

Cultural Study

Our culture is our life. It is who we are. As a truly caring cross-cultural missionary you will want to learn all you can about the countries and cultures of your new international friends. The more you know and understand, the closer you will come to their hearts and beliefs. Here are many questions that you can ask. They are placed in the setting of more possibilities for spending time together. Use some of these to gather information to write at least a two-page cultural report. Include the name of the people group, their country and basic population information for the group both in their country and where they have migrated (for helps see joshuaproject.net and peoplegroups.info).

You can also look online and in libraries for further information. The *World Factbook* provides information on the history, people, government, economy, geography, communications, transportation, military, and transnational issues for 267 world entities. (cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/)

1) Eat Together

You might ask your new friend if you can take him or her out to eat at a restaurant that serves food from his or her country. As you order, tell your friend about any particular way you eat (if you are vegetarian, don't eat pork, or can't handle spicy food). This will help for a future time when you might cook together and eat at your friend's house or yours. It will help you all to know how to make food in a way that accommodates each other in advance. If your friend likes to cook, ask to be taught how to make a culturally important recipe like flat bread, a rice dish, or a favorite dessert.

You might ask questions like:

- What kind of food do people typically eat in your home country?
- What is your favorite food from your home country?
- Back home do people usually use a spoon and fork or some other kind of utensil?
- Who eats together and who does not eat together?

List ideas for additional food-related questions that you could ask your new friends:

2) Spend Time in a Park

Plan a time to get together in the park with your new international friend and his or her family or friends. You might ask your friend to teach you some games from the country your friend came from. You can also share some games that you know.

Enjoy the beauty of nature together, gathering leaves, observing birds, etc. Compare typical trees, flowers, animals in your region and your friend's homeland. You could also bring food for a picnic.

You might ask questions like:

- What kind of sports and games are popular with the young people in your home country?
- What do you like to do when you have some free time?
- Please tell me about some of the most beautiful places in your home country.

List additional games and nature-related questions that you could ask your new friend or list ideas that you could share about games and nature from your country:

3) Share Holiday Celebrations

Many new arrivals are eager to understand and participate in local holidays. Invite your international friends to join you in your celebrations. Through the things you do together and other things you observe and talk about, you can teach about your culture and values, pointing out both good and bad things. Pray for opportunities to emphasize family, moral, and spiritual values that are important to you and that will draw them closer to God. Think about what you could do to build friendships and talk about important values on the various holidays throughout the year.

Ask your new friend if he will soon celebrate any of his home country's holidays. Ask if it would be okay for you to join and observe. Learn something about the holiday in advance so you can know how to ask good questions. This may also help you avoid some spiritual activity on the holiday that would conflict with the Bible and your convictions.

You might ask questions like:

- What holiday in your home country do you especially enjoy? Why?

- What did you enjoy about our holiday celebration?
- What things did we do that you want to understand more about?

What holidays or commemorations are coming up in the next few months? List ideas of how you could use these holidays to build a positive friendship with someone of another culture:

4) Learn More About Their Country and Culture

Ask your new friend to teach you about her culture. You might find books about her country that will help you and her know what to talk about. Learn about the way they dress, eat, live, and work. You could ask her to speak in her language and to show you what it looks like when written. Try to learn some of the basics of her language, both spoken and written. You might want to see if she could share some music from her country as well. Perhaps she even has a national costume and headdress she could show you. Look up the meaning behind your new friend's country's flag. Many people have strong connection to their flag and the significance of the colors and design. Ask to see pictures of family and culture from their home country.

Here are some other questions you might ask about country and culture:

- What do people in your home country do when they greet each other (shake hands, kiss, raise their hands together, palm to palm, etc.)?
- How do you show hospitality when someone visits your home` and what do you do when you visit someone else's home?
- When do people typically give gifts in your home country and what do they give?
- In their home country what are the major natural resources, kinds of foods, and exports?
- What is the general education level and what are the main jobs in their country?
- What are the most respected careers in your home culture and what careers are looked down on?
- What are some significant things that happened in your people's history?
- What happens in a marriage ceremony in your home country?
- What are the major diseases and health challenges back in your home country?
- What cultural differences have you noticed between your home country and here?

Are there any cultural “rules” that your friend may need to know about your country in comparison to his or her culture? What are these practices and what should your friend understand about them?

5) Learn More About Their Present Community and Needs

1. For your people who have come to this country, what are the greatest needs?
2. Who do you know that’s meeting those needs?
3. If you could help your community in anyway, what kind of help or program would you want to do?
