

## A Native Approach to Finding Unity within our Diversity

### The Importance of the Circle

As we enter into any conversation with someone new it is important to find ways to understand and respect their cultural differences. How do we respect other cultures? It begins with evaluating our own feelings and our own cultural background. It is important to be aware of what you bring to the conversation, what knowledge and wisdom and what negative baggage we may carry with us.

- **Talk about it:** *What are some basic tenants of your culture you might feel are often different from those around you?*

Once we have a better understanding of our own feelings and culture we can then enter into conversation to learn more about other's culture.

In most Native cultures there is a great deal of importance placed on the circle. There is significant symbolism in the circle that will help us to converse with people in an inclusive manner. We prefer to meet in a circle because we want all people to have face-time, value and identity in our conversation. A circle creates equality among those who create it. Each person is of equal value in the circle.

Creating a circle is not always simple, the act of coming together to seek out unity can be difficult and can bring up ideas and concepts that might cause division instead of bringing us together for mutual encouragement, teaching or development.

- **Talk about it:** *What are some things that may divide us as followers of Christ?*

There will always be issues and obstacles to sharing our faith, culture and lives with others. However, God's word gives us some great advice on how we can interact with one another to help build community.

- **Talk about it:** *What do we see in God's word that helps us know how to build relationships and trust as we enter into conversation with a culture that is different from our own?*

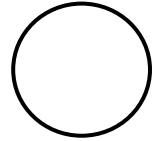
*"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. - John 17:20-23*

We are not perfect, but we know that God has created us to live in unity with one another. John 17:20-23 shows Christ praying that believers would live in unity as an example to the world that God had sent Christ.

- **Talk about it:** *How can we show respect and earn the respect of those that are different from us?*



As you enter into conversations and working relationships with those of other cultures remember the analogy of the circle. Think of the act of creating a circle out of a piece of string. We must intentionally bring our circle together- a string is not a circle, it takes effort and purposeful action to take two ends and create one unified circle.



- **A Closing Activity:** *Sharing simple string bracelets*

It's important to find ways to remind ourselves of the importance of the circle even when we are not with our community. We can use a string bracelet as a little gift to each member in our circle or our community to show our growth from being just an individual, a piece of string, to becoming a part of community. As we tie the ends together it makes a complete circle, much like as we come together in conversation, it makes community. This also is a visual reminder of our relationship of wholeness with God, and to one another as friends, brother and sister in Christ.

### Notes about this resource:

This resource emerged from a series of 2012 workshops delivered by Mike Hendricks at the "WJEF - Would Jesus Eat Frybread? And Other Native Questions About Jesus" Conference.



**Mike Hendricks** serves as a Trans-cultural Ministries Coordinator with Global Adventures, the Missions ministry of Calvary Chapel of Albuquerque. He has been married for 32 years and is a graduate of Arizona College of the Bible. Since 1979 he has grown in ministry networking relationships with numerous indigenous people groups in five countries. Mike's life goal is to be a Christ centered mentor and model cultural awareness and understanding.