



Leading Across Cultures: Effective Ministry and Mission in the Global Church

By James E. Plueddemann

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The worldwide church is more interconnected than ever before, with missionaries going from everywhere to everywhere. Africans work with Australians in India. Koreans plant churches in London and Los Angeles. But globalization also creates challenges for crosscultural tension and misunderstandings, as different cultures have conflicting assumptions about leadership values and styles. Missiologist James E. Plueddemann presents a roadmap for crosscultural leadership development in the global church. With keen understanding of current research on cultural dynamics, he integrates theology with leadership theory to apply biblical insights to practical issues in world mission. Savvy discernment of diverse cultural underpinnings allows multicultural teams to work together with mutual respect for more effective ministry. The author shows how leaders can grow from an individualistic egocentric practice of leadership to a more global-centric approach. The future of the global church depends on effective multicultural leadership. God has called people from various contexts to minister and lead in every land for the sake of the gospel. Whether you are teaching English in China, directing information technology in Africa or pastoring a multiethnic church in North America, discover how you can better work and lead across cultures.

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Editorial Review

Review

"In *Leading Across Cultures*, James Plueddemann gives the Global Church a toolbox for crafting leadership for cross-cultural ministry. He writes from personal experience, important cultural research, and missiological and biblical insights. The result is a guide for mission practitioners and a textbook for contextualizing leadership." (Marcus W. Dean, EMQ, July 2010)

"Professor Jim Plueddemann has succeeded in achieving a rare feat. He has written a book that is scholarly and practical, biblical and contextual. Professor Plueddemann draws from his long and rich experience of leadership in Christian ministry and scholarship both in the West and crossculturally. He offers illustrations from every continent. He provides clear boundaries with his definition of *missionary* and *leadership*. One of the great strengths of this book is the assumption that all leaders from all cultures can learn from one another. No culture is perfect. As God's children endowed with the Holy Spirit, we can certainly benefit from each others' experience and walk with God. I highly recommend this book to any leader who is involved in crosscultural ministry. That is every leader because of the global context in which we live." (Bulus Y. Galadima, provost and associate professor, Jos ECWA Theological Seminary, Nigeria)

"This book is a rare combination of insights that draw from the biblical disciplines as well as social science research. Jim Plueddemann's insights, blended with a lifetime of global leadership experiences, enrich all of us with new knowledge and practices that contribute uniquely to building the church of Jesus Christ. Readers will be enriched with new understandings and possibilities for more culturally sensitive global leadership." (Duane Elmer, G. W. Aldeen Professor of International Studies and Mission, Trinity International University, and author of *Cross-Cultural Conflict and Cross-Cultural Servanthood*)

"In an increasingly interconnected world, the need to understand cultural differences in leadership is paramount if the global church is to take the glorious gospel 'from everywhere to everywhere.' Leading in global missions today requires wisdom from above coupled with a new set of assumptions humbly prescribed by a handful of pilgrims who joyfully serve in God's global harvest. In this work, Dr. James Plueddemann takes us on a journey to interact with him and other pilgrims found in a variety of cultural settings whose experiences will enrich the reader who seeks to play a significant role in the globalized church." (Américo Saavedra, executive director, APOYO-HCJB Global, Latin America)

"I found this an extremely helpful book and one that was screaming to be written--from my vantage point as a facilitator of crosscultural competency training seminars. I have both used others' adaptations as well as developed my own material of the concepts researched by Geert Hofstede as well as Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner. Well-written vignettes illustrate crosscultural leadership concepts and difficulties so very aptly that my facilitation of these seminars will be enhanced by focusing not on presenting the basic concepts, but on leading discussions on how they can be applied to specific situations represented by the participants. "The results of gleaning leadership principles from different cultures and applying them can enhance a person's leadership effectiveness, because the world has changed and there are few, if any, purely monocultural situations. As Plueddemann writes, 'We need each other. We need to listen to each other and blend an unchanging gospel into a new missiology that is in tune with an unpredictable, ever-changing cultural context.' "But we also need to tread gently (which is why this book needs to be read) because situations are not always what they appear. After having studied and worked in America for ten years, I returned to India to serve under a Canadian missionary who had been there for thirty years. He

communicated with me as though I was an Indian and I with him as though he was a Canadian, while in truth he had become more Indian than me and I had become more North American than him. Now working in a U.S. university, I am surrounded by colleagues from all over the world, and we are all together part of a global ecology. To quote Plueddemann, 'Multicultural leaders must be flexible, able to shift their leadership approach according to expectations of the situation. He or she must not only be proficient in several leadership models, but must also learn to work comfortably under leaders with very different cultural expectations of followers.' "This book is a must-read for anyone who wants to influence others in crosscultural and multicultural situations, and as a dean, I would recommend it to all those who teach in higher education because of the diverse students we have in our classrooms." (Junias Venugopal, dean, Seminary & School of Missions, Columbia International University)

"Plueddemann paints powerful pictures of how our 'low context' images of leadership blind us to the expectations and practices of people living and leading in 'high context' environments. He then guides the reader to think and reflect on how biblical principles both challenge and affirm our respective values. Following the same practice, he critiques the contemporary literature on 'power distance' and 'individualism/collectivism.' This is an important theological reflection on contemporary leadership theory (GLOBE) and its relevance for crosscultural Christian ministry." (Sherwood Lingenfelter, provost and senior vice president, Fuller Theological Seminary)

"*Leading Across Cultures* is one of the most informative books that I have read on the subject of crosscultural leadership. It integrates sociological data with praxis, experience with theory and, finally, actual life stories with optimal patterns of what crosscultural leadership would look like in given contexts. It is must-reading for those who intend to seriously engage in leadership in the globalized mission/church context of the twenty-first century." (David Tai-Woong Lee, director, Global Leadership Focus, Korea)

"This book carefully integrates theory and reality in contemporary global Christian leadership. It is an invaluable tool in the hands of a leader who desires to impact our multicultural world globally and contextually. It equips, inspires, challenges and enlarges the leader's vision to a higher plane of impacting others. It frees the leader from a monocultural grid to a contemporary multicultural grid. The book integrates helpful ideas of the past with the present and brings our future world reality closer to the present on solid theological grounding." (Dr. David K. Ngaruuya, acting vice chancellor and head of the intercultural studies department, Nairobi International School of Theology)

"I read and reread Plueddemann's book *Leading Across Cultures* with extreme excitement. I can say this book has transformed my thinking and understanding on intercultural leadership of global missions. I am thankful for his contribution and efforts not only for readers from the West, but also for the global church and overall global missionary endeavor. Therefore, I hope this book will transform the understanding of many, many mission leaders, pastors and missionary trainers. It will also bring new ways of doing missions for those who are ready to change and truly want to expand God's kingdom in missions and church planting in different cultures. Reading this book with conviction will bring humility and harmony among missionary teams, inspire for action, and give direction and vision for new ways of doing missions in crosscultural contexts." (Dr. Desta Langena, director, Kale Heywet School of Missions, Ethiopia)

"For years Jim's example and principles have guided me in my leading and teaching in Africa. I have tasted first-fruits of the great joy and fruitfulness I see in his life. Now in this engaging book, Jim shares his practical insights from forty years of leadership experiences and research with you. He has led influential Nigerian, American and international organizations; personally mentored leaders in fifty countries; and integrated research from business, anthropology, education and intercultural studies. Read well and lead well!" (Rev. Steven Rasmussen, Ph.D., founding director, Training East African Ministers, and lecturer,

About the Author

James E. Plueddemann (Ph.D., Michigan State) is Professor of Missions and Chair, Department of Missions and Evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He is the author of *God's Heart for the World: Missionary Themes from Genesis to Revelation*, *James: Growing in Maturity*, *Spiritual Hunger: Filling Your Deepest Longings*, and *Meekness: Claiming Your Inheritance* (all with Carol Plueddemann).

Users Review

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