Chapter 1

1. List and define each of the four fields of anthropology. For each field, generate an example of a Christian application.
2. Compare and contrast anthropology and sociology.
3. What is the anthropological perspective? How does the anthropological perspective enrich understandings of cultural similarity and difference?
4. Pick an area of the world as a research focus. How could a Christian anthropologist contribute positively to that area through each major area discussed in the chapter: Christian witness, missions, basic research, and the global church?
Chapter 2

1. Read Genesis 1–2. List elements of culture present before the fall. Remember, culture includes symbols, language, marriage, economy, family, custom, law, and other elements of life. In your experience, have Christians emphasized culture as part of God’s good creation, or as part of the fall? How might a view of culture as emerging from creation shape Christians’ cultural engagement?

2. If you were to make an ethnic fair exhibit for your culture (or a culture with which you identify), what items would you choose to represent the culture? In what ways does the ethnic fair accurately represent your culture? How does the ethnic fair misrepresent or oversimplify the culture?


4. Create a new metaphor for culture and explain its benefits and its limitations.
Chapter 3

1. Consider the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. State it in your own words. Then think of one specific way in which language shapes thought and behavior.
2. Compare and contrast historical linguistics, descriptive linguistics, and sociolinguistics.
3. How does language ideology shape how Christians interpret Scripture?
4. Tell a story about a time when you observed one language or dialect being valued over another. How were these social judgments communicated, and what impact did they have?
5. Consider the metaphors for God listed in the chapter. Generate a new metaphor for God, one that you have never heard before. Which characteristics of God are highlighted with use of this metaphor, and which are minimized? How does our language for God shape our relationship with God?
Chapter 4

1. Write your own definition of reconciliation, making a clear connection to social structure and inequality.
2. What are two reasons that it is difficult for people to perceive social structure?
3. Which ethnic groups do you affiliate with? How do these groups link to social inequality—are they privileged groups, subordinate groups, or both?
4. Review the textbook discussion “Is ‘American’ an Ethnic Category?” then answer that question yourself.
5. Compare and contrast caste and class.
Chapter 5

1. Compare and contrast sex and gender. How are these concepts related to one another, and how are they distinct?
2. Tell a story about a time you encountered a gender norm that was different from the gender norms of your background. How did you respond to the difference?
3. What is a distinctive contribution that anthropology can make to Christians as they work through contemporary issues of gender and sexuality in the church?
4. Design an ethnographic research project about gender that includes the study of both men and women.
5. Consider the social factors that contribute to social inequality. Compare and contrast sex, gender, ethnicity, race, and social class as elements that contribute to inequality.
6. Review the creation narrative in Genesis 1–2. What can we learn about God’s creational intent for sex and gender from this passage?
Chapter 6

1. For each mode of subsistence, discuss its presence in Scripture. How could attentiveness to economics shape biblical interpretation? Generate a specific example of how knowledge of economic context might shape your understanding or application of a portion of Scripture.

2. Discuss production and exchange in holistic perspective. How do these elements of life link with other dimensions of culture, such as religion, education, kinship, and so on?

3. After reading this chapter, would you agree that foraging cultures represent the “original affluent society”? Why or why not?

4. Design an experiment like Alastair Bland’s that would allow you to immerse yourself in a different system of production or exchange.

5. Which economic theory do you find more persuasive, substantivist or formalist, and why?
Chapter 7

1. What is one way that God’s power is like human power? What is one difference?
2. Tell a story about a successful use of persuasive power in a church setting.
3. Tell a story about an unsuccessful attempt to use persuasive power in a church setting.
4. If you wanted to increase attendance at your church, would you turn first to formal sanctions or informal sanctions, and why?
5. Consider similarities and differences between band societies and state societies. What is one way in which being a Christian would be the same in both types of society? What is one unique Christian practice that may be important in a band? In a state?
6. Generate one example of how Christians could work through the political system to contribute to the common good.
Chapter 8

1. Give two examples of how marriage exchange establishes social relationships that are broader than just the individuals being married.
2. How does the biblical story of Ruth reflect the kinship patterns of Ruth’s culture?
3. The textbook authors conclude, “Kinship behavior is, arguably, more important in Scripture than kinship rules or structure.” Do you agree or disagree, and why?
4. What are two reasons why kinship and marriage are so important in social organization?
Chapter 9

1. Tell a story about a ritual that was important in your life. It should be a rite of intensification, a rite of affliction, or a rite of passage, and it may be secular or religious. What factors make rituals meaningful for individuals and for communities?

2. What are three important social functions of religion?

3. Compare and contrast religion, magic, and witchcraft.

4. What does it feel like to subject your own religion to anthropological scrutiny? Does scientific scrutiny demean or disrespect religion, and if so, how? Is scientific scrutiny helpful to a person of faith, and if so, how?

5. What is distinctive about studying religion from an anthropological point of view?

6. How can the anthropological study of religion benefit Christian life?
1. Consider your local church, or one you used to attend or are familiar with. Generate an example of how one of these concepts is present at your church: deterritorialization, westernization, transnationalism, cultural hybridity. In what ways is engaging globalization a choice for the people of your church? In those instances, what kinds of choices do you think they should make? In what ways is engaging globalization a given, something that just happens on its own, for the people of your church? In those instances, how could people be more aware of or more intentional about globalization?

2. Which of the major theories of globalization do you find most persuasive, and why?

3. Describe two ways in which globalization is influencing contemporary fieldwork.

4. Globalization is often studied as an economic phenomenon. What distinctive contributions do anthropologists make when they study the cultural dimensions of globalization?

5. Describe how globalization is rooted in colonialism, and how colonial relationships continue to influence globalization today.

6. Describe several of the cultural dynamics of postcolonialism.
Chapter 11

1. Why is theory important in anthropological research?
2. Explain the contributions of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber to anthropological theory.
3. Describe one early anthropological theory that is no longer in use, and explain why it is not considered a plausible theory today.
4. What are some reasons that Christians sometimes find tension between their faith and anthropological theory?
Chapter 12

1. Generate an example of how anthropology can be helpful in each arena: work, everyday life, ministry.
2. Describe two important connections between anthropology and missions.
3. How can anthropology benefit the global church?