Student: Florencio Zabala

Professor: Dr. Skip Bell

Course: CHMN 747 Leadership and Church Management

Elmer, Duane. *Cross-cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility.* Downers Grove, Intervarsity Press, 2006. 212 pages

I certify that I have read this book from page 1 to 212 and that the following journal reflects my reading, thoughts, insights and experience during the reading activities.

The practicality of this book is astonishing, I have the experience of working in Four countries and more than Thirty different nationalities represented there. Church members coming from the various end of the world and worshiping under the same roof, bringing some elements of each culture into the worship experience, sharing food, music, dress, attitudes, and witnessing. Dr. Duane Elmer has done an outstanding job with Cross-Cultural Servanthood, I personally felt as having a conversation with the author in many of the chapters.

Dr. Elmer mentions the fact that during he service cross-culturally, he made some mistakes that he now recognizes. I can relate very much with lots of them, my experience reading this book was one of feedback, repentance and humility. Needed to say that, I was familiar with the content of the book in some aspect. Last summer I sat in a class with Dr. Erick Baumgartner, professor of the leadership program at Andrews University and he shared some insight from Dr. Elmer.

Far from making any comparisons, between my experience and the author experience like Dr. Elmer, I had to learn cross- cultural servanthood in my marriage. My wife was born in rural Jamaica, having hail to the queen of England once while in primary school; she could not fail to recognize her country colonizer. Been marry to her I had to deal with the abroad and the local elements of a culture that it own motto is, “Out of Many, One People.”

Christ is the perfect example to follow; he was incarnated in the culture of man in order to win back humankind. This is to reinforce the author’ statement, there are more things in our lives to make us humble, than those to be proud for. The example of Christ is so powerful, so compelling; I could do nothing else, but share the great teaching and knowledge embedded in the lesson given to the twelve disciples. The request was made for a position of great influence, leadership and power, instead the savior of the world show his closest men that the secret for holding power or staying in power, does not resides in human ability, but rather in practical service that demonstrates humility and wiliness to help others.

The author selection of the three fundamental elements to establish relationships in a new culture or just new people is: openness, acceptance, and trust. Any person or church organization must recognize these elements as the base for relationships. God bestowed values and principles in every family, ethnicity, tribe, tongue, and nation. We are to find ways to acknowledge and give proper recognition to the moral standards and practices of the people we come in contact with.

The experiences that Dr. Elmer shares in this book reflects very much the attitude of a vast majority of missionary, that includes me; haven been sent to a new culture to serve in any capacity we allow our ego to makes us feel that there is no one in that country that could do the job or fill that gap. The advices to avoid such mistakes are clearly given in the stories and reflections of the author.

The approach of adopting an attitude of learning from, with, and about the new culture; I consider it as a high point in this book, the reason for it is because when someone enter into a new culture, local people are eager to share, display and show up their identity, the elements that give them a sense of nation, people, culture or race. No given the opportunity, it constitutes a great offence to the local people. However, just by the fact that you sit and listen, eat, learn a game or simple sing their music you are building trust and as a positive result they will accept you into their circle.

The usage of biblical source in every chapter is a remarkable ability in which the author connects stories, personal experiences, and anecdotes to bring across some God-given lesson to his servants. The incarnation of Jesus is presented as the greatest event in cross- culture, the savior not only new the problem of the human race, but he understood its connection with sin and therefore was able to mingle with men and provide care for their needs.

The one thing that gives the must problem to connect with another culture is someone’s view of sin and sinfulness. I found this quotation “Sin and its effects are always with us, but if we obsess over them we overlook the wonder of God’s presence in people and their various cultures. Look for the good and the beautiful, and when you see it you will see God’s grace”. This will I carry with me while serving people of other culture. There will always be certain aspect of the new culture that conflict with mine, perhaps; things that are not accepted in my culture. The author gave ample example of westerner and how we view some practices done in some eastern country.

The final chapters of the book are filled with hardcore reasoning about some biblical example of leadership. Paul, Barnabas, and Joseph create the thesis of the book; serving cross-culturally. In the case of the apostle Paul, short-term missionary work in some region characterized his service for God’s people. His fundamental roll was to empower the local people to take charge. Barnabas, in the other hand; used a lot of practical skills to serve the people, he had great influence on other including his contemporaneous leaders.

Joseph, the fitting character to finish this book in a positive and encouraging form. I have read the story of Joseph several time, but never in the context of cross-cultural servanthood. A true servant, who represented kingdom’s values in every way he could, everywhere he could and whosoever he could.

My final comment on the work of Dr. Elmer is that, I realize the many mistakes I have made, the things I have done right and what I can do to improve while serving cross-culturally. One thing that no one can overlook is the fact that, Christ is the One and only who can claim the title as Lord and King. It is my determination by God’s grace and power to serve his people with humility. By his power I will seek to develop the abilities that are enlisted and clearly defined in this book as the keystones to successfully lead in a cross-cultural environment.