

Teaching Tips (things to help you prepare)

One of the first things you must understand when sharing in a foreign country is the differences between the cultures, language, dress, etc. The information below is designed to help you gain some understanding of the issues involved and how you can avoid errors that disrupt your ability to share. Some argue that you must remember you are a guest in another country and therefore you must respect their culture. I think this is a humanist attitude that has at its foundation the idea that your culture is superior to theirs and you are willing to condescend to theirs for a short time. I think a far greater motivation is that of Paul:

To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 1 Corinthians 9:22-24 (ESV)

Two other issues are useful to consider. The first is to remember that even the various sections of United States have different cultural attitudes toward life, not right or wrong, just different. If you plan to make a difference in a given area, you need to understand and respect the difference. The second is to remember there are plenty of things in American culture that are ungodly. Please understand the way to correct them is with the loving and faithful teaching of the Word so that the hearts of people are changed and then the change in their lives will in time change the culture.

A missionary friend of mine included the following in one of her family prayer letters and speaks to the issue cultural impact on how one expresses themselves. She writes

I'll close with one example that helped me to understand some of the ways Ugandans communicate. The woman who worked for some missionaries dropped a plate. Her response was to say to the missionary, "The plate fell, and it is dead!" The missionary replied with something like, "You dropped the plate though." The woman repeated that the plate fell and it is dead. She asked her one or two more times wanting her to take responsibility for the act, but she refused. She automatically saw that negatively and felt the woman was refusing to take responsibility for her actions. She learned through someone later on though, that to say, "I dropped the plate" in that culture means you INTENDED to drop it. Since the woman definitely did NOT intend to drop it, she used the passive form of communication to express what happened! In Uganda, people use the passive form of communication commonly. For example, "It got lost!" contrasted with "I lost something."

This next section is from a veteran African missionary. This grows out of his personal experience.

One of the points focuses on the Justice of God and how he must judge us for our sin. To illustrate this, I ask them what they would do if someone came on three different occasions and stole from them and each time the judge let the thief off. I then ask, was this a good judge or bad judge? Most of the Christians (including the pastors) have been telling me that he would be a good judge! I sometimes think they automatically put themselves in the place of the thief, rather than the victim. Then when I ask them again, "what would you say if you were the one who received no justice? Then they are a little unsure.

When I asked my language helper about this, he showed me how to say "just judge" because "good judge" seems to connote the idea of "merciful".

These Biblical concepts of sin, judgment, and forgiveness are rather fuzzy here in East Africa. A word for "sin" can be the same word for "mistake". A "good" judge may be a lenient one. "Forgiveness" is often equated with being "excused". For example, we once had to fire an employee in Uganda for stealing. When she asked us to forgive her, she was shocked and angry when we said that we could forgive her but still had to fire her because trust was broken. If one is "forgiven" they may be "excused", thus avoiding the need for repentance or restitution. There does not seem to be different words for forgive or excuse.

Clear communication of these ideas is critical if our audience is to understand the grace of God. Why was Jesus crucified? How can one appreciate the substitutionary atonement of Christ without understanding God's justice in judging our sin? At the cross the judgment of God was fully met. "God made him who knew no sin, to become sin on our behalf, in order that we might become the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:21, see also Romans 3:5-6).

Once I was teaching and contrasted grace and mercy. My translator stopped and said "They mean the same!" I responded they do not and he then asked how they differed? My simple answer: Grace is when God gives you a blessing you do not deserve. Mercy is when God withholds a curse (punishment) that you do deserve.

The following points are from a great personal friend and veteran East African missionary.

1. Even though a significant majority of Ugandans speak English, try to memorize a short greeting in the native language

and use it in your introduction. It will really grab people's attention to hear you attempt to speak in their own language.

2. Use the simplest English possible, and speak in short phrases at a time. Even the best available translators do not have an expansive English vocabulary, and a long complex sentence is very difficult to remember well enough to correctly translate it into native languages.
3. Frequently pause and ask the people questions to test their comprehension of what you've just said. This is a good check to see if your translator has done a good job, and/or if you have done a good job, and/or if you are speaking over the people's heads. There's no sense in moving on to the next point, if they haven't understood the point you just finished teaching.
4. Use plenty of illustrations, short stories and proverbs. Of course there is a reason why Jesus used parables so frequently in His own teaching, so why not follow the Master Teacher's example?
5. Keep each of your presentation focused on ONE specific truth, and then explain it several different ways. If you try to teach too many different truths in just one session, you will probably just confuse everyone.
6. Don't let people sidetrack you with questions that are not relevant to your subject. Simply and politely offer to answer the question AFTER you have finished the lesson.
7. Always try to apply the truth you are teaching in a practical way to the people's lives. This one might be tricky since you don't know a whole lot about the culture and the way of life here. Again, feel free to ask the missionaries and/or the local leaders for advice.
8. Be as animated as you possibly can be. The Ugandans are a very animated people, who love to laugh and easily express emotion. So the more expressive you can be, the more likely you will be able to hold their attention and make the truth you are trying to teach stick in their minds.
9. Have fun! The Lord can and will use you. The way you relate to the people, the joy you have in Jesus, the love you have for His Word and His flock will communicate volumes to the people (much more than your words!). Even though you'll only be in Uganda a short while, the people will remember you and the fruit of the Spirit in you for years to come!

The list below contains suggestions of topics to share in Uganda. Each team member should pick several topics at their own level and comfort zone. I recommend you pick at least 4 topics to prepare really well, and then 4 to 6 more that you can share in case of need, but you would not need the same level of preparation. Check with others on your team and divide up the various topics so there is no duplication among parts of the team that will most likely work together in Uganda. Everyone must have something to share, even if it is very simple. You do not want a Ugandan host to call on you and ask to share for a few moments and you have nothing to say. You do not have to sound like a seasoned preacher or classroom teacher, but you do need to have something to say.

The basic idea is to take something you have learned, that means a great deal to you, and then reduce it into a form you can easily share. Once you begin to do this, you will find yourself at every sermon, every Bible study, and even your personal devotions considering how what is being said can be made into your own presentation.

The secret to getting ready is to make it your purpose to spend two hours a week, Sunday afternoon is a great time, where you work up materials for sharing, prepare teaching outlines, and organize your presentations. A good start would be to take the small booklet by John Blanchard "Ultimate Questions" and make an outline of each of the twelve chapters on a single sheet of paper. This will help you better understand the flow of the gospel message and how to share it with others. I am sure there are other books, booklets, tracts, etc., that have influenced you and all you need to do is take the content of them and organize it as your own presentation. In time your confidence will grow to where you will begin to generate materials of your own.

Basic Points

- Short simple outlines are your best tools to use (without an outline, there is the tendency to ramble and with a manuscript, a tendency to read the presentation, but use whatever is comfortable to you)
- Develop one simple idea several ways
- Repeat important information, repetition is a great teacher
- Use stories to illustrate rather than abstract concepts, but make them simple and applicable in the African context
- Be observant, look around for things from Ugandan life and culture that illustrate your point
- Avoid illustrations that are unique to American life and culture or suggest American superiority
- The use of puns, American colloquialisms and customs are very often lost in translation
- Be prepared for question and answer period, and always do your best make every answer Bible based. Questions may not relate to your teaching topic. Also, if the same question gets asked two or three different ways, do not

become frustrated, just try to make the answer more clear.

- Do not hesitate to interrupt your own presentation to ask the Ugandan's how to best express what you are trying to say. I have always found that after two or three of them talk among themselves, they will come up with just the right way to make your point communicate.

List of Possible Topics for Presentations

- Sermon preparation
- How to prepare and give a personal testimony
- How to be a Christian businessman or woman
- Abstinence, morality, and faithfulness
- Character traits of a Godly spouse
- Biblical counseling
- Kingdom focused prayer
- Stewardship of time, talents, & treasure
- Creationism
- Personal evangelism
- Discipleship training
- How to lead a Bible study
- One or two Bible stories for children
- Christian Leadership
- Basic Christian doctrines
- Marriage and
- Interpersonal relationships (from male or female point)
- Conflict resolution
- Repentance and Forgiveness
- Spiritual gifts
- The Ten Commandments
- Psalm 1 as a guide to study and understand all Psalms*
- Psalm 51, the Psalm of repentance
- The Beatitudes (Matthew 5)
- The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6)
- Any of the parables of Christ
- Bible characters (men and/or women)
- Teaching the children's Catechism
- Justification, Adoption, Sanctification, Glorification
- Being a Godly wife
- Being a Godly husband
- Being a Godly teenager
- Raising Godly children
- Loving your parents
- Living with and witnessing to an unbelieving spouse
- Sharing Christ with unbelieving relatives
- Prayer for and with your children
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Making God the love of your life
- How to handle money
- Tithing
- Nutrition
- Wound Care

Take advantage of their language

- You will share in English and there will be plenty of Ugandans to translate for you when it is needed
- However it is effective to learn the basic greetings in the local language: It is striking how just using a few phrases in the language of your hearers opens up an audience to listen to the speaker. Along with the greetings, try to learn basic phrases such as "Please", "Thank you", "No, thank you", etc.
- Learn the proper forms of address in the local language
- Use of titles conveys respect and demonstrates your

willingness to learn about their culture.

Sharing a platform with interpreters

- Many in the audience will understand your English but being interpreted help make sure everyone understands
- Keep your points focused and to a minimum, speak in a clear and straightforward manner
- Use simple English - short complete subject, verb, and object sentences
- Long involved compound sentences are difficult to translate, as are fragmented concepts, and giving only part of a thought, the best interpretation is not word for word what you say, but what you mean and a fragmented thought has no real meaning when translated
- Be animated and expect your interpreter to attempt to copy your movements and gestures
- Sometimes your interpreter may move ahead of you and finish your thoughts for you, or elaborate on something difficult at length, this is good
- During your presentation, look at and speak directly to your audience, not your interpreter
- Do not embarrass your interpreter if he/ she has difficulty finding an equivalent word; understanding you, or stumbles with unfamiliar concepts, or asks you to repeat something
- Be patient. An interpreted talk takes longer. Careful interpretation often requires the use of long explanatory phrases. It is helpful if you can provide your interpreter with an easy to read outlines of your talk
- Avoid technical terminology, abbreviations, and professional jargon. If it is necessary to use words you know will be difficult, discuss them with the interpreter before you begin
- Avoid colloquialisms, abstractions, idiomatic expressions, slang, similes, and metaphors
- Remember that words can mean different things in different cultures
- Jokes will probably be lost in the translation, as will most references to American life-styles, history and culture
- While many jokes do not easily transfer into other languages and still retain their humor, personal anecdotes, embarrassing experiences, and funny illustrations will cause people to smile the world over. Humor produces good will, and good will opens the doors for ministry
- Always watch your audience for their nonverbal responses
- For an excellent extended discussion of this topic visit: www.thirdmill.org/newfiles/de_bills/de_bills.Interpreter.html

Comments to avoid, even in private conversations

- "Why don't Ugandan's ..." many endings such as
 - have running water?
 - have flush toilets?
 - sleep under mosquito nets?
 - have electricity?
 - have electricity all the time?
 - buy clean bottled water to drink to drink?

- and just about anything else that is common in your home, but is difficult or impossible for people who struggle just to live from one day to the next
- **“Why do Ugandans ...”** many ending fit here as well:
 - eat dinner at 8:00 p.m?
 - have a dirt floor in your church, home, etc?
 - ditto as above
- In other words, avoid any comment that suggests your way of life is superior to theirs and if they were as smart as we are, they would do things differently. I have encountered many Uganda who are very intelligent but live in a country where they had few if any advantages, even in the area of education.

Some basic attitudes in Africa:

People:

- not accustomed to structure – whatever it is, it is
- “youth” is to at least to the late 20s
- lifestyle is simple and laid back – accept things as they come
- little sense of personal responsibility – “it broke” rather than “I broke it”
- time is not important, people are – relationships override most other considerations
- AIDS is epidemic – in the early days known as “Slim” people got sick, lost weight (became slim) and died
- there is a high rate of alcohol abuse and abuse of other drugs are growing

Culture:

- oral and musical traditions
- must deal with death on an almost daily basis
- no public display of affections with the opposite sex, even between spouses
- men hold hands with men, and women with women and it means no more than shaking hands in America
- favorite sport (I am unaware of what is second place) is soccer which they correctly call “football” and an entire village might turn out to watch a match
- collectivistic society where willingness to share to help others in need is very strong
- strong family orientation
- many still practice polygamy (note: if asked, “Can the church welcome a polygamist who becomes a believer?” Answer is yes, and since God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) he must not put away any wife, but he can never be an officer in the church (1 Timothy 3:2 & 12)

Religion:

- strong sense of the spiritual
- teaching abstinence (religiously based) has impacted the youth to the point that Uganda was the first Sub-Saharan country to reduce the rate of the spread of AIDS
- native religions and witch doctors are common in villages
- strong awareness of evil and evil spirits
- child sacrifice is still common – baby girls often have pierced ears and boys circumcised as these renders their flesh “damaged” and not worthy of sacrifice

Church:

- emphasis is on health not growth
- health is measured by caring and sharing

- turning members into ministers and missionaries in daily gospel and mercy ministry to others around them
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