

# Dirty Water

**Description:**

a series of multiple choice discussion starters

**Aim:** to highlight choices Christian workers face when working in different cultures

**Audience:** teenagers and adults, any size group

**Time:** 20–30 minutes

**Equipment:**

pencils, copies of discussion sheet

**Scripture to Study:**

1 Corinthians 9:22–23  
Philippians 2:3–11

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*The contents of this CD may be printed out and copied for classroom use only.*

**Leader's Instructions:**

1. Divide participants into groups of four or five each.
2. Hand out a pencil and discussion sheet to each person.
3. Read out Participants' Instructions below.
4. Allow 10–15 minutes for discussion.
5. Use the Discussion and Application section to conclude.

**Audience's Instructions:**

You are a team of Christian workers living in a small, African village among the Kasena people of northern Ghana. You haven't been there very long, and much of your time is taken up learning the Kasem language and building relationships with your Kasena neighbours. Kasem culture is very different from your own and you find yourself faced with new and difficult choices every day. Your discussion sheet outlines five scenarios.

1. Have one person from each group read out the first scenario.
2. Everyone in the group should put a check mark by their choice.
3. Now discuss the choices you have made and try to come to a *group decision*.
4. Do the same with the other four scenarios. Raise your hands when your group is all done.

**Discussion and Application:**

Briefly invite each group to summarize their answer to one of the scenarios and explain why they made their decision. Then discuss the following:

1. What is culture? (Culture has to do with behaviour, values and traditions. People of different cultures act and react differently. To communicate with people of a different culture you have to adapt and make adjustments. This may involve forfeiting some of your own behavioural patterns and values.)
2. How do you learn to act appropriately when living among people of another culture? (The only way you can learn how to act appropriately is by sticking your neck out and being prepared to make mistakes. So it helps to be able to laugh at yourself! You must also be humble enough to ask the advice of national people. Know-it-alls don't get far.)
3. What factors did you take into account when you made your deci-

sion? (Personal health and safety, your rights, others' feelings, your future ministry of sharing the Gospel?)

4. Was there any disagreement in your group? Imagine what this is like for Christians working together overseas. How would you handle such disagreements when you're face to face with a choice that needs to be made?

It was an unfair quiz! You didn't know all the facts. But neither does an outsider going to a Kasem village for the first time. The five scenarios you discussed are not made up. They are drawn from the experience of Philip and Judy Hewer who worked among the Kasena people as Bible translators for sixteen years. Philip and Judy would be the first to admit that there are no right or wrong answers to situations like these, but just for the record, here's what they learned from each of the circumstances you have been discussing:

### **1. Dirty Water**

Ghanaians are very hospitable. People in the north of the country always offer visitors a drink of water right away. If you reject the drink you are rejecting hospitality and are considered very rude. On the other hand, dirty water is a serious health risk. So it's best to accept the drink but just take a sip, or even just pretend to drink. The Hewers did pray that the Lord would protect their health! Discreetly slipping in a purification tablet is acceptable, as well.

### **2. Borrowed Bicycle**

None of the suggestions here are really appropriate. If you ask your neighbour why he took the bicycle, he would probably tell you he needed it: you were not using it and you are his friend! In a poorer society there are fewer personal possessions so it makes sense for them to be shared. If one person is not using their shovel or bucket or bicycle, then someone else might as well make use of it. Borrowing without asking showed that the Hewers were being accepted into the local community.

### **3. Plate of Cookies**

Western manners are not always logical. To a Kasena, what you offer is what you intend them to take. So if you intend your visitor

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to have one cookie, just give him one. This situation happened only once. One of the elders was actually teasing by taking the whole plate, so the Hewers asked for it back with a joke too.

**4. Two Brothers**

Since you do not know the whole situation, it would be best to do nothing except to ask someone else what is going on. In Ghana, authority goes with age, so an older brother has authority over a younger brother and that authority may often be enforced physically. Many situations seemed wrong to us and we were often critical, but when we asked for an explanation, we often learned an important aspect of Kasem culture.

**5. Washing Line**

As with the borrowed bicycle, our washing line was empty and so available for others to use. When this first happened to us, the large cloth hanging just outside our door cut off the light so we could not continue our language study. After consulting with our Kasena language assistant, we moved the clothes around to restore our light and, in future, made sure we hung our washing out early if we wanted to use the line.

**Kasena Update:**

The Kasena people number about 180,000 and live in northern Ghana and Burkina Faso. Since the Kasem New Testament was dedicated in 1989, the Holy Spirit has been at work! Some churches have grown slowly and steadily, but in one area of Kasem-land the young churches have almost doubled in number. And each group is reaching out to new hamlets and villages. New Kasem churches have also grown up in almost every region of Ghana where Kasenas have moved to find work or farming land. One of the reasons for this growth has undoubtedly been that Kasena people now have the opportunity to respond to the Good News of Jesus in their own language.

**Optional ways to use this activity:**

1. This discussion also works well when led from the front, without dividing into groups at all.

2. The material lends itself very well to drama adaptation. Have each scenario acted out with volunteers from the audience improvising their reactions. The audience watches, then discusses whether the volunteer responded appropriately.

### **Discussion and Application:**

1. Read Philippians 2:3–4. Discuss the relevance of this concept to missions today and to the way the Hewers related to their Kasem neighbours. Did they do it? Could you?
2. Read on from verse 5–7 or even on through verse 11. Are we left not knowing HOW to put verse 3 and 4 into practice? No! We have an example to follow. We can always ask ourselves “What would Jesus do?” Now there’s a great reason to study the life of Christ and know your Bible well! Study the Master, so you can be like Him.
3. Read 1 Corinthians 9:19–23, especially verses 22, 23. Why is it sometimes important to give up doing things your way and become like other cultures? (So that the *oddness* of the messenger doesn’t get in the way of the Gospel message. So that others might be saved.)

**Notes:**

You are a team of Christian workers living in a small, African village with the Kasena people of Ghana. You haven't been there very long so you spend most of your time learning the Kasem language and building relationships with your neighbors. Kasem culture is very different from your own. You face new and difficult choices daily.

### 1. Dirty Water

You visit a village house after a long walk through the countryside. Your host sees that you are thirsty and offers you a drink. The water is warm, very dirty and has insects floating in it. You remember that disease is caused by drinking bad water. Do you

- drink it eagerly and ask for more?
- refuse to touch a drop?
- drink a little and pray?
- take out your own flask of purified water?
- drop a water purifying tablet into the drink you've been offered?

### 2. Borrowed Bicycles

Your neighbor borrows your bicycle without permission. Do you

- call the police?
- tell the village chief?
- wait until he returns and then get angry with him?
- lock it from now on?

### 3. Plate of Cookies

You pass around a plate of cookies to visitors who drop by. The first person takes them all! Do you ask

for them back?

- get out a new package of cookies?
- give visitors only water in the future?
- drop a few hints about how expensive cookies are?
- give them out one by one from now on?

### 4. Two Brothers

You see children fighting. A boy is hitting his brother with a stick. The little boy runs away bleeding and crying.

Do you

- rebuke the big brother?
- chase them both away?
- find the little boy and comfort him?
- do nothing?

### 5. Washing Line

Your neighbor hangs washing on your clothes line. Do you

- take the washing down?
- take the clothes line down?
- Pin up a notice saying "\$.50 to hang washing here"?
- buy your neighbor a clothes line?
- make no complaint? In the future, get your washing out first?