

First Find Out Who Said It!

By Jim Myers

The next phase of my journey began after reading *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*. The answer to my earlier prayer wouldn't go away, so I decided to get serious about finding out how words work. But I didn't know how to go about doing that, so I decided to camp out in the library of a local Seventh Day Adventist university. I wasn't an Adventist, but it was less than a mile from my house. I began in the *linguistics section*, worked my way through the *history section* and ended up in the *reference books section* at a table with the entire *Encyclopedia Judaica*. It is a treasure chest of cultural information about the Jewish people.

In the *linguistics section* I put things together from what I learned about language and created what I called the *Law of Language*. Today I call it the *BHC Linguistic Guideline for Bible Study*.

“A word is a group of symbols with an attached bundle of associations; and those associations are the product of the Source's culture, historical time period, geographical location and personal experiences.”

My goal for users of this guideline is that they achieve a *Successful Communications Experience*.

“A Successful Communications Experience is achieved when the Receptor understands the Source's bundles of associations.”

In order for us to achieve a *Successful Communications Experience* you must understand my meanings for the following key terms:

- **Symbols** are the letters of an alphabet.
- **Bundles of associations** are memories attached to words or phrases.
- The **Source** is the person *speaking* or *writing* the words.
- The **Receptor** is the person *hearing* or *reading* words.
- A **Communications Experience** is when a Source speaks or writes words and a Receptor hears or reads them.

In this *Communications Experience* I am the *Source* and you are the *Receptor*. The *symbols* are letters of the English alphabet. The *bundles of associations* attached to my

words are memories formed from living in America during the 20th and 21st century CE. The most important factor for understanding the words of any Source is *culture*.

We all think, act, and communicate in ways that are primarily predetermined by our culture. We didn't choose our culture any more than we chose our parents. We just arrived on earth and found ourselves in a particular family and culture.

Culture is the whole behavior and technology of any people that is passed on from generation to generation. Culture consists of the knowledge, beliefs, morals, laws, religion, customs, concepts, habits, institutions, and any other capabilities of a given people in a given period.

A culture is more than a set of rules to guide behavior; it is a comprehensive worldview and way of relating to one's fellow human beings. Cultures are complex and do not spell everything out literally, but leave much to inference. A culture's strength lies not only in what it says, but also in what it chooses not to say, and this too must be learned.

Cultures change over time and even though the symbols of words remain the same, the bundles of associations attached to those symbols may change. And, in different geographical locations during the same time period, a word may have different meanings.

I will provide much more information about how to use the *Linguistic Guideline* in future chapters, but for now when you realize you are involved in a communications experience, take a moment to answer to one question -- **Who said it?**

Do not simply assume that a Source has your *bundles of associations* attached to his or her words! Why? This is what a very wise boss taught me to help remember not to assume things.

assume = ass + u - me

When you assume things, you make an ass out of you and me!

Do not assume!

Get the FACTS!!!

Now you know what I think every time I hear someone say, "Let's assume"