

Understanding Culture and Community

For Effective Intercultural Ministry

Lesson 1:

This is the second of two courses looking at culture. The first course, which most of you might have studied by now, is cultural anthropology. The subject of culture is one of the most important ones if you are going to move out of your area into another area of China or another area of the world. It is easy to think that people are the same everywhere. However, in fact, there are many differences between different peoples. In this particular course we are going to look at how to study another culture, how to adapt to another culture, and try to understand the way people live in those culture.

There are four main sections in this program. Each of the sections is about six lessons long. The first main section is going to be about observing – looking at how the people live. That is going to be the main theme for the next six classes. The second section is about interviewing. Let me go into the method of interviewing. You will be looking for information in order to understand what the people you interview think, what their way of life is, and what they hope for the future. The third section is participation. This is one the major things that is special to anthropology. We talk about participating in their culture, taking our own place within the lives of the people. Fourthly, we are going to be looking at recording (writing). By writing things down you begin to clarify your understanding of people and at the same time produce something that is going to be helpful for others.

These are the four main sections we will be looking at. This is anthropology in Chinese. It is also the study of minority people. The study of the people of China and the surrounding areas as an anthropologist is more than being a tourist. A tourist goes, looks, takes photographs, and then moves on. The anthropologist, and the Christian who comes to witness in an area, stays and takes part in people's lives. This is a general introduction to what we will be discussing.

The first part of this study I have entitled it "Understanding Culture." Now when I tell my students that culture is one of the most difficult words in the English language, they usually look at me in horror and think, "How am I going to

understand this if it is so complicated?” However, it is not complicated because it is a difficult idea, but because we use the word in so many different ways. You need to stop and think, “Who is saying this? Who is using the word and in what context?”

We use the word culture in three different ways. I want to start by looking at the lessons that you did in the first course of anthropology. You have already looked at some of these, but I want to broaden this so you will understand other ways to use the word. The English word “culture” comes from the word “cultivate,” which is a word used by farmers for preparing the land. You improve something when you dig it, stir it, and take out the rocks and the stones in it. It is changed. There is some sort of an improvement that has taken place.

The most common understanding of the word “culture” and is generally the idea of high culture. It is an elite form of life best illustrated by telling some stories. If you go to Beijing, you can see classic ancient art form including the characteristics often found in classic art. You find that many of the men have long beards and the women sing with a very high-pitched voice. It is good art, appreciated by many. This also includes cups and different sorts of plates. Their many sets of pottery are well known all over the world.

One of the reasons why the English and Europeans generally wanted to trade with China was that they wanted to get the beautiful pottery. In English, you will find that word for pottery “China” is well known because of its high quality. Another example of high culture is calligraphy – the beautiful drawing of Chinese characters. They are often mounted and put on the walls at homes. This is all part of high culture. It is something you will find in all countries and all societies. The central government in Beijing is eager to preserve this sort of culture.

The second way that culture is used is in the popular context. It is known as popular culture. It used to be produced by small businesses, little cottages that will do handicrafts that are sold to tourists in different towns, but especially in tourist places. Popular culture is spread wider by television (TV). One popular program on Chinese TV, especially for those learning English, is “Culture Express.” They

bring you the latest in pop music from China and around the world. You might have people imitating Michael Jackson's singing and dancing. You might have South Korean pop singers who are from Hong Kong or from China.

This competition has become very popular. People watch this and vote on who they think is the best girl singer. Some of you might have even voted for someone on this show and you might have been surprised by the person that was chosen. Maybe it was a woman who dressed very much like a man. You may have said to yourself, "Oh, this is strange. That style of dress is popular with many young people in China." We will come back to that later. We will look at different ways people dress in another class.

Therefore, when we look at the word "culture," we have the idea of high arts and we have popular culture, such as the culture seen on the movies or on TV programs. You can see that this is something that young people are interested in, especially in fashion, the way people dress. You can also see that the students are very concerned about having nice mobile cell phones. They like to have the latest model that has nice things like "Hello Kitty" devices on it. That is popular culture. The word "culture" is used in that sort of way quite a lot. When people talk about culture that is often what they mean.

For anthropologists, there is more to the word "culture" than this. We have definitions that go beyond this. The first definition of this word was actually written many years ago by an Englishman, Edward Taylor. Edward Taylor in 1871 came up with a definition that goes like this, "culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

It is this idea of culture that you studied in your first course in cultural anthropology. This is the one generally used by anthropologists. It has changed a little bit over the years from the first definition. Later people started looking at groupings of people, so culture had to do with people living in society. A simple definition is that culture is the total way of life of people in a society. They live the

way. It embraces all aspects of their lives. It includes what we have been talking about with high arts and popular culture, but it goes beyond that. Behavior touches every area of a person's life. That is what you started to have a look at in the study of Cultural Anthropology.

In that course, you were introduced to the illustration of a cabbage, the Chinese cabbage that we enjoy with our food. The illustration tells the story of cutting the cabbage through the middle. Then you have the two parts of the cabbage. What you see is that the cabbage has various layers, the leaves that you take off so that and you can get further and further into the middle. That is very much what culture is like.

There are certain things on the outside, which you easily see. That is why we talk about observing. As you go further down, taking off leaf after leaf, you start getting into a different area. You start getting into the area dealing with what people think, why they think that way, and what they do, and why they do what they do. This is why the second section is really focused on asking. You ask so that you can find out about these things. Eventually you get to know how people think. This is right in the middle of the cabbage.

Here, at the center, we find the values and ideas that are important to people. This is perhaps the most difficult area. Here is an exercise for us to look at- How do we get at this central core? Which level do you think is the most difficult to change? I think we can already agree that the outer layers are the ones that change most regularly. That is what we think. This is where fashion is. This is why the style of fashion will change from time to time.

However, as we get closer to the center, the basic ideas and values are the more difficult to change. Essentially, for Christians, this is what is most important. We do not just want people to change their behavior. We want to see something happen in the very center of their lives. This comes from understanding who Jesus is. That will transform their lives from the inside out. That is something that I will try to keep in mind throughout this whole course.

This is our third definition relating to culture. **Culture, from an anthropological point of view, is the total way of life of a people.** Keep that in mind. You will come across other definitions, but this is practically the simplest that you will have and it is the one we are going to be working with here. You began to understand it in the first course, and we will continue with it in this course.

So, there are three broad definitions of culture. Let us have a look at what culture actually is and try to explain it a little bit more from this anthropological viewpoint. That is, that culture is the total way of life of a people. These three questions relate to culture-what do people do, what do people make, and what do people think? Keep those questions in mind as we continue.

What do people do? If you watch people, you can see them coming up to each other to greet one another. You will find this is different in different cultures. An American will shake hands with another American. You will find that in Germany, they have a different way of shaking hands. It tends to be a stronger sort of firm handshake. For Russians, they often give you a bear hug with their arms around you. This is great, but it can be a problem if you are not expecting it. If I am in my culture, I know what happens when I greet someone. But if I go to another culture, I might think I am going to shake hands with that person and then he might give me a bear hug. We will misunderstand each other.

If you go to Thailand, they greet each other with the two palms pressed together. You will find that if you do this to someone, that person will be quick to do it back, but only in certain cultures. In India, you have the same thing. You put your hands together and do what is called "Salam." But the world is changing. In India, you will find out that many men like to shake hands with Westerners. Many are still apprehensive and they give you "Salam." Things change, and simple things like this can cause a misunderstanding. You can look rude and unwise in your behavior.

In China and many other cultures, people eat with chopsticks. We get our bowls of noodles and we eat them. We can pick up our bowl and eat our rice. It is

quite accepted. But in Western countries you will quickly find out that we do not pick up our plates. We have knives and forks. We rather push the food onto the fork. In fact, if you did not do it this way, it would be regarded as being rude. You cannot eat with chopsticks in some places. The plates are differently shaped. They are not like bowls that you can use with chopsticks.

It is with simple things like this that you can make mistakes. It has to do with how we do things. How do you touch people? Where do you touch people? In Thailand you do not put your hand on somebody's head. The head is special and sacred. So even when you go to get your haircut, they touch it very delicately. In China, other things are important. You come to a house and you know that you will take your shoes off and put plastic shoe covers on. This is so that you do not carry dirt into the house.

In a Western house, you do not do that. You just walk in. No one expects you to take off your shoes. In fact, what you do take off may be your coat, because inside the house it is heated. So even in wintertime, you take your coat off. Whereas, in China, you take your shoes off and you sit inside with your outside clothing on. Otherwise, it is easy to offend people over very simple things like this.

One thing that I found important with some of my students when I was teaching in English is the question of how close you should stand together. Westerners stand somewhere about two feet apart, or a little less than a meter. But people coming from Latin America, such as Brazilians, like to stand closer when they are talking. In fact, they will touch you when they are talking to you. They will touch your arm. This is not quite comfortable for English people. You find, therefore, that an English person would tend to step backwards a bit. Then the Brazilian feels a little bit odd and distant, so he will take a step forward. Then the English person feels uncomfortable again and so he takes a step backward again. When they part and go their different ways, it is easy for the British person to think that Brazilian people tend to be all over you. He thinks that it is not right to be that close. Whereas, the Brazilian person is thinking that the British are rather distant

and cool, not wanting to be friends. So, both can get wrong ideas of each other simply by these outward things.

That is going to be important in our study. When we are going to relate to other people, we need to be sensible about how we do things and about how they do things. Very simple things that you might take for granted and just being friendly might cause misunderstanding to others. One of our aims is to try to understand some of these things.

What people do, what people make, is one major difference between people and animals. Animals might make an ant hole or a nest. But you will find that human beings make much more creative things – buildings and many other tangible things, things that you can touch. Today in China, the central government is very concerned about the preservation of its tangible heritage. We have places like the Great Wall of China. We are going to have a look at this because there are many important places within China today that are listed as world heritage sites. But those are just the big things.

Culture can also be things relating to food. China is known to be on top of the world for the quality of its food. Different parts of China have different styles of food. In Hong Kong, the food tends to be sweeter and have a lot different flavors. But in Szechuan, you have hot food with a lot of chili peppers and spices in it. Pork is very important in many parts of China. Some people like salty food, and so there is a wide variety of tastes within China. We like to talk about the food. We all have our favorite forms of noodles and rice. This is something that we make.

Things are not just material things. It is practical things, like food. It could be the pots used to make the foods. We will see later on that when people make things, they do not just make them in a simple way, only for a functional use. They make designs on them or they make patterns. They want to make it attractive. By making it attractive, they are actually expressing something about their artistic interest. That is something else that we are going to look at art. We are going to look at the things people make in order to understand what they think is important.

What people make includes food, pottery, small things such as necklaces, and many other different things. Culture is what people make.

Thirdly, and perhaps more difficult, is what people think. You cannot always know the ideas that people have. You cannot see them. Ideas do not take physical form, but people can express those ideas in various ways. They can express them in words. They can tell you what they are thinking. They can tell you how they feel. So words provide another means of understanding a person. We need to learn about interviewing to get people to tell us about their most important values.

Some people say culture is like an iceberg. When an iceberg is in the sea, and the top of the iceberg sticks out, only about a fifth of it is above the water level. Similarly, you can only see part of culture. There is a lot of culture beneath the surface, just like the iceberg. It is below the water line. You cannot see it, but it is there. The part that you do not see is part of the whole, just like with the iceberg. What is underneath is just as significant as what is above. In order to understand some of the things that are underneath, you have to start by looking at what you can see. But recognize that there are deeper things. What you can see is an expression of these deeper ideas. The deeper things include what is important, what is valuable to people, and what is not so important. So think of culture like an iceberg floating on the sea.

Some people said culture is like a map. Imagine you have a map of Beijing. You can follow the map and find your way around the whole city. But if you take that map to another city, it is not going to help you get around. You have many things that are the same. You have roads, streets, subways, traffic lights, all of that! You even have some of the same sorts of buildings. But a map from Beijing will not help you find your way around Wuandu Chindu. And so each culture has its own map, and that map is understood by the people of that culture. They know their way around. They know what to do and what not to do.

This is an important point that we are going to see as we go on—what people do and what people make. These things are not just done in isolation. They link together. The word that is often used in anthropology for this is “integrative.” It means, “fixed together.” If you change one part, it is going to affect the others. They help each other. They reinforce each other. This is an important thing to understand when you study change in cultures.

All cultures are going through a process of change today. When the integration begins to break up, people feel stressed. We will return to look at this subject later on when we talk about change in culture. We said that culture is the total way of life of a people. The different parts of culture come together in community life. Culture is shared by a community. It is something that is integrated and fixed together.

How do we study this thing we call culture? This is going to be the main theme for this particular course. By understanding people, we can know what they believe and what is important in their lives. We are able to present the Christian message in a relevant way so that they can respond. This is our aim and that is what I hope will achieve in this first class

Lesson 2

HOW DO YOU ACQUIRE YOUR CULTURE?

In the previous lesson, we were looking at culture, trying to get an overall picture of what culture is, and how it is used in different ways. An important part of understanding culture is how we acquire our culture. How do we gain our culture? This was something that was not deeply considered in the first lesson, but it is

actually very important. In this course we will need to understand how you get your culture because it will affect your view of the people. How do we acquire culture?

Let me start with a story. In 1780 there was a British trading post in what is now Hong Kong. Different British families were there and one family adopted a Chinese orphan, a lovely little boy, and they took that child back with them to England. Everybody was surprised by the fact that the child grew up not being able to speak word of Chinese; the child spoke perfect English. It was a surprise to people because it is almost assumed that you speak English because your parents spoke English. Somehow, it was believed to be a biological thing that was part of your life. Likewise, it was believed the Chinese speak Chinese because it was something that was part of their lives. However, that is not true. Language as part of culture is something that is acquired as a baby. Through your life you grow from being a person who has no culture to one that has a distinct culture and is able to cope with the world.

This was put into an academic framework by a man called John Locke who lived from 1632 to 1704. He said the mind is actually like a blank sheet of paper. When a child is born, he has that blank sheet of paper, but on it culture becomes written. The child grows up in a certain way knowing that culture, knowing that language. We then see, there are two things that make you as people. It is, first, that which is inherited through race. It is through my bloodline or my makeup. Medical science refers to this as genes, the genetic code that has been passed from my parents to their children. On the other hand, I have what I learned as a child and throughout my life, the way I do things. The things that we have called culture are acquired, distinct.

I cannot do much about the fact that as an Anglo-Saxon I have hairy arms and the Chinese do not have hairy arms. I could shave off the hairs, but they will grow again. The culture might have to do with the desire to remove the hairs, but the genetic part causes the hairs to grow. Or consider the shape of my nose. Why do these foreigners have such big noses? That is something that is genetic, it is passed on, similar to the color of hair. I can do something about it culturally by

having it changed and colored, or changed and styled; but essentially what we've got here is culture as opposed to race. The difference between these two things is very important. It goes back to the question how I acquire my culture.

In early childhood, the child learns how to eat. Now, how is that child taught to eat? In India, the child is taught to eat with its hand. Notice that I said "hand" and not "hands," because in India you eat with your right hand because that is the clean hand. The left hand is the dirty hand. This is quite important to know if you were an Indian. If you were to hand something to a person in India with your left hand, that would be regarded as being rude and very offensive. For this reason it is important to use the right hand because that is the clean hand. That is why in India you learn to eat with your right hand from the time you are a little child.

In UK and in America you will find that it is a spoon that is used to eat with, and later you will go on to use a knife and fork. In China, it is chopsticks. Even a young child must be able to use chopsticks, and so the child is taught how to do so. But by learning one way of eating, the child does not learn how to use other ways. Other ways are regarded as being bad or rude. For example, an English person eating food with his hand is regarded as having bad manners. You quickly learn not to eat with your hand. My mother told me not to touch my food and that I should eat properly. That is, with a spoon or a knife and fork. Likewise, if you use chopsticks you do not touch your food. In India you do touch your food.

When I was working in India, this was something of a problem. When I used to go with my Indian friends and we used to eat meals together, we used to use our hands. But to eat with my hand seemed difficult because my mother had always told me not to touch my food. Our little daughter at that time had no problem. She used to eat quite happily with her hands, because that is what she saw other people doing around her. We did not tell her it was a bad thing.

What you see happening is that a child learns to do things in a certain way because that way is regarded as the good and acceptable way of doing things in that culture. That way might be unacceptable in other cultures, but in that culture that is

the way of doing things. And that has an effect on us for all our life. There are various factors that are at work when it comes to culture and these are important to understand, although but we do not need to go into them too deeply.

There are five factors that are significant here.

The first one is that of the family. A child learns its culture, many of the habits that it has, from mother, father, and the rest of the family. The child sees, the child copies, and it becomes part of that child's way of life, its culture.

The second factor is school. The child goes to school. Now, that is something different. At home, they were perhaps the only child and so parents and grandparents looked after that child. Now in school, they have one teacher in a class of 30, 40, or 50 children. Now the children are learning to make friends and they are influenced by those friends.

The third factor is friends.. Especially by the time you get to college or university, you make special friends, those in your dorm and the rooms that you share. The special relationships that build up and the way that you do things together are important. In fact, the way that you make friends in China is different from the way of making friends in America or Europe. In America or Europe, we tend to be much freer with friends. Friends come into our lives and go out. It is not often that we have friends that last for many years. But in China, you make good friends and, although these might be few, they are very close friends who will provide you helping assistance. In Chinese this develops something called the 'guanshi' network.

There could be organizations. This is the fourth factor. There could be political organizations or religious organizations. Parents might take their children to the temple and teach them how to bend jog sticks to the 'guaying' or one of the other bodies. Or a Muslim family will take the child to the mosque. A Christian family will take the child to church. All these are things that the child will learn as a part of his or her culture.

The fifth factor is the mass media. This includes television. In the last 20 years, television has expanded within China. All sorts of communication have happened. We can get popular music, we can see DVDs, and we have CDs. We can see what is happening around the world. Mass media is important. Internet games have become very popular. Some students in China find these quite addictive. After their classes, they will go off and spend the night on the Internet, playing games in the cyber world.

Different factors affect different people. Different generations are affected by one or more of these. These are some of the factors in the whole process of ENCULTURATION: learning your culture. It is something you acquire during your entire life. It starts off when you are a child and gradually you learn more and more in order to enable you to cope with the world in which you live. That is perhaps one of the most important things when it comes to an individual--to grow in a way that he can cope with culture, his culture, to be able to succeed in it, and to be able to live healthily within it. He will be able to have friends and relate socially to them.

Anthropologists have studied this process and have made considerable progress examining it, how it affects you. The study of childhood is important. Who looks after children? Is it parents or is it grandparents? There are different ideas about it. In China now many grandparents are the ones who look after the children, because the parents are busy working. You can have two, three, or even four grandparents looking after one child, because the parents are out working. That is different a Western situation where the parents take it upon themselves as the ones responsible to look after the child. The question now comes, the children who are looked after by grandparents, does that have a different influence on them from children looked after by their parents? The question is valid, especially when the world is changing so rapidly, and when China is changing so rapidly.

So, first point is, how do you acquire your culture? You acquire it by being born into it. You learn the habits of that culture. It becomes part of you. It just

seems right. This is simply the way you do things. This is the way you eat your noodles, with your chopsticks. And when you drink juice, you pick up your bowl. This seems to you the right and proper way of doing it. But when you go to other cultures, it can affect you, because your way of doing these things seems right to you.

Then you look at what others are doing and you say, "That's not right." You start making judgments. So often, this feeling of difference is something that is important in your perspective. It is also an important thing in our study. When doing a study of culture, it is always comparative. I am comparing one culture with another, my culture with a culture that I am going to enter. This comparative aspect is something that is special about anthropology.

The second question has to do with how this learning process of culture affects my view of other people. First of all, what I feel familiar with always is what seems right. The way that I live, the way that I do things, just naturally seems right. This is what is comfortable. The way that I dress, the way that I talk, seems comfortable. And when I look at other people, I tend to see their way of doing things as being wrong.

You see this in the English language. In the United States and in the UK, people drive on different sides of the road. You find that an American talking about British roads will say, "You drive on the wrong side of the road." A Brit, talking about Americans would say, "No, you drive on the wrong side of the road." But it is not wrong, it is only a matter of being different. In China, you drive on the American side of the road (on the right). But, being an Englishman, it seems to me that I am driving on the other side of the road. If I were to start driving the English way in China (on the left), I would cause chaos because I would be going against the flow of traffic.

There are different rules. You could choose either rule, but everyone has to follow the same rule in that culture. If you move to another culture, it comes back

to you. You need to be able to adjust to that way of life, to those rules, to the way things are done in that place.

The first thing then is, when I look at other cultures, it is always easy to say that my culture is best, that this is the way you should do it. It is nicer, the food is better in my culture as opposed to the other one, and so on. I start making judgments, judgments about other people and judgments about their culture. Sometimes people can get offended because we all think our culture is best.

Most Chinese from the East Coast would shower every evening. Most Europeans and Americans tend to shower in the morning. Most Tibetans will wash their face, hands, and feet. Only very rarely do they wash the rest of their body, maybe once a year. It is very easy to say, “They are wrong,” or “They are dirty,” or “They are different.”

They have a different way of life. It is easy to start thinking about things like “my culture,” “from my background,” or “from my home” as the best. The technical term for this in English is **ethnocentrism**. **Ethno** comes from a word, which means “people”, and it means something like “the ethnic group.” On the other hand, you have **centric** meaning “center.” Ethnocentric means that we see our own way of doing things, our culture, as best. I start looking at the world, making judgments, from this ethnocentric point of view. That is the first stage.

The second thing is that it is easy to move on from here and say that the people who do things my way, similarly to that of my culture, are better than others are. We can easily judge others and say, “Well, not only my culture is best, but my people are best.” It is easy then to have prejudice against others. We look at other people, at the way they dress. We might look at a Muslim woman and see that she has her head covered, and make negative judgments.

But it can also involve international things, how we look at the world. For example, an American might think of his or her culture in these sorts of ways: America is the best. It is the biggest country, the wealthiest country. We like new things, progress, development, technology, and freedom of speech. This may be

true, but the Chinese might also think, “We think China is the best. We have a long history going back 5000 years or even longer. We have a great tradition of inventions. We like our heritage. These other countries are relatively new. They have only been around for two or three hundred years. They do not have the traditions we have. We might have a bit of a problem now. We have gone through problems in the 20th century. We know that we will soon be the world’s superpower. We will be number one in world economics.”

Both have their views. Both think they are right and have this point of view: our people are best. So it is easy to become prejudiced against others and say, “They’re new. Their country is small. They are backward.” We fail to appreciate that they are people too. All people are made in the image and likeness of God. That is what the Bible teaches us, and that is what is so important to have as a starting point.

It is easy for this to become part of our way of thinking, making judgments about others, about how they are different. You will find this with many minorities within China. As a Han Chinese moves around his country, especially among the minority areas, he will be met with friendship.

But there can often be the feeling that the Han Chinese feels that he is superior to the Tibetans or to some of the other ethnic groups, and it can even come through in the way that he relates to them. Likewise, when I am in another culture, the people of that culture can see me as being powerful. They see me as a foreigner entering their country and as being different from them. This can affect our view of other people.

We have looked at how I acquire my culture, how this affects my view of other people, and how prejudice and misunderstanding can arise because of this. Surely, I have to make judgments. How do I make judgments about the world? This is where anthropology can be especially helpful. Anthropology gives us tools to make cross-cultural comparisons.

But, how can I judge whole cultures? I cannot. I cannot look at the Han culture, Chinese culture, French culture, Greek culture, or Indian culture and say which is best. They are too big. For one thing, I do not know all of that culture. Culture is too big, especially when we are considering a rich culture or an ancient culture like the Chinese or Indian cultures. I cannot make the comparison. It is too big. People differ too much. And yet, I need to make some judgments because sometimes things go on in a society that are just wrong.

In Cambodia, you have the case of Pol Pot. Many people there were killed. You can go to Cambodia and visit a museum in which there is a pile of human skulls. These are just some of the many people who were killed at that time. You can go to Germany and visit museums and see the large number of people--Jews and Gypsies--who were actually killed. They were exterminated by Nazi Germany, millions of people. As part of the global world today, we have to make some judgments about some of this. Is this right? And if it is not right, what do we do about it?

Although we cannot judge whole cultures, there are things within a culture about which we must make a judgment. You cannot take a bomb on a plane and try to blow it up and say that this is just part of that culture. Something must be done to bring stability within society, to allow people to live in different ways. Each culture must seriously consider the way they and others live. People are starving in parts of the world. We need to do something about it. It is not adequate to say that is just their way of life. We need to be reaching out to try to help them attain a better quality of life.

So, although all people feel that their culture is right and good and maybe even the best, that does not mean that there is not something within every culture that needs to be changed. This is important for a Christian to understand, because when we bring the Christian message to people, we are going to cause change. This change needs to be based on the Bible and how the Bible relates to their way of life. In fact, the Bible has to be the way that we make such judgments. It cannot be

based on my idea of what I think is better--to eat noodles using chop sticks or to eat rice with your hands. It has nothing to do with that sort of thing.

It comes down to these more fundamental aspects of looking at the total way of life of a people. This goes back to the illustration of the cabbage that we had before. As the cabbage is cut, those basic ideas--the thoughts, the assumptions of the people--need to be brought in line with the Bible. Here you can see the basis of this as it relates to the Ten Commandments.

The Bible teaches us, "You shall not kill." That must be a basic part of human rights. Governments should implement that in all societies. To try to kill people, as happened in Cambodia or Nazi Germany or on airplanes, is not something that is acceptable. This is not because it is just something I do not like and which I think should not happen. It is because the absolute basis behind this is what God has taught us in the Ten Commandments: "You shall not kill."

And regarding theft, God says, "You shall not steal." Now the idea of theft and stealing can vary from culture to culture, but we need to be looking at what is important to God. The whole area of corruption in society is one that is detrimental to the way of life of all people. All countries suffer from some level of corruption. The Bible teaches us that we should not steal. We should not covet. Therefore, corruption is wrong. In our society, as well as in other societies, we should be willing to make judgments.

It is easy to look at other societies, see the problems there, and point them out. But we need to look back at our own societies, especially as Christians, and to have the awareness that we should speak out. We are concerned about human rights. We are concerned about human abuse, about corruption in society. This is not because of how we feel about things being good or bad, but because God has given us a standard. This is a standard based on Scripture. For this reason, we all need to be striving to live our lives in ways that are honoring to God.

We need to live so that the officials can look at our lives and say, "These Christians are not involved in corruption. These Christians care about people who

are suffering. These people reach out to those of different groups. They have the same standards based on moral principles that are good for each one of us and for the whole country of China and for the world as a whole.”

When it comes to making judgments, you cannot judge the whole of a society and say which society is best. Similarly with the language, can you say whether Chinese or English is better? The question does not even make sense. But we can look at those parts of the culture that need to be changed, help people to realize this, and then, as Christians, we can have the opportunity of implementing positive changes.

So when it comes to my culture, and me I acquired it as a child. But through acquiring it, those things that have become ingrained as a habit within me, the way I feel things should be done, can easily lead me to make judgments about other people and to become **ethnocentric**. That was a word I introduced you to earlier. In other words, it is the idea that my culture is best. We all feel like this to some extent.

You might think you have more material wealth than other people do, but they might look at their culture and say that they are more caring. They have more family life than you do. You just go after money. That is all that you are looking for.

It is so easy to make judgments of other people. Change needs to happen in all societies, but for us, as Christians, we look to God’s standard. This is the basis that we find in Scripture, and the Ten Commandments provide us with a good starting point. We should draw up principles that are relevant for our nation. Our society is changing, our world is changing, and we, as Christians, need to be speaking positively into this world.

Ron Burger wrote the following, “When we encounter people from different backgrounds, we have the opportunity to learn new ways of seeing and experiencing life which we never knew existed.” That is a great privilege. If you move from your hometown and go somewhere else, you will have the opportunity of meeting people who are very different from yourself. That will enrich your life.

You will know the pleasure of living and experiencing different things, different foods, and most of all, you will make friends with people whose basic ideas are very different from your own.

This is what we will consider. How do we make these friends? How can we prepare for the research, to understand other people as we move out from our homes, our countries, into other areas, so that we might indeed be witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson 3: PREPARING FOR STUDY OF ANOTHER CULTURE

Our third session is preparing for study of another culture. So far, we have looked at culture and how we acquire our culture. Now we will start the topic of how I actually prepare to understand another people. I want to start by looking at our world (or, I should say, God's world), and then we will look at some of the things you can do before you move to another area. Often this is called library research. Then we will talk about meeting people from another area. Finally, we will learn about entering another culture.

About understanding God's world, it is easy to look at the people around you and see many, many millions of people. We begin to realize that people around the world are all the very much the same. It is true that we have many similarities in our cultures, but there are also differences. These differences exist all around the world. In China, there are 56 different Minzhous or ethnic groups--peoples or nations. That is how the world is understood. We are one nation, but there are 56 different people groups there.

On the 60th anniversary of the formation of the Chinese People's Republic in Beijing, one of the major developments was the construction of 56 pillars. Each pillar represented one of the minority peoples in the world, including the Han Chinese. The idea of Minzhou came about in the early period of the Chinese People's Republic. In 1953 some people in China began looking how to bring as

many people as possible into the nation by recognizing the different national ethnic groups.

The idea actually came from Stalin in the USSR. It was borrowed by Chairman Mao. It was agreed that each group should have a common land, a common language, and a common spirit or culture. Those were the characteristics employed in the USSR by the Russian communists.

Chairman Mao took up the same principles and this is how eventually it was established that there are 55 minority groups plus the Han Chinese. The lines were not easy to draw because some Minzhous do not have a common land they could identify as their homeland. These would be the Hwey. The Hwey are essentially ethnic Han Chinese, but they have become Muslims and they stand out because of their different way of life. Consequently, they do not have their own land.

A common language--There are many groups that differ in their language. In China, there are many dialects even within Chinese, such as the difference between Portwan Haw in Beijing and Sitwan Hwa in Shendo, or Shanghai hwa in Shanghai. There are different dialects of a common language. In some places, especially in the Tibetan world, there are many differences between languages. It is not just a matter of dialect; it is more than that. Yewno is a province that has many dialects. There are many provinces within China. Twenty-four provinces are recognized now, but back in the 1950s, there were 250 groups who asked to be recognized as distinct Minzhou. Today, they have joined together with others. This is important politically because it allows these groups to have political participation in the central government in Beijing.

The world is divided up into different groups and people recognize these differences. But it is more than just recognizing these ethnic groups. You have this with the multi-cultural West. In the U.S and Europe you have different groups of people. Many of these have migrated to America or Europe over the last 50 years or more. This is why in New York you have Irish who have settled there and have become very well known as police officers or cab drivers. In Europe, there are

many Muslims who have moved up from North Africa. In France there are large communities of North African Muslims.

People have come to the UK from somewhere like Pakistan, or one of the other former colonies. Many Pakistanis have moved to settle in the UK and have formed their own communities. After a period of time, these communities differ from those of their homeland. They are not the same as their homeland. They are not the same as those of their new land. They are creating something new--new peoples, new societies. This is God's world and God's world is multi-cultural, with different people, different cultural groups.

Sometimes in multi-cultural societies people blend in more readily. This used to happen when the Polish and East Europeans moved into Britain. Because they were white-skinned, and they spoke a language similar to English, they quickly learned to speak English and be able to merge into the community. They married local people and became part of it. Sometimes all that is left is their name that gives any indication of where they came from.

This same sort of thing is happening in China. You find minority groups marrying with Han Chinese. There is a mixture going on. People are merging together as part of this whole. Some people talk about this as being like a melting pot, like a pot of metals. As more metals are put in, they all merge down to become one new type of metal. But that view is no longer held. Now it is viewed as a big pot of soup--chilies, meat, and vegetables all being cooked together. Or, it is similar to Sitswan, a hot pot, in which everyone who comes along goes into the boiling water. They have put in different vegetables, different kinds of meat. As it cooks, there is a common flavor. You can still see the different parts of it, but each part has its own characteristic.

This is God's world and it could be, as a Christian, you feel God calling you to move from one place to another. Moving out of your hometown into another area can be a challenge. Yet, if you know God is calling you, it is something that you must obey. But in doing this, we need to be wise. This is what we are trying to do

in these courses. We are trying to give you the tools to enable you to more effectively move to another area and be able to relate to the people and live happily in those areas.

At this point we need to look at some of those tools that we can give. It's God's world, and God's world is like a huge hot pot containing different people. Let us consider what we can do by way of preparation.

First of all, we will consider what anthropologists call **library research**. That does not sound very exciting, but there is so much that has been written about different peoples and is available today in libraries. You might find in this information in universities, schools, bookshops, and on the Internet. So much is now available. Some of the things you will want to look at include:

1. **Some of the old texts about the people.** China has a long history of writing about minority groups. There are stories about the Chan people of northern Sitswan or the E people of Unan. These provinces have had long history in their contact with the Chinese and there are stories about them. People have collected stories about their heroes and their villains. The local people would be very pleased to know that you have read something about this. When you go there and tell them, they'd say, "Oh yes, this is where this event happened, this occurred." It shows that you have taken the time to be interested in them and so they respond to you in a positive way. These things have significance, history, and their ancestors are also important to them.
2. **You can get government records** and in many places now in China you will have records of the numbers of people who live in villages and towns. This information is used in making plans for developments, for roads, and for building schools.
3. **Life histories of individuals.** These are stories of great families. Sometimes these have been made into books or even into movies. Some of the great movies tell the stories of these events and people. One interesting story relates to the Tusi, the kings of the Geron people. This is a story of life among the Geron

people in western Sitswan 200 years ago. This becomes something that gives insight into their way of life.

Take time to look at these things. Keep notes of what you find. Get a notebook and write down some of the things you find. Gradually you will build up an awareness of the way the people live and their ideas. This is a good starting point. You will find that many tourist websites now have lots of information on different parts of China. These are both in Chinese and in English. It's good to take the time to look and study these things.

These may not be academic texts, but they can still give you a starting point for learning about the people. Then you can start asking questions. Of course, it also means that you can start to pray for them more. As you learn more about them and their way of life, you begin to become concerned about them because you are taking the time to understand them as a people, rather than just seeing them as a mass of individuals.

So library research is a good starting point. The more you can read, the better. But aside from books and the Internet, another thing that's important is meeting people. All over China, there are people who are coming and going from different parts of the great country. You will find that in the universities there are people who come from different provinces. Tibetans enjoy dancing on Fridays and Saturday nights at the universities, or sometimes on the main square of the town. They also like to talk about their homeland. There are people from Unan province who are happy that someone is showing an interest in them and their people, and not just regarding them as individuals with no background.

So take time, time to make friends, time to listen. Perhaps that's the most important thing--to listen to their stories, where they are from, their families, their background, what is important to them, their hopes for the future. As you build those bridges with them, then they will begin to ask you questions, questions about your hopes and what your beliefs are.

Some people can be very special individuals. In anthropology they can often be called **gatekeepers**. A **gatekeeper** is someone who stands by the door and can open the door so that you can go through it and enter a new room, or have a new experience. Often anthropologists have found that there are people who will invite you to come into their homes, like the people from Unan. They are often very willing and say to the friends they have made in universities around China. "Oh, you must come to my home and to stay with my family."

These are the gatekeepers. They open the door so you can have a new experience. I once met an African chief in London who was anxious that I should visit his home. It turned out that I was in that area of Africa, so I joined him and went to his home to meet his family and his friends. He introduced me to them and I became known to them. His friends saw that I was no longer a stranger from the UK. I was his friend. That's how people saw me. As we continue, we're going to be looking at this more and more. Gatekeepers are a way you can enter into a society and make meaningful relations with people of a different society. Gatekeepers are a key to meeting people.

We looked at it the world as being God's world. We've looked at getting information about people from libraries and by meeting people. But when we go to another society, there is something, which often can be a problem. Anthropology and other studies have used the term **culture shock**. It is not being shocked at a culture and saying, "Isn't it terrible what people do?" but experiencing a stress, a pressure in living somewhere where things are very different from what you're used to. This is something, which exists in all cultures. All people feel it to some degree as they move to another culture. The term was first used by an American psychologist and anthropologist called Obulk. He defined culture shock as that disorientation precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all your familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. Those things that are so familiar to you are taken away.

We talked in the previous lesson about culture and the formation of habits. That is something with which we feel very comfortable. It's the way we live, the

way we dress, the food we eat. We feel at home with these things. But when you move into another culture, you get pushed out of that norm. Every day you are exposed to different experiences, different foods, and different ways in which people speak. That pull and being pushed out of the norm produces a stress. That stress is what is called culture shock. This what Oburk talked about as being something important for many people. He defines it and describes it as being part of a **four-stage process**.

When you first move into a new culture, when you move from one province to another, or one country to another, then, first of all, it's fascinating, it's interesting. This is like being a tourist. I look around and see different things, different styles of housing, different foods, and different way of dressing. It is all nicely different and exciting. This is **the fascination stage**. That's why many foreign tourists like to come to China and visit different parts of China. It's because it is fascinating.

The second stage is the one that Oburk called **hostility**. It often occurs when you start trying to learn the language. The tourist comes in and he learns just a few phrases so that he can order meals or get to the hotel. But he or she knows that they are just passing through. They want to take their photographs and move on. But if you are there for a longer period, it's very easy to start struggling, struggling to learn the language. Some of you might have tried to learn English and will quickly find that the word order is different in English.

Although you might get to learn the phrases and words, it is very different and so hard. So, you struggle and can easily get annoyed. You begin to think, "Oh, this silly language. Why can't it be simple like Mandarin?" But it's not and it can be difficult. In your home area, you know where the good shops are. If something goes wrong with the electricity or the water in your house, you know where people are and you can contact them to help you. But in a new place, it's different. The way the electric is wired might be different. Sometimes the electric power goes down. So there you are, hoping to do something, and suddenly the electricity goes off and you can't do anything. That's why Oburk calls it hostility.

You are being pushed out of the norm and it's easy to project this onto other people. You think, "Oh, his language is so strange," or, "Oh, I'd love food from my home province. It's so much better." Many Chinese face the same sort of problem when they go to study in Australia or Europe or America. They go to these countries and find they don't have as much rice, or the food doesn't taste right, there's not the right spices in it. And they become annoyed by it. That is what is meant by hostility.

But Oburk says there's a third stage. Following fascination and this decline into hostility, he talks about it becoming **humorous**. In time, a point comes when you can still make mistakes in the language, but now you begin to understand why you make those mistakes. When I was first in China, it was very easy for me to slip and make a mistake. Instead of saying to someone, "Please bring me rice (Mifan)," I'd say, "Please bring me (Mafan)." Mafan means problems or trouble, not rice. Many foreigners make similar mistakes. That's the sort of thing you begin to understand with time. Then you can laugh with the people because you realize you have made a funny mistake. You can laugh with them about it.

When you go to different parts of China, you lose your Guanchi network. Gradually you start making new friends. New situations emerge, and with time you can adjust. This is the fourth term used by Oburg. The first stage is fascination, the second stage is hostility, the third stage is humor, and the fourth stage is **adjustment**.

You begin to feel at home in your new town and your new country. You get used to the people and your attitude changes. You become friendlier to them and avoid the problems. Some anthropologists say all people go through this process. It's sort of a dip and a gradual rise.

However, studies indicate that only about half of people who move to other cultures have some problem. The other half don't have any problems whatsoever. You may be part of one half or the other half. You might find the friends you travel with you or even your husband or wife has difficulty, whereas you might not have

any difficulty whatsoever. What actually happens in this process that Oburg called culture shock?

It's essentially a stress related to living in a different culture. The way that you are used to living has changed. Often that stress can become a very negative thing. You can criticize the local people, but it is unfair criticism. You might think, "Their food is no good," and yet their food is really delicious. It's just different from what you are used to. It's different from what you have in your home, or where you are from.

Some people become irritable and start being unpleasant to their husband or wife or other people. Some feel homesick. They think about their home, their families, and their hometowns. They feel sad, thinking, "It would be so nice to go back home." And some people do. They find it so difficult that they do go home. Some people find the best way to deal with this is to withdraw from the people that they meet in the streets. They read books from their home. They only meet with the people from their home. This is not the reason they actually came to the country in the first place.

Sometimes, people feel tired, fatigued. They feel that at home they can do so much, but in this new place, with the problems of the language, and the different foods and different rooms to sleep in, there are different problems to face. It's easy to become fatigued and tired. You are not able to do as much work as you would like to do. Problems could occur because of a change in the altitude. If you are up on the Tibetan plateau, then you could experience difficulties with breathing. You find that although you can easily run up the stairs in your hometown, here you slowly climb up the stairs and you can feel tired. Fatigue and denial are all these part of this. Culture shock can drain you and leave you exhausted and perhaps critical of other people, a criticism that is unfair.

Having said this, and knowing this phenomenon, how can you prepare for it? The first thing that you can do is be aware of it. This is why a course like this is helpful in giving some preparation before departing for another culture.

Culture shock is not something unusual. In many places people tend to feel it is just them. But this is something common to us as human beings. As we move from one part of God's world into another part, we need to be prepared for that change, prepared for the shock that may come. We need to be willing to adjust. That is how we can deal with that stress.

First of all, get to know the people. This is the main problem. You might not be able to speak their language or their dialect. You have to listen hard. They seem to talk fast, in different ways. They seem to be shouting more. They don't appear to be friendly to people from outside. But get to know the people. Get to know who they are, where they are from.

Generally speaking, if you smile at them and show friendship, they will respond to you. In the main cities of China, often people have their heads down. They don't look at others around them. They just pass through. But you will find that in many places in the countryside, the people are eager to talk to strangers. They would like to know about you, who you are, where you are from, what your background is.

The second thing is to set realistic goals. What do you want to achieve? This is where Christians can have a problem. They want to go out and do great things for God. They want to change the world. That's a good ambition, but sometimes we have to bring our expectations down a little bit. God does great things through us, but sometimes He does it in His way, which is different from our way. That's why we need to set realistic goals and let God work through those goals for us.

The third thing is recognize signs of stress. In the new culture that you are living in, you can easily have stress. We can sometimes say, "Oh, I'm not stressed," but we know from our very nature we can be. Many people who become stressed don't sleep as much, although some people sleep more. People who smoke cigarettes tend to smoke more when they have stress. The stress level goes up by

the number of cigarettes they smoke each day. Learn to recognize the signs of stress in you.

The fourth is to develop a positive attitude. This is so important for the Christian. As a Christian, we need to trust God for so many things and know that God cares for us. He has given us His Son. Therefore, it is so essential for us to remember so be thankful, to rejoice in all things. As the Apostle Paul says, “Again I say rejoice.”

That positive attitude will encourage not only those around you, but will also encourage you, as you are thankful. God knows your situation. God cares for you and God wants to achieve good things through you. So, believe that your Heavenly Father cares for you.

Fifth--make friends. This can be difficult if you are in another province. You don't have guanchi (network of friends). No one knows who are you, what your relations are, or your background. But by showing care and consideration for other people, you can make friends. Gradually build and make friends. So often, it will be through those links of friendship that you can move forward and share something about the good message that you want to share.

Sixth--take time off, have fun. So often, when you move to a new place and you don't have many friends, you keep pushing. You keep working. You can work for a long time in the shop that you have set up, or in the factory, or doing other activities. But there is a time to have a break, to do things that help you to relax and just have fun. We are all different, but find what is meaningful for you.

The seventh and last--have faith you can do it. God can take you through this and will lead you so that you are able to relate to people meaningfully and effectively.

There is one other aspect to all this, and it is also a part of culture shock. How do you actually live among this people? There are different ways to do this. There are limitations on how far we can go to adapting to others. This is something

we will need to discuss more fully later on, but, at this point, it's necessary to talk about the two extremes. One extreme is to live separately, to continue to live your life in the same sort of way as you did at home. This includes eating the same foods, dressing the same way, and everything else being the same as at home. Your new home becomes a little picture or model of what life is like in your home society.

On the other hand, you can adapt to the local people so much that you become just like them. There is no difference between you and them. Often that's been called "going native." It means to live just like the other people. So we have these two extremes. The best option is to find something that is between the two, to be wise in making choices about how you do things, about how you live and adapt to the local people.

Here is a final point relating to culture shock. It is easy to think of culture shock as something that happens when you go from your home to somewhere else. We don't realize that when you return back home, that can be equally as difficult. It's the reverse process. During these times, you find that people often seem different. It's the sort of problem that students can have who go overseas from China to study. When they come back, they think, "This will be great. I'm going home." But then they find things have changed. Going back home from the university in one place to another, things change. It could be a change in your friends.

Some friends that you once had and you used to do much with, part of that guanchi network, are busy now. It could be that they now have children and they don't have a place for you. They've made new friends who take on the role that you had. The time you used to spend with them they now are spending with other people. It could be a change in your home so that your hometown is different--different buildings, different roads, and new buildings going up. There could be a change in your home so that your hometown is different.

Also, you find that you don't know your way around anymore. It could be a change in the society. The local society and how it's run may be different. You will see new things happening in the towns, new cinemas going up, and activities various sorts of people do. It's different and you might not know about it. But perhaps the biggest thing is that you will have changed yourself.

You will have seen new things. When you go back, you will find that as you talk about these new things, people will be pleasant and interested, but soon they will direct the conversation to something else, to something local with which they are familiar. You have made new friends with people from different places, different parts of the world. You somehow have changed because you've seen things through other people's eyes. That's perhaps the most important thing that has happened--the change in you.

Nothing is more special than being able to live with other people and to make friends with people that are very different from you. In *China Daily* in 2007, Dr. Dew wrote that the benefits of living abroad are profound and powerful. Just as culture shock is correctly described as a learning process, going back home and the reverse culture shock is also a learning process. It's both useful and necessary.

This is part of the process of preparing to go to study another culture. It is recognizing that this is God's world and that there are differences among people. Start by doing some library research to find out where people are, what their interests are. I'm going to give you an exercise at the end of this class. It is to start collecting information about the people in which you are interested. It could be a people you've been praying about. Start finding information. Perhaps you can get a notebook. Draw a map that show where this people live, where their home area is, what the towns are there, and what sorts of things do they do to make a living. Start collecting information that you could put on each a page--a little bit about them at a time as you gather the information.

LESSON 4: THE PRIOR QUESTION OF TRUST

Our fourth session is going to be on a topic that is called, “The prior question of trust.” The word “prior” means “the first.” So the first question you should ask relates to trust. In this session, I want to look at how you can start entering into a new area, what could happen during that time, how people see you, and how you should be behaving. This will enable us to be able to move on to the next stage of entering into a new culture.

The term is a prior question of trust. Trust is important. It’s very easy for people to mistrust you and what you are doing. In 1Cor. 13, we read in verse 4, “Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. It believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Perhaps that’s what is meant by this term a prior question of trust. Trust is a bond between people, with your classmates, for example. Your friendship is based on trust. As a team you begin to trust each other. You know that they are not going to let you down and that there are good relationships with one another. A prior question of trust is asking questions in everything I do. Does this person see me as one who is trustworthy? That’s the first thing that comes through. Is what I am doing or saying building trust or is it undermining trust? All of this has to do with integrity in the way that we live.

I’ve read about love from 1 Cor. 13, but there are other biblical teachings on this. I want to look at other portions of the Bible. In Luke 5:27-32 we have the story of Jesus and Levi the tax collector. (Read in the story.) Here we have a point about integrity. Levi made a decision to follow Jesus. It was not something that he kept to himself. He did not become a secret believer among the tax collectors. He invited all his friends to come in although his friends were tax collectors. Tax collectors were disliked by most of the Jewish people. But he called them and they

came so they could hear about Jesus. He was pointing out to them, “This is the man who made a difference to my life.”

This is about integrity. People are going to ask about you as you come to another country or another town. They will ask who you are. Maybe they won’t directly ask you, but they will notice you and talk about you. It could be that in your area or town, if you are seen as being different, if you are the only Han living there, or the only American living there, people will notice you. They will want to know about you. They will look to see what you do, how you behave. They will be watching you all the time. They’re looking to see the good things you do and to see the things that you do wrong.

This is why the first thing in building trust is integrity. If what you say is what you do, people will trust you. It could be a simple thing. In a shop, if they give you back too much change, you don’t just say, “Oh, good,” but you have integrity. You say, “You have given me too much change. Here, can you please take it back?”

People will gradually begin to realize they can trust you. You are different. In many parts of China, people are moving out because they want to make money. That’s the reason for coming, especially in minority areas. People think of them for one reason only, to make money. But as Christians, we’ve got to be different. We’ve got to have integrity in how we live, how we behave.

They see tourists coming in. They look at the tourist and he runs around to have photographs taken. He runs around to go to this club and to spend money. But the whole time the tourist just wants to get the most out of it for himself, irrespective of what the local people have. Gradually you will find the local people will become disillusioned with visitors. They see them as people that they can get money from.

But you are going to be different. You need to be like Levi. When he changed, he showed how he was different by saying, “Here is Jesus.” Integrity is seen by the way you live your life. Integrity needs to be seen in those who are seeking to be witnesses for Jesus. Those who are anthropologists need integrity,

because often anthropologists have done wrong things within the society and the people.

The second phase involves overcoming suspicion. When you move to a new area, people are suspicious about you. It takes time. After a while, people will get to know you. You can tell this sometimes from what children say. In one of the housing complexes where I lived within China, the local people would talk about “Lawei,” the foreigner. The adults would always be very careful not to speak openly in public, but sometimes a little child would speak up and say, “Oh lawei, lawei.”

I would joke with the child and say, “Oh no, I’m not a lawei. I’m now a member of this town,” and they would laugh because they would know it’s only my adopted town. This is building bridges based on trust. You’ll overcome suspicion.

There’s a lovely story that we read about in John, chapter 4. It gives a good example of the whole process of overcoming suspicion. Here is the story. (Read John 4:4-26.) We see here that the woman had a lot of suspicion concerning Jesus. Who is this strange Jew who has come into the area? Now he’s asking for water from this person.

The Samaritans were people who were not of pure Jewish blood. They had been taken away many years before, but had come back settled into that area in the northern part of what is now Israel. This is Samaria, but the Jews did not accept them. They pushed them back all the time. There was no friendship between them.

Now here is this Samaritan woman talking with Jesus. Since the Jews had rejected them, she rejected the Jew that stood before her. She’s thinking, “There must be something wrong, How is it that you can talk to me in this sort of way?”

That was her prejudice. That’s the first step in overcoming suspicion, dealing with the prejudice. Her prejudice was borne out of misunderstanding and persecution, but Jesus goes on and gives her a gentle answer. He says, “If you knew

the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

Gentleness is so important. So often people can misunderstand us and what we are doing, and they can react negatively to it. It's easy to react strongly back. But you see here a gentleness of response and meekness. He was not trying to assert Himself over her, but He just quietly responds. She goes on and says, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep..." That's true, but she continues to mock Jesus.

This sometimes can be the case when we are in a new area. It's not just a matter of prejudice. It can be an increasing sense of mockery, making fun of who you are, your people. This is because each one of us comes from a particular background, whether you are from Hunan province or Quando or Sitswan.

We tend to look at people from different provinces and say, "That's what these Beijing people are like," or, "That's what Shanghai people are like." We tend to lump all people together as one type. It's easy for this to turn into mockery. But Jesus, in His response, says, "Everyone who drinks of this water...eternal life." Still the woman is not going to respond to this. She says, "Sir, give me this water...to come here to draw water."

Sometimes it's hard to get through to people. You can be gentle, but they still put up barriers. Here you see this. Sometimes we have to move the conversation in different directions, but still use gentleness in our speech, not showing our anger, not showing that we are displeased about things. Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here."

Now this was different. He was relating not just with this outward thing of water, but now he was relating to her personal situation. It was an insight that He had. The woman answered, "I have no husband," and Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying I have no husband for you have had five husbands...what you have said is true." The woman said, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet." And then in

verse 20, she says, “Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

There are a lot of discussions about what the woman is doing here, but what seems to be happening is that she feels that Jesus is getting too close to her as an individual, as a person. It’s as if she’s saying, “Hey, you know too much about me. Let’s talk about something a little bit more distant. Let’s talk about where we worship, about other things, not about my personal life.”

But Jesus keeps going back to her as a person, as an individual. He said, “Woman, believe me, an hour is coming...in spirit and in truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming...” Then Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you I am He.”

The rest of the story is that the disciples return and are shocked that Jesus is talking to the Samaritan woman like this. What is he doing? He’s overcoming a lot of the misunderstanding that she’s got, the prejudices that she’s got against Jews. People will have prejudices against us wherever we are, whether we are American, European, or Han. People from different places will have their prejudices and we need to try to overcome their suspicion.

What we see here is that Jesus uses gentleness and truth in everything He said. Jesus here is speaking truth to her, and yet there is also an intellectual side to what He says. It’s also a matter of her asking about where she should worship. It could be that in town people were saying, “You know, here in this temple before this image of Guanli is where we should worship,” or, “We should worship in the church in town, shouldn’t we?”

When Jesus comes, He points out that the important thing is the integrity in our hearts. It’s our spirit speaking out to the living God. It’s not found in a building, a temple, or a church. It is a relationship between the individual and God. So she’s changed her attitude towards Him. She’s begun to see new things. Her immediate reaction is to go home to her part of town.

Usually, women will go and get their water in the morning, when it's cool, not in the middle of the day. This is why Jesus knew there was something different about this woman. She was being pushed out. Others were prejudiced against her. And yet, she ran back home to her home village and said, "Here is a man who told me everything I've ever done" (Jn. 4:39).

She had five husbands and five different stories. She was not proud of them, because they marked her as a loose woman. Yet, here was someone who knew her, and He was reaching out to her in gentleness and truth. He was bringing realization, hope of who He is. That's an important part of what we have here. Jesus is trying to overcome the suspicions of this woman.

People will be suspicious of you when they see you around. It could when they see the clothes you wear, they will see you as a rich person. Therefore, they will charge you more if you use the taxis or the three-wheel vehicles. This is all part of the things that are done to strangers, strangers who are watched by local people. You overcome this by showing friendship to the people and trying to build bridges.

A time will come when a person will turn to you and want to learn lessons about the truth. Jesus gradually brought this woman to see that. In one way, going into another culture is like bringing a mirror. As we bring that mirror, it reflects back their way of life. They can see themselves in it because of the differences. Our way of life is different from theirs. This is the cross-cultural comparison that is so much a part of anthropological research. Or, changing the illustration, we can be like a window. We let people see that there are different worlds.

How we live in different places could help overcome suspicions. People can get very suspicious about what happens in a church building. The government officers want to know what goes on, when your meetings are, and what happens there. People distrust you. That's why it's important to be open. That way people know that nothing strange or illegal is going on in your groups. They can see and they would know. Eventually, they'll say, "Oh, those people, yeah, we know about them."

You are like a window, transparent, so people know what you are doing and why you are doing it. When there is a need, you go out and meet that need, and help those in need. In May 2008, you all know there was the earthquake in Sitswan. One of the most remarkable things is that Christians from Xhindo and other places were the first to respond and to go to those in need. They had gathered things on the way. They were giving out blankets and water. Those who had taxis filled the taxis with water and drove out there. They got no pay for that day. They gave out water to those in need even before the soldiers came in to be able to give the massive aid that was needed. This is the way to overcome suspicion. People know who we are because we are not hiding anything.

Integrity is overcoming suspicion. My first question about a prior question of trust is something that you often get asked. It might not be verbally asked, but it's in people's minds: Who are you? People see you on the streets and look at you as if to ask, "What are you doing here?"

In anthropological terms, this is talked about as being your role. What role have you got in the community? One of the common roles that you will find foreigners have in other countries, other provinces, could be that of a tourist. Tourists come and go, but you can usually recognize tourists. You see them, and they have usually had their cameras. They usually have nice clothing. They usually go to scenic spots and have their pictures taken in front of different statues. Do the people see you as a tourist?

It could be that you come as a student. They come to university to learn the language. People see you going to the university. People like to know who you are. You can come as a teacher. Many foreigners come to China and become English teachers in the universities and are welcomed there.

The wiban looks after them and they make friends with the students. So this is the role of a teacher. If you move into a new area of China, leaving your hometown behind, what role do you take? It could be as a worker. It could be that you set up a little shop and in that shop you do things, maybe the same sort of things

that you did at home. It could be a photo studio, a bicycle repair shop, or so many things. But people like to know who you are. It's a label they can put on you so that they can say to their friends, "Those people over there, they are teachers at the university."

Roles can be different. I have a friend, an Englishman, who was working in Japan. He was an English teacher. One day he went to have his hair cut. To have your hair cut in Japan can be very expensive. So while the hairdresser was talking to him in Japanese, he was following what was being said, and the man was talking to him about baseball. My friend is English, and in England we don't play baseball. We play soccer. Suddenly, the hairdresser realized he wasn't interested. This customer wasn't interested in baseball. So he asked what we play in England. When he heard about soccer, he suddenly said to him, "Oh, we want to set up a soccer team for our children in this area."

My friend had been a coach for a soccer team. As soon as the hairdresser said, "Please, will you coach our children? We've got plenty of people teaching them baseball, but none for soccer." My friend said, "No, I'm here to learn the language. I can't do that."

But as he was walking home, he suddenly stopped. "What I'm I here for? I'm here for the people." He went back and said, "Yes, I will teach them every Saturday afternoon." He ran a soccer school. The soccer school was right in the middle of a shopping area. There was a man who was prematurely white-haired running around with all the Japanese children, teaching them to play soccer. All the local people knew him because, when they came shopping, they saw him playing soccer. Everyone now knew who he was. His role became soccer teacher. He was respected.

Sometimes when you play soccer, the children get injured a little bit because it is a physical game. He always used to take the child to with the injury to the child's home and fix it up using first aid. So now when the soccer teacher came, he was greatly respected. He was ushered into the house. This is very rare in Japan

unless they know who you are. He was invited into the house as an honored guest. He was able to speak to them about who he was and why he was there. There was a role that came through all of this for him.

Part of my research involves some minorities, and many of these were Tibetans. In Tibetan villages and towns, they have a saying. It is, "If you can speak, you can sing; if you can walk, you can dance." Many evenings, there is dancing. It's easy to be on the outside, just watching the dancing. But once you start joining them, and taking part in the dances, suddenly everything changes. Now, you are part of that community. Those who are there at the dances will remember you the next day. They will say, 'Ni haw.' You might not recognize all their faces, but they know you because you're the stranger from outside.

Now you are accepted by the people. You have a role they understand. They have an answer to the question, "Who are you?" You are the teacher, or you are the student who comes to the dances. Suddenly, it makes a lot of difference and bridges are built.

Sometimes, however, it isn't just a matter of building bridges. To do some of these things, there is an issue of surrender. In 2 Cor. 4:7-14, Paul talks about suffering. In Acts 9:15-16, Paul is told how much he must suffer for the Gospel's sake. It's not always easy. It's not always a matter of fun. It can often include times of loneliness. That's also a part of living in another culture.

One final story to illustrate some of this. I was once working in a village with Tibetan people. We were looking at various things and the problems they were facing in the village. There was one man who was given to help me, to make sure that I didn't stumble as we climbed over the rocks. He was looking after me, making sure that I was in the right place at the right time. He was with me all the time. We'd stop sometimes to eat together.

His language was different from mine, but, nevertheless, we made friends. We were together each day. At the end of that time, when it was time for me to be leaving, he came to me. Through a person who could speak both languages, he told

me that his son had a problem at school. His son was lazy as a student. He had no desire to study. He asked me if I could help him by giving him a blessing. To many Tibetan people, they will take a person to the Lama, and the Lama will give a blessing. He asked me if I would give a blessing to the young man.

I said, "I'm a Christian. I'm not like the Lama." But he said that he wanted what I had. So the boy was called, and the boy with his family knelt before me. I put my hands on him and I prayed for him. I had the person who was there with me translate it so that everyone would understand. It was the New Year, so I said I would pray for his son every day of that year. And so that's what I did. The son's studies suddenly improved. Instead of being pushed out of school, he graduated from that college.

Now, to that family, they know who I am. I am one of them. When I pass through that area, I always stop there and they have a room for me. It's a special room. When I'm there, they will often give me a special gift, a leg of lamb or some walnuts. This is what they have. They don't have much money. But now I am part of their family. I'm like a father to their son. Suddenly, my role has changed. They listen to me.

Sometimes we sing together with our karaoke. I'm not very good at singing, but I can sing Amazing Grace through the loud speaker system that echoes through the valley. People know it's the white man who is a friend of this family. When I walk in the area, they all smile and wave because now I have a role. They know who I am. I've built trust, and that's an important thing in relating to people,

Jesus in Matthew 10:16 says, "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and as innocent as doves."

LESSON FIVE: BUILDINGS

Our fifth session is looking at buildings or architecture. The technical term that is used in anthropology is “tangible heritage”. Tangible is something you can touch. If it is intangible, it means it is something that you can’t touch. In China as in other parts of the world, heritage is divided up into tangible and intangible heritage. Tangible is what you can see and touch. Intangible are those things like dances, songs, and paintings. Those sorts of things are the skills of people.

Tangible things give us an opportunity to look and observe. That’s the session that we are currently in. We’ve been looking at different things that we can see. When it comes to buildings, these are ways in which people express their way of life. People don’t just put up a building that they live in. The style of the house says a lot about their deeper culture. As I said before, it’s like the illustration of the cabbage. The outer leaves are what you can see, but the outer leaves depend on the inner leaves. It is the inner leaves that give it the shape. Here, with the house, as you look at it, it is easy, first of all, to say whether or not it is a pretty house. You can see it as no more than something that you take a photograph of.

We are going to be looking at tangible heritage. China especially is taking great care of its tangible heritage. The Beijing government is putting aside money to preserve these things. But first, let’s go to Gen 11:1-8—

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. ² As people moved eastward,^[a] they found a plain in Shinar^[b] and settled there.

³ They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

⁵ But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶ The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”

⁸ So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.

This is a well known story among anthropologists. One of the ways of looking at a culture is to ask the question, “What is the purpose of the biggest, the tallest, the most magnificent buildings of a culture?” That immediately tells you something about the priorities of that culture. So here, in one of the earliest times in

the Bible, the people intended to build a tower tall. It was a tower to bring praises to the achievements of the people. It came about as a result of new technology – the making of brick. These bricks would be built into a greatest tower. It would give a sense of their identity.

All through human history, you can see this with different civilizations. Egypt's history goes back as far as China's. There, the early Pharaohs used to make pyramids. The Romans would sit and watch people fighting to the death. This was the great entertainment in every Roman city. Every city had, not only the seat of government, but a vast arena for games and for sports, and where people fought and died. Not forgetting China, there the forbidden city of Beijing built a long north-south access.

Beijing is a beautiful city with its red walls and its golden roofs. Built further down that access is the temple of heaven. It is all laid out and with rest of the city around it. It shows the focus of China of that time. It focused upon the Emperor. He was the center of civilization of ancient China. But in Europe, as Europe was in the Middle Ages from about the 10th century onwards, Europeans started building big buildings.

These buildings were the cathedrals, the huge churches that still stand a thousand years later. You can look up at them, the big pillars holding the roofs high above you. Walking in them, there is sense of quiet, a sense of being overwhelmed, because this is the place you come to pray and to worship the living God. These buildings were the buildings constructed for Christian worship. You will find them all over Europe, big ones in the city, and small ones in every village, usually with a tower on top, that marks it out, stands out as the tallest and biggest building in the village or in the town.

In the cities, cathedrals that still give you a sense of wonder. Tourists come to see them. That was when Europe was very much Christian, and Christianity was being expressed in what people did. So you ask, what are the tallest buildings of the world today? Tall buildings, new ones, are being constructed which are even taller in different places. Often these are for finance and banking in London and New York. You can still find churches there, and next to them are the skyscrapers that go up to 100 floors. The churches that once dominated the landscape now are looked down upon by these tall buildings. This is where money is the important thing for the people, often generated by the entertainment industry. Big buildings represent a lot of money, as people see these this as being the most important thing for them.

Buildings tell us a lot about the priorities and values of people. What are the values which you see today? Are they religious values, because of the beautiful

monasteries that are built in Tibet? A lot of buildings are now been built for tourists and to keep Tibetans happy. In Beijing there are big buildings like the CCTV building which is an architectural marvel. People all round the world watch, see, and hear from the center of China's TV network. These are the sorts of things that are now the priorities of our age. Each country seems to want to build taller and higher and look more impressive than the last to show that they can do it. This is the first thing to consider in looking at tangible heritage. What is built reflects the priorities of the people. You can look and see.

I will like to show you two pictures. The first picture is from Szechuan. This is the photograph of the tomb of first Emperor. But, really it is an army, the famous Terra Cota warriors. Here they stand in their roles all lined up, each one the size of a human being, but each one different. This clearly is one of the most amazing building constructions that has ever been made. It was built there for the first Emperor. His actual tomb, as you know, is not far away, but it hasn't been opened yet because to open it might damage what is inside. Work has slowly been going on to try to draw it out. A tomb for one person is something totally unique. Think about that picture in your mind.

The second picture goes to the borders of Tibet into western Sinkiang and into the valleys there. This is the area where the earthquake of 2008 had an impact. As you look down into the valleys, you see that there are stone towers. These towers are nine, ten, up to 13 thirteen stories tall. They are made with rock that people collected from the hillside. They brought the rocks and built these towers. They stand up all the way down to the valleys. So why do people build towers in a place like this? You can understand why they built the tomb of the Great Emperor.

It can help you to understand the beliefs of the people of China back 2200 years ago. They were concerned about the spirit of the dead. They wanted the Emperor to be protected, but why do people build towers? Are those particularly special? Well, in the world, there is an organization called the World Heritage Foundation and it lists the most important buildings in the world. China has many of these World Heritage buildings, including the Forbidden City and the Terra Cota warriors in China.

A suggestion is being made that western Sitchuan should also be included. But they are different from others because they differ in shape. Some of them are square like big block towers. Some of them are in the shape of a star and the number of corners they can have can be eight, ten, twelve, or sixteen. So what were they built for, and who built them? You start looking and asking questions about the people and their way of life and why they would build. Perhaps we can approach the question by asking when were they built. They were made of stone. There was

plenty of stone in the areas. So stones were shaped and put in place and they were put together with mud to sort of act as the mortar between them.

But the floors were built of wood. Around the area there use to be a lot of trees. So they put wooden beams across them. That means you can now cut out a little bit of a beam and send it for analysis and get a dating. This is because when a tree dies, the carbon in it starts running down. This is called carbon dating. You can therefore date that tree and know when it was first cut down. Some people have been doing this and they have discovered that some of these towers are a thousand years old, and some two hundred. This shows us something about them.

We can find out about them from the history records we talked about. It is important to look at some of these old history records. Emperor Chin Long sent his forces into that region to fight not once, but twice. This was because the first time they had opposition from people fighting from the towers. From the top of the tower, you can shoot down on other people. They have little slits in the towers through which they could fight. So the towers were difficult to conquer. The Emperor's soldiers were hindered as they made progress up the steep valleys.

So we know that the towers helped the people to defend themselves. But that was not the only purpose of the towers. Some would ask, why is that bolt on the hill? There is nothing in particular to defend. When you stop and look from the top of the tower, you can see across the valley. Then you begin to realize that you can make signals from one tower to another. This is another reason, why the towers where built.

Sometimes the towers were built right next to a house. And so you ask, "Why?" Was it for defense? Did the people run into the tower when there was danger? If you start looking at the history and talking to people, they will tell you. In this area, when a son is born you build the first floor of a tower. The next year you build a second story, and then the third. So for each year, you build one floor of the tower until you reach thirteen floors. At the age of thirteen, the boy is considered a man and he owns the tower and the property. This begins to show you what is important to the people. It takes a lot of time to build a tower. Therefore, it shows that it is something important to them.

Today many of those towers have been damaged by the earthquake. The Chang people use to build these towers and although many have collapsed, many still remain. Now the people are rebuilding the towers. They are not like the pyramids of Egypt that were built and remain untouched. These towers have often fallen down and the people rebuild them again. And so, these mysterious towers dominate the area.

Today, these towers have been presented for the World Heritage Organization to be listed in this way. If they become listed, it will make them important tourist sites. Certainly you will find tourists who will want to come and see the mysterious towers of western Tibet. People build things and what they build shows a lot about the way people live.

We have considered two examples. Let's talk about recording tangible heritage. One of the obvious ways today is with digital cameras and photography. Because many of these things are things that could disappear, taking photographs is important. But we are not talking about just taking pictures to make a photo album or something to hang on a wall. We take pictures to be able to understand what it is all about.

Today you will find that many universities are trying to set up databases of cultural heritage. The world is changing and many news media are collecting archive materials. It is easy to take a picture on a digital format and keep it. You can keep it not only for a period of a year or two, but, for the first time in human history, we can record events both in visual and audio formats. In this way we can start preserving culture, preserving what is important to people. That is what is happening.

But we need to point out here that this touches on the prior question of trust. How do I take a picture? Do I sneak in and take a picture and then hide it? What is it that I need to do? I need to make sure that people want that picture to be taken. There are times when we like pictures taken of us, but times when we don't like pictures taken of us. That applies not only to us, but to everybody. And so it is important to find the appropriate times to take pictures.

We are going to be looking at suitable times, but there are also unsuitable times. When you are washing your hair or when you are taking a bath, that would be an unsuitable time for a picture. But there are times when you are dressed up for a wedding or for a party. You are happy for a photograph to be taken. The prior question of trust involves asking the person. With digital photography we have got something which is more fun because it is now possible to show them the picture immediately and they can know whether they like it or not.

So tangible heritage is about that, but going further than that, I want to look and talk more about the houses of minority peoples in China. Most of us are aware of the cities in China and the big buildings that are being constructed, buildings with 32 stories made out of concrete and glass windows. We see these in every city. They sort of get taller and bigger and become the focus of the city.

When you go to the countryside, you find different forms of housing. They are not as modern, but they are different, and for many of the minority peoples, the style of housing is one that is totally distinct. For example, the Tibetan house is not just one floor. The first floor, the ground floor, is usually where the animals are kept. There you have the pigs, and so any surplus food gets thrown over the side into the pen for the pigs to eat.

The next floor is the entrance area, and this is where you will find the kitchen. This is where there will be a toilet and sort of a welcome area for guests. The third floor tends to be more the private area for the family. This usually has an open area where you can work. The house is built so that it points towards the south so that the sun shines into that area. This is so that you can work in that area. If you are making cloth or if you are preparing food, that is taking place on that floor.

At the very top on the roof there is a special room. That is the room for the shrine. Inside you will find there will be the tanka, the images, and a shelf with different idols. It is the place where the Lama will come, or where the priests will come and do the rituals for the spiritual protection of the place.

The design of the building reflects their priorities and their way of life. The ground floor has the pigs. The pigs are important to them. They need to bring the pig inside, especially in cold weather or when it could be lost or eaten by wild animals. Above that you've got the family set up where guests would come. Then moving up, almost towards their gods, their religion is at the top. So the whole structure is like a building that is important for them.

Now imagine, if these people were to move from there and go to a big city in China, what sort of house would they have. They would have a single story apartment that would be very different. Here there is no place for their animals, no place for the preparation of food. There is no place even for the god room that will be on the roof. Their way of life will change just because of the difference in the buildings.

Many people think about Tibetan houses and say they have toilets on the outside of their building. They do, but there is a reason for this. The toilet is built of wood on the outside of the building on the north wall. That's important because on the north wall it doesn't get so hot in the sunshine. The toilet drops down into the pit from which they can take the manure and put it onto their land to fertilize their land. That's how they can get a good yield from land that is high up in the mountains at 5,600 feet. That is all very practical. The way the building is constructed reflects their daily life.

There is a second thing to look at concerning buildings. The Chang people live in western Szechuan and are very much affected by the earthquakes. The Chang house is built almost like the spiritual fort. The roof has four horns and on each horn there is a white stone. The white stone for the Chang is believed to have special spiritual importance. Some people even talk about the Chang worshipping white stones.

So these are important to them. You can see this in the construction of the roof of the house. It is a flat roof with horns in each of the corners, and then in one part of the roof there will be a fifth horn. This is where there will be a fireplace. Into that fireplace will be put different fuels, including some powder that makes the smoke white. From the top of the roof, the white smoke goes up into the blue sky of the area. White smoke is a gift to the gods of the mountain. The houses are built like this in order to show something about their religious beliefs.

When you look at the doors, you see that above the door is a 'Labach painting' in Tibetan style. You will find pictures of some gods and spirits above the door. This is because the door way is the entrance to the house and it needs to be protected spiritually. This is how they see it. So their religion gets worked into their buildings.

Now this is not just some interesting facts. If these people become Christians, how will it affect the design of their houses? If there was an individual in that family who became a Christian with all these things around, how would they relate? Some of these are practical things that can touch the lives of individuals.

The Chang are in the maintain top villages because that is where the Chang usually, and traditionally, have lived. On the ridges of the mountains, they don't really have streets. They have a pathway leading from one house to the next. Many times you can look from the second floor of one house to second floor of the next house without having to go outside from one gate to another. In this way you are able to move across high up in the mountains. Using the footpaths, it will take you two or more hours to climb up from the road up to the village.

This is their way of life separate from the main valley community. Yet today, many of those Chang have gone from those villages. They've come down to the valley and they are now in towns. New towns are being built, but they are being built out of concrete, not out of stone or wood, but of concrete. It's cleaner. The toilets are not on the outside. The toilets are modern toilets, but it is different. There are no animals. Sometimes they are given fields to work in, but they are so different from where they were, up in the mountains with their little fields.

What can they do for fertilizer? How do they live in such places? This is why since the earthquake the Chang have been had a lot of problems. They have to establish a new way of life. Many of the villages on the hills are now being emptied. You would find that those who live there now are only the old people. The young people and their children have come down into the valleys. So up in the hills, in the old traditional style houses that often have been damaged, is where the elderly live.

And so, their way of life is changing. Sometimes you will find that government officials make roads up to these villages because it is good for the tourism. Wealthy tourists from Beijing and Shanghai come and they travel up. They take photographs and the old people quietly let them take their photographs. At the bottom of the road up to their village, there is a place where the tourists pay their fee to go up into the village. They make items for sale--different cloths and other things. The tourists pay them and they leave. They are visited and then the people go to a tourist center.

It is not part of modern China, but it shows us a lot about the life of the people. It is something you can see. It is easy to go in and just look and to take pictures. But what is more important is to start talking to the people, to understand their way of life. Because as we understand how they build and how they live, then we are able to relate more to them. We are building trust, and that is important.

We have talked about buildings and about entering buildings. There is a story told in Acts 10:24-30 about Peter.

The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.²⁵ As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence.²⁶ But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

²⁷ While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people.
²⁸ He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean."²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"

³⁰ Cornelius answered: "Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me..."

For a Jew to enter into a non-Jewish home was seen as polluting. He was not supposed to do it. But here God spoke to Peter and said he shouldn't call any man unclean. If you remember the story, Peter had a vision. In the vision, a white

sheet had come down from heaven and in the sheet were some animals. The Jews were very particular about which animals they should eat, only those that followed the guidelines in the book of Leviticus. There some animals that are regarded as impure. In the vision, Peter was told “Rise. Kill and eat.” He began to realize that it is not a matter of rejecting or of saying, “No, I am not going to eat that. I am not going to have contact with Gentiles.”

To go into a house of a minority people and to stay there can be something of a challenge to some people used to the city. To sleep in a room while hearing the pigs snorting downstairs can be hard. It is easy to say, “Oh, I don’t want to associate with these people.” But when you build friendships with them, and then they start inviting you into their homes, you will be associating with people different from yourself.

When you look around, start developing skills of looking and seeing. One way of doing this is actually drawing some sketches. Start getting notebooks and sketching what the buildings are like. You will find that people will come up to you and say, “Oh. What are you drawing? You have missed this side.” You will look and see that maybe there is something small that you overlooked. But for them, it is something important in their building and you begin to talk about it.

People are interested. They want to know. This is tangible heritage. It is something that can be seen. It is something that can be observed and recorded. This is one of the easiest ways to start asking questions about people, about what their beliefs are. Why do they build a house in a certain way? Why do they build these towers in the Chuan valley? What was the purpose for them?

Today many of these beautiful items are becoming no more than tourist attractions. Maybe that is one use for them, as long as we don’t just look and take photographs, but spend time listening to the people. When you invite someone into your home, you have entered into a new relationship with that person. “Strangers you keep out; friends you invite in.” You show them hospitality and that is the beginning of building bridges, of understanding about people. Then you begin to understand how you can share something of your life with them, and they share their life with you.

LESSON 6: INTANGIBLE THINGS

In the previous lesson, we were looking at tangible heritage, things like buildings and other things that can be seen and analyzed. In this chapter, we are going to look at the opposite, which is intangible things. Intangible things are not fixed. They are not material, but are expressive of people. That's one way of looking at intangible things. This is the area where people seek to express themselves. There are two main areas we are going to look at.

The first area relates to language and the second is that of arts and crafts.

LANGUAGE

Before you even go to another people, it's good to learn some phrases. You might have met up with people who are from that district. Try to begin to learn from them. When you get to an area, don't just depend on the Mandarin that you know. Start listening to how they speak to each other and what they are saying. This is important for at least three reasons.

1. Even if it is at a simple level, **learning their language shows respect for them, their culture, and their language.** It shows love, which is the path of developing this bond of trust. So many Han Chinese move to minority areas and don't take the time to learn the language. This is because they can communicate so easily using Chinese. If you spend the time to learn the language, it shows love.
2. **Learning the language allows understanding of people's thoughts in a deeper way.** This is because language conveys ideas. To get an understanding of those basic ideas, you need to know the language. Their use of a word might be different from your understanding of that word. When you speak the language, you are getting a deeper understanding of their ideas, especially when it comes to things relating to religion, illnesses, techniques, and farming. For all of these sorts of things, you need knowledge of words in order to be able to communicate more effectively.
3. **Learning the language allows better communication because people like to speak in their first language.** If you can start sharing at that level, they can

respond. So often, the problems that people have are difficult for them to express in a second language. They will be able to buy and sell things in Mandarin, but they are not able to communicate some of their feelings or struggles in Mandarin. So, if someone is interested in becoming a Christian, then you ought to be able to talk to that person in their first language.

These are the three main reasons why learning a language is important. You should start learning it even before you go. But, how do you learn a language? There are universities in China that provide courses on learning minority languages. Unfortunately, these are usually open only to foreigners coming in with student visas. It's often difficult for a Han Chinese to be able to study a language in this way. They may be asked, "Why do you want to do this?" Unless there is a particular purpose, then you stand out. You've got to find other ways. Here are some useful ways of doing this is:

- First of all, listen to local people and pick up certain **phrases**. Tashe da le is a phrase that is quickly picked up. It is just a typical greeting of a Tibetan person. Its meaning is one of peace. You will quickly pick up that. Start listening to others. Get other phrases and try to pick up the rhythm of the sounds.
- Try to learn **key words**. If you are running a business, find the local word for the item that you have in Chinese and try to build up a dictionary. In some cases, you will find a local dictionary of Chinese and the local language. That will give you extra phrases that you will be able to learn and understand.
- Find someone who will be **a teacher** for you. At first people might be a bit reluctant to do this sort of thing. They may question why you want to learn the language. But if they see that you are interested, then you may be able find a good teacher who will be able to instruct you regularly in understanding the language. That person can become a good friend, someone who is listening to you. You may build a relationship with him or her. This is another reason why you need to find such a teacher. It may be that you have to pay a small amount for their time. Make an offer. It will show that you are serious about the study. It's so easy to become overwhelmed by all the other things you've got to do that language learning gets

marginalized. Spend time just learning the basic phrases and you will be able to start to communicate quickly.

We will come back to the issue of language later on in another chapter. Here, we are looking at intangible culture and language is a part of that. Language is important in learning about the stories, songs, and other old traditions of a people. This is part of their heritage, and heritage is one of the intangible things important to a culture.

In one way, culture is about the way we **dress**. It's easy to see that other people wear different clothes than we do. But in actual fact, by looking at dress, you can see different things about people. This is what I want to explore now.

First, you have to be aware of the people. If you look at a people from a minority group, very often you will notice that they wear clothes that are somewhat different from others. A Muslim is characterized by the fact that a man wears a little white cap and his wife wears a covering over her head. Even if it's a sunny day, or if she's working in the kitchen, she will keep her head covered. It's a characteristic that you know. Their dress is linked with a particular identity and a particular way of life. He is making a statement by wearing dressing that way.

When you go to a Tibetan area, especially during festivals, you will find that people will wear different clothes. At festivals, you are often able to look at the young women and you can tell which one is married and which one is not. This is because those who are married wear long colored cloaks, whereas, the unmarried ones have clothes with white and black bands. This shows that they are not yet married. So, you can tell a lot from the dress of people.

In some societies, you see another side to this issue. Dress isn't just a matter of conforming to culture or doing what everybody else does. People like to be individuals, and so you will find varieties within a culture. You will find individuals have distinctive fashion. Fashion is often the word that anthropologists use in discussing individual styles of dressing. We've all got all different preferences in relating to colors. We might have different styles of dress. For

university students, when you look around the classroom, you will see great differences in the colors, styles, and even in the hairstyles.

Most Chinese girls like to have their hair long and often tied at the back in a ponytail. But some want it different. They want to express their individuality. So they go to their hairdressers and add color to it. Some even have it cut short, and dye it blonde, making them stand out in the student body. This is what you can find in fashion. Fashion is part of being distinctive, and of saying, “I am different from other people.”

The third area that is significant here is **uniforms**. The English word actually comes from the idea of “unique in one form, shape, or design.” Uniform means everyone has the same sort of dress. You see this in many places.

When you go to a cafe or restaurant, you will see that the waiters come and serve you, and they often wear uniforms. Everyone wears the same style of dress. You can go to a hospital and you can tell who the doctors are, and the nurses, and the attendants, because there are different types of uniforms for each one.

You also find this in the military. The soldiers have got distinct colors. You can tell who is a part of the police force, or in the army, or who is with the navy. Even in some businesses, you can tell what rank people have and what jobs they do. If they wear dark purple suits, whether a man or a woman, you know that they are a top ranking executive. On the next level, they wear gray suits. These are in the lower management position. Then you move on to another level and you find those in security will wear a dark gray uniform. Lower than them, have people who are cleaners, and they have their own uniform. Those who work in the gardens have their uniforms as well, and so it goes for each worker. You can classify what people do by their uniforms. Uniforms tell us about the role of a person.

Even among religious people, this happens. When someone joins a Buddhist monastery, he will change his clothes, shave his head, and put on robes, usually the deep red robes of a monk. If he goes into a Chinese monastery, he will

have dark gray robes. Different colors indicate different traditions. You can know a lot about people by their clothes.

The forth area that relates to clothes is that of distinctive dress for special occasions. A wedding is an obvious example of this. In modern China, the bride in the city would want to wear a white wedding gown. After the welcoming, she would come back wearing a traditional red dress. She is linking across two traditions. The white dress is a characteristic of western society. It's seen globally as something that a bride would wear. The red, on the other hand, is a sign of blessing and good fortune characteristic of Chinese tradition.

What have seen here? Dress, including how we cut our hair, what clothes we wear, and the adornment we use, all show us something. It is not just a matter of seeing these things as something strange. It's something important.

One anthropologist said that the body is the physical link between ourselves or our souls, and the outside world. It is the medium through which we most directly project ourselves in social life. This is what Victoria Ebe discovered in her study of dress and its role in culture.

It is the way we project what we want the world to see about us. This raises a question: how do we dress? Because the way we dress says things about us. Therefore, we need to be careful that we are communicating the right sort of message. I can easily communicate that I am keeping my own manner of dressing, and that I have nothing to do with the local style of dress. We can laugh at the local dress, saying all sorts of things, like, "Why does he wear that strange hat?" It projects a critical attitude that does not build trust.

How can I build trust with the people that I am around? I do it by taking on some of their dress. Maybe we do not adopt all of it, because we are never going to be exactly the same as they are. They know that. You can take on part of it, what is adaptable to you. You will quickly realize that they are happy just to see you are accepting something that is a part of their lives.

These are some of the things that are most important. For the E people, down in the Eunuch, dress becomes quite significant. When a girl becomes a young woman, when she reaches marriageable age and begins looking for a husband, she will often change what she wears. The makeup and necklaces she puts on helps her to stand out. Everyone now knows that this young girl is hoping to be married.

Something else related to dress is how that dress is made. Among the Chan, one of the most important things is the head cover for the women. This is usually a black covering that goes down to the back. This keeps the sun off of the back of her neck. She can always flip it forward so that it acts like a shade over her eyes. This isn't just a black piece of material. The Chinese are especially good at needlework. They make various patterns of flowers and shapes of spices. Each one will do have own preferred style.

This is in art form that is much appreciated, not only by the local people, but by many tourists. Tourists are eager to buy such things. Many of the Chan people make a living by the cross stitch featured in their shoes, hair coverings, and shirts. They make money by using the skills they've got. These skills show the patterns that are important to them. You should try to learn about such things. Find out about what they think by asking them about their art. Ask them, "What does this pattern mean, or this flower, this tree, or this mountain?" All these things can be hidden in the art of their dress. By asking them, you can find out about things that are special to them, or what things which are not special to them.

That leads us to our third thing. We've been looking at dress, but what you can also see besides dress are other art forms. Other things that are important can include paintings or sculptures. This is often called "expressive culture," because people are expressing how they see things. You can see this in many different places.

For example, if you look at a Muslim mosque, you don't find any pictures of people or of animals. This is because Islam forbids such things. What you do see are designs. You might be impressed by the colors of the blue, white, and green

stones and the mix of beautiful mosaic patterns that shimmer in the sun. In the mosque, there are lots of colors being reflected. There are no animals or people, but if you look closely, you begin to see the patterns and words. You would recognize those words if they were in Chinese, but the characters are Arabic. They state some of the basic principles of Islam in beautiful Arabic calligraphy. Some of the words include, “Allah ak bar” – “God is great.” You can look and you can ask the people what the words mean. They will tell you. You begin to see the patterns there. Islam forbids any images, and so you won’t find those images there. Instead, you find calligraphy.

But also, something else Muslim art. As you look at the beautiful pots and the other beautiful things that they make, you will nearly always find that they imperfect. This is because of their belief that on earth, nothing is perfect. God alone is perfect. From the art, you begin to understand something about their religion.

In contrast with Muslims, you come to the Tibetans and the Mongolians with their form of Buddhism. Here, it’s totally different. If you look at their art forms, you will find a lot of shapes hanging from the roofs and all around the walls-- pictures of people and figures. They often seem very alive, but they are all different. As you look around, you can see different images of the Buddha. If you look closely at the way their hands are positioned, each one is representing a different thing.

Another thing you will find in Tibetan Buddhism are the “eight species signs.” These signs are regarded as bringing good fortune. In many places in China today, you will find a growth of interest in Guan Yin, the goddess of Chinese Buddhism. You will find that many towns and places are beginning to build this image. One island has one of the biggest images of Guan Yin in all of China.

This island has become almost like a playground for people who are interested in Guan Yin. The tourists come to the island to have a holiday, but they will also go before this statue of Guan Yin in the park and give offerings and ask for

blessings. You will even find this in some of the smaller towns throughout China, like the town of Numa. Here you will find a temple that has been in the process of restoration since the reform and opening up of China. There is much more opportunity for ordinary people to express themselves and their religion. The temples are in the process of big changes.

Sometimes government officials are insuring that some money is going toward the restoration of the temples. This is so that they look nicer in the town. Inside these temples are big images of Guan Yin. It's not just a matter of the officials giving the money for the restoration. These ordinary people--people like the little woman who might be selling noodles down the road or who might be cleaning the streets--are the ones who will give smaller amounts each week toward putting gold upon the statue of Guan Yin.

Art also shows how culture is changing. You can see this in all societies. In China, during the time of Chairman Mao, there was a restriction in the sort of music permitted. Classical music was encouraged. The sort of books that were read were those from the nineteenth century Europe. Those by Charles Dickens and Jane Austen were popular.

But since the opening up, there's been a lot more western popular music. Now you have artists coming through that have not been seen before. Pop stars from America and Europe, South Korea and Taiwan are very popular. Therefore you find Chinese young people copying some of their styles. Even in the paintings that they are making, you can see a whole new form of art being created in China. Chinese artists are creating their own styles based on some of the western and international styles. This is part of the change that is going on within China today.

You see this in western culture. Many writers have talked about how art has changed in the West. If you look back, maybe in 400 years, you can see the different styles of pictures that were popular. Much of the art portrayed Jesus in the arms of Mary. This style was quiet flat and almost heavenly in form. But then, as we come closer to the time of the Reformation, Jesus was portrayed as a more

human person. It looked more like an ordinary woman holding an ordinary baby. The artist was trying to show Jesus being born into this world, a real world, not just an angelic world.

Since the invention of photography, there have been changes, especially in design. You see it within western art. The art is not just trying to capture the exact image, but it's trying to capture feelings. One of the outstanding pictures is that of Turner. He wanted to picture a boat in a storm. He could have easily taken photographs of such a thing. But he wanted to get the feelings of it using colors and writings and shapes.

This is what we've done. This is the expression that is often found in western culture--an attempt to go deeper than just taking a photo. It is trying to express the feelings of people. Often artists are the ones who try to express their feelings. They become the ones who bring about change within society by the way they design things and the way they express themselves. So often, the artists can be the revolutionary in the way that he expresses himself. So art becomes a way in which you can see that society is changing.

We've come to the last topic, which is music and dance. Especially among the minority groups of China, music and dance is very popular. Often at night, after people have done their work, they will gather in the town square and will take part in some of the dancing. At the universities, the sport ground will often have dances. You will find that this is the time that the people from the minority groups are eager to show other people how to do the dances. It's an opportunity to make friends. It's an opportunity to participate in their way of life in a way that is accepted, fun, and enjoyable. If you attend these events, you will begin to become known by the people.

The ethnic music and dance might seem different, but many Han Chinese are learning the dances of the minority groups. In so doing, they are building bridges, and we need to find ways of building bridges to these people.

Participation is going to be the topic of the next section. We have come to the end of the first part. We've been looking at observation. Now we will move on to part two where we will be looking at how to ask questions to get deeper understanding about people's culture. Then we will go onto the third part, which relates to participating in different cultures.

LESSON 7 –INTERVIEWING

In this chapter, chapter seven, we are going to look at interviewing. This is one of the main tools used by the anthropologist in understanding other people. We have been looking at observation, and now we will look at interviewing. This is asking people questions about their ways of life. There are advantages to the interview method. Five advantages stand out as being of special importance.

The first is asking questions. That seems obvious, but you can develop observation skills to get answers to questions that might be in your mind. Yet by asking questions, you can get a deeper understanding of the culture.

The second is when you do not only get a response in verbal terms. You can find out much by the way people say things. You can find out much by the way they give an answer. Do they pause before giving an answer? Does that show that they are thinking about it? Does that mean they are hesitant about how to reply to you? In some other cases, people find that they can answer you immediately and easily. Sometimes from the tone of voice, you can learn much about how people think about a topic. Does their tone indicate sadness or disappointment, or is the tone happy? You know you are not only getting a verbal response, but also the feelings of the person.

Thirdly, the interview method allows you to be able to ask for clarification. You can stop and say, "Have I got this right?" or, "What do you mean by this?" By such questions, you are really able to ensure that you understand what the person is saying.

The fourth advantage is you can ask follow up questions. You can say things like, “Oh, in the light of that, what do you think about this?” You develop more questions as one question follows the next. You can get a deeper understanding depending on the answers you have already understood.

The fifth advantage of the interview method is that you can adapt your method to different situations. It is not just a matter of one pattern that you should follow. There are various options available, depending on the situation and why you are asking the questions.

These are the five main advantages of this method, one that is widely used by the anthropologist in ethnographic research.

There are various types of the interview method, as I have implied. Some are very formal some are very informal. A formal interview will be that of a questionnaire in which you have a set of questions that people are encouraged to answer.

The other extreme is the informal interview where you are chatting with people. You could be in the teahouse, drinking tea with friends, and as you talk to them, you get information about different events. Between these two extremes there’s a variety of other forms generally called in English, semi-formal. It could be just a list of questions.

So let us look at the formal method first of all, the questionnaire. In China, it tends to be the government that uses the questionnaire most. Often people are a little bit apprehensive of what is happening, but this can be of value in understanding the local culture. The advantage of a fixed questionnaire is that you have a standard that is used with all types of people. You could have many people going out to ask the questions and writing the answers. You can compare this and can get a lot of information about people from different interviewers over a short period of time. The questionnaire must have four characteristics.

First of all, it must be short. It is so easy to make it long and to have more and more questions. The questions themselves must not be too long or too complicated.

If they become complicated, the answers you get back will indeed be confusing. People will answer different parts of the question. That is why you need to have short questions.

This brings us to the second thing. It needs to be simple. Do not try to ask two things in the same question, because the response might be confusing. They might be answering yes or no to one part, and they might have different feelings relating to the next part. You need to keep the questions simple and you have to record the answers in a form that is simple.

You need to keep in mind what you want to achieve through the questionnaire. What is the aim of it? You are not just collecting information. You are collecting relevant information for a purpose. You need to know what that purpose is and keep it in mind. You need to ask sufficient questions in order to put it in its wider context, but not more than that.

Fourthly, it needs to be appropriate to the situation. How are you going to get people to complete the questionnaire? If they are students at the university, they may be willing to fill in the questionnaire by hand. However, if you are working in a village situation where people have little education, some respondents may be illiterate. You may need somebody to help write his or her answers down.

Let me give you an example of a questionnaire that a university in Szechwan used recently. It is looking at the left behind children. This is the term for the children of migrant workers who have moved from the countryside to the cities. They move and leave their children behind, usually to be looked after by grandparents. However, many of these children are having difficulties. They struggle at school. They end up looking after their elderly grandparents. They become destructive within the community. In China, authorities have noted this problem.

The question has come up, what can be done to help these children? A questionnaire was written in order to find out the situation that these children are in. The questionnaire is addressed to a particular household. The questionnaire was taken by university students who spoke Szechwan and who would go to the village

areas and the homes. They did this soon after the spoon festival, when everybody was home. This was an appropriate time. Then you would have the grandparents, and the parents who had returned from the city, and children all there. That way you could ask questions about the household.

They would ask questions like how many live in the household? How many go off to the cities? Do the mother and father go to different cities to work? What about the children? Who looks after them? What about the health of grandparents?

Some of the grandparents are disabled, and some become sick and so they would find it difficult to look after the young boys who are growing up into **manhood**. The girls might be busy at home, cooking food, looking after the elderly. There is the farm and the need for schooling. Sometimes no work is done on the farm and so the fields are left empty. Maybe they can find someone else to look after the fields, but that is not common. So what can be done?

The questionnaire will try to ask these questions in order to identify the problems such families are facing and look at the academic records of these children. How are they doing at school? Most of them are failing. About 80% will go no further in their education and have nothing else to look forward to but the time when they can follow their parents to the cities. So what happens with the farm? What happens with grandparents?

The survey is trying to find out where the families are now. From this, they try to look at ways in which help can be given, especially to the children. Will something like an **after-school** club be helpful? The children can be given something like an after-school club in their studies. It will be good for them to have extra classes in Chinese or in English.

The officials will also be looking for ways in which the children's needs can be met. The central government in Beijing is particularly interested in this sort of thing because they recognize this problem. It is a social problem that faces many people. This is the use of a questionnaire.

One thing we should always do is explain to people what the reason is for the questions. That is the starting point. We find that as students took the questionnaire around and explained what they wanted to study, the people responded, “Yes! That is a big problem here. Some of the boys are rebellious and they ran off, but the girls work under the burden of this. They get little education. They sleep at school because they are so tired.”

They wanted to find ways for their grandchildren to move forward academically. Once they explained the reason for it, and then they started getting some real answers.

Many universities **make use of** a formal questionnaire. Sometimes they publish their results. They even have the questionnaire on websites, so you can sometimes find out more about these things. Many universities in the big cities conduct studies about migrant workers coming into the cities. They look at the things things they face, the problems, especially having to do with health. The Chinese government is looking at improving health. The formal questionnaire method is a way to gather this information.

Then between the informal questionnaire and the formal is the semi-formal. It is a list of questions. For Christians moving into an area, this is probably one of the best ways to get to know more about the way people live. You should have questions relating to some particular theme. When you go into any society for the first time, that is the time when you can ask questions. When you have been there four or five years, people will think you should know by then. They will find it strange that you are asking questions.

So make up a list of questions. In a later chapter, we are going to be looking at things such as weddings and funerals. Those are often good times to ask questions. You can ask questions about who is getting married to whom, why they are getting married, and where they they going to live. All those sorts of things are part of the

list of questions, whether you have it in your hand or in your mind. You should make a list.

Then we also have the informal interview. Often this can be beneficial. Remember that what you are trying to do is to understand their way of life. You can have a casual conversation with a taxi driver or with a person in a shop or in a restaurant. You can find out more and more about what the people are facing.

One thing that is important in all of this is that you need to keep **confidentiality**. You do not share things about people's personal lives with other people. This would be gossiping. It is something we all need to guard against. We need to be careful about this in the way that we pass on information from interviews, and also in the notes that we take. We must be discreet in what we do. During the interview, it is good to tell people exactly what you are going to do with that information.

We have everything from a formal questionnaire that can be used to look at the social situations of people, right down to the informal chat. All of them are different methods that have different purposes. You need to be able to use different ones in different situations.

We have looked at the types of interviews. The third thing to look at is your role as an interviewer. This varies and it is important to understand. We have talked about role before. It is your status, your position within the society. It is the answer to the question, who are you? Who are you to be asking these questions? What sort of person are you? You need to overcome suspicion. We have talked about this before in connection with entering a culture.

The same is true with these interviews. Why are you asking these questions? Is this a government survey? What is behind it? People's attitudes will change depending upon the circumstances. The sort of answer you get will depend on things like your age. You will find that when a younger person interviews an older person, the older person will give a different answer to a younger person. An older person may not tell him all that he may like to, because this is just someone

younger. Whereas, if an older person is doing the interview, the person answering the questions would regard the interviewer as being in the same age group as himself, and he will treat him with respect.

The gender of the person doing the interview also matters. If a young girl is asking questions of a male lama, she can often get different answers than if an elderly foreigner asking the same sorts of questions. An elderly lama may not appreciate the fact that a young woman is asking him questions. You need to realise that who you are is going to be important. You have to find a way to encourage the person to share openly and honestly with you.

Status is also a factor here. Who are you? Often you find that if a person is respected, and the people understand the reasons for the questions, then they will give answers that are real and genuine. This is what we found with the questionnaire relating to the left behind children. The people will want to find ways that are meaningful and useful to help those doing the study. When they knew this, and that the people behind it had money in order to be able to help the situation, they were willing to give answers even to the young students. This is because the people know that all this will go back to help set up a policy and a plan that will help everyone within the village. Status is important in all of this, in getting the information.

Linked up to this role is that of context. This concerns when and how you do the interview. I will go back to what we talked about in the previous chapter, which is this prior question of trust. To get real genuine answers, people have to be able to trust you. In many cases if the trust is not there, they will give quick answers which are enough to satisfy, but may not be useful or even true.

In developing this prior question of trust, you need to think about the context, the time when you actually do the interview. For example, when do you do an interview? First of all, it has to be at a time that is convenient to the people themselves.

If you are in a farming area, there are times of the year when people are very busy such as during the season of harvest. They do not want to spend time giving

interviews. They are tired after the day's work. They have been out working in the fields, building houses, doing many things and they are too tired. However, there are times of the year when they have planted the seed and the crop is growing and they have more time. This is an appropriate time to ask questions. They like talking to people then because there is nothing else to do.

I once went to Chang village following the earthquake. In the village, there were some old people around. They were too old to do some of the heavy lifting that was needed in building the new village and the new buildings. So they cooked the food. Then after meals were served, they would sit back and talk. When I was there, they were happy to talk. They talked about the situation that they faced, the houses that were being built, and about what they felt they had lost in the earthquake. All of this happened because it was an appropriate time. But then they would get up, get involved in cooking the meals and getting ready for the evening. For that group of people, I was able to talk to them. The parents they were working on the houses. The children were down at the temporary school in the valley below. But the old people were there. That was a convenient time for them to talk and they enjoyed talking.

Often it is the older people who are the ones who have time. When? Where? Those are the questions you need to ask. Sometimes people find it embarrassing to answer questions in a public area. They are giving answers not just to you, but also to the other people who might be listening around them. So they are careful about what they are saying. They choose different words.

But in a quiet room where just the two of you are talking, you might get different answers, answers that are more from the heart and the feelings of the person. They might be willing to express sorrow, whereas in public they might express their gratitude to this person or to that official or to this office. But, in fact, they do have real problems that have not been addressed. This is why you need to be careful about when and where you ask your questions.

And the third point is how you ask the questions. This has to do with your skill, the tone of your voice, and **the look that you have on your face**. Are you listening to them? Are you sympathetic to them? Are you showing that you are following them?

This is the problem that many government surveys have. The officials go out and fill in the forms. It is obvious that they just want to fill in their forms and that they are not really listening to what the person is saying. For us, it has to do with building trust. We need to develop listening skills. We need to pay attention to what they are saying. How I ask the questions is important. Do they see concern on my face? Do they see that I am really listening to the words they are saying and reflecting back in order to advance in my knowledge. If it is a questionnaire, then I need to be careful what I am writing down. I want to be sure that I am saying exactly what they think. This all has to do with the context of any interview--choosing the right time, choosing the right place, and developing the right attitude in asking the questions.

Finally, you need to say something about the informant, the person that you are interviewing. The first example is the ordinary person. This is the person that you meet on the street, find in the snack bars, or in your neighbourhood. Ask them about some of the issues that they are dealing with or about their way of life. You can ask them about some of the things that we are going to be talking about—festivals and marriages and families. This is often a good way to get started.

One of the instructive ways to interview people is through their life stories. People are eager to tell you stories, some of the things that they have gone through. China has changed much in the last sixty years, and some of the people have gone through very difficult times. They often are willing to tell you such stories. Many have written about these stories and some have been published, not only in China, but also around the world. The life story is also a useful means for drawing information out of people about their society and how society has changed.

Many will tell you how life is better now than it was thirty years ago. Now they have food, doctors, and many things that before were lacking. So use life stories, but remember this issue of trust. Build into your questions and their stories confidentiality. What the person has shared with you must not be misused by others in society.

The second thing regarding ordinary people is something called sampling. In other words, you need to get different opinions. This is because if you talk to a woman about something, you might get a different answer than a man would give you. I remember some work I was doing in Africa. We were looking at a project on development and improving the society in a very dry area of Africa. Talking to the men about water, they said, "There is no problem with water," but when we talked to the women, they said "Oh yes! The water is running out." It was the women who went out and got the water. The men did not do that work. All they saw was that the pots of water were there in their house for them to wash and for food. This is why we had two different answers. You need to be careful about this.

This is what we mean by sampling. Look at distinct groups of people within the society and make sure you ask each group for their views. In Africa, the men do certain jobs and the women do certain jobs. The men do not understand all the jobs of the women. Likewise, the women do not understand what the men do. You need to be careful.

Another project we were looking was working with the people who were involved in the earthquake. They were moved to temporary accommodations by the government. In that temporary accommodation you had two sorts of people—the Han Chinese who came from the towns that had been damaged such as Muachian and Win Chuan, and the Chang. They are different people, but they could both speak Cihuanhua. For the Chang, their main language was Chang, but for the Han, it was Chinese. They each have a different way of life.

The Chang came from the mountains where it was cold and the skies were bright. You could take your meat and you could hang it up and it would dry in the sunshine.

But in the valley, it was more humid and damp. There were different sorts of food to cultivate in the field and they had struggled. The two groups historically have had different struggles. The Chang did not have shops because they did not sell things in that way. But the Han had shops. They started some shops, and then government officials tried to get the Chang to do something similar, but that was not part of their culture. Now, because of the earthquake, two groups had moved into the same area and each had very different problems. They found that they could easily clash with each other and not find ways to live peacefully with each other.

Thirdly, do not just to do sampling, but look at certain specialists. If you want to find out about medicine and healing, then you would go to the doctor, not just to the patient. The doctor will give you different answers about a person's illness than the person himself. Likewise, in many areas, there are those people who are specialists. You should be talking to them, especially when it comes to religious truth.

This is something about which you need be careful. Religious specialists will give you a different sort of answer from a layperson. If you ask what the purpose is of a festival, the layperson will give you one answer, whereas the lama, the monk, or the healer will give you a different explanation. Often that answer will involve something of a sacred truth that is important to them and they may point to some books or some texts.

Here we have the role of the informant as the person who gives that information. You need to be wise. Remember to do sampling, so you are choosing groups of people who will be able to give you significant answers about the topics you are looking at.

Thirdly, the specialist will be able to give you insights into things that are considered sacred to them. This is the end of this first section on interviews.

A good exercise for you to do is, after talking to your informant, sit down, and write down some of the things that he or she has said. It may be a life story. How does that story differ from your story? As we will see in the last part of this course, recording is one of the most useful things to do in order to understand a culture. So

we can start here, collecting the information about the life of the person who is your informant. Remember to keep confidentiality about this, and in all things build trust.

LESSON 8

We are going to look further at interview methods and try to learn something. We talked in the previous chapter about the advantages of the interview methods, types of interviews, role, context, and informants. Now we are going to try to see how to get more information from the discussions, look at some of the limitations of the interview method, and then some of the ethics involved in the method as a whole.

First of all, let's consider obtaining more information from the **informant**. I mentioned in the previous chapter that how we respond in an interview can influence the answers people give. Are you really interested in them? There are some techniques that you can use in order to encourage people to share what is really important to them. There are five that I want to have a look at.

The first one is **silence**. When you've asked a question and the person gives an answer, sometimes you can tell they want to say more and they pause. Don't just come in and ask another question. Give him space to follow through on what he's saying. There is nothing wrong with having that period of quiet. Friends are those who can sit together in times of quietness and not have to say things. They are friends and they know they are supportive of one another. By looking at the person and being patient, that person might go on and give some further information.

The second way is to **acknowledge them**. It could be by saying "Ah," or using simple little verbal expressions to show that you are listening. This is the same thing we do on telephones when we can't see the person. You just give a little grunt to show the person that you are there and that you are listening and responding to what they are saying.

The third way is by **asking a question**. It could be a very simple question. "Can you tell me more about that, please?" "Have I correctly understood what you said?" Such little questions can draw the person out a little further. As we said in the previous chapter, one of the advantages of the interview method is that it allows you to use follow up questions.

In the formal approach, you use a questionnaire, and there is often just one logical pattern all the way through to the end. But with the informal method, you can go off to other subjects. It could be that there are issues that you haven't ever thought about that are important for this topic. You ask a question and the answer you get shows that this is a new area. You need to explore that new area, and so instead of making a logical linear approach to it, you can go off on a different direction and discover new things. That's one of the advantages of a personal interview, an informal interview, because you can often see how the people

themselves link things together and what is important to them. That comes about by asking further questions based upon their answers, rather than just following the list of questions that are on the questionnaire.

The fourth thing that is associated with this is **reflecting back** on what they have said. Reflection holds up a mirror to make sure that you understand what has been said. So ask something like, “Do I understand this correctly?” Then go on to express in your own words what you think the person has just said. In this way, they can say, “Yes, you have understood.”

This becomes quite important when it is personal problems that they may be facing. Especially for Christians who might be struggling with difficulties, it’s important for you to make sure that you understand what they are feeling. Don’t assume that you do. You need to make sure that you know what they are saying by asking them and not just assuming that you know it correctly. This is acting like a mirror to reflect back what they are saying. In this way, they feel they can trust you and that you are really listening to what they are saying.

The fifth point is **expanding** on what has been said. After they’ve answered your question, you can ask them to elaborate further. A simple question is, “Do you still feel the same about this today?” Have their views changed? How has this affected other people? If it’s a sensitive topic relating to the issue of left behind children, you won’t ask them specifically about their children. Some people don’t like talking about their children, but will talk more about other things in general. You can ask, “Do you think that this is a problem in your area? Are some people having difficulties with this?”

It’s easier for people to talk about the problems that others are having. Then through their voices, you will be able to see some of the things that they themselves are facing. In this way, you are expanding your information beyond the questions that you might find in a questionnaire. You are expanding it into a wider arena. So often, when people start talking about others, they are actually speaking about their own situations and, in this way, you can understand more about them.

These are the five ways in which you can get more information. This is basically a matter of techniques and skills, but again, remember the importance of the prior **question of trust**. As a Christian, you need to have the integrity that shows people that you are not just there to gain information. You are there to gain information so that you can show your love to these people and to be better able to communicate the love of Christ to them in their situation. That is the process that is going on. This is a difficulty that many professional anthropologists have. They gather their information so that they can write up their academic papers, which are published internationally so that they can see their career

progress and become famous. But we are here to be able to show the love of Christ to this people.

Another way of obtaining more information is to have **focus groups**. This term has come to mean a group of people who come together to talk about common things. These could be people from the same village. Here you might find the people gathered together to talk about some problems that they have in their village. In many minority areas, you will find important concern for them, such as schools. They may want a primary school in their town or village. By people coming together, they can share and talk about their situations and the problems that they face.

Often these things happen when there have been earthquakes or some disaster in the community. People get together and they want to talk about these things. As you talk with them, and they talk with each other, you will find that you might get some person who will say certain things. "In my opinion, it is this..." But others might say, "Oh no. That is not what we all think." So you start getting the opinion of the group as a whole and not just the individual.

We talked earlier about the case of the women going to get water in the African village. That can always be interesting because often you will find that women have different experiences from the men in some areas. It could be not only that the women struggle more with childbirth, but that they also are the ones looking after the young children.

Then there is another group, like the grandparents, who might be looking after the grandchildren while their sons and daughters are at work. They are looking after the children. They sit in the sunshine and often are willing to talk to you about some of the things that they know. In this way, you can get insight from a particular generation.

In this one type of group, because there are a number of people there, the answers they give are not only from them to you, but might be influenced by the fact that others are listening to them. In this way, you may get a slight difference in the answers that they share.

This is valuable because you are getting more of the standard views of what the people think about the topic, rather than just the views of some individuals. You will get more variety if you talk to individuals from the focus group. Their different views will balance themselves out. This is a good starting point in looking for a group of people and talking to them about their views.

The interview method is good, but there are limitations. We need to look now at those limitations and to bear this in mind with the information that we obtain. Three things are important here.

Firstly, the person may have **imperfect memories** of the event. With the passing of time, our views change and we forget things. This is why the anthropologists will always write things down. We might think, "I will always remember that event." But sometimes you do forget part of the story. Generally, what you find happens is that people will retell a story about an event, and it almost becomes standardized. You find this with tourists.

Tourists come from Beijing to experience life in minority areas, and by the time they get back home, they have made up stories to tell to their friends and their colleagues at work. They will tell them about the houses and other things. Stories are told of the beautiful girls of the valley, and most of the stories get passed on. There are beautiful girls in the valley, but there are also ordinary girls, and so the stories are told and retold.

It could be that they tell about some negative things, and so when they go back, that is mostly what they remember. They have structured the story so that when international tourists come to China, they can have these same sorts of experiences. They may focus on one thing. It can be a negative thing. Then they go back and tell their friends about that negative thing that happened to them. There is imperfect recall.

So, when you talk to people, you've got to beware of this. The stories they tell can even become the standardized stories. It's a danger for Christians. We talk about how we became Christians, but sometimes, as we tell it over and over again, we develop some little structures, little phrases. These things come about from telling the story over and over again. It's not wrong by any means, but sometimes it gets fixed in our minds a certain way, and there are many other things that happened that are not included in the story.

The second limitation that we have is that **the person may not be telling the truth** or at least not the whole truth. There was a team of American students who were studying anthropology who were on a field trip in northern Kenya. This was part of their assignment. They were asked by their professor to make a survey of the local area, and especially of the young men and how they relate it to their animals. It was in an area where there had been droughts for a number of years. Many of their animals were dying.

This group of students organized themselves and went out to the very dry areas to find out what was happening. They met up with some of the young

Kenyans there. The students could speak Swahili, which is the national language of these people. As they talked, the young men started telling them stories and they said, “Oh, this is a secret story. Do not write about it.” But all the students started writing these stories in their notebooks. When the Kenyans went away, they were laughing because these stories were all made up.

The Kenyans met up with the supervisors of these young students and he saw them laughing and started talking to them. The Kenyans told him what they had done. The students returned with their notebooks filled with these exciting stories that were all untrue. The point here is that you need to be careful. Are people telling the truth or the whole truth?

Sometimes people only tell part of the story. Maybe the part they don’t tell is the most significant part. This is where you need to build trust. If people know you and trust you, then they can communicate more openly with you. They don’t feel that you are just some distant stranger who’s collecting information. You are their friend, someone who is concerned about them. Friendship is part of building of trust, the trust bond. Out of that there can be better and more effective communication.

The third thing which is a limitation to the interview method is that **the person may feel differently now than he did at the time of the event**. His views may have changed. It can be that something tragic happened, but now, as they look back at it, they say that it worked out for the best. A person might not have passed the examination to go to the university, but they were able, after a while, to set up a business, maybe to set up a restaurant. That restaurant has flourished and now they are making more money than if they had gone to the university.

Their views from that time have changed. The feelings are different. That is always important. People are not fixed in their views. Such things happen. There are deaths and there are accidents, but good things can come out of those tragedies. As you listen, you will see the changes that have occurred. So the interview method gives us further insights into people and their situations, but it also has its limitations. These limitations need to be noted and you need to be careful.

Most of the limitations can be overcome through friendship. There is also another important issue relating to the interviews. It is ethics. What are you going to do with the information that the person has shared with you? You will write it down in your notebooks, but what else will you do with it? What is the value of it? This has various aspects to it.

First of all, we need to bear in mind the need for **respect for the people**. This is why we spent earlier chapters looking at appreciating other people. What we

talked about is ethnocentrism, looking down at other people. We should respect them when they don't have the education you do, or if they are of a different language group, or whether or not they can read or write. We should respect them as human beings. We are all made in the image and likeness of God. That is going to be our starting point. God loves them as He loves us. We need to respect them on that basis. We are not superior to them. We are all the same at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Respect for people is communicated through respecting their language, respecting their feelings, and respecting the information that they have shared with us, information that can often be important to them. Sometimes this can be personal information because it often involves sharing something of themselves. This is not something to be handled lightly. You can hurt people in how you handle the information that they have given to you. You can cause great pain because you mishandled something that to them is very important. Respect for the people is so important.

Secondly, anthropology talks about **the principle of causing no harm**. Seek good for them. When the people of Israel were taken captive to Babylon, the prophets gave words to those captives. The prophets told the people to seek the good of the city. That is what we should do for all people, seeking their good and not causing any harm.

It is very easy to start gossiping about what they have told us. Sometimes people can tell us stories that make us smile, funny stories of what has happened. We think, "Oh! My friend back at home would love to hear this story." It's very easy to start sharing that story. We are all prone to do this. This is something we have in the letter of James. He talks about the important of words, the words that we speak. We can easily use stories to make fun of people. We might not do it intentionally, but we do and it causes harm, especially if it gets back to the person who has told the story. You will find trust is gone. Once trust is gone, it is very difficult to build it again.

So take care. Seek the good of the people. Seek the good in regard to politics, because sometimes you will find officials might like to know some of the information you've gathered. Maybe their motives are not as honorable as yours. You've got to take care in whom you share things with, and what things you share with them.

The third thing will be to seek to **bring justice**. Be fair in what you are saying. We often can get into the position where we make judgments about people and we don't treat people equally. We need to bring justice by what we are saying

and doing. It may be in a local area. This is why we need to be careful, especially when we are with a person who feels that officials of the government have not treated them properly. We will be building a relationship with those people. This can affect our attitude towards people in the government. Perhaps the government officials have pushed them aside, saying that these people are lazy. It can influence our thinking. We need to bring justice into that situation.

As you will see in later chapters, this can lead us into a whole area of action. We are trying to bring about change for good in the society, and that can be part of it. As Christians, we are change agents in the world, seeking to make a difference, helping people to progress. Not only are we helping others to know more about our Lord and God, but we are helping to bring justice to a part of society and our world.

So there are three things here--respect for the people, seeking good for the people, and bringing justice. Linked to that is a subject that was touched upon in the previous chapter- confidentiality. In general, be willing to tell the people after an interview what you plan to do with that information. Sometimes, it's best not to put a name forward. You can perhaps use a code for it. Many anthropologists do this. As you write up your interview report, make sure you've got that code name in there. Make sure you put down the date and the times of that report and the situation in which you made that interview. All those things reinforce the information that you've got. For those doing research projects, this becomes something extremely important because you can go back and look at what is happening or why it happened.

Finally, to draw things together by way of the conclusion, how do you end an interview? Some things to note here:

First is to thank the person. This is especially important if the person is a stranger, but it is also important if the person is a friend. They have shared something of their story, their life with you. That information is valuable. They must know that you regard it as valuable. They have shared time with you, and that is important.

The second thing is to explain what you are actually going to do with the information. Make it clear to them that you are not going to use their name. You are going to bring this information together in order to try to help in a situation. Make it clear to them that you appreciate what they have shared.

The third thing is to ask if you can return. Following any interview, you will think about it, and as you talk to other people, more information will come to mind. You might find out that one person's answers were different from what you heard

from others. You might ask yourself, “Why is that person saying something different?” Therefore, you want to be able to go back. You want to be able to ask that person about it and be able to draw out more information. It could be that that person’s experiences are very different from the others in the society. But you didn’t know that until you started talking to others. So you need to be able to go back.

It could be someone who has become a monk in a **monastery**. Why did that person become a monk? Why did that person enter the monastery? It could be because that person’s parents had died. He was an orphan and the uncle who has been looking after him placed him in the orphanage as a young person. From the orphanage he went into the monastery. The monastery acted more like a family for him. So it’s important for you to be able to say, “Thank you for what you’ve been sharing. Is it all right if I come back to you and talk to you again?” People can value that.

Write down notes about your interview. It is important that you have things in writing. We’ll look at this in one of the final chapters, but making notes is important. If it’s a questionnaire, you have a piece of paper in front of you and you let the person see you filling it in. This is so you can respond back and say, “I have written this. Is that the answer? Is it right?” They know what you have written.

If it’s informal, maybe it’s best, when you return back to your room to write down what they have said, because you were busy listening. It’s part of the informal nature of it, but you need to write it down. Maybe the things that come out in the interview that relate to particular topics should be put it into another file. Later you can do research and you can get more information about their culture. Write out answers, put it down with the information about the person, including the time, the nature of it, the situation, the context, and how you felt the interview had gone, anything that helps you to better understand the information that you’ve received.

So we’ve come to the end of looking at interviews. In the following chapters, we want to be able to apply some of this to different situations and to look at how people live together and how people buy certain things. Interview methods become very valuable for finding out about these topics.

Today the exercise we’ll be presenting will be to make up a questionnaire concerning the people with whom you are interested. Choose the questions and put them in order so that the discussions flow from one to the next. Let someone you

know, who you can talk to about this, try asking the questions. In this way, you can develop the skills you need to be able to talk and draw out relevant information.

LESSON 9: MAKING A LIVING

In the previous two chapters, we have been looking at interviews as an ethnographic method to gather information about people, their ways of life, and the problems they face. In this chapter, we want to look at the situation of people who are moving from the countryside to the cities.

In the previous course on Cultural Anthropology, you looked at some things related to the way of life of a people. We talked about the four main classes of people that we have. One group of people is the hunters and gatherers. These are usually small-scale societies in which people gather food by hunting animals or collecting fruits. This is not relevant to China today. The second group was nomads. We will return to look at the subject of nomads because on the Chin-Hi plateau we still have nomads. The third group is the farmers and the fourth is the city dwellers. Those are the four main categories by which people make a living and get the food that they need.

We are going to begin by looking at farmers, but before we do, we need to clarify something. In the cities and in the big towns, you will often find farmers who have come into the cities. These are the so-called migrant workers. You can often see them working on the buildings. They are the ones we see so often sitting at the noodle bars, wearing their yellow hardhats and eating their cheap bowl of noodles. They live in the dormitories built for them by the construction company. They are there until the spring festival. After working for fifty weeks, they go back home. This is one the biggest migrations of people in the world. Every year, sixty or even seventy million people go from the cities back to their homes in the countryside. Most of these people are farmers, and they return to their farms. Anthropologists use the term "peasant" to describe these people, as did Chairman Mau.

A peasant is someone who lives in the countryside and gets food – his or her own food – by cultivating a piece of land. The anthropologist Robert Redfield did the first piece of work on peasants. He lived from 1897 to 1958. He worked in the

villages of Mexico. In the 1930's he published a number of books on peasant life. He did this by making use of interviews, by asking people how they lived. He came up with the definition of a peasant. The definition is "a peasant is a rural person whose way of life takes account of the cities."

In other words, he is a person who is living in the countryside, but whose life is affected by the city. They are in a relationship with the cities. Robert Redfield studied the distinctiveness of their way of life. This anthropologist, who was looking at the same sort of issues in Mexico as we have here in China, comments, "Peasants are definitely rural, yet they live in relation to the marking of time. They are a class segment of a larger population that usually contains urban centers, sometimes great cities. They are people with a distinct culture often found within a larger distinct culture." Here are some of the things that relate to the peasants. One can characterize a peasant by five things.

First of all, the peasant is involved with farming, cultivating the land. Keep in mind that there is a big difference between the farmers and the big companies who are involved in farming. There is also a big difference between any of the farmers in China and those that are found in Western countries. In Western countries, farming has become a business. People in the West use big equipment. The farmer in the West is a businessman, and he is producing food in order to sell it and make money from it.

In peasant society, the people are working in a small area. They produce the food for themselves. Their main work is to provide food for their family. The pigs that they have are for them to consume. Perhaps there will be one or two extra pigs that they can sell in the city. Their food comes primarily from the plot of vegetables that they are growing. It is for their own use, not for selling. Farming for peasants is not so much a business, but is for their consumption. Any additional food that is produced can then be sold.

The second thing about a peasant is that he has a piece of land, but sometimes that land is rented. In that case, he has to pay something to the

landowner for the use of the land. His land might be small, but it is something that is very important to him. You will find that a peasant knows the land. If he has several fields, he knows exactly what each field can grow. By feeling the dirt, he knows the quality of the soil. He knows where water is needed. He knows that the field on this side of the valley is better for growing maize, rice, or vegetables. He knows the land.

The third characteristic of a peasant, according to Chroppa and Redfield, is that the labor is done by the family. It is the family who works on the field. This can involve the whole family, both the elderly as well as the younger. Sometimes, when it comes to busy times, such as harvest times, you find even the children are called away from school so that they can help with the harvest. Suddenly, the school attendance drops.

It could be that the land is looked after by the grandparents while their children have gone to work in the city. In that case, it is the grandparents who have the responsibility of looking after the land. If there is the labor, if they do not do it, there is no one else. They do not have the money to be able to employ people to work for them. The family is the only source of labor.

The fourth characteristic you will find is the use of simple equipment. They do not have expensive equipment and tools. Maybe the village will have one tractor in order to cultivate the fields. Maybe that tractor will be owned by different families within the village. The tractor may help them, but in most cases, it is the individual families who plant the rice or the vegetables around the house in different fields. The equipment they have is simple tools. This is not like the elaborate equipment that is used in Western countries. In some areas of China, you cannot find expensive farm equipment.

The fifth characteristic is that peasants have contacts with markets in the cities. Peasants travel into the cities to go to the markets. You will find villages around a city with markets. The people in the villages will make their way to the markets. They may walk two, three, or even four or more hours to get to the market.

They make that journey from the valleys of Tisuan. You can find people coming down the paths from the high villages to the market towns.

They go to the markets to buy things that they need. There are some vegetables they cannot grow. There are things like fertilizers that they need to buy. There are also many other things like tools and cloth that they might need. They also may need to sell some of their products. They may need to see some of the products in the market. They can buy some of the things that they cannot produce themselves.

These are the characteristics of a farming community. It is a whole way of life built around farming. That is why anthropologists talk about this being a distinct society or culture. You can look at the villages, but to understand all about the life in the village, you have to understand something about the market towns and the people who come to the markets. This is where interview method can be very effective. You can discover some of the issues that are facing the farmers today in society. What are the problems that they face with their fields? It could be the lack of rain in many parts at China. This has become a major issue, especially in the north where they need additional water. There has not been as much rainfall as they have had in the past. Yet, in the south of China, there has been more rain. There have been floods, especially along the rivers. Many of the fields have been destroyed. The farmers have different problems and you will find that the farmers are always eager to talk about their feelings and what problems they are facing.

This is a way of understanding their way of life. One of the most extensive studies of Chinese culture is Wisdom by Fei Shai Tung. He lived from 1910 to 2005. He is one of the most famous anthropologists from China. He did a study of peasant life and culture. This was one of the first studies done by a Chinese person of Chinese culture. Fei Shai Tung studied in London, under a famous British anthropologist. His doctoral **dissertation** was published first in English, but it has become well known in China in the Chinese form. He was looking at typical peasant society and since that time, he has been a leading voice explaining the

situations that peasants face. The communist government has looked to him for advice and wisdom about the peasant situation.

With peasants, what is important is to understand is the how development has been affecting them. With the Hukou Policy that was introduced by the CCP in 1950s, there were restrictions made on people's movements to the cities. If your resident permit indicated that you were a city dweller, you stayed in the cities. Generally, that is where economic development occurred. For people whose resident permit indicates that they live in the countryside, they had different issues to face. The government has since made reforms and is now less restrictive, so that people may now be able to migrate into the cities. Still, many cannot leave the countryside.

Interviewing provides a way of talking to the people in the countryside about the situations they face. Some of the older people have traveled very little. They have gone to the market towns, but to go to the big cities, the capital of the province, such as Beijing or Shanghai, is very different. Many of them have never travelled that far. Some have never traveled more than twenty or thirty kilometers from their home village. The way they look at the world is therefore different. They tend to be much more traditional in their ideas and they are separated from the people in the cities.

They have children who go into the cities, but when they return, they differ in their views. They have seen something different that influences them. Many peasant farmers struggle trying to produce enough food. Those who live closer to the markets are able to sell their produce. They can arrange for trucks to take the produce from the villages into the cities where it can be sold. Some people take up their own initiative and they will transport their vegetables in sacks on bikes into the cities. Then they will sell them in the cities by the side of the road and travel back at night. The younger ones could be doing this while the older people are working on the farms. The peasant farmers have a complex way of life.

It is not a simple culture. The culture can only be understood if you take into account the role of the city. Often the city is where decisions are made about their situation, about their way of life. They often feel pushed to their limits. You can sense their frustration in their tone of voice. This is how it is for the farmers, the peasants.

The second culture in China is city life. Something different, especially in China, is the need for resident permits that indicate whether you are allowed to live in the city or if you are just a migrant worker coming in. This is something that is not found in other countries of the world. It is a major issue within China as people come into the cities to work and go back again. This huge migration occurs every year as people return home from the spring festival.

Cities are growing in China and the culture is changing due to that fact. In China, cities are growing more rapidly than in any other part of the world. England was the first country to become industrialized. In 1800, only 20% of the population lived in cities. In 1851, England became the first country in the world in which more people lived in the cities than in the countryside. The urban movement had begun. By the year 2000, somewhere in the region of 80% of the population of England was living in the cities. Now many people are moving back to the countryside because they find it more pleasant. English people look back to the countryside as being a nicer place to live, but they want the roads and the buildings to be up to the standards that are in the cities.

Similarly, in the United States, back in 1800, only three percent of the population lived in cities, but by the year 2000, it was 75%. This trend is reflected throughout the world as people are moving to the cities.

Likewise, in China, the cities are growing. People are moving to them in big numbers. In China today, those living in cities has gone up to 30% of the population. This means that the majority of people are still living in the countryside or in small towns. People who move into cities face problems. Many interview methods have been used to try to understand the issues facing those migrating to the

cities. Why do people go to the cities? There is a process used by anthropologists called “PUSH and PULL.”

There are those things that **push** people to go from one place to another. You can then ask the question, “Why come to this place? What causes people to leave?” People leave because they are struggling on their farms. That is one factor. Another factor that causes people to leave is loss of status. People can see the cars and the nice shops in the cities, and suddenly life in countryside is not so exciting. Sometimes it can be the monotony of life. It is nice to be with your family and friends in the countryside, but there is little activity except being able to watch TV and movies.

There are not that many people to visit with in the country, so that can cause monotony. Also, in the countryside there are traditional restraints. There are parents and others who ask questions. They know you and they know your background. You might find a little restraint that stops you being able to do some of the exciting things you would like to do. It is a type of lack of power because sometimes in order to make changes, the changes come from the cities. All things seem to focus on the cities, and so you can feel a degree of frustration. Personal things can be the case. It could be problems with neighbors, problems with boyfriends, girlfriends, or a combination of these.

These sorts of things can come out when you are interviewing individuals, asking why they are leaving. But then, the other side is the **pull**. This is what attracts them to the city. One thing is the possibility of jobs. In the cities, there are good jobs. It may be hard work, but you know you can get good money. You can earn four, five, even ten times as much as you could if you stayed at home. The other attraction is that in the city the life that you have could be better. It could be that through finding a job in the city, you could be able to live in the city. Maybe you could take over some sort of a business and be able to progress forward. The city is where you find education. Many young people work hard in school with the hope of getting a job in the city in the future. But that means going to the university.

If they are students at the university, they are then able to get a resident's permit to stay in the city and become a teacher.

For them education provides a way in which they can enter the life of the city. Of course, the city has many more conveniences. In the village, it may be that the only way to get to the market is to walk. But in the cities, you have buses and for a small amount of money you can travel around the city or you can go to work. You have the convenience of electricity, the convenience of the food that is prepared by the stores around, and of clean toilets. All sort of things that make life easier are in the cities. If life in the countryside is monotonous, it is more exciting in the cities. Not only is there TV, but you can go to KTV, or to the cinemas if you have the money.

Just walking around the streets, there are new things to see and new fragrances. When you come to the cities, people from home are not there. You can do things that you would never be able to do at home. These are some of the reasons people move to the cities. Using interviews, you can start talking to people, asking them what the things that are most important to them are. Universities in China have made many surveys looking at the problems facing migrant workers coming into the cities. This is what we need to look at next in city life. What issues do migrant workers face? What are the main problems in coming to the city?

There are four of these. Although they are common in many societies, you will certainly find them as migrant workers coming to the cities. **The first problem is security.** When you first come into a city, you have left your own village and you have packed your things into your bag and sacks that you carry on your shoulder. You have used your money to take the train into the city. As you look at the city, you see all the cars, all the businesses people, more people than you have ever seen except on television. Now you are in the midst of noise. You can sense the pollution and you need somewhere to stay. So **where do you stay?**

Sometimes you might know family members who are living in the city and you can stay with them. Sometimes someone from your village will introduce you

to the man in charge of a factory or a building estate. But you need someone who can look after you, provide security and shelter. Where do you live?

Often with jobs in the bigger cities, you will find that there are dormitories where young women who make clothing can find shelter, somewhere to live. There may be four to eight people who share an accommodation together. This is in making the clothing that is sent for export. They work long hours, but they have that accommodation and they have the beginning of a friendship.

The third thing is to find a job. Often the job is linked with accommodations such as shelter, but how do you find a job? Many young people, as they arrive in the cities, go from one construction site to the next asking if there is work. Eventually they will find a place where they will be employed. Now they are living and working with people from different parts of China. They discover that it is difficult to understand some of their coworkers because each one has a different dialect. They will slowly begin to understand it.

Those from the south going up to the north, to Beijing, to work on construction will find it very cold in winter. In Szechuan and Unar, the temperature just drops below ten or even five degrees, but in Beijing it can drop to – 10. It could be so cold. The food is also different. So much is different.

The fourth thing is relationships. This happens slowly. When you move into a new setting, you are at the edge of society, and so you make friends slowly. You still hope to make money to send back home, and that is what you do, but you want to make new friends. There are the people that you work with, and the ones in the dormitory. Doing an interview has been one way to try to understand the issues facing such people.

Most parents are unable to bring their children to the cities. They have problems affording schooling for their children. How can they provide quality schooling? So, many of them leave their children at home. They are the left behind ones that we spoke about in the previous chapter. Government officials in the

universities have studied those questions. Why do people migrate to the cities? What are the issues that they face? What can be done to help them?

Finally, after looking at farmers and city life, we need to look at nomads. Nomads are generally found in the desert areas, those areas with limited grass for animals. In China, they tend to live on the Chinghai Plateau. The Tibetan nomads live in the areas on the edge of the Gobi desert. Among the nomads are the Mongolians, the Muslims of Shanghai, and the Kazaks. Many Han Chinese businessmen have moved to the towns and the new cities that are being built. Outside the towns is where you will find the nomads. Like the farmers, they also come into the cities and towns at times. How do we characterize nomads? First of all, nomads live off the domestication of animals. For the Tibetans, it is the yaks. The yaks and the products of the yaks are central to their way of life. The second thing is that their animals help nomads to transport their goods. They are able to carry many things with them. And thirdly, nomads travel over set routes. This could be certain vast areas of land that is known to them. They regard this as their area for grazing their animals.

Up by the Yellow River, you will find the nomads who move their yaks in the dry season. They will move closer to the Yellow River, but when the rainy season comes, they will bring their animals further from the river. Annually there is a movement that they follow. In anthropological terms, this is known as trans-humans, “trans” as in transport or to journey, and “human” because it is a human journey. It is a journey that they make to and from the locality.

A problem that nomads are facing is that the government is trying to give the nomads new towns to live in. Although houses have been given to them, the nomads now are restricted to these houses. This makes it difficult for them to look after their animals. The animals were such an important part of their lives that they feel frustration because of this. The government is trying to introduce scientific methods of grazing for the animals by fencing in some of these areas. The result has been that the yaks have eaten the grass and the grassland is turned into desert. So the nomads are struggling to adapt to a new way of life.

Many young people buy motorbikes and then use them for transport. They can move people around over the grasslands to the surrounding villages. These are some of the problems faced by nomads. By using interviews you can find out some of the issues with which they are struggling. Nomads have very strong characteristics. They tend to have strong personalities, especially up on the plateau. The men tend to be strong, macho personalities. They look down on people from the towns, regarding them as weak. The people from town are not strong. They cannot face the cold or the harsh conditions of the plateau. Many of the nomads have been with soldiers. The Mongolians who invaded China and Europe are like this. They have strong personalities and can sometimes be rebellious and like to fight.

Generally, you will find the nomads are a strong crowd of people and they do not want to be confined. They see this as a restriction on their traditional way of life. Many are struggling. How can a young person find a job? This is why interviewing can allow you to understand some of the problems that people are facing. China is changing. How can a nomad be brought into modern Chinese society? How can a person born on a grassland whose education is not as good as a city person be drawn in and be made part of new China, modern China? Many of these people are looking for answers, looking for help, and looking for jobs. This where doing surveys, doing ethnographic research, can help us to be able to understand their situation more clearly and to be able to be part of the answer to the questions that they have.

Many are asking about different religions, different ways of life, looking for different options rather than those of the past. Here are some of the changes that are going on in northern China as China moves forward to become a world superpower. These people do not want to be left behind.

Lesson 10: Giving and Buying

The question that is always asked in ethnographic research is, where do you start? I have answered this by saying you start with what you can see, what you can observe. You cannot understand the thoughts of people. You cannot simply look at the culture as if it is a machine, like a car or airplane. Culture is beyond simple description. What you can study are the things people have. You can see how they handle those things, how they exchange those things. This is the subject of our study here as part of this gentle topic of interviews. Here we want to start by looking at gifts.

My first question is, when do you give gifts? If you take some time to think about this, you will find that you often give gifts at special events in a person's life. It could be when a child is born. It could be at a wedding or at a birth. Gifts are not given randomly. They are given to establish the relationship between you and that person. Another time that gifts are given is at special holidays, such as Chinese New Year. Often children look forward to receiving the red envelopes with money inside.

Third occasion when gifts are given are for special friendships, to show a special relationship. This can be to build Guan Chi. It could be something like giving a ring to a special person, such as when a young man gives a ring to a young girl. It is more than just an exchange. This is something very special. That is why anthropologist Miles talked about the spirit of the gift. That was the name of his book and it is the theme of his discussion. In giving something to a person, you are expressing the relationship that you want. That gift can be a picture of that relationship. This is especially true with the ring, the engagement ring, the marriage ring. It is special. A person understands what it means. So gifts are important in showing relationships, but who gives gifts to whom?

Marshall Shalin, another anthropologist working in Asia, came up with a scheme. He said that you could look at gifts as being of three sorts. There are those relating to the family and within the family. Gifts are given easily. You might give a gift to your son and your son might give a gift back, especially at holiday time. You give a special gift to him. It could be a bicycle, but in return, he might give you a drawing of yourself. You might look at the two and say that your gift was much bigger than what he gave to you. That does not matter. What matters is that your son has given you a gift.

The spirit of the gift comes through in the whole process. I have some books on my bookshelf. I have not read them, but over the years, they have been given to me by my son and my daughter. Inside it says, "To daddy with love." I do not want to let them go. It is not because I have not read them. It is because there is an attachment that comes along with it. This is what Shalin wanted to show. A relationship is built up by giving gifts. You can understand something about who gives gifts to others. People do not estimate the value of the gift, or say that one is more valuable than the other is. It is a token of a relationship, the spirit of the gift that is important.

The next level that Shalin talks about is balance gift giving. This means that the sort of gift you give you expect to receive in turn. I can illustrate this best by letting you in on a secret about English people and the custom of giving cards at Christmas time. You will find that each English household will make up a list of the names of the people to whom they send cards. Then they will check the person's name when they get a Christmas card back from that person. If they do not get a Christmas card from that person, the following year they will not send a Christmas card to that person. It is balancing off. It is especially important at the level of neighbours, not family, but those you have contact with in a looser sort of way. This is what Shalin

was calling balanced reciprocity, the giving of gifts of equal value. You find this even at weddings. The gift that is given at a wedding, you will find, gets balanced back. The family of the bride will sort of say, “We have got to give a gift of equal value back.” Gift giving is important at this level.

The third level is also important. This is two strangers. This has to do with getting a financial benefit out of something. You give a smaller gift than that person gives back to you. For example, you give a big gift to a teacher and he gives you a small gift. It is a matter of building relationships. These are the three levels of gift giving that anthropologists see in most societies. You begin to understand how people build relationships. This is part of developing Guan Chi.

There is another part to this question, what sort of gifts do you give? In all societies, there are gifts that are approved of and accepted. In China, the red envelope with money in it is accepted and desired by young people. That is regarded as being a good thing. However, in Japan, when you give flowers to a person, it indicates that you no longer want a relationship with them. It is a way of saying, “That is enough. Let’s call this relationship to an end.” It is not said in words, it is said in the nature of the gift that is given.

The gift becomes the symbol of your relationship. So it is important to know when gifts are given and what gifts are given. It is part of building Guan Chi. Often in Tibetan societies, when you get to know the farmers and they become friends with you, they may give you the leg of a pig or a lamb. Suddenly, you have been given this, so what do you give back in return? What is expected in that society? Generally, in China, if someone invites you to his or her home, you will take along a gift. In many Western homes, when you are invited, you take along a bottle of wine.

That is the sign of you that you are contributing something in an acceptable way. In this way, the relationship is established between them.

So what sort of gift is important? You have to look at the gift, who gives it to whom. There is another side to this that has been studied by the anthropologists. How do you give the gift? How do you package it? Especially in a country like Japan, the packaging of the gift is important. Some may bring a gift of four eggs, but how the gift is packaged is more important than the contents. The eggs are not just given in a plastic bag, like in a supermarket. How they are packaged is an art form. The paper is carefully folded. The decoration is pretty. Packaging is very important. You would not give a gift that has not been properly wrapped.

We see the same sort of thing in Thailand and many other parts of Asia. The paper in which it is wrapped, and the decoration, matter a great deal. You do not simply give the contents. The packaging is all part of the gift-giving process. This is especially important in Japan. The gift itself might be small, but how it is packaged is important. You could give money to a person, but it is not the accepted way just to count out money. It needs to be put into a red envelope and presented in the right way.

Most cultures will give a gift with both hands to show you are part of a special relationship. You do not just pass it to the person. The same is true for food. The food is presented to you, not passed out randomly. We mentioned in the previous chapter, that in India things are not given with the left hand. That is the dirty hand. Things are given with the right hand; that is regarded as the clean hand. These ways of giving gifts enable you to see what is going on within a society.

In some societies, gift giving is part of a whole way of life because they do not have money. In many parts of ancient China, you find that money was not

introduced until later in its history. People were used to giving gifts to each other. For some of the Chang villagers, it still works in that sort of way. If somebody has something extra, he will go and give it to another family, and then that family reciprocates by giving a gift back. In this way, you have an exchange going on without going to a market or a shop. In some societies, this is how the whole thing works.

In a small African society, if a person goes hunting and comes back with an animal that he has caught and killed, he will not be able to eat all of the meat from that animal before it goes bad, so he cuts up the animal and gives it to people from his tribe that live in his area. That way each member of the community is able to eat that food. Another day, another hunter will be successful and bring back an animal and that hunter will share with them. In this way, there is no need for money. They are sharing all that they have.

This practice does not continue for long because it has its problems. Firstly, it can be slow in getting the item. You might want something, but if the person who has something that you want does not want to exchange it for something that you have, then you must go to a third person to get something to exchange for the item you want. By the time you have gone through all the different people to get what that person wants, you might find that he has already exchanged the item that you wanted for something else. So the process is slow.

And secondly, it can become ineffective because the person at the end of all the gift giving might not be happy with what he has. The third thing that is important about this whole process of giving of gifts is the issue of generosity. People are seen as generous or as stingy. Generosity is something that is valued in such communities. You give part of what you have, and the person can have a reputation

of being generous to people. Not to have something means you are no longer regarded with the same sort of esteem in the community. This is an expression of social status. Generosity is important in China in an age when many Chinese are seeking to become rich and acquire money.

How do you advance? How can you be seen as generous, not only in order to be influential and progress forward socially, but to help people who are in need? It is a Scriptural mandate to give to the poor. Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). So when it comes to gift giving, you have some questions to consider. How do they give? What sorts of gifts do they give? When do they give them? It helps you to understand how society works. What is the economic way in which this operates?

The next thing to look at is markets. To go to a market in a small town or in a big city is always fascinating. You can see business in operation. Markets, first of all, require money and money is produced by the state. Most of us think about money in terms of the currency given to us. It can be the RMB in China, or the American dollar, or the French franc. In fact, anything can be money. Then you start looking at different societies, and you start to see that many things have been money over the years.

In ancient China, money was a copper coin with a hole in the middle so you could thread the coins together onto a string. Somewhere like in Yapal in the South Pacific, the money was a stone, but it was almost too heavy to lift. It was round with a hole in the middle. It was not difficult to make. Anyone could make money. If you found a stone, you could shape it, but it was not something you could easily carry around with you.

But now, in modern times, it is important that money be only created by the state. Money is used to buy and sell things. Money is used by the state in connection with raising taxes for society. Therefore, it is now possible for a person to exchange something he has produced for money. For example, it could be a type of work that he could exchange for money. With money as the common factor, he can buy other things. So money takes on an important significance.

When money comes into an economy, it changes the way that things are done. Some of the old Chang people from the villagers find it difficult to set up shops in the valley. It is not the way that they are used to doing things. They are used to giving gifts, sharing things one with another, not trying to make money. To the Chang, some people are too keen on making money from them and sometimes they take advantage of them. Money is something that is important and necessary for market.

We could ask a question here. Who controls the markets? Perhaps this is a question that is not asked by people in everyday life. But this is what anthropology tries to do. Anthropology asks questions because often the answer is not obvious. So much of culture is taken for granted. Culture is something that is expressed in the way people live. For example, most markets are controlled by men, but not all. In many African markets, you will find that the women are the most dominant force.

In Ghana, the women do the buying and selling, and control the market and each product. A woman is in charge of setting the price. You have the banana sellers and they are all women. But they will appoint one woman and she will be in charge of setting the price. Then the next woman is in charge of the tomatoes, then the yams, and then different vegetables. In Ghana, the women are in charge of buying and selling produce, but when it comes to mechanical things like motor bikes, it is

men who are in charge of buying and selling. They buy and sell machinery. The men run the shops with mobile phones. All of these things are important. They are different because different people are in control of them, but money becomes the common factor. So the farmers will sell bananas to the women of the market, in return the farmers get their money, they can go and buy what they need, and so the whole process continues and develops. Markets show the structure of the economics within the society and provide a good insight to what is happening in the society.

There is a third thing that we need to look at in reference to wealth and money. That is the use of money. We have looked at gifts. We have looked at markets. But to go further we need to ask questions about wealth.

The first issue is how money is used. People use money in different ways. People generally spend it or put it away for later use. Most of us tend to put money into banks so that it is kept safely. That way you can build up more and more money. This leads to a capitalist system in which there is more money and people become rich. That can be part of the problem because when some people get wealthy, it might mean that other people are getting poorer.

Money can also be used to demonstrate things such as prestige. You can see this in the sort of cars people buy. On the streets of Chinese cities you can sometimes see big BMW cars, Mercedes, or you might even find very expensive foreign sports cars or black Rolls Royce. These are all symbols of wealth. You can go round to shopping malls that you usually find in the cities. There are expensive shops with genuine Gucci handbags. You can find genuine Levi jeans in those special stores. People like designer labels because it shows that they are wealthy and it gives them

prestige. They like the brand names. They do not like the generic items. It is the brand name that gives them status. People can see it and admire what they have.

But it is not always those who are very wealthy who do this. Students like to have a cell phone that is a good brand, a modern cell phone, not just an old model. It is part of their way of establishing their identity. I know many students who have gone without food for many days in order to save up enough money to buy a better cell phone as part of establishing their status.

So, how is money used? Do we give it away? Do we show that we have it by how we dress and what we wear? A man like Bill Gates, who was the wealthiest man in the world, is giving away vast amounts of his wealth. He does this because he knows that there is a finite amount of things you can buy. There comes a point when you give it away.

The second question regarding wealth is, what things can actually be owned? It could be tangible things like a car, a bicycle, or a house. All of these things are very important in life. You might want to have one of those, but there are also other things that are important to people. This brings us to a discussion of intellectual property rights.

When it comes to a computer program or a CD with a program on it, you might think that there is nothing on it you need to buy. Isn't it just a piece of material with some electronic writing on it? Yet someone spent time writing that program, and that has value in itself. The mere fact that you can easily copy it does not take away from the value the person has given to it.

This is one of the problems that is occurring in the world today. China might be producing a wide range of goods, and selling them around the world today. But in

other parts of the world, what is being produced is music, movies, and computer program. This is intellectual property, and in many cases it is valuable property. There's a mismatch as people can easily copy these things.

In many societies what is valuable are the songs that they have, songs of people from minority groups. Do they get money from these songs, or are they just copied? Then the song is sold and somebody else is making money from it. It could be a dance, or even the way that the people dress. When it comes to tourism, the tourists go to look at the minority village. But, who is making the money from the tourists who are going to the village? Very often it isn't the people themselves. It is someone in between the native people and the tourists.

One other issue that becomes important here is that of ethics. We looked at how money is used and at what can be owned. But, what are the ethical issues? Maybe this is part of a Christian point of view, because we see in the Ten Commandments that it says, "Thou shall not steal." What are you stealing? It is easy to think, "I didn't steal a car. I didn't steal a bicycle." But what about stealing a movie, something on a DVD; or stealing a computer program, information on a CD? All these are stealing.

You don't find in the Bible, "Do not steal a CD." But you will find phrases like, "Do not covet your neighbour's donkey." Well, your neighbour may not have a donkey, but he might have a new computer program that you would like to have. So ethical issues are important. As Christians we need to be careful about these things. In that way people will see the honesty within us. Often officials say that Christians in China are those who pay taxes promptly, and who do not give bribes. Bribery is something we find in all societies.

What is the difference between giving a gift to someone and giving a bribe to someone? We might give a gift to someone out of friendship, but a bribe is usually given to someone so that he or she will do something for you afterwards.

Corruption in a country is always a danger sign because it means that the society is beginning to become sick from the inside. As Christians, we need to be sure that our lives are lived with integrity. We need to be sure that we are not pushing ourselves forward by breaking the rules that God has set for us. So when it comes to giving things, be careful. Make sure that when we give things, it is based upon our care and consideration for people, and not so that they will feel obligated to us and give us things that are not actually lawful.

In any society, the Christian needs to be the salt and light in that society. This is the phrase that is often used in the Bible for Christians. In our witness, in our life in society, that is what we should be doing. When we are salt, we help preserve society. Salt gives flavour to society. Salt gives new vitality. But salt that has lost its taste should only be thrown out.

As Christians and as a Christian community, we need to be living a life of ethics and be faithful to biblical teaching. In this way, we are applying biblical truths to our lives, but, at the same time, we understand the culture in which we live well enough to be able to live in a way that is honorable, with integrity, vitality, and meaning. So in the midst of the people that we are seeking to share the Gospel with, they need to be able to see in us what it means to be a Christian with honesty and integrity. Some of this ethnography research should help us to understand our own way of life.

Lesson Eleven: Living Together

This chapter builds on what was covered in the previous course on Cultural Anthropology concerning the issue of marriage. Whom will I marry? Whom a person can marry is something you can see in a culture and it gives you insight into how that society works.

Marriages everywhere are happy events, and they give you an opportunity to understand and ask questions. Marriages are when people move from one household to another. In the last chapter, we looked at how **things** can move from one person to the next, or from one household to the next. Here's another thing that can be seen. It is **people**. Who lives with whom, and the question of who has children with whom, is another important matter. This is why marriage gives us an insight into the culture of people. This is going to be the first of two sessions. In the first one, we will be looking at marriage itself. The second one examines households and the sort of relationships that exist between people, kinship, and their families.

We have a number of questions that we need to consider. The first question is, who marries whom? According to Article 2 of the Chinese Constitution, a marriage system is based on the free choice of both partners, on monogamy, and on equality between a man and a woman. Article 4 of the Chinese Constitution states that marriage must be based on the complete willingness of both the man and the woman. Neither party may use compulsion towards the other, nor must a third party not interfere.

Similar laws can be found in other parts of the world. Here in China, they have been written in this way because they were making a break from the old marriage customs that were part of the fugal system under the Chin Dynasty. Now, in modern China, there is equality between man and women and there are no compulsions associated with marriage.

Having said that, we all find that in all societies there is what is known as the incest restriction. In other words, there are some people that are not allowed to

marry each other and this exists in all cultures. A man is not allowed to marry his own mother, sister, or daughter. It seems so obvious that we can easily pass it by as not being important, but it is something that is found in every society. When we can talk about people marrying, we can talk about certain restrictions that exist. Often the fear of incest is based on familiarity in childhood. A boy will not marry his sister because he knows what she is like.

Freud has a psychological theory about this. But most anthropologists would say that it is better to have your daughter marry other villagers, and for you to marry one of their daughters, because it seems that you develop a network, a friend, a mutual obligation that helps support you. That is what is known as the incest taboo. It includes certain restrictions. But it goes further than that because certain societies encourage people to marry certain other people.

In many parts of the world, you are encouraged to marry your cousin because your cousin is your father's sister's child, your father's brother's child, your mother's brother's child, or your mother's sister's child. This has advantages because you are marrying someone with a family link. The first advantage is that the children are not marrying strangers. You know who the other family is. The second advantage is that wealth is passed from one part of the family to an extended part of the family. And the third advantage is status.

If you are of high status, you know that the person is marrying someone of a similar status. You find in China today that young people have their own views on who they would like to marry. What are the qualifications for a marriage partner? Interviewing students, you find out what sort of marriage partners they would like. If you talk to a young woman who is a university graduate about a suitable marriage partner, she would say that it would be someone who is taller than she is, someone who has higher qualifications than she has, and someone who earns more money than she does. She might go on to say that he should have a car and a house. That limits the possibilities because a young man might not have a family wealthy enough to be able to buy a house for him.

Here we see the use of ethnographical methods to look at the society and to see the difficulties that people have. To these five qualifications that the young woman might have for a marriage partner, she might add a nice character and a sense of humour. Qualification number seven could be that he is good-looking, but the other qualifications are more important, especially having a car and a house. That becomes a priority.

Many young men from poor backgrounds can struggle to find young women who could be marriage partners. This is especially true in modern China since there are more boy babies being born than girl babies. This means that there are going to be many single men. By the year 2020 there will be somewhere around 40million young men who do not have wives. This is causing a big change in society. The government is also aware of this fact.

When you go into some of the Tibetan regions, such as Chi Wan, you will find that a young man also has his qualities for a young woman. He isn't looking at the same sort of things as the young woman. You will find that a young man from Tibet would like to marry somebody from up the river, even 10 or 20 kilometres further up the river.

You may ask why? That is the sort of anthropological question you should be asking because it gives an insight into their preferences. In this region, the nomad people of Chan and Ando are regarded as the "pure people" and as the strong people. But, as you move down the river, down to the Chi Wan Basin, you are moving away from that area and the people are seen as being less pure. This is why a young man would like to marry someone from up river. This will be part of the search for a bride that goes on.

In many minority groups in China today, you still find that the family is involved in making the decision about who will marry whom. This is true even though the law says that no third party should be involved. It used to be that a marriage broker would go to the girl's family and to the boy's family to arrange the marriage. Now you find that the family wants to know about the girl or the boy. This is especially

important because often the girl comes to live with the boy after the traditional wedding. Therefore, the boy's family wants to know what the girl's family is like. Are they a nice family? Did they bring up the girl to be hardworking? The boy might think that the girl is pretty, but if the family sees that she has a bad temper, the marriage will be off. All these sorts of things go on within societies in China today and are important to the people. It is important to be able to understand such things in a society.

So who marries whom? It can vary, but there are certain things that are common. How do people get married? In the cities in China, there are three ways that weddings happen. First of all, there is the legal marriage. People can go to the legal office, and for a small fee, they can register to be legally married, and that's all that needs to be done. But most people do more than that.

They usually have a banquet as the second thing. They will invite their friends and family to the banquet. There may be 200 people in the hotel at the banquet. Of course, it is understood that you will bring a gift along with you. Usually it is the red envelope with the gift of money in it. Again, you have to be careful what you do. You don't give a gift with the number 4. You would not give 400 Yen. You know this because it is part of your culture, but for a foreigner entering into China, this is something different. They wouldn't know about. That is part of the second thing.

The third thing is that there's freedom to do something else. You would often find that a couple who are Christians would go to the church and have a service to dedicate the union to God. For Christians this is the most important part. When you see some Christians come into the community where you are working, then it is important to build on this. Getting married isn't a legal or a social thing, but a commitment to each other in front of God. This is part of building the church and building Christian families that are strong and are going to be a witness within the

community. You can be involved with that part. But let's have a look at some examples, especially among the minorities in China.

The Yao people and the Yu people of Hunan have something that is called marriage by capture. This is when the young man will arrange with some of his friends to sort of capture the young girl and carry her away. It could be that in ancient times this was done more forcibly, but even then the young woman knew what was going to happen, so her cries when her chosen young man came for her would be quiet. Of course, if it was the wrong young man, she would shout louder, but this has now become part of a ritual. When she is ready, he will carry her on his back as a sign that he is running off with her. Her friends would be following behind, all dressed up in their wedding clothes.

In ancient China, marriage used to be by arrangement. Even today, one of the first questions that people tend to ask is, what is your animal year? This is because there are certain years that are considered better than others are for a marriage. It is better if your animals' years match. That is something you won't find in Western countries, but in China this is very important.

Also you find that in China, when a young woman is getting close to 26 years old, then her mother starts getting concerned about when she's going to get married and who she is going to marry. Similarly when the boy would get to 30, then the parents would get concerned. They want their boy to get married and have children in order to continue the family line. Some of these things continue today.

Another example of minorities is the Tuja people in Hunan province. The Tuja are especially well known because of the Kuja, the crying wedding. When a girl leaves her home, she will cry and will spend three or four days crying for the family to come and console her. She is leaving her house and moving to the house of her future husband. She sees this as a loss. Because of this, she will spend time writing a crying song to express her sorrow in leaving her family. Today the family is

changing and this custom tends to include no more than a few tears. Some of these traditions continue to this day.

By looking at marriage you begin to understand how societies operate. Marriage is a time when you can be with people and ask questions. You can sit and talk with them. Such times give you insight into the whole arrangement of society.

Who marries whom? How do they marry? The third thing we want to look at is the economic arrangements. Marriage isn't just a matter of two people living together. You find that marriage involves pride, recognition, and often money. Many societies have something known as the bride wealth or bride price. This is common in ancient China. It is that what the boy's family will give to the girl's family as gifts. Sometimes these gifts are big. It could be money. It could be clothing, houses, or animals. These gifts are widely found in societies.

In many African countries where they have cows, the boy's family may give the girl's family cows, 20 cows, or even 30 or 40. I have known up to a 100 going from the boy's family to the girl's family. The anthropological question here is why do people do this? It has meaning. It has a function in the society. As you start understanding the society, you begin to know what the function is of these things. They are not just strange patterns of behaviour. They are patterns that have meaning. So what is the meaning of this? What is the function?

The first function is that bride wealth compensates the bride's family. It is because the bride's family are now going to lose a daughter who used to work in the fields, and who used to help in the house. That person is gone and she is now working and living in the boy's family.

The second function is that it states a claim on the children. The children that are born of that family now belong to the boy's family. In Chinese culture, there's a difference between the father of the husband and the father of the bride. That shows the significance of the relationship, because the children are born into the boy's family. So the bride's family have no claim on the children.

The third function that this applies to is what happens if there is a divorce and the girl is expelled from the marriage. If the boy divorces her, then the animals or whatever else has been given to the girl's family stays with the girl's family. This is so she can be supported by her family through those gifts. So that's a part of the function. That is bride wealth. It is seen throughout the world, but it is the most common in China traditionally.

Another economic arrangement is that of dowry. This is when gifts are brought by the girl into the marriage relationship. It is the girl who brings them in. In Western societies dowry was quite common. In Europe you often find that girls will start building up their wealth. It could be sheets, clothing, or household things. Then when she gets married, she takes those things into the marriage with her.

In India this has become especially important. In south India, you will find that girls have to give big gifts to the boy's family. So the girl's family will start to save up for a long time in order to have enough to give a substantial gift to the boy's family. This will cause some problems. There are many girls in India protesting against the dowry practice. They are saying, "We don't want this," and they think that it should be abolished. Some of the dowries will be so large that the boy will have enough money to go to the United States and study for a period of three years. It is an economic arrangement.

There is a third economic arrangement we call a token. We see this very much in China, as well as a form of it in Western countries. When you get invited to the wedding banquet, you bring the red envelope with some gift in it. This is known as a token gift.

Now in Western countries, this is becoming computerized. If you want to give a gift, you go to the website of a particular store and you will find the list of all the items that the person has requested. As you go through the list, you can tick off what you want to give them and you pay for it using your check or credit card. Your gift will be wrapped up and delivered to the wedding. It is a token. This is beginning to happen in parts of China today.

So here we have the bride wealth, the dowry, and the token. This is part of the economics that goes on. In many places in China, people are working hard to buy a house for their son to live in so that their son will be able to live near them and be able to care for them when they grow old. With the changing patterns, grandparents are far more significant. But that is what we are going to talk about in the next chapter.

The fourth and final point of this chapter is divorce. Marriages sometimes end. How do marriages end? In China, following the establishment of new China, divorce was rare but they sometimes did occur. Now divorce is increasing. Mainly in the big cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and Banjul, there are increasing divorce rates. This is being examined in a study by many in ethnographic research, using questionnaires and interviews. Why are marriages ending in divorce? What is coming out of those surveys is that both the bride and groom are used to being the only child within the family, and that now they are finding it difficult to get along with someone else. They don't link together. They start competing. Both want their own way.

A second thing that people are finding is that the pressure of work is very significant. The husband and the wife both have to work and when they see each other, they are tired. They don't have time for each other. Often they can be living with grandparents, and so the pressure builds up. The inquiry method of interview allows you to understand some of the issues people are facing in modern China. Our subject here is not just the causes of divorce, but how those causes can occur.

In some cases it is not easy to get a divorce. In traditional China, in the Chang dynasty, it was quite difficult to get a divorce. But in modern China, it is a matter of going through the legal office with a claim for divorce and making a payment of a small fee. In many of the big cities, this is increasingly common as marriages break down. Generally, among minorities there is less divorce than among the Han Chinese.

This is especially also true in regard to the Tibetans and Muslims. With Muslims divorce is handled differently. Generally Muslim men are quicker and more able to divorce their wives than the woman is to divorce her husband. Throughout the world, the Muslim man can divorce his wife by simply saying, “I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you,” and then it is finished. On the other hand, the woman cannot do that. She will have to go through long procedures because she will have to make divorce arrangements effective.

Divorce is increasing. Why is this important for the Christian to know today? Because in societies we want to see Christian families being established. It can be a problem in an area where Christianity hasn’t been preached. There might be a young girl who has responded to the Gospel, but she is marrying a young man. Is the young man a Christian? Does she avoid marrying until there she finds a suitable Christian young man? What happens then? This is an example of some of the practical challenges that occur. What happens if the couple come together and start living together without being married? What should they do if they become Christians? How do you handle this?

This is all part of Christian life and Christian ethics. It is not merely a matter of two individuals who accept Jesus or not. The Christian mission is to make disciples. These disciples need to live godly lives. That means making Christian families with a husband and a wife who bring up their children in a godly way. Divorce, therefore, is not a good thing in God’s sight.

There’s a need for Christian couples to be helped in marriage. This should be based on biblical principles. It requires understanding society and some of the problems young people are facing. It requires understanding the pressure from their families to get married, to have children and to understand how they are seen by their friends. We need to see Christian families in new China. In this way there will be a living witness that Jesus Christ is indeed King of kings and Lord of lords.

LESSON TWELVE – LIVING TOGETHER

In the previous chapter we were looking at marriage. Marriage is a fundamental factor of every society. We saw the different patterns that emerge concerning marriage. We looked at who marries whom and how people marry. But in this chapter we want to have a look at where people live after they have married.

Where do people live after they have married? What we are looking at are households. Households provide the basis of social life in all communities. Many anthropologists have become aware the culture is made up of many households. These households cluster together to make up villages and many villages make up cities. So households is the topic of the class for this day.

In the previous course of Culture Anthropology in Chapter 6, we were looking at the six patterns of residence. When a couple get married, where do they go and live? In answering this, we are going to be raising questions that are fundamental to our ongoing study of a society. The way of approaching this topic is by asking the question, what is its function? What does it do? People don't just do things with no relevance to its function. Function is an important part of a study of a society.

Let's turn to the six typical patterns that you will find. First of all, we will start with the most common. The technical term is "patrilocal," which comes from the English word "patri" meaning father and "local" from locality. In other words, the people live with the father of the groom. It is so common that 69% of societies in the world follow this sort of pattern. It has some immediate values, as we will see. In this pattern, some stay with the parents and it is the daughters who marry out into other households. The wives of the sons marry into those households and become part of those households.

You can see this in the Old Testament in the book of Genesis. Abraham followed this pattern. His sons had wives who married into his household. It was a common pattern throughout Jewish life. Similarly in Chinese society, you find the same thing in ancient times right up to quite modern times. In Beijing you can see the ancient Hou Thong houses built in a square with a courtyard. Around the courtyard are rooms where the sons live with the parents. Into the Hou Thongs come the brides and they become part of the family. The children of the relationships are part of the extended family. They become the grandchildren to a point where you can have four generations. So you can have great grandparents, grandparents, parents and the grandchildren.

This pattern has a number of important functions. The first is that descent passes through the male line. That is why, we talk about a grandfather, a father, and grandchild all

the way through. It's the male line that inherits the property. It's the male line that has the wealth and carries forward the name of the family. This produces a very strong sense of identity. Today in China, it's the boy's parents who expect their son to look after them. This is one of the changes that is important with modern China. We are going to explore the impact of this later on. But let's take another example, that of a Tibetan wedding.

Tibetan weddings often have the same sort of pattern, the one in which the bride comes into the family of the boy. Usually this can be quite an exciting part of their festival or wedding. Often with a Tibetan wedding, you will find that they will have the legal part of their marriage done, and then later on, they will go through a more traditional wedding. The girl would be at home and she will prepare to leave her home village which might be 5, 10, even 20 km. away from the boy's home. There will be a party and the arrangement is made for the bride to leave. Then the people from the boy's home go and they will usually take a car. It used to be that they would go by horseback to the boy's home. Now a nice car is taken. It is all decorated up. The girl says goodbye to her family, gets into the car, and she is escorted back to the boy's home by his friends and relatives. There she is introduced into the boy's home. Usually this consists of her coming in with another young lady, who is dressed identically to her.

In past times part of the fun was to see if the young man could distinguish between the bride and the other young lady. The two families meet in the home of the boy and they would toast each other. Then the time would come when the girl is taken into the home. She is now a member of that household, and that household is now where she lives. Following her might be the things that she is bringing with her into the marriage. Then both families will go out. The time of the actual marriage is finished when they have a dance and a meal together. It is a time of celebration. Then the girl's family will return to their home.

The girl has moved from her home to that of the boy. In the morning she will get up and she will be in her new household. She is now a part of the family just like any of the daughters of the family. She will work and will be directed by the boy's mother in what duties she does. Of course, the children that are born of that union will be members of the son's household. What we saw in the previous chapter is that in this sort of arrangement, the children are part of the male line. They will look to their grandparents in a very special way.

The second pattern that you find is more unusual, but is still equally significant to understand. These occur in some societies amongst the minorities in China. If the previous one was called "patrilocal" in English, this one is called "matrilocal." "Matri" means "of a wife or woman." Here the family is established in the household of the women. Some 69% of societies in the world are patrilocal and only 13% are matrilocal. Here, the sons leave,

and the inheritance goes through the female line. It's from the women--from the grandmother to the mother to the granddaughter. It becomes quite a significant way in which they live. Examples of this are mainly found outside of China, but you do find some within.

One example will be the Hopi Indians in America. Another example will be the Ashanti people in Ghana. Here you find that the daughter has a very close relationship with her mother, rather than that with her father. Even though daughters might leave their homes, they will come back to the household of their mother. That is where they consider their life to be focused.

This method has advantages. One is that it protects the girl from abuse. In a patrilocal arrangement, the daughter is going into the household dominated by the mother of the son who can be very strict. Many Chinese stories tell of the problems that the young bride has in adjusting to the family of the boy. Not until she has given birth to a son is she really accepted. In the matriloc system, this is not the case. Here the girl is the focus. We'll see later on that there are variations of this which are important in China.

The third pattern is known as "bilocal" in English. "Bi" means "two." This is where you get the word "bicycle" – two cycles, two wheels. So "bilocal" really means they can live either with the son's parents or the daughter's parents. They can live with either parent. This is a much more flexible type of system. You usually find that in households that are patrilocal, there is an option for this to happen as well. It could be that if a family has only daughters and no sons, in order for a family to have a line that will go on through their son, they may adopt a young man into the family. Then the young man marries one of their daughters. In this way, there is a continuation of the family line.

The fourth one is rather unusual, and this is where anthropology tries to make sense of what seems strange in a society. One thing that you find in many societies is that your immediate impression is that this seems very unusual, very different. But anthropology is at its strongest when it tries to make sense of these things and this is one example. Here, in this case, the son goes to live with his uncle, his father's brother. That's not living with his father, and it is not living with his wife's family. He is going to his father's brothers' family, his uncle.

The question that was raised earlier in this chapter was, what is the function that you will find happening here? By looking at the function, you are able to uncover the reason why this happens. If you will look at such societies, which make up only about 4% of societies in the world, you will see that the son inherits, not from his father, but from his father's brother. It begins to make sense. If the young man is going to inherit from his uncle, inherit his uncle's house, his uncle's fields, then it makes sense that he goes to live

with the uncle. He resides there and learns from his uncle how to look after the house, how to work the fields in his area.

It is different from the patrilocal system that has been as common in China. But remember what we have seen before. Different does not mean something is wrong. It just means it is an alternative. It is a different sort of pattern. With an introduction like this into anthropology and the function of households, it gives us an understanding of the breadth of patterns that can exist in a society. Unless you know that this is a possible option, you might never ask questions about it.

Some anthropological theory in what was covered in the previous course can be helpful here. When you know that there is such a possibility, then you can look at it and it starts making sense. You can ask further questions about this particular characteristic of way of life. This characteristic is not common in China, so we don't need to say anything about it here. One that is becoming more and more important is known as "Neolocal." "Neo" in English means "new." and so this means "new household." Generally, as you look at the world, only five per cent of societies have this sort of pattern. This is where the sons and the daughters both leave their homes and go to set up their own households to have their children. Although only 5% of societies do this, in actual fact you will find some of these other larger societies in the world.

This has become the basis of Western society. Most Western people will think that when their son or daughter gets married, they will go and buy their own house. They will have a separate house and their children will live there. They will not live with either grandparent. This is, therefore, the basic unit of a family – father, mother and children. The term that is often used for this is "nuclear family." It is called nuclear because it is the smallest unit that you can get to have a family.

This sort of pattern is one which is becoming very important in cities. This is why this pattern has become so common within Western societies. As people migrated from the countryside into the town, they moved from being patrilocal to becoming neolocal. This is going to become increasingly important in China as people move to the cities. In actual fact, people often make the joke that a nuclear family includes children and the dog. Pets are part of the life of that community.

This assumes there is considerable wealth within that society. For a new family to be established and to buy a new house in which the young couple can live costs a lot of money. It becomes only a possibility when there is wealth within the society. It doesn't mean that this the pattern that all can follow. Some people take the verse from Genesis "the couple shall leave father and mother and cling to each other" (Gen. 2:24), refers to the establishment of these new families. In actual fact, this is something that is really new in the world. When you look at the Old Testament, the common practice was that the bride

went to live with the boy's family. So this Genesis text doesn't mean that you have to establish new families.

In fact, often what you will find is that people from poorer areas go to live with the boys' family. One Indian friend who is a Christian said to me that it was easier to build a room onto his father's house. His father's house had four walls and he could then build his house next to it. He only had to build three walls, and so it was cheaper. They could also share the common kitchen and bathroom.

This is so different from Western people who have the wealth to buy a house and live in a new place. But that also has problems because, as with the nuclear family, they are separated from either parent. What you then find is that, as those parents become older, there is the question of who looks after them. In a patrilocal system, the son and his wife are able to look after the aging parents and provide for them. In the nuclear family that is not a possibility. There might be some distance between the two homes.

Also you will often find with nuclear families there is mobility. The young couple is able to move to different cities or even to different countries in order to find better jobs. But it means the distance between them and their parents gets greater. They are unable to care for them. For this system to operate, therefore, it means that the grandparents have to save up funds for their retirement. So when they stop working they get their retirement pay. They have medical insurance to make sure they have needed medical care. Maybe when they get very old they will go into a home where they are looked after by strangers. This is because their sons and daughters are in different places around the world.

So the neolocal system, although it has some advantages in that it allows the young couples to have their freedom and be able to move and earn more money, it also has negative factors. It could well be that the elderly parents feel separated, isolated, lonely and far away from their children. Yet this is the sort of pattern that is emerging in the modern world, especially in cities.

We will return to this later as we look at the changes that are going on in modern China. I said there are six patterns that are going on. The final one is called Neotolocal. This comes from where you are born. In other words, the sons and daughters all stay with their parents. This can seem quite strange to those from a patrilocal system or even neolocal system. It is very rare in the world today, but there are cases in China. The most well known is of the 'Mosso' people in 'Unan.' It has become quite famous not only in China, but throughout the world.

Here the sons and daughters stay with their parents. Why does this happen? This is the question we are looking at. First of all, we need to look at the question, how does it happen? It begins because the man and the woman, living in their separate homes, start to

get to know each other. It could be that the young man will start to compose love songs for the girl and begins to meet with her. If the young woman likes him, what she will do is weave a scarf for him as a gift. That is a symbol to him that he can then come to her home.

When night falls, the man will visit the girl's house. He will usually come with a piece of meat that he throws to the dog so that the dog will be quiet. This allows him to get into the house. But before he comes to the girl's room, he will be outside and will sing a love song. The girl will open the door and he will come into her house.

Sometimes he will climb up to the window on the second floor. It is important that he leaves before it is light in the morning. He climbs out the window and goes to his own home. If he want to come again the next night, he will come and will sing. If the young girl wants him to come, she will open the door or open the window. If she doesn't want him to come, the door will remain closed and the young man will know that there is no on-going relationship.

In Chinese the term that is used is 'Zo Hung,' which is 'walking marriage.' This is because there is marriage, but it involves the young man walking to the girl's home. On Yusso Lake, that beautiful lake in Unan, you will find the Mosso people. They still have a very high regard for this form of marriage. Tourists from all over China go to the area to try to see the beautiful young ladies.

Here we have something different from what we are used to. Anthropologists try to go further than just describing what happens. That is what the tourist does. The anthropologist in his study looks at the question of function. Why do people do this? You can see this by looking at the advantages within the system. There are several advantages. The first is that among the Mosso people the women work in the fields and own both the fields and the property. The women want to gain control of the way that the work is done. This way the women are dominant within that family and so within each household. It is the older grandmother who is in charge.

The second thing it does is it avoids the sub-division of property and fields. Often what can happen with the patrilocal system is that if there are two sons in a family, the land gets divided, half for one son and half with the second son. If those sons then have two sons each, the land gets divided again. So the number of fields gets gradually reduced. This is the sort of thing that you find going on in India today. In many cases the size of the farm becomes so small that a person cannot live on that area of land. But here, with the women being in charge of the house, it doesn't get sub-divided. It is the household that owns the house and the property.

It has one advantage over the new family. With the nuclear family, they will have to go and buy or build their own house. But in this case, they don't need to build any new

houses. Perhaps all they need to do is to extend the daughter's house. But you can have one traditional house which lasts for many years.

Another advantage is that the women are protected. Also the women are highly respected and have high status. Unlike the patrilocal system, where the mother of the son can sometimes abuse the girl, in this case, the girl is protected by the family.

She also has more control over her own sexuality. She can open the door for the young man to come in, or keep it closed so that he cannot come in. She is not merely subject to the sexual advances of her husband. This has an advantage in that it helps control the number of children that the woman has.

Amongst the Mosso people, the population is not growing as rapidly as in other places. And so, what might seem like a very strange pattern of behavior has, in fact, many advantages. When the young Han Chinese hear of the Mosso, they often find it quite romantic. The tourist industry in China makes much of this. They talk about going to the beautiful "Mosso Lake" during the evening sun, and the beautiful young ladies all dressed up, and the men going to sing their love songs at night.

There are six different patterns, but we will try to show that with each of these differences there is a reason why the societies have chosen to follow these patterns. That is one of the key elements within anthropology, trying to make sense of what looks different or strange to the outsider. As we go to work in another area, in another culture, we need to be aware that people are not strange but different in their behavior. We need to try to understand why this sort of thing happens.

Let's look at some of the factors that we see going on in modern China. Thirty years ago China introduced the "One Child" policy. This was in an attempt to stabilize the population. All Han Chinese people were encouraged to have only one child--one couple, one child. This was achieved by having birth later. It was achieved by having abortions of unwanted or second or third pregnancies. It has indeed had quite a major impact on the economy in China.

You will find in many societies around that world that without such a restraint on the number of children, the population has increased. As the population increases, the wealth of the country needs to increase in order to see economic growth. Comparing China with India, you will find that in India, although there is some sort of a birth control policy, the population of India is still growing. By the year 2020 it will surpass China. China has actually become more economically wealthy than India because it has stabilized its population. This is what the government saw in China and sought to do.

Now we can all see the advances that are being made in the economy, but the policy has had certain major effects upon society. One is that with the birth of only one child, we now have a system in which the typical family consists of father and mother together with their one child. Each of them has two grandparents, two parents. So what you have now is like an inverted pyramid with the four of the grandparents' generation, two parents, and one child.

This means a lot more pressure is put on that child. The child is expected to do well at school. The child gets much more attention than ever before. We have all heard the jokes that are made about the wealthy children of Beijing and Shanghai. They are called "little emperors" because they have everything they want. However, it isn't just a matter of having what they want. They must deliver. That often comes through their studies.

The children have to work hard in order to do well at school and to pass the examination of the GHACAU. That way, they can go to a good university. The pressure is so intense that they are often required to work at school for twelve hours a day. These are things we all know. Anthropologists look at modern society and ask questions so they can help us to help children with their education.

How can we help them to learn in more effective ways, rather than just cramming in the subject material that is required by the schools? The first issue that comes out is the pressure on the children as a result of the inverted pyramid. But it also says something about grandparents. The parents have to work hard. Both the mother and the father are going out to work, so it is the grandparents who look after the children. We have seen the problems that this can cause when the parents are migrant laborers who go off to the cities and the grandparents are the ones looking after the children. This also happens in the cities and even in some wealthy homes.

You can have four grandparents living in an extended sort of house, looking after one baby while their son and daughter-in-law have gone to work. Sometimes the son or even the daughter goes off to advance their own education. They may go to overseas to universities, leaving their child behind to be looked after by grandparents. This is part of what is happening in modern China. It can cause pressure upon that child, pressure that maybe the grandparents don't want.

Sometimes it works very well. If grandparents do take care of the child, a third thing can happen. In such a situation, the grandparents often would prefer to have a grandson, not a granddaughter. With modern science and technology, it is now possible to identify the sex of the baby before it is born. Although it is illegal, we all know that there are cases in which, when it is discovered that the fetus is a girl, the child is aborted. What this means is that the number of boys being born is greater than the number of girls.

Grandparents are happy that their son has a boy-child to carry on the family name. But when you look at China as a whole, you will find that the number of unmarried boys when they get to 20 to 25 years of age is going to increase. By the year 2020 there will be 40 million men who will not be able to have wives.

Usually when you look at this, you see that this will come from the poorer areas of China. It's not going to be that these 40 million men are going to be spread all through the economic system. Someone who is wealthy is certainly going to get a wife. He is going to be more attractive as a husband. The ones who are not going to get wives are those who are poorer. These are the ones living in the countryside from poorer homes.

The girls will move to cities where they can marry wealthier boys. It means that the largest number of single men is going to be in the countryside. It is going to be the migrant workers within the society who are going to struggle. Even now you can find that in the countryside, the poorer areas. There are many young men who are looking for wives, but there are no single girls in their area.

So one can imagine the sort of feelings that they have about the future. Central government is aware of this and has introduced policies to try to correct it. They have introduced policies which encourage those who have one daughter. They can have another child in order to try to correct this imbalance. These are issues that are going on in modern China. This is new China. Such decisions made today will have important implications by the year 2020.

If we are going to understand this, we need to be able to do the studies and learn the lessons. Especially for the Christian church and for new Christian households, we need to have answers for the problems that many people will face. We feel we have a Christian message which is relevant to all people. Do we understand some of the social issues that people might be facing? This is something that we need to look at: living together in households.

At the end of this chapter, we give an exercise. This exercise is to draw a kingship diagram of members of your own family. This was shown in chapter six of the previous course. Draw a simple diagram showing your parents, grandparents, members of your family, and your extended family and then draw out what units lived together. Living together in households is important in all societies. The Christian message must be adaptable to Christian households.

LESSON 13: FIELDWORK OR SHAPING THEIR LIVES

With this chapter, we are beginning our third section to the course. This has to do with the idea of participation. Participating in the life of the people is one of the most important tools used by anthropologists. The technical term in English is “participant observation,” but we will just use the term “fieldwork” here.

We have seen in previous chapters that the comparative approach to studying culture is important. This is because by comparison, you begin to note the differences. For example, if you come from one village in the north of your province, you might not note that you speak in a way that is different from the people who live in the south of your province. When you go there, they speak with a different accent. They have a different dialect. But they think that you speak with a different dialect. It is only when you leave your hometown and go to a different one that it becomes noticeable to you that you have an accent, a dialect.

This is where the comparative approach comes into play. An important element of all anthropological research is physically going to the people that you are studying. That is why anthropologists call it fieldwork. It is not done in a laboratory. It is not in your hometown. You are going out to another place and that gives you a comparison.

But this method of observation, which we will look at further on, is not just observing from a distance. It is actually going to that society and participating in that society. Participant observation is therefore defined as a method of study in which the outsider immerses himself or herself in the life of the community and participates in daily activities. Usually, this entails the researcher living within the area for an extended period.

Out of this experience, the observer, the researcher is better able to understand what is going on in that society. In this way, we can start addressing that question about the meaning and the reasons why people do the things that they do. It is not just a matter of observing strange customs. It provides a way in which they can look at the question of function--“Why do people do these things?” Out of that

answer comes the deeper questions. As was said in the previous chapter, ethnographic research and anthropology is at its strongest when able to explain why people do things that seem strange to us.

Here are some examples of participant observation in order to understand what is meant by this. One example is of a Chinese student who is a child psychologist, now studying in the United States. He is studying Chinese children of parents who have migrated to the United States and are working there. They may be working in restaurants or somewhere else, but their children do not know English. These children are going to American schools. How do these children adapt to this new environment? How are they learning English and managing in the educational system in America?

One way in which he is doing the research is by actually going into the schools and working alongside teachers, helping the children with their reading. From this, he is participating in the activities of the classroom. In that role he can see how the children are progressing. He is comparing Chinese children to those who are from the United States.

There are three communities of children, Chinese, Spanish speakers from South America, and English speakers. They are in an English media school. How do they progress? Can those who speak Spanish learn English quicker than those who speak Chinese? How do they learn? What things are helpful?

Spanish has many structures similar to English. The Spanish-speaking children seem to be able to make links more easily between their native language and English. Chinese speakers struggle more with word order. That is the question he is looking at. It is a very important question. In this case, the child psychologist, because that is what he is, is participating in the classroom as a teacher. In this way, he is seeking to understand the very process by which children learn. Children who are unable to talk to him about their feelings cannot be the informants who can be interviewed. But by participating in their daily activities, he is able to understand more of what is happening.

The second example is an anthropologist wanting to study how American scientists operate. This is a very different case altogether. How do American scientists do their research and make new discoveries, make new inventions? Well, he took the study of the oceans. There are groups of American scientists working on the oceans of the world. It enabled him to go on some of the ships that groups of scientists use and to talk to them to see how their ideas have changed and to see how they went about doing research.

He participated by living on the ship with them and by participating in some of their activities. He went down in a submarine in order to see all this. Through that participation he could see how they were talking, coming up with new ideas, and making discoveries. He was the observer. In English, we have a little expression, “a fly upon the wall.” We try to look at the situation as if we are not there, although in actual fact we are.

The fact that we are human beings with other human beings, we are affecting them. This anthropologist was watching the scientists. They knew that he was around, but what he seeks to do is to keep a distance, an objective distance. He is not looking at their methods of research, but he is watching them in their process of doing their research. In this way, he is beginning to understand how people make discoveries and how it affects them.

Those are two very different examples. What are the advantages of this method? First, this method enables you to get closer to the way people see through their eyes. You are able to watch them during that process in which they are doing something like the psychologist with the children. He is able to see how the children develop. He can see the struggles that the children have. He is looking at the world through the eyes of the people. That is what the anthropologist is trying to get to, to be able to understand in a deeper way.

The second advantage is that it builds friendships. You are doing things with people. You make friends, and out of that come the building of trust bonds. This is the prior question of trust, “How can I show trust to people?” Here it is. You show

people they can trust you by doing things with people, not just by being the outside observer or perhaps taking photographs. That is what the tourist does. The researcher, the anthropologist, seeks to go in closer with the people so he is not just holding a camera to capture the picture, but is doing things with the people as part of them. Sometimes, the camera can get in the way.

I remember one case in Africa. I was involved with a big church ritual. This was an African church and in the open air outside. There were some ten thousand people. From the central candle that was lit by the priest, everyone lit his or her own candle. Then the light spread from one candle to next, spreading out like a wave right through the whole area into the darkness where they could see nothing. Suddenly, there was a wave of light as people passed on the light from one candle to another.

The effect was beautiful and I would have liked to capture that on a picture, but I was there near the front. At my feet was my camera, and I was holding my candle. If I had put my candle down to pick up my camera and take the photograph, everyone would have been looking at me, because I was doing something with him or her. I would have changed the whole of the situation. But for me to be there, participating with them, I was seeing things as they see them. This is the difference between the tourist and the researcher. It is a matter of building friends with people.

The third advantage is that it is non-judgmental. You are not saying what is good or bad about their society. We are going to be looking at this later on. There is a limit to this, especially for the Christian. But by doing things with people, it means you are accepting them and the way that they do things, such as the food they eat and the way they eat their food. You might be used to using chopsticks, but if you were to come to a Western country and you start using a knife and fork, then it is showing that you are participating in their way of life. You might struggle, but if you were to start eating Western food with chopsticks, it is not only difficult, but it also looks as though you are making a judgment on the use and value of a knife and fork.

Participating in the life of the people shows that you accept them. That is why you will find many anthropologists take part in agriculture. When it comes to bringing in the harvest, the fruit from the trees, to be involved with the people picking the apples, collecting the walnuts, or going into the fields to get the vegetables in shows that you accept them. It is showing that you are one with them. Often they will see you as a member of their household. You are guest in their home, but you can even become like a son and a daughter to them. They see you in that special way.

You begin to see the world as that household sees it. If you are just a guest who comes in for a short time and then leaves, you might learn something about them. But if you are a member of the household, then you can hear disagreements, arguments, and see how they come to decisions. You are now part of their family. But sometimes they can also want you to make some contribution to it. It could be finding money to help one of the children go to school. You are now in their house. You are part of them. It has its disadvantages, but that is what we will look at later on.

There are some important advantages of this method. Here are two advantages that we could look at further that have to do with participant observation. The first is this one of insider perspective as opposed to outside perspective. You see the world in different ways. One person has said it is very much like looking at a mountain. If you are away from the mountain, standing on another mountain, and you look at that first mountain, then you can see it. But note that you can only see part of it because the other side of the mountain is facing away from you. You can see that side facing you, take a picture of it, and describe it, but if you are on that first mountain, you have a very different perspective of that mountain. This is often called the emic view. In other words, it is my view of it. If you participate in an activity, you have different feelings, a different perspective than that of just observing.

I was interested in doing some research in an African independent church, a very distinctive church. One practice of this church was praying for people who

were ill. In past times, others had come to look at this church. As part of their healing, they would have a square area in the middle of their church. People who were sick would be in seats all around the square. Then, in would come the healers. The healers would bring oil and then all sorts of noise and shouting would begin. People had talked about this because they have been on the outside, watching all that was happening.

In this case, I had gone to talk to one of the leaders of the church the night before the festival. This man had a problem with his leg. It had swollen up and he said, "Oh, I'm waiting for the healers to come and they're going to pray for my leg." I said to him, "Ah, in my church, we pray for people who are sick. Can I pray for you now?" He said, "Oh, yes." Carefully I put my hands on his sick leg, I prayed for him, and then I went home. I had hoped to interview him and find out more about the church from the earliest times.

Then, in the evening as I came to see other people, I suddenly saw this man and he was walking. I asked him, "Oh, did the healers come?" He said, "No, before they came, I was healed." Then he said, "You are a healer in our church". That made a big difference because when it came to the healing ritual, they insisted I wear a white robe like the other healers. They insisted I not stand outside of the square, but that I come in with the healers. Now I was seeing things in a very different way. I joined the healers outside and we came in together.

I had met with them as they prayed and we came with a sense of spiritual power to pray for the sick. As we came in, then others who were around the outside of the square put out bowls of oil for us. We put our hands in the oil and then we rubbed the oil on the sick part of the person. Other researchers had been outside looking at it, but now I was inside with my hands in the oil. People were uncovering parts of their body that needed healing, a broken arm, or a twisted ankle, and all sorts of things. I was now an insider.

When I left that meeting, I had a very different understanding because I felt like the healers did. I saw the faces of the sick people. I could see some who were

healed. Some who were healed would stand up and they would rejoice. Out of all the chaos of what was going on, I was in the midst of it, seeing the people who were around me. It did not look so much like confusion. I could see individual people being healed.

That is the emic approach. It is the insider's approach. But we are going to see how one enters into such a position. Not only is it insiders, but it begins to allow you to answer questions about why do you do this. When you start getting to deeper ideas, people often do not know why they are doing things. They may look somewhat puzzled when you ask. "Why do you do this?" They may reply, "I don't know. We've always done it this way."

It can be something quite similar to the question, "Why do Western people marry and the bride has a white wedding dress?" They may say, "Well, the bride always has a white wedding dress." Then they would have to think more about why that could be. Maybe they would give some answer about purity being illustrated in the color white, or something like that. But there is not an explicit, a clear answer that they can give.

By participating, one can often sense what is going on while someone outside does not see it. I was taking part in one ritual, the Tibetans' New Year Festival, and I was with the older people who were involved with a dance. The younger people were in another area. I was with the older people in the dance and we were going round in our dance in the circle. But some of the other researchers in the team were outside. They were looking at both groups. I could only see what was happening in my group and we were dancing around. Then we stopped and then there was talk going on. Then we went on again and we would still talk.

Those who were outside looked at it and said, "Ah, this must be something special they are doing because of the fact that they are stopping and saying special things to each other."

However, since I was with them, I could hear what was going on. What they were saying was, "The young people need to get busy and light the fire." They were

just waiting for the young people to do their part. There was nothing special about it. It was just a time of waiting so that they could get on to the next part of the dance. Since the other researchers did not know what was really going on, they assumed that the pause was significant.

So, how can we enter a situation as a participant observer? It is not easy to get into such a position. There are three challenges involved with becoming a participant observer. First, you must overcome suspicion. The child psychologist working amongst Chinese children in the United States might have to overcome the suspicion of the teachers. “Why do you want to do this,” “I don’t want you in my class”. Or the scientists might question the anthropologist, “why do you want to look at us and what we are doing, we are busy we want to get on with our work”. Thus, we need to find ways of overcoming suspicion. This is why building trust is so important. When you have done a good job of building trust, you will be able to explain why you are doing something.

Now let us discuss the concept of a “gate keeper”. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, a gatekeeper is someone who guards the gate, but if he opens the gate, he can provide entry for you into that new environment. I talked previously about the healing in an African church. The elderly leader of the church who had been healed from his sickness became my gatekeeper. He told the people that I had prayed for him and therefore I was like them. The following day I was asked to teach. Because I knew the healing ritual, I talked about Jesus healing the man at the pool of Siloam. The message had a big impact on the people, but I didn’t know why until I found out that the high priest of this church had actually preached on the same text the previous day, and I had said many of the same things (although I taught it from a Western perspective rather than from an African perspective.) Because of that, I was a special person in that church. Doors opened and so I was brought in. Gatekeepers are important in all societies, gatekeepers like the head of the family who might invite you to come and stay in their home, “Don’t stay in the hotel down in town, the food is not good there, the beds are not clean, you come

and stay and become part of our household”. So, you start getting a very different perspective of what life is all about in the society.

The third problem is finding a role that is significant to the people. Suspicion can be overcome and gatekeepers can help you gain entrance, but people still want to know who you are. One possible role is that of being a friend. If you are at university in one of the big cities, you might make a friend who is from a minority area and that friend invites you to their home. All the local people know you as that person’s friend, so as you walk around the village, they will all say, “Oh yes, that’s the friend of so-and-so”. You are no longer a stranger because they know who you are. Or perhaps you are a teacher sent to work at a school in the village. People quickly find out that you are the teacher. That is why you are around and why you go to their shops. So you become a valuable member of the society. But if you just come as an outsider with no friendship links, you remain a person who could be dangerous. “Is this some official coming to look at what is happening?” So try to find a role that is significant to the people so that they can understand what you are doing. Friend, teacher or student are all good roles. I know of some universities that are doing research on anthropological methods. When the researchers enter a new situation, the first thing they do is introduce themselves as students. “We are students from the university and we are trying to understand life in the countryside or what goes on when people were relocated following the earthquake”. These sorts of introductions help people to know who you are. So trust begins to be built.

One final point about fieldwork, it results in vulnerability. You feel vulnerable because you are not in charge. When I have been invited into households to stay with people, I do not know what may happen in the household. The pattern by which people live is strange to me and it can be embarrassing. For example, when the people have fixed meal times, I wonder if I should make sure I am there at the right time. Or I wonder, “Can I leave my things in their home?” “Will they get stolen?” I remember feeling very vulnerable once when I was coming in as one of the healers because I did not know what was expected of me, “Will I make mistakes that could cause embarrassment, not only to my friends but to me?” So one needs to

be careful, but the fact that you are vulnerable does not mean that people are not open towards you. They know you are new to their way of life, they show care, more care than they would do to others because they are looking after you, realizing you are a stranger in their midst. The very fact of being vulnerable leads to friendship and out of friendship you begin to know far more about the way people live. So, participant observation is a way in which one can get closer to what is important to people. In the following lessons, we are going to be looking at how, in which ways, we can actually participate in people's lives.

LESSON 14: FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS

In the previous chapter, we looked at participant observation. One area of culture that we can participate in very easily is festivals and rituals. There are two main classes of rituals that are common to all societies, those that occur every year (calendar rites), and those which relate to an individual and his cycle of life. (We already discussed this topic in Chapter 5, which is entitled: “Life is going in circles”.) Both classes of rituals provide easy ways to become involved and participate in society in an accepted, friendly way.

Let us begin by looking at the characteristics of calendar rites. By definition, calendar rites occur on a regular basis. The most common of these relate to the solar calendar or the lunar calendar. We are all familiar with the spring festival, when we all go home to spend time with our families. Spring festival is the great holiday time in China and it has been so throughout their history. It is based on the lunar calendar. In contrast, the great holiday time in Western countries (Christmas) is based on the solar calendar. But both occur on a regular basis.

The second characteristic of calendar rites is that they divide the year up into sections. If time was ongoing with everyday the same, it is quite clear that life would become very boring. But festivals mark out time into clear sections and so spring festival is the beginning of the springtime, the end of winter, and then follows summer and the heat of the summer time. This division of time into clear periods is significant because it give people a break. The associated rituals serve as a celebration, as well as a marker of the beginning of a new period.

Another important characteristic of such period, especially when it comes to religions, is that festivals and celebrations often relate to the life of a god or prophet or some great person. This is clearly seen within Christianity in the rituals associated with Christmas Day, December 25. It is a time when Christians celebrate the birth of the Christ. Another festival that occurs in the Christian calendar is Easter. Easter is based on the lunar Jewish tradition. It is when Christians remember the death of Christ and his resurrection three days later. There are other events in the Christian

calendar relating to a remembrance of the saints and other great Christian figures. On November 1, many churches in Western countries celebrate All Saints' Day, a day for remembering some of the saints. So, you can see how the festivals link up to stories.

Within China, you have different events, spring festival being the most familiar to us all. The Tibetan New Year, Lo Sah, usually occurs 28 days before spring festival. However, in 2010, the times shift and so for this year (one in every thirteen) the two festivals were at the same time. Festivals that are celebrated by minorities have their own distinctive features. The Chang people have their festival about 6 weeks ahead of the spring festival and that is usually held by the Shibi, the priest of the Chang. This festival is often shown on the Chinese TV. It involves offerings to ancestors as well as the twelve local gods of the Chang people.

Often an animal is sacrificed as a way of showing gratitude to their ancestors and to their gods. These types of celebrations have become a tourist attraction because it is a time when the Chang are open and welcoming to others. It is a festive time, a happy time, a time when people enjoy doing things together and get dressed up to look their finest. It is a time when they like to take photographs. "You know that when we're just in our working clothes we don't want people to take pictures of us, but now at a festival time, we enjoy it." People prepare for it and there is a lot of eating and drinking. Festivals differ from society to society, but they have in common the fact that they function as a marker of time so that life is not just seen as an endless progression.

As we look at the basic characteristics of calendar rites, we need to realize that festivals sometimes have other characteristics as well. For example, Christmas is a religious festival in which people remember the birth of Jesus Christ, but at the same time, it is also associated with children's activities involving Santa or Father Christmas. You might ask the question, "How did Father Christmas become a part of the biblical story of Jesus and his birth?" Both here and in China, Father Christmas has become the focus of attention. In actual fact, however, the most important thing is the historical story of the birth of Jesus.

So, where did the story of Father Christmas come from? Well, it has nothing to do with the biblical account except that there was once a king who lived in Eastern Europe who became a Christian. He was the first king in his country to become Christian and his name was Nicholas, King Nicholas. The story is told that King Nicholas became concerned about the poor people in his country, and one Christmas Day as he was celebrating the event with a big meal, he looked out of the castle window and saw a poor man gathering sticks to take home. It made him realize that there were many people in the area that were poor and still hungry, so he called his servants, took some of the food, he put on a thick coat and went out into the cold snow to give gifts to the people in the area. So he is regarded as good King Nicholas. In some parts of Eastern Europe, Father Christmas is actually called St. Nicholas. Parents tell children the story because it emphasizes the fact that Christians should show kindness to others and even the king showed kindness to people by giving gifts. In the Biblical story, three wise men come from the East and give to baby Jesus three gifts. You know the story from the Bible.

Gifts have become a common practice at Christmas time. Gifts remind us that the greatest gift of all is the one God gave to us, his Son. In western countries children often hang up stockings so that parents can slip in on Christmas Eve and fill them. It is part of the fun of Christmas but also reminds us of the Biblical teaching that God so loved the world that he gave his only son. This is an example of children's activities coexisting with religious rituals in a calendar rite.

A third element of the Christmas festival in the west is the commercial. Christmas is a time when people buy gifts and shops are full of the things that are suitable for Christmas presents. Businesses see Christmas as an opportunity to make lots of money so storeowners decorate their shops, play Christmas songs, and stock their shops with Christmas decorations and foods. A whole business has developed around raising and selling Christmas trees. All of these things have become essential to having a happy Christmas.

So you can see that in Western society, Christian religious festivals go hand in hand with the children's activities and the shopping activities. When you look at

Christmas as an outsider into western culture, it is important to be able to divide it up into at least these three sections so that you can begin to understand what is going on in western society at Christmas time. Then you can ask, "What do you want to be important in your church?" Certainly, you want to include the Biblical story, but how much do you include of Father Christmas and other such activities? Do you need Father Christmas to be part of the church activities in China? Is it not more important to find other activities that are meaningful to Chinese children and the situation in which you find yourself? If you are among minorities you should be looking for ways in which you can make Christmas a Chinese Christmas while keeping the heart of the Biblical message about Jesus Christ. Other elements of the festival can change dramatically.

One festival seen in the northern cities of China today is Halloween. The shopping malls sell children's dresses with black hats and caps, pumpkins and other Halloween things. People assume that since Halloween is celebrated by Western Christians, it is a Christian holiday, but what do you think? Should Christians in China celebrate Halloween just because it is observed by Christians in other countries? What about China? Is it something that they should do? To answer this question, it helps to know where the event came from. Well, you have to go back to the history of Europe because in ancient Europe, the New Year began November 1. An event called Samhein marked the beginning of the winter period, which was believed to be the beginning of the year. Ancient Europeans believed that ghosts would come closest to the living at this time of the year. Thus it was the best time to speak to ghosts if you wanted to, and a time to try to scare away ghosts if you did not want to have anything to do with them.

When the Europeans became Christian somewhere about the third or fourth century AD, the church produced an alternative festival that became known as All Saints Day celebrated on November 1. The root of the word Halloween comes from words associated with All Saints Day. Hallo means holy, and the evening before the Holy Day was known as Hallo's Eve, which evolved into the word Halloween. So, Halloween does not have anything to do with the Christmas story or the Christian

story at all, it is an event that goes back before that time. So, Halloween has become just a fun time in which people can talk about ghosts, spirits and other fearful things and perhaps tell ghost stories. But the church in China needs to reflect on this. Is this a good a thing to have in the life of the church or is it best to put it to one side? The shopping malls might make something of it to try to get the wealthy people to buy the cloaks and the special food and these things but is that something the church in China should import from the West?

So by looking at the nature of ritual, you can decide what sort of festival is good for the church to have. You might even wonder if the church in the West should they actually practice Halloween. It might be fun time does it really help to explain Christianity? That is for the Christians in the west to decide, but you can look at the church in China and decide what is important for your own witness and testimony.

To sum up, festivals vary and you need to look carefully at them and understand them as they are practiced in mainstream society and among minority people. As an example of minority practices, we mentioned animal sacrifices in Chan festivals. Is that a good practice for the Chang when they became Christian? Should they continue to perform animal sacrifice or should they keep themselves sacred from that? We need to understand them and talk about how our anthropological research can be applied to the life of the Christian community.

The third thing that is important to think about is the function of calendar rites. What does the rite do? This is an important question to ask, especially in the light of talking about suitable Christian festivals in China today. Festivals are times of social unity, of people come together. We have seen this with families coming together; we have seen it with Christian communities coming together. You will find that Christians like to come together at Christmas time in order to give thanks to God. It is part of this sense of unity as one family, a Christian family, our social family. A festival should build on this a sense of common identity. If people stop having these festivals, they stop feeling this sense of identity. Many minority people in China lost their festivals after the formation of New China and so lost

something of their social identity and so they are struggling to re-invent some of these traditions.

The second function of a ritual is that it reduces social tension, which is a long way of saying it provides a time of fun. We should not forget that, although we see calendar rites as serious events, they are also times when we can have fun together, when we can have meals together, when we can eat better food. As we prepare the food and drink together, people can relax, renew friendships, and sort out differences.

Thirdly, rituals provide education for young people. At Christmas time around the world children act out the story of Christmas. Parents enjoy seeing their children take part, so it is a time when they take photographs. In Western countries, parents who are not Christian are quite happy to come along to see their children act out the Christmas story. This process of education for the young through festivals is something you will find in all societies.

Finally, let us draw together some of the points relating to Christians and Christian festivals. We have seen that certain festivals are celebrated in the church worldwide. Christians worldwide celebrate Christmas and Easter. These two great festivals are common to Christians around the world and the church of China should enjoy them. It does not matter whether or not the government makes it a holiday. It is a time when the worldwide Christian family celebrates. Whatever race we are from, whatever country we are from, we unite in these celebrations. They are rites that we should encourage wherever we are, even with the Mahlong (people who are interested in Christian things). Invite them to your time together. It is often a very meaningful time.

The second point that is significant is the type of festival, how we live it out, how we enjoy it. Each country, each denomination has its traditions, the way that it has celebrated Christmas or Easter over the years. Some have more symbols and pictures than others do. But we need to decide which festivals and stories are relevant to us in New China and which we should leave to one side (such as Father

Christmas) to enable us to focus more on the story of Jesus. We want our Christian festivals to be meaningful to the people.

The technical term for this is contextualization, which simply means that the story should be put in its local context. Christmas in China should be Chinese because Christianity is not just a western religion; it is a religion for people worldwide. Christianity began in Asia in the land of Israel but it spread around the world and has become a religion for all people. We express it in different ways. Western people can express it in their way, Chinese people their way. Despite the different expressions, we are all part of the one global family, we are Christians. By participating in these rituals, we show our identity to the people.

To sum up, festivals associated with calendar rites give us the opportunity to study outward symbols to get insight into their meanings. As we enter into festival activities, we understand more and more why stories are told. Rituals communicate to the young but they can also communicate to you as outsiders going into the society. So, calendar festivals are one type of ritual. In the next chapter we will look at the second type of rituals known as rites of passage.

LESSON 15: RITES OF PASSAGE

In Chapter 5, you studied Life is Going in Circles, which was the study of a pattern of life of an individual, the stages that a person goes through in life. This marks off certain very distinct stages that are common to many societies. The anthropologist Van Genipp used the term rites of passage because you pass from one stage of life into the next. It is as if you move through a door from one room into the next room and everyone knows you have gone through that doorway. You have a change of status, and the transition is difficult and dangerous. Therefore societies have rituals at these stages in order to protect the child or adult as they move from one stage to the next. We have already seen that these can also be times of fun and of celebration, as well. Birth is the first rite of passage. The second common rite of passage is that of maturity. When does a boy become a man? When does a girl become a woman? The third common rite of passage is that of marriage, when does a person move from being a single adult to being a married adult? And the fourth is that of death, when a person dies, a person moves from living to dying. In some societies there is another transition as one progresses from death into ancestorhood.

The first rite of passage-birth.

Let us go back and have a look at what Van Genipp would say is most important rite of transition. It is the birth transition. A new child is coming into the world. A new member of society has arrived. Birth is a dangerous transition and people are concerned for the child. In Tibet, the rite of passage associated with birth is known as Pang Sai. Tibetans believe that when a child is born, they are usually born alongside birds and that somehow, the child and the birds are linked together. Therefore a ritual is necessary to cleanse away the Pang, the pollution, from the child and to help the mother to recover quickly. People come to the home to give a white shawl to both the parents and the child. After three days for a boy and four days for a girl, a special festival is held and attended by Illama or some notable person in the village. The Illama does a chant for the child, which cleanses the child of pollution. Later, the child is taken out and shown to people. This is called

outdoor. A child who dies soon after birth, before the ritual takes place, is taken away and buried. Little is said, except some older people who may say “Ah, this was not really a child that has come to stay but was an evil spirit that is playing a trick on you.”

In some African countries, the term that is used to describe this rite is the ‘come-to-stay point’. When the child has come to stay, it becomes a member of the society. It is a new member that is cared for and will grow into an important person. After that come-to-stay point, the child is treated in a different way. If the child was to die at one or two or three years of age then it is buried as a person but before that, the child is not regarded as a member of society, it has not entered the community of people. So, birth rituals are important.

Birth rituals are also important to Christianity. When a child is born into a Christian home, what do you do? Do you just ignore the fact and the child comes along to the church or do you mark it as a time when the child is dedicated as part of the Christian community, and say, “This child is now part of our church fellowship”?

The second rite of passage-maturity

This is when a boy becomes a man. In Africa, this rite is very important and has been extensively studied. Van Gennep describes the process below:

A boy may be playing with other boys when the time comes (once a year or so) that all the boys of a certain age group are taken out of the village. They are separated from their families and their village. This is a time of testing to see if they are strong enough to be a man. They must learn to throw spear more effectively and they learn about their bodies and hear stories about their tribe. When the time is complete, they come back to their village having disposed of the clothing of childhood. Sometimes their clothing is burned in a fire ceremony and the boys jump through the fire to show that they have passed over from childhood into manhood. Then, they return to their village dressed in the clothes of a man. They have moved from being boys to being men. They are treated like men, and behave like men.

One finds a similar rite among the Jews. It is called Barmitzvah. At the age of twelve, a Jewish boy is brought into the synagogue (the building in which Jews meet for worship). There the young boy reads from the Jewish text. From that time, he is regarded as a man and he is treated like a man.

These two examples contrast with what you will find in western societies. Western societies traditionally have not had a big festival like that and so the question arises, "When does an American boy or an English girl become an adult?" Well, there are various pointers along the way, the first one being sexual biological maturity. There are other markers as well; one is sixteen, which is the time that a child might be able to leave school, but not before that time. Another marker could be seventeen. In many countries in the West 17 is important because it is the time when the child can learn to drive and in Western countries to drive means that the child has freedom to move. At eighteen, it is a time when a person can vote, join the army and fight for the country. Twenty-one is often the legal age of maturity. In some European countries that is the age at which a child would inherit from his property if his parents have died. So you can see that in western society there is a range of ages of maturity. There is not one time when a boy can now say, "I am a man" or a girl says, "I am a woman". This is why some anthropologists have asked the question, "Is this the reason why we have a teenage period in western cultures, but not in African cultures? Is this what makes the difference?"

The third rite of passage- marriage

In Western society, marriage is a time when a young couple moves from living in separate homes with their parents into their home together. The legal part of marriage is fulfilled by the priest. The marriage celebration includes a meal in which all friends come together, but it is also a time of separation because it is the time when the young couple goes on a honeymoon. They go off to have a holiday together for one or two weeks before they come back into society to take up the role of being a married couple. So they move from being two singles into a time of separation and then united back as one. That is why in many western movies the honeymoon is seen as an important time, a fun time.

The fourth rite of passage-death

This is a difficult time for people. When it comes to death rituals there are at least five things that are important. The first relates to the disposal of the body. What is the acceptable way to dispose of a corpse? There are a limited numbers of ways that you can do this. In the West, bodies are traditionally buried in a wooden coffin in a solemn ceremony. In Moslem societies, the body is not placed into a coffin, but is wrapped up in white cloth before it is placed into the ground. In India, most bodies are disposed by cremation. People go outside of the town to a cremation area and gather around. Usually the eldest son is the one to light the fire while all those gathered watch.

Recently, changes have taken place in the ways we choose to dispose of bodies. In the United Kingdom in 1900 over 90% of bodies were buried in the graveyards, but during the 20th century, the majority of bodies are cremated rather than buried. A more mobile society has caused a change in burial practices. In the 1900s the body was buried in their hometown. However, many Europeans no longer have a hometown. They have moved on, their children are in different places, their mothers and fathers have come from different towns, so cremation has become a way of disposing the body.

Tibetans have a disposal practice known as sky burial. In sky burial, the person's body is sent into the hills and there the Illama will cut up the body into portions will place it onto a rack off the ground and will then chant for the soul of the person while vultures circle overhead and come to eat the flesh. Westerners and Chinese are horrified by the practice, but when you listen and talk to Tibetans, it can change your perspective. They see this as a way in which the body is taken up. It is liberated because the body itself, the outer part of the body, is nothing more than something that is passing. Vultures, to the Western mind, are dirty, despised birds. In contrast, Tibetans see them as heavenly birds, which come down from the skies and help to release the soul of the person into the heavenly realm. So, you can get a different perspective, but it is only when you start listening to the Tibetan people

without judging that you begin to understand. (This is why it is so important to listen, to ask questions that are not judgmental.)

The second important part of death rites is preparation of the spirit. What happens to the soul of the person? The Tibetan sees the soul as something that needs to be liberated and freed into the world. What does the Christian think about this? When a Christian dies, what happens? He goes to be with the Lord, according to the New Testament. "What happens when a person dies?" This is one of the most important questions that can come up at such a time because people are open to talk about sensitive things. They are thinking about what happens to the spirit, the soul. We just need to be careful of what we say.

The third thing that the death rite needs to do is to provide a mean for the channel of grief for feeling sad. How do people express that sadness? English men have the reputation of keeping a brave face, (or what is called a stiff upper lip). The English man does not cry. In the Muslim world you will find crying and loud noises at a funeral and sometimes even professional mourners. The Englishman looks at this with a certain horror, but it is just a method of trying to channel the grief that is there. You could debate which is best, to cry or to keep the feelings within. It is important at a Christian funeral to realize that people need to grieve.

The fourth thing a death rite needs to do is to restore a social balance. A member of society is gone, leaving a gap. Who is going to be the husband, the wife or the father to the children? Societies have different ways of overcoming this. In many societies if a man dies, it could be his brother who is required to marry the widow. In the Old Testament, you find a number of cases of this, especially in the book of Leviticus. It is called the Levirate marriage. A Jewish man would marry his brother's wife if he dies especially if she does not have a child. In that way, the dead brother's family line is not lost.

The fifth thing a death rite should provide is an explanation of life. When someone dies and there is sadness, and the question arises, "Why did or she die at this time?" In western countries it is easy for the government to talk about statistics

and the probability of a person dying in a car accident but that does not provide an answer to the question of “Why was it my husband, my friend who died? It is often at such a time that as Christians we have a channel, an opportunity to share something with people because we have a hope. A Christian funeral is different because we know when that when someone has died, it is not just the end, but that person has gone to be with the Lord. That is the hope that enables us to cope better.

Governments are interested in three of these rites, birth, marriage and death. Governments see maturity rites as superstition or tradition. But governments need to know how many people are in a nation and what age they are when they marry, and when someone dies. Therefore, all three of these rites are found in modern societies. But for these times (birth, marriage, death) the church should be willing to provide a rite of passage for its members. For example, marriage should not be just a matter of going to register the marriage of the couple and then going to have the banquet together with friends and family. It should also be a time when you are also celebrating and making vows before God. Therefore, many Chinese Christians go to church in order to sing praises to God and make vows to each other before God before making the legal declaration. Then they go on the way to the banquet to enjoy a celebration together. So, marriage is becoming part of the church.

So there are four basic rites of passage found in most societies. There is one rite, the rite of ancestorhood, which used to be practiced in traditional China. A year or more after death, the ghost of the ancestor would go through onto the next stage into a happy existence. This is not common in mainland China today, although you may find it in Taiwan or Hong Kong.

Other transitions

There are other progressions in life that are not rites of passage. They may be either religious or non-religious. One such initiation is going into a monastery. A young man might decide that he wants to become a monk, so he goes to the monastery to make his vows to the head of the monastery. He will have his head shaven, take on the robes of that order and live in the monastery. This is more

common among the Tibetans and Mongolians. Sometimes Han Chinese who become disillusioned with life in the cities and the continuing quest for money go up to the Tibetan hills to find spiritual answers by becoming a monk. This is an example of someone making a transition because of a spiritual quest.

But there is another sort of initiation that you will find in all societies—the graduation ceremony when a person has finished their degree. This involves special clothing, it involves celebration, and it involves the ritual that goes along with it. So, every year, in the universities throughout China, you will find students dressed in their black gowns and black hats, lining up to receive their degree from a senior official of the university. Then, they will have their photographs taken in their gowns, followed by a meal with family and friends. Now they have moved from being students to those who have graduated into the area of work. They are now professional people. This also happens in other associations. To become a member of the Chinese communist party requires education and training after which there is an initiation where you make your vows before the senior official and say you want to be a member who is active in the communist party. You make a commitment to the communist party and to serving the nation.

All these are different forms of rituals when a person has moved from one state into another state. The ritual is the marker. Now that you know the rituals, you can start asking questions, “Why that marker, at that point?” What does it mean?” “Why do they do things in that way?” Rites of passage provide a way to understand how a society is ordered.

LESSON 16: RELIGION

At the beginning of this course, we looked at understanding culture and we took up the illustration of the cabbage. We saw originally that the cabbage has outward leaves, these are things that can be seen and that we can easily observe. The outer leaves represent the behavior of the people. The leaves further in represent the things that people make. Then the very heart of the cabbage represents the part of culture that is the most difficult to understand—ideas, or the way people think. You can see what they do, you can ask those questions but it is only when you listen carefully and take part in their lives that you begin to get to the heart of culture.

In this chapter and the following one, we are going to be looking at some of the key ideas that are part of any society. First we will look at religion, which is at the heart of culture. In the following chapter we will look at ideas that people hold to be true, which is also at the heart of culture.

Wallace (1966) defined religion as “belief and ritual concerned with supernatural beings, powers and forces”. All religions have of these both elements-- beliefs (ideas) and rituals. In the past two chapters we have discussed two common rituals-- calendar rites and rites of passage. Rituals, religious figures and religious symbols are the outward expression of the inward values and beliefs of the people. We can start looking through the rituals and symbols to people’s beliefs, values, ideas and assumptions. This is the inner part of culture and perhaps the most difficult part of culture to discern. Karl Marx believed that in time people would move from religion into an atheistic scientific way of life. But, he was wrong. So, the question would be is why are people religious? With all the scientific development, education and philosophy, why is it that people remain religious? Even in the United States, 50% of the population still attends church. Religious traditions are a part of cultures worldwide. The number of people who would actually say, “I do not believe in God, I am an atheist”, is, in fact, no more than ten percent of the population.

So, what is the function of religion? Well, if you talk to students in China, you will get some of these answers:

1. Religion helps reduce anxiety. We have seen how rituals are a way in which people can reduce social tensions. Belief in God and in the power of God in your life means you are not just dependent on yourself but you can turn to a living God for help. This is very important in the Christian tradition-- God is our Father and we can give our cares and anxieties to Him. Something similar is found in other religious traditions and so for this people find that religion is important in reducing anxiety. Some of the studies that have been done on religion and religious belief in various countries have shown that people who have a strong faith are those who can be at more at peace about things; suffer less from depression and difficulties.
2. Religion tends to maintain social order. This is especially seen in countries that profess Christianity. When Christianity spread into Europe and became an important part of European life, a new social order emerged which was based on a new moral ethic --the Ten Commandments. The ethics in the Ten Commandments contribute to maintaining social order and stability.
3. Religion answers questions about life. These big questions are not answered satisfactorily by science or most non-Christian religions. Science does not seek to answer questions like, "well, what am I?" It is not satisfying to say, "I'm no more than a collection of cells that have divided in my mother's womb to become a human being. One day, I will die and these cells will decay again." Every human being questions "What am I?", "Who am I?", and "Is there more to life than this?" Science cannot answer these questions. Neither can it answer the questions, "Where do I come from and where do I belong?" and "There must be a reason for my life. If there is no meaning to life, then life is something of a joke and I will die and that is the end."

Science also fails to answer satisfactorily the question, "How did the universe begin?" Science attempts to answer with such theories as the Big Bang

theory and the theory of evolution. But whatever position you take on the origin of the universe, you come back to the same question “if it was a big explosion that caused the world to begin, who/what was the cause behind the Big Bang?” and the question again, “Why is the world here as it is?”

Yet another question is, “what happens when I die?” We touched on this in the previous chapter when we were looking at death rites. Death rites can be the occasion for asking this question.

Even a person who is strongly atheist might ask the question, “Why did God allow this to happen?” Another larger question is, “why do bad things happen?” We are all aware that in life there are good things and bad things. Life has a moral nature to it, but what is the basis of ethics and morals within life?” and perhaps the biggest, “what is the meaning of life?” There must be something more to life than just living a few years having children, working, retiring and then dying. Religions try to give answers to these big questions. In Christianity we find the answers in the Bible.

To sum up, there have been various surveys that ask Chinese students the question, “Why are people religious?” The answers that come up over and over again are that religion reduces anxiety, maintains social order, and answers the big questions about life.

Now we need to address the question “how do you actually study religion?” It is not an easy thing to study, because of its complexity. A British professor named Ninian Smart uses a method for studying religions that compares seven significant points. As we discussed earlier, comparison is an important tool in anthropology. The seven points of comparison are:

1. Religious practices

These are the rituals and festivals we talked about in the previous two chapters. We can participate in and film rituals and festivals. They include symbols that can help us to understand where people are at and what they are thinking. The field of psychology can aid us in this understanding. A psychologist knows the importance of symbols. They are the expression of people's thinking in visual form or spoken form.

2. Experience

This second element of comparison is more difficult because we are not able to look at anything. Instead, we gather information by doing interviews. One of the most powerful ways of doing an interview is to get a person's personal story. What does religion mean to them? However, describing a religious experience is often difficult. A person might have an experience of God when they hear God speak to them, see a light, then see Jesus as a person in white. These experiences are difficult to put those in words. But people struggling to put experiences into words can be a way for them to share something of their inner experiences and feelings. If you are listening carefully, you may be able to understand what they are saying. It might be something that, "It was like a voice that spoke in to me". Throughout the history, godly men and woman who have had experiences with Jesus have written them down in an attempt to explain how they have felt.

3. Stories

Religious stories are written down and become sacred books. These books could be a collection of the words spoken by the founder of a religion. For example, the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book, contains the words that were recited by the prophet Mohammed and written down by his followers. The Jewish people's sacred book is the Torah. The Torah is the first five books of what Christians call the Old Testament. Within the Old Testament you will find the story of the Jewish people. But it is more than just a story, it shows God's work in their lives, from the time of God's call to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, right through to King David and the establishment of the kingdom of Israel, through to the prophesies of Isaiah and

Ezekiel and others, from which comes the promise that God will send His savior, the Messiah, the Christ. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is seen as the fulfillment of the traditions and promises concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament. These stories are written down in the books and so you can compare the stories.

4. Teachings

All religions have their sacred writings. From these writings come the principles or main teachings of the religion. It is the human mind, engaging with questions that are common to each one of us. The doctrines that answer these questions are passed down through the years and become central to the teachings of the particular religious tradition.

So you get to hear stories about God, “what is God like?” Christian theologians, when they answer this question, say that God is love. Within the Muslim tradition you do not find that God is love. He is unknowable, He is outside human comprehension. All you can know is what God wants you to do. Therefore Muslims are known as those who submit to God. Islam means submission, you submit to the will of God and so, although God might be seen as compassionate you do not have the same understanding of the God of love.

Another question answered in the doctrine of a religion is “what is a human being, who I am, what am I doing in this world?” Some religions will point forward to some new state that could be called heaven; they also talk about salvation or the end of things. However, these doctrines only partially answer the question because they do not address the problem of weakness in people (described as “sin” in the Christian scriptures).

5. Ethic, moral behavior and rules to live by

One of the difficulties with atheism is that there is no external God speaking into human society as to how one should live and so therefore, it has got to be human beings, whether it be the officials in the Communist Party or some philosopher, who teaches us what is right or wrong. And so in Communist countries, moral education

is a problem. In contrast, the Christian has a basis for relating to God and others that has been given in the Ten Commandments: “You shall have no other gods but God”, “you shall not make idols”, “you shall not make wrongful use of God’s name,” “you should keep the Sabbath as a holy day,” “Honor your father and mother” , “Do not kill”, “Do not commit adultery”, “Do not steal”, “Do not bear false witness against your neighbor” and “ Do not covet your neighbor’s goods”. In this simple way, here we have a basis for moral education within Western society.

6. Communities and Social Institutions

Religious people form communities and then social institutions begin to emerge. Some people are not just members of a culture, but also members of a social community relating to a particular religious tradition: they attend a particular church, mosque or temple that gives them a sense of community.

So, what is the role of the church building and the people who meet there? Christian teaching says that the church is not the building but the people, it is the people who are the church (the community of God’s people) so we need to be able to support each other.

Sometime communities mark themselves out in different ways. We are all familiar with the Whey people. The Whey men wear their white caps and women wear their head coverings to let others know that, “We are Whey, we are different”. The Buddhist monk shaves his head would put on robes and it marks him out who he is.

7. Things people make

All societies make things. So it is not just a matter of what people think about religion but what people make. Sometimes they make images. It could be golden images of a particular Buddha that people come to worship. It could be buildings or the temples. It could be paintings. All of these sorts of things are part of the holy place made by people as they are trying to express the image that they have of a God by making it into physical form. Often the image or the statue is in fact the visual expression of what God is like, of what the Buddha is like. In images of the Buddha

the artist tries to express the peace and calm of the Buddha in the blissful stage of Nirvana.

So by studying religions, one can begin to understand some of the basic teachings of people and those teachings help us understand what these people find significant, how they understand the worlds. The symbols come as visual forms of things that are ideas or of teachings, so enable us into get into the heart of people's culture.

Religion and Superstition

In China, the government recognizes five religions: Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, Roman Catholic Christianity and protestant Christianity. There is a degree of religious freedom within the expression of these as long as one follows one's religion in an established, recognized building with the governance of a particular official who is known as a qualified person in his tradition. Aside from that, there are a number of other folk beliefs and the beliefs of tribal peoples that are classified as superstition.

One can look at the distinction between the world religions (like the five that are acknowledged by the CCP) and the religions that belong to tribal minorities. World religions like Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism have a universal aspect to them. But tribal religions tend to be unique to just the tribe. The Chang people, the Yee people or the Mossi have their own religion traditions and they are not really considering changing.

World religions usually have a written text, but tribal religious tend to be conveyed by oral traditions, passed by word of mouth, like this one:

A Chang fell in love with a heavenly princess. After great exploits he made his way to heaven where the princess gave him various things including a sacred book. He brought that book back to earth but he was so tired from his ordeal that he laid down by the bank of the river and fell asleep. When he woke up the book was

nowhere to be found. When he realized what had been lost to his people, he was just about to kill himself when suddenly, up in the tree was a golden monkey. The golden monkey started chattering and pointing towards a goat. Then he knew that the goat had eaten the book. Again he was disappointed and would have killed himself but the golden monkey said “No, go and kill the goat and from the skin of the goat make a drum and with every beat of the drum you will remember one phrase from the book.

Even today, as the Shiba, (the Shaman) beats his drum; he is able to chant those words. This is an example of a story that has been passed on orally and is still told by the Shibi Setswan today.

World religions have clear doctrines (statements of what is believed), whereas tribal religions tend to be far more pragmatic. When something goes wrong this is what you do.

World religions have a moral code but tribal religions are more concerned about coping with problems in their world. Tribal people are more concerned with giving gifts to the gods so that the gods will be quiet and peaceful and not cause them difficulties.

World religions tend to be missionary whereas tribal religions do not. In tribal religion people have their own beliefs and think that you have yours, but missionary religions will push in. Buddhism came into China as a missionary religion starting the first century. Later, Christianity started coming in great force. Mission is part of a world religion. It is part of the traditions of Christianity because all people are regarded as part of God’s family and although they are sinners, God wants them to come to a knowledge of Him.

It is interesting to note that in the history of religion, it has been tribal religions that have actually been the most eager to convert to a world religion. As Christianity spread in the early centuries, it went into the Roman Empire. In the Roman Empire, there was a belief in many gods. When they accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior in

the fourth century, Emperor Constantine declared the Roman Empire Christian. Christianity spread among the Anglos and the Saxons and so the people of England and Germany and France become Christians. You can see some of the remnants of the ancient religion even in the days of the week. Monday comes from the word 'moon'. It is the day that the moon goddess was recognized, Tuesday from 'Tues', Wednesday from Waldon, the god of thunder and fire, Thursday, Thor the god of sky and the high god, Friday, Fria, the goddess of love, Saturday, it comes from Saturn, the planet that we can see in the sky and Sunday represented the sun. These are remnants that have remained in the English language even though people have become Christian.

A final point about religion--reaching out to those of other religions requires first of all, a life encounter. Build trust. As you make friends with people they can see your life because you draw close to them. There needs to be integrity in your life. People will look to see who you are. So, it is not just a matter of the researcher going to look at the people, it is two ways, the people will look at you and ask what sort of person are you. Do they see kindness and joy in you; do they see love in you? And if they do, then across the bridge of friendship people can come to know the Person who gives you those qualities. That is a life of encounter.

There also needs to be something of a truth encounter. You have your beliefs and these need to be expressed. You want to share what Jesus has done for you and you want to do it in a way that is so exciting, but it must be done with care, understanding how the people will see it. This is a topic that we will return to in a following chapter, but it is a matter of stating what truth is. Is truth found within Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Taoism, or another way? It is an encounter. And eventually as you are in another culture, the question will come up, "In what do you believe?" People have been telling you what they believe but now, what do you believe?

And thirdly, when it comes to reaching out to those of other cultures a point will come when there is something of a power encounter. Things go wrong and

people will ask for your help. Perhaps it is somebody who is sick. What do you do, are you willing to pray for that person in a way that is appropriate and meaningful, do you trust God to do something in their lives so that things will be changed?

Prayer it is not just something that Christians choose to do. God has invited us to ask of Him and do things in His name in the situation in which you find yourself. So now the researcher is moving into a different role. Sometimes this is known as action research because it is not just a simple matter of standing on the outside. Instead it is becoming involved when there are situations where the researcher can bring good to the people. That is the aim, to seek the good of the nations. And so the study of other religions provides you with the framework, so that when people ask the question. "And so, what do you believe?" you have the opportunity to effectively tell them your personal beliefs.

LESSON 17.....IDEAS, ASSUMPTIONS AND VALUES

Right at the beginning of this course, we were looking at people. We saw that culture had to do with what people do, what people make and what people think. We have gradually come in from the outward to start looking at the inward- the way people think. In terms of religion, we saw that religion has an external part (rituals, buildings and other objects) and an inward side. Now, we want to probe more the inward side and ask this question, “How can I understand how people think?” This inward side has been referred to by anthropologists as a **worldview** (translated ‘he je quan’ in Chinese). It is a way of looking at the world and making sense of it. There are various definitions that have been given to it. Robert Redfield defined worldview as, ‘the central assumptions, concepts and values shared by members of a society’. Christian James defined a worldview as a set of presuppositions or assumptions that we hold consciously or subconsciously about the basic makeup of our world. These definitions draw together the key ideas of what is meant by worldview.

The first part of the definition of worldview is that of **ideas**. Worldview is not something you can see-- it is people's thoughts and their assumptions. Ideas do not just float around like balloons in space, they are actually linked together, and they have a structure and an order. For example, when people play ‘mahjong’, you can see the mahjong table and you can see people laughing and moving the tiles to play the game. But, as an outsider you might not know what is happening because behind those outward things are the basic rules for ‘mahjong’ and each person’s preferred strategy for winning the game.

So, people have ideas, and behind these ideas is the structure or pattern that is there. You can see this in the way that human beings tend to arrange things. For example, it is easy to look at a shape on a piece of paper, but then you start trying to identify things that are there – the shape, the structure – to bring some order into that structure. That is the noble part of human thought relating to worldview.

Worldview is also consciously and unconsciously held. You can sometimes ask people, “What do you think about this?”, and they will say ‘this means this’. But there is also another side. It is the unconscious answer—the answer that comes out when people reflect and say ‘well, I do not know what this means, we have always done it this way and I do not know what it is all about.

This is the difference between worldview and philosophy. In philosophy, people are telling you what they believe. Theology does the same thing—it tells you what Christianity or Buddhism believes. But within all societies, the worldview has parts that are outside people’s thinking. That is the differences between worldview and philosophy.

Worldview also has a strong degree of commitment. People feel this is right; this is the order in the world. These feelings and assumptions can often be the bases for cultural clashes. One western writer has talked about a clash of worlds. The western world has its assumptions and the fundamentalist Muslims have a very different view of the world, but both groups are thoroughly committed to their view. The result is a clash that can even lead to warfare. So to identify basic assumptions one can look at what people feel a strong commitment to. It could be, ‘the world is like this’ or it could be ‘God is like this’. We have some basic principles that are held.

The fifth part of the definition of worldview is that the ideas are held by a community. It is not just by individuals but it is the community that holds them together. You might find individuals with a different philosophy but it is the community that will hold the worldview as a whole. Worldview is very much like a tree with its branches. The leaves on the tree give the tree its shape. In wintertime the leaves come off and what you are left with is the framework, the trunk and the branches of the tree. When the leaves bud again in the summer time, the tree takes on a different shape, but it is the same tree. So it is with culture, you got the leaves giving the shape of the tree but underneath is the framework of ideas that people embrace.

As a researcher, we ask the question ‘how do you identify worldview themes?’ If people are unable to explain their ideas, how do you get started trying to understand the basic assumptions of their society? Well, one way forward is to explore the answers to ten key questions. Knowing these answers will help you to get more understanding of the worldview of a people.

The first question is **what beliefs are strongly held by people?** In other words, what do they feel a commitment about? This can often emerge when you witness arguments between people. You will hear ‘no, this is right, that’s wrong’ and so the discussion will go. When you see people expressing this strong belief it gives you insight into what is of importance to the people.

The second question is **what do people regard as a major offense?** What is regarded as being a great sin, a great problem? In Thailand, to put your hand upon someone’s head is not regarded as being good at all because it shows that you consider yourself above that person. There are some cultures where murder is a major offense. In other cases, you could well find what is important to the people is hospitality. So when you go to their home, they want to be hospitable, they will give anything you want and to be inhospitable is actually a great offense.

The third question that could be explored is **what are the greatest fears that people have?** You often find in cities that one of the greatest fears is economic collapse, the loss of money, what happens if I lose all my money? But among some minority people what is of greater importance is some spirits or some ghosts that might affect them. How can such a spirit influence me and how therefore can I protect myself in such circumstances.

The fourth question that can be explored is how **do people train their children to behave?** What do parents or grandparents teach their children? In many countries and especially in the nonwestern world, you will find that children are told to behave or some evil spirit will come and attack them. Sometimes that evil spirit is regarded as a white man. ‘Be careful or the white man will come and catch you’. So

the child begins to fear foreigners. So what is the pattern of behavior that the child should follow and what is regarded as good behavior? Is it that the child sits quietly at the table or the child plays around having fun?

Fifth question is **what do people do in a crisis?** When something goes wrong, when you are ill, what do you do? Many people in western countries, even though they will claim to be Christians will immediately go to the doctor, but isn't it better to pray first and ask God to heal us? In many parts of China, especially Hong Kong, if students are anxious about their examinations, they will go to the temple, shake the sticks and out will come the fortune stick, and take it to the priest so the priest will tell them what it means. Things go wrong in life. What do people do in such circumstances?

Six, **what rituals do people perform?** What are the important things that you can see in their rituals? We've talked about some of rituals connected with Christmas. But you will also find that there are everyday things that people do. One common superstition in Europe is if you want good fortune, cross your fingers and say 'cross my fingers and this bad thing won't happen to me'. In many parts of the Tibetan world, you don't go on a journey if when you walk out somebody is saying bad words or there is a black cat that walks across your path. These are bad signs showing that the day is not auspicious and so you delay your journey until the signs are good.

Seventh is **what is considered to be words of wisdom** and this is important and we are going to come back to this.

Eighth, **who are the trendsetters?** Who sets fashion? Today in modern China, so often it is the pop stars, the movie stars, these are the ones who dress and behave in certain ways and so people copy the way that they dress. Their pop idol, the actor that they see on TV or in movies becomes the one who most influences them.

Nine, **what is expressed in art?** In the previous chapter we talked about art and how it is often an individual expression. An individual can draw or paint or

produce a statue that is characteristic of how he or she feels. In so doing they may be expressing something of the feelings that are of importance for others in the culture.

Ten, **what aspects of culture are most resistant to change?** All cultures change but what aspects change only slowly. One aspect that changes slowly in Chinese society is the family and respect for the elderly. Many other things are changing rapidly Cars, houses, the drinks people like, the coming of MacDonald's and KFC, and so many other outward things are all parts of the change in modern life, but the family and basic respect for the elderly are still important.

All ten of these questions provide a useful way of thinking about worldview but words of wisdom (question #7) is perhaps the best way to start looking at the basics of a society's worldview. Many anthropologists have spent time collecting words of wisdom in a society. Then they listen to when the phrases are used in order to understand their context.

A study was made of American sayings. Here are the top ten, along with comments about what conclusions we might draw about American thinking from these sayings.

1. 'Just do it' (You probably can hear Nike!)
2. 'Enough is enough' (OK, do it, but there are limits to things you can do)
3. 'You cannot argue with success' (If a person is able to succeed maybe it doesn't matter much how he got there).
4. 'Rules are made to be broken' (There is a moral order but we like to think that there are exceptions).
5. 'Live and let live' (Get on with your own life, don't bother with other people, they can do what they like)
6. 'God helps those who help themselves' (It is up to us to do something to improve ourselves before God steps in.)

7. 'Shop till you drop' (Americans live in a consumer society.)

8. 'No pain, no gain' (parents use this to motivate their children to work hard, we value hard work)

9. 'Time is money', (all of us talk about time in this way, time is linear, and it is something we can lose.)

In contrast, for an African, time is not money. Time is something you spend with people, it is not something that flows linearly, but it involves taking the opportunity to enjoy. Time in many parts of Africa is like being in one room and then moving into another room, but not until you have thoroughly enjoyed the first room. They do not see time as a river that is endlessly flowing. For an African, there is not a correlation between time and money.

10. 'Time flies when you are having fun' (the implication is that we believe that to have fun is good.)

Different societies have different words of wisdom. Listen for them, try to write them down, collect them and put them into your notebooks. Ask people what sayings they can remember and then listen to how and when those sayings are used. You will find sometimes that it is not easy to understand colloquial sayings, but by gathering those sayings you will begin to see what is of value to that society. The Book of Proverbs is an example of sayings that were collected and written down. We can learn a lot about Jewish thinking from them. (Many of these sayings are also relevant for today because they are inspired by God and written for our benefit.) To sum up, when you begin to understand what is behind words of wisdom and sayings, you begin to move from the outside into the inside of people's thinking.

We can explore further by comparing worldviews on six major themes: the nature of the universe, human beings, knowledge, community, time and ethics. Let's compare the atheists' worldview with that of the Christian on each of these themes.

The atheist regards the world as scientific and material, so anything beyond what can be seen, measured or analyzed doesn't exist. They come to the conclusion that there is no God, which leads to the question of how the world is created. The theory of the evolution of all life provides the answer to that question, so this theory becomes important to the atheist. The Christian on the other hand makes a very different assumption. Those few words at the beginning of the Bible express this basic assumption - God created. He created out of nothing and yet made the whole material world, not only things that I can see and measure and study, but also the spiritual world. All things were created by God and for Him.

To the atheist, a human being is something like machine--a computer with its hardware and its software programmed by society. In contrast, the Bible talks about mankind being made in the image of God. In other words, human beings have some of the same qualities of God. God is creator so human beings are creators on a lower scale---we can make things, and we can do things. God is love and so as individuals, we can love. One of the difficulties with the atheistic worldview is explaining the experience of love and where love comes from. In the Christian worldview, the understanding of who God is leads to understanding human nature (despite the spoiling of that divine image due to sin).

Now let's talk about the question of knowledge. What can I actually know? The atheist worldview talks about empirical, scientific and rational methods. Consequently all that I can really know is that which I can measure, weigh, or study in a scientific way. The Christian worldview also talks about the possibility of studying the world, but it allows for another form of knowledge, which is the type of knowledge known as revelation. Core to the Christian worldview is the belief that God reveals himself to human beings, through the Bible and through His Son Jesus Christ.

Fourth, we can compare the way a worldview looks at community. In atheist societies, people are individuals although they may be gathered together into communes or communities. The Christian worldview emphasizes that human

beings are part of God's family and within that family we find meaningful relations with each other based on love because God is love.

The fifth element is time. Time in an atheist worldview is like a clock, it keeps ticking on and on. We know something about the beginning of time (the big bang) but we don't know about the end. We can look forward and try to extrapolate about the universe collapsing but we don't really know. All we know is that the clock is ticking as time steadily goes forward. In comparison, the Christian worldview has the assumption of progress. We are progressing toward a great culmination of history when God will fulfill his role in history, after which history itself will come to a climax and an end. The Christian has hope knowing that God is going to succeed and God is going to achieve his purposes.

And finally, ethics. We explored this a little earlier with the atheist worldview. How does law become established within atheist society? In communist countries, the communist party establishes patterns and laws for the community. Since these laws do not have a basis in a moral absolute, law can change over time. Many universities in China struggle as they seek to teach moral education. What is the basis of moral education? For the Christian, the basis of moral education comes from the law of God in the Ten Commandments. Governments can establish the law and put in proper punishments for those who break the law because they have a basis in moral education.

This has been a brief comparison of two different worldviews that exist in China today. We have seen that a worldview is not just a disconnected set of ideas floating around. Instead worldview is a set of ideas that have structure. These ideas make up a way of understanding life and living life. A culture is built around a society's worldview.

Before we end this chapter, we need to look at some of the weaknesses of the atheistic worldview. In western societies, the atheistic worldview is as much in evidence as in communist countries. It shows up in the materialism and secularism of western society.

First is, the atheistic worldview cannot answer the question of the meaning to life? Many people in the world still ask this question. What happens when I graduate from university? When I retire from my job? What happens beyond playing Mahjong? What is the meaning to life?

The second one relates to love. The atheistic worldview cannot answer the question, 'what is love?' How can I know a real relationship with another person? What does it mean if I say I have love for my country?

The third one relates to our own experiences. We all have dreams and experiences that lead us to hope that there is a God. It is important to us because we cannot just look at ourselves as a machine and our lives as the output of a machine. We instinctively think that there must be something more. A topic that has become of great importance in recent years is that of the environment. Am I here just to make things and consume things? The world deteriorates, the pollution is all around, the water is polluted, and the air is polluted, what is my responsibility to the world?

And finally, there is the problem of moral education. What is going to be the basis of a society? , Without a moral basis, corruption will increase, people will think they can steal money or take bribes. People risk being caught since they can escape punishment by offering a bribe. Without a moral basis, people don't show care for the world, for other people, or for the nation of China.

Understanding worldviews is one of the most difficult things we run into when we are doing research into a society. However, when one finds answers to questions we have introduced in this lesson, it enables us to communicate more effectively and to be able to explain your beliefs in a more effective way. You have listened to their assumptions, their ideas, their values and you can help them reflect on those very things. The researcher is not just one who absorbs information. Rather, the researcher is the mirror that reflects back and in reflecting back, people can begin to understand what is important in life.

LESSON 18—LIMITS TO PARTICIPATION

For the last five chapters, we've been looking at participation in culture as means of understanding what is going on in society. In this final session, we'll be looking at limits to that participation. Often, people like their foreign guests to enjoy their culture. Chinese people expect foreigners to enjoy Chinese food, but even Chinese have their individual preferences.

My Chinese language teacher was teaching me the word for "stinky dough food." She was saying it tastes very nice, although it could smell very poor. As we talked about it, she admitted that even though most Chinese liked stinky dough food, she did not. So there are certain individual differences among us all. So when it comes to participating in a culture, there are at least four areas that we need to consider and see that there are limitations in how far we can go in participating in a society.

First of all is personal integrity. I once visited a young anthropologist who was working in north Kenya among the people called the Takana. This young man was in his rough clothes living in a mud hut, going out and spending a lot of his time with the local young men who wore little pairs of shorts. This young British man was telling me that he expected to get married and that his wife was going to come and join him. He was expecting her to take on the same sort of dress as the local women. The women in this area don't wear any clothes above the waist.

I paused and looked at him and asked, "Are you serious about this?" He was, and he thought that she would just want to do this. After all, he dressed very much like the men. I pointed out that women in this area don't wear any clothes above the waist. They may have a few beads around the neck and long skirts to cover their legs, but that is all they wear. Did he expect his new young wife to dress like the local women? He said, "Of course, this is part of identifying with the people and participating in their life." I said, "You might change your views after you are married." I visited him a year later, and there was his wife wearing a nice cotton dress that went from her neck right down to her knees. He looked at me in an embarrassed way.

We've all got a sense of personal integrity. We've been brought up in our own culture. As part of that, there is a sense of what is modest to us and it's not easy for us to overcome that sort of thing. In fact, it's not required by local people. They don't expect us to merely take on all their culture without thought or reference to other things. Personal integrity is an important limitation on participation. We can go so far, but the people do not expect their visitors to adopt all their culture. There are three reasons why this is important.

First of all, if we seek to adopt everything that they do, it implies that we do not like our own culture. In fact, it implies that we hate it and this seems strange to the people. Why do you dislike your own culture? They like theirs, and as we saw when we were looking at ethnocentrism in chapter two, we all have a preference to our own culture. They expect us to prefer the things that we do. When we come into their culture, they expect us to do those things that we enjoy in their culture, things that don't cause them any offense. But they don't expect us to disregard all of our own culture.

The second thing is that people want to improve and develop. They like to look for new ideas. When visitors come, those outside of their culture, they see them as people who bring new ideas. Some of these ideas are relevant and useful for them. They would adopt those sorts of things.

They see much about life in Beijing and Shanghai on TV, so when they see a tourist or a researcher coming into their midst, they can see some of these things put into practice. Our hairstyles, way of dress, way of behavior, and other things, they will take on and make part of their culture. This is especially true for young people. People want to progress. In this way the researcher is something of a window to the outside world. We too are that window. They look at our lives to see what they can use and apply to their own situations.

The third thing is that local people do like you to wear their clothes, but usually special clothes, not everyday clothes. It's usually the clothes that relate to special festivals. The festivals could feature traditional clothing that is exotic, strange to the tourist. Many of these become photo opportunities. In many minority areas, you will find tourists dressing up in the festival clothes of the local people and having photographs taken of them at some scenic spots. The local people enjoy this.

The many areas that I've been in China, I've found that minority people like me to wear their clothes if it's a New Year festival or if it's a special dance and they are eager to see me participating in this way. As soon as the festival is over, as soon as the dance has ended, then they expect that I will naturally go back to the clothes that I'm familiar with, which are my everyday clothes.

There is a degree of personal integrity which must come through. The most important point in all of this is to ensure that you don't cause offense in the way that you dress or in the way that you behave. Be careful not to insult the people that you are with.

In many Muslim countries, women must have their head covered. If a woman doesn't cover her hair, it's an insult to the local people. This is why you will see political figures visiting Arab countries, even leaders like Hillary Clinton, who will cover their heads when they go to visit Saudi Arabia. The Queen of England on a tour of the Middle East covered her head. This was to show respect for the people and not cause any offense to

them. This is something that is important, but beyond that there is a lot of freedom. Personal integrity is something that is important as it relates to the limits of participation.

A second thing is in regard to ethical issues. This relates to the first, but goes on to moral safety. This can be illustrated by the story of one young lady anthropologist who was working in Papua New Guinea. She was working in a very remote area. The local king had 99 wives and his children were also quite numerous. He had a big influence on the whole area. It became clear to this young lady anthropologist that this man was a key figure in the local culture. If she was going to understand the influence of this person and his family on society, she needed to know what it was like to be a wife of a king in the area. She, therefore, took the rather foolish step of becoming the wife of the local king.

Fortunately, her supervisor realized what she was planning to do and stepped in and refused to give her permission to study in this way. Here was a young woman who had taken on the idea of participation in society to an extreme level and without understanding some of the difficulties that she would encounter in such a situation.

Another example comes from Nepal. Here was a young British man who was doing research in the Tibetan religion. He had joined the local monastery and he had the Lama give him instruction. He stayed at the monastery, and went through a whole series of rituals, learning many chants and the Tibetan language. He felt that he was beginning to understand the Tibetan religion from an insider's perspective, that of a monk. He even decided that he would go on to some of the higher levels of initiation and become empowered by one of the spirits that the Lama had given him. This final ritual involved a segment which included having sex with a woman from the area.

Up until then he hadn't fully realized what would be involved in this. Realizing that he'd gotten himself into a foolish situation, he quickly packed up and ran away from the monastery. In the monastery, they regarded what he had done as causing pollution and so they underwent a ritual to cleanse it from what he had done. The young man left the area and returned home. That university has now taken out a policy that none of the researchers can be initiated into another religion without explicit permission from the university's central body explaining exactly why this is happening. This is a clear ethical issue.

Today, many world class universities have a code of practice to stop their young and enthusiastic researchers from going beyond what would be acceptable behavior into something that could be immoral or dangerous, not only mentally but physically as well. Participation in things of ethical nature is extremely important. When we talk about observation and becoming involved in the life of the society and in some of the rituals, there needs to be limits that the researcher bears in mind. Sometimes the person needs to say, "I am not going any further along this line."

The third level of limitation relates to what might best be regarded as spiritual attack. Some Christians are very concerned about spiritual attack, especially when entering a temple. If you are not familiar with Tibetan Buddhist temples, for example, entering for the first time can seem very fearful. The walls have paintings of images of various demons with ferocious looks upon their faces. The room can be sometimes be small and dark. There's incense burning. It can be poorly ventilated and people can feel rather dizzy and even faint, especially if the monastery is at a high altitude.

What about entering such places? What about being involved in such rituals? How far do we go on this? Let's talk about idols. In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul writes something parallel to this. He says,

¹ Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. ² Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. ³ But whoever loves God is known by God. [\[a\]](#)

⁴ So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one." ⁵ For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), ⁶ yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

⁷ But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. ⁸ But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

⁹ Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰ For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? ¹¹ So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. ¹² When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

So some Christians might enter into a temple and see these images and recognize that they are no more than wood, stone, and metal. There is no god or deity there. They have a firm belief that there is but one God who is Lord of all, and that these other things are merely just images of various forms. But other people, such as someone who may have been a monk and lived in a monastery, may have come to chat before these images. He may have a problem because he has a real fear that these are gods. He may now be a Christian and see God as Lord of all, but there is still that real feeling that these other gods are around.

Maybe for some, these are believed to be demons and spirits. A fear comes into his heart, and for such a person, to go into a temple can be an awesome experience, a fearful experience. For such a person, as Paul said, it is better for them not to eat the meat, not to enter a temple, but to live outside and keep their distance from such things.

If you are from the city, or from a family that had nothing to do with religion, you may come in, and these strange images have no real significance to you. You've never worshipped them; you've never had any involvement with them before; they are just things. You have a strong faith that God is Lord of all, and that He will protect you from all such things.

In this passage in 1 Cor. 8, Paul is talking about the weak brother who becomes fearful, and the strong brother who has a firm, strong faith. You who have a strong faith must not be a stumbling block to the one who is fearful. So if you are going into a temple, you might be a hindrance to the weaker brother because he does not know how you are able to handle it. You need to be careful about how you do your research and how you enter into such a situation. You need to draw a line concerning what you find acceptable and what is a hindrance to another person.

Entering a temple, for example, you may need to be very careful to not give any indication that you are worshipping such spirits. I have even seen atheists enter a temple and then prostrate themselves before the images of the temple. They will do that and when I asked them afterwards, "Why did you do that?" They will say that it's just the acceptable thing to do.

As a Christian, you need to draw a line. We are not acknowledging such spirits in any way, but this is something that must be seen. Let people recognize that there is a difference in your life. This is especially important for Christian researchers. They need to make a clear decision about how far they go, where the hindrance can be for them. That line may be different for different people. Paul is saying about meat offered to idols, that some people may have no problem in eating that meat. But for other people, it is something that is a major problem.

We need to build each other up and not to pull each other down. Another side to this has to do with those who become Christians from another religious tradition. Chinese people in Taiwan struggle over this. A young person finally has become a Christian, but when she goes home, she goes into the shrine room, and there is the table with the ancestral altar. This has been part of her family life for many generations. At appropriate times, the family gathers together to burn incense and give offerings to the ancestors and spirits.

Now she is a Christian, so what does she do? Does she just come along side and do the same things as before? Does she walk out and say, "I have nothing more to do with this"? In many cases, if the young person refuses to take part in the ritual, the family, usually the parents or grandparents, will put her out of the house altogether. They will disassociate her from the family. The young convert is in a dilemma. Does he or she bow down to the ancestors as before? Does he or she rebel against the parents? The Bible tells us to honor our father and mother. Many young people in this situation have come to some sort of a compromise.

One girl came to her father and said, "Look, I will stand outside of the shrine room while you are taking part of the ritual and I will pray for our family and I will pray for blessing on our household." The father accepted this sort of position.

We need to be wise about all of this. We need to do what is right for us. Many young converts who have homes that have other religious traditions often find that they have a very difficult decision to make. We need to help them make the decision that is right for them and not condemn them for being weak if they do something that we might not find a hundred percent acceptable.

There's also another thing. Some Christians tend to feel that if you enter a temple or a spiritual area, somehow you become dirty, polluted. They start having dreams or visions of other spirits. In such cases, my advice would be to pray for that person. You need to show them that it is in fact true that Jesus Christ is Lord and that He will keep them safe. For such a person, they should be warned not to put themselves into a difficult situation in which they will be subject to spiritual attack.

One thing that is important is that a person should not allow fear to become a major part of their life concerning such things. We are children of God and we do not need to fear those outer powers as long as we walk in the purposes of God and obey Him. I John 1:4 tells us, "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."

The fourth area that is important concerning the limits of participation relates to security issues. In every country, government security offices are becoming interested in

the results of social research. The researcher begins to understand more about that society, how it works, and sometimes the political and social demands that are going on within that society. The police, the politicians, and the officials like to know more about what is happening. They may approach the researcher and request such information. They may use interrogation or put pressure upon that person in various ways. This happens in many countries and it is why the researcher needs to have clear limits regarding confidentiality.

People have shared things with him or her and it is important for the researcher to establish clear limits about what they are willing to share. Many universities and anthropological associations have codes of practice about researchers divulging information to officials and to governments. Generally, the rule is, you do not divulge information unless it is of great importance for the life of that person or for the lives of other people, such as in a terrorist situation. In most cases, you do not give details about your informants without consulting the local people who have spoken to you about these things. This can often be difficult, but the researcher must draw the line in order to know where his participation in that society ends. The researcher should never be tempted to regard his role and the privileges that he or she has in society as being a source of building relations with political forces. This is unacceptable.

As we have seen before, what is important is the A-prior question of trust. Do the local people trust you? If that is the case, it is absolutely essential that you honor that trust and not disappoint them. Once you disappoint them, then your whole relationship is gone. And for a Christian, it also means that your witness has lost all credibility within that community. When others come, they will not be willing to listen to what they have to say.

Participation in society is an important means of understanding a society. But, as we see here, there are some very practical limitations that must be kept. Without these limitations there is the danger of risking personal integrity, morals, and spiritual principles. We need to draw clear lines.

So far, we've looked at various methods of investigation. The first is observation, careful observation. The second is comparison. The third is participant observation in a society. The next is recording your information. This is what we will commence in the following chapter.

LESSON 19: MAKING RECORD

The anthropologist Clifford Glibes made the statement “The anthropologist is an author.” That might seem like a strange and somewhat strong statement to make at the beginning, but what he is saying is that when you start to write things down, then things become clearer in your own mind. This is exactly what a teacher does with the student. It’s all right for the teacher to tell the student certain facts and for the teacher to ask the student, “Do you understand?” The student will say, “Oh yes, I do.” But it’s only when the student is able to write those things down that it become clear that the student has rightly understood those ideas. This is why in schools and universities, we have tests and examinations. They show whether the student has really understood what has been said.

The same happens with writing research projects. You might have done a lot of work collecting data, collecting information about a people’s culture, but until you start writing it down, there are many things that you fail to connect. You fail to see how one thing links with another. By writing you start finding connections. Anthropologists would call these “field notes.” This is the first thing that we must look at.

Practically, there are three sets of field notes. The first is a rough notebook in which the researcher would jot down any observations of different things. The second is more of a journal, a diary, in which the researcher would write every day stating ideas and opinions. The third thing is an attempt in a notebook to put together items relating to the same topic.

Gradually, as the diary gets bigger, different subjects can be included into the third document. Today, this can be done on a computer, but a pen and paper is still one of the easiest ways of doing these things. Let’s look at these field notes.

The first is the rough notebook or jottings book. This is just to get down some basic facts, such as a person’s name, or the name of an object, or some piece of information that is shared almost on a casual basis. Here is a tip when writing in your daily journal. The journal is perhaps the most important thing. Most researchers will spend one or two hours a day writing in their journal.

The importance of this was shown through the famous American anthropologist, Margaret Meade. She used to have many notebooks. She used to fill these in when she made her study of many Pacific Island societies. She made detailed notes of all sorts of things about that society. She would spend many hours each day writing in a notebook. As she saw things, and as she talked to people, from those notes, she was able to make links. That’s the sort of things that should be included in field notes or journals.

First of all, there should, of course, be the date, time, and place of observation. This is important, but I would add yet another factor, one you might find rather strange. I had an experience in which I was invited to go to a rain making ritual. Here, in this area of Africa, there had been no rain for eight months. In fact, there had been no clouds in the sky for that entire time. Then the old man in the area sent a message which said, "Why don't you come. We are going to make it rain."

I thought this was interesting. They wanted me to take my camera. So along I went, and there the people were. They would begin their dances, and they were dancing almost in a line that was wriggling like a snake wriggling on the ground. They also had a big black cow. I asked what the black cow was for. I was told that we were going to see black clouds appearing in the sky and that we were going to sacrifice this animal to Akkutch, which was the name of their high god. They prayed to Akkutch.

The translations of the Bible in this language actually use Akkutch as the name for God. The animal was killed and was cooked and the meat handed around. During all the festival, I was filming with the camera I had. Then I saw on the horizon a little cloud and the cloud got bigger and bigger. By that afternoon it was pouring rain. As I packed up my equipment and got into the 4 x 4, there was heavy rain. It was difficult driving to get back.

Did the rain making ceremony cause it to rain? This is where my journal came in handy because I was able to look back and I saw that a few days before I had made a note that around the sun was a huge rainbow. I thought about this. You get a rainbow when there is moisture in the air. I looked in my dairy and I could see that the previous day I had noted that the wind had changed direction. It was no longer hot and it had become cooler. Cool air blowing into moist atmosphere causes clouds.

The local people wouldn't see it like that. I had a talk with the old man who had told me that they were going to have the ritual and I told him about the rainbow. I told him about the wind and he smiled. He and I both knew that he had seen the signs and he knew that the rain was going to come. These things can help you to put together the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of what is happening.

The second thing that should be in your journal are specific facts. Numbers and details of what happened at the time. Instead of saying, "Many people were there," this should be as specific as possible and as carefully presented as possible. Most researchers will try to write in their journal in the evening and put down all the facts that they can possibly remember.

The third thing are sensory things--sights, sounds, textures, smells, and taste. It's so easy just to have things you see, but there are other things beyond that. The sound of the music, the nature of the clothing, the feel of it, the smells of the incense, and all sorts of

things can often get neglected when we tend to focus only on what we see and not what we sense with our other senses.

The fourth thing is our personal response to the facts of making the field notes. Many anthropologists find it important to put down how they feel at that time. Margaret Meade, who I mentioned earlier, used to put down what she would call a bad hair day. It was not so much her hairstyle, but that she did not feel very good. Sometimes when we are struggling and don't feel happy in a situation, it can often affect how we see things. We can be more critical and negative towards people. Sometimes they respond to us in a critical way. So it's important to make a note of those sorts of things.

Number five is to use specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations, and insider language--the terms that are used by people. You might find out certain religious words, certain popular words that are used in a community. These include words that could be used that are not normally used, such as at a funeral. The way things are described could be different. These provide important ways of understanding what is going on in that society.

Number six is to include questions about people or behavior at the site for future investigation. As you write up your notes, it may become obvious to you that you should have asked a particular question. Note that down so that maybe the following day you can go and talk to the people again and say, "What actually did that mean? Did I understand that correctly?" The day following could be an important day in ensuring that you understand what is happening at a ritual such as a funeral or a rite of passage.

If you leave it too long, people just dismiss it. But the following day, people still have it in mind. They know what you are talking about, what somebody said. So it's important to make a note of the questions that come to your mind as a result of writing.

Number seven is that it is an important thing to make sure you've got page numbers on your papers. Your notebook can get easily damaged and can fall apart. If you are putting your data on a computer, make sure you back it up. Many have lost a lot of data because they hadn't backed it up, or it was stolen, or the computer broke. So make sure you back it up on at least two different media to ensure that it works well for you in the future. We forget easily and so it's by writing that you are better able to understand what is going on. This is the general exercise that is so important to the anthropologist.

Personal feelings are important part of your field notes. In the previous chapter we looked at culture shock and how many individuals can go through a period of negative feelings. Often this is reflected in your notes, and so you must be careful in making notes about this.

From making field notes you move to doing the actual writing. This is when you start writing papers or reports about the situation or culture. This is the time when things become clearer. I know this from personal experience and many situations. As I write, things become more evident. But you can face a problem. Out of all the notes that you are putting down in your journal and in your subject log, which ones are significant? What do you use to write the paper? One of the best ways to focus on this is to consider the society and ask the question, what is most important to the people in this culture? By handling a clearly focused question, you can start pulling your material together.

In an earlier chapter, we spoke about the left behind children of the Chinese migrant workers. Here's a clear question related to this, what sort of problems are these families facing? Now, you can start getting your interview material and your observations and your participation all together. We showed how the use of questionnaires was important for such a case. All this brings in information. From that initial question, you can then start drawing ideas together.

Often in English, we use the term brainstorming, which is just an expression for throwing down all the ideas that come to your mind when you are thinking about a particular topic. The third part to this is, out of all those ideas, you need to try to draw up a basic structure. Usually, it will be something like an introduction, explaining the problems, and then move on to present the data. If it's from a questionnaire or from informants, then what information have you got? Questionnaires can give you some qualitative data as well as quantitative data. Under quantity you can say, for example, that 90% of the families face certain difficulties when the children are left behind.

This is the beginning of some factual data. Then from that you can go on to analysis. How does this actually work out? What are the problems that these children face? You can move on step by step in understanding the situation. By the end you are able to come to some conclusions. So the order of the paper will be an introduction, posing the question, the method of how you got the data, the record of the data, your observations of the data, and then conclusions that you've drawn out of it.

This is a simple pattern that is widely used in academic papers and in most social research projects. It's important and it's a key method of making a record, but it's not the only way. There are other ways of making a record of what is happening. These include using some of the more modern electronic methods. One is sound recording. This is ideally suited for gathering songs and stories, which are an important oral communication means. They are found especially in folk societies and in villages. They are often kept and memorized by the older people. These stories are very important to them. Throughout China, in the minority areas and in the countryside, some of the traditional stories and songs are disappearing because young people are too busy to learn the songs and stories

from the older people. But now, using recording equipment, it is possible to collect these stories. Many researches are using electronic recording methods to collect stories.

Up in Mongolia, Shin Jan university students have been collecting these stories and songs in a major database. Many Tibetan stories are being gathered together. One method that I have found very useful is to give to older people a simple recording device and encourage them as they sing their songs and as they tell their stories to switch on the recorder. Some are so touched by the fact that you think that they have something valuable for the future that they are eager to help in this way. Then from the recordings, the songs and stories can be transcribed from their language into good Chinese or even English. Many of the songs and stories are now being published in international journals because storytelling is so important to the history and tradition of the people.

Photography is another important means because photographs show much about the life of a people. The world's famous camera maker, Canon, has sent teams to the Shanan people to record their way of life. Following the earthquake, a team was travelling around Wenchuan, Noshan taking pictures of the people. This is a very good exercise, but sometimes a camera can get into the way.

When you are taking a photograph, people are very conscious of that fact. It is not possible to take a casual photograph when you have big, expensive photographic equipment. People feel they've got to look good. They want to show you their best. They don't like it if you photograph them when their hair is not combed, as it may be in their daily life when they are working in the fields. They would want to comb their hair, make themselves look pretty.

To be a photographer, to capture the life of the people is very difficult. It's a skill. It is not just a matter of taking a snapshot. To be able to get a photograph to tell a story, the skill it takes not only includes an ability with the camera, but the ability to make people feel at ease with this. I always find that an interesting exercise is, following some sort of festival such as a wedding, I will get a series of photographs of the event and I will have these printed out. Then I will lay out the photographs and ask the people what they think about them.

If it's a wedding and the young couple have no photographs, I will give these to them as a gift to build friendships. But as we talk about the photographs, they start pointing out to me the things that are important to them. I begin to understand more about their culture. Societies are changing, but electronic recording, whether in sound or pictures, are going to be important in the future.

There's another means of recording and that is video recording. Many of the larger TV companies are in the business of producing documentaries. We are all familiar with the

Discovery Chanel or the History Chanel programs that are available in China or those produced by the BBC, such as a Wild China. This shows much about the wildlife of China. Through a video documentary, it is possible to capture something of the life of a community. But this needs careful editing. It's not just a matter of taking film of an event. A documentary needs to tell a story.

Just as with writing, the video presentation starts off with a question. It needs to follow through and come up with some answers. With a video documentary, one of the best ways of doing it is to focus on a particular person or case study so that the viewer can engage with the issues. The documentary can illustrate a situation that a particular group of people face.

Let me give an example of this. The BBC in 2008 did a series of documentaries on life in China. This was all in preparation for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. But one of those films was quite significant. In fact, it was looking at issues relating to marriage in China. It portrayed the state of changing patterns of marriage and then focused on three people. The first was a poor young man who is a farmer in western Szechuan. His parents were poor in the village. There were no single girls. These were some of his problems as he looked towards the future. He needed to marry so that he would have a wife who would be able to look after his elderly parents, as well as to help him farm the field.

The documentary followed the young man as his parents encouraged him to go off to Beijing to work as a migrant worker. He left his village and went off to Tsintsin. He travelled by train all the way to Beijing. The program followed him as he was trying to find work in the city in the construction sector. It showed something of the struggles that he was facing in finding a job. So the story ended there and shifted over to Shanghai.

In Shanghai, they focused on a person from a very different social background. This was a rich young woman, one of the modern, well educated young women who are emerging in the bigger cities in China. She was 30 years of age, had a good profession, had money, and had her own apartment. She could travel. In fact, her job was as a travel writer. She would travel around the world writing documentaries and books for Chinese people. They talked to her about getting married. She claimed that she wasn't too worried about that. She would date men, even Western men. Her mother kept on saying that she should get married, that she was getting old. But she didn't want to be tied down.

Then documentary moves to a third person. This was a village girl with very little education. She never left her home village until she was kidnapped by men who were selling her as a bride in a different part of China. She was finally rescued by the police and they told her story.

These three cases are extreme. The stories reflect something of what is going on in China as a whole. Often this is a good way for a documentary to tell the story of what people are feeling. In these three extreme cases, for most people there is something in the middle of all of them. They know about the wealthy young woman. They know about the poor migrant young man who returned home without money and without the bride. They know about the abused girl, the problems that she faced, who is now finding it difficult to get a husband because of the abuse she suffered.

Many documentaries use this approach of telling human stories. In these stories you can gather the feelings of the culture, not just the facts. This is the power of documentaries. These are some of the means of making a record of culture to show to people and to capture what is happening within a society. Society is changing all the time, and so the record, the photographs, the sound recording, and the videos all help to capture something of this.

As China moves forward and becomes a world power, it needs to remember the past. It needs to look forward to being a great influence in the world and to taking care of the people in the world. The researcher then starts to look at what is going on in the society, not just to gather information and data about the society, but to start asking questions about what sort of society we want to become. This leads us on into our next chapter, which is on action research.

LESSON 20: ACTION RESEARCH

So far, we've been looking at different methods of research. We have been using this to gather information and try to analyze what is going on. But research is for a purpose. In this section, we are going to be looking at the purpose of research and see how that purpose can be applied, not just to social improvement, but to Christian involvement in society.

The purpose of research often is divided into four types: One is description, which is fact finding. What is happening in society? Why do people do things? That is the descriptive element that we looked at during the beginning of this course.

The second is analytical. The analytical is seeking to explain why things happen and could be looking at social problems that people face.

The third is prediction. It is forecasting events. We talked about a number of cases, such as the increasing number of single men in Chinese society. That is the process of forecasting. The aim for such research is to give officials information about which they can make decisions for future planning. The five year plans are often based on such data. They seek to forecast future events.

The fourth purpose of research is problem solving. This is known as action research. It is raising the question, what can be done to help in such a situation? There are problems, so what can be done? The questionnaire for the left behind children mentioned earlier is an example of this. Here is a problem that is facing many in New China. How can answers be found to those problems?

In this chapter, we are going to look at the pressing problems of the Tibetan people. This is to be used as an example. We could consider other examples of people in China, but this provides an insight into many of the practical issues that exist.

First of all, what we know is that Tibetan people are moving from the grasslands. This process is increasing in pace. It is due to a number of reasons. One is the lack of rain in many places. Another is the quest for a better way of life. There are some restrictions that apply for the migration of their animals. Society is changing and people are looking for a new way of life.

The second issue that comes into this picture is the beginning of the breakdown of family life. There are many domestic problems that people face. Men are leaving their homes. Young men are becoming more reckless in their behavior. Often the family can't even afford for the young man to be driving around on the roads across the grasslands, due to the tax system for the local people. The recklessness of the driving means that these young men usually only live five years in such an occupation. It's the beginning of the breakdown within the family, the family life that was once so important to them.

The third issue we see in many Tibetan areas is an increasing alcohol addiction problem. Many minorities for many generations have valued alcohol as an important part of their diet. When you go to their homes, or to any festival, the first activity is to give - alcohol to the guest. Alcohol has now become something that young people are abusing in greater measure.

The fourth problem that we are beginning to see is gambling and drugs. Young men especially spend time gambling, and the beginning of a drug culture is emerging in many areas. With all of this, there is a high accident rate. These issues show that society is in the

mix of social change. These are major problems that young people are facing. These problems are affecting young people more than the older people, although young people are less able to cope with the situation.

Action research seeks to understand what is going on in such a situation and to be able to find the reasons why. The methods we talked about in previous chapters are attempts to identify these, to move from the description of the facts to trying to analyze them and to predict what will happen. Often the social pressures that lead into anger, frustration, disillusionment, and even violence. Therefore, problem solving is important.

For Christians, it becomes a key thing to ask, what can the Christian involved in such research suggest be done? It isn't just a matter of writing the report or recording what is happening. The researcher has the good of society at heart. The researcher wants people to improve. There are needs to be met. This is the positive side of action research. It can lead to personal challenges. It is easy, on the one hand, to write a report to submit to officials. But the other part is asking, "What can I do?"

One remarkable change that has occurred in New China following the Szechuan earthquake in 2008 is that an increasing number of people have volunteered to help. After the earthquake, thousands of people came from Shanghai, Bangui, and Beijing to help with the problems caused by the earthquake. That was something that was recognized by the government. Now many organizations are coming in to try to facilitate the response of volunteers in social needs.

Here are Chinese people, perhaps from wealthy backgrounds, who are trying to express their care for their fellow Chinese people by helping them in whatever situations they face. Here are examples of action research doing things. So often volunteers are needed to respond to a natural disaster. When there is an earthquake, you see that homes need to be rebuilt, shelters need to be constructed, and food needs to be given out.

Action research tries to go further in this process of predicting future events and raising important issues. It asks, "What will help these people as they are going through these social difficulties?" Many Tibetan people are facing social integration at this time. And so volunteers need to stop and ask the question, "What is happening and what can be done to help them?"

We move from the problem to planning for Christian action. Then one clear thing that a Christian should seek to bring about is hope for the future. If people lose hope, then they will struggle, not only in their personal lives, but in their social lives. This is why Christians need to be seeking the good of the people.

The Gospel story recounts that Jesus went about, not only preaching the good news, but also healing, feeding the poor, and caring for the sick. There is a social aspect in Christian life. This aspect of doing good is what is important for us to realize in this particular chapter. So what can be done about this.

First of all, identify. We looked at some of the needs that are basic to the Tibetan people. Out of these needs, we need to also look at what can be done for the future. How can some of these needs be met. It's not just a matter of providing money to help. There are other things that go on. People need to be encouraged, to be established, to have pride in their own self worth and in their own culture. If people feel disillusioned with their culture, their way of life, then there will be disintegration. Then, no matter how much money is put into that society, it will have no effect.

The second thing that is important for Christians is to network with likeminded people. There are many who are seeking to work and help those who are in need, who are struggling. You shouldn't just focus on people who are from your particular group, your particular country. You have to be willing to network with others. Many foreign governments have sought to work in Tibet. Occasionally, they are able to place their own nationals to work in such projects. But generally, this is discouraged. Such people find it difficult to get visas and to live in some of the key places.

Chinese nationals are able to move freely. Those from Hong Kong are trying to place volunteers to work in minority areas of China in Tibet, China, and in other areas. By so doing, they are seeking the good, not only of the people, but of the nation of China as a whole. So networking with people who have similar ideas and similar visions is good because together we can ensure that we cooperate. We aren't just reproducing what others are doing. It also means that we can make sure there are no gaps, that we aren't missing things that are important to people. Networking is essential because otherwise we can miss many important things.

The third thing that is important for Christian action is building respect for the culture. This has been one of the key issues of this course. It touches on the prior question of trust--building trust. The basis of that is respect. When a society is beginning to disintegrate, it's very easy to start criticizing it, to point out the problems within. That society is disregarded, but we need to respect the people. Maybe they are struggling. Maybe they are lacking certain things. The important thing to know is that they are human beings, just as we are. We need to be reaching out to them with care and compassion. It's no good talking about just having love for people. That love must move into action, caring for those who are in need.

The fourth important factor of Christian action must be the focus on families. Christian families throughout the history of Christianity have been an essential part of

Christian society. Family values are imperative. Many churches in China have found this to be an important thing regarding their own marriages and how they bring up their own children. They would testify that Christian values are foundational to them. This is something which is urgently needed within the Tibetan context today and within other minority groups, as well as among the Han Chinese.

We've seen this in connection with the left-behind children and the issues faced by migrant workers. We've seen it also in wealthy homes in the cities where parents are under pressure to work hard and the children are left to go to school and be looked after by grandparents. All these things put stress on the family. It's important that Christian family values are established. These are some of the patterns that need to come out of Christian action.

Now that we have made some general oversights, we need to look at possible opportunities. What possible opportunity is employment? Work is a gift given by God. If you read the story in Genesis, Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden and God gave them the task of caring for the garden. He gave them the task of naming the animals. This is God-given work, and work is something that shows the very nature of God.

There is the danger of going too far. It is only after the Fall that we start reading about work as difficult, as being hard, as challenging. But work itself is not wrong. It is an expression of humanity. People need to have the opportunity to work with their own hands, to be able to do things. Because work brings a sense of self worth, if people fail to have this, they can become lazy and depressed. They can lose something which God intended for them to have. Work is an important element within any development program, and it provides opportunities for individuals.

Let's return to the Tibetan case study. What businesses could be started that would help Tibetans to be able to establish themselves and to see social progress? One work that is very common in many of the towns throughout the Tibetan region is restaurants. Tourists enjoy Tibetan foods and restaurants can provide other activities, such as the songs and dances that are so characteristic of the Tibetan people.

Many young girls, especially, find that to become a dancer or a singer at a restaurant in town is a way that they can earn money for their family and have a better standard of living. But the danger of immorality coming into such a situation is very real for many young girls or even young men. Here is where Christians can provide a safe caring environment in which they can employ Tibetan young people and also give them training in order to give them the skills in which they can cope with the changing world in which they find themselves.

Poky bars are another way of providing this same sort of service to tourists. Others can find work as mechanics in various areas. Repairing motor bikes or cars requires training. So vocational training becomes an important part of the whole activity of trying to help people move forward. Many government officers are seeking to find means of helping the local people in their towns or districts. One option is the need for skilled teachers who would be able to provide practical training for a group of young men. Then they can become qualified as mechanics to repair, not only their own bicycles, but those of other people, and to repair cars, and to be able to service equipment that is found increasingly within the Tibetan region.

The third area that is becoming an important employment basis is that of Internet technology. IT and communications generally are important. Over much of the Tibetan plateau, you will find that cell phones are very common. Tibetans need to be trained to use the equipment to service such IT so that they are able to use information technology in an important way. This can include advertising their own services, producing Tibetan medicine that could be marketed on the Internet and sold throughout the world, and repairing the communication systems with the cell phones. All of these are new opportunities. It is mainly the bigger companies, like China Mobile, that are providing services for cell phones.

When it comes to computers, this can be on a smaller scale. Here are some of the opportunities that Christians may have to help train young people to set up their own businesses and make a positive contribution to their community. Business is something that is important and action research can show where there is a need for such a business to be set up in that particular area.

The second opportunity is that of students. Many students are now making their way to university. They've worked hard at school and they are ready to make the move from their home to the town where they've studied at school and where they've learned to speak Chinese well. They're ready to be separated from their home. They feel part of New China and yet they struggle to find jobs. They struggle as they go to university. This is their opportunity to move forward. Their studies of Chinese and to get to university have meant that, although they speak their own language, they do not know how to write or read.

Tangrin becomes their major language. They often have problems with finances. Although many get sponsored, they still struggle. At the end of their university studies, they can often find it difficult to find a good job. Here is where there are opportunities to help such people move forward and to be positive members. Many struggle when it comes to the difficulties that they face. Just like those young people on the plateau, many of the students are facing the temptation to commit suicide. These are some of the issues that

students are facing. They are the ones who are at the forefront of what will be the New China with its growth, so care must be taken to help them.

The third possible opportunity relates to tourism. The increasing number of mainland tourists are now exploring the beauties of the Tibetan plateau. Hotels are being built in many towns right across the plateau that provide an experience of the beauty of Tibet where the sun is big and blue, and the sunshine bright, and the snow shines on the mountain tops. Here in the hotels, there needs to be service staff to help provide good facilities for wealthy tourists from Beijing, Shanghai, the eastern cities, and for international tourists as they begin to come in greater numbers.

There is a need for transportation for tourists, to take them to see some of the wonders of the plateau, to experience more of daily life, and to take them from one city to another across the plateau. We've already mentioned the entertainment that is found in the hotels, which is the dancing and the songs. Here is that expression of authentic Tibetan life that tourists enjoy. Tourism is one of the needs for economic development, especially in the poorer Western regions of China.

Government offices are trying to encourage this. Sometimes towns and villages are designated as being of historical cultural importance. Tourists are only allowed to visit such places by making payment that benefits the locality. Here is a way of seeing tourism generate the local economy. When other things are going on in other parts of the world, tourism can be very difficult to sustain. It is an economic crisis if jobs are difficult to find then suddenly tourism disappears. Then the people who have come and provided the jobs for the local people are suddenly no longer there, and the local people suddenly find themselves unemployed.

Tourism can be an important engine for economic growth in the poorer regions of a country, but it is also one that can suddenly change and disappear. Action research seeks to do something positive within the community. It seeks to help people on a practical level. Today in China, the new move toward volunteerism, of showing care to fellow Chinese people, is something that is positive and is being encouraged by government officials. Here is the way in which the research that has been done by the anthropologist is being put into practice. It is for the good of the people and the good of the nation.

CHAPTER 21- TELLING THE GOOD STORY

In the previous chapter, we looked at social action in a community. But for a Christian, there is also something else that is very important to him or her. That is to tell the story of Jesus Christ. This chapter will look at how our understanding of the society and the research that we have done can help us in this very process. To do this, we are going to look at a person's past and to liken it to a road. At one end, beginning with the road, there is a person who has very little knowledge of what Christianity is all about. They've probably heard about Jesus and they probably know something about Christmas, based on what the person has told us. But they know little of what the actual teaching of the Bible is and many can even be quite hostile to it.

They would say Christianity is something primitive and unscientific. They might be atheist, or they may be Buddhist, or they may be followers of a traditional religion. This is the first stage. We will look at this in terms of evangelism, trying to show people what the Christian message is really about. The second stage on the journey, as people progress in the knowledge of what Christianity is about, is actually making a decision about who Jesus is. What is His role in their life? Then the third stage is discipleship when they have come to accept him as King of kings and Lord of lords and how that affects their life. So it's a process. It's a pathway. All of us go along this pathway.

First of all, on with evangelism. One basic rule in evangelism is to start with what people know. We come in with ideas, teaching that is so foreign to people that they are lost in the words. They don't know what you mean by the terms you use, and this is detrimental. It doesn't help people. They can often feel frustrated and may get angry. If the person is already antagonistic to religion, this can really make them even more antagonistic.

Perhaps one way of seeing communication is to look at how Jesus communicated with the people of His time. Jesus continually used parables. These are the stories that are recorded in the Gospels. You see Him relating His ideas to things that people knew. For example, let me tell you a parable from Luke 18:9-14. But I want to put the story into a modern context, into the context of the Tibetan area. Try to find a way in which we can communicate in this way.

Here is the story. There were once two men. One man had been very devout in his Buddhism and so every day would go to the temple and he would do use his beads. He would spin the prayer wheels. These were important things for him. As he would go around, he would think of the good things he was doing. He could do 101 prostrations and was proud of the fact that he could do this. He thought life was good for him.

His friend, however, was very different. He had been to school and had struggled there. He was not very religious. Sometimes would go to the temple, but he didn't find that very meaningful. He was busy trying to make money in his little shop. But a day came when he found he was losing money. Very few people came to him. His wife was angry with him over small things and he felt so sad. He realized that within his heart, he was not good. His heart was black. And so, in desperation, he closed the big shop and he went to the temple.

As he stood there, he didn't know all the prostrations and the prayers and the chants. He realized that it had been so many years since he had done such things that he just sat at the back corner of the temple. As he sat there, he cried out, "God, have mercy upon me." Jesus asked a question in his story. He asked, "Which man got the blessing?"

Was it the man who fulfilled the religion, who did the rituals that were required in the Jewish countryside where Jesus lived or was it the man who out of sincerity cried out to God for help? Jesus doesn't give an answer to that question. Here, in my version of the story, we don't need to give an answer to the question. People would usually say, "Oh it's the first one who got the blessing." He did all these things. He did the prostrations as Buddha said. He did the chanting. He did the beads. He did all these things, so he must get the blessing.

Often people realize that the sincerity of the second man means that he was the one who God would favor. It raises questions in their minds. By telling stories that relate to the real life of people and applying them with a moral dimension and in a culturally suitable way, it is something that people remember. It is a method that does not cause offense. It is something that makes people think, and makes them more positive towards the Christian message rather than being negative towards it.

In the early stages of people's knowledge of Christianity, the method must be thought provoking. Jesus shows us how this is done by using parables, by telling stories. Out of these stories, people start thinking and they will realize the need to be sincere in their religious practice. Religion is not just doing things, but it relates to the heart. The story also illustrates another important issue. The means of communication must be meaningful. It must be relevant to their situation. For them to hear about things that are so distant from them both geographically and culturally is a hindrance to them. There needs to be methods of communication that are relevant to them.

For Tibetans, often they are familiar with the conquers, the wall paintings which are in most temples. You will find them in people's homes. These drawings of typical Tibetan style are meaningful to the people. The symbols, the shapes, and colors are all part of the culture of Tibetan people. We need to find ways in which the Christian message is presented in the same manner. It makes Christianity seem as though it is Tibetan. It will

be seen as relevant to them and not as something foreign that has been brought in from outside.

Whether it is from the Han society, or American or European society, the people need to see its relevance to them. Some have actually drawn tankers in which there are pictures of the story of Jesus Christ. It's a way that people can look and understand what is happening. They can understand the symbols because the symbols are relevant to them. In previous chapters, we looked at art and the place of symbols within it. Here is where the lessons that come out of that, the information that has been found, can be applied to people's daily lives.

The conquers can be an important means. It could be in songs, because all minority groups are proud of their songs. Can Christian songs be written in their format, in their style, using their instruments, so that it works in the hearts of these people? Many Christians have actually done this and some of these songs have actually been recorded on C.D.'s. The style of music, the words, and the phrases that are used come from the research that has been done in the culture of the people. They are now being used to convey the meaning of the Christian message.

In Han society, many Christians find calligraphy is a good way of expressing feelings. Churches and church bookshops have scrolls which they have used beautiful Chinese calligraphy to capture the verses from the Bible. This is drawing together the richness of Chinese society, using an ancient art to be able to convey the Christian teaching.

Christianity is not just for one nation. Christianity is for all people, and Christianity can be expressed in different cultural forms so that it feels real and familiar to all people. People are happy when they look at it. They don't see it as being something alien. In this early stage, as people become aware of Christianity and of the teaching of Scripture, it is good to start off where people are, with the things that they know--their culture, their symbols, their stories; showing how these can point people to understand what Christianity is all about.

The second step on the journey is when people start to make a decision about Jesus Christ. When they gain some understanding of who Jesus is, when that initial hostility towards that which is new has diminished and they start listening and asking questions, then the shift should take place towards the actual story and life of Jesus Christ. This is the focus in the Gospel. It is not simply a matter of telling those biblical accounts. It becomes more meaningful to start by talking about the history when Jesus lived.

One of the important things to realize is that Jesus is a historical figure. He came into the world. He lived out His life on earth, but has ascended to the Father. So Jesus entered the world in a distinct culture at a specific date and time in history. People need to

realize that. This is when they will read the stories. They will begin to understand the cultural context in which Jesus lived.

The story of the parable of the two men can now take on the significance of being a historic account. Many of the stories Jesus told have this practical element in which he challenged people, not telling them the answer. Often the parables make people think and challenge people on the question of who He is. Jesus was careful about this. He wanted people to discover who He was.

The disciple had been with Him for those many months, and the time came when he asked them, "Who do people say that I am?" They responded, "Some say John the Baptist. Some say one of the prophets. Some say Elijah." Then Jesus asked the question, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter's response came so clearly. "You are the Messiah, the Son of God." It is that discovery that Jesus is wanting people to make today.

At this stage, we should be helping people to come to the place where they realize this. It's not up to us to tell them. When we see that they are responding and that they have known the illumination of the Spirit of God in their lives, then we can affirm them and say, "Yes, you are right." But this revelation needs to be related to the personal issues in their lives. Often people who turn to the Lord have problems that drive them on the spiritual quest to ask, "What is life all about? Where can I find truth? Who can tell me what God is like?" It is at this point that people come to realize that Jesus is the One who can meet their needs.

So there is the process in accepting Jesus, believing in Him and feeling that they have put their trust in Him. But there are some important aspects that are connected to this. It's not just a matter of accepting Jesus. It's also recognition that each one of us is a sinner, that we are separated from God, and that the growing awareness of this fact is important. It's when people come to see who Jesus is that they wake up to their need to confess their sins. That process is radical because at that point they will see that Jesus offers them forgiveness. They can enter into the joy of the forgiveness of the Father and the love of the Father.

That is the thing that transforms their lives. That brings them to Jesus, to a commitment to Him as the Son of God. Often at a time like that people want to respond in some way. This is so often where rituals come in. People have different ways in which they express themselves when it comes to their feelings, their sense of forgiveness and of joy.

So often, people are used to rituals. They like to know that their feelings are expressed in some way. It can be something very simple, such as a person kneeling on the floor, asking for God's forgiveness, thanking God for His forgiveness, and perhaps expressing what is happening through tears. There is a time when they are looking for

blessing, a time when Christians can lift up their hands and ask God to come upon them in a new way. This is also the time when people must see that their trust is focused clearly upon Jesus Christ.

It's not just a matter of trusting the person who has been telling him about Jesus, but trusting God's Word. Those who can read find it exciting to read the stories of Jesus. In this way they can come to know who He is. In a changing world with people moving around, one of the most important things for them is for them to have a copy of the Bible. For this reason they should be instructed to read their Bible regularly. It is best if they have a copy of the Bible in their particular language, because the Bible has been translated into many languages of the world. This is the decision stage, the point where a person has finally realized that Jesus has a message for them. It is the point where they stop and make themselves available for God's work.

Third stage is ongoing discipleship. It's not sufficient for a person to simply acknowledge, "Yes, I want to accept Jesus." The Great Commission in Mathew's Gospel does not only tell us about making converts. It talks about making disciples and the need to teach people so that they can become disciples. That is an important part of basic Christian teaching. Jesus wants us each to be His disciple.

What can we learn from this? First of all, there is the Bible. People need to understand the Bible story. The Bible is not an easy book for people to read because it has a very different historical context than people have today. Many Han Chinese interested in Christianity find it very difficult to know where to start. Often university students ask questions about how they can understand the Bible. It is such a big book.

One way in which teaching can be given on this is to bring out the idea that this is God's story. Bring it out as a series of accounts, so that the historical stories that are found in Genesis are presented step by step. Beginning with the account of God's creation of the world, and on to the account of God's creation of human beings, and onwards, with a step by step presentation, people begin to get a historical picture of the Bible.

China has a long history, and the great dynasties of China are all part of its development. Similarly, the Jewish people have a long history. From the call of Abraham some 4000 years ago, and throughout all of Scripture, one can see God at work in that group of people. One can see the faithfulness of God, the provision of God. And so, as people begin to read the Bible, and to study it with you, these issues will come out. They will begin to see that God is holy. God is kind and caring to His people. He makes promises and is faithful to those promises.

They will also see that human nature is sinful, and from this has originated many problems that have resulted in our separation from God. Only God could find the one

ultimate way of meeting the needs of human beings, and that was to send His own Son. Here is the historical account that can help people to understand the story of God at work in human life through His chosen people, the Jews. But now, in Jesus Christ that message has spread out to all people. We can all look back and feel a unity. Whether we are Chinese, Tibetan, American, European, Australian or Indian, we are part of God's family. We are one people because we have come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The second thing that comes out in regard to discipleship relates to social problems. We are all living in a world with needs. The research that we've been looking at in previous chapter works itself out practically. It's not just a matter of getting information, it's a means of us going out and sharing the life of Christ, not only in words, but in deeds. There should be a relationship between the sort of life that we have now and caring for the people around us. This is an answer to some of those social problems. The Tibetan Christian can reach out to the Han Christian, and call him his brother, and work together with him in unity, love, and trust. They should deal with some of the social problems in society so that together the church is being salt and light in today's world.

The third issue that is important is meeting together with other believers. This is an important thing within the Christian tradition. We are brothers and sisters. Those of us who have been brought up as an only child, one of the exciting things is that now that we are in God's family, we have brothers and sisters. This is an exciting family that we can know, we can join with. We can support each other. We can help each other as we move forward in life together. Therefore, we want to come together to worship God.

If we are working in a minority community, it isn't right just to take what we have from our home church back in the Eastern provinces and have the same sort of service in the Western part of China. We need to be relevant to the people of that area. What we have in our home can be very good, but is it as meaningful to the people in Western China as it is to those of Eastern China. We talked about rituals in the previous chapter. How can Christian rituals be transformed in such a way that they are relevant to the people of that area? Maybe we can adjust them so that they are culturally appropriate. We spoke earlier about songs that have been transcribed into the Tibetan culture, written in Tibetan and using Tibetan instruments so that we can see Tibetan believers sing these songs. They get a new joy in singing these songs because it is something that resonates within their hearts. It's also surprising how many Han Christians and foreign Christians also enjoy singing these songs because they are the expression of the hearts of Tibetan brothers and sisters.

There is a way of worshipping God. This is the story told about the Samaritan woman that we commented on in the previous chapter. She asked a question, "In which temple do we worship the Lord?" Jesus said, "A new age is coming when we will worship in spirit and in truth." This is going to be the basis for all worship. It's not just one standard

form that will applied all across China, or all across the world. People will be free to express their worship in ways that are meaningful to them in their own language, with hands raised or hands lowered, with eyes opened or eyes closed.

So in the meeting, there is a sense of joy as people express their worship in ways that are culturally relevant to them. What we should adapt from this is the need for leaders. The training of disciples is going to be the training of leaders. You need to see leaders take a role. Within a period of time, people need to be instructed and grow to maturity. But how do we appoint leaders in a new congregation? We might have different ways, but we need to determine what the relevant way is in that culture in which we are working. We might do it by having a vote to see how many people want a particular person to be the leader of a congregation, as opposed to another person. It could be a matter of looking for volunteers.

In many parts of China, people do not want to push themselves forward. It is not a culturally appropriate way to do it. In that case, they will not volunteer to be leaders. They would not put their names forward to have a vote and be elected by others. And so, to appoint leaders can be difficult. In one small congregation that was emerging, the person asked, "How can we establish who should be the leader?" The people turned and said, "Let's draw lots for it. Let's gamble for it."

It would have been very easy for the Christian to say, "But this is not right. We shouldn't do this." But he remembered that in the Book of Acts, there is the story about when the disciples wanted to choose a replacement for Judas as a disciple, and they casts lots. So in this little fellowship, the people put forward four fine Christian men and said, "We should cast lots." And the people prayed, and they cast the lot, and out of that a man was appointed, a fine Christian man.

It is so easy to condemn something different as being wrong, but this is where these people were at this time in their walk towards God. It might change in the future. But for them, it was meaningful. This is how the research that we have done will enable us to understand where people are spiritually, what is important to them, and to be able to help them to express their ideas in a relevant way. Our goal is to establish a community of God's people who are able to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

It might look different from the Christian communities from which you come, with which you are familiar, but the important thing is that their hearts are committed to the Lord. Each one in that community now has bonds of love from one to another. Ethnographic research is not just a matter of academic discipline. It's not just a matter of gathering information to write up for university papers. This may be what is most important for students, for the academics. But for the Christian, we want to know where people are at spiritually. We want to build trust, to understand them so that we can help

them move forward in their lives, and so that they can make a contribution to New China. Then they will indeed be light in this world and salt in their communities.