

Series: Christianity 101
"CROSS-Cultural Living"
1 Peter 3.8

Candid Camera is not nearly as popular as it was a generation ago, but some of their episodes are iconic. They did several episodes that focus on social influence and peer pressure. One dealt with elevator psychology. The person being tricked is in the elevator alone. Then, three staff members of Candid Camera enter and face the rear of the elevator. Then, the one man, trying to maintain his individuality, little by little, turns and faces the rear of the elevator.

Another episode takes place in a doctor's office waiting room. Everyone in the room—who are in on the experiment—has stripped down to their underwear. The 'test person' sits down, observed his surroundings, and then begins to take off his clothes as well!

The easiest thing in the world to simply comply and live like the world...to just go with the flow of life and live pretty much like everyone else is living. However, for those of us who know Christ as our Savior, we know that should not be true of us. Those of us who, by faith, have been to the cross of Christ, seen Him bleeding and suffering there for our sins, and have been transformed into His disciples, cannot afford to live like everyone around us. The Lord Jesus is never pleased with such social conformity. He expects us to live "CROSS-culturally," and thus the title of my message.

So, when I use the term and title "CROSS-Cultural Living," I'm not using it in a missions' context where a missionary lives life in a foreign culture. I'm using it with regard to us living "against the grain" of our culture right where we live, living and conducting our lives like we've been forever changed by the CROSS, and therefore, living differently than those who've never 'been there.'

The word "**finally**" in verse 8 does not signal the end of the letter, but the conclusion of the current section, which began all the way back in 2.11 where we were urged—as strangers, exiles—to stay away from the passions of the flesh and to live honorably among unbelievers.

That living honorably includes submissiveness to authority, even for those who were slaves at the time. Even for anyone living under the reign of an oppressive government. Even for wives who are married to someone who's antagonistic to the faith. And even those believing husbands had better use their authority to demonstrate servant leadership in the home. *How CROSS-cultural is all of that?*

No one lived a "CROSS-cultural" life better than the Lord Jesus. And speaking of how our Lord lived, verse 8 is loaded with Christlikeness. And in this one verse we have five virtues that, if you flesh them out, you automatically live "CROSS-culturally."

Also, practicing these virtues will lead to *smooth relationships...within the church*, and with pretty much anyone else in most cases. How cross-cultural would that be today?!!

Therefore, my purpose for preaching this sermon to share with you **five Christlike virtues** to be modeled by all Christ followers as they live CROSS-culturally...

And when they are, they will lead to *smooth relationships within the church* (and with pretty much anyone else in most cases).

Be Harmonious ("of one mind")

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus.

"These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single fist, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold."

"Which channel do you want?" asks Linus.

Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get together like that?"

The call to "harmony" is common in the New Testament:

Romans 12.16a Live in harmony with one another.

Among other exhortations, in **2 Corinthians 13:11** we are told to "...agree with one another, live in peace...

1 Corinthians 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you....

Philippians 2:2 Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Where two or more people exist, differences of opinion exist. However, we as Christians must strive to be governed by the mind of Christ, so that differences do not divide us but rather enrich us. Therefore, he exhorts us to "be of one mind," to live in harmony with one another.

Being of one mind does not mean becoming a clone, and it's not an invitation to join a cult! In a cult, everyone thinks the same thing—whatever the cult leader teaches. **Conformity is the operative principle in cults.**

Harmony is the operative principle in Christianity.

An orchestra is made up of many different musicians with a wide variety of instruments. However, even those playing the same instrument might be playing different parts to be played even by the same kind of instrument. In a good orchestra, every member plays the same song, and all follow the leadership of one conductor. So, it should be in the church. We all have different stations in life, different gifts and abilities, different viewpoints on things...BUT we've embraced the same gospel, we're trusting in the same Savior, and we must always strive to follow His leadership through obedience to His Word and submission to His Spirit.

In our physical bodies, when a group of unhealthy cells begins attacking and devouring another group of healthy cells, we call that cancer. Tragically, and even more seriously, the same can happen to the body of Christ. May it never ever happen in our fellowship, but a local body of believers can have members that begin to devour one another.

Listen to Paul's warning to the Galatian church: **Galatians 5:15** If you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Psalms 133:1 reads, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" That verse was at the bottom of our church's stationary for several years. Believers don't manufacture unity in the church; it already exists. We are already *one in Christ* (Gal. 3:28). So, we don't manufacture unity; we strive to protect and maintain that unity.

Be Sympathetic ("be sympathetic")

NKJV: "having compassion for one another"

This one of the blessed characteristics of our Lord, who is our sympathetic high priest...

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to **sympathize** with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Our Lord attended a wedding and celebrated with the joy of the newlywed couple. Our Lord also wept with those who wept over Lazarus's death. Our Lord entered fully into the experiences and emotions of humanity...just like we're instructed to do...

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Like the Lord Jesus, we are exhorted to play "emotional Dominoes" with other believers, matching your emotion with the emotions of someone else.

1 Corinthians 12:24–26 ...God has so composed the body...that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

George Washington Carver once wrote...."How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these "

Be Loving ("brotherly love")

I'm not sure how old my younger brother Rex and I were at the time, but I'm going to guess around 12 and 8. I'm pretty sure Rex started it all by calling me a name. And with my propensity for "righteous rage," I gingerly picked him up and body slammed him.

Rex the Ruthless came back with more name-calling and I continuing with my imitation of Jesus overthrowing the money tables in the temple and I threw him to the floor again and again until finally, Ruthless Rex had had enough. Into the kitchen he goes.

So, I'm feeling pretty good about myself for beating up my brother who was 3.5 years younger than me...*until Rex returned from the kitchen! Ole Rex had something in his hand he didn't have when he left the den...a steak knife!!*

The next words out of Rex's mouth have been echoing in my head ever since: "I'll cut you, man! I'll cut you!!" And I've not body-slammed Rex since that day!!!

When Scripture tells us to "love as brothers," to demonstrate brotherly love, that's not the kind of love Rex and I were showing one another back in the day!

Instead, this scriptural brotherly love is a much more mature type of love. It's actually the kind of love Rex and I now have for each other. The kind of love that enabled us to thoroughly enjoy each other's company when we hiked the Grand Canyon and several other surrounding National Parks last September. The kind of love that I believe either of us would express to the other in doing whatever was necessary to help the other and thereby fulfill the Lord's "new commandment" in John 13...

John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Loving one another is to be THE distinguishing mark of the Christian community. It's *the* mark that signals to the watching world: we belong to Jesus, the Lover of our souls.

Romans 12.10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

1 Thessalonians 4:9–10 Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more.

Paul Cedar writes, "***This is family vocabulary.***" We are members of the family of God. Christ is our "older brother," and we are all brothers and sisters in Him.

During Vacation Bible School a teacher's class was interrupted about an hour before dismissal when a new student was brought in.

The little boy had one arm missing, and since the class was almost over, she had no opportunity to learn any of the details about the cause or his state of adjustment. She was very nervous and afraid that one of the other children would comment on his handicap and embarrass him. There was no opportunity to caution them, so she proceeded as carefully as possible.

As the class time came to a close, she asked the class to join her in their usual closing exercise. "Let's make our churches," she said. And so everyone put their hands together with their fingers interlocked and tucked inside their closed palms. "Here's the church and here's the steeple, open the doors and there's the people."

The awful truth of her own actions struck her. The very thing she had feared that the children would do, she had done. As she stood there speechless, the little girl sitting next to the boy reached over with her left hand and placed it up to his right hand and said, "*Davey, let's make the church together.*"

You know what a loving church family does? *They put their inadequate, handicapped lives alongside the lives of others and say, "Let's lovingly make the church together."*

Be Compassionate ("a tender heart")

The idea is to have deep inward feelings and genuine concern for the other person, especially when we observe the suffering which another person endures.

The only other place in the NT where this exact word is found is in Ephesians... **Ephesians 4:32** Be kind to one another, *tenderhearted*, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

We have received the free grace and compassion of the Lord Jesus and He wants us to imitate Himself show the same tenderheartedness to others. ***We are not to be compassionate or tenderhearted to score points with heaven; we do so because we've already been touched by the Lord of heaven.***

The root word of this virtue is found in several other places. Let me share a few of them...

After the parable of the prodigal son, the wayward son came to the end of himself and his sinful living, he decided to return home and to his loving father. In **Luke 15:20** we are told that "while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and ***felt compassion***, and ran and embraced him and kissed him."

Matthew 15:32 Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "*I have compassion* on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. ***And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.***"

Here's where we see the difference between "sympathy" and compassion or being tenderhearted. Both deal with being conscious of other people's feelings. However, the difference is that this word refers to taking action to alleviate whatever need there may be. —Life Application Bible

Compassion/tenderheartedness is a desire to not only see and feel the problem but to become a solution to fixing the problem.

Matthew 14:14 When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and *he had compassion* on them ***and healed their sick.***

In Matthew 20, two blind men cry out over the noise of the crowd and ask Jesus to open their eyes so they can see...

Matthew 20:34 And ***Jesus in pity touched their eyes***, and immediately they recovered their sight and followed him.

Matthew 9:36 When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

You see, the brand of Christianity that fails to make us more tenderhearted and kinder is not New Testament Christianity. —J. Allen Blair

Don't know if you've heard of it or not, but the Wounded Warrior Project is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to honor and empower wounded warriors. This mission is accomplished primarily by raising awareness of the needs of severely wounded service men and women and by providing unique programs and services to meet those needs.

I have often likened the church to a spiritual hospital, a place where people from all walks of life with all sorts of “wounds” can come and have their hurts ministered to.

For a believer and/or a church to effectively minister to the “wounded” all around us, we will need to have the same compassion and perspective on people that Christ had when He saw those needing healing, when He encountered people who were hungry, when he saw that “harassed and helpless” crowd of “sheep without a shepherd.”

People are “harassed and helpless” because of the consequences of sin, because of the assaults of Satan against them and their families. People are wondering aimlessly through life “like sheep without a shepherd” because of false teaching and false religions.

People are wounded because of divorce, death, and disease. They hurt because of unfulfilled dreams and selfishness on the part of a parent, spouse, or friend. They have scars because of lies and deception, because of broken promises, because of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. The wounded list goes on and on and on.

We must do everything in our power to make our church a place of refuge, a place where “wounded warriors” can have their “injuries” ministered to. A place where those who have suffered much at the hands of their “adversary the devil” can be nursed back to spiritual health. A place where any believer can regain his/her spiritual equilibrium and one day resume useful service to the Lord.

Be Humble (“a humble mind”)

A few years ago, there was a Little League World Series game between GA and HI. It was an elimination game with the winner going to the USA Championship game. The teams had faced each other twice already and split. HI had beaten GA the day before in an elimination game and then beat them a second time in as many days.

After the game, the HI coach tried to settle down his team and with them huddled around he kept repeating, “Humble! Humble! Humble!”

I don’t know how many Bible verses that coach could quote, but he was certainly biblical in his exhortation.

Romans 12.16b Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

1 Peter 5.5 ...be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Being “humble” does not mean you have a poor self-concept (“I’m no good”). That’s false humility. Instead, true humility is an awareness of one’s gifts and abilities *coupled with the awareness that God is the giver of all those capabilities and He’s the one who deserves the glory for them, not us.*

Romans 12:3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, *but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*

The latter part of verse 3 there shows the balance: *thinking with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*

True humility is that accurate opinion of yourself that’s maintained and demonstrated whether or not anyone is around. It’s when God Himself can testify to your being humble in your thought life, to your being humble in spirit. – Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll

How uncommon is genuine humility, the kind of attitude that was in Christ when He humbled Himself and became one of us (Phil. 2)? Jesus, the King of glory, became a servant to all. Humility involves a willingness to take the lower place, to do the less exalted service, and to put the interests of others ahead of one’s own interests. Imagine everyone associated with Unity constantly putting the interests of others ahead of their own!

Humility is achieved when there is constant awareness that who I am, and what I've done, and what I'm doing, and what I will do, is all because of Christ!

1 Corinthians 4:7 ...What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

Humility is what you see and learn when you study the life of the Lord Jesus. Listen to His personal testimony...

Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

If there is to be 'like-mindedness' with Jesus, there must also be 'lowly-mindedness.' –Edmund Clowney

In the 17th century, the wealthy landowners would hold hunting expeditions. And although they camped out in the open, they brought fully staffed kitchens, dressing rooms and even libraries and all the household staff to make it work.

After they shot and killed several deer, the camping trip would turn into an outdoor feast. The household staff, however, never got any venison to eat. Although they did all the work, all they would get would be the leftover scraps – the innerds – we call them, which they referred to as “umbles.”

They would take the “umbles” and clean them, prepare them with vegetables and fruit, and then roll it all up in dough and bake it; it came out looking like a pie. They referred to it as “umble pie.” –Adapted from www.wordorigins.org/humblepie via Steven Davey

This phrase would change over the course of time into “humble pie.” and it came to refer to someone who was forced by failure or loss or demotion to be eating humble pie.

They would be brought down a notch or two because they didn't win. So, they were effectively forced to eat humble pie.

Look, no one voluntarily orders a slice of humble pie, right? *Unless they do so in obedience to Scripture.* Would you commit yourself to making “humble pie” a regular part of your spiritual diet?

If you're a follower of Jesus, would you commit yourself right now to being harmonious, sympathetic, loving, compassionate, and humble? After all, don't you want to live “CROSS-culturally” and thereby imitate your Lord?