

# 5. Strengthen Our Inner Selves

## Transformation

Knowing ourselves is a great start, but it is vital to remember that God is continuing to work with us to transform us from one degree of glory to another, into the likeness of his beloved Son.

This can sometimes be painful as any 'cracks/faults' in us tend to get enlarged with the pressure of a cross-cultural situation. Our insecurities can come to surface, as well as feelings of failure, rejection and disappointment.

However this provides a great opportunity to deal with these things and strengthen ourselves in partnership with God and others who we trust. When we arrive in new culture it is therefore important to make sure we establish honest, open and safe relationships, both with people we are with, as well as those who are supporting us from our home culture.

**It is absolutely crucial that you have others with whom you can share how you are feeling.** Isolation will only multiply any negative emotions. If you are a married couple, then you will have each other to talk to - but you need another couple as well. It is essential that we learn to be real about our feelings, and learn how to express these to others who can help us to healthily process them.

## Develop Attitudes That Will Help

Having a good attitude is also essential to coping in a new culture. Learning to accept the differences in culture and appreciate the good things will require us to have a realistic view of our own culture i.e. good and bad features, and be aware of our own attitudes.

## 5 Wrong Attitudes

These wrong attitudes will prevent us from adjusting

- **Pride** - an unwillingness to be helped or corrected. A resistance to learning new perspectives or attitudes.
- **Superiority** - tendency to focus on the good points of our own culture and bad points of the host culture. 'Our way of doing things must be the best'. Being a 'back-homer' i.e. 'back home, we do x, y & z!'
- **Obtuseness** - reluctance to take the time think through what we are perceiving around us in any detail. Assume our lifestyle is acceptable without any consideration of how we are perceived by those around us.
- **Prejudice** - the tendency to jump to quick conclusions and make generalisations. We lump everyone together instead of seeing them as individuals.
- **Ignorance** - continuing to act in ways that are rude, insulting, offensive or patronising. Not taking the trouble to find out how or why we may be causing offense.



## 5 Right Attitudes

- **Humility** - being open and teachable. Being able to laugh at ourselves and the weaknesses of our own culture. Sadly, humility may be the least expected attitude from a white westerner - but when people encounter it, that makes it even more powerful!
- **Respect** - remembering that we all have equal worth before God. Valuing each individual, man, woman or child, rich or poor. Demonstrating appropriate compassion and sensitivity. Looking for good in the host culture.
- **Friendship** - look to form warm and affectionate relationships. Making ourselves vulnerable is a great tool in this process. Asking for help in finding our way in a different culture and society can open very many doors. Most cultures have a tradition of providing help to the stranger or new-comer.
- **Forbearance** - be patient and tolerant, not (outwardly) comparing our new home negatively with our old one. This includes developing patience regarding God's timing for things, and learning to live with our limitations
- **Understanding** - become a student of our new home. Study the culture, ask questions, read newspapers, watch local TV and movies, sit and watch people about their daily business. Ask our friends about their lives and their families. Be willing to share stories about our own background—but don't lead with that.