

Culture Bible Study 4: **God's Love for All Cultures**

*Jesus loves the little children—
All the children of the world.
Red, brown, yellow, black, and white—
They are precious in his sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.*

This song is almost as common as the Lord's Prayer. It's difficult to imagine that Jesus might not love little children—those defenseless, cute little creatures who naturally evoke a response of tenderness.

But between childhood and adolescence, the Sunday-school veneer of "reaching out to all" is rubbed off to expose a heart that isn't filled with especially tender thoughts about people of another color.

Jesus loves every culture he created. Its members are little children, and he longs for them to fully experience the healing of his compassion. That's what redemption is all about. Because some of our sincere attempts to bring others into this love have been clumsy and insulting to other cultures, we are bombarded with accusations of destroying other cultures with Christianity. Some of those accusations are true and worth listening to. Yet these mistakes are not the true picture of our ministry. The gospel is good news to all societies, and God has always called and is still calling his people to bear his redemptive love to every place and people group on the earth.

Read Psalm 67.

1. Identify the blessings the Lord wants to bring to the nations.
2. Discuss what these blessings would look like if they came to your own culture.
3. Consider how these blessings would affect some other nation in the world.
4. Explain how the psalmist sees the relationship between the blessings on Israel (the "us" of verse 1) and the nations' blessing.

In chapter 1 of Jonah we learn of God's command to Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach. Jonah ran from the Lord, taking a ship in the opposite direction. God brought a storm, and Jonah was thrown overboard to save the ship from God's wrath. To continue the story reach Jonah 1:17-2:10.

5. Some cultures are so reprehensible to us that we would rather see God's judgment upon them than his blessing. This was the problem Jonah had with the Ninevites. They were so corrupt and bloodthirsty that towers of human skulls formed the gateway to their city. In your mind what culture or group would compare to that today?

5A. How would you feel if God asked you to go into that culture and tell the people about him?

6. How does Jonah express his sense of God's grace (2:2, 6, 9)?

Read Jonah 3.

7. How do the Ninevites respond to Jonah's message (vv. 5-9)?

8. How does God respond to their repentance (v. 10)?

Read Jonah 4.

9. Why is Jonah "displeased" and "angry" (vv. 1-3)?

10. Normally to call God "gracious and compassionate" means that we want to praise him. Why does Jonah seem to resent God's compassion in verse 2?

11. How does God respond to Jonah's anger (vv. 4-9)?

12. What is God's lesson through the vine (vv. 6-11)?

13. *Response:* Write a sentence thanking God for his compassion for the nations. Close by praying through these sentences as a group.

This study is available online at: www.intervarsity.org/ism/article/8218
For Further Study: Genesis 12:1-3; Matthew 12:38-42.