

## Evangelising to Europeans and East Asians

### The differences in meeting/evangelising to South East Asians, Europeans and Scandinavians such as Swedes

Every person we meet will think and behave slightly differently and we must be careful not to stereotype them and assume that we know how they think. Need to get to know each person individually. However there are some general trends:

#### EUROPEANS

- Culture changes within Europe, from N to S:
- North = reserved and efficient
- South = warm, friendly and relational

*Q. What differences have you noticed between Scandinavians and Italians?*

#### **SWEDES** (but generally true of other SCANDINAVIANS too)

- Very **reserved** (more so than us), won't invade your personal space (shake hands rather than kissing etc.), means it can be hard to get to know them.
- **Religious background** = Lutheran state church, traditional, liberal teaching, most Swedes baptised and use church for funerals and weddings, but not much else! Other churches smaller and people suspicious of them.
- **Philosophical, thoughtful** – lots of depression, drunkenness, and also can be interested in the gospel.

Ask them **questions**

- What do you think is the point of life?
- What do you think happens when you die?
- Who do you think Jesus is?

They **talk about important things**:

- When they know you well
- After midnight
- When they're drunk!

#### ITALIANS

- Tend to be **relaxed** and easy going.
- Find English people cold.
- Spend lots of **time** just relaxing together.
- **Catholic background** - may consider themselves 'religious' or 'non-religious'. Many have a sense of religion which is comforting, but undemanding in terms of "submitting to God". They tend to react against certain aspects of "hypocritical religion", and choose not to go to church at all, but still have a sense of God.
- Often happy to discuss theological issues in a **philosophical** way.
- We need to try to understand why someone may have the opinions they hold, but then encourage them to join in **Bible studies** – although most will probably not be that keen. Otherwise anything we say is simply "your way of looking at it", and would have nothing to commend it in opposition to "my way of seeing things."

#### EAST ASIANS

They are more similar to Scandinavians than Italians, but there are differences too.

*Q. What differences have you noticed?*

## Harmony and Saving Face

In the West people want to explain everything and use it, traditionally in East Asia they want to see everything in the right place and relate to it. They see the universe as a whole, it is perfect as it is and shouldn't be forced to conform to human desires. So for the East Asian, **harmony**, with nature and with people, is more important than truth. This has a big effect on the way they relate to people.

- Relationship-oriented rather than task-oriented

The concept of **'face'** is very important. It refers to self-respect or honour. It must always be preserved especially in front of an audience. People from East Asia will generally be very polite because they want to 'save face'

- 'Yes' may mean 'I'm hearing you', not 'I agree'. They may say what they think we want to hear because they want to please us
  - e.g. they may agree to go to church even if they don't want to.
  - e.g. they may pray to become Christians to be polite or to save face or from gratitude for the friendship we've shown them
  - So when asking them if they want to do something always offer alternatives, don't put any pressure on them. If they say they want to become Christians ask them why they want to.
- They often won't ask their questions directly for fear we'll lose face if we're unable to answer and they often hesitate to answer questions because they are afraid of giving the 'wrong' answer.
- To criticise someone's ideas and suggest something different is an attack on them personally and on their ancestors.
- If they feel we are doing things for them (like helping them with their English) they may feel they need to do something for us in return
- We need to build up relationships of trust before we try to share the gospel with them.

## Group/family

In the West we have become very individualistic - we see ourselves as individuals with individual rights and choices. However the East Asian sees each person as part of the whole. The responsibility of the individual is to fit into the whole.

- Decision making is the responsibility of the family/group. They will often look to the oldest male member of the group to make the decision for them. This can affect whether or not someone decides to follow Christ. They especially respect their parents desires.
- Present Gospel relationally

## The Younger Generation

Young East Asians are influenced by the traditional East Asian mindset, but they are also increasingly influenced by Western culture:

- Materialistic and technological
- Individualistic
- Looking for happiness and personal satisfaction

As with Western young people, we need to show them that our faith is genuine and affects the way we live bringing hope and purpose.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 9

- Context: Paul has been defending himself against those who claim that he is not really an apostle.
- v19-20 he is willing to do all he can in the hope that people will believe the gospel. We've been thinking about what we can do to become Italian to the Italians and East Asian to the East Asians!
- v23-27 his whole life is focused on the need for people to hear the gospel.
- I know how easily my 'body' makes me it's slave as I get distracted by things going on in my life, and in the lives of my friends, so that I forget the desperate need for people to hear the gospel.  
GEMMA
- Let's run the race like Paul!