce compositions, and more.¹ Each cultural change alters the nature of intercultural communication, which in turn requires adaptations to message mechanics. Thus, leaders need a wide array of viable communication tools to support meaningful transmission of the gospel in ministry.

Christ made His followers ambassadors--fellow workers commissioned to make disciples of all nations for Him (Matt 28:18-20; 2 Cor 5:20; 6:1). Nations (Greek: *ethne*) represent every tribe and tongue. Ethnicity derives from the Greek word *ethne*. Building upon ethnicity, anthropologists use the phrase people group to describe a specific population with which “the largest group within which the Gospel can spread...without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance”² A key question surfaces to carry out Jesus’ commission to the target population, namely, what communication barriers of understanding or acceptance might exist. Understandability includes tradition, location, legends, histories, worldview, and language.

Consequently, one’s understanding of intended people groups through the cultural iceberg model holds a critical role in effectively communicating across cultures. The model provides a framework that illustrates the cultural iceberg’s structure: the objective-based, human practices and behaviors visible above its surface, as well as subjective unseen values and worldviews below its surface. Accordingly, the framework equips the communicator with the knowledge to reach beyond the receptor’s outward veneer, rather than operating from one’s cultural sphere of understanding. Based on the familiarity of a person or people’s cultural context, the communicator starts the process of creating thoughtful and meaningful dialog.

¹ D’Vera Cohn and Andrea Caumont, “Ten Demographic Trends that Are Shaping the U.S. and the World,” *Pew Research Center: FactTank News in Number*, March 31, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/31/10-demographic-trends-that-are-shaping-the-u-s-and-the-world/> (accessed July 24, 2018).

² 1982 Lausanne Committee Chicago Meeting, from <https://joshuaproject.net/resources/>

This article aims to overview the cultural iceberg model. It prepares the student for the process of applying the cultural landscape map in the next reader as a means to contextualize communication of the Gospel. Leading to the model, content explains the fundamental parameters of the meaning-making process of communication, intercultural communication, intentional communication, theology of intercultural communication, transformational communication, and the nature of culture.

1.1-1A Essentials of Communication

Essentially, communication involves an information exchange between participants using verbal, oral, and visual modes for mutual understanding.³ The *source* initiates a message and sends it, while the *receiver* listens to make meaning of it. Understanding occurs when the receiver unlocks the conveyed message and converts it into an idea.⁴

Aristotle referred to the source and receiver as speaker and audience. He hypothesized communication traveled according to three reference points: speaker, speech, and audience.⁵ However, communication requires more than traveling through reference points to make meaning. A physical message journeys on a pathway from encoding to decoding. *Encoding* requires the source select a physical message with the right words, gestures, signs, or actions and proper communication channel, both culturally specific to the receiver.⁶ *Channels* transmit the physical message via written, verbal, and nonverbal modes connecting the source to the receiver. One-on-one conversations, storytelling, preaching, emailing, texting, video conferencing, and letter writing typify various communication channels. *Decoding* requires the receiver to convert the transmitted the physical message into a comprehensible idea. Once the receiver decodes the message, meaning occurs.

³ Everett M. Rogers and Thomas M. Steinfatt, *Intercultural Communication* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 1999), 113.

⁴ Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz, *Semiotics and Communication: Signs, Codes, Cultures* (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1993).

⁵ David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 28.

⁶ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 41.

Along that pathway, nevertheless, noise lies in wait to scramble meaning. *Noise* blocks understanding on the receiver's part occurring when the source and receiver do not share a common knowledge of the sent physical message.⁷ What causes noise? People bring to the table their distinct cultural backgrounds that affect message construction.

De Visser pointed out that a message "travels through an already programmed mind, which has a distinct worldview and culture."⁸ Communication forms a meaning-making process dependent on culturally specific symbols influenced by linguistic, political, economic, social, psychological, religious, national, racial, and other differences.⁹ In turn, cultural symbols affect the ways one expresses ideas as well as perceives the world, thinks, and acts.¹⁰

A *symbol* stands for something associated with the internal thoughts of a person¹¹ as determined by a culture's normed system.¹² Either verbal or nonverbal, symbols come in cultural specific artifacts, words, phrases, gestures, or behaviors varied in meaning and purpose. The source seeks to remove any noise inferring with the meaning-making process for the receiver. *Noise* consists of unknown symbols encoded in the message.

1.1-1B Intercultural Communication Defined

Many definitions exist regarding intercultural communication concerning a particular discipline. However, each centrally focuses on the meaning-making process dependent on symbols.¹³ For example, Lustig and Koestner from a sociological perspective highlighted shared meaning. They viewed communication as "symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual

⁷ Rogers and Steinfatt, *Intercultural Communication*, 114.

⁸ Adrian de Visser, "Complications of Communicating the Gospel: Why We Should Take the Culture of the People Seriously," *Lausanne World Pulse Archives*, <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles-php/684/04-2007> (accessed July 27, 2018).

⁹ Charles S. Mudd and Malcolm O. Sillars, *Content and Communication*, 3rd ed. (Chandler Pub, 1997); Raymond Zeuschner, *Communicating Today*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997).

¹⁰ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Culture*, 99.

¹¹ Larry Samovar et al., eds., *Communication between Cultures*, 7th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2010), 1617.

¹² Stella Ting-Toomey, *Communicating Across Cultures* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999), 9.

¹³ Mudd and Sillars, *Content and Communication*; Zeuschner, *Communicating Today*, 2nd ed.

process in which people create shared meaning.”¹⁴ Similarly, Hesselgrave from a missiological approach emphasized transfer of meaning in communication connected to symbols.”¹⁵ Further, Ting-Toomey looking at the transcultural communicative aspect involving more than one culture, noted individuals exchange symbols to support shared meaning of ideas during communication. Most critically, when two transreceivers successfully decode and encode symbols during a message encounter, it leads to effective communication. However, an unsuccessful exchange may cause an intercultural misunderstanding.¹⁶

1.1-1C Intentional Communication

In communication’s center lies culture. Both communicator and receiver view everyday words, gestures, and text through their personal lens of external and internal cultures. To communicate Christ effectively, one must cross culture with intentional actions to give meaning to message for transformation.

In the beginning, God united humankind in “one language, and of one speech” (Gen 11:1). After they became defiant, He confounded their language so that no one would understand each other and scattered them (11:7-8). Hesselgrave puts this in perspective with, “God imposed a kind of cultural quarantine upon them.”¹⁷ Babel is synonymous with, “the confusion caused by language differences which were part of the divine punishment for the human pride displayed in the building.”¹⁸ Though humanity had the potential for peace and mutual understanding, their fallen state resulted in God’s sanction that disrupted their common language. As people migrated

¹⁴ Myron W. Lustig, et al. eds., *Intercultural Competence*, 5th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2005), 10.

¹⁵ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 55. Hesselgrave based his research on Eldridge’s definition of communication from *Fundamentals of Sociology* (New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell, 1950), 363. According to Hesselgrave, Eldridge defined communication as the transfer of meaning through the use of symbols. Around this definition, Hesselgrave further investigated emergent questions such as “Where is meaning to be found?” and “What is the meaning of meaning?”

¹⁶ Ting-Toomey, *Communication across Cultures*.

¹⁷ J. H. Wheaton, *New Bible Dictionary* (ed. Howard Marshall, A.R. Millard, J.I.Packer, and D. J. Wiseman; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press), 109.

¹⁸ Myron W. Lustig and Jolene Koestner, *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures*, 5th ed. (Boston: Pearson), 26.

across the earth, they moved into family units. Each family then developed characteristics unique to their distinct culture.

When people communicate with each other, they filter meaning through the lens of their respective cultures. Both communicator and receiver view everyday words, gestures, and text through their particular lens of external and internal cultures. Consequently, understanding another's cultural background creates an aid for the communicator to adapt a message into something the receiver comprehends. To communicate Christ effectively, one must cross over to cultures to create bridges of understanding that lead to intentional conditions for transforming communication. The cross over process requires probing culture from the various angles of shared interpretations and learned behaviors, internal/external behaviors and intentional messaging to promote meaningful communication.

1.1-1D Four-Step Model of Intentional Communication

What comes to mind with the word intentional? Uncovering its meaning might point to descriptors like deliberate, knowing, designed, and willful. Intentional communication has a chosen course of action driven by a planned purpose. What better outcome than striving for communication that goes beyond one size fits all to serve the Gospel for maximum understanding!

How does a border crosser intentionally communicate the Gospel? Three points surface at the onset. First, prepare for a mental shift because intentional communication may run counter to standard and accustomed practices. Second, adapt to new ways of communicating to flow with change. Third, start intentional communication with strategic methods. The Four-Step Model for Intentional Communication in Ministry presents a beginning strategy. It features seeing, hearing, thinking and doing communication differently.

See Differently

1. Build Self Awareness
2. Watch Intently
3. Going Outside the Box

Before understanding the cultural patterns of other people, the source communicator has to develop self-awareness of one's external practices, values, and worldviews in comparison to other cultures. This awareness forms a foundation to build cross-cultural communication skills. From this point, watch people to learn about them and their communication style. Since each person approaches communication in a distinctly, no one way exists. Go outside the box to bridge communication gaps and reach for Christ.

To see differently be open to cultural differences and similarities.

TIP: Let diverse communication enrich rather than detract from meaning.

Hear Differently

1. Listen Mindfully
2. Listen from Another Perspective
3. Listen Actively

Mindful listening means the communicator pays attention and gives thought to what another person says while aware of "assumptions, viewpoints, and ethnocentric [3] tendencies."¹⁹ While mindfully listen to a person, also keep in mind the individual may have contrasting perspectives and interpretative lenses²⁰. [5] This leads to the so essential art of listening--trying to understand the entire message a person sends. [6] Take notice of a person's facial expressions, gestures, words, meanings, and context during the conversation. Remove any self-distractions and judgments that interfere with taking in the sent message. At a time when communication heavily relies on social media, a short text message carries the same weight as face-to-face contact.

To hear differently interpret and respond as a perceptive listener.

TIP: Observe all messaging cues to allow the Holy Spirit to guide gentle listening (Titus 3:2).

¹⁹ Stella Ting-Toomey, *Communicating Across Culture* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999), vii.

²⁰ Ting-Toomey, *Communicating Across Culture*, vii.

Think Differently

1. Respect Differences
2. Avoid Stereotyping
3. Feel What Others Feel

Stereotyping involves a conscious or unconscious judgment one makes about a person's nature that relates to cultural background. The action of labeling impedes cultural self-awareness because of predetermined views. Whether known or hidden, biases or assumptions prevent people from developing competencies in cross-cultural communication. Learning about culture helps avoid unintentional stereotyping.

To think differently consider ways people sort each other according to social judgments.

TIP: Reflect on the stereotypes, prejudices, and biases that exist detracting from effective communication across cultures.

Do Differently

1. Be Honest and Flexible
2. Think Twice
3. Communicate to Transform

The idea of intentional communication not only suggests working towards cultural competence, but also changing how the communicator approaches another person. As one develops self-awareness of culture's influence on communication, it impacts prior ways of conveying meaning. Natural by-products result in frequent self-evaluation of cultural understanding, as well as an open and flexible means of communicating for understanding.

To do differently keep in mind all four steps of intentional communication. Look at effective cross-cultural communication as a process of life-long learning about people.

TIP: Set realistic goals regarding cross-cultural communication. Begin by learning about self-cultural patterns in communication.

Communicating cross-culturally furthers God's mission to build His Kingdom, edify the Christ community members, and harmonize the Body into oneness. Understanding how to

communicate across cultures, helps catch people. Believers do not just communicate but communicate to transform--convey Christ's mission for salvation and renewal to the nations and unite the Body as one in Christ across cultures. His mission of transformation places a high value on interaction that a person cannot underestimate or ignore. The intentional process of seeing, hearing, thinking, and doing differently into regular message-making routine opens doors to broader ministry strategies for a unified, mosaic church in a multicultural environment once incorporated.

1.1-1E Theology of Intercultural Communication

The listener must process a sent message through culturally determined symbols to understand and then internalize the given communication. Whether a verbal or nonverbal message, Nida²¹ proposed symbols derive from artifacts, words, phrases, gestures, or behaviors. Since a people group or individual determine symbols unique to their understanding, then these symbols may influence how a person or people interpret God's Word in the communication modes. In response to meaning, how did God create an understanding of His inspired Word?

Scripture shows God communicated to His people employing diverse modes of expression to support the make meaning process. He used verbal, visual, tactile, aural, and experiential modes relevant to the cultural context of individuals across the two testaments. In doing so, God varied His message indigent to the listener's beliefs, values, norms, social practices, surrounding circumstances, geographical location, and historical events. Though believers in Christ cannot replicate God's divine communication means, they can look to them for guidance when speaking to the diverse audiences they encounter in ministry.

The Adamic, Edenic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants each show examples of how God communicated His purpose and promise of salvation for humanity. God always has had a passion for communion and relationship with

²¹ Nida, Eugene, *Message and Meaning: The Communication of the Christian Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 65.

humanity desiring to transform them into His image as holy (Rom 8:29). The Creator does so through the covenantal language of redemption emanating from love for His creation.²² By examining each of the covenants, one sees instances of His expressional communication modes to individuals and collective bodies.

Edenic Covenant (Gen 1:26–31)

God made the Edenic Covenant with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before sin's entrance. God revealed His purpose in Creation with this covenant (Gen 1:1; 2:25). Greene explained the Genesis author wrote the Creation account in the context of the ancient Israelites' language, using cultural symbols the original audience would understand.²³ During the Edenic Covenant, communication shows God's verbal, visual, and aural communication with Adam and Eve.

Set to the backdrop of the mist that went up from the earth, Genesis provides metaphorical language describing the perfection of God's work (Gen 2:6–7). One reads in 1:26–31 how God created man in His image and likeness as the centerpiece of all He created. He formed Adam from the dust of the ground (2:7a), and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (v. 7b). Then, the first Adam became a living soul (v. 7c).

As the Creation account continues in the Edenic Covenant, the author recorded God's first words to humankind between the Lord and Adam. God stated His command to Adam in simple and direct terms: Freely eat of any tree in the Garden, but not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or Adam would die (vv. 16–17). The statements, in fact, reflect the terms of the Edenic Covenant. The tree of life itself standing in the middle of the Garden represents a visual symbol of the covenantal seal.

²² Conner, 2000 para. 3.

²³ T. S. Greene, *The Metaphorical Language of Creation*. Greene's Creationism Truth Filter, 2000, <http://www.reocities.com/Athens/Thebes/7755/genesismetaphor.html>, para. 3. See also Kevin J. Conner and Ken Malmin, *The Covenants: The Key to God's Relationship with Mankind* (Portland: City Christian Publishing, 1997), 13.

Through the unfolding covenant, one reads of close and intimate dialogue between God and Adam. God told Adam he needed a suitable help meet (2:18b) and then brought him all the animals and birds to search for his companion, only to find none suitable. Therefore, God created woman and fashioned a wife called Eve from Adam's rib (v. 22). The serpent (symbolic of Satan) then comes on the scene (3:4) and successfully tempted her with fruit from the forbidden tree. She ate the fruit, and gave one to her husband (v. 6). Now disobedient, God's next communication to His Creation was aural. The Amplified Version tells Adam and Eve heard the "sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (v. 8). Then God calls out to Adam, "Where are you?" (v. 9) and follows it with a series of reprimands. One might imagine God as the disappointed parent standing face-to-face with His unruly children. God's communication ended as it began—simple and direct to make Himself clear.

Adamic Covenant (Gen 3:14–19)

While God made the Edenic Covenant with Adam and Eve before sin's entrance, He established the Adamic after it. God revealed His purpose in redemption.²⁴ Here, God communicated verbally and visually. When God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, they moved eastward from it (3:24). Eastward represented prosperity that Adam and Eve lost from the Fall.²⁵ When Cain fled after murdering Abel, the nomadic son traveled further east to Nod and built the city of Enoch (4:16-17) signaling a greater loss of prosperity. If a picture portrays a thousand words, then God verbally painted a grim image of the land outside the Garden of Eden. He promised receiving judgments of cursed ground (3:17b), working land that would produce thistles and weeds (v. 18a); eating herbs of the field (v. 18b); sweating and toiling of the cursed earth until death; and returning to dust (v. 19a). To add to this visual imagery, after God expelled Adam from the Garden He placed "Cherubims, and a flaming sword which

²⁴ Jan Paron, *Old Testament World: Geography and History*, from All Nations Leadership Institute (power point slides), October 15 2014, <http://www.slideshare.net/PerSpectives12/old-testament-world-geography-and-history-all-nations-leadership-institute> (accessed July 19, 2018).

²⁵ John A. Beck, David G. Hansen, and James C. Martin, *A Visual Guide to Bible Events: Fascinating Insights into Where They Happened and Why*, (Baker Books, 2009), 15.

turned every way" to keep and guard the tree of life (v. 24). Though Adam and Eve lost close fellowship with the Lord, God gave humankind the promise of redemption to restore them to a covenantal relationship. Along with the curse, God gave the seed promise (3:15a), bruising the serpent's head—a messianic prophecy God would reveal progressively through the Old Covenants and fulfill with the New (cf. Matt 1:20; Luke 1:30–31; Gal 4:4; Heb 4:14–17; 1 John 3:8). God communicated a vivid picture of life to come for Adam and Eve because of their disobedience.

Noahic Covenant (Gen 8:20–9:6)

God's covenant with Noah after the flood involved all future generations of humankind and every creature on earth. Through it, He confirmed His purpose in redemption with a new beginning by replenishing all flesh by a covenant of grace. He spoke Noah with instructions to follow in preparation for the Flood (Gen 6:13; 7:1; 8:15-17) and again to elaborate His covenant afterward (9:8-17). The Lord also displayed a rainbow to communicate the seal between Him and humankind in remembrance of His everlasting covenant (9:15; cf. v. 17).

The Lord communicated to Noah in different forms such as visual with the water and dove. Could one have been experiential, too? How did Noah know to build an ark that would save future generations from the Flood? Lee proposed God communicated non-audibly since the Garden of Eden, meaning not all conversations between God and His people in biblical accounts were in out loud vocal mode.²⁶ He based this on the meaning of *'amar* (Hebrew: אָמַר) translated to English as the word said. Lee felt *'amar* can take on a range of meanings including "say in the heart." Further, he theorized Noah sensed or heard God's voice in his heart and followed through by the condition of faith. His theory could be true since God chose Noah because he found grace in the Lord's eyes (6:8). Further, the Scripture described him as perfect in his generations and one who walked with God (v. 9). Noah stood on faith when he carried

²⁶James Thomas. Lee, *God Did Not Speak Out Loud to the Old Testament Saints*, (Amazon eBook), September 6, 2012, http://www.amazon.com/God-Speak-Loud-Testament-Saints-ebook/dp/B00EKB6298/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1402507873&sr=8-1&keywords=God+did+not+speak+out+loud+to+old+testament+saints.

out God's command to build an ark to save him and his family along with specified species from a flood that would destroy every living thing of all flesh (7:4).

God's command to build an ark further showed social and geographical factors connected to His directives and Noah's obedience. Within a social structure, Noah ranked as a patriarch. The early patriarchs headed single-family units, having a special relationship with God.²⁷ As a patriarch, Noah retained the responsibility of heeding the voice of God for direction. Geographically, the waterways from the Near East and Mesopotamian region where the early patriarchs resided more than likely could not have held a boat the proportion of the ark.²⁸ The ark size measured well beyond the size of a normal shipping transport. Taking into consideration the scope of the command, God's possible inaudible voice, and social and geographical circumstances, this communication mode shows that faith plays a role in how God speaks to His beloved. Despite adaptations that give meaning to the promises of God, humankind must stand on God's Word by faith. "For we live by believing and not by seeing" (2 Cor 5:7 NLT).

Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1-4)

The Abrahamic Covenant concerned the nation of Israel, the seed Messiah, and believers of all nations.²⁹ The people having been scattered across the earth and experiencing their language confounded as a result of disobedience at Babel (Gen 11:7-8), had developed families into nations at the time of Abraham (11:10–28). Abraham, much like Noah, had to walk in faith because of the words God spoke to him (Heb 11:8). How did God communicate with Abraham? God gave him direct verbal commands, such as departing from Haran to an unknown land with the promise of a great nation (Gen 11:31; 12:1), promise of the entire land of Canaan

²⁷ Israel Finkelstein and Neil A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Text*, (New York: Touchstone, 2001), 27.

²⁸ S. M. Miller, S. M. (2004). *Who's Who and Where's Where in the Bible*, (Uhrichsville: Barbour Publishing, 2004), 287.

²⁹ Kevin Connor and Ken Malmin, *The Covenants: The Key to God's Relationship with Mankind* (Portland: City Bible Publishing, 1983), 98.

(Gen 13), promise of an heir (15:2; 18:10), and sacrifice of his son (22:2). Also, God appeared to Abraham in some type of divine manifestation when He said, "I will give this land to your posterity" (12:7 AMP) and vision regarding the Lord as Abraham's shield and great reward (15:1). He also spoke to Abraham through other people. A pharaoh asked Abraham, then Abram, to leave the country when God brought down plagues on the Egyptian and his household after he took in Sarai to his harem misled she was Abram's sister (12:15). God additionally used imagery to make His message meaningful, comparing Abraham's seed to the dust of the earth (13:16). In one last form of communication, God spoke to Abraham experientially through tests by living through famine (12:10), being asked to sacrifice his son (22:2) and surviving war (14:16). God did not limit the use of communication symbols to convey a message that Abraham would understand, all revolving around the Promise Land.

Mosaic Covenant (Exod 19–31)

The Mosaic covenant was conditional made with the children of Israel after God delivered them from Egypt. This schoolmaster covenant was a shadow of better things to come for Israel in Jesus Christ.³⁰ God spoke to Moses as well as Israelites in this covenant. People in this covenant experienced all forms of communication including verbal, visual, tactile, aural, and experiential. To bring back the wayward Israelites into relationship with Him from sin, God caught their attention. He came down in a cloud, which He announced with lightning, trumpet's noise and a smoking mountain (Exod 19:16-19). This covenant records multiple conversations between God and Moses. It also shows God revealing Himself in the burning bush in a theophany (3:2). The Lord spoke to Moses "face to face, as one speaks to a friend" (Exod 33:11; Deut 5:4 NIV).

In contrast to God's arresting communication with lightning, trumpet's noise, and a smoking mountain (Exod 19:16-19) that made the Israelites fearful of the Lord, Moses conversation with the Lord demonstrated the intimacy that comes with friendship. Propp said Moses' encounter with God differed from everyone else's. Only Moses had this direct access to

³⁰ Paron, *Old Testament World*, 2014.

God.³¹ God's communication during this covenant characterized wide-ranging symbols from the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night that signified God's presence to the children of Israel in the departure from Egypt (Exod 13:21–22) to the intricacies of the Tabernacle of Moses. Even the ten plagues on the Egyptians and the starkness of the desert were modes of God's communication. Perhaps, God communicated in a demonstrative fashion to Moses and these first-generation children of Israel who provoked Him ten times and wandered in the desert to their death because of their disobedience (Num 13–14:22).

Palestinian Covenant (Deut 28–30)

Whereas the Mosaic Covenant was between first-generation children of Israel, the Palestinian dealt with the second generation. It amplified the Mosaic Covenant with moral and civil codes as conditions for living in the Promised Land.³² This covenant pertains to the land. Much of the language relates to the land, mentioned about 180 times in the Book of Deuteronomy.³³ The land showed a much different future. Rather than stark desert conditions, it promised milk and honey. These were visual symbols to the children of Israel of forthcoming prosperity. During this covenant, Moses spoke for God to the children of Israel. Moses himself conveyed the covenant (Deut 29:1; 29). God continued to dialogue with Moses. While He showed Moses the whole land, He would not allow him to cross over to into it (34:1-4).

Moreover, as the children of Israel went into Canaan to conquer the land under Joshua's leadership, the Ark of the Covenant went before them (Josh. 1-3). It symbolized new beginnings. However, the Israelites did not keep their conditions, and God expelled them from the land. During the period of the judges, Scripture communicated what awaited them as sickness, plagues, and cast out status (Deut 29:16-29; Lev 18:24-28).

³¹ William H. Propp, *Exodus 19-40: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 602.

³² Paron, *Old Testament World*.

³³ Connors and Malmin, *The Covenants*..

Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:11–15)

In the last Old Testament covenant, which extends the Mosaic and Palestinian Covenants, God promised kingship from the lineage of David and the House of Judah³⁴ with a messianic nature. This covenant shows some different patterns of communication. First, David enquired of the Lord and the Lord, in turn, answered Him (1 Sam 23:2–4). The response did not have the same tone as the intimacy shown with face-to-face dialogue between Moses and God (Exod 33:11; Deut 5:4), but David did communicate directly with Him. The Davidic Covenant also foretold the language of redemption with a number of seed promises (e.g., Isa 7:13–14; 9:6–9; Jer 25:5–6; 33:15). Additionally, the sacrificial animals and blood typed greater spiritual sacrifices and atonement to come in the New Testament (e.g., burnt offerings to the Ark of the Covenant; 2 Sam 6:17, Chron 16:1–3). The seal was another symbol of the seed with the sun, moon, and stars as signs for the seasons, days, and years. While the heavens remained, the sun ruled the day, and moon and stars the night David's throne would exist (Jer 32:35–37; 33:19–26). Jesus fulfills the seal.

New Covenant (Isa 11:1; Matt 1:1; John 1:17; Acts 2)

With the New Testament, Jesus, the Chief Cornerstone—God manifested in flesh walked and talked among the people freely teaching, healing, and preaching among the marginalized. He reached the multitudes with stories, parables, and symbolic illustrations. When the Fulfilled Law outpoured His promised Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, there came a sound from heaven like “a mighty rushing wind” (Acts 2:2a KJV). Then, “cloven tongues like as of fire” (2:3) settled on each disciple, and the Holy Ghost filled them. Each spoke as He gave them utterance (v. 4). Those dwelling in Jerusalem heard these utterances. The scattered with their confounded language (Gen 11:7–8) now understood what the disciples said each in their own dialect (Acts 2:6 AMP). These expressions exemplify multisensory modes of communication by Jesus and

³⁴ Paron, *Old Testament World*.

through His Spirit. They serve to witness who Jesus is. The Holy Spirit continues today to manifest His presences through the speaking of tongues in believers.

Biblical Implications

The children of Israel despite their promise to obey God repeatedly turned from Him in the Old Testament, while the crowd rejected Jesus as the Messiah in the New. Scripture contains the hidden things God's indwelt Spirit reveals in the fullness of Godhead through His special revelation that spiritual man discerns (1 Cor 2:6-13; Col 2:9). Conner compared these symbols to Jesus' parables.³⁵ While the crowd who listened to Jesus heard them as the language of Creation, the disciples understood it them as "the language of the symbols" or also called "the language of redemption."³⁶ Thus, people in the natural cannot perceive the spiritual things of God. Also, learned behaviors such as beliefs, values, norms, and social practices behaviors people acquire from a host of associated cultural groups, from family member to workplace colleagues affect how they make meaning.³⁷ These behaviors influence how they perceive and interpret events, situations, and communications including the Gospel. How do leaders address the cultural perceptions of the listener, yet communicate in a way that spiritually transforms them?

God contextually communicated with humankind in the Old and New Testaments using multidimensional methods to transmit message appropriate to the context to transform them to holiness in redemption from salvation through Jesus Christ. Ministerial leaders should exemplify this same intent to reach a diverse population for spiritual transformation utilizing intentional signs and symbols that promote sense-making meaning between the source and receiver anchored in a Christian perspective in both theological function and principles. Five axioms drive transformational communication during discipleship: (1) supports God's purpose and plan; (2) revolves around unconditional love; (3) generates from the Holy Spirit; (4) brings meaning;

³⁵ Kevin Conner, K. *Interpretation: The Symbols and Types*. (Portland: Bible Temple Publishing, 1080) 5.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ludwig and Koestner, *Intercultural Competence*.

(5) and unifies the Body in diversity. These can serve as a starting place for reaching the nations through witness.

1.1-1F Reaching the Nations with Transformational Communication

Five axioms for effective transformational communication guide us in Christian witness. Transforming communication should support God's purpose and plan, revolve around love, originate from the Holy Spirit, bring meaning; and unify the Body as one.

Aristotle developed speech communication in his treatise, *Rhetoric*.³⁸ His work greatly influenced rhetorical expression since the fourth century BC. The Aristotelian view taught five canons: "topics of finding a subject and supporting materials; organizing topics; using an appropriate level in the style of expression; delivering the speech so that it has clarity and impact and using the speaker and listener's memory of events to make the speech appealing."³⁹ Aristotle and his contemporaries viewed rhetoric as art forms for persuasion. Certainly, the canons hold solid form today; however, transformational communication goes beyond argument encompassing a range of modes with a purpose specific to Christ for restoration and renewal.

What drives transformation? Jesus died on the cross to redeem us from sin. He loves the lost, having come to seek and save them for life in Him. Jesus passed the responsibility for discipleship to those who follow the original apostles, commanding His believers to go into the world to all nations and preach the gospel to His creation, from every race. A believer's witness not only makes disciples, but also unifies the Body. Transformation results from the Holy Spirit's inner workings. As disciple-making disciples, believers serve as Christ's ambassadors to reconcile the Body for unity in Christ. The Holy Spirit speaks through His disciples in the communicator role to the listener as the message receiver. Transformational communication encompasses five axioms purposing to nurture a saving and renewing culture: supports God's purpose and plan, revolves around love, generates from the Holy Spirit, brings meaning, and

³⁸ Aristotle developed Rhetoric during two periods in Athens, 367 to 347 BC and 335 to 322 BC. From Wikipedia, Rhetoric (Aristotle), May 27, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhetoric_\(Aristotle\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhetoric_(Aristotle)) (accessed June 2, 2018).

³⁹ Zeuschner, *Communicating Today*, 4.

unifies the Body in diversity. Each axiom further details the broader communicative purpose with theological function and principles.

Axiom 1. Supports God's Purpose and Plan

God desires His people abide in Him (John 15:4) through covenant to transform them into His image (Rom 8:29) as His treasure reflecting His glory, separated for the Gospel and to worship Him (Deut 7:6; 2 Cor 3:18; 1 Pet 2:9-10; Matt 4:10). This forms the basis of His mission. Believers have His authority to set their sights on His mission as salt and light for community and world transformation.⁴⁰

Theological Principle

Christian witness lets the Spirit save, rescue, and deliver others (Luke 19:10). The freed then testify of their transformation to others in a replication cycle.

Theological Functions

- Supports God's mission (Matt 28:18-20)
- Establishes and nurtures a person's identity in Christ (1 Cor 2:16)
- Enables the Spirit to work through the speaker to save, rescue and deliver the receiver (Luke 19:10)
- Replicates more disciples when the newly delivered testify to God's transforming power (Matt 28:19-20a)⁴¹

Axiom 2. Revolves Around Love

God expects His disciples to communicate in love. "Beloved, let us love one another...for God is love (1 John 4:7a, 8b). Early Judaism argued over commandment rankings

⁴⁰ Thomas Long, *Witness of Preaching*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005).

⁴¹ The author states in the prior article Examining the Reality of Jesus that, "Jesus' commissioned disciples to reproduce themselves. He instructed them to "go" (28:19a), "baptizing" (v.19b) and "teaching them to observe" everything He commanded them (v.20a). From Jan Paron, "Examining the Reality of Jesus," PerSpectives 12 Blog, May 27, 2013, <http://specs12.wordpress.com/2013/04/28/examining-the-reality-of-jesus/>

for one that would “interpret the rest.”⁴² Jesus settled it by positioning love of God first and neighbor second (Mark 12:28-31).

Theological Principle

Love catalyzes spiritual growth.—People see Christ’s love when shown love, which in turn, invites them to know Him and experience His transforming actions. By building bridges for reconciliation and communities of restoration, believers in Christ support vertical reconciliation between God and humanity “through Jesus Christ to unite them as one with their heavenly Father.”⁴³ Additionally, bridge building through love strengthens *ekklēsia* and *koinonia* among the brethren, which “focuses on relationship between believers”⁴⁴

Theological Functions

- Matures spiritual growth and formation in discipleship (Grow up in Christ) (Eph 4:14-15)
- Opens the door for people to know Christ and experience His intimacy as the object of His love (Phil 1:9; Rev 3:20)
- Further reconciles humanity with God in Christ through grace as ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:20a)
- Extends God’s grace and mercy (2 Pet 3:18)
- Strengthens the Christ community of believers (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:25-27)
- Edifies both the communicator and receiver with each devoted to the other (Rom 12:10; Gal 6:2)

Axiom 3. Generates from the Holy Spirit

The incarnate Jesus works within those baptized in His Spirit to produce His fruit. His vessels yield to convey His saving message. In turn, communication works harmoniously with

⁴² Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 330.

⁴³ Jan Paron, “The Ministry of Reconciliation,” *PerSpectives 12 Blog*, June 23, 2012, <http://specs12.wordpress.com/2012/06/23/the-ministry-of-reconciliation/> (accessed May 12, 2013).

⁴⁴ Paron, “The Ministry of Reconciliation.”

His will for holiness from Him (Heb 12:10) to create a healthy tree that produces good fruit (Matt 7:17-20).

Theological Principle

Theologian David Bernard says, “The title ‘Holy Spirit’ describes the fundamental character of God’s nature, for holiness form the basis of His moral attributes while spirituality forms the basis of His non-moral attributes. Thus, it describes God Himself, the one Holy Spirit”⁴⁵ God is Spirit (John 4:24). Therefore, seek a “theological fusion between the Word and Spirit”⁴⁶ while communicating His holiness. The Holy Spirit then binds transformation for change.

Theological Functions

- The Holy Spirit speaks through the communicator to seal His promise to those who trust and then believe in Him (Eph 1:13)
- Progressively reveal Scripture’s truth to those who believe and obey to further guide them into His will (Rom 1:21-28)
- Pierce the believer’s heart with conviction (Acts 2:37)
- Guide and influence the believer’s walk (teach, John 14:26; guide Rom 8:14; and commission, Acts 13:4)
- Align the believer’s body, mind and soul with the incarnate Jesus to walk in union with Him (Gal 5:16-23)
- Bestow spiritual gifts to the believer for the edification of the Church (1 Cor 12)
- Empower the believer for witness (Matt 28:18; Acts 1:8)

Axiom 4. Brings Meaning

God speaks uniquely to humankind’s montage to capture their hearts and minds through different formats, expressions, traditions and roles, in addition to various spiritual disciplines and

⁴⁵ David Bernard, *Oneness View of Jesus* (Hazelwood: MO: 2004), 61.

⁴⁶ Greg Heisler, *Spirit-led Preaching: The Holy Spirit’s Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: B & H Publishing), 3.

phenomena. The Christ follower's commission to the nations warrants that evangelizing across cultures.

Theological Principle

God's people encounter Him in ways ranging from the oracles to bold manifestations.⁴⁷ Likewise, preach with diverse form, image, and need in mind.⁴⁸ Hear the audience as well. Communication, in part, derives from listening to people and learning about them. It restores and renews from a circular type, role exchange between the speaker and receiver strengthened by relationship. By no means does it resemble a one-way, isolated message from the speaker. Know them: celebrate their victories; comfort and mourn their sorrows, uplift their emotions; guide them in spiritual formation. Make the message relevant, meaningful and enduring.

Theological Function

- Gives clarity and meaning to the Word (Hab 2:2)
- Restores and renews life and hope in Christ (Matt 11:28)
- Focus on issues and felt needs⁴⁹ crucial to the lives of the listeners ⁵⁰(2 Tim 4:2; Heb 4:12)
- Strengthens relationship with God (Luke 15:11-32)
- Reaches the heart of human emotion with the power of the Blood (Mark 7:21)
- Emerges up from the listener, rather down to them (Jesus walked among the people)

⁴⁷ God uses a multisensory and people-centered approach through lingual, aural, visual, tactile and experiential expressions. He met people through oracles, written Word, direct exchanges, worship, prayer, visions, dreams, and manifestations.

⁴⁸ Long, *Witness of Preaching*.

⁴⁹ Felt needs refer to those most acutely and fundamentally felt by a person and/or segment of the population." From Bob Whitesel, *A House Divided: Bridging the Generation Gaps in Your Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 145.

⁵⁰ Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Transforming Culture: A Challenge for Christian Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998).

Axiom 5. Unifies the Body as One in Christ

Jesus prayed “that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:21b, NKJV). This passage reflects a seamless and unified one fold under one shepherd for the identity of Jesus as the Messiah.⁵¹ Samovar said humans are symbol-making creatures. These symbols “stand for or represent something else.”⁵² Believers represent the face of Christ and the reconciling unity of the Body.

Theological Principle

Effective cross-cultural communication draws the nations together by joining them for a powerful witness. As Nieman and Thomas noted, preach to every pew.⁵³

Theological Function

- Breaks down liminal boundaries and respects cultural differences (Gal 3:28)
- Frames “the Gospel message in language and communication meaningful to the local culture”⁵⁴
- Enables all parties to cross-communicate beyond ethnocentric viewpoints.⁵⁵
- Gives opportunity for cross-cultural fellowship, prayer, teaching (of the apostles’ doctrine) and the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42)
- Joins the Body in unity (John 17:21-23; Eph 2:14-15; Gal 3:28)

⁵¹ Jan Paron, “*Seeking the M.O.S.A.I.C. Church: Understanding New Testament Unity, Pt. 2,*” PerSpectives 12 Blog, June, 2012). <http://specs12.wordpress.com/2012/>(accessed May 23, 2013).

⁵² Larry Samovar, Richard E. Porter and Edwin R. McDaniel, *Communication between Culture*, 7th ed (Boston: Cengage Wadsworth Learning), 16.

⁵³ Nieman, J. & Thomas, G. *Preaching to Every Pew: Cross-Cultural Strategies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

⁵⁴ Lingenfelter, *Transforming Culture*, loc 55.

⁵⁵ Ethnocentrism is the perceptual prism through which cultures interpret and judge other groups” It is not always intentional, rather “learned at the unconscious level.” From Larry Samovar and Richard E. Porter, *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, 9th ed.(Belmont: Wadsworth), 10.

Closing

How do these axioms come together for a coherent definition of transformational communication? Grounded in love and generated from the Holy Spirit, the axioms provide a framework to guide the believer in communicating God's mission for salvation and renewal to the community and world. The axioms also present the listener with an individualized form and style together with a compelling message aiming for significant and lasting meaning. Last, the axioms produce diverse transmission that reaches across cultures to unite a multicultural Body as one in Christ to bear witness of Jesus, the Son of God.

SECTION 1.2: NATURE OF CULTURE

1.2-1 The Nature of Culture

Culture consists of learned sets of behaviors one acquires from associations with specific cultural groups like family, personal friends, workplace colleagues, church congregants, or fellow citizens. Lustig and Koestner explained these behaviors as “shared interpretations about beliefs, values, norms, and social practices, which affects the behaviors of a relatively large group of people.”⁵⁶ In turn, these behaviors influence how a person perceives and interprets events, situations and communications.

From a broader perspective, culture reflects the elements of worldview (beliefs or thinking), values (feeling), and external practices (behaviors) each people group teaches and reinforces to its members.⁵⁷ Combined, the three elements of culture form a population’s ethos. Each affects and works in tandem with the other. Consider a mosaic. When completed, the mosaic’s various tiles and colors form patterns that portray a story. So too does culture. A mosaic emerges from intermixing all culture’s aspects.

1.2-2 Hall's Cultural Iceberg Model

Hall viewed culture as an iceberg. Ten percent of an iceberg’s form rises above the water surface visible to the eye. However, its remaining 90 percent submerges itself below the surface. The casual observer might detect some of the iceberg’s shape immediately beneath the water, but find it difficult to ascertain its true mass and properties farther below the surface. The iceberg’s hidden properties lend themselves to the expression “the tip of the iceberg” because of the difficulty in understanding only a small manifestation of a larger problem (Wikipedia, 2018).

Similarly, the cultural iceberg mirrors the above surface ten percent comprising objective culture and below ninety percent subjective or also called psychological. The joined components

⁵⁶ Myron W. Lustig and Jolene Koestner, *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication Across Cultures* (5th ed.; Boston: Pearson), 26.

⁵⁷ Jan Paron, *Study of Selected Cultural Value Dimensions from Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede for Bridging Communication in an Urban, Multiethnic Church* (Marrion: Wesley Seminary, 2014).

of the cultural iceberg reflect external practices (above surface or objective culture) with underlying values and worldviews (below surface or subjective culture)

Objective Culture

The above surface *objective culture* reveals the see, hear, and touch external behaviors—the material constructs human create. These objective cultural behaviors present themselves in easy-to-see learned and concrete predictors about culture. Examples include food, eating habits, clothing, rituals, communication patterns, religion, use of various technologies, and linguistic systems. While learning the objective culture of a target people group gives the cultural border crosser some insight to external practices or behaviors, it does not generate cultural competence. *Intercultural competence* indicates the source communicator's level of effective and appropriate communication with people from other cultures. Competency includes negotiating the entirety of the cultural iceberg surfaces by effectively engaging its exposed objective practices, values as well as hidden subjective values and worldviews.⁵⁸ This means the communicator must also examine and understand subjective culture.

Subjective Culture

The below surface *subjective culture* consists of the more difficult to detect — the intangibles of values (feelings) and worldviews (beliefs or thinking). Members of each people group evaluate their environment, in turn, these judgments affect the way they view it.⁵⁹ Triandis viewed subjective cultures as society's "characteristic way of perceiving its social environment."⁶⁰ Subjective culture resides well below the surface. It involves a triad of unstated assumptions, operating procedures, and habits from past generations carried into the future. Critical elements such as language, economics, education, politics, philosophy, religious beliefs, aesthetics, moral codes, and social etiquette rules affect each component of the triad.⁶¹

⁵⁸ This process must extend beyond one's personal cultural iceberg to support the meaning-making process in communication.

⁵⁹ Harry C. Triandis, *Culture and Social Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 87.

⁶⁰ Harry C. Triandis, *The Analysis of Subjective Culture* (New York: Wiley, 1972), 8.

⁶¹ Triandis, *Subjective Culture Online*, 3.

Consequently, both the triad of assumptions, procedures and habit with critical elements underpin social behaviors and communication. Oftentimes, what you cannot see in subjective culture, expresses itself in the objective.

Upon investigating subjective culture further, one discovers it two related, yet different dimensions: etic and emic. *Etic* speaks to the general dimensions all cultures have functioning as common grounds for comparison. *Emic* refers to those dimensions unique to a given culture only its member find meaningful.⁶² Knowledge of the etic and emic of one's culture compared to another's provides a framework for interpreting social behaviors and communication.⁶³ Triandis illustrated a difference in interpreting events with the example of men finding full-bodied women more attractive than a thin one in some cultures experiencing widespread hunger.⁶⁴ On the other hand, the Western mindset frequently values the lean, model look as desirable. Thus, the heart of intercultural communication points to understanding sameness and differences across cultures: the etic and emic.

Keep in mind that responsibility as a border crosser comes with uncovering objective and subjective of the cultural iceberg. Focus on both the visible artifacts above its surface and unseen down deep below the surface.

⁶² Harry C. Triandis, (2002). *Subjective Culture*. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1021>.

⁶³ Triandis, *Culture*, 7.

⁶⁴ Ibid.