

Connecting Heart to Heart

Leader's Guide

Part II: Reflection

PURPOSE: The goal of this Bible study is to help us examine our own attitudes about cross-cultural interactions and to challenge us to build bridges to, and friendships within, groups beyond our present boundaries – connecting Heart to Heart. **NOTE:** All references are from the NIV.

NOTE to Leader: In order to have enough time to complete the study of Part II in a half hour or less, it may be necessary to limit discussion of the Opening Activity and to plan ahead to assign selected references in the section called **Jesus, Witness to All**. Please see additional NOTES within the text below.

Introduction: *“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it”* (Heb. 13:2). When He appeared to the Eleven as they were eating, Jesus charged them: *“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation”* (Mark 16:15). Today, we, His church, continue that commission. When we fail to do so, we miss both an opportunity and a blessing!

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, we praise You for the many and wondrous blessings You bring into our lives. Confessing that we are in need of forgiveness, we ask that You bring to our hearts and minds an awareness of the openings we have for outreach. Enlarge our understanding. Fill our hearts with Your love. Show us Your way. We pray in the name of Your Precious Son, who died that we might live. Amen.

Opening Activity: Discuss with a partner or small group the following situation.

A couple in your congregation is excited about their adoption of a 4-year old child from another country. This precious child is brought to church and placed in your Sunday school class. As time progresses and the child understands more and more English, you notice that s/he never makes

direct eye contact with you. Researching cultural differences on the Internet, you learn that a child's steady eye contact in some cultures is considered impolite or even challenging — differing greatly from the common assumption that not making eye contact shows disinterest, disrespect, or even dishonesty.

Knowing this cultural difference, how might you adjust your interactions with the child? With the class? **sample answers:** change instructions: instead of “look at me”, “look at this picture”; have the child sit beside or near you so that frequent eye contact is not a huge issue

How might you support the family? **sample answers:** prayer; let parents know you are aware of the language and cultural bridge the family is spanning and that you want to be part of the support group; share your knowledge of this cultural difference with others in the congregation who might express their concern about it

Each of us belongs to several cultures linked to (among others): birthplace; family status; gender; age; education; physical condition; profession; place of work; economic status; nationality; ethnicity; language; religion.

How can awareness of cultural differences open wider the doors of communication? **sample answers:** less discomfort; helps avoid mistakes in etiquette; gives confidence to reach out

Name other situations, in addition to the previous one, in which more than one culture meet. **sample answers:** if you live or travel abroad; marriage; if you host an exchange student; in school; at work; at church

The Focus of Part II of our study is on recognizing the value of cultures around us and owning the desire and responsibility to reach out to build bridges and friendships. We look first at a number of examples of outreach in Jesus' ministry and the cultures addressed.

Jesus, Witness to All

We do not know what kinds of cross-cultural experiences Joseph and Mary may have encountered on their flight into Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15) or during the time they lived there. It is likely, however, that the two-year old Jesus would have found many people and things that were new upon His return to Nazareth (Matt. 2:19-23). What we know for certain is that the Son of Man lived the Father's desire that all people should come to know Him and come to Him.

Speed Search: Working independently or with a partner, look up one or more of the verses in the chart on the next page as assigned (or chosen) at random. Present your one-word or short-phrase answer for the **question** at the top of the page to the study group as a whole. Please limit your comments: the goal is to identify a maximum number of people mentioned in a

minimum amount of time. **NOTE: Once the Speed Search page is completed, including the questions beneath it, return to the question and paragraphs below.**

Question: To whom does our Savior show His compassion/concern/love/respect in these verses?

NOTE: This question is stated at the top of the Speed Search.

NOTES to Leader: Allow time for individual or group research of the references in the Speed Search and completing the assigned section of the chart, report rapidly, and then discuss the questions beneath the chart. Return to the first page of the study in the *Quarterly* for the question from Revelation 1:4-6 and closing the study. (See next page for chart.)

References marked with an asterisk and # mention women or people (which could include women). Depending on the size of the group, you might assign just the marked passages – or small groups might be assigned the references from one book of the Bible. Allow only 3-5 minutes for research and remind participants that answers are to be in the form of one word or a short phrase. Whole group sharing of answers will be most effective if done in rapid fashion.

Answers could also be written by participants or groups on flip chart paper and hung on the wall or written on a marker board for later copying by individuals.

It is not expected that the column for notes will be filled in for each reference. **Please limit comments: the goal is to identify a maximum number of people mentioned in a minimum amount of time.**

Speed Search

Question: To whom does our Savior show His compassion/concern/love/respect in these verses?

Mark:	Reference:	Compassion/concern/love/respect shown to:	Note:
	Matt. 8:1-4	leper, (priests)	
	Matt. 19:13-14	children, young	
	Matt. 19:16-22	rich young man	
*	Matt. 21:31b-32	tax collectors; prostitutes	
	Matt. 22:15-22	Caesar; authorities, government	
	Mark 1:16-20	fishermen, disciples	4names
	Mark 5:2-8	man with an evil spirit, emotionally or mentally ill	
	Mark 5:22-24	Jairus, synagogue ruler	
*	Mark 5:25-34	woman bleeding	
*	Mark 6:34-44	crowd; disciples; people	
*	Mark 12:41-44	poor widow	
*	Luke 2:45-51	teachers, temple leaders; parents	
*	Luke 4:16-22a	everyone in synagogue	more
	Luke 7:1-10	centurion, his servant	
*	Luke 7:36-50	sinful woman; Pharisee; Simon	
	Luke 19:1-10	Zacchaeus, rich tax collector	
*	Luke 23:33-36a	soldiers; rulers; crucifiers; people	
	Luke 23:40-43	criminals, thieves	
	John 3:1-15	Nicodemus, member of the Jewish ruling council	
#	John 4:7-10, 27-42	Samaritan woman; disciples	others
*	John 8:3-11	adulteress; teachers of the law	
	John 8:12-18	Pharisees; people	
	John 9:1-7	blind man	
	John 20:24-28	Thomas, doubter	
	John 21:15-19	Peter, denier	

One of the answers above is **marked with #**. **Discuss it further** by answering the following questions:

(NOTE: See next page of LG for questions and answers beneath the Speed Search.)

What was/is a stereotypical response to the people in this group? *verse 27 shows the disciples' surprise to see Jesus talking to her; answers will vary*

What was Jesus' response? *to offer her living water; answers will vary*

Who might be considered part of the group today? *answers will vary*

How do you think Jesus would respond to today's group? *answers will vary*

Read **Revelation 1:4-6**. How does John describe Jesus Christ? *faithful witness; answers will vary*

The Pharisees, their disciples, and the Herodians spoke accurately in Matt. 22:16b: *"Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are."* Jesus often goes with the one who makes the request, goes to the person in need, goes into the "awkward" situation: *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost"* (Luke 19:10).

Closing: Paul writes to Timothy about Christ Jesus " ... who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession," (1 Tim. 6:11-16 and John 18:33-37). John the Baptist assures his own disciples that Jesus "testifies to what he has seen and

heard," ... (John 3:32). May we follow the example of our Lord and Savior in all our interactions with all God's children.

Say or sing together: "O Son of God, in Galilee" [LSB 841, LW 400], "Jesus Loves Me" (substituting "us" for "me" and "we" for "I") [LSB 588], or the George F. Root chorus "Jesus Loves the Little Children."

Closing Prayer: Father, we thank you that when we were yet sinners, you had such compassion for us that you sent your only Son to become one of us to provide the sacrifice that covers our sin. Savior, thank you for your sinless life that is our robe of righteousness by faith and for conquering our enemy death. Holy Spirit, thank you for supplying power to speak to every nation. Holy Trinity, so fill our hearts with thankfulness, love, respect, and courage that we may follow confidently the outreach example of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

For Further Study, Discussion and/or Reflection:

NOTE to Leader: More information concerning the suggestions below may be found in the "Additional Resources" on the last page of the Leader's Guide (see below).

Complete Speed Search (or other sections) above. Discuss your answers with a partner or small group.

Create an "elevator speech" of 1-2 minutes that contains the major points that you would want to make in describing your faith and what it means to you.

Research the Internet for varied cultural attitudes toward interrupting, non-verbal communication, typical distance between conversationalists, physical touch, discussing money.

Locate and read the book *Angel Unaware* by Dale Evans Rogers, first published in 1953 (special edition 2004; publisher Revell).

Investigate the witness and/or outreach of other examples in the New Testament: Luke 1:2 (Luke); Luke 2:25-38 (Simeon and Anna);

Acts 5:32 (the Holy Spirit); Acts 8:5-6 (Philip in Samaria); Acts 8:14 (the apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria); Acts 9 (Ananias); Acts 11:22-26 (Barnabas — and later Paul — at Antioch); Acts 13:46-47 (Paul and Barnabas); Acts 16:22-34 (Paul and Silas); Acts 16-20 (Timothy); Col. 4:9 and Philemon 10 (slave Onesimus and Paul); Heb. 13:3 (those in prison); Paul's three missionary journeys and his journey to Rome.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

LEADER'S GUIDE

Parts I, II, and III

(I) *What's So Amazing About Grace?* by Philip Yancey was published in 1997 by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. While Chapter 12 is particularly appropriate to this study, all the chapters are thought-provoking.

(I) The poem "Outwitted" is the first one in Markham's book *The Shoes of Happiness and Other Poems* (Publisher: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1915). The full text of the poem (four lines) may be found at several locations on the Internet.

(I) In the musical *South Pacific* (1949, composed by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, book by Hammerstein and Joshua Logan), Lieutenant Cable sings "You've Got to be Carefully Taught." If it is available to you, play the song for participants. If not, find the words on line. Listen/read/sing and discuss.

(II) To research the Internet for varied cultural attitudes toward interrupting, non-verbal communication, typical distance between conversationalists, physical touch, discussing money, try entering a phrase such as: <cultural differences; eye contact>.

(II) In *Angel Unaware*, first published in 1953, (special edition 2004; Publisher Revell), Dale Evans Rogers tells the poignant story of daughter Robin Elizabeth, who died of complications of Down Syndrome. Evans was very influential in changing public perceptions of children with special needs and served as a role model for many parents.

(II) "Jesus Loves the Little Children" was written by George F. Root (1820-1895), who wrote the words and music for several well known hymns. The chorus may be found in *The Other Song Book, Revised Edition*, published in 1987 by The Fellowship Publications. Words are also available on line.