



Cross-Cultural Collaboration

OPEN THE EYES OF MY HEART, LORD

Cross-Cultural Collaboration is our fourth value of the *Free Methodist Way*. From the beginning, God's intent was to have a people from every nation, culture and ethnicity, united in Christ and commissioned to carry out His work in the world. This is what heaven will be like! A place for all – cultures, nations, ethnicities – shouldn't we start practicing now on this side of heaven? As a group, watch through Pastor Jim's message on *Cross-Cultural Collaboration* and engage in the questions below.

Begin your group gathering by reciting in unison the following passage of Scripture: "*Open the eyes of my heart, Lord, Open the eyes of my heart. I want to see You, I want to see You.*"

Opening Activity:

As a group participate in this simple and fun exercise in observation. Take a common object – it can be most anything. As you pass it from person to person, have everyone name one attribute of the object (e.g. a tennis ball might be "fluorescent" or "fuzzy"). Continue through three complete cycles and have someone write down all the responses.

Now reflect on these questions together.

- For the first person to receive the object, how easy was it for you to name an attribute? How much time and thought did you give to your response?
- For the last person to receive the object in the third round, how much time and thought did you give before responding? How did your



experience differ from the first person to name an attribute of the object?

Questions:

- Describe a time where another person made a false assumption or judgment about you. How did that make you feel? How did you respond?
- How often do you ask your friends of color about their opinions, viewpoints, feedback, or experiences?
- What might be one step we can take in our church and personal lives to open the door to pursue collaboration with others?
- Consider this and discuss: People are not like the object we passed through our circle. They are people. We use objects, but when we use people, we objectify them rather than humanize them.

Digging Deeper:

READ: John 4v1-26

How beautifully Jesus shows us how to cross over barriers to discover and experience community! Imagine His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well in the fourth chapter of John's Gospel. She clearly understands the dividing wall of hostility between them: culturally and religiously, He is Jewish; she is a Samaritan. (John explains in verse 9 to make sure we outsiders know – "Jews do not associate with Samaritans.") He is a man; she is a woman. (In Jesus' culture, His disciples were shocked to see Him dialogue with her.) He is a holy rabbi; she has had quite a history. (Even conversing with her taints His reputation!) These are three "crossings" that Jesus does with great intentionality, even though they were culturally inappropriate in His day. Let's look at the...



1. Wall of hostility. Jesus crosses over into Samaria. What "Samarias" should we be crossing over into today?
 2. Issues of gender. Jesus talks with a woman. What issues of gender should we be crossing over today?
 3. Holy/unholy. Jesus interacts with a woman scarred by sin. In what ways can we minister to people scarred by sin without fear or apprehension?
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Pick one of the verses to read, if time, you can come back to the other.

READ: Acts 6v1-7

The book of Acts shows the breathtaking spread of the church from one people group to another. The Day of Pentecost in Chapter 2 marked the Holy Spirit's co-laboring toward this grand goal as people from all over the known world heard the message of Jesus in their own language. As persecution scattered the believers, the message spread like wildfire, but hit some firewalls of culture along the way. For instance, in Chapter 6, a dispute arose because Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jewish widows were being discriminated against in the distribution of food. The matter was settled by choosing seven deacons with the right culture and language to attend to these neglected women's needs. Barrier crossed.

- What spoke to you in this passage?
- Who are people in our culture who are overlooked or discriminated against because they are different from us?



Read: Acts 10v24-48

The book of Acts paints a portrait of cross-cultural expressions of faith in the early church. Chapter 10 tells the story of the Peter (a Jew) overcoming a lifetime of prejudice against Gentiles as God orchestrates an encounter with the Roman centurion named Cornelius. Complete with parallel confirming visions and a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit on a whole Gentile family, the wall between Jew and Gentile is breached.

- How are we like Peter – having a difficult time overcoming various prejudices – even religious ones?
- What role does the Holy Spirit play in bringing together the Jews and Gentiles in Acts 10? How might that inform us as to how the Spirit might work today toward the same ends?
- God uses the distinction between what is “clean” and “unclean” to convince Peter he has categorized people. What might we label “unclean” today that keeps us from crossing boundaries of culture to share the gospel and collaborate with new believers?

PRAY THIS TOGETHER:

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me”
(John 17:20-23).

