

Australian Aboriginal Culture

God is Patient and Kind

Note: all references to Australian Aboriginal People may apply equally to Torres Strait Islanders

Spiritual Awareness: God is forgiving, patient and kind

Culture contact in the history of Australia has caused conflict between European and Aboriginal Australians. Part of this conflict has occurred because of wrong attitudes on the part of the Europeans. In the early 1900's, due to the acceptance of Darwin's theory of evolution, Europeans regarded Aboriginal people as 'the missing link' between apes and humans. Aboriginal people were shot like animals, their children taken from them and their culture devalued. As a result of this treatment, many Aboriginal people have suffered from problems of low self-esteem.

The mistakes of the past have had a severe impact on the Aboriginal people of today. The blame for these mistakes has been placed upon missionaries of the day, when in fact government institutions were largely responsible. Col Stringer writes, in *Discovering Australia's Christian Heritage*:

"People are quick to write and voice their horror about how the early church and professing Christians...mistreated Aborigines....However, one must remember the days in which these people lived were far different from those of today's 'enlightened' society. A sadly neglected fact is that it was most often these very men and women of God that helped those who were being oppressed, often standing between them and a violent death at the hand of some bloodthirsty mob."

There is a need for white Australians to show Aboriginal people that they are truly sorry for what has happened in the past, and for God's love to be shared. Aboriginal people need to feel that they are valued people and recognized for all they have to contribute to our society. They also have a need to extend forgiveness for the wrongs done to them, perhaps only possible when they understand Christ's forgiveness towards us, (Col 3:12-13).

An important way in which Christians can help Aboriginal people is to proclaim the true Biblical history of Australia and its people.

"The scientific elite, aided by the media, still proclaim evolution as fact, and that Aboriginal people have been in Australia for at least 70,000 years, (impossible seeing the earth is only 6000 years old). Aboriginal people therefore have to try and fit their culture and history into this time frame and they are confused as they try and reconcile this to Scripture. Aboriginal people need to hear that they are all descendents from Noah, like the whole human race. Recognition that we are truly 'one blood' should draw us closer together and reduce discrimination." (Creation Magazine Vol 35, 2013)

Our response to 'God is Patient and Kind'

Because God is patient and kind, I will...

- try to be patient with others
- try to be patient with myself
- remember that God will answer my prayers in His time
- finish jobs properly and not take short-cuts
- persevere and not give up when things get difficult
- show self-control
- show kindness and gentleness to others
- learn to listen
- learn to wait
- learn to let others go first
- help people when they are hurting
- be friendly
- be forgiving
- be faithful

Supporting devotional resource

Themes for Christian Studies 5, (Love): God wants us to love others

Themes for Christian Studies 7, (Patient): God is patient with us

Themes for Christian Studies 7, (Creator): God is a perfect creator

Biblical references

Bible stories and passages

Luke 10:25-38- The Good Samaritan speaks of loving those of a different culture

John 4:5-28 – Jesus extended kindness to the Samaritan woman, of a different culture and not accepted by the other woman of the village.

James 2:1-9 - Warning against prejudice

Acts 10 (whole chapter) – the story of Cornelius, a gentile, was told by an angel to send for Peter, a Jew, to hear more about the true God. At the same time, God showed Peter that he was now to share his faith with non-Jews.

Peter's message began, "I now realize that it is true that God treats everyone on the same basis. Whoever worships Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him, no matter what race He belongs to." (verse 34-35)

Acts 8:26-40 – Philip shares the gospel with someone of another race, (Ethiopian).

Matthew 18:21-35 – the parable of the unforgiving servant applies to the importance of forgiving others for wrongs done in the past

1 John 3:11-18 - Love one another in word and deed.

Memory verses

Colossians 3:12-13 – You are the people of God; He loved you and chose you for His own. So then you must clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you. (GNB)

Ephesians 4:31-32 – Get rid of all bitterness, passion and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ. (GNB)

John 3:16 - God loves the *whole* world so much that He sent His only Son....

Luke 10:27; Matthew 22:39 - Love the Lord with all your heart...and your neighbour as yourself.

1 Corinthians 13:14 - Love is patient and kind.

John 13:34 - A new commandment...love one another.

Key Questions

Who were the first Australians?

Where did Aboriginal people come from and how did they get to Australia?

How long have Aboriginal people been in Australia?

What was life like for Aboriginal Peoples before the arrival of the Europeans?

Why did the Europeans settle in Australia?

What was the nature and consequence of contact between Aboriginal People and early traders, explorers and settlers?

Why were some Aboriginal people killed or pushed into the desert regions by some of the Early White settlers?

What is the meaning of culture?

Is religion part of culture?

Is it right for Christians to try to convert people of other cultures to Christianity?

What parts of a culture should be maintained?

Why do many people blame the missionaries of the 1800s and early 1900s for destroying Aboriginal culture and family life?

Was the government to blame?

What does God think about Aboriginal people?

What do Aboriginal people think about white people?

What can we learn from Aboriginal people?

What problems do Aboriginal people face today?

What solutions could you propose?

How can Christians show God's love towards Aboriginal people?

Outcomes

Students will

Knowledge

- develop an awareness and an understanding of the elements of traditional Australian Aboriginal Culture
- understand that Aboriginal people came to Australia post Flood, an event which happened approx 4,000 years ago
- understand the diversity and longevity of Australia's first peoples and the ways Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples are connected to Country and Place (land, sea, waterways and skies) and the implications for their daily lives
- understand some of the impact that Early European settlement had upon Aboriginal people, their families and the environment

- recognize why conflict arose between Aboriginal people and Early European settlers and how this has affected contemporary Australian society

Skills

- Compare and contrast cultures through discussion and debate.
- Identify different points of view.
- Research/investigate traditional Aboriginal/Torres Strait Island traditional through interview, internet, non-fiction resources.
- Communicate findings through a written assignment or oral presentation.
- Develop conflict resolution strategies.
- Sequence event chronologically.

Values

- Appreciation of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Island culture
- Fair treatment
- Respect
- Recognition that Australian are made up of different people groups from different backgrounds, but all equal in the sight of God
- Desire to show Christ's love, kindness and compassion to those in need

Activities

- Research traditional Aboriginal culture: beliefs, customs, homes, food, survival skills, tools and weapons, art, music, roles.
- Build or make a model of traditional shelters such as 'gunyah' using bush materials.
- Study Aboriginal devices such as the firestick, boomerang and woomera. Make a model. Explain how they were constructed and operated.
- Try throwing a boomerang.
- Try some bush tucker.
- Compare lifestyles of Aboriginal people living in different parts of Australia today e.g. urban / rural / Arnhem Land
- Study pictures of Aboriginal people today, including housing, work situations, children at school and play.
- Locate information on Aboriginal contributions to Australian society.
- Interview guests of Aboriginal heritage.
- Look at examples of Aboriginal art and research the importance of the work of current Aboriginal artists globally.
- Paint in the traditional Aboriginal style using patterns, simplified animal shapes and typical colours.
- Draw the Aboriginal flag and discuss the significance of the colours.
- Make a list of Aboriginal place names and their meanings.
- Research the history of Australian settlement and discuss the way in which Aboriginal people were treated.
- Discuss reasons for Aboriginal children of last century being taken from parents and given English names.
- Discuss and debate issues such as land rights.
- Discuss connection with the land and their respect for the creation.

- Discuss the Dream Time and compare it to the Creation. How has the 'millions of years' theory for the age of the earth affected the popular view that the Aborigines have been in Australia for over 70,000 years? If all people originated from Noah, how long ago would the first Australians have come to Australia?
- Define the meaning of 'racist' and find examples of it in the Australian community.
- Relate Biblical teachings to racial problems.
- Study the biographies of European missionaries who had a positive effect in bringing the gospel without destroying culture.
- Discuss the role of patience in culture contact: Have Australian Aboriginal people shown patience towards white Australia? Have white Australians shown patience towards Aboriginal people?
- Compare how attitudes have changed over time through comparison of newspaper articles from early this century.

Assessment

1. Pose a question relating to Aboriginal People and answer this question in the form of an oral presentation to the class.
2. What have I learned from the study of Australian Aboriginal culture...
 - about God?
 - about doing what God wants me to do?
 - about the Bible?

Link with Australian Curriculum

History Year 4: First Contacts

Learning Connections

English:

- Read some Aboriginal legends, and Aboriginal flood stories. (Find resources from www.creation.com and also see "When Wonjuna made the Great Flood", from *Themes for Christian Studies 7, Creator*.) Discuss why this story would be part of Aboriginal culture.
- Read *The Secret*, (*Themes for Christian Studies 6, Life*). This story describes the secret of finding water in the desert. Discuss the survival skills of Aboriginal people.
- Read the play, *Seeing through the Eyes of Christ*, *Themes for Christian Studies 5, Love*. Discuss ways in which we can love and accept others as Jesus did.
- Read the story of *Nabor the Aboriginal*, from *Themes for Christian Studies 5, Love*. Discuss the actions of Nabor and the way in which he put into practice the words of Jesus.
- Read "We are Sorry" from *Themes for Christian Studies 7, (Patient)*. Discuss the importance of saying sorry on the one hand, and forgiveness on the other hand. How do these attitudes contribute to the reconciliation process?

Science: Study the aerodynamics of the boomerang.

Art: painting in the style of Aboriginal art.

Thinking skills: See the *Creative Thinking Skills* section of this website – “*Australian Aboriginal Culture*” (*Middle/Upper Primary*).