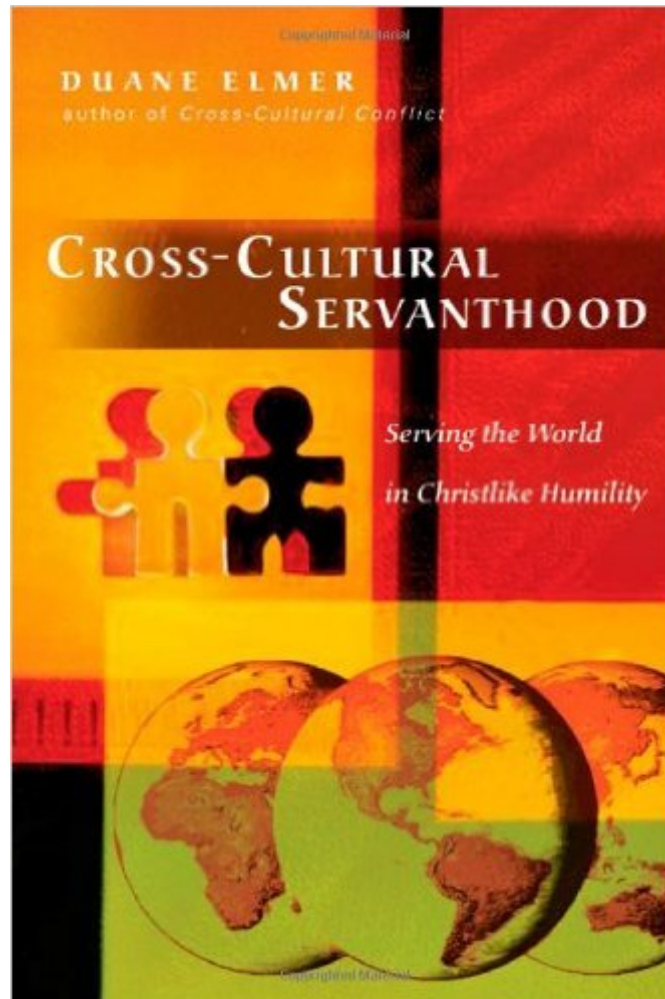


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# Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving The World In Christlike Humility



## Synopsis

Duane Elmer asked people around the world how they felt about Western missionaries. The response? "Missionaries could be more effective if they did not think they were better than us." The last thing we want to do in cross-cultural ministry is to offend people in other cultures. Unfortunately, all too often and even though we don't mean it, our actions communicate superiority, paternalism, imperialism and arrogance. Our best intentions become unintentional insults. How can we minister in ways that are received as true Christlike service? Cross-cultural specialist Duane Elmer gives Christians practical advice for serving other cultures with sensitivity and humility. With careful biblical exposition and keen cross-cultural awareness, he shows how our actions and attitudes often contradict and offend the local culture. He offers principles and guidance for avoiding misunderstandings and building relationships in ways that honor others. Here is culturally-savvy insight into how we can follow Jesus' steps to become global servants. Whether you're going on your first short-term mission trip or ministering overseas for extended periods, this useful guide is essential reading for anyone who wants to serve effectively in international settings with grace and sensitivity.

## Book Information

Paperback: 212 pages

Publisher: IVP Books; 2.6.2006 edition (April 8, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0830833781

ISBN-13: 978-0830833788

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (80 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #52,218 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 in [Books > Travel > Specialty Travel > Literary & Religious](#) #66 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Ministry & Evangelism > Missions & Missionary Work](#) #99 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Christology](#)

## Customer Reviews

Although the book is subdivided by several sections, there are really two concepts to this book: (1) See the image of God in others-- which encompasses the ideas of "welcoming others into our presence," "communicating respect for others," "building confidence in relationships," and "seeking information that changes you;" and (2) Show Christ to others-- which involves "posture of the

servant," "becoming like Christ to others," "biblical foundations for change" and "the servant and leadership/power." The section entitled, "Acceptance," basically suggests that Christians ought to see the image of God in others. Acceptance is "The ability to communicate value, worth and esteem to another person" (58). To illustrate the meaning of "acceptance," the author shares 1 Corinthians 8:13--"An accepting Christian values the other person so highly that he or she would rather sacrifice a personal preference, even a right, than risk losing the relationship or being a stumbling block to that person" (61). If a Christian believes that people are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), then there is "common grace" that is bestowed on all people. The author explains it in this way, "Acceptance of others is to proactively communicate respect and dignity to each human being based on the fact that each is an image-bearer of God" (75). In a similar way, acceptance of others as image bearers of God is found in Galatians 3:28--"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (NIV). One does not need to be a Christian in order to bear the image of God as illustrated in this passage: "Yes, you must execute anyone who murders another person, for to kill a person is to kill a living being made in God's image" (Genesis 9:6).

In *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, Duane Elmer tells the parable of a monkey who sees a fish swimming against the current of a stream (pp. 27-28). Assuming the fish is struggling to survive, the monkey plucks the fish out of the stream and places it on dry ground. At first, the fish flops around--excited to have been saved, the monkey thinks. When the fish stops moving, the monkey feels satisfied, believing the fish is resting contentedly. Of course, the fish is dead. In cross-cultural exchanges, we intend to serve others, but our efforts may be perceived as exercises of arrogant power. The remedy is Christlike humility. "Humility is mandated," Elmer writes, "but"--and this exception is crucial--"its expression is culturally defined" (p. 33). We must both intend to be humble, in other words, and act in ways that people from other cultures perceive as humble. How do we do this? *Cross-Cultural Servanthood* examines "the process of becoming a cross-cultural servant" (p. 19). Elmer outlines this process with six steps: 1. Openness: "the ability to welcome people into your presence and make them feel safe" (p. 39, emphasis in original). 2. Acceptance: "the ability to communicate value, worth and esteem to another person" (p. 58). 3. Trust: "the ability to build confidence in a relationship so that both parties believe the other will not intentionally hurt them but will act in their best interest" (p. 77). 4. Learning: "the ability to glean relevant information about, from and with other people" (p. 93). 5. Understanding: "the ability to see patterns of behavior and values that reveal the integrity of a people" (p. 125). 6.

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