

Slavic planting context

HOW TO REACH PEOPLE FROM A SLAVIC
BACKGROUND



1. What are the most common ideologies and religious beliefs among Slavic people?

What are the different groups?

	Ukraine	Russia
Orthodox church	62.3 %	74%
Greek Catholicism	9.6 %	
Protestants	2.5%	1%
Catholicism	1.2 %	1%
Judaism	0.4 %	1%
Islam	1 %	7%
Buddhism	0.3 %	<1%
Hinduism	-	<1%
Jehovah's Witnesses	2 %	
other		<1%
no religion		10%
atheism		5%
find it difficult to answer		2%

People from eastern Slavic background:

1. Most people from the Post-Soviet Union background consider themselves Orthodox Christians.
2. Since the vast majority of them rarely go to church, they do not know the basics of the Christian faith. When people visit Orthodox church a few times a year for Christmas and Easter, they often follow the religious routine.
3. They believe that church is the place where they can pray or encounter God.
4. They rarely pray using their own words; instead they recite or read prayer books.
5. They believe that only the Orthodox Church is true.
6. They consider all non-Orthodox as well Catholic Christians a sect.

Western Europe:

Low context

Typically, Germanic or Scandinavian cultures are more low context, men are usually more low context...

- Explicit information
- Direct communication
- All of the necessary information is integrated in the exchange
- Exchanges are more direct
- Easy to enter



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Slavic:

High context

Typically, latin or Asian cultures are more high context, women are usually more high context

- Implicit information
- Importance of rank, status, hierarchy
- Common history and background
- Nuanced communication
- Emotions are being transmitted
- Difficult to enter



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What is affected?

- One to one interactions
- Group communication
- Written communication
- Circulation of information (formal, informal)
- Learning styles
- Relationships
- (and grant requests)



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2. What general cultural differences are particularly helpful for western/non Slavic Christians to be aware of?

Coconuts and peaches!

Coconut culture (hard on the outside but sweet on the inside)

- rarely smile at a stranger
- do not engage in conversations easily
- do not talk about personal information with strangers
- may be neutral towards you for a long time
- However, if you manage to break through their outer shell, they tend to become loyal friends who will accept you as family.
- mostly keep to themselves or stay with their close friends and family
- like accepting guests and visiting friends' houses
- when visiting friends, can stay up late ignoring the time
- love to give advice
- people oriented

Peach culture ("soft" on the outside with a hard stone)

- friendly to people they have just met and frequently smile at strangers
- chat, share information (not necessarily deep conversation), and even share pictures
- However, when you get past the initial friendliness, you see a very private self that they protect.
- difficult to become real friends
- may seem superficial and fake
- like to meet up outside their house e.g. restaurant, cafes, picnics, etc.
- aware of time and follow schedules
- don't give advice unless asked
- task oriented

3. What aspects of the Gospel do Slavic people tend to struggle with?

What are the 'defeater beliefs' and blockages in evangelism?

1. Due to the culture, it is difficult to start a conversation with strangers as they may be suspicious.
2. People believe that Orthodox church is the only true church and without the church there is no salvation.
3. The authority of church traditions is higher than biblical teaching.
4. Salvation is to be earned.
5. Those with Orthodox background, are reluctant to be baptized as adults; this is regarded as a betrayal of the religion of their ancestors.
6. If you cease to be Orthodox, you risk to become an outcast from your family or the group of friends.
7. People are afraid to leave Orthodox church or lose friends and relatives. They attend our Bible groups and Sunday services, but still call themselves Orthodox Christians.
8. Many people like to be friends with us, but they are afraid to read the Bible and come to Sunday services.

4. What are some of the most effective ways to evangelize and build relationships in this context?

1. We pray and ask the Lord to lead us to those that are open to the Gospel.
2. We try to get to know people and become their friends and be sensitive to their needs e.g. We try to understand the context of a person. If there is an opportunity to share our faith, we often follow a principle of **3 stories**: your story, my story, God's story.
3. We try to maintain relationships with people who are closed to the Gospel; we try to engage those who are open in reading Bible and discovering more about Christian faith.
4. We started a group for couples (Christian, non-Christian and mixed) to help them with their marriages.
5. We respect people's denominational beliefs and help them discover truth through reading Bible rather than arguing with them.
6. Jesus commands us to make disciples. We are equipping new Christians and mature Christians to do the same with people they are in contact with.