

1. Culture -

- The term "culture" refers to the complex collection of knowledge, folklore, language, rules, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, and customs that link and give a common identity to a particular group of people at a specific point in time.¹
- Culture is formed through communication (symbolic, verbal, non-verbal), and all communication is cultural.

2. West vs. East

- Cultural dividing line somewhere around Greece that divides the West from the East.
- We divide the regions of the East based on their relativity to Greece
 - Israel/Egypt – Near East
 - Iraq/Saudi Arabia – Middle East
 - China/Japan – Far East

3. Communication differences between **West** and **East** –

West	East
- Abstract	- Concrete
- Low Context	- High Context

- **East** prefers truth communicated concretely (see, hear, touch, smell, taste)
- **West** likes truth expressed abstractly

God is...	
West (abstract)	East (concrete)
- Holy	- A (my) Father
- Love	- A (my) Rock
- All-powerful	- A (my) Shepherd
- Omniscient	- A Judge

- East – each answer creates a picture of something concrete, and the attributes of that object are common to all within the culture.
- West – the answers don't create a picture, and each person will internalize the concepts based on their own preconceptions.

¹ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/media/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/culture-and-communication>

4. **Low Context v. High Context**² –

- The United States has the **lowest context** culture in the world (a melting pot).
- The further East you move – the culture shifts to **High Context**

5. Good communication in a **Low Context** culture (United States):

- Explicit.
- Clear.
- Words have a precise meaning.
- The message is communicated at the surface.
- Responsibility for communication is with the speaker.

6. Good communication in a **High Context** culture (Israel – both modern and ancient):

- Subtle.
- Layered.
- Listener/reader "reads between the lines."
- Dependent on shared knowledge and subtext.
- Words can be ambiguous and have a broad range of meanings depending on the context of their use.
- Both parties are engaged in the communication. The speaker assumes the audience has the subtext, and the listener/reader makes interpretation decisions based on context.

7. **High Context** cultures tend to have fewer words that each have a broader range of meaning –

United States (English)	Modern Hebrew	Biblical Hebrew
174,000	33,000	7,000

8. **Concrete** and **High Context**:

- The Bible communicates God's will through **concrete** symbols/metaphors/events that carry meaning within the **High Context** culture of the Ancient Near East (ANE).

- Meaning is carried in the concrete symbol rather than the words on the page.

- Meaning is found layered within the stories or by reading between the lines.

Exodus Examples: slavery, Pharaoh's heart, Passover Lamb, water dividing (Red Sea), Mount Sinai, Commandments in stone, the Tabernacle.

² Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business*. 2014.