



**Establishing the Kingdom of God
in the Kingdom of Cambodia**

CAMBODIA

O U T R E A C H

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Cultural Considerations for Ministering in Cambodia

- 1. We are guests in Cambodia and you are our guests.**
We must honor the Cambodian culture as much as we can. Their priorities are "Nation, Religion, King", so don't criticize any of these. Please protect our reputation in Cambodia. Don't criticize what you don't like or are not accustomed to. Keep your opinions to yourself in public and when with your translators. Don't do anything to bring shame or reproach to Jesus Christ or our ministry in Cambodia.
- 2. Be careful about drawing attention to yourself.**
Don't do loud, attention-drawing street evangelism without talking to a leader at the Church first.
- 3. Give honor to the old and don't pat someone older than you on the head.**
- 4. Watch what you eat.** Be careful eating from the street vendors as the food is often not sanitary.
- 5. Don't make someone lose face by displaying anger at someone in public.** This is a serious issue in Cambodia and can often create life-long grudges and even revenge.
- 6. Just because someone smiles and nods, it doesn't necessarily mean they understand you.** Try to use simple concepts and simple language when communicating. If you want to make sure someone understands, ask them to explain to you what you've been telling them. Try to take all idioms and technical words out of your conversation.
- 7. Regarding helping others,** be careful about making any promises to help someone after you've returned to your country. I've comforted many Cambodians who can't understand why the foreigner has not fulfilled their promise to write, contact a relative or send help. Our Cambodian staff have been instructed to not ask for (or hint at) financial help. If you have a situation where this happens, please contact me or one of the leaders. Feel free to help beggars. They are poor and usually only ask for 100 reil (less than two cents). Keep your Cambodian money in one pocket and your other cash in the other. When purchasing

Cambodia Outreach is the ministry of the McCauls in Cambodia since April 1995.

New Life Fellowship is the church which the McCauls pastor in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Other churches have been planted outside of Phnom Penh with the same philosophical and biblical foundation.

New Life Foundation is the relief and development organization which the McCauls direct in Cambodia. The current project is an Office Skills Training School in Phnom Penh which teaches Cambodian young people the English language, typing, basic computer programs, office skills and other office-related subjects for no fee. Successful students are then assisted in finding a job in the office of an international organization.

something at the market, bargain for a fair price and then buy it. When you start the bargaining process and finally agree on a price, you are committed to buying the product. Before you give money to a translator or any other as a gift, it's usually best contact me or another one of the leaders to make sure what you are doing is appropriate and will be used for the intended purpose.

- 8. Regarding the political situation and your personal security.** Christianity is often misunderstood. Our attempt to help holistically is misunderstood as trying to "bribe" people into Christianity. Also, false conversions are common as people will often agree with you in order to not lose face even they don't really grasp the concepts you are trying to convey. There have been many newspaper articles criticizing Christianity or questioning our methods. Please don't give interviews or detailed information to journalists as it will probably be misunderstood and distorted.

The best way to explain why you are here doing what you are doing is that Jesus Christ changed your life and filled you with His love for others. Jesus' love is what compels you to help others. If they see something in you that is good, it is because of Jesus' love toward them. You don't do these things to earn good merit for heaven, but simply to show God's love to them, working through you. You want to give them an opportunity to know that love, too.

- 9. Regarding Cambodians response to a Gospel presentation,** Cambodians, by their nature and culture, always respond in the affirmative. They will say "yes" to anything you ask, as they want to honor you and give you face. The common response to *anything* is "yes." However, "yes" doesn't always mean "yes." It's not common that someone who has never heard the Gospel before in Cambodia to respond in true repentance the first time they hear. Please don't lead them into false conversions and tell them they are now Christians that will go to heaven unless you are absolutely sure there has been a dramatic revelation of the gospel. Otherwise false assurances of salvation make it doubly difficult for the next person who now has to try to convince them they are not truly saved (born again).
- 10. Regarding your clothing and appearance.** Dress modestly. For women, no shorts or skirts shorter than knee length. No shirts that show your belly. No sleeveless shirts. If you are going to be ministering to an audience, please dress neatly (no torn or dirty clothes) and wear long pants or a skirt.
- 11. Regarding your teaching and expectations for Cambodians in their response to the Gospel.** Stay simple and basic. If you don't know if your teaching would be appropriate or in line with what we would be teaching, check with us or don't teach it. Don't tell non-believers or new believers to remove idols from their house – it usually better to leave that to us to deal with. Prepare your lesson for a third-grade level. If a third-grader can't understand it, an average Cambodian can't understand it. Try to be careful about using "Christianese" – even terms like "saved, the Lamb of God, born again" need explanation in Cambodian society. (See our document on "How to Speak Through a Translator")
- 12. Smile.** Cambodians understand this language better than any other. A smile tells them you don't look down on them, but accept them. This will open their heart more than anything else.