

## OVERCOMING BARRIERS

### Culture:

- God has helped us humans make sense of our world by giving us groups of people that share many things in common
- We feel at home in a group that has familiar stories, the same language and understandable norms of relating to one another
- Crossing from our culture to a new one can unnerve us a bit
- Often we find the obstacles too high in crossing cultures and we retreat back to our familiar group where everything makes sense

### Barriers That Keep Us from Reaching out to Other Cultures:

- Fear
    - We fear that we may say something culturally inappropriate and offend someone or perhaps we just fear the awkwardness of not understanding someone's English
    - Spicy Russian mustard plaster example
    - We should identify our fears, and ask ourselves which alternative is worse... Perhaps our fear is realized and while reaching out in love we create a culturally awkward moment is the alternative of not reaching out at all better?
  - Ignorance
    - A subset of fear
    - Engaging cross culturally can expose what we don't know about the world
    - Nobody likes finding themselves wading into vulnerable waters of a topic in which we have limited or no knowledge
    - Embrace your ignorance and allow it as an opportunity to honor your neighbor and to learn from them
  - Ourselves
    - The most difficult to overcome
    - This obstacle takes many forms
      - Prejudiced and feel like everyone should talk, think and act like us
      - So occupied with ourselves and our busy activities that we don't have time to reach out
      - We simply don't care
    - To this barrier, Jesus says it best in Matthew 25:41-45 In other words, Jesus is saying to us, "When you allowed fear or ignorance or yourself to keep you from reaching out to your international neighbor, you allowed those barriers to keep you from reaching out to me."
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