

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

## Trans-cultural Missionaries ... Who are they?

Trans-cultural Missionaries ... Who are they?

When we think of missionaries we generally think of someone who is going to travel to some remote point on the globe to do the work of ministry. Perhaps an assignment to a tribe in the remote jungles of Africa or South America would be a place where we envision a missionary being sent. Maybe China, Haiti, the Philippines or Russia would fit better into your idea of where a missionary would go in the world today. These are all places where missionaries go. Why do they go there? The answer is quite simple. Look at John 3:16 and Matthew 28:19-20. These two references pretty much sum it all up.

We have been blessed with the opportunity of working with and providing Information Technology support for various missionaries who serve in El Salvador, Belize, Paraguay, Namibia, Angola and Russia. Regardless of where they go there are some fundamentals that all of them went through to be prepared to be a missionary to a specific people group.

Have you ever wondered what it takes to live in a different culture? What does it take for one to not simply survive in a culture but to effectively communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ? What things do you need to know about the people you are going to live with and are expected to influence for the Lord? These are interesting questions and very pertinent for a missionary. Let's look at some of the things a trans-cultural missionary has to become familiar with.

The most obvious thing that comes to mind is language. In most cases, the training comes in phases. First you would go to an intense language school stateside for a period of up to 6 months. The second phase takes place in the actual area that you are going to work. You are usually placed with a native or more experienced missionary to help you to acclimate to the language and the culture. Which brings up another area to consider. That area is the culture.

The differences in a culture can be harder to adapt to than the actual language for some. When we think of a different culture we sometimes think of going to a country where the people live in grass huts with dirt floors, no running water, no electricity, no radio, no family and friends, no favorite restaurant, no TV, no internet, no shopping malls etc. These things are true to some degree in all mission locations. The way things are done on a daily basis is quite an adjustment for some. For example, in locations where refrigeration is not available, daily trips to the market are necessary. So it's good bye to the days of grabbing some leftovers from the fridge and heating them up in the microwave.

Once the shock of the daily life is dealt with, there is the issue of the people that you are to live among and minister to. They see things in a different way. They do many things in a different way. They have been taught differently from birth. They do not understand things from your perspective. They assume that they are right and since you are not one of them, that you are wrong. You must learn the morays and folkways of this culture so that you can begin earning their trust and build begin building relationships.

For example, a retired missionary from India shared a lesson from his first attempt to reach a village for Christ. He wanted to show a village that he cared about them so he thought that the best way would be to hold a Vacation Bible School like meeting for the children of this village. He brought medical supplies that were needed, food, clothing and various items for the children. But efforts were received overall, poorly. Try as he might to reach the village through the children, the overall results were discouraging. In his thinking, giving to the children would be the surest way to touch the hearts of the villagers and to let them know he was concerned about them and their children. In frustration he left and went to a friend of his who was native to the area and told him of his dismal results. His friend laughed at him. He told him that in the culture here you do not

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

approach the children first with anything. This is an insult. You approach the older adults first and deal with them, next the young adults and then the children. When this approach was used the results were amazing. He apologized for his unintentional insult and began working with the senior adults. This opened the door for him and his group.

The last thing a trans-cultural missionary has to deal with is a difference in the people groups' worldview. You may ask what is a worldview? It is basically how one views the world. A person's, cultures or groups worldview can be defined basically by answering the following questions:

1. Is the Bible a moral authority and absolute truth applicable to all or is all truth relative and therefore subject to the individual's whim?
2. Did the universe just spring into being or was it a creation of God?
3. Is the human race a product of random evolution or a direct creation God?

In answering these three basic questions, you can come up with a pretty good idea of a person's worldview. This is absolutely essential for all trans-cultural missionaries to understand. Without understanding this the missionary would find it hard to witness, communicate and function effectively. The missionary would find it hard to teach others to stand for their faith and to raise a family in this culture while maintaining Christian worldview.

At this juncture I would like to make an urgent prayer request for a trans-cultural missionary that is living in a very hostile culture. Please go to your bedroom and look into the mirror and pray for God to bless, protect and make a more effective witness out of this trans-cultural missionary. That's right it's you!!! The Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:20 states, "But we are citizens of Heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives..." As Christians we must never forget that who we are. We are called to be a witness to the world. We are called salt and light. We have been commissioned by Jesus himself to be active in this world and our culture. We are missionaries to a foreign culture. Look at the three questions above. Think about our school systems, the media, and what political movements are top on the agendas of the world today.

**Question #1.** The Bible is not seen as authoritative. As a matter of fact that Bible has been relegated to the position of an out of date book of fairy tales. In most schools the mere mention of the Bible can cause issues. Many see the Bible as a book of stories to help teach us morals, but is not binding or authoritative. Since the Scriptures are not seen as an authoritative source for absolute truth, then right and wrong must be left to the individual. This is Humanism. Therefore one comes to the conclusion that Hitler was right in killing the Jews during WW II because "he thought it was right." Osama Bin Laden and Al Queda were right in what they did on September 11th because if truth is according to what the individual believes, then this was right because "they believed what they did was right and justified." Giving away the authority of the Bible has severe consequences in ones worldview. Without a true foundation to stand on any system will fall and take it's adherents and those who they rule with it.

**Questions #2 and #3 are related.** Evolution is taught and touted as a solid scientific fact. Nothing however could be further from the truth. Creation is scoffed at and cannot be taught or even mentioned in most schools. PBS is saturated with programming that presents evolution as a well-established fact. Our culture is inundated with this on every level. Evidence for Creation and against evolution is plentiful but ignored.

The outlook for a culture without God is grim indeed. If there is no God and we are not his creation then man becomes no more than an animal. Choices of sexuality, morals, honesty and any other choice that one makes have no true foundation and ultimately have no lasting significance.

This is the culture that you are a trans-cultural missionary in. It is becoming more of a hostile environment as time goes on. To survive in it you must be prepared. The study of the Word of God and prayer are of the utmost importance. Below are some links that will help you to familiarize yourself with some of the issues.

# The Christian Arsenal

[www.christianarsenal.com](http://www.christianarsenal.com)

- [Click here](#) for the sign that needs to be not only on the inside of your front and back door and also in plain view at every exit of your local church.
- Your child has been told that Evolution is true and that there is no evidence to dispute it. [Click here for facts evolutionists can't answer.](#)
- Do you understand what secular Humanism is and why it's so dangerous? [Click here for an overview of Humanism.](#)
- Homosexuals claim they can prove that their lifestyle is mentioned and approved of in the Bible. [Click here for a response to this claim.](#)
- You are told that as a Christian you should not and cannot judge because the Bible says not to. [Click here for a study of what the Bible REALLY has to say on this issue.](#)
- The Bible is becoming less and less important to many people and many denominations. Some maintain that we have finally outgrown our need for it. [Click here for some considerations to this mistake.](#)
- You are having a conversation and you are told that everyone is a Christian and that everyone will eventually be saved so it doesn't really matter what you believe. [Click here for some insights into this erroneous thinking.](#)
- Are you familiar with what the term dualism means when it comes to Christianity and our society? [Click here for an article to define the problem and make you aware of what God says about it.](#)
- Here is a short but pertinent study dealing with some facts about Jesus that many tend to miss. [Click here for the study.](#)
- Some insist that in being a Christian you have no responsibilities to anyone for anything. You are just supposed to live and let live. [Click here for what God says on the subject.](#)
- Does the Bible have anything to say about the feminist movement? [Click here to see a study written by a Christian business woman..](#)
- How can you find out what your denomination stands for on certain issues? There are several ways. You can ask your Pastor or check your denomination's website. [Click here for the Denominational Report Card.](#)

There are many issues that we face and this is just the tip of the iceberg so to speak. We recommend the book Tough Faith by Craig and Janet Parshall, which provides a wonderful framework for what a trans-cultural missionary is going to have to deal with. The book is very insightful and is 100% relevant to our times. You are a trans-cultural missionary the moment you walk out of the door of your home or perhaps even before you do so. May God strengthen and encourage you as you serve Him.