

Serving with Eyes Wide Open (Doing Short-term Mission With Cultural Intelligence) by David Livermore, Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI) 2006. (38
Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Four Million Go on Short-term Mission Trips.

“Some estimate that as many as four million Americans take short-term mission trips out of the country annually.” (p. 12)

2. Attitudes of “Our Way Is Best.”

“Sadly, however, our increased accessibility to the globe doesn’t seem to have dwindled our colonialist tendencies. Much of the way we interact cross-culturally continues to be filled with an ‘Our way is best’ mentality. The importance of cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness of different cultures is certainly better than a couple decades ago. However, a subtle sense among Americans that we have the ‘right’ culture and thus need to ‘convert others to our ways still permeates much of our cross-cultural perspective and practice--whether it’s work we’re doing as part of a multinational corporation, a university study-abroad program, or a mission trip.” (p. 13)

3. Be Effective Cross-culturally.

“This book is for anyone who wants to be more effective cross-culturally--whether in preparing you for your upcoming mission trip or tour abroad, helping you relate to an immigrant at work, or enhancing the work you do overseas as part of your job. *Serving with Eyes Wide Open* also is a resource for churches, mission agencies, universities, and other parachurch agencies that continually grapple with issues of cross cultural interactions.” (p. 13)

4. Growing Populations of the World.

“Every second, four babies are born. Four more babies were just born ... and four more ... and four more ... and four more. It continues day after day after day, the population of the world growing at a rapid rate. More than twice as many people born each day than die. All this adds up to a world population of 6.5 billion people. Line us all up in single file around the world and we’d circle the globe more than 110 times. At this rate, we can expect a population of eight billion people by the year 2025.(U.S. Census Bureau, “World POPClock Projection,” June 17, 2005, <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/popclockworld.html>)” (p. 20)

5. 5000 Ethnocultural Groups Worldwide.

Twenty percent live in China. Twenty-five percent live in India. Five percent live in the United States. Fifty- five percent live in other nations of the world. Developing nations are growing rapidly while their industrialized neighbors remain relatively static. The 6.5 billion of us are scattered throughout approximately two hundred nations, but there are more than five thousand identifiable ethnocultural groups in the world. (Anthony Marsella, “Conflict, Negotiation, and Mediation across Cultures” (lecture, Fourth Biennial Conference on Intercultural Research, Kent, OH, May 5, 2005).” (p. 20-21)

6. Living on a Dollar a Day.

- “Twenty percent of the world live on one dollar a day.
- Another 20 percent live on two dollars a day.
- Twenty percent of us live on more than seventy dollars a day.
- The remaining 40 percent are somewhere in between.

(Timothy Garton Ash, *Free World: America, Europe, and the Surprising Future of the West* (Random House, 2002), 149)” (p. 22)

7. Wealthy Have More Money than Most of World.

“The combined income of the 447 wealthiest people of the world is more money than the combined income of 50 percent of the world’s population. Did you catch that?-- 447 people have more money than the combined assets of 3.25 billion people in the world!” (p.22)

8. Inequitable Distribution of Food.

“Americans make up 5 percent of the world, but we consume 50 percent of the world’s resources. Think about that. We consume half the world’s resources. the problem of hunger in the world is *not* the earth’s ability to produce food for 6.5 billion people; it’s the inequitable distribution of food.” (p. 22)

9. Bonded Debt Slavery for \$35.

“Ravi, a seven-year-old boy in Dehli, is among the 95 percent of the world who aren’t Americans. Ravi works ten to twelve hours a day, seven days a week, shining shoes on the streets of Dehli. Ravi faces four years of bonded labor in order to pay back a thirty-five-dollar loan his parents took out for his sister’s wedding. Ravi will spend the next four years paying off a debt that is less than what I spend on dinner out last night.” (p. 22-23)

10. Poverty Statistics.

- “More than two billion children live in our world, half in poverty.
- One of every four children in the world has to work instead of going to school.
- Eight percent of people in the world own a car.” (p. 23)

11. Death from Preventable Diseases.

“More than three thousand Americans lost their lives on September 11, 2001. We all remember where we were when we first heard the news that day. Three thousand lives were lost in a matter of hours. We pause each year on September 11 to remember the victims and their families, and we should.

“Yet how many of us will remember where we were today when we were reminded that thirty thousand people die *today* from preventable diseases? It’s all too easy to read that, say, ‘Wow! That’s horrible,’ and move on. Thirty thousand people will die today. More than two hundred thousand ... will die this week from preventable diseases.” (p. 23)

12. Death from Hunger Every 16 Seconds.

“A child dies from hunger every sixteen seconds. Just about every time i take a breath, another child has died of hunger.” (p. 23)

13. Unsafe Drinking Water.

- “Forty percent of the world lacks basic sanitation facilities.
- Over one billion people have unsafe drinking water.(Bryant L. Myers, *Exploring World Mission: Context and Challenges* (Federal Way, WA: World Vision International, 2003)” (p. 24)

14. HIV/AIDS Threat.

“The worst disease facing us is HIV/AIDS. AIDS threatens the social well-being of entire nations. Almost forty million people are infected with the virus, with another hundred thousand infected daily. These numbers are expected to double by 2010.” (p. 24)

15. Parents of 15 Million Die to AIDS

“Over fifteen million children under the age of fifteen have lost one or both parents to AIDS, and that figure is expected to double by the year 2010.(United Nations AIDS Report, “Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic” (New York: United Nations, 2004)” (p. 24)

16. HIV/AIDS in India, China and Russia Next.

“HIV/AIDS has been raging in Africa for more than twenty years. Meanwhile most people, and most churches, have gone about their lives. The next wave of the pandemic is expected to be in India, China, and Russia, home to almost one third of the world’s population. We are at the *beginning* of this crisis, not the end. This is a century-long struggle.” (p. 24)

17. Two dollars or Less a Day.

“Of the 6.5 billion people in the world, 40 percent live on two dollars or less a day.” (p. 24)

18. Displaced Persons and Refugees.

“Too many people on our planet are being forced out of their homes and communities. These people are called *displaced peoples* or *refugees*. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of refugees over the last thirty years. In 1975 2.5 million people were known to be refugees. Today more than 12 million people have been forced out of their native countries. Another 24 million people have fled conflict and persecution and are internally displaced within their own countries. The vast majority of refugees are women and children, and more than 65 percent are Muslim. (United States Committee for Refugees, “World Refugee Survey: Refugee and IDP Statistics” (Washington, DC: USCRI, 2004)” (p. 24-25)

19. Interdependency of the Body of Christ.

“According to three-self theory, national churches should be self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing.

“However, some majority world church leaders aren’t convinced three-self is the right approach. They contend the three-self movement comes from an individualist perspective rather than one developed for an interdependent church around the world. Isaac Mwase, A Christian scholar with roots in both Jamaica and Zimbabwe says, ‘Unless the economies of poverty in the global South change dramatically in the future, Christian solidarity would seem to demand external support. What is needed is not self-sufficiency among the poor; but a way of partnering across cultural and economic differences that affirms Christian solidarity, the interdependency of the Body of Christ. (Isaac M. T. Mwase, “Shall They Till with Their Own Hoes? Baptists in Zimbabwe and New Patterns of Interdependence, 1950-2000,” in *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World*, ed. Lamin Sanneh and Joel Carpenter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 74)” (p. 36)

20. Seeing the Big Picture.

“There is much to learn from the majority world church. We’ll look more specifically at the implications of these snapshots for short-term missions, but initially let’s open our eyes to see the big picture.” (p. 37)

21. Need for Leadership Training.

- “Eighty-five percent of churches in the world are led by men and women who have no formal training in theology of ministry.
- If every Christian training institute in the world operated at 120 percent capacity, less than 10 percent of the unequipped leaders would be trained.
- Eight out of ten nationals who come to the West to receive training never return home.
- Leaders from every non-Western region say their number-one need is leadership training. (World Evangelical Alliance, “Report on Global Consultation on Evangelical Missiology” (lecture, Global Consultation on Evangelical Missiology, Iguacu, Parana, Brazil, October 1999).” (p. 41)

22. Often Short-term Trips Reinforce Wrong Assumptions.

“The brevity of our cross-cultural experiences ought to alert us about the wrong conclusions we make as a result of the common-ground issue. Indeed many of the behaviors, nonverbal cues, and issues we observe may in fact be familiar. The question lies in whether or not we interpret them correctly. When we’re in a cross-cultural context for only a brief amount of time, we interpret everything we see through our own cultural framework rather than learning, over time, to identify with another cultural framework. As a result, the short-term trip has the potential of further reinforcing inaccurate assumptions and interpretations rather than helping alter our inaccurate assumptions. Even multiple short trips to the same place don’t necessarily alter them. Continued brief encounters in the same place often result in continued observation of the same similarities rather than exporting the vastly different cultural paradigms at work.” (p. 70)

23. Narrow View of Most North American Pastors.

“While hesitant to be overly critical, more than half of the national pastors studied expressed frustration that North American pastors talked about successful churches in the United States with little awareness of many churches that are far bigger in other parts of the globe. As a result of the tendency to look for common ground, many North American pastors felt the needs among the churches where they were training were the same as those back home. Almost every North American pastor commented on the similarity in the issues in churches cross-culturally. Whether discussing youth

ministry, elder boards, getting people to buy into vision, putting people under church discipline, or dealing with expectations of people upon the pastor, most of the North Americans concluded, ‘Church is church, wherever you go.’” (p. 73)

24. Accurately Interpret What Is Occurring.

“Conflicting perspectives between North American trainers and national pastors were more than occasional. Upon extended study and review, these two very different perspectives became a consistent them. North American pastors were operating from the assumption that ‘Things here are pretty much the same as home, so these pastors are really hungry for guidance on how to lead.’ In contrast, national pastors said, ‘You act as if the American church is the true trendsetter for how we should all do church.’

“I would be misrepresenting our brothers and sisters from the majority world church to suggest that nothing of value came from this training or that it’s always a waste of time. Several described some specific experiences with foreign teachers that really moved them forward in their lives or ministries. So while you might be ready to ban anyone suggesting short-term training efforts overseas, I’m not ready to go there just yet. I am, however, ready to call us once again to widen our perspective. The point is not that nothing good ever comes from trips or the training. *Instead my point is to help us see our tendency to inaccurately interpret what is occurring and what’s being communicated by familiar behaviors [italics inserted].*”(p. 75)

25. Hold Stereotypes Loosely.

“Some researchers argue that stereotyping can be a positive thing to assist us in cross-cultural engagement. They say that understanding familiar traits and values of a particular culture helps us interact more effectively there. For example, if we understand the way Latins think about time compared to how we do; or if we think about the communal orientation of most Africans compared to our individualistic drive; or if we consider the respect given to elders in an Asian context--these help move us toward cultural intelligence. The challenge lies in whether such stereotypes are accurate generalizations in the first place.

“At best the key lies in holding stereotypes loosely, and not applying them too quickly to everyone. We must be aware of having an experience with one or two individuals from a particular place and suddenly thinking we’ve now experienced a trait that can be generalized to all or even most people from that place. We ought to resist stereotyping cultures on our own. Some things about me are terminally American. But other things are unique to me and unlike many Americans. The same is true of you. The same is true of the people we encounter when we travel to a new place.” (p. 75-76)

26. We Are Quite Similar, But There Are Differences.

“Looking for common ground isn’t a bad thing. I actually find it quite inspiring to think about the connection we have with people everywhere. We can find common ground not only with Christians everywhere but with all our fellow image bearers in the world. We share similar fears, loves, and needs. There’s something really right about seeing our similarities. Be we’re wise to discover and embrace difference between us as well! It’s part of serving with eyes wide open.” (p. 76)

27. We Do Not Know the Poor.

“Shane Claiborne of the Simple Way in Philadelphia thinks most American Christians do care about the poor. He says, ‘I believe the great tragedy of the church is not that rich Christians do not *care* about the poor, but they do not *know* the poor.’ (Shane Clairborne, “Downward Mobility in an Upscale World,” *The Other Side* (November/December 2000), 11.) He believes we resort to charitable giving as a way to ease our consciences rather than really entering into mutually enriching relationships with people who are financially poor.” (p. 96)

28. If You Are Not With Me, You’re Against Me.

“Filmmaker Michael Moore appears to exercise the same kind of oversimplification for which he so brutally attacks Bush in his documentary film *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Moore asked Pete Townsend, British rock star of the The Who, for permission to use his anthem ‘Won’t Get Fooled Again’ as part of the soundtrack for *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Townsend refused because he felt Moore’s previous works demonstrated ‘bullying’ and lack of good critical engagement with key issues. In response Moore accused Townsend of being a war supporter. Townsend said Moore’s attitude seemed like the very terrorist credo he was criticizing in Bush: ‘If you’re not with me, you’re against me.’ (Jefferson Morley, “Michael Moore, Ugly American: Filmmake Taken to Task for Arrogance, Ignoring Israel,” *Washington Post*, July 13, 2004.)” (p. 100)

29. Be Careful What You Say.

“However, one of more troubling comments I heard from a group of majority world pastors who were giving me their frank perspective on American short-term trips was this: ‘You talk about us to your churches back home in such demeaning ways.’

“I pushed back. ‘Really?! You guys come off as heroes in the reports I hear. You would think your churches were near perfect from what most short-termers say about you.’

“They weren’t so sure. Our exaggerations about how nationals are so dependent upon these short-term teams, the long-term impact suggested by the work, the jokes about the weird foods given and the destitute conditions, and the exaggerated reports about what was accomplished often lead our brothers and sisters to feel demeaned.” (p. 106)

30. Culture Knowledge Is Largely Invisible.

“In talking about how to grow in our understanding of culture, it’s important to consider a definition of culture. anthropologists and sociologists have argued for years about how to define culture, but most agree that culture is the collective fundamental beliefs people hold about how things should be and how one should behave. It’s a way of looking at the values, attitudes, and beliefs shared by a common group of people. While such things as food, art, and literature give us visible expressions of culture, one of the greatest challenges that comes with gaining understanding about culture is that culture knowledge is largely invisible.” (p. 116)

31. Understand Rudimentary Dynamics and Differences.

“In order to truly nurture our knowledge CQ [understanding about cross-cultural issues and differences], however, we need to go beyond that. We need to look at a broader perspective of cultural understanding by exploring some key categories of cross-cultural difference. Keep in mind that knowledge CQ is not primarily about mastering the dos and don’ts of a particular culture. Instead it’s understanding some of the rudimentary dynamics and differences that exist between cultures.” (p. 118)

32. Dimensions to Understand and Measure Cultural Difference.

“As we think about nurturing our knowledge CQ, we’ll look at five different dimensions used to help understand and measure cultural difference--time, context, individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance.” (p. 118)

33. Americans Generally Have Difficulty Adjusting.

“Americans typically have lower success rates adjusting to other cultures compared to many other ethnic groups. There are a number of reasons for this. One of the primary contributing factors for our poor adaption cross-culturally comes from our individualistic orientation. We’re programmed to pursue our own interests and ‘do our own thing.’ So the very idea that doing something beyond what we can see might immediately benefit us personally is counterintuitive. Furthermore, despite our espoused desire to learn from others, it’s ingrained in us as Americans that we’re the leaders of the world. With that mind-set comes a set of assumptions that make it

more challenging to have a high level of motivation to truly adapt cross-culturally.”
p. (144-145)

34. Low in Individualism Adaptation Is Different.

“In contrast, cultures that score low in individualism approach cross-cultural adaptation much differently. They’re motivated most by what’s good for the whole group. For example, McDonald’s wasn’t successful in using its ‘Employee of the Month’ program in Nepal in the same way it uses it here. So in Nepal, McDonald’s rotates the award among teams of employees rather than singling out an individual. To award a single individual would not only be demotivating but would be humiliating for most Nepalese.” (p. 145)

35. Level of Interest in Connecting.

“Our level of interest in connecting with the culture as a whole will directly shape how well we do our work in subtle but profound ways.” (p. 145)

36. Honesty about What We Offer and Gain on Short-term Missions.

“As we pursue this kind of honest questioning and motivating, we begin to move away from the drive-by mission trip mind-set. Accurate perspective on what can happen within others and us is the kind of honesty our supporters deserve, not to mention our brothers and sisters in Christ in the majority world church. This kind of honesty about what we are and aren’t doing through short-term missions is an essential part of nurturing perseverance CQ. Over the long haul, we’ll stay motivated far longer and persevere through much more cultural dissonance when we become honest about what we have to offer and what we have to gain.” (p. 149)

37. Soaking in the Culture Is Key.

“The average short-term team won’t see how eating at McDonald’s could hinder their vacation Bible school program. Yet we need to see the subtle but profound connections between where we eat, where we stay, and how we interact and how we fulfill our mission tasks. Soak in the culture and set the tone for others traveling with you about the importance of doing so for your overall mission. Persevere through difficult interactions, try the foods and the language, continue the hard work of journaling, and seek to understand what’s really going on beneath the surface of what you see. If you’re leading a short-term mission trip, challenge your group members to soak in the culture as much as possible. Help them see how taking it all in can directly relate to fulfilling your mission--both your short-term mission and your lifelong calling to extend the redemptive mission of God.” (p. 150)

38. God's Bigger than Your Short-term Trip.

“Only God can use a group of twenty people holding Romanian babies to be part of what gives those babies a real-life experience with Jesus. In the words of Jonathan Edwards, at the end of the day, ‘God’s work of power and grace will not be thwarted by our great many errors and sin.’ (Jonathan Edwards, “Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol.1 (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1834), 380.)” (p. 168)