



Bridge-Building beyond Youth Mission Trips: Transformation through Intercultural Youth Groups Reading the Bible Together

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OPEN TO THE OTHER

Catch only what you've thrown yourself,
all is mere skill and little gain;
but when you're suddenly the catcher of a ball
thrown by an eternal partner
with accurate and measured swing
towards you, to your center, in an arch
from the great bridgebuilding of God:

An important element in reading a text from a different time and culture is the requirement that readers do what they can to transcend their presuppositions, as far as possible. Reading a text with readers from other contemporary cultures can help put our own presuppositions in a clearer light. This means a better opening to the text, and to those with whom we read it.

why catching then becomes a power—
not your, a world's.
—Rainer Maria Rilke¹

A Norwegian, a Malagasy, and a Thai youth group walked into a church conference center in Madagascar. While this might sound like a twist on a conventional joke, this actually happened in 2014.² Three youth groups from very diverse contexts gathered together in Antananarivo after a year of Bible studies done in their own groups locally. Throughout the year, the groups shared notes back and forth across the world through email. In his analysis of the intercultural experience, Knut Holter states that the results were in alignment with recent research by Taggart Wolverton, who identifies the potential for three-dimensional transformation: “learning to read the *Bible* differently,” “learning to see *others* differently,” and “learning to see *oneself* differently.”³

This recent model of intercultural dialogue⁴ presents a way to facilitate transformation for young adults⁵ that is possible when one opens up to the Other—the Other of the biblical text as well as the Other of the people from a different context. This model is a constructive way to deal with some of the (many) challenges inherent to youth ministry:

This recent model of intercultural dialogue⁶ presents a way to facilitate transformation for young adults⁷ that is possible when one opens up to the Other—the Other of the biblical text as well as the Other of the people from a different context.

- In a world that is increasingly polarized, how can we—ministers of the gospel—help youth to be open beyond entrenched positions?

¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), 5. Rilke as translated in Gadamer.

² Knut Holter, “Norwegian, Malagasy and Thai Youths Reading Luke 15 Together,” in *A Critical Study of Classical Religious Texts in Global Contexts: Challenges of a Changing World*, ed. Beth E. Elness-Hanson and Jon Skarpeid (New York: Peter Lang, 2019), 141; Knut Holter, Intercultural Bible Reading Project Interview, June 15, 2021. The project was partly funded by the Church of Norway’s Catechumenal Program.

³ Taggart E. Wolverton, “An Intimate Revelation: Reading Luke 15:11–32 with Adolescents,” in *Bible and Transformation: The Promise of Intercultural Bible Reading*, ed. Hans de Wit and Janet Dyk (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 416–26. See the rich discussions on the definitions and research on transformation in six articles in *Bible and Transformation*, 1–129.

⁴ Hans de Wit et al., eds., *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2005).

⁵ See Wolverton, “An Intimate Revelation.”

⁶ Hans de Wit et al., eds., *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2005).

⁷ See Wolverton, “An Intimate Revelation.”

- How can we nurture our impressionable youth to consider biblical and prophetic perspectives that are dismissed by the dominant culture?⁸
- How can we facilitate transformation that deepens faith and nurtures discipleship in Christ?

This article examines how *intercultural Bible reading* (IBR) can open us up to the Other, which can kindle transformation. As a young adult is drawn into an intentionally curated community with increased safety, interpretations from different Christian contexts—such as these organized encounters—can facilitate a more complex and deeper reflection that supports transformation. This model is based on the hermeneutical philosophy of Paul Ricoeur and the writings of Emmanuel Levinas in relation to the “Other”—very briefly overviewed here—which are integrated with the practical application models of Holter, Wolverton,⁹ and others.¹⁰ Then, with a gracious and limited critique of some models of youth “mission trips,” I illustrate this framework for reenvisioning youth “mission” experiences with a focus on “bridge-building,” or intercultural dialogue as youth read the Bible together.¹¹

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INTERCULTURAL READING

Seeing the face of the Other is explicated in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, who describes the reality that we understand the world on the basis of the Other.¹² Levinas writes (when masculine pronouns were standard but with inclusive meaning):

To approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it. It is therefore to *receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity. But it also means: to be taught.¹³

Thus, aligning with Levinas, as we open ourselves to be confronted by Otherness, we have the privilege of deepening our understandings—not just of the Other but also of ourselves.

⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination: 40th Anniversary Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018), 1. Brueggemann writes, “The contemporary American church is so largely enculturated to the American ethos of consumerism that it has little power to believe or to act.”

⁹ Taggart E. Wolverton, *An Intimate Revelation: Intercultural Bible Reading with Adolescents* (New York: Peter Lang, 2019).

¹⁰ See de Wit et al., *Through the Eyes of Another*; de Wit and Dyk, *Bible and Transformation*.

¹¹ I prefer facilitating intergenerational groups for intercultural encounters. Yet, this examination focuses on reenvisioning the predominant youth group “mission trip” model.

¹² Bettina Bergo, “Emmanuel Levinas,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2017 ed., <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/levinas/>.

¹³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 51.

Paul Ricoeur builds upon Levinas's thought¹⁴ related to the interaction between the text and the reader, when the text constructs a world that is entered and in which one can imaginatively live.¹⁵ Jonathan Draper summarizes Ricoeur, stating that through this experience of opening oneself to the text and providing a "moment of autonomy for the text" over against the reader, "we may be transformed by the experience of an-*other*."¹⁶

THREE-DIMENSIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Recent research in IBR by Taggart Wolverton identifies the potential for three-dimensional transformation: "learning to read the *Bible* differently," "learning to see *others* differently," and "learning to see *oneself* differently."¹⁷

LEARNING TO READ THE BIBLE DIFFERENTLY

"Learning to read the *Bible* differently" starts with an authentic dialogue with the text, but this aspect continues to deepen through intercultural encounters, such as described by Mark Allan Powell. Through teaching the Luke 15 "prodigal son" text in seminaries in the United States; in St. Petersburg, Russia; and in Tanzania, Powell identified that people from different social locations saw different things within the biblical text.¹⁸ When Powell asked his students in each location, "Why did the young man end up hungry and feeding pigs?" over 90 percent of the students in the US identified the reason as that "he squandered his money." Powell states that this is the answer he expected to be predominant in the American context. From a Western consumer and materialistic context, indeed it is what I thought of as well. Powell continues that in St. Petersburg, about 80 percent identified the famine as the reason—which none of the Americans identified—yet the "severe famine" is clearly stated in the text. No doubt the terrible famine in St. Petersburg during the war in the 1940s, in which 600,000—or one out of every four—people died, highlighted these words in the text for them. Finally, in Tanzania, about 80 percent of the students responded according to the phrase in Luke 15, because "no one gave him anything" to eat. The Tanzanians were shocked by such an inhospitable country without the honor to care for an immigrant in their midst. This is a powerful example of how different people from different social locations see different

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 189.

¹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 98–102.

¹⁶ Jonathan A. Draper, "African Contextual Hermeneutics: Readers, Reading Communities, and Their Options between Text and Context," *Religion & Theology* 22, no. 1–2 (2015): 9–10; See also Jonathan A. Draper, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 43–44.

¹⁷ Wolverton, "An Intimate Revelation," 416–26. See also de Wit and Dyk, *Bible and Transformation*, 1–129.

¹⁸ Mark Allan Powell, "The Subjective Part of Biblical Interpretation," Seedbed, <https://www.seedbed.com/the-subjective-part-of-biblical-interpretation/>.

aspects within the text. So when we look at the Scriptures through the eyes of another, we can have a fuller understanding of the biblical message.

Not only did Hans de Wit facilitate a model of experiencing an-Other through examining a text, but he also added the dimension of intercultural dialogue with “ordinary readers” centered on reading biblical texts together.¹⁹ De Wit and a group of researchers organized a Bible-reading project with more than 120 groups from around the world. All the groups had local Bible studies on the John 4 “woman at the well” text. Then they shared their notes with a dramatically different group and, finally, responded to the reflections from the other group about their original comments. Then the researchers critically examined what can be learned from this model. Several researchers continue to engage this model and even to examine the transformational outcomes through empirical analysis.²⁰ Through this research, de Wit states that transformation cannot be programmed, because in a process where there is an authentic dialogue partner, the outcome is uncertain.²¹ However, de Wit writes, “Because of the material gathered and research, the impressive examples of the effect of otherness . . . I am convinced it is a promise and not a pretense.”²² Similarly, Louis Jonker summarizes his empirical study with eight distinct cultural groups in the Western Cape of South Africa: “The project confirmed clearly that the tool of intercultural Bible reading has transformative power.”²³ Jonker also states that *interculturality* is a strategy “to overcome ‘othering,’” which is a good segue to the next part.

LEARNING TO SEE *OTHERS* DIFFERENTLY

For the second aspect, “learning to see *others* differently,” Jonker’s empirical research of IBR among the eight distinct cultural groups in South Africa—such as Xhosa, White Afrikaans, and Colored Afrikaans—demonstrates encouraging outcomes. He writes that prior to the intercultural exposure, there were participants who stated, “The apartheid past still causes division” and “Cultural differences cause division [in society].”²⁴ Indeed, the majority of the statements were negative. However, after the cultural exchanges, there was “appreciation and respect for ‘the other,’” while differences were still acknowledged.²⁵ Jonker identifies that the responses were overwhelmingly positive to two core questions related to “attitude” and “changes of knowledge and insight.” With regard to attitude, responses included “Our appreciation for them increased” and “We got to realize the

¹⁹ Hans de Wit, “Through the Eyes of Another: Objectives and Backgrounds,” in de Wit et al., *Through the Eyes of Another*, 5–6, 46.

²⁰ See de Wit and Dyk, *Bible and Transformation*.

²¹ Hans de Wit, “Bible and Transformation: The Many Faces of Transformation,” in *Bible and Transformation*, 66.

²² de Wit, 70.

²³ Louis Jonker, “On Becoming a Family in South Africa: Intercultural Bible Reading as Transformative Power in Society (Luke 11:1–13),” in de Wit and Dyk, *Bible and Transformation*, 411.

²⁴ Jonker, 399–400.

²⁵ Jonker, 404.

similarities between us.”²⁶ Related to changes of knowledge and insight, descriptions included “Our biases disappeared” and “We discovered our shared (spiritual) needs.” Jonker summarizes:

These positive responses contrast dramatically with the negative understanding of the South African nation in terms of “family” and “hospitality” observed before the intercultural exposure. Although the project included only a single intercultural Bible reading meeting, one may state with confidence from the data presented above that significant transformation took place in all groups, as well as in the individual group members, in their openness toward and understanding of “the other.”²⁷

Another dramatic example of the possibilities of transformation by “learning to see *others* differently” is described in Janneke Stegeman’s research. Stegeman facilitated dialogues between various groups in Israel and Palestine. One group of Palestinian Christians and Israeli Jews met and discussed Jeremiah 32, a complicated text that centers on land in a distressed situation.²⁸ In this context with centuries of violent conflict and current tensions, some difficult conversations developed from the Jeremiah text related to current land and power issues. Amazingly, Stegeman writes, “At the end of the meeting, all agree that it was good to meet,” and she quotes one participant who stated, “It made me realize we can be together.”²⁹

Understandably, I do not recommend that you plan your first intercultural encounters between groups that have such deep-seated histories of injustice, like Jonker and Stegeman did. However, these accounts are exemplars that demonstrate that IBR facilitates transformation through “learning to see *others* differently.”

LEARNING TO SEE *ONESELF* DIFFERENTLY

In the third aspect of transformation, “learning to see *oneself* differently,” Holter describes that in the dominant secular Norwegian culture, one gracious way to invite Lutheran youth into deeper reflection on biblical texts is to engage in intercultural dialogue. Holter writes that in contextual readings, “‘ordinary’ readers often lack a critical distance to the encounter between text and context. As such, they may need an interpretive corrective that can help them grasp their own contextuality.”³⁰ As an example, Holter identified that the Norwegian group tended to psychologize their interpretation of the relationships in the parable of the prodigal son, which was specifically discussed in a response from a Malagasy

²⁶ Jonker, 405.

²⁷ Jonker, 407.

²⁸ Janneke Stegeman, “Decolonizing Jeremiah: Identity, Narratives and Power in Religious Tradition” (PhD dissertation, Vrije Universiteit, 2014), 17–19.

²⁹ Stegeman, 240.

³⁰ Holter, “Norwegian, Malagasy and Thai Youths,” 143.

perspective.³¹ The Norwegians were invited by the Malagasy into a dialogue on their method of interpretation. In dialogue, one is invited to open to the other and listen in a way that seeks to understand. In this way, the dialogue with the other can develop into a metaphorical mirror, where one can begin to reflect upon different perspectives in relation to one's own. Holter summarizes, "In this project, such a corrective was brought up by the introduction of a socially and culturally 'other' reader of the Bible, an 'other' who serves both as a window to alternative interpretations and as a mirror of one's own contextuality."³²

With an overview of Wolverton's three aspects of transformation—learning to read the *Bible* differently, learning to see *others* differently, and learning to see *oneself* differently—this exploration now turns to describing the model, first in contrast to short-term mission (STM).

GRACIOUS CRITIQUE OF SHORT-TERM MISSION TRIPS

Short-term mission trips are the best and the worst things we do in North American youth ministry.

—Mark Oestreicher³³

As one who has facilitated seven short-term mission (STM) experiences and a couple of college-level study-abroad groups, I am generally a strong advocate of STM—when done well. However, there are good, bad, and ugly models—a fact that has stimulated a significant corpus of books to deal with the issues. I was able to engage many best practices of STM, even having our leadership group self-critique and redevelop our plans according to the "U.S. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission."³⁴ Our leadership team was intentional in linking our mission travels with the church's mission statement we all said together at the sending of each Sunday's service, in order to make it an extension of our local ministry.

However, there still was the constant challenge of "deconstructing" mission stereotypes and unconscious patronizing that can occur within Western contexts. Over the two to three years of preparation, I intentionally began with "mission" language that was designed to have those looking for a glorified adventure self-select and opt out. Then, over the next two to three years of preparation, I would reframe "mission" language into "pilgrimage" language and spiritual practices.

³¹ Holter, 147.

³² Holter, 143.

³³ Mark Oestreicher et al., *5 Views on Youth Ministry Short-Term Missions: Are Your Trips Helping or Hurting?* (San Diego: The Youth Cartel, 2020), 5.

³⁴ Roger P. Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary Non-Professional Missionaries* (Minneapolis: STEM Press, 2008), 277–79; Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds., *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013), 756. My church-based STMs included returning to the place where I served as a missionary, so I knew the culture, with repeated visits with several repeated participants; responding to a direct invitation and collaborating with long-term friends who were local leaders; gathering an intergenerational group with a minimum of two years of preparation; and drawing upon my college missiology training.

When people asked, “What are you going to build?” our response was, “Relationships!” Our leadership team wanted to avoid horror stories like what Oestreicher describes when other groups joined his team:

Most of the other groups were there for what I could only call “ministry tourism.” They were there to do a tiny bit of work for the poor and wretched people (please read that with sarcasm) of the village we visited, and to feel better about themselves in the process. Evening debriefs were full of sympathy-tears and pity-projections, but I knew those high schoolers were going home unchanged, and that we’d actually done damage—in the colonialism sense—to the beautiful brothers and sisters we were theoretically serving.³⁵

Fortunately, the remaining almost twenty-five STM experiences that Oestreicher facilitated were different than that “worst trip ever,” as he engaged deeper thinking. While your connections with STM might not be as weak, consider a bit of self-reflection on “Three Factors Contributing to STMs ‘Done Poorly,’” as identified by Roger Peterson:³⁶

1. Failing to recognize, understand and connect with the *missio Dei* or God’s already-at-work global purpose. . . . While such compassion is a noble thing, too often STMers become over-impressed with what they have to offer and what they can accomplish on their own. . . .
2. Planning and acting independently of the seasoned time-tested mission agencies and national/local churches. . . . Without connecting in significant ways with existing missions and churches, [STM groups] sometimes return home without even realizing that they may have been burdensome or sometimes even harmful in sensitive situations. . . .
3. Using STMs primarily as experiences to further personal discipleship. . . . If the stated or unstated goal is to disciple believers instead of helping to disciple the nations, what could have been significant moments in the *missio Dei* turn out to be more of a “*missio me*.”

With Peterson’s writings and the small library of other STM resources—some even engaging social science research to evaluate outcomes—the models and outcomes have strengthened. Thus, I still believe they can be a strategic ministry opportunity.

However, the stereotype of mission and many of the subconscious pre-understandings that are inherent in STM are not typically part of an IBR exchange,

³⁵ Oestreicher, *5 Views on Youth Ministry Short-Term Missions*, 7.

³⁶ Roger Peterson, “*Missio Dei* or ‘*Missio Me*’?: Using Short-Term Mission to Contribute toward the Fulfillment of God’s Global Purpose,” in Winter and Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 753–54.

because in IBR, the dialogue is engaged between *equal*³⁷ partners.³⁸ No doubt there are still presuppositions to unpack and reformulate, but it is typically easier to develop a new framework than to deconstruct an entrenched paradigm and rebuild. Following is an overview of a typical framework.

INTERCULTURAL BIBLE READING WITH MAJORITY WORLD TRAVEL

One wonderful aspect of being part of the Christian family is that we have siblings around the Majority World for dialogue partners and who can facilitate the international travel portion.³⁹ Fortunately, English is the medium for at least secondary school in many locations, so there are partners who would not present major language barrier issues. With the rise of the internet, video chat, and email, inexpensive ways to communicate can be leveraged for creating coordinated encounters for IBR.

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As a paradigm shift from STM, launching this model will require clarifications among stakeholders. After the administrative foundation is set, an informational meeting for the youth with their families shapes the expectations of the yearlong journey. An application process will identify the necessary well-being and flexibility needed for international travel. Each participant needs to commit to a monthly three-hour meeting and one pre-travel weekend retreat as well as one post-travel retreat for reflection. Each meeting includes the following:

1. community building
2. travel logistics (passport, vaccinations, visa, liability release forms . . .)
3. cultural information, with two parts:
 - a. developing intercultural competencies (openness to the Other, practicing simplified and non-idiomatic English . . .)

³⁷ It is important to identify that not all groups are equal in the opportunity to travel. So, a conversation with those who have the privilege to travel is important to discuss equality as dialogue partners, in order to mitigate any potential unconscious bias of superiority. Perhaps some external grant matching funds can support reciprocity and bring international partners back to your home congregation. Furthermore, careful collaboration with the leadership in the other context is important to nurture equality among the leadership.

³⁸ Danie C. van Zyl, "Toward Transformation: Factors in Transformative Reading," in de Wit and Dyk, *Bible and Transformation*.

³⁹ Obviously, IBR can be done locally or regionally by engaging a nearby church that has a predominantly different ethnic background. In fact, a local dialogue can be a wonderful way to build local community or equip youth for international travel, where you will encounter a very different dominant culture than in North America. Local IBR also is more environmentally friendly, and groups nearby can more easily foster long-term relationships.

- b. learning about the host country and people (history, worldview reflections, food, celebrations, beginning language learning . . .)
- 4. faith formation (Bible study, sharing of faith stories, worship, and prayer)

The faith formation is coordinated to include the IBR portion. I suggest for the first six months, you engage all four aspects, focusing on developing community with intercultural competencies.⁴⁰ Consider David Livermore’s book *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*.⁴¹ For the second half of the preparation year, engage the Bible reading and intercultural dialogues. One practical reason for this sequence is that it is harder to sustain the energy if there are several months between the encounters.⁴²

The Bible text for the IBR is jointly chosen with the leadership of your international partner,⁴³ such that it provides connection points for adolescents.⁴⁴ Here is a basic model for the last half of the year:⁴⁵

- Five months before travel: Each group writes up self-introductions about the full group and their context (applying Livermore’s cultural intelligence tips). Perhaps short videos are presented about the group in general, depending on the internet resources of your Majority World partner.
- Four months prior: The first Bible study and discussion is done within each one’s group. While the exact method of how you do your Bible study should be collaboratively developed with your partner, Arie Moolenaar identifies that a typical process can include asking participants to concentrate on three aspects: “the story and their own life experience, understanding the text, and identification with the text.”⁴⁶ Notes are taken, written up (perhaps put in simplified English), and then shared with the receiving group via email.
- Three months prior: The notes from the intercultural partners are discussed in a spirit of seeking to understand. The reflections are written up and shared with the partners via email.
- Two months prior: The reflections from the partners about your group’s comments are read and discussed. Holter comments, “The third reflection is particularly important, as the groups here were challenged to try

⁴⁰ Wolverton, *An Intimate Revelation*, 146–47. Most aspects can be engaged by the international partner, though if there is not reciprocal travel, then the travel logistics are not needed.

⁴¹ David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012).

⁴² van Zyl, “Toward Transformation,” 126.

⁴³ van Zyl, 126.

⁴⁴ Wolverton, *An Intimate Revelation*, 197.

⁴⁵ This basic model needs to be collaboratively revised with your international partner. Yet, each partner takes responsibility for the preparation of their youth participants.

⁴⁶ Arie Moolenaar, “Listening with the Heart: The Reading Experience of the Dutch Groups,” in de Wit et al., *Through the Eyes of Another*, 100.

to understand how the other [group] had understood their first, contextually informed reading of the text.⁴⁷

- One month prior: Your group reflects on all the previous comments and writes up questions that they might want to ask in order to seek to understand when the dialogue happens. This can also be a time for the youth to write up individual introductions of themselves to share in order to begin to get to know the individuals in the other group. There is also an opportunity to bring in a Bible teacher or pastor to deepen understanding of the text—beyond the “ordinary reader” level—for more exegetical analysis. This month is meant to include a bit of a catch-up if a previous session was not completed.
- Travel! While information was shared back and forth, now the face-to-face encounters happen over several days. The Norwegian, Thai, and Malagasy group-building started with playing paintball in mixed teams. After the ice-breakers, the Bible study discussion and reflection takes place. Here is where some prepared questions can facilitate the interactions. Small integrated groups can discuss them and share insights in the larger group. Creative engagement of the Bible text could invite different groups to write a song, prepare a short play, paint pictures, and prepare a worship time together—based on what the group learned from discussing the text together. A final session includes time of quiet reflection, with each person writing on three questions: How did I learn to read the Bible differently? How did I learn to see others differently? How did I learn to see myself differently? The responses can be told in small groups to allow more time for personal sharing, and then each one can make a shorter contribution to the large-group sharing.⁴⁸

The final retreat back home reflects upon these three questions again, after more time to incubate the depth of the experience.⁴⁹

CONCLUSION: AN INTERCULTURAL BRIDGE TOWARD TRANSFORMATION

Finally, I have two reflections on the three transformation aspects: to read the Bible differently, to see others differently, and to see myself differently.

First, these transformation questions are distinct from the goals of some less-holistic STM models, where one expects to help and serve someone who is in need. While I do not want to disparage helping and serving, not all STMs—much

⁴⁷ Holter, “Norwegian, Malagasy and Thai Youths,” 142.

⁴⁸ I always encourage the participants to write a 30-second summary of their experience on the airplane going back, as most people back home have the patience to listen to a short summary, so it is helpful to have a thoughtfully prepared overview. These three questions could be points within that synopsis. Then, if they ask a question about something shared, you have been invited into a fuller conversation.

⁴⁹ Remember, the relationships can continue through email or chat, especially at holidays or anniversaries of the previous conversations!

less adolescents—are equipped to engage in these actions with the critical distance to do it constructively or without unintended consequences due to a lack of adequate understanding of the culture.⁵⁰ Instead, in IBR, one comes as an *equal* dialogue partner, which opens one up to the Other and to learning from the Other. Not only does this avoid colonial mentalities, but it is part of the attitude that facilitates being anticolonial and antiracist.⁵¹ Instead of reinforcing a dichotomy of givers and receivers, IBR establishes gracious space for mutuality and learning from each other.

Second, these transformative questions address the three (of many) challenges of ministry identified at the beginning:

- helping young adults to be open beyond entrenched polarized positions—especially through seeing *others* differently;
- considering biblical and prophetic perspectives beyond the dominant culture—through learning to read the *Bible* differently and seeing *oneself* differently through the mirror of another culture with reflections upon their own values; and
- deepening faith that nurtures discipleship in Christ—through all three aspects, but especially seeing the lifelong potential for reading the *Bible* differently with others.

These three challenges are engaged through IBR. Furthermore, empirical analysis indicates that the Holy Spirit enacts transformation through the gracious space of these organized intercultural encounters.

Thus, reframing the STM model from givers and receivers toward intercultural bridge-building through dialogue among equal partners is a fruitful option that equips youth for a life of engaging the Other—both the Bible and a dialogue partner. ⊕

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⁵⁰ Steve Corbett, Brian Fikkert, and Katie Casselberry, *Helping without Hurting in Short-Term Missions: Leader's Guide* (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 5.

⁵¹ “An antiracist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups.” Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019), 18.