



What is the Christian Role in Cultural Reconciliation?

"Please don't sit next to me, please don't sit next to me, please! Ah, I can't deal with them. Seriously! They dress all crazy and if they sit next to me, people will think I hang out with them. I actually don't even know their names, but like I really don't care. I'm not a bigot, I just don't want them around me. Nor do I want to be with those other people that think they are so much better than me because of where they live. Whatever, I just wish they would just leave. When is service going to start anyway? I wonder why we all have to be at the same church."

Many of us would like to believe that racial and cultural prejudice are on the decline in our world, but all you have to do is look around and know that is not true. There are strong prejudices between blacks and whites, rich and poor, Catholics and Protestants, Jews and Palestinians, and the educated and uneducated. Being a Christian does not mean that you are immune to prejudice or hate. Sadly, some of the worst atrocities in history were led by Christians who thought they were doing "good" for God's kingdom by killing others. Jesus did not ever tell us to kill if others didn't believe in Him. As Christians, we are commanded to stand against prejudice and be the visible expression of Christian love to all people. Hatred and judgment of people and people groups have existed since Cain killed Abel and continue today, a quick glance at the morning news confirms this, but even amid all the strife, there is Jesus. He puts one arm around the blind, another around the poor and loves them both.

In Jesus' day, prejudice was common among people groups: Jews, Gentiles and Samaritans were all at odds with each other. Jews were not allowed to speak to or walk on the land of those "half-bred" Samaritans. Jesus not only traveled into Samaria, but he met a woman at a well. He talked with her about her 5 former husbands and the man she was living with that was not her husband. Jesus loved her right where she was, despite her sinful lifestyle. She, through His compassion, conversation and forgiveness, believed that He was the Living Water and the Son of God. She dropped her water jug and ran back into the town to tell others what had happened. John 4:39 *"Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony."* Sometimes it takes crossing the line and going against the tide to break down the walls of bias and hatred.

Every single person needs Jesus Christ, and every one of us has equal access to Him, through believing God died for all the sins of all people and then He rose again, just as He said He would! God doesn't discriminate. We are all welcome in His house. We must hold tight to the truth that every person, no matter what the creed or color, is loved by God and He wants to have a relationship with them. We, as believers, are called to be peacemakers, to love our enemies and to speak the truth of Christ to them through our lives and with our words.

John 13:34-35 *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

1 John 4:11-12 *"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."*