

GIG Week 1: Leaders Guide

WELCOME AND CAST VISION

Thank you for joining us for this two-week Beyond Colorblind GIG (Group Investigating God) as we explore ethnicity and spirituality. We are glad you're here! We are talking about these topics because we believe that our divided world needs the message of hope, healing, unity, reconciliation, and restoration through Jesus. In this GIG, we will look at how our personal ethnic stories are understood from a Christian perspective. Spoiler alert: Christianity acknowledges both the beauty and brokenness in every person and in every ethnicity and culture yet believes that Jesus can heal and restore even things that seem damaged beyond repair.

OVERVIEW

When people think of ethnicity there can be positive and/or negative associations. Some positive associations include: delicious foods, beautiful music and art, cultural celebrations, or family. Negative associations may include: ethnic divisions, ethnocentrism, racism, prejudice, or stereotypes.

As a Christian, I believe that God's desire is to amplify what is beautiful and to heal what is broken in our ethnic stories. And whether you're a Christian or not, or whether you even consider yourself spiritual or not, my hope is that we can explore these topics together, listen to one another well, and grow together in the process. Let's begin!

Introduce yourselves and your ethnic background. Be as specific as possible. (See Teaching Notes) Also share what brought you here or what you are hoping to get out of our time together.

OPTIONAL: Share "Ground Rules of Engagement." (See Teaching Notes)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY EXERCISE: Things I Heard Growing Up (15 min)

Often we learn core cultural values from watching the ways our families interact with us and with the world around us. Here is a worksheet with some different things people heard growing up. Pick 3 phrases you heard while growing up. (If your group is large, have them share in pairs first.)

- Which 3 are familiar to you? Describe.
- Compare with those around you. What was similar and what was different? What questions come up for you?



- **OPTIONAL:** There are some real differences between our different cultures. What do you notice?

PSALM 139 EXERCISE (15 min)

We believe that our ethnicity is not an accident but rather a gift from God. God created us, our families, and our ethnic heritage, and intended for it to be good. We are going to read a poem from the Bible where David, someone who had an intimate relationship with God, reflects on how God created him. As we read this poem together, listen for a word or phrase that resonates with you. Maybe God has something to say to you through this poem.

Let's read Psalm 139:1-3, 13-16 aloud. Let's be open to God to amplifying the beauty in how God created us.

Read Psalm 139 aloud.

Write in your own ethnicity(ies) and gender into the blanks provided. Read your version out loud to your neighbor.

- How did that make you feel? How does this message compare/contrast to what you have heard or been told about your ethnic background?
- What are some things you can identify as good or beautiful that you want to share with others?
- **OPTIONAL:** What are some challenges in identifying good or beautiful things about your ethnic background?

Invite your group to try praying Psalm 139 every day this week.
(See Teaching Notes)

LEADER'S TRANSITION

This discussion is easy for some people and difficult for others. Like we said, each of us experiences both beauty and brokenness in our ethnic journey. We want to amplify the beauty and invite God to heal the brokenness.



Now we're going to watch a video where different people from different backgrounds share some of the ways that they have experienced brokenness around topics of ethnicity. Let's listen to these honest and vulnerable stories with open hearts, and pay attention to stories that you can relate to, but also to stories that are very different from yours. Next week we will focus on the hope we have in God's love and reconciliation power, but first we have to be honest about the brokenness.

BROKENNESS VIDEO: with Debrief Questions (20 min)

Play the video and invite everyone to take notes using the handout. Ask them to jot down key words or feelings. Afterwards, discuss in pairs or SG.

- Which story did you resonate with the most? Why?
- What are you learning about your ethnic story and the story of others from this video?
- If Jesus could heal something in your ethnic story, what would you ask him to heal?

LEADER'S CLOSE

There's a school of Japanese pottery called, *Kintsukuroi*, where master potters take broken pottery and use glue made of gold, silver and platinum to restore it. And in this philosophy, the breakage isn't something to disguise, but an integral part of the object's history that adds richness and value.

That's kind of what we're hoping to do in this group... to take our ethnic cultures and stories that are beautiful, be honest and real about what's broken and somehow find even more beauty in the restoration process.

Thank you so much for sharing honestly and listening well to one another this week. Next week, we'll explore the hope and healing that Jesus offers us as we engage our ethnic stories.

NEXT STEPS

Invite participants to consider one or more of the next steps below for how they can respond to what you've talked about today.



Meal Conversation: Invite the group to get into pairs (perhaps the pairs they've been discussing already) and schedule a time to meet for a meal or coffee/tea. Invite them to use that time to share what they are learning about beauty or brokenness in their ethnic story.

Prayer and Reflection: Remind them about the Psalm 139 prayer application from earlier in the study.

Give Us Feedback: Finally, we'd love to get your feedback (pass out index cards):

- What is one question you have that we did not address today?
- Write down the name of a friend you want to invite to join us next week.
- What is a practical step you take this week to grow in your awareness of beauty and brokenness?

Teaching Notes

BEFORE THE STUDY

This week we'll be talking about the beauty found in our cultures. For some students, this can be very difficult. Before you meet, think of elements of beauty you can call out in others' cultures in case you need to speak truth to those who struggle to see beauty for themselves. Pray and ask Jesus to help you and the group to be a voice of blessing to each other. Look over the Ground Rules of Engagement below. Discern if your small group will be helped if you begin the discussion by going over the ground rules. You may want to ask your members to watch the overview video before your first meeting.

INTRODUCTION EXERCISE

When sharing your ethnicity, encourage everyone to be specific. For example: "Chinese American vs Asian" or "German American vs White" or "Black, descended from slavery or Nigerian-American vs. black." Some may not know their ethnic background, that's okay, too.

PSALM 139 EXERCISE NOTES

Be prepared to explain how Psalm 139 is about ethnicity as well as other parts of how people are made. Try to move them away from just thinking physically. You may need to reconcile this passage with physical brokenness (birth defects, mental illness, etc). Give a disclaimer that this passage hits on how we are made in several ways but today we are focusing on how this passage applies to our *ethnicity*.

This could bring up some deep inner wounds (like self-hatred or rejection of their ethnicity) that could lead into prayer ministry or further discussion outside (or within) small group.

Sample Script for Invitation to Pray Psalm 139

"You may want to take time each day this week to read and reflect on Psalm 139. At any point in your day, you can just read the passage, take a moment to think about it, and pay attention to see if you sense any words or impressions from God. That's really the starting point for prayer. You may want to take a picture of the psalm, find it on your phone or download a free Bible app so you can get it anytime.

Ground Rules of Engagement

In order for this to be a conversation where everyone can be honored, challenged, and grow in their ethnic journey, we need some ground rules that help us do that.

1. Avoid language that generalizes (ie all _____ people are like_____)

Don't assume that one story about a ____ person is true of everyone

*Avoid assumptions about wealth/poverty

Avoid dismissing race or "colorblind" mentalities

2. If you think it might be an offensive term, avoid it. If you're not sure, preface or ask with "I don't mean to offend but I don't know any other way to say this" or "I'm not sure if this is appropriate so somebody please help me understand if there's a more accurate or better way to say this."

3. Put yourself in the learner's seat instead of putting others on the defensive. Ask good questions. We are all a work in progress. We all have growth edges. Give yourself grace to learn & make mistakes & receive correction from others.

<p>ACCUSATORY QUESTIONS (to avoid)</p>	<p>LEARNING POSTURE QUESTIONS (use instead)</p>
<p><i>“Why do you do that?”</i></p>	<p>“Could you tell me more? I’d love to understand better what that experience was like for you.”</p>
<p><i>“Why do your people or _____ people do that?”</i></p>	<p>“I think I missed something back there. Could you help me understand what was happening when ____ happened?”</p>
<p><i>“That food/event/experience was _____ (gross, inefficient, chaotic). Why is it like that?”</i></p>	<p>“Forgive my ignorance, but I don’t know what _____ is. Could you explain it a little more so I can learn?”</p>
<p><i>“Aren’t you just overreacting? Why did you say that?”</i></p>	<p>“This might be an uncomfortable topic, but at some point, I’d love to know about what this is like for you. Could we talk about it sometime when you feel comfortable?”</p>



Gently correct others if they offend you.

(Use Approaching Differences Diagram for #3 & #4)

NO LECTURING. The point of the conversation is to reflect on our stories and to learn from the stories being shared.

The leader reserves the right to HIT THE PAUSE BUTTON at any point in the conversation to debrief and interpret what is happening.

The real danger is not of you being labeled a racist. The real danger is shutting yourself off from

- 1) the opportunity to love those around you better and
- 2) the opportunity to experience God's love for you more deeply.

Love God, love neighbor.

We will commit to:

listening to each other, learning from one another's experiences, and reconciling as conflict comes up

Brokenness Video: Cheat Sheet

NAME (in order of appearance)	QUOTES
CHARLENE (Ghanaian)	"In 1st grade, while I was walking home from school with my twin brother, one of our friends proceeded to call him the N word"
LEAH (Puerto Rican, Italian, Polish)	"When I would share about my culture... It was me being Puerto Rican that was the problem for [the other kids]"
CAROLINE (Malayali)	"Another painful reality is that the caste system still exists in India... and it's hard to distinguish what prejudice is"
SEAN (African American)	"It was the 1st time that I had seen a cross-cultural conflict up close like that and I remember thinking something is not right"
KAITLIN (Chinese American)	"My worst fear had come to pass as a 6 year old, someone had noticed that I was different and it was not good"
CHARLENE (Ghanaian)	"When I would go to the bathroom, I would spend 5 maybe 10 minutes washing my hands, trying to get the black off of my skin"
NOEMI (Mexican American)	"I distanced myself from [my Afro-Latina friend] because I didn't want to go through that pain either... I wasn't any better than the people that were making fun of her"
COURTLAND (Native American from Lakota Tribe)	"They yelled 'Hey Indian, white power'... I knew that they were bigoted... but it still scared me. I was hated"
NOEMI (Mexican American)	"'But you're too pretty to be Mexican'... Essentially she was saying that my people are not beautiful, that my people are not worthy, that my people are ugly"
CAROLINE (Malayali)	"A friend was driving around with his windows down when a truck of white men pulled up next to him... and said 'F**ing ISIS, go back to where you came from'"
TODD (German American)	"I didn't want to be white any more and I tried to distance myself from my ethnicity"
BRENT (African American)	"'You're not really black'. When I asked why she said because you're smart, because you're kind, because you're respectful... 'Why would you want to be black?'"
SEAN (African American)	"My first two weeks staying in that apartment complex I got stopped by the police 15 times"
KAITLIN (Chinese American)	"My first generation Chinese friends labeled me twinkie, yellow on the outside, white on the inside because I couldn't speak the language and because of my white-washed self"
CHARLENE (Ghanaian)	"The teacher stopped and she looked at me and she said 'Charlene, well you're black. Do all of your people steal?'"
ANDREW (German, Scottish, Irish English and Armenian)	"I started to become overwhelmed with shame for the color of my skin and for the actions of my people, and I started to live in the lie that being white is wrong"
KAITLIN (Chinese American)	"'Mom, I'm 100% Chinese right?... Wait, I'm also 100% American because I was born here right?... So I'm 200%?"
ELEANOR (Asian American- Filipino)	"Filipinos have always been the conquered, the foreign, the servants, as a result of this, there is this notion... that says we will never be good enough"