

# Embrace Diversity



## Multicultural Ministry Bible Study

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## Study Overview

- This bible studies are intended for use by any group who would like to engage in dialogue on biblical themes that relate to issues of inclusiveness and diversity in the church. Likewise, for individuals who has a calling in multicultural mission and ministry.
- The Bible studies are presented in the hope that by reflecting on God's word and scriptural themes, we can rise above the issue of diversity in the Church and in our communities.
- The structure of each study session will require a facilitator determining how to open and close with prayer, deciding when to begin and end the different parts of the session, allowing members to participate, ensuring a safe environment by reminding participants of the communication guideline, allowing time and space for dialogue through Mutual Invitation process.
- The best method is to schedule a weekly session. Monthly is not recommended because the long period in between sessions will minimize the focus.
- It is not necessary for anyone in the group to have extensive knowledge of the bible or a Theologian because it is the sharing from each other that is pertinent.
- The sessions can be enhanced or complemented by inviting a guest speaker who might have a special insight on the scripture passages or topic. Likewise, a guided meditation from someone affected by cultural insensitivity.
- Each participant should have a copy of the Study guide to take notes and to provide a sense of the direction.
- Introduction to each session is simply to provide basic orientation to the theme to be explored.
- Be very attentive to using Communication guidelines during discussions and using Mutual Invitation process during dialogues or reflections.

# Leader's Notes

## Opening Prayer

*Leader says:* Let us all pray:

**God of the nations, you call us to share in the life and ministry of your Church. Enable us, though different in colour, customs and heritage, to celebrate our oneness in you and the shared inheritance of your Kingdom.**

**Prosper our work as we endeavour to build bridges of love, understanding and cooperation, that, transformed and renewed by your Holy Spirit, we will be no longer strangers to one another, but together, as members of your household, Always give you glory, through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

## Creating a Safe Environment

*Leader says:* Before we get started, there is a communication guideline (*Towards Open Communications*) that we must adhere to in order to create a safe environment for discussions. Likewise, a *Mutual Invitation* process will be followed during a dialogue. The difference is that *Discussion* is a free form communication and exchange of ideas while a *Dialogue* is having your own time and space to communicate your thoughts, feelings or ideas without any judgment or contradiction or criticism.

*Leader reads the following before proceeding:*

**Before we start, there is an overall ground rule that if at anytime during this Bible study, you asked to do something that you don't want to do, simply say, "pass". We do not want to make anyone feel uncomfortable and no one needs to feel pressured.**

**The ground rules:**

- 1. The Bible passage, and not the Leader or the Group, is the focus of this Bible study.**
- 2. We are not here to debate who has the right interpretation, but we are here to read the Scripture together and share our insights.**
- 3. Our Leaders are not experts. They are but facilitators who will lead us through a process by which the inspiration from Scriptures can be shared and celebrated.**
- 4. We are all equals before the Scripture; therefore no needs to feel disadvantaged. We invite you to adopt a "beginner's mind" so that every time we approach a text, we would hear it as if for the first time.**
- 5. We seek insights and not just information; it is essential that everyone join in the discussion.**
- 6. We invite you to hold the personal information shared here in confidence because only in this way can we feel to say what is in our minds and hearts.**

## **Mutual Invitation Process**

- Objective:** To facilitate sharing and dialogue in a multicultural group and to decentralize the power and control of the facilitator.
- Setting:** Participants should sit in a circle.
- Time required:** 1 to 2 minutes for the person to share, depending on the size of the group or the time allocated.
- How to proceed:**

1. The facilitator or designated person will share first.
2. After the facilitator or designated person has spoken, he or she then invites another person to share.
3. Who you invite does not need to be the person next to you to avoid going in circle process.
4. Then after this person has spoken, he or she is given the privilege to invite another person to share and so on.
5. If you do not want to say anything, simply say “pass” and proceed to invite another to share.
6. We will do follow this process until everyone has been invited to speak.

### **Please note:**

*There is a tendency to give up on the process and go back to whoever-wants-to-talk-can-talk process. We have to persist in using it because this process addresses differences in the perception of personal power among the participants. Some people will be eager for their turn, while others will be reluctant to speak when they are invited. If a person speaks very briefly and then does not remember to invite the next person, do not invite for him or her. Simply point out that they have the privilege to invite the next person to speak. This is especially important if a person “passes” because this person still has the privilege to invite. If someone exceeds the time required to speak, all members will remind the speaker that he or she has gone beyond the allotted time to share and must conclude and invite another person to speak.*

## Towards Open Communications

*Narrative:* We, people from different race, culture and ethnic backgrounds, bring with us different assumptions of communication styles. Sometimes, these different assumptions can cause misunderstanding among the participants. **This document is intended to facilitate open and free expression relating to the experience of participants with regard to racism without any inhibitions and impediments.**

1. We are not here to debate who is right and who is wrong. We are here to experience true dialogue in which we strive to communicate honestly and listen actively and openly to each other. We invite you to open your hearts and minds to experience new ideas, feelings and situations even though, at times, the process may be uncomfortable.
2. The facilitators are not experts or teachers. Their role is to provide a structure and process by which we can better communicate with each other.
3. We recognize that we might have preconceived assumptions and perceptions about others. Some are conscious; some are unconscious. We invite you to be aware of how they influence the way you listen and interpret others' words and actions. We also invite you to be aware of how these assumptions affect the way you speak and act in the group. In doing so, we can better maintain our respect for and acceptance of self and others as valuable human beings.
4. We invite you to take responsibility for what you say. We also invite you to speak with words that others can hear and understand, whenever possible, use specific personal examples that relate to the topic being discussed.

We encourage the use of "I" statements. "I" statements are about owning and respecting one's understanding, assumptions, information experience, feelings, values, analysis and desired outcomes while allowing space and respecting other people's space. If one's experience or understanding be different from that of another - it does not belittle or negate either. It just shows they are different and are to be respected for what they are. Our own experience and understanding are areas of potential agreement or disagreement. It helps in our relating if we know the area of our agreements and disagreements. Being aware of these can help us to understand both our own and other people's perspectives and help us find a common ground. This can only happen if we take ownership.

5. We invite you to expand your listening sense to include not just words but also feelings being expressed, nonverbal communications such as body language and different ways of using silence. Active listening requires that we do not let our thoughts wander, that we are not 'lining up' our rebuttals, and that we 'check out' with the person our understanding of what they are sharing. Paraphrasing what we think we heard is helpful in checking our understanding. Please avoid "yes, but..."

**6.** We invite you to take responsibility for your own feelings as they surface. Feelings are neither right nor wrong and may be triggered by particular words or actions but they may or may not be directly related to the particular interaction. Share your feelings by describing what you are experiencing rather than just 'naming' your experience.

In doing so, members of the group can hear and learn constructively the consequences of our words and actions. When we do not share what we are feeling, it leaves the interpretation of what we are saying more open to misunderstanding. For example, our anxiety, nervousness, or silence might be interpreted as anger, hostility, impatience, or disinterest.

**7.** We invite you to hold the personal information shared here in confidence because only in this way can we feel free to say what is in our minds and hearts.

## Study Guide

*The Leader explains the study procedure: During this study, we will listen to the same Bible passage(s) three times. Each participant will be invited to share his or her insight after each reading. In order to ensure that everyone who wants to share has the opportunity to speak, we will use Mutual Invitation process.*

### Step 1:

*Leader invites a participant to read the text for the **first time**. Leader will ask the group: **As the passage is read, I invite you to watch for a word, phrase, or image that speaks to you.***

### **Read Text - (Please refer to the Bible Study Sessions for the selected passages)**

*After reading, there may be a period of silence then using Mutual Invitation, the leader or a designated person will share first. After that person has spoken, he or she invites another person to share until everyone has been invited to share.*

### Step 2:

*Leader invites another participant to read the text for the **second time**. Leader says: **As the passages are read, I invite you to reflect on this question:***

*(The Leader may choose one of the following questions or another suitable question.)*

- a) What was the writer trying to say to the people of his or her time?*
- b) Imagine yourself as one of the characters in the story. How do you feel as this character?*
- c) Where does this biblical passage touch your life today?*
- d) Where does this biblical story relate with your life story?*
- e) What does this passage say about our theme?*

### **Read Text - (Please refer to the Bible Study Sessions for the selected passages)**

*Once again, using Mutual Invitation process, Leader will say: **I now invite you to share your reflection on this question.** (Repeat the question selected)*

### Step 3:

*Leader invites another participant to read the text for the **third time**. Leader says: **As the passages are read, I invite you to reflect on this question: What does God asking you to do through this passage?***

### **Read Text - (Please refer to the Bible Study Sessions for the selected passages)**

*Once again, using Mutual Invitation process, Leader will say: **I now invite you to share your reflection.** (Repeat the question)*

## **Bible Study Sessions**

### **Session 1: In the Beginning**

Since the beginning, the bible reveals God as an inclusive and welcoming God. Through the descendants of Abraham, God would send the Messiah to redeem the world, all people of the earth. God recognizes the diversity of “families” as “nations” or ethnic groups with their own unique languages. (Genesis 10:31) Then, the whole world had one language. The people decided to build a tower to the heavens to glorify themselves. God was not happy as his people were worshipping themselves and creation, not the Creator. So God confused their language until they could not understand each other and scattered all over the earth. (Genesis 11:1-9) Even after the fall (Adam & Eve) and the Flood, God sought after to regain fellowship. At the heart of the covenants were blessings extended to “all people of the earth” Instead of working with scattered people, the promise of hope and a future that is given to Abraham and his family, one nation, so that he may bless all peoples through His involvement with that one family (Genesis 12:1-3) While there was a chosen people, these people were to be God’s light to the nations Isaiah 42:6. So the message was to spread the gospel to all. God welcomes all people to the blessings of the gospel. God extends special concern to the less privileged (Exodus 22:22 Deuteronomy 10:18 Psalms 146:9) The strangers who were outside the covenant were not to be mistreated or oppressed, “You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” Deuteronomy 10:19 Even as an extension of neighborly love (Leviticus 19:18) and they were treated as one of the local-born (Leviticus 19:33-34)

**Genesis 1:26-31** *Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’*

*So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’ God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

**Genesis 10:31,** <sup>31</sup>*These are the descendants of Shem, by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations.*

**Genesis 11:1-9,** *Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. <sup>2</sup>And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. <sup>3</sup>And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.’ And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. <sup>4</sup>Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.’ <sup>5</sup>The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. <sup>6</sup>And the LORD said, ‘Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup>Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.’ <sup>8</sup>So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. <sup>9</sup>Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused\* the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.*

**Genesis 12:1-3**, *Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'*

**Isaiah 42:6**, *<sup>6</sup>I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations,*

**Isaiah 61:1-9** *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.*

*Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines; but you shall be called priests of the Lord, you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory. Because their shame was double, and dishonour was proclaimed as their lot, therefore they shall possess a double portion; everlasting joy shall be theirs.*

*For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.*

**Exodus 22:21-22**, *You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. <sup>22</sup>You shall not abuse any widow or orphan.*

**Deuteronomy 10:17-19**, *who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. <sup>19</sup>You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*

**Psalms 146:9**, *The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.*

**Leviticus 19:18**, *You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD*

**Leviticus 19:33-34** *When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. <sup>34</sup>The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.*

## Session 2: Body of Christ

St. Paul describes the community of Christ followers as the Body of Christ; each person in the community is a component on the Body of Christ, a necessary part. While St. Paul was illustrating the different spiritual gifts but he goes on to say that whatever ethnicity or social status we are all baptized in one body. For the reason of the diversity, the body as a whole is able to function.

**1 Corinthians 12:12-27**, *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. <sup>14</sup>Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup>And if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup>But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. <sup>19</sup>If all were a single member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>As it is, there are many members, yet one body. <sup>21</sup>The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’, nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ <sup>22</sup>On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup>and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; <sup>24</sup>whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, <sup>25</sup>that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. <sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

**Ephesians 4:1-6**, *I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

**John 17:20-26**, *I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup>that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup>The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, <sup>23</sup>I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. <sup>24</sup>Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup>‘Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup>I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.’*

**Matthew 26:26-29** *While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ <sup>27</sup>Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; <sup>28</sup>for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup>I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.’*

### Session 3: The Great Commission

This passage in Matthew records Jesus' command to his disciples to make disciples of every nation. The phrase "make disciples" satisfied the question of what Jesus' followers were commissioned to do. But the phrase "of all nations" specified the extensive target Jesus had in mind. The Greek term translated as "nation" is *ethnos*. In other words, Jesus was commanding his followers to make disciples of people from all ethnic backgrounds. All nations, all peoples, all languages, all cultures, and all ethnic groups were to be evangelized, in contrast to Matthew 10:5-6, where the apostle's message was restricted to the people of Israel. The dividing wall between Jew and Gentile was broken by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**Matthew 28:18-20** *And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'*

**Ephesians 2:11-22**, *So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth,\* called 'the uncircumcision' by those who are called 'the circumcision'—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body\* through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.\* So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.\* In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually\* into a dwelling-place for God.*

**Acts 1:8**, *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

**Galatians 3:28**, *There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*

**Colossians 3:11**, *In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!*

**1 Peter 1:22** *Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth\* so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply\* from the heart.*

## Session 4: Transformation as Ambassadors

St. Paul spoke of reaching both Jews and non-Jews. He was willing to change his ways and customs in order to win people in Christ. St. Paul's outreach went beyond simply announcing the gospel but also living cross-culturally for the sake of the gospel. Whenever you interact at deeper levels with those from other racial and cultural backgrounds, we must be willing to adjust. We are challenged to go through transformation, a renewal of the heart.

St. Paul also spoke of two things God did for the believer. First, God reconciled the believer to Himself. As new creations in Christ, believers are reconciled to God. Second, God has given every believer the ministry of reconciliation. All who are ambassadors of Christ are called to represent God regardless of ethnic identity. Christians are called to evangelize their world regardless of color, class, or culture.

**1 Corinthians 9:20-23**, *To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. <sup>21</sup>To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. <sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some. <sup>23</sup>I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.*

**Romans 15:5-7**, *May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*

**Isaiah 56:3-8**, *Do not let the foreigner joined to the LORD say, 'The LORD will surely separate me from his people'; and do not let the eunuch say, 'I am just a dry tree.' <sup>4</sup>For thus says the LORD: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, <sup>5</sup>I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.*

*And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant—<sup>7</sup>these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. <sup>8</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.*

**Acts 20:21**, *as I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus.*

**Ephesians 3:6-7**, *that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power.*

**John 1:9-14** *The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*

**Luke 10:30-37**, *Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii,\* gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'*

**2 Corinthians 5:11-21** *Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences. <sup>12</sup>We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart. <sup>13</sup>For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. <sup>15</sup>And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. <sup>17</sup>So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup>So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**Revelation 7:9-11**, *After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!' And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God,*

## ***Closing Prayer***

O God, who created all peoples in your image,  
We thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world.  
Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship,  
And show us your presence in those who differ most from us,  
Until our knowledge of your love  
Is made perfect in our love for all your children;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen