

THE FRIEND CONNECTION



FRIENDSHIP ACROSS CULTURES

[Sermon preached on Sunday 22nd April 2018]

Resources needed: Bibles, a ball of string or wool, access to show a YouTube video clip.

WELCOME

Reflect and be accountable:

If you did the 'Love Languages' activity for homework, share in the group your results and how this has helped you understand others.

Ask people if they have managed to cultivate, or work on their friendships yet? How did they get on?

All friendship in some way involves reaching out beyond ourselves to those who are different from us (everyone is by the way!). This includes differences of age, ethnicity, national traits and individual backgrounds. However, we are encouraged in Scripture to make ourselves vulnerable and attempt to do this. Partly in this way God's church gather a people from 'every nation, tribe, people and language' (Revelation 7:9) and reflect the wonderful diversity He has in mind!

BIBLE FOCUS

1. Read the following passages (allocate to pairs?) and then discuss the questions below: **John 4:1-26;**
Matthew 15:21-28; Matthew 8:5-13
 - What cultural boundaries did Jesus cross here?
 - How did he make himself vulnerable in each situation and even put himself at risk?
 - How might his actions have been misinterpreted, or misinterpreted by some in the society of his time?
 - How did he go out of his way to accommodate others?
 - Is there anything else of note in the passages that strikes you?
2. Recall some of the incidents in Jesus' life and his interactions with the disciples. Imagine yourself as one of them.
 - What traits do you think would have made Jesus attractive to have as a friend?
 - Would there have been times when having him *as a friend* would have been at some cost? Have you ever had friends who have come with some 'cost' in this way?
3. We are encouraged in Scripture to reach out in friendship cross-culturally.
 - Have you had experience of making particular friends with folks of a different ...
 - ... generation?
 - ... nationality or ethnicity?

- ... socio-economic background?
 - ... religion?
 - How did this come about?
 - What were the obvious differences in cultural backgrounds, and what impact did these differences have?
 - Did vulnerability or humility play a part in building the friendship?
 - What was the reward to be had?
4. Self-awareness is key in building bridges across cultures – an understanding that not everyone is like ‘us’!
- Are there particular influences in terms of personality or family background (as well as some of the cultural traits discussed previously) that have shaped who you are?
 - Which of these are you thankful for?
 - Which might you appreciate being ‘redeemed’?

WORSHIP ACTIVITY

Either:

- Watch the video link on YouTube - DC Talk ‘Colored People’ - reflect on the words together (you may want to print a copy of the words for people to look at, see below).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iM17qeIIIIE4>

Pray and give thanks to God for the cultural diversity that there is across the world today.

Or:

- **Worship nets** - Using a ball of string or wool explain to the group that you are going to throw it to someone in the group whilst keeping hold of one end of it (you may need to unravel it a bit first).

The person who catches it then shares something or someone they want to thank God for. They then throw it to another person across the room, who does the same and so on.

As the ball of string travels across the room between people it creates a net of connections, and shows how we are joined together in our friendships and through our worship.

RESPONSE AND PRAYER

For the group: Pray for the relationships your group has with people from different cultures.

For individuals: Think about how you respond to people who you consider to be ‘different’ from yourself. Pray about whether you need to respond differently and ask God to help you.

DC TALK - "Colored People"

Pardon me, your epidermis is showing, sir
I couldn't help but note your shade of melanin
I tip my hat to the colorful arrangement
Cause I see the beauty in the tones of our skin

We've got to come together
And thank the Maker of us all

Chorus:
We're colored people, and we live in a tainted place
We're colored people, and they call us the human race
We've got a history so full of mistakes
And we are colored people who depend on a Holy Grace

A piece of canvas is only the beginning for
It takes on character with every loving stroke
This thing of beauty is the passion of an Artist's heart
By God's design, we are a skin kaleidoscope

We've got to come together,
Aren't we all human after all?

Chorus ...

Ignorance has wronged some races
And vengeance is the Lord's
If we aspire to share this space
Repentance is the cure

Well, just a day in the shoes of a color blind man
Should make it easy for you to see
That these diverse tones do more than cover our bones
As a part of our anatomy

Chorus ...

We're colored people, and they call us the human race
(Oh, colored people)
We're colored people, and we all gotta share this space
(Yeah we've got to come together somehow)
We're colored people, and we live in a tainted world
(Red and yellow, black and white)
We're colored people, every man, woman, boy, and girl
(Colored people, colored people, colored people, colored people, yeah)