



CROSSING CULTURES

SERMON #2 DISCUSSION GUIDE: Week of September 19, 2021

Scripture: Acts 15:1-35

Big Idea: Crossing cultures is as simple as crossing the street.

Discussion Questions:

1. If you have been in any church circles in your past, were there some “extra-biblical” rules imposed on you, or moral or cultural expectations?
2. If you were a Gentile hearing that these regulations were required, how would you feel about your faith? As a strict Jew, why would these things be important to you?
3. What “additions” to the gospel might a new believer sense in our church today?

From the Sermon:

Before we talk about culture, we need to acknowledge and own the culture we come from - the textures, nuances, perspectives, and norms.

1. What culture(s) did you come from? How does this affect the way you see the world?
2. Take a moment to examine your relationships. Who are the “others” in your life? Are they someone with a different personality, race & ethnicity, gender, class, or religion than you? And how do you perceive them?
3. Identify one person who you think transcends cultures well? What can you learn from them?
4. How can we actively engage people with cross-cultural differences and people who are different from us?
5. As we cross cultures, the Spirit must lead us as we lean into the tensions of diversity. To whom is the Spirit leading you to and how is the Spirit leading you to engage?

Action Steps:

Take some time to intentionally engage with another culture. Here are some ideas:

- Attend a cross-cultural event.
- Ask a friend to share a meal from their culture and if they'd be willing to share stories from their heritage. Be willing to share your stories as well.
- Visit a religious space different than your own, with the goal to learn and build relational bridges.
- Share different cultural experiences in your small group or community.

Crossing Cultures Sermon Content Review:

Love your neighbor. I'm sure we've all heard this phrase in one way or another. We've been saying this over the months as we try to find ways to serve and show love to our friends, neighbors, and family even in the midst of the pandemic. This is not just a popular phrase with those of faith, but for everyone. This idea crosses cultures, faiths, and history. It's this idea that we treat others as we would want to be treated. But who is our neighbor?

Is it the person who lives next door to us? Is it just the people who live on our street, in our town or at our school? Maybe for you, a neighbor is someone who looks, acts, votes, and believes the same things you do. Anyone who sits outside of these traits doesn't necessarily fit into our definition of neighbor. As a matter of fact, they are not only our neighbors, but we see ourselves as better than them.

In Bible history, the Jews were not a people who loved their neighbor. For the most part, their history had involved loving only those in their culture and faith and destroying anyone who would challenge that faith. To them, a "neighbor" was someone who looked, talked and acted the same way they did. They thought they were better than all other people in the world. So, they mistreated these neighbors.

How do you treat people? Are you simply polite to your neighbor? Waving and saying hello, but never actually connecting with them in real and powerful ways. Scripture calls for us to not only see our neighbor, but to love them in ways that would be radical. Spend time talking to them. Lend a hand to someone who needs help. Pray for your neighbors, both in your daily moments, but also with them.

We are called to look past our biases, our preconceived notions and our fears and to reach out to those people in our lives who are like us AND to those people who are not anything like us. Just like in the story of the Good Samaritan, we need to show love to those people who might otherwise be called our enemies.

GOSPEL: Jesus not only calls us to radical love with our neighbors, but he models that for us in his life. What you may not think of regularly was that Jesus had enemies. There were people who wished him dead; the pharisees, the Romans. And the reality of Jesus sacrifice on the cross is that He chose to die for even those people who wished him harm.

Notes: