

The World at North America's Doorstep

Some 27,000 distinct ethnolinguistic groups exist in the world today. The U.S. Census Bureau also estimates that a little more than 1.5 million immigrants (both legal and illegal) move to the United States each year. It is difficult to envision a ministry in the United States that is not intercultural. Fifty years ago, only those who were preparing to serve on the foreign mission field needed to gain an understanding of the issues specific to intercultural ministry. Today, with the ever-growing international population in the United States, we must train every minister of the Gospel to be an intercultural minister of the Gospel.

The cultures of the world are coming to our shores and neighborhoods daily. Millions of people are providing us with unprecedented opportunities to share the Word of God with them without even needing to leave the comforts of our homeland. The arrival of so many immigrants could be a time of tremendous missions advance. Yet, we will miss this excellent opportunity to impact the world with the Gospel as long as we ignore the cultural differences between ourselves and the other cultures coming to live among us.

If we want to influence the world at our doorstep, we need to understand our own cultural distinctions as well as those around the world—whether we are visiting them or they are living among us. Only then can we relate to them and communicate the Gospel effectively. In fact, Dr. David Hesselgrave stated in *Communicating Christ Cross-culturally* that communication is the name of the game and that the task before us is to “cross cultural and other boundaries in order to communicate Christ.”

Intercultural ministry among so many different groups today requires unique preparation. As you think about ministering in the diverse culture of North America, here are some steps to get started:

- Take a course in intercultural studies. Consider taking an on-line course through Southern Seminary as a special student.
- Do a demographic study of your area to determine just how diverse it is.
- Invite to lunch an ethnic minister in your area. Learn about his culture and how your church can pray for his work.
- Read articles on intercultural ministry like those found at www.davidsills.org.

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