

## 2:3 FORM AND MEANING

### A. INTRODUCTION

1. **FORM** is the perceivable shape.
2. **MEANING** is what the shape symbolizes to those who use it in a particular society.

Illustrations:

| <u>FORM</u> | <u>EXAMPLE</u> | <u>MEANING IN U.S.A.</u> |
|-------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Word        | Dog [dawg]     | _____                    |

### B. PRINCIPLES OF FORM/MEANING CORRESPONDENCE

1. **MEANINGS ARE COMMUNICATED TO HUMAN BEINGS ONLY THROUGH CULTURAL FORMS**
  - a. Verbal
  - b. Non-verbal
2. **A CULTURAL FORM BORROWED FROM ONE CULTURE BY ANOTHER WILL HAVE AT LEAST SOME DIFFERENT MEANINGS IN THE NEW CULTURE**

| <u>FORM</u>      | <u>EXAMPLE</u> | <u>MEANING</u>         |
|------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Material Culture | Shoes          | (A) U.S.<br>(B) Africa |

### **3. THE SAME FORM IN DIFFERENT CULTURES WILL HAVE DIFFERENT MEANINGS**

| <b><u>FORM</u></b> | <b><u>EXAMPLE</u></b>    | <b><u>MEANING</u></b>          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Cultural</b>    | <b>Crossing<br/>Legs</b> | <b>(A) U.S.<br/>(B) Jordan</b> |

### **4. WE MUST FIND THE PROPER CULTURAL FORMS OR THE MEANINGS WILL BE WRONG**

- (1) Bible Translations**
  - **Formal Correspondence Equivalent**
  - **Dynamic Equivalent**

- (2) Unclear Meanings**

**Illustration: I Corinthians 11:5,6 [KJV]**

**“But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. {6} For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.”**

- **Legalism**
  - **Misuse of “culture” as a factor**
  - **Meaning or principal truth**
- (3) Christian anthropologist’s rule:  
Exegete all passages [find the meanings in context]**

**5. WHENEVER POSSIBLE, TRY TO USE THE FORM OF THE NEW CULTURE RATHER THAN YOUR FOREIGN FORM, AND START THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMING THEIR MEANINGS (TEACHING)**

**Illustration (1): "Logos"**

**Illustration (2): Passover**

**Illustration (3): "Allah"**

**Cross-Cultural Communication Of The Gospel Is  
Not An Option For Christians!!!**