

*Text summary of a message delivered by Margaret Loh at Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2025.  
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## **One in Christ: A Cross-Cultural Calling**

### **Ephesians 4:1-6**

Revelation 7:9 paints a beautiful picture of unity in diversity, with *'a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb,'* worshipping Jesus Christ. This diversity is a testament to the inclusivity of our faith. It's a joy to come together this morning in one Spirit, united in our worship of Him, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

As the world is open to everyone. Globalisation became a cultural enrichment, making crossing borders easy. Cross-cultural interaction and fusion occurred through the flow of activities, holidays, work, sharing of ideas and designs, traditions, new relationships, food, and other cultural practices.

According to 2025 census data, the population of Singapore is 6.11 million, of which 60% are citizens 40% are Permanent Residents and foreigners living in Singapore. As for New Zealand, the estimated population in 2025 is 5.34 million, of which 70.5% are citizens and 29.5% are PR and foreigners living in New Zealand. These census data gives us a sense of how social movements and cultural values can influence change. They are intertwined. In general, the higher that percentage, the more cross-cultural you are. Therefore, cross-culturalism is

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unavoidable. Also, this diversity reflects the cross-cultural nature of our world today and the opportunities it presents for us to grow together in Christ.

As Ephesians 2:19 beautifully puts it, **'So then, you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God'**. This unity in Christ binds us all together, making us part of a larger and loving community.

Today's message comes in three parts:

1. "Christ for everyone" from Galatians 3:26 to 29.
2. "Cross-cultural in ancient times and today"
3. "Oneness in Christ" from Ephesians 4:1 to 6,

This slide shows the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul. I will take you through a small part of the Apostle Paul's ministry that is relevant to our learning this morning. The Apostle Paul, in the first century, broke through boundaries and integrated people across cultures and ethnicities through cross-cultural transformation. This transformation, at the heart of the Gospel, refers to the process of cultural exchange and mutual understanding that occurs when people from different cultural backgrounds come together in Christ. Even today, it is God's intention for cross-cultural transformation to occur.

Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians from Antioch: **Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,** (Galatians 3:25-26).

In verse 25, **"This faith has come,"** Paul centres the message about Christ Jesus that all things hold together in Christ. Our faith is in Christ, who is no longer under the guardianship of the Old Covenant, the Law of Moses. People do not have to become Jews to be counted as children of God. No one needs to convert to Judaism. There is no need to change your identity, tradition, or culture.

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We don't have to earn our way to God. The verses encapsulate the message of Jesus' unconditional love, which is based on His grace, stating that **"we are all children of God through faith."**

***for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Everyone is offered the same opportunity to become a child of God and a full member of the Body of Christ.*** (Galatians 3:27-29)

Verse 28 further affirms that the gift of salvation is for all people. In Christ Jesus, we are all one. This unity in Christ is a powerful bond that connects us all. God promises everyone who belongs to Christ will receive His blessings and inheritance. We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

When I studied Paul's missionary journeys, my learning felt endless and fresh every time. I admire the Apostle Paul for his obedience and faithfulness, his strategic thinking, his boldness, and his ways of teaching and leading believers and churches. As such, his ministry contributed significantly to the growth of early Christianity.

His boldness in pushing forward, crossing boundaries, and integrating was the key to the spread of early Christianity. His ministry journeys and locations provided him with a blend of cultural, social, and political factors. All these created the perfect environment for early Christianity to grow and thrive.

Here are three main contextual factors contributing to the success of Paul's ministry in ancient times:

1. The diverse cultural context of the Roman Empire. The Apostle Paul began his ministry in these dense and close-knit communities, which facilitated rapid growth.

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2. Greek was used as the common language. However, there are many different types of people in that region. Greek was written and spoken throughout the eastern Mediterranean. The Bible was written in Greek, so the people easily understood it.
3. Social networks were an advantage to the Gospel. People came from different cities; they were travellers and traders. They particularly enjoyed cultural exchange and were open to sharing their lives and views, which allowed Christian messages to reach a wide range of people.

The Apostle Paul's cross-cultural encounters were at the heart of the Gospel. It is a divine commission to cross boundaries and fulfil God's intent for cross-cultural mission – The Great Commission of making disciples. The concept of cross-cultural or intercultural biblical hermeneutics or interpretation is meant not only for ancient times but also for today's churches.

You can see from the slide that God's intent for cross-cultural mission has not changed.

*Is cultural diversity equal to cross-culturalism?* No. **Cultural diversity** merely refers to the existence of many different cultural groups. **Cross-culturalism**, on the other hand, refers to the *interaction and exchange of practices between these various cultures*, which is what we are celebrating today.

For example, a city like Auckland is *diverse* with many cultures living side-by-side and among each other. If they live without much interaction with different cultures, the city will be diverse rather than cross-cultural. Therefore, diversity is merely describing the state of having multiple cultures exist together. They are not necessarily cross-cultural. A *cross-cultural* city or community is one with a diverse group of people actively interacting, sharing ideas, beliefs, and practices across different cultural backgrounds. These are mostly done intentionally, or people make an effort to cross cultural boundaries to create a flow of interactions.

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In the first century, the Apostle Paul did not stay at home to wait for believers to turn up at his door. Instead, Paul went on several missionary journeys to spread the Gospel to the people. His journeys covered many major cities in Asia Minor before returning to Jerusalem. On his third missionary journey, Paul stayed in Ephesus for about 3 years (Acts 18:19-21) because Ephesus was a strategic city in the province of Asia. He used the city as his base to meet people and spread the Gospel.

The first-century churches have their own historical context and theological symbolism for us today. They were intended to convey a timeless message for all generations of Christians. Today, I hope we learn from the Apostle Paul's cultural adaptability. I wish to encourage churches to expand their cultural boundaries by engaging with different cultures through intercultural interaction.

One day, I was at the IRD training centre attending a course. I saw an Asian man standing at a corner, and he seemed lost. He could only speak a little English. So, I offered him some help that day and gave him my phone number. Later, I got to know his family and continued to journey with them for a little while, sharing what I know about New Zealand. Later, he moved to Wellington.

Sometime in 2023, I received a call from him. He sounded thrilled over the phone and told me that day was his dream come true. His dream was to become a Policeman. He is now a police officer in New Zealand, focusing on maintaining public order and safety in our community. He speaks and writes fluent English now. He has moved back to Auckland.

He is an example of a person's cultural adaptability. Praise the Lord for his enabling. People need a chance, someone who can show the way forward with genuine guidance, just like Jesus, who provides us a way when we are weak and vulnerable.

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Today we live in a diverse community, “the harvest is plentiful.” Can you hear a divine cross-cultural calling? Do you want to be a good Samaritan? You can change someone life by merely being nice and encouraging or just being present.

Let go back to God’s words. As the Churches flourished, challenges arose. Paul wrote to the Ephesians years later while he was under house arrest in Rome. In his letter, Paul gives believers a clear direction for their lives. He wrote,

***I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one Body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”*** (Ephesians 4:1-6)

The Apostle Paul urges all believers to live a life worthy of God and the spiritual calling to Oneness in Christ.

- **One Body:** refers to the Church, the Body of Christ, all members of the Church coming together as a single entity.
- **One Spirit:** signifies the Holy Spirit is active in us, we are united in Spirit and purpose, and of one mind.
- **One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism:** The unified foundation of Christianity, we are saved by grace through faith in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only son of God, one saviour, one redeemer, and one spiritual baptism that incorporates all believers into the Body of Christ.
- **One God and Father:** who is our ultimate source of all unity, God Himself.

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If you look around in Church, we are blessed with about **34 different ethnicities**. Clearly, it is the Lord's divine arrangement for us to come together to worship Him. We are also blessed with a wide range of talented people and their spiritual gifts to build up God's Church. As we always say in Windsor: **Life & Faith Together**.

What does the word "together" mean? It refers to one family in Christ. We have a special bond forged through genuine love, shared experiences, and mutual support, which together form the foundation of One in Christ.

Calling comes with blessing, in early Christianity and today: The Bible recorded many blessings across God's people and His Church. Churches were strengthened through trials, and they were blessed with spiritual richness. God's blessings have come through from early Christianity to us today. It comprises instructions for all believers, an enduring theological foundation, and a commitment to standing firm in biblical truths. They have surpassed all worldly materials.

When the Church responds to God's call faithfully, God will bless them too. Jesus blessed the Church in Smyrna, he says in Revelation 2:10, **"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."** And to the Church in Philadelphia, Jesus says to them, 'you are a pillar in the temple of my God.' Jesus blessed His Church with the assurance of lasting stability, unwavering security and permanent presence in God's eternal kingdom.

What are God's blessings in a cross-cultural church?

- All cultures can come together as One in Christ.
- God's words become a living communication in all cultures.
- You will see and experience God's everlasting love in you, for you, with you, through you and around you. God's love becomes visible through you and His global Body. In 1 John 4:12, **"God is invisible; if we love one another, love makes God visible."**
- Unity in the diversity of every nation, tongue and tribe. Christ holds us together.

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- Spiritual renewal in each of us, we become afresh and alive in cross-cultural interaction. Mutual respect and learning from other cultures' perspectives and practices.
- To see God at work in new and different ways.
- Fulfilment of the Great Commission.
- The Blessing of Beatitudes.

The call to being One in Christ, a Cross-Cultural calling, is both challenging and satisfying. However, it will definitely transform all of us, as individuals, communities, and the Church. Preparing us for eternity.

In conclusion, it is God's plan for the Church to be cross-cultural. It involves crossing boundaries and actively striving to break through and integrate across human cultures and ethnicities, expanding the visibility of God's global Body. It is a foretaste of heavenly life, Oneness in Christ.

Amen.

### **Principles of Cross-Cultural Competency**

1. Cross-cultural competence refers to a person's ability to understand people from different cultures and engage with them effectively.
2. Having "Cross-cultural competence" means you can be effective in your interactions with people from other cultural backgrounds.
3. Cross-cultural communication is the foundation of achieving an effective global kingdom culture.
4. Cross-cultural engagement is about upholding the dignity of each person made in God's image, as well as God's desire that disciples be made of all ethnicities and that, in Christ, we are treated as one, reconciled to one another.
5. Cross-cultural values are the most basic definition. It represents the shared principles, standards, and priorities that guide behaviour and shape perception within and across different cultural groups.



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**Reflecting on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2025:** What opportunities did you have to build connections with others last week in response to Naomi's Mental Health Awareness Week sermon? How is that going for you?

These questions help you think more about this message. We hope they might be a conduit for conversation and reflection, encouraging us to wrestle with how this message might practically work itself out in our lives.

1. Can you share a time when understanding someone's culture helped you connect with them better?
2. Do you find any cultural groups particularly difficult to connect with? What might that reveal about your growth areas?
3. What steps can you take to become more effective in engaging people from cultures different from your own?
4. What are some cultural values that differ from your own, and how do they challenge or enrich your perspective?

If you'd like to chat with someone about your spiritual journey or anything else going on in your life, please contact us at [care@windsorpark.org.nz](mailto:care@windsorpark.org.nz); **we're better together** and **no perfect people are allowed**.

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Below are some further resources that may take the message further and deeper and enable you to explore other viewpoints on the same theme. We also encourage you to engage with the preacher if there are further questions you have or if you'd like clarification on anything. Email us here [info@windsorpark.org.nz](mailto:info@windsorpark.org.nz) and we'll direct your query to the appropriate person.

1. Across Cultures is a new ministry set up by Margaret Loh dedicated to sharing God's love across culture, embracing diversity, and ensuring everyone feels welcomed and fully accepted. Click here to access their website, resources, and to support them: <https://www.acrosscultures.org.nz/>
2. In this 5-minute YouTube video University students describe Cultural Competence and what it means to them: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsWbODQiDWs>