

Cross-Cultural Evangelism

Understanding different worldviews
and “bridging the gap” with the
Gospel.

Our Goals

- Understand the challenge of missions
- Discern different worldviews
- Witness effectively to those who are not in the mainstream of our culture
- Overcome our natural tendency to be ethnocentric

Sources

- Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts by Gailyn Van Rheenen
- To Every Tribe with Jesus by David Sitton
- Cross-Cultural Conflict, Cross-Cultural Connections, Cross-Cultural Servanthood, by Duane Elmer

The “Western” worldview

- The rule of law is based on majority rule and written regulations.
- Justice is punitive, based on objective facts.
- Independence and personal freedom is valued and expected.
- Individualism is pursued and/or demanded.

- Basic kinship unit is the nuclear family (although this concept is deteriorating).
- Extended families rarely live together.
- We expect privacy and like “our space”.
- Sexual sins (aggressive) or acts of violence are viewed as the worst sins.

- Social status is based on occupation, education, financial net worth.
- Success is measured by the quantity of material goods we possess.
- Our homes tend to signify our status.
- Property is individually owned.

- Men are judged by the quality of their work, so work hard, get ahead, and get results.
- We are action oriented. Doing something is always better than doing nothing.
- We are **EXTREMELY** time conscious.
- We are future oriented. Plan ahead and don't live in the past.

- We think we can solve any problem with knowledge, especially scientific knowledge.
- We are consumed with pursuing material things - self-gratification.
- Be assertive, get what you can get.
- Sacred (spiritual) and secular are divided, so religion is optional, and non-essential.

The Non-Western Worldview

- Everything rises and falls on relationships.
- Harmony within the group is imperative, so “don’t rock the boat.”
- Good and evil are generally judged by whether or not the behavior harms the well-being of the community.
- Decision making is by family or community consensus, achieved by lengthy discussions.

- Controversial topics are dealt with in parables and long stories to avoid direct confrontation.
- Arguments between two people often become community business.
- Justice is more about restitution and restoring harmony than punishment.

- The elderly are highly respected.
- Life is event-oriented rather than time-oriented. The event and who comes to it is far more important than when you start it or when you end it.
- Time is past-oriented rather than future-oriented.

- Amassing personal possessions is not a high priority because it is all shared anyway.
- Generosity/sharing is highly valued and respected.
- Personal privacy and “space” is a low priority. Houses of relatives and friends are entered freely and without formality.

- The sacred (spiritual) and the secular are blended together and are not distinct.
- Spiritual issues are understood from an animistic perspective.
- Fears and phobias dominate. Trust no one. Be suspicious of everything and everyone.

- God is the Author of ethnic groups
 - Linguistically (Gen 11 → Rev 7)
 - Biologically (Acts 17:26)
 - Geographically (Acts 17:26; Deut 32:8;
Amos 9:7)

For God so loved the world

- Why?
 - He made the world
 - He owns the world
 - He manages the world
 - He redeemed the world

Therefore, go and teach (disciple) all nations (ethnos = ethnic groups), and lo, I am with you always.

What is animism?

Animism is the belief that personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power and influence in all human affairs. One must discover what beings or forces are influencing us, so we can know how to live and act. One must learn how to manipulate those beings and forces for our personal benefit.

- Location is important
- Size is important
- Elevation is important
- Memorized words repeated again and again have power (mantra)
- Ceremonies (with potions/fetishes) and mantras are used to satisfy the spirits

“Beings” include:

- God (or gods)
- Spirits of the ancestors (ghosts)
- Spirits of animals or things in the natural world
- Angels (or demons)
- Satan

“Forces” include:

The mysterious unknown powers behind magic, curses, hexes, the movement of stars, and a host of other natural phenomenon.

Most animists believe that the “beings” and the “forces” interact with each other.

The essence of animism is POWER.

The motivation of an animist is to manipulate
“the powers” for personal benefit.

There is no thought of developing a
relationship with “the powers.”

Most animists believe that all of their troubles in life are generally due to their inability to keep the spirits satisfied.

There is a Supreme Creator God, but He is distant and disconnected, so they are pre-occupied with satisfying these spirits who are everywhere and influence everything.

(diffused monotheism)

Many believed animism would die out and the animists would be absorbed into the world's major religions. They thought animism was simply the “superstitions” of the uncivilized and uneducated. However, it is not dying, but reshaping itself into many forms, such as the New Age movement.

It is estimated that 40% of the world is openly animistic.

However, the flavor of animism pervades nearly every society and religion in the world.

Animists have joined many religions and kept their animism as well.

- Animists have joined Islam or some branch of “Christianity”, and still kept their animistic worldview, syncretizing their beliefs with their adopted religion.
- 2 Kings 17:24-33

Many animists profess Christ as a way to find power.

They see the blessing of God and the power of God and they want it.

But they are not really submitting to the claims of Christ on their life.

We often play into that by presenting Christ as “the problem solver” without addressing the issue of submission, self-denial, or suffering.

John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Phil. 1:29;
1 Pet. 4:12-16

To one with an animistic mindset, the cross symbolizes forgiveness and liberation from the power of demonic forces.

But it also symbolizes suffering, and reminds us that God sometimes allows us to suffer for His sake.

Foundational Issues

- Who is God? What is His Name?
- What is He like?
- What is His role in the world?
- How does this relate to me?

- What is sin?
- Who has the right to define what sin is?
- What do you mean by salvation?
- Salvation from what? For what purpose?

- What is the proper motivation for seeking God?
- What is the nature of the divine-human relationship?

True conversions require a worldview change.

Without a worldview change, the profession of faith is simply syncretism.

The Challenge – Acts 26:17-19

- Blindness
- Darkness
- Bondage

We must not be disobedient to God's call:

- cross cultures
- bridge the gap
- preach the Gospel!