

Faithful Presence in Cross Cultural Situations

Luke 3:12-13 and 18:9-17; Luke 5:27-32; 7:34; 15:1-2; 19:1-10

Introduction: From the very beginning, Jesus intended that His message cross every cultural, racial and linguistic boundary. It was a message for the world and a message for each successive historical epoch. That means believers in each generation need to assess, “Where is God calling me to cross cultures? And, how do I do so in wise ways?” Jesus provides us with one of the best examples of cross-cultural faithful presence with the tax collectors.

1. CONCEPT – We are commanded to cross cultures. *Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8*

- A. Crossing cultures is part of the Great Commission. Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8
 - 1. Matthew 28 directs us to all nations. (See also Gen. 12:1-3.)
 - 2. Acts 1:8 directs us to the entire world.
- B. Crossing cultures is the example of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. Jesus addresses the Samaritan. John 4:27; 4:4
 - 2. The Spirit directs ministry to the Ethiopian. Acts 8:26, 29-30
- C. Crossing cultures is the legacy of the church. *Two examples...*
 - 1. The evangelization of Colonial America by David Brainerd (1743-47).
 - 2. The beginnings of the modern missionary movement with William Carey (1793).
- D. Crossing cultures is more crucial today than ever before.
 - 1. We experience cultural diversity today in two areas: a) immigration and b) pluralism.
 - 2. What do you think is your biggest hindrance to crossing cultures today?

2. EXAMPLE – Luke provides a theology of cross-cultural ministry in his progressive story of the tax-collectors. *Luke 5:27-32; 7:34; 15:1-2; 19:1-10*

- A. *Introduction* – Luke has a specific theology of tax-collectors in his book.
 - 1. The tax collectors were a totally despised sub-culture in Israel.
 - 2. Luke portrays them in an exceptionally positive light. Luke 3:12; 5:29-30; 18:10
- B. *Phase 1* – Jesus spends social time with tax collectors. Luke 5:27-32
 - 1. Jesus and Matthew lived in Capernaum.
 - 2. Jesus calls Matthew to be a full time follower. Matthew hosts a party.
- C. *Phase 2* – Jesus becomes a friend of tax collectors. Luke 7:34
 - 1. Jesus’ continues those relationships. Note the divine physician motif (5:31).
 - 2. Jesus received a reputation among the religious elite.
- D. *Phase 3* – Jesus begins active ministry with the tax collectors. Luke 15:1-2
 - 1. Jesus is traveling south on the way toward the cross. 9:5-52; 19:28
 - 2. Jesus’ reputation of safety allows Him to do direct ministry.
- E. *Phase 4* – Jesus leads the chief tax collector to Christ. Luke 19:1-11
 - 1. This story shows amazing artistry. Note the love in vs. 5 between the two “tree” verses.
 - 2. The placement of this story in the account suggests Zaccheus will now influence others.

3. APPLICATION – Four principles for crossing cultures.

- A. Ask yourself, “Is God drawing me toward a particular culture? What are its characteristics?”
- B. Ask yourself, “Where are people experiencing pain in that culture?”
- C. Ask, “How can I build trust within that culture, through the principles of “faithful presence”?”
- D. Ask, “Who are the *magnet people* within that culture, and how should I pray for them?”