

How Jesus Works Through Our Ethnicity and Culture

The COMMUNITY God addresses	The PERSON God uses	God's VALUE or INTENTION	The CULTURAL EXPRESSION
What human ethnic group is involved?	Who is engaging them? This is demonstrated by...	What is the spiritual principle?	What action is relevant to the culture?
Jewish disciples in Israel	Jesus in John 13	Love one another	Footwashing
Jews and Gentiles in Jerusalem at Pentecost	The disciples in Acts 2	The gospel is for all tribes and tongues	Speak in their languages
Unbelieving Jews in Lystra and Iconium	Paul & Timothy in Acts 15	Have respect for Jewish customs	Circumcision
Greeks in Athens	Paul in Acts 17	Evangelize in an effective and relevant way	Speaking about the altar to 'an unknown god' and quoting a Greek poet

A Good Summary Statement from Paul

For though I am free from all, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews I become as a Jew, that I might win the Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. (1 Cor.9:19 – 22)

Lesson #1: God communicates spiritual truths through human languages and cultures. Hence if we are to better understand God, God's mission, ourselves, and others, we must understand ethnicity and culture.

Lesson #2: Since every tribe and tongue will one day worship Jesus around his throne (Rev.5:9), it seems that God is preserving language and other cultural distinctives that are good or that can be redeemed. Human culture reflects a diversity He loves. Aspects of human culture are sometimes good and sometimes not, but God wants to redeem as much as possible.

Ethnicity, Culture, and Christian Faith: A Questionnaire

We all have ethnicity – sometimes a mix of ethnicities – which influences how we see ourselves and how we interact with others. Our ethnicity is our people group(s) of origin. In biblical terms, the Greek word *ethnos* is used for this. Ethnicity is connected to our family background, our languages, customs, nations of origin and their histories, social views and values, and interaction with what the colonial/Enlightenment category called race. Culture is the sum total of our ways of interacting with each other. Some of us reflect a mix of ethnic identities and cultures. Many of us come from a primary ethnic-cultural background, though we may have a blend of backgrounds and influences.

Here are some questions to help you think about and then share about your own ethnic background --

1. What foods remind you of home?
2. Name one family tradition.
3. Name two members of your family and why they're important to you.
4. When asked about your ethnic identity, I say, "I am _____."
5. What are some media representations of people of your ethnic background?
6. What are some things you enjoy about your ethnic heritage and culture?
7. What are some things you don't enjoy about your ethnic heritage and culture?
8. What are some ways others would describe your ethnicity, both positively and negatively?
Positive: _____ Negative: _____
9. How do you feel about these descriptions?

10. If there was one thing you would want others to know about your ethnicity, what would it be?
11. When did you first become aware of ethnic difference and/or racism? How did that affect you personally?
12. How did you feel about President Obama's election?
13. When a person asks you a question, how quickly should you respond to it? Can you interrupt another person while s/he is speaking?
14. When getting to know someone, do you tend to share more about yourself, or ask questions of the other person?
15. How do you poke fun at friends?
16. How many minutes can you be late before you feel like you need to apologize?
17. True or false: I feel that there is a standard English grammar and that everyone should use it.
18. True or false: When introducing important people, I think it is important to include their occupation and title.
19. Your friend tells you that when he went home for spring break, his mom got angry with him on the last day of spring break for not having helped her clean the house. However, she did not explain to him that she had those expectations. Who is basically right or wrong here? What do you advise your friend?
20. How did Christian faith first enter your ethnic group? What impact does that have on you?
21. What observations do you have of expressions of Christian faith in other ethnic groups?
22. What are some positive things I bring from my ethnicity/culture?
23. What are some positive things I can gain from being with people who are ethnically different?