

## Session 6—Crossing Barriers

# The Skin You Live In

Dr. David Ireland

### NOTES:

**INTRODUCTION:** Two prisoners who had to “kill their fathers’ bulls” to form a cross-racial friendship

#### • Two kinds of barriers

- **Internal barriers**—something inside that keeps you away from those different from you
- **External barriers**—something in the social environment that separates people

#### • How to cross barriers

- **Recognize the barrier**—feeling awkward, looking for escape, feeling the authentic you suppressed, etc.
- **Identify the cause of the barrier**—myths, lack of information or exposure, one of “your father’s bulls” (i.e., worldview, values, prejudices, fears), etc.
- **Remove the barrier**—take positive baby steps, seek outside help, etc.
- **Seek outside help**

#### • Stranger model

- Admitting you’re a stranger prompts people to help you
- Ask, “What do I need to know? How could I have done better?”

#### • Barriers are deterrents. They are:

- Self-imposed by our theological beliefs
- Formed by societal patterns and behavioral expectations of interracial relationships
- A reflection of our fears

#### • Accept the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)

- Reconciliation is a social word meaning “to come back together in harmonious ways”
- God has given us all this ministry
- Don’t be too hard on yourself!



## REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Remember Dr. Ireland's story about two prisoners who formed an unlikely friendship in prison? What particular barriers do you imagine each had to cross (or "fathers' bulls" did they have to kill) in order to become friends?
  
2. What do you tend to do when you recognize an intercultural barrier?
  
3. Try to give an example of one internal and one external barrier that you have been challenged by, either for yourself or for others.
  
4. With those two examples in mind, what might they have been caused by—a theological belief, a societal pattern, a fear, something else?
  
5. Re-read **2 Corinthians 5:17-19** and the surrounding context, where God gives us the ministry of reconciliation.
  - a. How does God's call for you to live an intentionally diverse lifestyle challenge you?
  
  - b. What are you doing (or could you do) to overcome awkwardness and isolation? . . . or to signal others that, "I'm safe. I am interested in having a friendship with you"?
  
6. What sacrifices or changes do you think The Navigators might have to make in order to cross organizational barriers?

