

Let's Talk About Cultural Appreciation

Do you like Mexican food? Have you picked out your Halloween costume yet? Are you thinking of changing up your hairstyle? What on earth do these questions have in common? Food, costumes, and fashion in general are all areas where we have opportunities to connect with elements of other cultures. Dances, rituals, gardening practices, and so much more are also elements of cultures. As National Hispanic Heritage Month begins September 15 and costume parties start to pop up on the calendar in anticipation of Halloween, let's talk about cultural appreciation.

The first thing to know about appreciating other cultures is the difference between cultural appreciation and its not-so-great counterpart, cultural appropriation. Alison Czinkota wrote this excellent article on VeryWell that explains cultural appropriation...very well.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-cultural-appropriation-5070458>

So, let's not appropriate others' cultures. But we can, and absolutely should, take the opportunities we have to appreciate different cultures and learn about how other people live their lives! So, how can we appreciate cultural differences? How can we celebrate the things we love about cultures beyond our own, in ways that really value the people whose culture we appreciate?

1. **Follow the money!** When you buy things or attend events that come from a specific culture, think about who's getting paid. Is your money going to someone who actively practices the culture whose elements are for sale? If so, that's great! If not, try taking the time to look for an artist/seller who does meet that requirement. (You'll probably get better quality and more unique stuff that way, too!)
2. **Build relationships.** If you don't know people who practice the culture you're enjoying, then make some new friends! If you enjoy Latine music and food, get to know some of our Spanish ministry siblings. You'll make new friends and probably gain a deeper understanding of some of those great cultural gifts. If another culture is attracting your interest, but you don't have a human connection to it, then look for events hosted by members of that cultural group, and...you guessed it...make some new friends!
3. **Learn more about your own culture.** When we have a deeper understanding of where we are coming from, we are much better prepared to learn how others experience life differently. Plus, healthy friendships go both ways, and some of those new friends you're making might want to learn more about the particulars of your cultural background!