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How Do You Resolve Conflict?

"When two elephants fight, it's the grass that gets hurt."

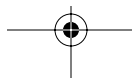
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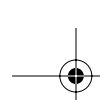


Conflicts are inevitable in life, even for Christians. It is also true that no matter how much you know about working with other cultures, no matter how carefully you examine each cultural lens, a disagreement, conflict or miscommunication will occur. This chapter will deal with cultural factors that cause these problems. It will also explore how we can expand our strategies to resolve conflicts.

One of the greatest obstacles to resolving conflicts when they occur is our inability to think outside the parameters of conflict resolution we have learned. These learned methods are culturally based, so it follows that when we expand our relationships to include those from other cultures we must also expand our conflict resolution options.¹

How do you know if the conflict has a cultural basis? This question has no easy answer. The root of conflicts can be deep within a relationship or can be on the surface or anywhere in between. Many times a conflict has more than one root cause. In a crosscultural relationship often at least some aspect of the problem is culturally based.





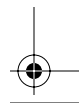
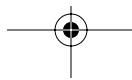
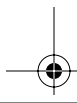
Common Causes of Crosscultural Conflict

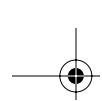
Misattribution is the greatest cause of conflict and misunderstanding. As mentioned in the first chapter, misattribution is ascribing meaning or motive to behavior based on one's own culture. Because cultural behaviors and values are so diverse, it is easy to see how misattribution can create an environment where behaviors can be misunderstood.

Joe and Sung are coworkers at a local bank. Joe, an African American, is out-going and outspoken. He is often thought of as the life of the office because he brings a great deal of energy to any project. Sung, a Korean American, is a hard worker but very quiet. Joe often teases Sung, as he does the others in the office, about being so quiet and makes comments designed to provoke a response. The more Sung is passive and ignores Joe, the more Joe antagonizes him. Joe is convinced that Sung is prejudiced and that is why he will not make eye contact with him or engage in the office banter. He begins to tell others how superior Koreans think they are to African Americans. He believes Sung's behavior is racially motivated.

Sung on the other hand fears Joe is targeting him because he is an immigrant. He is humiliated when he hears Joe make fun of his accent. He knows he has done nothing wrong to Joe. He has acted toward him as he has everyone else, so all he knows to do is to ignore him and hope that he will someday stop bothering him.

This example may seem somewhat silly. Why would grown men think and behave in such a way? Yet, it is all too common. Misunderstandings like this happen all the time in the workplace, in the church and in daily transactions. What really happened? Joe was being himself and doing what he always did with his office workers. When Sung did not respond to Joe's attempts to include him as Joe thought he should, Joe assumed a reason based on his own cultural experiences. He could have been right; but in a crosscultural relationship, chances are he would not have been and in this case he definitely was not.





Sung's response had nothing to do with Joe being African American or feeling superior to him. Sung had responded to Joe as he would have to anyone. Joe's boisterous antics made him uncomfortable. When Sung tried to have a conversation with Joe, his teasing and joking caused Sung to disengage from the conversation. Sung believed that the teasing was a sign of Joe's contempt and disrespect for him, as it would have been if someone from his culture had been doing the same thing. Both were making misattributions that were escalating a conflict situation.

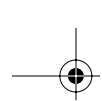
Other causes of conflict include information, expectations, values and behaviors.²

Information. It is easy for anyone to receive incorrect or unreliable information, but when this happens in a crosscultural situation, the ensuing problems can be more difficult to resolve. Many times our assumptions are the source of incorrect information. For example, José is late for a meeting and I believe that he is from a culture that is not as time conscious as mine. I assume that is why he is late, and jokingly refer to "Mexican time" as I attempt to explain why I am starting the meeting without him. Later when José comes in, I learn that his child was ill and the doctor was running late on her appointments, thus causing him to be late. Not only have I operated on misinformation, I have shared it with others and so perpetuated misinformation and a stereotype.

Incorrect information may also occur when one person assumes the other person knows the background or shares the similar cultural assumptions. It is obvious that this could be a greater risk when working crossculturally than when in a homogenous situation. Many times we give only partial information about a situation with the understanding that everyone knows what that means. Assuming that the other person knows or understands your assumption creates a large amount of unreliable information between cultures. You may be sending signals with additional information, but to someone not from your culture, these signals go unnoticed.

These situations can be as simple as a casual comment "Let's





have lunch” that is never followed up with a specific invitation, or saying “Let’s meet at lunch time,” assuming that all cultures eat lunch and that lunch will be eaten at the same time. It can be more serious when assumptions are made about what the length of a lunch meeting should be, and so one party expects to be on their way in one hour and the other won’t even be ready to get down to business until after the meal is finished. Other ways in which this happens is with body language. Many times we expect people to pick up on our body language as part of our true message, but since body language has very different meanings across cultures, this can be a very unreliable means of communication.

In addition, the differing cultural values of what is appropriate disclosure may hinder the communication of some information, especially that of a more personal nature. For instance, if my neighbor, who is of my culture, asks how I am doing one month after I have lost my job, I will probably tell her, “I am hanging in there, but money is getting pretty tight.”

However if, in a similar scenario, she asked a neighbor from Japan, he would probably tell her that everything is OK. Unless my neighbor knew that it would be a loss of face to say that he was struggling financially, she might mistakenly believe that he was actually doing fine. While this same scenario could happen between persons of the same culture, it compounds the problem in crosscultural situations because of the expectations assumed by each person.

Conflicts can be avoided by checking to make sure you have correct and reliable information.

Expectations. Different expectations can also be a source of conflict because of misinformation or just a general difference in understanding of what is appropriate in a situation. In the previous situation with my neighbor, her belief that our Japanese friend was all right financially even while out of a job would prompt her to do





nothing. However, our Japanese neighbor would expect her to know that he could not be doing well under the circumstances. He would probably be confused as to why she would want to embarrass him by asking such a personal question. He would be further confused because while she seemed to show some interest in his family and circumstance, she was now doing nothing to be of assistance.

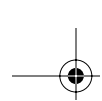
I remember learning this lesson the hard way. Frequently I would learn of a foreign-born colleague's hardship via a mutual friend. I would pray for them and then would either write a note or go by to visit. I was surprised to discover that many of these families perceived me as uncaring, while at the same time my peers from my culture thought I was going "above and beyond" to demonstrate concern and genuine caring. For those of other cultures, I was not doing what they expected and hurt feelings resulted. Their expectation was that once I was made aware of the situation, I would take action to remedy it. In my culture to presume to take unsolicited action would be considered intrusive. Neither of us had any idea that we had such major differences in our expectations.

I have also experienced this in reverse. Once when I was very ill, a friend of mine from an African country called me. I told her that I was sick and she offered to come over and bring me some food. I readily declined, truly not wanting anyone to see me in such a condition, not wanting to expose her to whatever I had and really not wanting any food. In her culture, however, she could not conceive of knowing of a person's illness and doing nothing so she came bearing much nourishment for my ills. I am afraid that my reaction to seeing her at my door communicated that we certainly had very different expectations in that situation.

Understanding different cultural expectations can facilitate better communication and the avoidance of conflict.

Values. Differing values contribute to conflict situations as well. While we seldom think of prioritizing our values, we do have a hier-





archy which governs our decisions and our behavior. In *Multicultural Management*, Elashmawi and Harris report their findings on the ranking of values by country. Table 9.1 lists the top five values for four countries.³

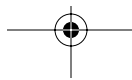
Table 9.1. Cultural values ranked by country

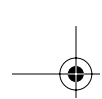
Japan	United States	Russia	France
Relationship	Equality	Family security	Self-reliance
Group harmony	Freedom	Freedom	Freedom
Family security	Openness	Self-reliance	Openness
Freedom	Self-reliance	Openness	Relationships
Cooperation	Cooperation	Material possessions	Time

These differing cultural values create tensions internally as well as externally. If my highest value is self-reliance and I am working with someone who does not highly value that, then my efforts to safeguard that priority may be misunderstood. The value placed on saving face is often dismissed by cultures that do not place as high a value on relationships and group harmony. It is the similarity in values within cultures that helps us understand each other's behavior without verbal explanation.

When cultural values differ, conflicts may occur. Learning to respect the priority a person places on a value helps you to avoid these conflicts.

Behavior. Differing behaviors are the most easily recognized cause of conflict. Let's look at one behavior pattern—speech. Speech patterns such as rhythm, inflection and voice are learned behaviors. Usually when a person learns a new language, the speech pattern from the original language is retained. This is why, for example, an English as a Second Language class may have six students from different countries learning English from the same





person, but each student will have a unique speech pattern that will be more similar to someone from their homeland than to anyone else in the class.

Now let's say that you are from the southern United States and are working with a person who has emigrated from Nigeria. Their English will probably have a British quality and vocabulary, but may also be fast with the accents on different syllables. This may require some intense listening, which soon becomes frustrating or even annoying. Now the content of the message is mixed with your emotions. Conflicts and misunderstandings can arise from such a simple thing as this.

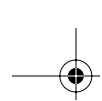
Sometimes there are preconceived impressions of a speech pattern that inhibit good communication from the start. The staccato pattern of Koreans sometimes is perceived as anger, while the tone of the British may appear arrogant. Even the more common African American, Hispanic and Anglo speech patterns, dialects, accents and word usage carry subtle meaning to the listener that influences the communication. Prejudice based on misattributions of speech patterns also exists in the United States. How often does Hollywood portray a character with a slow Southern drawl as dim-witted?

The issue of speech seems small and petty, hardly the stuff of major conflict, yet it provokes such a spontaneous reaction that ideas can be formed and impressions made without the listener even knowing what occurred to shape those impressions. Can you imagine then the impact of more obvious behaviors?

It is important to be aware of the effect of speech in conflicts because of another little-recognized fact. Duane Elmer points out that in many parts of the world people are more comfortable speaking in the passive voice.⁴ This is especially true in conflict. To many in the United States the use of passive voice is seen as a way to avoid responsibility. In return, the constant use of active voice may create a barrier by sounding too self-important or too confrontational.

Imagine a conversation between Solomon, from Africa, and his supervisor, Frank, from the United States.





- Frank: Why didn't you come to the meeting this morning?
 Solomon: The bus left without me, so my feet had to bring me.
 Frank: Don't blame it on the bus. You must not have been there on time.
 Solomon: I am sorry you are so angry about the meeting. What would you like me to do?
 Frank: I want you to take responsibility for your actions and get here on time next time.

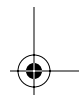
From Frank's perspective Solomon was irresponsible by missing the bus, but even more so by not owning up to it. Solomon, on the other hand, recognized his responsibility and admitted it in the way he knew how. His use of passive voice exacerbated the already tense situation for both men. Now, imagine Frank understood that Solomon would prefer to speak in the passive voice and that it was not a means of escaping his responsibility.

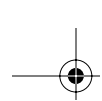
Or what if Solomon knew that in English the active voice was most often used and its use would not mean a loss of face? Understanding the speech patterns of each culture and the priority of values would have prevented this incident into escalating into something bigger. Imagine the conversation like this.

- Frank: I was disappointed you weren't at the meeting.
 Solomon: The bus left without me, so my feet had to bring me.
 Frank: It is important for all of us to be there, so I will expect you to be on time at the next meeting and to get the information you missed this morning from a coworker.

Or like this:

- Frank: Why didn't you come to the meeting this morning?
 Solomon: I missed my bus so I had to walk.
 Frank: You will probably get there earlier next time, walking had to have taken forever.
 Solomon: I will. Thank you for understanding.





When either person changes their first statement, the whole encounter takes a different turn. The more we understand the cultural behaviors and expectations of others the more we can avoid conversations that create disharmony.

Misattribution is a major cause of conflict. Even different speech patterns and voice can trigger responses that are unrelated to the reality of the situation. Being aware of misattribution is a big step in reducing conflict.

Western Styles of Conflict Resolution

The United States and other Western cultures have five basic strategies for resolving conflict.

1. *Win-lose (competition)*. This is the strategy that seems most often used in Western culture. It alludes to a battle where one side wins and one side loses. While it has been used for centuries, relationships can be a casualty.

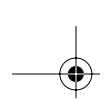
2. *Lose-win (acquiescence)*. Here one side gives in, a “peace at any price” approach. While it can bring resolution to a conflict and on matters of little consequence may be most efficient, it can also devalue and create resentment in the one giving in.

3. *Lose-lose (avoidance)*. With this approach neither party will initiate a discussion or action to resolve the conflict. The results are that relationships are wounded and conflicts go underground.

4. *Lose-lose (compromise)*. Another way for both parties to lose is to compromise. The parties agree to “meet in the middle” but neither one wanted to be in the middle. However, receiving half of what you wanted seemed better than receiving none of it. Viewing this as a lose-lose seems to be a U.S. perspective. Many other cultures view this as a win-win.

5. *Win-win (collaboration)*. In collaboration, both sides work to a solution that is not a compromise (meet in the middle approach) but one in which a totally new solution, fulfilling the needs of both parties, is mutually designed and accepted.





As you can see, each of these five styles takes the perspective of two sides in battle. Even in collaboration there is the underlying motivation of reaching the best resolution for each clearly defined side. Other cultures approach conflicts differently. Many times in multicultural situations, participants are caught off guard by the conflict and then seem unable to find a way to approach a solution. Learning these other strategies will give you additional resources to use and will help you recognize these approaches when you see them at work in your own multicultural environment.

Before we explore more effective crosscultural strategies, let's examine conflicts from a broad cultural perspective. David Augsburger, in *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures*, develops a framework for understanding different cultural understandings of conflict.⁵

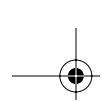
Table 9.2. Different approaches to conflict resolution

Situationally defined conflicts (Options are open, pragmatic solution)	with	Culturally prescribed conflicts (Conflict is embedded in the culture's values and sense of right and wrong.)
Individual issues (Where the individuals involved have ownership of the problem)	with	Communal concerns (The group as a whole has ownership of the problem.)
Direct, dyadic approach (One on one processes)	with	Indirect, triangular approach (Third party processes)

As can be seen from table 9.2, these contrasts represent basic differences in cultural values. Reflecting on the different cultural lenses we have discussed, can you determine which cultures understand conflict in these ways? For example, individualistic cultures would fall into the categories on the left and collective cultures on the right.

Augsburger goes on to contrast the solutions to conflict as destructive (divisive) and creative (conjunctive). The destructive solutions result in alienation, competition, stalemates and denial. The





creative solutions create bonding, connecting, resolving and restructuring.⁶ In a crosscultural situation, using strategies that are different than what you would ordinarily do may help you find a creative solution.

Crosscultural Strategies for Conflict Resolution

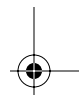
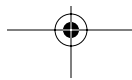
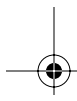
The following four strategies are adapted from Duane Elmer's book *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry*, and will assist you in resolving conflicts in creative and mutually satisfying ways.⁷

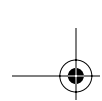
1. Mediator, unwitting mediator. Most of us are familiar with the role of a mediator. What you may not know is that for some culture groups, using a mediator is considered the norm and the most appropriate means to deal with tension between two parties.

When a person from a culture that prefers mediators is living in the United States, it may be more difficult to enlist a mediator. The person who may have served in this role may not be living in the United States and the indirect messages that would normally solicit a mediator may not be understood by a U.S. American. In addition, the other party in the conflict may not be willing to work with a mediator.

Because of this, many times a mediator is recruited without being aware that he or she is being asked to serve in that role. Years ago a Nigerian pastor came to my office concerned about a problem between himself and another pastor. I listened very carefully, pleased that he would confide in me. When he was finished, I gave my best advice. He nodded in what I thought was agreement, thanked me and left. I felt so good that I had been of help. About a week later he returned to my office and told me about the same problem. Again I actively listened and suggested things that he could do. When he left I was curious about why he had come back, but reasoned that he must not have clearly understood my ideas.

Upon his third visit it became apparent that I was definitely missing something. Taking some of my own advice I sought the





counsel of a cultural coach, a respected Nigerian. He recognized immediately what was happening. The Nigerian pastor was trying to engage me as a mediator, but I did not understand that. What appeared to be his unwillingness to solve the problem himself (that is, taking my suggestions) was actually his earnest effort at bringing about a solution (that is, obtaining a mediator).

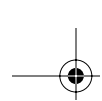
2. *Storytelling, proverbs.* One of the best examples I know of storytelling to resolve conflict is the story of King David and the prophet Nathan. Rather than confront David directly, Nathan told a story and then used David's own reaction to the story to open his eyes to his behavior.

For many cultures this method of confrontation is most effective because no one loses face. A person can make amends or rectify the situation without ever having to orally acknowledge the offense. It can also be used to create empathy or understanding of an emotional situation where it has been difficult to communicate feelings successfully. Gary Smalley in *The Language of Love* recommends a similar approach of using word pictures to communicate in a powerful but indirect way not for crosscultural relationships but for relationships within the family!⁸

I have been amazed at how God can use this approach and variations on it to resolve issues that seemed otherwise irresolvable. Once a very serious breach occurred in a crosscultural friendship of mine. I knew something was terribly wrong, but could not figure out what had happened, nor could I get my friend to tell me. I was afraid that I would lose the relationship and never know why.

In desperation, I tried one last thing. I went to my friend's home and asked if I could talk with her for a few minutes. She agreed and I began to tell her a story about how I had been feeling. I had thought ahead of things she had told me about her culture, what she valued and experiences that had been meaningful for her. In my story I related my feelings to circumstances she would relate to, such as the loneliness of leaving all of her family to come to the United States. I spoke of the confusion and deep pain of being





judged guilty of something without even being given a chance to explain, as those in her country who were forced to confess things they never did. As I was talking, she began to cry. Soon she was pouring out the hurt that had occurred and why she had blamed me.

Because we were able to talk about the situation, we grew closer rather than growing apart. My story did not accuse any one of anything. Rather, it allowed us to look at the emotions, create some common ground and work backwards to unwind what happened.

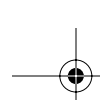
3. Inaction, silence, indefinite response. This approach is more subtle than some of the previous approaches. It may take more practice to become proficient at using and recognizing it. Indirect responses usually follow events or questions where the answer would be “no” or something negative. This prevents the use of “no” or direct confrontation, avoiding a loss of face.

For example, Ron asks Byung Kim to participate in a fund-raising event at work. Mr. Kim does not want to contribute, but rather than saying, “No thank you,” he says, “I will try later.” Ron does not understand that this is his polite way of refusing. When Ron continues to ask day after day, Mr. Kim becomes embarrassed and upset. He is not certain if Ron does not understand his answer or is just trying to humiliate him into doing what he does not want to do. If Ron persists to the point that he directly confronts Mr. Kim with, “Hey look, are you going to contribute or not?” as he might with someone from his own culture, the relationship will be damaged.

This type of scenario is common at all levels of communication and in all kinds of settings. The main thing to be sensitive to is the possibility that an indirect answer is actually a definite answer put in a softer form. This skill is acquired by listening to and observing other cultures.

Silence can also convey the same meaning. To a person familiar with other cultures, the silent message will be as clear as a verbal





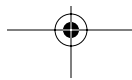
one. Take, for example, a meeting in which plans are being made for a special event. If the leaders of the meeting are from the dominant U.S. culture, they may assume that when ideas are presented and pursued those who disagree will speak up. Those from other cultures, however, such as many Asian cultures, will think that not verbalizing agreement or support will communicate that they are not in favor of the particular plan. It is important to tune in to the cues of silence when working crossculturally.

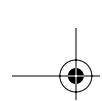
Inaction can also be a powerful communicator. For cultures where saying no directly is considered rude, inaction is often the way in which “no” is communicated. Persons from these cultures understand that you show respect by not directly refusing them. In other words, one does not need to say “no” when declining an invitation. Giving a “maybe,” or “I’ll try” will be sufficient, and the final answer will be delivered by whether you attend. While this may seem rude or confusing to Western thinking, it works well for the majority of the world.

4. *One down position and vulnerability.* This strategy is not new nor does it apply only to crosscultural relationships. All of us have probably been in situations where we have said, “Help me with a problem I am having” instead of, “You did not do what you said, and now we are having a problem.” To put oneself in a vulnerable position by asking for help can be a tremendous asset in building and maintaining relationships, as can taking ownership of a problem so that the other party does not have to deal with the loss of face. A key factor to remember is that assigning blame and focusing on getting a person to admit error will most likely not be the best way to ultimately resolve the situation and maintain the relationship.

Being willing to try new approaches and strategies for solving conflicts will increase your ability to maintain relationships.

If you find yourself facing a conflict with someone of another culture and are not able to use any of the previous strategies success-





fully, you may want to try the following process, which has proven helpful in conflict situations.

1. *Pray.* This is always the place to start. Ask God specifically for wisdom to understand the other person's perspective, your misattributions and also the sensitivity to respond to God's leading in the resolution of the situation.

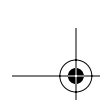
2. *Identify behaviors, expectations and so on in the conflict.* It is helpful to begin to sort out the areas of conflict. Is the conflict based on behavior—not adhering to a time schedule, speaking very directly and so on? Expectations—expecting to be rewarded for loyalty, expecting specific results, expecting a relationship to include particular aspects and so on? Values—desire for results, desire for relationship and so on? Once this is known the emotion associated with it can be seen from a new perspective.

3. *Look for misattributions.* With the areas of conflict identified, look for the misattributions. The behaviors, expectations and values quite probably convey a meaning to each party that is different from what the person thinks is being conveyed. Identifying the misattributions will help create greater understanding of the situation and may actually lead to a solution at that very point. Being willing to relinquish misattributions will be the more difficult task. The longer the history of the relationship and the greater the trust level, the easier this will be.

4. *Clarify motives or salient cultural factors.* Though important to clarify motives, this is often difficult to do. Asking “why” questions in situations can be too direct and sound accusatory. It is easier and usually more successful to ask the person(s) to describe what they have been wanting or how they would have wanted the situation to have been. Motives are usually discovered through this response, as well as salient cultural factors. Learning to listen in such a way so as to identify both motive and cultural factors impacting the situation will help the current situation and future relationships.

5. *Diffuse emotion.* Diffusing emotion has, hopefully, been hap-





pening through the entire process. God's leadership and the clarification and understanding gained thus far should help the parties feel calmer and more confident that a resolution will be found and that the relationships will continue. It is important to remember that resolution may well look different for each party involved. It is not successfully achieved until everyone feels that it has happened.

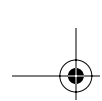
In order for everyone to have a sense of resolution it may be necessary to give people a time to share what is in their hearts without comment or rebuttal. Ground rules should be established for this ahead of time and being flexible will be a key. Some cultures will not be open to speaking from the heart and will want to placate the authority figures involved, or they may want to use an intermediary to speak for them. Allowing for these differences will help the process move along and will help build trust for the future. This is a good time to check for any lingering misattributions.

6. *Find common ground.* In almost any conflict situation there is common ground from which you can build a resolution. However, it may not be obvious at first. Learn and practice discovering the shared values, goals, relationships and so on, that you have with others. Practicing this with those with whom you have no conflict is a good place to start. Most people are amazed at how many things they hold in common with others when they look for them rather than for the differences. In the connecting exercises you will find some ideas to assist you in developing this skill.

7. *Look for a long term solution, not just a quick fix.* Living in a world of fast food, speed dialing and e-mail, you may also be used to weighing the effectiveness of a solution against the speed at which it can be implemented. You then decide what will give you the best solution in the least amount of time. In crosscultural relationships, when speed of implementing a solution takes a higher value than saving the relationship, you have lost the war even if you manage to win the battle.

It is also true that if you are accustomed to letting time solve





conflicts—that is, doing nothing until enough time has passed to ease the pain or discomfort of the situation—then you may again be winning a battle but losing the war. In other words, it is important to keep in mind the relationship and the impact of this one event or conflict on its future.

8. *Remember that mending the relationship is a solution.* There may be times when keeping a relationship is more valuable than trying to dissect a situation or find who is responsible for a past experience. It is just as appropriate to work on not letting something happen again or finding better ways to communicate, clarifying roles or expectations and so on, than overanalyzing the past. Once opportunity is taken to share feelings, impressions and thoughts about an event, it is important to focus on the common ground and to move ahead with the relationship. Forgiveness can be given without being asked. Saying, “I am sorry this has happened” may help turn the corner so that you can move forward.

All healthy relationships experience conflicts, but by focusing on the relationship instead of just the problem, the relationship will not only survive but also grow stronger.

Connecting

1. Think about the conflict resolution strategies mentioned in this chapter. Name the two you use most often and why.
2. Select two new strategies that you are willing to try.
3. Read the following passages that Duane Elmer’s book *Cross-Cultural Conflict* identifies and determine the conflict resolution strategy utilized.

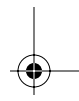
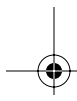
John 8:1-11 _____

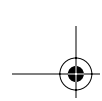
Matthew 27:11-14 _____

2 Samuel 12:1-9 _____

Matthew 21:23-27 _____

Mark 9:33-37 _____





4. Pick two relationships in which you are currently involved. (These do not have to be crosscultural relationships.) Make a list of the things you have in common. For one week, pick another person and think of the commonalities you share. List the re-occurring ones. How many of those same things would be true of a person of another culture?

For example, I have two friends, Jan and Lisa. The following are interests that we share.

Jan: home decorating, shopping, Bible study, crafts, travel

Lisa: volunteer at the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), movies, talking, shopping

Which of these could I also share with someone of a different culture? What other interests of mine would be shared by someone of another culture?

