



THE MULTIETHNIC
KINGDOM
OF GOD

REFLECTION GUIDE

Welcome

Thanks for joining us for our teaching series on The Multiethnic Kingdom of God. We hope this reflection guide is a helpful supplement for you and those with whom you follow after Jesus.

The aim of this series is to put us in touch with God's heart to assemble a Kingdom people of every, tongue, tribe, and nation. This series will establish a biblical and missional foundation for our community. We want to express this in how we reach out to those around us with the good news of Jesus. We want to see this brought to life in our church through the kind of unity between different people that only the Spirit can bring. We want to do the hard work of bringing people together in the midst of tension, just as the early church did, through humility, listening, repentance, and lament. Our hope is that God would more and more make our church a window into the future, a picture of what His people will look like gathered around the throne.

Thank you for joining us on this journey.

Christian, Tim, Hannah and the Hillcrest Team

How to use this reflection guide

Throughout this series, our desire is to have a firm foundation of intimacy with God in prayer. In this series we will ask God to teach us about ourselves and help us to identify the ways in which we see the world. This self-reflective work is hard, and can be messy; God might show us challenging things about ourselves. We also recognise and believe that there is an enemy out there who likes to use disunity and division against us and the Kingdom of God. Our hope, then, is to establish and maintain prayerful, humble, and courageous hearts.

Each week will begin with an invitation to pray. We encourage you to begin with this practice, before moving on to the study and reflection sections of the guide

After you have spent time in prayer for yourself, our church, and our world, take some time to read the Scriptures provided and consider the questions asked.

You may simply want to go through the reflection guide on your own or with a trusted friend. It can also be used as a guide for conversation with your small group, family, or housemates. If you're working through this guide with your small group, plan to do the reading and reflection on your own, and come to your group prepared to share.

God's Mission to All Peoples

In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.

- Isaiah 2:2

Pray

Read John 17:20-23. Inspired by the verses you just read, write a prayer for Hillcrest church and the body of Christ worldwide.

Study

Read Genesis 12:1-3

- In this text we read the call of Abraham. In what ways is God's call to Abraham a response (and a surprise!) to the break up of people following the tower of Babel (found in Genesis 11:1-9)?
- How would you summarize God's heart for all the people of the world as he expressed to Abraham?

Read Acts 2:1-24

- How does Acts 2 reverse what happened at Babel, and begin to fulfill God's promise to Abraham?
- In what ways does this passage of scripture shape how we think about God's multiethnic Kingdom?
- How does God's Spirit move people in this passage? How does it shape perspective?

Definitions

Homogenous: of the same kind; alike.

Culture is defined as the set of shared attitudes, goals, practices and values of a country, group or institution.

A cross-cultural experience would be defined as experiencing a culture that is different from the one you usually live and/or work in.

Ethnicity includes culture, especially language, but emphasizes common ancestry and geography.

Jesus the Boundary-Crossing Messiah

They sailed across to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. -
Luke 8:26

Pray

Pray for the church in Bellingham and Whatcom County. Pray for a heart to reach all people of every tongue, tribe, and nation both around the world and across the street.

Study

Read the story of the Samaritan woman in John 4. As you read, notice and highlight some of the boundaries that you see in the story and times where they are crossed.

- Name the boundaries you see in the story.
- Notice how Jesus goes to where the woman is. What does this say about Jesus' approach to cultural and social boundaries?
- What does Jesus, as a boundary crossing Messiah, say about the Kingdom of God?
- How does Jesus, as the boundary crossing Messiah, shape how we think about social and cultural boundaries in our own lives?

Jesus demonstrates the crossing of these boundaries and then sends His disciples out to do the same.

- What does this tell us about our own mission and place in God's story?

Ethnic and Cultural Tension, and the Kingdom of God

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility... - Ephesians 2:14

Pray

Read Acts 11:1-18. Reflect and write a prayer for the church in America today based on what you have just read.

Study

Read Acts 15

- How do you think the Gentiles felt as the apostles and elders met to discuss the “entry requirements” for them to be a part of the Kingdom of God?

At the center of the debate was the practice of circumcision, a culturally held tradition that the Jews believed and taught as both pivotal and fundamental to their salvation, yet was being disputed as a no longer required practice. Circumcision, along with food laws, and keeping the Sabbath, were the cultural practices that marked out Jews as Jews in the first century. The question the early church was debating was whether Gentiles (non-Jews) had to essentially become culturally Jewish to be followers of Jesus.

- What do you think it was like for the Jews to see Gentiles beginning to claim and follow this Jewish Messiah?
- The Jews had to sacrifice something for the inclusion of the Gentiles. What do you think this was like for the Jews in the church? How did they feel and respond?
- What about for the Gentiles? The council, equally, radically alters their value system. What do you think it was like for the Gentiles to rearrange what they valued in their life in order to participate in the Kingdom of God?
- Some of the Jews were glad to hear the Gentiles had converted to following Jesus, but wanted the Gentiles to become culturally Jewish in order to be “saved” and participate in community.
 - In what ways has this same dynamic played out in church history, and does it still occur today?

Living with Honesty and Humility in the Current Church Age

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. -

Romans 12:15 - 18

Pray

Read Luke 10:25-37. Write a prayer inspired by these verses.

Study

Read *Philippians 2:1-4*

- How does Jesus exemplify humility?
 - What does that mean for us?
- What does walking humbly with others look like practically?
 - Who do you know that exemplifies this?

Read *James 5:16*

- How does James encourage believers to act?
- When is a time someone confessed to you and it brought healing?
- When is a time you have courageously confessed sin to someone else?
- What would a church community quick to confess sin look and feel like?

Resources

Books

- Reading While Black - Esau McCaulley
- Redemptive Kingdom Diversity - Jarvis Williams
- Building a Healthy Multiethnic Church - Mark Deymaz
- A Many Colored Kingdom - Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Stever Kang, Gary A. Parrett
- Beyond Racial Division: A Unifying Alternative to Colorblindness and Antiracism - George Yancy
- From every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race - J. Daniel Hays
- From Mother to Son - Jasmine L. Holmes
- The Color of Compromise - Jemar Tisby
- Strength to Love - Martin Luther King Jr
- One Blood - John M. Perkins
- Prophetic Lament by Soong-Chan Rah
- First Nations Version: An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament, by Terry M. Wildman