

43-01-02-Following our Enculturated Savior  
incarnation, culture, communication, missions  
John 1:14a

Christ's Incarnation makes cross-cultural outreach our mandate.

**INTRODUCTION:** (Responsive Reading: John 1:1-14)

–The *Incarnation* is a very *human-friendly* part of our Christian faith. There's no better way God could *reveal His love* for us than to *become one of us*. But, by taking on our flesh, Jesus took on a human culture. The Incarnation was an **enculturation** [means “to assimilate a new culture”]. He entered a human culture to transform it with Kingdom culture.  
–Following our enculturated Savior (**title**) means to “go into all the world” with His Gospel. This “world” is full of cultures different than our own. It may not always be easy, but **HOM.idea**. Let's look at His example:

**I. His Dynamic Experience of a Culture– John 1:14a (NKJV), And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...**

- A. Jesus “became flesh” in a *body* but “dwelt among us” in a *culture*.
- B. A *culture* is a set pattern of *human interactions* with the world.  
(People take those behaviors wherever they go.) **A culture can be:**
  1. **ethnic:** norms for a “*people group*” within a society or nation.
  2. **sub-cultural:** behavioral norms adopted within a smaller group.
  3. **personal:** a person's unique behavioral pattern of living life.
- C. To appreciate a *culture* we must know the dynamics that shaped it.
  1. A land's weather shapes *dress, cuisine, architecture, work*.
  2. History shapes *behavior* [Curtains left open in the evening in Holland.]
  3. Philosophy & religion shape *values, ethics, economy, politics*.
- D. What can cultures do ethnically, sub-culturally, or personally?
  1. They can unite people, but also blind them to other cultures.
  2. They can create group identity, but also suppress *individuality*.
  3. They can be productive (helping people *survive life's challenges*) or destructive (creating or supporting *de-humanizing behaviors*).

**TRANS:** God cares for all people living in *all cultures*. Jesus “became flesh and dwelt among us” to save people in “every” human culture– Rev 5:9b [is addressed to Christ, saying] “and with your blood you purchased men for God from every **tribe** and **language** and **people** and **nation**.” **Christ's Incarnation makes cross-cultural outreach our mandate.** Let's look at...

## II. His Divine Entrance into a Culture

- A. God's Son came to earth by a giant cross-cultural move:
1. Jesus left His *heavenly* culture for an *earthly one*. (When He says "Follow Me," He's asking us to do only what He's done Himself.)
  2. Jesus became a *Jewish* boy, culturally learning all the *behavior patterns* considered proper for a Jewish lifestyle in those days.)
- B. By becoming "*flesh*" to save people in all cultures, He entered a specific human culture. (But the salvation He brought was a *new life in the culture of God's Kingdom*, and **He began living it out**.)
- C. Christ's cross-cultural willingness, in order to bring humanity into *God's Kingdom culture*, is the example we are to follow.
1. Crossing cultural lines, He changed a culture by transforming its people. (People with **His light** dispel earth's *cultural darkness*.)
  2. To share Christ's *saving message*, we too can enter cultures that are *ethnically, sub-culturally* or *personally* different than ours.

**TRANS: The Incarnation makes cross-cultural communication our mandate.** It's *easy to relax* in the *familiar ways* we're *at home* with, but Heaven's our real home. We pray, "**Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven**." Jesus left a *cross-cultural example* of His will, and it's that...

## III. His Disciples Encompass Other Cultures

- A. Each of us is a *missionary* [from the **Latin**, "*sent one*"]. We're **sent** by Jesus Himself– John 20:21, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."
1. More often than to foreign lands, *Jesus sends us to our neighbors* who have *personal cultures* that can seem foreign to our own.
  2. When Jesus sends us, out of our *comfort zones* into *unfamiliar cultural territory*, He goes with us to share His Kingdom love.
- B. A stubborn attachment to our own culture can hinder the Gospel.
1. [In the **early church**, a *sub-culture* of Jewish Christians, tried to keep the Gospel *Jewish*, but God quickly clothed it in the cultural dress of the Greeks.]
  2. The Gospel we share may seem foreign to some people, if we're unwilling to defer our own *cultural preferences* to theirs.
- C. The *unfamiliar stretch* felt, by *entering someone else's personal culture*, may end up deepening our own spiritual growth.
1. [**A. J. Appasamy**, a Christian scholar from India, wrote that the message "of *Jesus Christ is for the whole world*. It is so infinitely rich that *different nations with their characteristic gifts interpret and emphasize this or that*

*aspect of its teaching...* [showing that] *the tributes which are laid at the feet of Jesus Christ by different countries are of great value to the whole Church.*]

2. We're not to adopt cultural falsehoods, personal or social, but we must leave our comfort zone for the sake of *sharing Christ*. [**Some years ago**, I did 650 hours of massage training at a school that rented its facilities from a New Age resort. *To me*, the religious environment there was *uncomfortably foreign*. But I shared my faith when I could. I didn't see any conversions, but I did get a hearing, because they knew I was a Christian pastor **on their turf**, not to *argue* but to *learn*, and it was my openness to their personal culture that made them open to hear what I had to say.]

## CONCLUSION:

–Because Christ's own *enculturation* shows God's love for all people in all cultures, **the Incarnation makes cross-cultural communication our mandate**. Jesus still enculterates Himself by indwelling His people in the macrocosm of myriad world cultures, but also in the microcosm of individual believers, who have their own unique *personal culture*.  
 –God hears prayers from *all kinds of backgrounds* and preferences. No prayer sounds foreign to Him, because *Jesus has encompasses every culture so He can transform the people living in them*. We have both the privilege and the responsibility to do the same in our personal world, if we choose to follow our enculturated Savior.