

## Cultural Agility (Part 1)

You can make a request but people will hear it through their cultural lens e.g. asking an American to take a photo of someone and a Japanese to do the same. In some cultures it's an insult to bring your own food if you are being hosted whilst in other cultures it's considered polite. With some Indians in SA it's seen as rude to not eat seconds. "Are you saying the food was not nice?" In some cultures it's seen as bludging and greed when you don't say no. I know someone who was raised to never accept a second helping.

In culture you have Peach VS Coconut. Peach cultures are soft on the outside, but we should not confuse friendliness with friendship. I have seen it with some Durban Indians. Then you have the coconut cultures (Polish, French, German or Russian where they won't always smile at strangers. When you become friends with them they can be very warm. Don't be offended. Some people grew up in families where their friend's parents could spank them (whole village raising a child) whilst others had stronger boundaries. E.g. being spanked on each syllable used in vernacular language, first by stranger then by caregivers. So don't be offended when you feel that person crossed boundaries by scolding your child. This is the very person who also feeds your kids when they have no food.

### 1. Individualism VS Collectivism

This is the degree to which people are integrated into groups. How does this affect biblical principles like leaving mother and father? How is your marriage impacted by the extended family? It's important to understand how this affects leave requests at work. A black person might say he is going to his brother's funeral and his white boss might think he was lying because it was actually his cousin. Culturally the word is the same for brother and cousin. If they grew up in a rural setting they probably grew up together anyway. If someone tells you that their aunt died, try to find out the nature of the relationship they had. Many people were raised by their aunts or grandparents. Collectivist – China, Korea, Japan and African countries. Individualist cultures are US, UK and Australia.

### Biblical Balance of individualism and collectivism

*Gen 2:24 - That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

*Gal 6:4-6 – 4 Each one should test his own work. Then he will have reason to boast in himself alone, and not in someone else. 5 For each one should carry his own load. 6 However, the one who receives instruction in the word must share in all good things with his instructor....*

*Gal 6:2 - Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the Law of Christ....*

*Romans 12:5 - so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

### 2. Internal Locus of Control VS External Locus of Control

Who shapes your life? Is it what you do or something beyond you? Some people become shapers whilst others have a wait and see approach. Those who are fatalistic are sometimes nicer because they are not pushy. However, they may not make things happen. Sometimes they are superstitious. This is seen in our language. In Shona we say "Ndasiyiwa ne bhazi", meaning the bus left me. Why don't we hear people say I missed the bus. In Shona we say "Ndagumburwa", I was

tripped instead of I tripped. There is a fine line between looking to God for help and not taking accountability for your role in marriage.

### **Biblical Balance of internal and external locus of control**

*Gal 6:7-8 – 7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. Whatever a man sows, he will reap in return. 8 The one who sows to please his flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; but the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life....*

*James 4:14-16 – 14 You do not even know what will happen tomorrow! What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord is willing, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast in your proud intentions. All such boasting is evil....*

### **3. Task VS Relationship/People**

Task oriented people are action orientated. Unfortunately they sometimes leave casualties along the way. This is great when you want to achieve objectives but not always great when you need empathy.

*Phil 3:12 - Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*

*Acts 16:14-15 - 14 Among those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. 15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay" at my house. And she persuaded us.*

*Acts 21:1-2 - 1 After we had torn ourselves away from them, we sailed directly to Cos, and the next day on to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 Finding a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we boarded it and set sail....*

*2 Cor 2:12-13 – 12 Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and a door stood open for me in the Lord, 13 I had no peace in my spirit, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia.*

### **4. Direct Feedback VS Indirect Feedback**

There is a fine line between deceit and indirect feedback (Sometimes when people are indirect it can come across as being deceitful and/or manipulative. It could be deceit or it could be giving feedback but indirectly. There's a fine line between them). If you are not used to direct feedback, when it happens and you are the recipient you might get offended. You might miss the learning. Cultures with indirect feedback sometimes have a lot of gossip. Feedback can differ depending on whether its positive or negative e.g. Americans tend to give direct positive feedback but indirect negative. The British tend to soften their negative feedback.

Kenya, Ghana and Indonesia you will find a lot of indirect negative feedback whilst in Russia Israel, and the Netherlands it's quite direct. This also affects children and their perception of their

academic progress. In France you can be told “Apply Yourself” whilst coming near the top of your grade whilst in US you have smiley faces right the way through.

British will say “With all due respect” when they mean “I think you are wrong” and Dutch are hearing it as “He is listening to me.”

### Anglo-Dutch Translation

| What the British say                               | What the British mean                                       | What the Dutch understand                    |
|--|---|--|
| With all due respect...                            | I think you are wrong.                                      | He is listening to me.                       |
| Perhaps you would think about...I would suggest... | This is an order. Do it or be prepared to justify yourself. | Think about this idea and do it if you like. |
| Oh, by the way...                                  | The following criticism is the purpose of this discussion.  | This is not very important                   |
| I was a bit disappointed that...                   | I am very upset and angry that...                           | It doesn't really matter.                    |
| Very interesting...                                | I don't like it.  | He is impressed.                             |
| Could you consider some other options?             | Your idea is not a good one                                 | He has not yet decided.                      |
| Please think about that some more.                 | It's a bad idea. Don't do it.                               | It's a good idea. Keep developing it.        |
| I am sure it's my fault.                           | It's not my fault   | It's his fault.                              |
| That is an original point of view.                 | Your idea is stupid   | He likes my idea!                            |

From Nannette Ripmeester

### Biblical Balance of Direct and Indirect Negative Feedback

*James 5:19-20 – 19 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20 consider this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover over a multitude of sins....*

*Gal 6:1 - Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.*

*1 Tim 5:1-2 – 1 Do not rebuke an older man, but appeal to him as to a father. Treat younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity....*

*Mt 18:15-17 – 15 “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault (confront him) in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 “But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. 17 “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

*Look at these three different ways Jesus confronted:*

*Mt 12:34 - You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*

*John 8:3-11*

*3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4 and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” 6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.*

*But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.*

*9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”*

*11 “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life sin.”*

*John 4:15-19*

*15 The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”*

*16 He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”*

*17 “I have no husband,” she replied.*

*Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. 18 The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”*

*19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet.”*