

EXPLORING BACKGROUNDS #1

Think About...

- ▶ Think about a time when you met a new group of people (job, sports team, class, neighborhood group)—how did you discover the “culture” of the group?
- ▶ Are you usually able to quickly fit in to a new group, or is it usually a slower process? Why?
- ▶ If you’re the new person, what steps do you take to get to know those around you?
- ▶ Which is more important for you—learning about the culture of a new group of people, or finding things that make you feel safe and comfortable? Why?

The Encounter...

Trish is finally living her dream. After forever in med school, she finally has a full-time job at a hospital. Unfortunately, she is in alien territory. After spending years in school and interning at a hospital in downtown Chicago, her new job in Nebraska is incredibly different than her training experience. And the doctors here aren’t as forgiving and patient as the doctors on rounds during her internship. Even the patients are different. Her previous experience was in an emergency room, where everyone was intense and in a hurry—here, patients want to chat! Her training may have prepared her to be a doctor, but Trish isn’t ready for this.

Consider...

New cultures and new groups present relational challenges—it’s important to take the time to learn where we are, who we are with, and what’s important to those around us. How can we get to know our new relational culture? Here are some possibilities...

- ▶ **Learn stories.** Everyone has one—so ask questions that prompt others to tell their stories. *What brought you here? Before this season in your life, what were you doing? How has this relational circle impacted your life?*
- ▶ **Find out what is most important.** Trish would find an onramp into her new relational culture by asking the people she works with what they are looking for from her. The same goes for her patients.
- ▶ **Who can be a helpful guide to your new relational culture?** Find that person and ask questions.
- ▶ **“That’s how I’ve always done it” doesn’t work when you’re not in the place you’ve always done it.** Think about this new experience the same way you’d expect to integrate into a foreign culture.

I Corinthians 9:19-23 (CSB)

¹⁹ Although I am free from all and not anyone’s slave, I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to win more people. ²⁰ To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law—though I myself am not under the law—to win those under the law. ²¹ To those who are without the law, like one without the law—though I am not without God’s law but under the law of Christ—to win those without the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some. ²³ Now I do all this because of the gospel, so that I may share in the blessings.

ASK

WHICH OF THESE SUGGESTIONS RESONATES THE MOST WITH YOU, AND WHY?

Questions for Conversation...

- ▶ When you were the “new person” how did you adapt?
- ▶ What was the biggest change you had to make to fit into a new relational culture? Looking back, what would you do differently, and why?
- ▶ In your mind, what are the limitations to Paul’s statement: “I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some”?
- ▶ If someone new were to join one of your relational cultures, what piece of advice would you give them? Why?

On the Way Out...

Too often people visit a new relational culture and want it to change to fit them, not the other way around. To integrate into a new environment, we have to be flexible, humble, and curious. It may be hard at first, but what you can gain in experience and lifelong relationship is worth it.