

Beyond

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MINORITY

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MINORITY

Faith

A Study Guide on Race and Faith

Introduction

We're so excited that you're taking the time to journey with this group to better understand how Asian American identity intersects with faith in Jesus.

As a leader, you will have some responsibilities in prayerfully facilitating the discussions, helping process reflections and awakenings, and guiding people to develop a more intimate relationships with Jesus.

We know that all might seem overwhelming! But that's why we're providing a guide that includes insights and some group discussion assistance.



LEADER TALKS

As you can see in the Leader's Guide, there are sections that are part of the discussion you will have with the group. And then there are Leader Talk sections. These exist to help you facilitate the group discussion. They are included as a reference to help you from getting stuck and providing additional information - you don't have to read through verbatim. Feel free to use them as a reference for more insight and guidance. It's a tool to help you!



LEADER NOTES

In other sections of the Leader's Guide, there are notes provided to give you more background information on the topic at hand. These are resources for you to learn more and use if necessary and appropriate. Feel free to use them to give guidance and clarification, or simply for your own information.

GUIDELINES

Now before we begin, here are a few guidelines to take note of:

- Be sure to monitor who is talking and for how long. The time in each session isn't very long, and we want to make sure everyone gets to share.
- Try to make sure only 1-2 people share per question so you're not spending the entire time on one question.

However, if there is a great need to focus on one particular issue, then don't force the conversation to move on. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and trust in the Spirit's guidance in the entire process.

- Don't be afraid of silence. This may be the first time some participants are beginning to tackle this subject matter. Give them space to process quietly if needed. If no one

responds to a question, maybe you go first after waiting a few minutes. Be encouraging that it's okay to be silent and reflective. Silence isn't our enemy.

- Be sure to notice who the extroverts and introverts are during group discussions. Try to monitor if there are 1-2 people who're dominating the conversation to give space to others who may not be so prone to jump into the conversation or are afraid of wrong answers or appearing ignorant. Perhaps encourage people by saying, "Since we've mostly heard from 1-2 people, let's give an opportunity for others to share" and wait for the quieter people to respond.

Don't forget to take time to pray – for yourself that the Holy Spirit would give you insight and wisdom throughout the entire time together, as well as for the people attending.

Trust that the Holy Spirit is working. God will reveal, teach, and convict. Our job is just to point in the right direction and love.

Most importantly, let this be a time for your own learning and growth!

SESSION 1: WHAT IS ASIAN AMERICA AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?



LEADER NOTE: *Read the following introduction paragraph, pausing to let people take in the ground rules for the group.*

Welcome to our gathering! We're so excited you're joining us as we dialogue and journey together to learn more about Asian American issues and how it all intersects with our faith in Jesus.

As we begin, let's make sure we're all on the same page of respect, space, and listening well. Because of this, we want to make sure we're all in agreement for the following:

- We understand that this is a journey for all of us, so let's respect one another's stories.
- Let's give each other space to think and reflect. Maybe we take a moment before we jump into the conversation, or if we feel we're dominating the conversation. All thoughts and questions are welcome, and we want this to be a safe space for everyone.
- Let's really get intentional with listening well. Some of the subject matter we'll be covering could be sensitive and triggering for some of us. Let's not get defensive or argumentative, but rather treat this as a journey of discovery we'll be going on together.



LEADER NOTE: *Read the following curriculum outline. If people have questions about individual topics, let them know that the various topics will be covered in further depth throughout the course of the study.*

We're starting on a series that'll help us unpack what it means to be Asian American and then connecting with how that intersects with a faith in Jesus.

The whole study is a 6-part series, and each part is divided into 3 sessions. Here is what you can look forward to:

- Part 1. Introduction: What Is Asian America, and Where Does It Come From?
- Part 2. Microaggressions
- Part 3. The Black/White Binary
- Part 4. Media and Representation

Part 5. Gender and Race

Part 6. Living It Out

This first part we're starting with is "What is Asian America and Where Does It Come From?" In the first session we're going to look into Asian American history and why it's important we learn this.

But let's start off with an opening activity.

Who Here Has?



LEADER NOTE: *Have participants raise their hands or stand up if you would like some mobility as an ice breaker opening.*

Raise your hand if you can answer the following questions:

- Experienced that you didn't belong because of your Asian-ness
- Experienced that you didn't belong because you weren't Asian enough or "not really Asian"
- Was told you were desirable or exotic because of your Asian-ness
- Was told you weren't desirable or attractive because of your Asian-ness
- Was told your food smelled weird
- Was told your food was so unique and cool cause it was trendy and new
- Was told to speak English when speaking in your parent's native language
- Are 3rd or more generations in the US
- Was told to "go back to your country"



LEADER NOTE: *Take 2-3 minutes to let folks identify and laugh with one another in camaraderie.*



LEADER TALK: *Okay so that was a fun little opener to help us gauge how some of us experienced growing up Asian American.*

Of course, not everyone experiences the same childhood. But as we saw from even just our circle, some shared experiences do exist for those of us who grew up as Asian Americans.

And with that, let's open with some thoughts and reflection.

What Is Asian America?

“Do not diminish who you are. Your gender, your heritage, your identity. That’s what makes you unique.”

–Kailin Gow

Turn to a partner and share in 1-2 sentences what you think characterizes “Asian American” identity.



LEADER NOTE: *Have a couple of people share what was discussed.*

In what way do you believe it’s important to understand what “Asian American” is and the history for how this identity came about?

When you see the graph (right) showing the breakdown of Asian Americans in the US, what are your thoughts and reflections?

Terminology: Ethno-Racial Pentagon

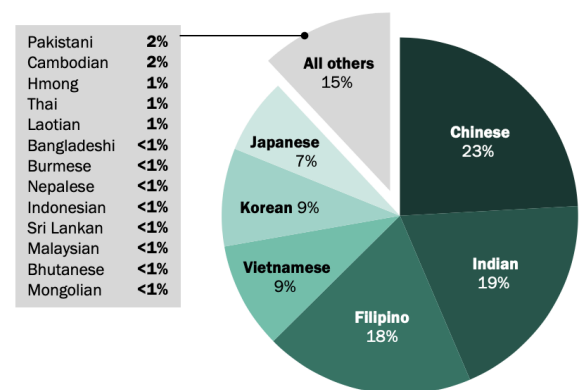
Ethno-Racial Pentagon was a phrase coined by historian David Hollinger to describe an issuing that happened in 1977 whereby the federal government began classifying people racially as white, black, American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, and Hispanic.

How might understanding these categories help us better understand how our society has been working?

“When it is said that race affects one’s destiny more than ethnicity does, the reference usually turns out to be to different degrees of mistreatment within a social system, not to different degrees of cultural particularity and group enforcement of norms. Some of the various ethnic groups within the Euro-American bloc have had their share of suffering, but it its dwarfed, according to our common if not always stated understanding, by the suffering inflicted on races. Moreover, the Chinese American suffers less as a Chinese than

Six origin groups make up 85% of all Asian Americans

% of origin group among all Asian Americans, 2015



Note: Chinese includes those identifying as Taiwanese. Category “Other Asian, not specified” not shown. Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. See methodology for more. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2015 American Community Survey 1-year estimates (American FactFinder).

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as an Asian, just as a Crow suffers not as a Crow but as an Indian. Although Japanese Americans were entered during World War II as Japanese rather than as Asians, that Asianness made the difference is proven by the less harsh treatment afforded Americans of highly visible German or Italian affiliations. This distinction between degrees of victimization is the key to the place of Latinos in the ethno-racial pentagon and to the assertion of racial status on their behalf.”

In what way do you agree with what is said in the above quote about suffering more as an Asian American rather than simply as someone with your ethnic background? In what way might there more power, influence, impact when ethnic groups are brought together in a racial bloc?



LEADER TALK: *Some of us might be wondering why this discussion is even important. Why do we need to understand what Asian America is?*

As we see from the above categorization of various racial groups, the issue is extremely complex. In fact, it's so complicated that we won't be able to fully unpack it over the course of the 6 modules we'll be going through. But we're going to do our best.

But, let's begin by going into why this is an important issue we should wrestle, and in particular how learning about our Asian American history is actually connected with our relationship with God.

The God of History

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham...

—Matthew 1:1

Insight: For Jewish people, as well as for other Eastern peoples of nomadic origin, one's family tree was hugely important because a person's identity was linked to family and tribe, more so than to place of birth. A genealogy is a list of names, tracing the family lineage between one individual and their ancestors.



LEADER TALK: *Can someone read aloud Matthew 1:1?*

“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham...”

What are genealogies, and why start there? They're these sections in the Bible that

list out family lineages.

For Jewish people, as well as for other Eastern peoples of nomadic origin, genealogical family trees were hugely important because a person's identity was linked to family and tribe, more so than to place of birth.

Genealogies are both individually and communally important. They weren't just to verify one individual person, but to establish the person's place in society and history.

Those who followed Jesus believed him to be the Messiah, or savior of the world. It is believed that Jesus was the Son of God who came to earth in human form.

One of the essential ways to prove this a truth was through the genealogies – the genealogy of Jesus proved the identity of Jesus.

Your Asian American identity is an essential part of your personhood, an important and unique element of who you are – how God created you.

Who you are is important to God. History, context, and genealogies are all things that God values and reminds us to also value.

The New Testament, the section of the Bible describing the life and work of Jesus and his followers, begins with this genealogy. This section shows us that the God of the Bible is not a philosophical idea or impersonal principle but a personal God that enters history and interacts with the day-to-day lives of real people who live in particular times and places.



LEADER NOTE: *God does not exist beyond time and space in the realm of ideas and concepts, but in physical times and places, alongside people with physical needs, dealing with through their own individual struggles.*

Whether in Biblical times or the years since, God has met people in their own contexts and worked through them to impact their families, communities, and societies. Whether migrants living in exile or slavery, part of a social minority, or as members of the ruling class, God values people and sees who they are where they are.



LEADER NOTE: *An important point to take away from this is that God values people and sees us as we are. He is not an impersonal idea, but a personal being: entering into history and interacting with human beings in a relational way.*

Discussion Questions

How might your view of history and learning the history of Asian Americans change knowing that God is a God of history and values who we are, and the journey of those who've come before us, as well as our own journey into the future?

Take a moment to reflect and think about the various history classes you've taken up to now in your life, especially from elementary through high school.

Which ethnic or racial group's history did you predominantly learn about? What was the second racial or ethnic group's history you learned the most about?

On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being very little and 10 being so much that I could win Jeopardy, how much Asian American history did you learn about in school?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How might it affect your awareness and perception of the social impact Asian Americans have had when our history hasn't been fully integrated into all "American" history?

If God is a God of history and one who remembers and values our own Asian American history and genealogy, then in what way would learning about Asian American history be a spiritual exercise?



LEADER TALK: *While it might not be initially obvious why learning history is important, we actually see how learning history influences us both consciously but also subconsciously. This is especially when we begin to examine exactly whose history we're learning and who's telling the historical story.*

If we're predominantly learning the history of white Americans and Europeans, what would be called occidental with only other ethnic and racial groups' history as being an alternative or supplemental that sends a message that Western history is central, primary, the standard, and normative.

But in reality, Asians and Asian Americans have a long history in the United States.

Let's take a look.

Our Asian American History

Asian American Experience in the US pre-1970:

1587 – 1907: Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese migrate to America

1890: Chinese Exclusion Act is passed, the first ever immigration law created in the United States excluding one specific ethnic group from entering the country.

1910: Angel Island opens as a major immigration station to detain and interrogate predominantly Chinese and Japanese immigrants arriving to the US from 1910-1940.

1913: California bans Japanese immigrants (“Issei”) from purchasing land. Land begins to get purchased in the names of U.S. born children (“Nissei”).

1924: Immigration Act of 1924 (Oriental Exclusion Act) passes and bans most immigration from Asia. The quota for most Asian countries is zero.

1933: Filipinos are ruled ineligible for citizenship barring immigration and could no longer marry White people.

1942: President Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, uprooting 100,000 Japanese people to be sent to Incarceration “internment” camps.

1968: Historian Yuji Ichioka coins the term Asian American to replace “Orientals” and frame a new “inter-ethnic-pan-Asian American self-defining political group,” and co-founds the Asian American Political Alliance with Emma Gee at UC Berkley.

1968: Third World Liberation Front, a coalition of student groups, forms to go on strike in demand of a more diverse and less Eurocentric curricula. Asian American studies is created and taught for the first time at San Francisco State University, UC Berkeley, and UCLA.



LEADER NOTE: *Use the following discussion questions to prompt reflection on this timeline of some of the key points in Asian American history.*

What are some takeaways you have when getting a glimpse of Asian American history in the United States?

For those who have learned very little about Asian American history, do you know how you can begin learning more about it? What resources would you have access to?

Knowing that history is important and remembered by God, in what way can a faith in Jesus help in bringing about a more just future for Asian Americans?

For This Week

- Take some time this week to reflect and journal on the fact that God is a God of history and values your past, family history, where and who you've come from. Think about how this affects your own view of your past and your family history.
- Do a little bit of research by asking and having a conversation with your parents about your family history. Ask and find out how your grandparents and parents came to be together. What is their faith history? How has God been interactive in their own journey thus far?
- Read up on the history of how Asian American came into existence in the United States from the additional resources provided. Reflect and journal how knowing the history and journey of Asian Americans in the U.S. impacts your own journey, history, and future.

Additional Resources

Books:

Beyond Colorblind by Sarah Shin

How Asian American Came to Be: The Making of Asian America by Erika Lee

Podcasts:

<https://soundcloud.com/centeringpodcast>

<http://asianamericapodcast.com/>

<http://www.vivianmabuni.com/someday-is-here>

<http://theycallusbruce.libsyn.com/website>

Other resources:

<https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/ethnicity-and-the-incarnation-kevin-doi/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000004706646/thisis2016-asian-americans-respond.html?src=vidm>