

Flexible: how to build cross-cultural bridges

discussion guide

based on **1 Corinthians 9.19-23** (Linked to sermon of 5/3/23)
which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/talks

Intro: can you think of an example of cross-cultural miscommunication from your life?
Can you think of an example where you have been enriched by friendship with someone from a different cultural background?

Read 1 Corinthians 9.19-23

V19 Paul says he is free – but *chooses* to become a slave. Elsewhere he talks about being a slave to Christ. Here he is a slave to everyone. What then is the nature of Christian freedom?
How does this relate to Jesus' call to 'deny ourselves and take up our cross'?

V20 Paul was a Jew by birth, yet says he 'became like a Jew'. In other words, he didn't see his ethnicity or race as his primary identity. Sanjay commented, "Our birth background doesn't define us. Whatever our birth background, our identity now is in Christ."

Which bits of your birth background are most important to you?

In what ways might they rival our identity in Christ?

Sanjay was clear that our birth cultures are still important to God and us, that God brings unity in Christ, not uniformity. In what ways could we appreciate our cultural diversity more?

V21-22 Paul was constantly flexible in his approach, for the sake of evangelism. Think of someone you know from a different cultural background who isn't a Christian. What might you need to learn about their culture, in order to share the gospel message appropriately? What questions could you ask them?
Paul wanted to win people, not arguments. What will help you avoid the temptation to win the argument, not the person?

Sanjay said, "We need to build bridges to other cultures otherwise the church will always look like us." Dan said a few weeks ago that our vision is to be a church which better reflects the increasing diversity of our local area. What might 'building bridges' look like for you?

Spend some time praying for friends from other cultural background; for our church to become more inter-connected across our own cultural diversity; and for our church to reflect the increasing diversity of our local area. You might also find our '3 words prayer' relevant:

Father God,

Remind us that you are with us, so we may be courageous.

Remind us that Jesus gave everything for us,
so we may be whole-hearted followers of him.

Remind us that you are able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine,
according to your power that is at work in us - and so make us expectant.

Come, Holy Spirit and transform us into the people you are calling us to be. Amen.