



## WEEK 1: GOD'S PERFECT PEOPLE

The question we aim to answer in this week's message is the following: Isn't it okay for people to just hang out with people like them?

### TODAY'S TEXTS:

Genesis 1:26-27, Acts 17:26-27, Genesis 12:1-3, Luke 4:24-30, Matthew 8:11-12, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 & Revelation 5:7-10.

### ONE MAIN POINT:

God's plan for his people has always been and will always be that they would be a radically diverse crew united by very little other than their common love of Christ.



In order to understand why God intends on diversity, we need to look at God's plan for humanity from beginning to end.

1. The first man and woman were born as image bearers of God. All humanity carries this same pattern, because every nation originated from one common ancestor (this is not just found in Genesis but in Paul's writing in Acts).
2. Culture and civilization developed after the fall, which became incongruent with God's original design for peace and unity, because of sin. God smashed open man's pride at the tower of Babel and used different languages to divide people, which forced them to scatter them into different regions.
3. In order to bring humanity back into its original design for unity in diversity, God chose Abraham, in order to bring about a nation that would be his own. The goal of setting apart a nation for himself, was not to exclude all other nations, but instead, to pour out His blessing upon them. In receiving his blessing, Israel was to witness to the surrounding nations of the glory of God, and draw them towards him. The promise given to Abraham about blessing, was intended to spread to all humanity, and would ultimately be fulfilled in the blessing of salvation through Christ.
4. When Jesus began his earthly ministry, he not only taught about the "outsiders" being brought into his kingdom, but he also loved and healed gentiles - even the very "worst" of them (such tax collectors or Roman officials). **He demonstrated that the true family of God was one of diversity.**





5. Jesus not only demonstrated this, he also commanded his disciples to go out and make sure that the Gentiles, all over the world, were called into the Kingdom. The disciples themselves, were to preach to them, disciple them, and send them out to do the same.
6. Paul, though a Jew, understood Jesus' heart for his diverse kingdom. Peter, on the other hand, did not. They fought constantly about it, because Peter could not release his own expectations of what God's kingdom should have been like. He could not fathom how the lawless gentiles could have become part of the chosen people, without conforming to the rituals and laws that had governed the people of Israel since their exodus from Egypt.
7. The early church struggled to adjust to the new paradigm of diversity that Jesus had introduced, and so they needed much coaching. Paul helped them to understand that their diversity was what made them functional as a family. He compared their spiritual gifts to the workings of a body, each part necessary for the whole to operate according to its design. This principle applied to other areas of diversity too: rich and poor, servants and masters, Jews and Greeks, men and women. Their diversity and uniqueness is what made the family of God function and thrive in the way it was designed to.
8. In the final book of the Bible, Revelation, John wrote of what the kingdom of God would truly look like: people together from every tribe and nation. This is who we are. It is time that we start to live out that identity in our reality.

- ❖ Q: Why is it important for us to realise, from scripture, that all of humanity are image bearers of God?
- ❖ Q: What do you think the garden of Eden would have been like, diversity-wise, had Adam and Eve not sinned? Explain your answer.
- ❖ Q: Why do you think it was so hard for Peter to embrace the truth of diversity, within the kingdom of God, that Jesus ushered in?
- ❖ Q: Why do you think we as human beings struggle, like Peter did, to not only accept but embrace diversity, in the way that Jesus wants us to?
- ❖ Q: Why is Paul's analogy to the body so important for us, when we think of our experience as a 92 percent homogenous church, in a nation like ours?
- ❖ Q: The kingdom of God is diverse. That is a fact. Why is it then so important for us to live out that identity on earth, while we wait in a fallen world for Christ to fully redeem all things?
- ❖ *Personal Reflection Q: What is your biggest struggle with diversity, theologically speaking? (You must have a theological basis in your struggle to move away from homogeneity. It is important to work out the theological struggle before you can walk forward obediently. It is worth considering, however, that the struggle is more often than not, a heart struggle. But once you are aware that this could be the deeper issue, then there is help at hand. Because Christ is in the business of renewing our minds and redeeming our sinful hearts.)*

