



A Model of Biculturalism

PREFACE In this unit, I share with you a set of ideas I have come to believe over the years help shape more effective models of leadership and ministry for people who are bicultural and on a journey of acculturation like myself, a third-generation (Sansei) Japanese American. While they are not based on experimental research, the ideas originated in the early 1970's when Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC) was in a process of reorganizing so that ethnic minorities might be better reached through its various ministries. These ideas came together in the form of a model of biculturalism which provided a rationale for designing the structure and strategy of what became Intercultural Ministries, the umbrella under which CCC established national ministries for Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans.

This model only served the needs of CCC and was without broad basis until I attended the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary and was able to develop it further. Acculturation studies and acculturation theory became the focus of my studies. I also taught a field-based culture learning and contextualization course while at Fuller, offering my evolving theoretical model of biculturalism to my students as the basis for developing their ministry proposals in light of the bicultural audiences assigned to them.

Following my studies at Fuller, I joined the staff of the Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society (JEMS) to serve, among other things, as the first director of Asian American Christian Fellowship, their campus ministry. The model provided foundation for this bicultural ministry as well. I was also asked by JEMS to share this model for several years with Japanese Americans preparing to go to Japan on short term mission assignments as a way of helping them anticipate the extent to which they would and would not be able to identify and relate with those in Japan.

And, more recently this model of biculturalism has provided the rationale upon which all we have done through the ministry of Iwa is based. Though it has undergirded our ministry all this time, I did not share the content of this model to any great extent until April of 1998. I was asked to speak specifically on acculturation and its impact on ministry as the plenary speaker at the annual week-long retreat for Japanese American Presbyterian pastors at Lake Tahoe, previously known as the Ministers' Cultural Seminar. In preparation for the pastors' retreat, I brought the model up to date. The response I received to my presentation was overwhelmingly positive, and has fueled my motivation to do just what I am doing now, writing down on paper what has been largely an interactive exercise requiring my personal facilitation so it can be shared more widely and developed even further.