



Connecting Heart to Heart

Part I: Awareness

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.

Introduction: In the first chapter of Acts, verse 8, Jesus told those present at the ascension: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* Our Lord Jesus Christ commands us also to *“go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... and teaching them ...”* (Matt. 28:19-20). Both our Savior and the disciple Peter modeled this gospel outreach for us.

Opening Prayer: Savior of the Nations, come to us. Be among us as we study Your Word. Draw us together as one in You. Guide our thoughts, give us open hearts to see our shortcomings, and grant us repentance, comfort, encouragement, and spiritual growth. These things we ask in Your Name. Amen.

Opening Activity: Many of us treasure family practices that are part of holiday festivities. Make a brief list of customs that are/were special to your family during one or more of our holiday celebrations. Now share one of those traditions, and its origin if you know it, with a partner or in a small group.

The Focus of Part I of the study is on raising awareness of attitudes toward interactions with other cultures. We will look at Peter’s meeting with Cornelius (Acts 10), his defense to the early church (Acts 11), and the criticism Peter receives from Paul (Galatians 2). With these goals in mind, we begin.

Cornelius

A centurion was a Roman soldier who commanded a unit of one hundred men. Caesarea, a seaport built on the Mediterranean by King Herod and the Roman capital of Judea, lies some 30 miles north of Joppa (now Jaffa) and about 60 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

Read **Acts 10:1-8; 24-26; and 30-33.**

What time of day does Cornelius have his vision? Who visits him? What is Cornelius’ response? List several characteristics you would ascribe to Cornelius.

Peter

While Peter was visiting the saints in Lydda, his healing of Aeneas (who had been bedridden for eight years) became known in the area. When the widow Tabitha (also called Dorcas) became sick and died in nearby Joppa, disciples sent two men to ask Peter to come at once. Peter went with them, was taken to the upstairs room where the body lay, asked those grieving to leave the room, got down on his knees and prayed, and invited Tabitha to “get up.” He

presented the widow alive and Acts 9:42 says that many people believed in the Lord. While in Joppa, Peter stayed at the home of Simon the tanner.

Read **Acts 10:9-29 and 34-43**.

Compare the details of Peter's vision in verses 9-16 with that of Cornelius. What significance comes to mind when you notice the fact that the vision is repeated three times (verse 16)? Which words indicate that Peter does not immediately understand the vision? How does the Spirit prepare Peter for the arrival of Cornelius' servants? Which verses show the meaning of Peter's vision? What was the meaning? Restate the meaning in your own words. Why do you think this vision was necessary (verses 14 and 28; Gal. 2:7)?

How does Peter's response in verses 17-29 confirm the phrase, "God doesn't call the qualified; he qualifies the called."? In what way(s) does this experience fulfill Acts 1:8?

Read **Acts 10:34-48**.

What is Peter's realization in verses 34 and 47-48? List essential elements of the gospel message expressed in Peter's witness in verses 34-43.

Jerusalem Accusation and Peter's Explanation

When the Holy Spirit "came on all who heard the message," Acts 10:44-46, Peter is quite confident that he has understood correctly: God wants **all** to be saved. When Peter returns to Jerusalem, the apostles and brothers throughout Judea have already heard about the Joppa event.

Read **Acts 11:1-18**.

According to these verses, on what basis did the church at Jerusalem criticize Peter's visit to Cornelius? How does Peter use the description of his experience to present his case in a logical way? How does personal experience enrich our witness?

Do restrictions such as verses 1-2 exist today? If so, please give an example. What limits our

contact with a variety of cultures within our own communities? How does this limit our relationships? Why do you think we tend to undervalue those with whom we are not yet acquainted?

What makes us uncomfortable in situations that are cross-cultural? How is it possible to communicate even without a common language? Who/what builds our confidence? What are some things that we can do to insure that we reach beyond our usual boundaries?

Old Habits Hard to Break

Paul recounts that during a later visit to Jerusalem, those in the church there saw that God was at work in his preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles just as He was in Peter's work as an apostle to the Jews. Paul set before the church the gospel he [Paul] was preaching to the Gentiles. Even Titus, who was with him, had not been compelled to be circumcised. James, Peter, and John gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. Paul presumes upon their common faith and fellowship to admonish Peter in Antioch.

Read **Galatians 2:11-16**.

According to Paul, how is Peter in the wrong? What consequences could have developed had the situation continued? Why is it easy to return to old patterns of behavior? List opportunities to reach out that are already present in your life. With whom will you share the love of Christ?

Closing: *"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb ... "* (Rev. 3:9).

Say or sing together: "We Are Called to Stand Together" [LSB 828]. A more familiar melody is "Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing" [LSB 924, LW 218, TLH 50].

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, You call us to witness to every nation, tribe, language, and people. Give us awareness to be mindful of the opportunities we have, courage to reach out to all Your people, and boldness to tell of Your love from our own personal experience. Amen.

For Further Study and/or Discussion:

Study the passages above in another translation and/or paraphrase.

Read chapter 12 (entitled “No Oddballs Allowed”) in Philip Yancey’s book, What’s So Amazing About Grace? It was published in 1997 by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Locate and read Edwin Markham’s short poem called “Outwitted.” (One website resource is <www.sjsu.edu>.) Reread the poem out loud, substituting feminine pronouns for “he” and “his” and remembering that “God is love.” Memorize the poem so that, when the opportunity arises, you can share it with others.



Connecting Heart to Heart

Part II: Action

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.

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 steady eye contact in some cultures is considered impolite or even challenging — differing greatly from the 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? How might you support the family?

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? Name other situations, in addition to the previous one, in which more than one culture meet.

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. Then, we are reminded that all of us have sinned and that the gospel invitation is to be taken to all people and cultures. Finally, we rejoice in our adoption through faith into the unity of one body, Christ’s church. With these goals in mind, let us explore Scripture.

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 (Luke 2:21-23). 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 following **question** to the study group as a whole. Please hold your comments: the goal is to identify a maximum number of people mentioned in a minimum amount of time.

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

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		
	Matt. 19:13-14		
	Matt. 19:16-22		
*	Matt. 21:31b-32		
	Matt. 22:15-17		
	Mark 1:16-20	fishermen, disciples	4names
	Mark 5:2-8		
	Mark 5:22-24		
*	Mark 5:25-34		
*	Mark 6:34-44		
*	Mark 12:41-44		
*	Luke 2:45-51		
*	Luke 4:16-21		
	Luke 7:1-10		
*	Luke 7:36-50		
	Luke 19:1-10		
*	Luke 23:34-38		
	Luke 23:40-43		
	John 3:1-12		
#	John 4:7-10, 27-42		
*	John 8:3-11		
	John 8:12-18		
	John 9:1-7		
	John 20:24-28/		
	John 21:15-19		

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

What was/is a stereotypical response to the people in this group? What was Jesus' response? Who might be considered part of the group today? How do you think Jesus would respond to today's group?

Read **Revelation 1:4-6**. How does John describe Jesus Christ?

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).

All Sinners, All Invited

Read **Luke 15:2**. To whom is the Great Redeemer’s outreach here?

There is one common culture that we all share. We are all sinful and need forgiveness. *“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:22b-23). Fortunately for us, *“God does not judge by external appearance”* (Gal. 2:6), because *“... all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;”* (Is. 64:6). Fortunately for us, *“... God does not show favoritism”* (Rom. 2:11). Fortunately for us, *“... God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him”* (John 3:17).

Name some of the words and phrases used in the New Testament to indicate that God’s love and mercy are impartial and universal.

- Matthew 24:14 _____
- Acts 1:8 _____
- Mark 16:15 _____
- Romans 10:13 _____
- Luke 3:6 _____
- Galatians 2:9 _____
- Luke 24:47 _____
- 1 John 5:1 _____
- John 4:14 _____

Read **Revelation 14:6**. To whom is the Gospel to be proclaimed?

Read **1 Timothy 2:3-6**: Why must we speak the Good News to all?

So it has been from Jesus’ birth: shepherds, angels, wise men. Simeon, through the power of the Holy Spirit, recognized the Lord’s Christ and praised God in the temple courts: *“For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all people,”* and Anna *“gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem”* (Luke 2:25-38).

All Adopted, One Body

Read **Ephesians 1:4-8**. By what process does a person become the child of God?

Read **Romans 8:15-17**. What blessings belong “to those who are led by the Spirit of God”?

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:12-13). (See also: Acts 2:21; Rom. 8:23; 9:4; 2 Cor. 6:18).

Read **Ephesians 1:22-23**. Who is Christ’s body?

Read **Romans 12:4-8**. How does this body function? (See also: 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Col. 1:24-29.)

Read **Colossians 2:2-5**. Why is unity vital from a practical standpoint? From a spiritual standpoint?

Galatians 3:28 *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you [we] are all one in Christ Jesus.”* Jesus Himself asks the Father, in John 17:23: *“... May they [believers] be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me”.*

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). God has given us apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to prepare us for works of service “*until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*” (Eph. 4:13). May we be willing and eager to be transformed to the likeness of Jesus the witness and to share the Good News of the source of our salvation with all whom we meet.

Say or sing together: “Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace: [LSB 844], “Jesus Shall Reign” [LSB 832, LW 312, TLH 511], or the Peter Scholtes praise song, “They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love.”

Closing Prayer: Father of all who believe, remind us to see new cultures as opportunities, not walls which separate. Good Shepherd, we know that this is Your way. Lead us as we walk in it and seek to be Your faithful witnesses. Holy Spirit, keep us in the unity of our adoption. Grant us power, love, and self-discipline that we may not be afraid or ashamed to speak the Gospel to all and tell of the grace we have received through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

For Further Study, Discussion, and/or Action:

Identify one or more bridges that you will begin to build toward those God has brought into your life.

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

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

Try learning some words and/or phrases in another language. There are sites on the Internet, which provide limited basic instruction. Some libraries have “travel courses” available for check-out and most bookstores sell “mini-courses.” While many towns provide introductory

courses through adult education, it is not necessary that this be a full-fledged course to experience a sense of what is involved in becoming fluent in another language.

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 9:1-10 (Paul’s conversion); Acts 11:22-26 (Barnabas — and later Paul — at Antioch); Acts 13:47 (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.

Locate and read the children’s book And to Think That We Thought We’d Never Be Friends by Mary Ann Hoberman. It was published in 1999 by Crown Books and in 2003 by Dragonfly Books.



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 Leader's Guide
Part I: Awareness

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NOTE to Leader: Unless otherwise noted, all references are from the New International Version Bible.

Introduction: In the first chapter of Acts, verse 8, Jesus told those present at the ascension: “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*” Our Lord Jesus Christ commands us also to “*go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ... and teaching them ...*” (Matt. 28:19-20). Both our Savior and the disciple Peter modeled this gospel outreach for us.

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Opening Activity: Many of us treasure family practices that are part of holiday festivities. Make a brief list of customs that are/were special to your family during one or more of our holiday celebrations. Now share one of those traditions, and its origin if you know it, with a partner or in a small group. answers will vary

The Focus of Part I of the study is on raising awareness of attitudes toward interactions with other cultures. We will look at Peter’s meeting with Cornelius (Acts 10), his defense to the early church (Acts 11), and the criticism Peter receives from Paul (Galatians 2). With these goals in mind, we begin.

Cornelius

A centurion was a Roman soldier who commanded a unit of one hundred men. Caesarea, a seaport built on the Mediterranean by King Herod and the Roman capital of Judea, lies some 30 miles north of Joppa (now Jaffa) and about 60 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

Read **Acts 10:1-8; 24-26; and 30-33.**

What time of day does Cornelius have his vision? verse 3 about 3 o'clock in the afternoon

Who visits him? an angel of God

What is Cornelius’ response? called two servants and one soldier, told them what the angel said, and sent them to Joppa to bring back Peter

List several characteristics you would ascribe to Cornelius. sample answers: devout; God-

fearing; giving; prayerful; obedient; respected; respectful

Peter

While Peter was visiting the saints in Lydda, his healing of Aeneas (who had been bedridden for eight years) became known in the area. When the widow Tabitha (also called Dorcas) became sick and died in nearby Joppa, disciples sent two men to ask Peter to come at once. Peter went with them, was taken to the upstairs room where the body lay, asked those grieving to leave the room, got down on his knees and prayed, and invited Tabitha to “get up.” He presented the widow alive and Acts 9:42 says that many people believed in the Lord. While in Joppa, Peter stayed at the home of Simon the tanner.

Read **Acts 10:9-29 and 34-43**.

Compare the details of Peter’s vision in verses 9-16 with that of Cornelius.

Peter: about noon; voice + sheet; Peter answered 3 times, “Surely not, Lord!”; wondered; went with men (More!)

Cornelius: 3 p.m.; angel; Cornelius asked once: “What is it, Lord?”; understood; sent men to find Peter (More!)

What significance comes to mind when you notice the fact that the vision is repeated three times (verse 16)?

sample answers: a new concept needs reinforcement; reminds us of the Trinity; confident he (Peter) was sent to the Jews, but mission to the Gentiles was a whole new idea

Which words indicate that Peter does not immediately understand the vision?

verse 17 wondering about the meaning; verse 19 still thinking about the vision

How does the Spirit prepare Peter for the arrival of Cornelius’ servants?

prayer; Spirit tells him to get up, go downstairs, do not hesitate to go with them, for they are sent by Him

Which verses show the meaning of Peter’s vision? What was the meaning?

verse 15: “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean”; verse 28: “I should not call any man impure or unclean”; verses 34-35: “God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.”

Restate the meaning in your own words.

answers will vary

Why do you think this vision was necessary (verses 14 and 28; Gal. 2:7)?

Peter was sent to the Jews; lived under the law to reach them; was not to enter house of uncircumcised; Peter needed a dramatic and forceful message to prompt change in his behavior

How does Peter’s response in verses 17-29 confirm the phrase, “God doesn’t call the qualified; he qualifies the called.”?

sample answers: Peter had no experience witnessing to Gentiles; he uses his understanding of the vision and the power of the Holy Spirit to answer the call; he presents the gospel by sharing his personal testimony of its impact on his own life

In what way(s) does this experience fulfill Acts 1:8?

Peter witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and elsewhere; he receives power from the Holy Spirit

Read **Acts 10:34-48**.

What is Peter’s realization in verses 34 and 47-48?

God accepts all people, and all may come to Christ and be baptized; the Holy Spirit has been poured out on Cornelius’ household, just as on the circumcised with Peter

List essential elements of the gospel message expressed in Peter’s witness in verses 34-43.

verses 36-43; compare to the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed

Jerusalem Accusation and Peter’s Explanation

When the Holy Spirit “came on all who heard the message,” Acts 10:44-46, Peter is quite confident that he has understood correctly: God wants **all** to be saved. When Peter returns to

Jerusalem, the apostles and brothers throughout Judea have already heard about the Joppa event.

Read **Acts 11:1-18**.

According to these verses, on what basis did the church at Jerusalem criticize Peter's visit to Cornelius?

verse 3: they said that he "went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them"

How does Peter use the description of his experience to present his case in a logical way?

his realization --> message of God to Israel --> his personal witness (Gospel) --> others' witness

How does personal experience enrich our witness?

sample answers: it is real; it comes from the heart; it makes connections; it confirms the truth of God's Word

Do restrictions such as verses 1-2 exist today? If so, please give an example. yes

sample answers: cultural, religious and political; answers will vary

What limits our contact with a variety of cultures within our own communities?

sample answers: tendency to stay in our own groups; inability to communicate in another language; fear; discomfort

How does this limit our relationships?

sample answers: we miss opportunities to interact, to witness, and to create new friendships

Why do you think we tend to undervalue those with whom we are not yet acquainted?

sample answers: we don't understand them; we are fearful of differences; we have not yet encountered their best qualities; we have no basis for "accurate evaluation"

What makes us uncomfortable in situations that are cross-cultural?

sample answers: fear of the unknown; not understanding the language and/or customs; fear of making mistakes in etiquette; we are out

of our comfort zone; old teachings and beliefs can hinder us (See also page of additional resources.)

How is it possible to communicate even without a common language?

sample answers: smile; laughter; gesture; touch; food; music; care/compassion; children

Who/what builds our confidence? the Holy Spirit; practice; the Great Commission; answers will vary

What are some things that we can do to insure that we reach beyond our usual boundaries?

sample answers: attend alternate language church services; enjoy "food and culture" festivals; make an effort to be friendly to one person; be a greeter at church; invite someone new to LWML events and introduce her to others (More!)

Old Habits Hard to Break

Paul recounts that during a later visit to Jerusalem, those in the church there saw that God was at work in his preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles just as He was in Peter's work as an apostle to the Jews. Paul set before the church the gospel he [Paul] was preaching to the Gentiles. Even Titus, who was with him, had not been compelled to be circumcised. James, Peter and John gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. Paul presumes upon their common faith and fellowship to admonish Peter in Antioch.

Read **Galatians 2:11-16**.

According to Paul, how is Peter in the wrong?

hypocrisy; verse 12 Peter used to eat with Gentiles, but when certain men came from James, he began to draw back and separate himself from them; verse 14 he was living like and with Gentiles, but forcing them to follow Jewish customs; he was putting law before Gospel

What consequences could have developed had the situation continued?

sample answers: the Christian outreach to Gentiles might become confused and/or limited; it might lead others astray

Why is it easy to return to old patterns of behavior?

sample answers: fear; we are imperfect and inconsistent; we grow by small steps; it takes time to establish a new habit, it is easy to return to the old way; we know the new may be criticized; want to stay in comfort zone

List opportunities to reach out that are already present in your life. answers will vary

With whom will you share the love of Christ?
answers will vary and may be private

Closing: *“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb ...”*
(Rev. 3:9).

Say or sing together: “We Are Called to Stand Together” [LSB 828]. A more familiar melody is “Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing” [LSB 924, LW 218, TLH 50].

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, You call us to witness to every nation, tribe, language and people. Give us awareness to be mindful of the opportunities we have, courage to reach out to all Your people, and boldness to tell of Your love from our own personal experience. Amen.

For Further Study and/or Discussion:

Study the passages above in another translation and/or paraphrase.

Read chapter 12 (entitled “No Oddballs Allowed”) in Philip Yancey’s book, What’s So Amazing About Grace? It was published in 1997 by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Locate and read Edwin Markham’s short poem called “Outwitted.” (One website resource is www.sjsu.edu.) Reread the poem out loud, substituting feminine pronouns for “he” and “his” and remembering that “God is love.” Memorize the poem so that, when the opportunity arises, you can share it with others.

NOTE to Leader: If you know that you will have one time slot of less than an hour in which to work with the materials in Part II, you may want to “assign” the Speed Search as “homework” before the next session. This would allow for rapid reporting of the references in the chart and make available more time for discussion of the other section.

Connecting Heart to Heart

Leader’s Guide

Part II: Action

NOTE to Leader: 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 to Leader: In order to have enough time to complete the study of Part II in one 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.

Should you decide to include some of the Additional Resources (see last page), Part II could be divided into two sections by considering **Jesus, Witness to All** as one entity, adding a closing prayer of your own. The remainder, with the addition of an opening prayer, would serve as the second section.

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!

NOTE to Leader: Since the focus on Part II is action, you may want to ask the entire study group to read the prayer aloud together.

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 steady eye contact in some cultures is considered impolite or even challenging — differing greatly from the 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. Then, we are reminded that all of us have sinned and that the gospel invitation is to be taken to all people and cultures. Finally, we rejoice in our adoption through faith into the unity of one body, Christ’s church. With these goals in mind, let us explore Scripture.

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 (Luke 2:21-23). 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 following **question** to the study group as a whole. Please hold your comments: the goal is to identify a maximum number of people mentioned in a minimum amount of time.

NOTE to Leader: 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. 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.

If you have “assigned” Speed Search as “homework” before this session, you will skip the

searching and go directly to reporting. You may want to ask those who completed the “homework” to volunteer answers or to lead a small group in quickly completing the chart (or those items you have chosen in advance).

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

Please hold comments: the goal is to identify a maximum number of people mentioned in a minimum amount of time.

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

Speed search, complete chart, report rapidly, and then discuss the questions that follow. (See next page.)

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. 22:15-17	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 4:16-21	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 23:34-38	soldiers; rulers; crucifiers; people	
	Luke 23:40-43	criminals, thieves	
	John 3:1-12	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:

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).

NOTE to Leader: Break here if Part II is to have a second section at a separate time. Continue or

resume with **All Sinners, All Invited** on page 3 of the participant materials.

All Sinners, All Invited

Read **Luke 15:2**. To whom is the Great Redeemer's outreach here? sinners (each of us)

There is one common culture that we all share. We are all sinful and need forgiveness. "There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:22b-23). Fortunately for us, "God does not judge by external appearance" (Gal. 2:6), because "... all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Is. 64:6). Fortunately for us, "... God does not show favoritism" (Rom. 2:11). Fortunately for us, "... God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17).

Name some of the words and phrases used in the New Testament to indicate that God's love and mercy are impartial and universal.

NOTE to Leader: If time is growing short, ask participants to suggest words and phrases that answer the question above from general knowledge. Study of the specific references can later become part of personal quiet time study and devotions.

Matthew 24:14 whole world _____

Mark 16:15 all the world, all creation _____

Luke 3:6 all mankind _____

Luke 24:47 all nations _____

John 4:14 whoever drinks the water I will give him, Judea, Samaria, ends of the earth _____

Romans 10:13 everyone who calls on the name of the Lord _____

Galatians 2: Gentiles, Jews _____

1 John 5:1 everyone who believes _____

Read **Revelation 14:6**. To whom is the Gospel to be proclaimed?

those who live on the earth — every nation, tribe, language, and people

Read **1 Timothy 2:3-6**. Why must we speak the Good News to all? God wants all to be saved

So it has been from Jesus' birth: shepherds, angels, wise men. Simeon, through the power of the Holy Spirit, recognized the Lord's Christ and praised God in the temple courts: "*For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all people,*" and Anna "*gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem*" (Luke 2:25-38).

All Adopted, One Body

Read **Ephesians 1:4-8**. By what process does a person become the child of God?

adoption

Read **Romans 8:15-17**. What blessings belong "to those who are led by the Spirit of God"?

Spirit of sonship; God's children, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ; share in His glory

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12-13). (See also: Acts 2:21; Rom. 8:23; 9:4; 2 Cor. 6:18.)

Read **Ephesians 1:22-23**. Who is Christ's body? the church

Read **Romans 12:4-8**. How does this body function? (See also: 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Col. 1:24-29.)

in Christ, many form one body; each member belongs to all the others; they have different gifts;
answers will vary

Read **Colossians 2:2-5**. Why is unity vital from a practical standpoint?

people are orderly; they are without dissension; there are no divisions; they are able to work together; answers will vary

From a spiritual standpoint?

they will have the full riches of complete understanding; they will know the mystery of God, namely, Christ; they will live in harmony; they will be united in mind and thought; they will have conduct worthy of the Gospel; so that the world may believe

Galatians 3:28 "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you [we] are all one in Christ Jesus.*" Jesus Himself asks the Father, in John 17:23: "*...May they [believers] be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me*".

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). God has given us apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to prepare us for works of service "*until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*" (Eph. 4:13). May we be willing and eager to be transformed to the likeness of Jesus the witness and to share the Good News of the source of our salvation with all whom we meet.

Say or sing together: "Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace" [LSB 844], "Jesus Shall Reign" [LSB 832, LW 312, TLH 511], or the Peter Scholtes praise song, "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love".

Closing Prayer: Father of all who believe, remind us to see new cultures as opportunities, not walls which separate. Good Shepherd, we know that this is Your way. Lead us as we walk in it and seek to be Your faithful witnesses. Holy Spirit, keep us in the unity of our adoption. Grant us power, love, and self-discipline that we may not be afraid or ashamed to speak the gospel to all and tell of the grace we have received through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

For Further Study, Discussion and/or Action:

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.

Identify one or more bridges that you will begin to build toward those God has brought into your life.

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

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

Try learning some words and/or phrases in another language. There are sites on the Internet, which provide limited basic instruction. Some libraries have “travel courses” available for check-out and most bookstores sell “mini-

courses.” While many towns provide introductory courses through adult education, it is not necessary that this be a full-fledged course to experience a sense of what is involved in becoming fluent in another language.

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 9:1-10 (Paul’s conversion); Acts 11:22-26 (Barnabas — and later Paul — at Antioch); Acts 13:47 (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.

Locate and read the children’s book And to Think That We Thought We’d Never Be Friends by Mary Ann Hoberman. It was published in 1999 by Crown Books and in 2003 by Dragonfly Books.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

LEADER’S GUIDE

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.

The poem “Outwitted” is the first one in Markham’s book The Shoes of Happiness and Other Poems. It is also on a plaque displayed on the northwest corner of Tower Hall of Wagner College. The full text of the poem (four lines) may be found at the college website and at other locations on line.

To research on line 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>.

Try learning some words and/or phrases in another language. There are sites on line which provide limited basic instruction. Some libraries have “travel courses” available for check-out and most bookstores

sell “mini-courses.” While many towns provide introductory courses through adult education, it is not necessary that this be a full-fledged language course to experience a sense of what is involved in becoming fluent in another language.

It is possible that one or more speakers of another language would consider providing a one-time experiential session for a group.

In the musical “South Pacific”, 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.

Enjoy the poems “Hug O’War” and “No Difference” by Shel Silverstein. If you don’t own and can’t borrow his book [Where the Sidewalk Ends](#), published by Harper Collins in 1974 and again as the 30th Anniversary Edition in 2004, you may be able to locate the poems on line.

The children’s book [And to Think That We Thought We’d Never Be Friends](#) was written by Mary Ann Hoberman and illustrated by Kevin Hawkes. It was published in 1999 by Crown Books and in 2003 by Dragonfly Books.

The song “They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love” was copyrighted in 1968 by Peter Scholtes and has been recorded by several Christian artists, including Jars of Clay and Rebecca St. James. It has been published in several collections, including Concordia Publishing House’s [Hymns For Now I](#) and Singspiration’s [Folk Celebration](#). If you have a recording or know the melody, words are available on line.