

Rynkiewich Chapter 2 Interaction Paper

1. The main idea of this chapter is summarized on page 12 “The concerns addressed in this chapter are the issues of *perception* or sensing reality, *cognition* or thinking about reality, and *emotion* or feeling about reality.” Our reality is not simply an observation, but an interpretation of reality informed by our cultural context.

2. The development of the discipline of anthropology, field work and the concept of culture are explored in this chapter. Of chief concern for Rynkiewich is defining what culture is not. “Behavior is not culture, but it is a product of culture, or rather a product of the interaction between culture and people’s physical, social, and spiritual environment.” (pp. 19) Culture is also not determinative of a person’s character or life (pp. 20). What culture is though is localized and particular and “Culture is learned and shared.” (pp. 21) Culture is a social construct, but a powerful way people interpret the world around them. When we forget this, we easily can run into the problem of ethnocentrism, that is “... to respond to other people’s ways by one’s own culture, especially values and feelings, to prejudge people’s behavior and explain differences as if they were the result of perceived physical and mental differences (racism) or spiritual and moral differences (elitism).” (pp. 24)

3. This chapter was a good reminder that despite our best efforts to be unbiased, we see the world through the lens of our cultural context. We must be intentional about learning to see people from their culture’s values and context if we are going to build trust and openness when sharing the gospel with others outside our own culture. Refusing to take the time to understand why a person thinks and believes the way they do not only devalues the individual, but also devalues the fact that Jesus embraces our cultural distinctiveness as seen in Revelation 7:9-10. Let us dignify other people by seeking to understand them and in doing so we may have built a bridge the gospel can travel over in their heart.

4. Questions:

a) How can homogenous churches honor and create space for peoples of other cultures? Is it worth it? Why or why not?

b) When we meditate on Revelation 7:9-10 how does it challenge our understanding or culture?