

INTRODUCTION

- IBC Eindhoven a **multicultural** church: 23+ nationalities- people **moved** to Eindhoven for training purposes, job opportunities, life partner, mixed marriages and friendships - the beauty and the challenges.
- Not so long ago the churches were much more **homogeneous**. Mixed marriages were regarded as sinful or at the most second best and travelling so far was only for the rich.
- Not so long ago Christians in this country were living on an **island**, doing shopping at a Christian butcher, going to a Christian hairdresser and mixing with non-Christians only if necessary. Today much has changed.
- What does the Bible teach on the topic of faith and culture? What about mixed marriages? Have we backslidden or does the Bible give room for the freedom we exercise? Today's passage is a good opportunity to think about these questions and seek guidelines from Scripture.

TWO REASONS FOR JACOB'S DEPARTURE

1. Genesis 27:41-45
 - Esau's grudge against him, plan to kill him
2. Genesis 27:46-28:5
 - To marry a non Canaanite woman

Genesis 28:6-9

- Esau also married a non Canaanite woman!

THE BIBLE AND MIXED MARRIAGES

1. Do not intermarry
 - Deuteronomy 7:1-6 - they will turn your sons away from following me
 - about treaties for which intermarriage was a means
 - Moses married to a Cushite – Numbers 12:1 - Miriam's criticism was punished by God
 - Rahab and Ruth in genealogy of Jesus - Matthew 1
2. Do not be yoked together with unbelievers
 - 2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1
 - Reference Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:10
 - 1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:12-16, 39 / Flee from sexual immorality and idolatry
3. Mixed marriages in Zion
 - Psalm 87 - All my fountains are in you
 - Human diversity reflects the greatness of God the Creator - intercultural partnering demands maturity, i.e. the ability to value different cultures equally and relate to them without compromising your identity

FAITH, CULTURE AND HOLINESS

1. Discern the difference between your cultural norm (standard) and holiness
 - Our own (family) culture provides a feeling of safety and the idea 'this is right'
 - Not questioning modern culture may lead to e.g. an embrace of consumerism or an uncritical positivism in ethical matters
 - Romans 12:2 - we need the body of Christ to know when to engage with or disengage from culture - which may lead to differences of opinion - e.g. Romans 14
2. Raising children in a secular world demands training them in spiritual discernment
 - When kids our young they need clarity about right and wrong. As they grow older it becomes more important to teach them how to think and discern - do this by encouraging them at early age to ask questions
 - Hebrews 5:14
3. Holiness is not only about doing the law of God but also being (in character) like God
 - Example Ephesians 4:20-24, 28-29 and Galatians 5:22 love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control
 - Too much focus on holiness opens the door for pride and fears. Better to focus on the Holy One
 - Ephesians 4:22-28

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

1. What are your own experiences in intercultural relationships? In what way has it been enriching or inhibiting for your personal growth? Did these relationships influence your beliefs about God?
2. Read Psalm 87 - what does this Psalm teach you about God?
3. Read Romans 12:1-2. Can you identify something in your family culture from which you had to (or want to) disengage for the sake of holiness? What are the challenges you are facing as you engage in modern culture? What support would you like from church in this area?
4. Reflect on holiness in character and the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 and pray for God's grace in specific areas of your life.