**Suggested Topics and Cultural Activities List**

When it comes to understanding of one’s cross-cultural context, I often adopt a posture of what Texans from the U.S.A. might say: “I don’t know what I don’t know, so, tell me what I need to know.” A person could also adopt an approach, which would lead to neither understanding nor teachability: “I don’t know what I don’t know, but I presume to know.” Ethnographic questions are fostered by the former, not the latter, and are on the menu to discuss with your various contacts from the beginning of your time in country. The following list will help stimulate some of the types of conversations one needs to have in order to minister effectively.

**TOPICS**

Every culture possesses a fascinating array of traditions, customs, practices, and beliefs. Each week, make a plan to attempt one or a few items to gain more understanding. Each item in this list could inspire a unique story of cultural grid and understanding. Cross-cultural understanding can be sought through some of these vehicles. Ask questions on these topics in neutral ways, while showing respect. It is important that we seek to understand what a given culture highly values, in order to more effectively communicate God’s ways to their hearts in meaningful ways.

(Ask neutral questions using “how?” “what?,” and “I want to learn about.” Avoid “why?” questions)

* Calendar
* Personal names
* Greetings
* Gestures
* Etiquette
* Mealtimes
* Athletic sports
* Games
* Leisure activities
* Music
* Dancing
* Feasting
* Bodily adornment
* Folklore
* Superstitions
* Cooking
* Food and Food taboos
* Family
* Marriage
* Kin-groups
* Housing
* Hospitality
* Visiting
* Gift-giving
* Friendship customs
* Courting
* Joking
* Sexual restrictions
* Modesty in natural functions
* Funeral rites
* Mourning
* Medicine
* Education
* Law
* Land-use policies
* Attitude toward animals
* Community organization
* Residence rules
* Property rights
* Status differentiation
* Racial and ethnic groups
* Mobility
* Trade
* Government
* Patriotism
* Religious practices and beliefs
* Spiritual leaders, spiritual people
* Aspirations for future
* Values
* Taboo topics
* Mental Illness
* Demonic possession
* High places for worship
* Graveyards
* What to avoid
* Authority in family structure
* Friendships
* Trust issues
* Conflict resolution
* Power centers
* Who arranges ceremonies?
* Community structures
* Judicial system

**ACTIVITIES:**

The following list provides practical activities for learning more about the general topics listed above. New personnel are encouraged to observe or participate in these activities during their first year in Indonesia. Talk over your experiences with Indonesian friends and/or with other expatriates.

* 7-month pregnancy ceremony
* Exchange of rings ceremony
* 40-day infant ceremony
* Wedding
* Circumcision
* Tooth-filing
* Funeral
* *Lebaran* (Ramadan)
* Watch Idul Adha activities
* *Arisan* (women)
* Participate in 17 *Agustus* (Independence Day) activities
* Visit a village or small town (with a neighbor)
* Interview a neighbor
* Join a sports team; badminton, soccer, basketball, volleyball
* Visit the longest standing palace remains of former Kingdom rulers
* Visit local library, visit school library
* Visit the well-known sites in your city
* Visit the High Places and intercede over (places where people go to gain spiritual power in Folk Islam)
* Visit a park
* Find someplace in your city that you think is beautiful and refreshing.
* Visit a museum.
* Picnic on a mountain or at the beach.
* Do a simple ethnography of your neighborhood. (Where are the residents from? What people group? What is their economic level? What are their daily patterns? How many families live in one dwelling? Who is the leader of the family? Do both parents work? Kids to school?