

Beyond

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MINORITY

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MINORITY

Faith

A Study Guide on Race and Faith

The Leader's Guide



Introduction

Welcome back to our journey towards a better understanding how Asian American identity intersects with faith in Jesus.

This week, the second session of Part 1, we'll be discussing the topic of migration. As explained in the last session, the **Leader Talks** and **Leader Notes** sections will give you guidance and provide resources. You can refer to the introduction in the last session to give yourself a reminder.

As a leader, part of your responsibilities are to prayerfully facilitate the discussions, helping process reflections and awakenings, and guiding people to develop more intimate relationships with Jesus. Review the guidelines from the previous session to help prepare yourself for this next gathering.

Don't forget to take time to pray – 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.

Importantly, this is also a time for your own learning and growth!

SESSION 2: REMEMBERING OUR MIGRATION STORIES



LEADER NOTE: *Although much of this was covered last week, because there may be some new people gathered, it would be good to read through it again with the group. It's also fine if you wish to have someone or multiple people from the group read this section out loud.*

Welcome back to our gathering! As we shared last week, we are dialoguing and journeying together to learn more about Asian American identity and how it intersects with faith in Jesus Christ.

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

- 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 jumping into conversation, or pull back if we notice that our voices are dominating the discussion. All thoughts and questions are welcome, and we want this to be a safe space for everyone.
- Let's actively try to listen well. Some of the subject matter we'll be covering could be really sensitive 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: *Pause shortly before you dive into this next section so people can prepare themselves. If you had other people read the previous sections, be sure to thank them before opening.*

With that said, let's move forward! We're continuing to unpack what it means to be Asian American, and then connecting that identity with a faith in Jesus Christ.

Last week, was our first session, covering An Introduction to Asian American History. We talked about why it's important that we learn about these issues.



LEADER NOTE: *If there is time, ask for someone who was present last week to quickly recap the highlights of that session.*

Today, we'll be continuing on with the second session of Part 1 – Remembering Our Migration Stories. Let's get started!



LEADER TALK: *It's an all-too-familiar experience: someone asks an Asian American where they're from, and after a response like "Atlanta" or "Los Angeles" is given, the question inevitably follows: "no, where are you REALLY from?"*

It's a frustrating question for Asian Americans to continually deal with. It's especially frustrating considering the fact that every single non-native American is "really from" somewhere else. On the historical timeline we looked over last week, you can see that some Asians landed in North America as early as 1587. That's even earlier than when the Pilgrims arrived in 1620!

Keep that in mind as we discuss two specific issues today. First, why is it important for us to know and remember our migration stories? And second, how does migration relate to our faith in Jesus?

Icebreaker: Where Are You Really From?

"What tethers me to my parents is the unspoken dialogue we share about how much of my character is built on the connection I feel to the world they were raised in but that I've only experienced through photos, visits, food. It's not mine and yet, I get it. First-generation kids, I've always thought, are the personification of déjà vu."

Durga Chew-Bose, Indian American author of
Too Much and Not the Mood: Essays

Spend a little time reflecting on this quote, taking a moment to think about your or your family's own migration story. Notice that "migration" does not just mean a family unit choosing to move to another country or culture, but actually includes a wide variety of narratives, both voluntary (moving to attend college or for job opportunities) and involuntary (refugees fleeing famine, war, or persecution; childhood and infant adoptees).

Some of our families arrived in America seeking "the American dream". Others came as refugees, were adopted as babies, or have been in America for generations. Some may have come as part of a larger, mono-cultural community, while others may be

woven into a multiracial family tree.

Our stories vary, and how they impact our lives varies significantly. These different stories can teach us about different sides of God's character. Maybe God showed up in miraculous ways during our family's times of migration. Or maybe God is bringing healing to the pain and trauma that can come out of such experiences.

What are some migration experiences that you remember, or family/community stories that you have heard told by parents, relatives, or others?



LEADER NOTE: *Pause to let 1-2 people briefly share their experiences.*

Last week, we talked about the importance of history. Continuing with that idea, let's take a little time to think about why it's important to remember the stories of how and where we and our families have come from. What do we gain when we remember? What do we lose when we forget our or our family's migration history? Take a couple of minutes to reflect on the following:

- For **those who have immigrated**, reflect on some monumental moments of achievement, struggles, high and low points. What were the hopes, dreams, and goals you had?
- For those who are **children of immigrant parents** or even grandparents, take a moment to reflect on their story – do you know their story, achievements, struggles, high and low points? What were their hopes, dreams, and goals? Is your or your family's migration story one that you're proud of or are you more ashamed?
- For those whose family came to America as **refugees**: what are some of the ways that God provided? What are some of the ways that the pain, trauma, or loss of that journey still linger? How do you see this still affecting you or other family members?
- For those of you who are **adoptees**: what questions do you have about your birth family? To what degree do you identify with "Asian America", and to what degree do you feel like that doesn't describe you? What are the ways that your family has been a blessing and support for you?
- For those who are **multiracial**, the different sides of your family may tell very different migration stories. How does this inform your Asian American identity? What do people usually think your racial identity is, and how does that make you feel?

After a minute or two, if you're willing, take 2-3 minutes to share with the group.



LEADER NOTE: *After giving people 2-3 minutes to reflect on these more specific*

questions, give 1-3 people time to share their reflections with the group. Try to make room for people with a variety of different migration stories to share.

“Those of us in the first American generations have had to figure out how the invisible world the emigrants built around our childhoods fits in solid America.”

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*

Migration has always been a part of human existence, and it plays a central role in the stories of the Bible. If we want to unpack our Asian American identity and experiences, there are specific features of our migration stories that can be helpful for us to keep in mind. While dominant American culture portrays migrant identity from certain countries as a positive trait (think the stereotype of a “sexy French accent” or a “sophisticated British accent”), being seen as a migrant from other cultures can be the opposite.

Have you seen portrayals of film or TV characters with a strong Asian accent or mannerisms that felt stigmatizing and marginalizing? In the following section, we’ll see how listening to God can help us to own and engage with even the most vulnerable of our identities.

Bible Reading: Loving our Whole Selves



LEADER TALK: *Some people have a very clear understanding and awareness of their own or their family’s migration story. For others, the stories have never been shared with us, perhaps because they’re too painful to unpack. Regardless, it’s important for us to understand that we all have been impacted by migration experiences in some way, shape, or form.*

But in the Bible, we see that God actually loves and values all of our whole identity - even especially the parts of that identity that are vulnerable and marginalized!



LEADER NOTE: *Have someone read each of the following paragraphs.*

Background: By hiding her Jewish identity, Esther assimilated into Persian culture, even rising to become the queen of Persia. When a crisis occurred, the Jewish people in Persia, already a vulnerable and marginalized migrant community, were placed in great and immediate physical danger.

In the midst of this crisis, Esther’s cousin Mordecai saw a possibility: with her closeness to the king, could she intervene for her people? He met with her assistant Hathak:

Esther 4:8-16

New International Version (NIV)

⁸ [Mordecai gave Hathak] a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

⁹ Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. ¹⁰ Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, ¹¹ "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."

¹² When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, ¹³ he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴ For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." Esther had a choice: she could try to distance herself from the vulnerability of Jewish identity in Persia, or instead be honest about the community she came from. But Mordecai's words reminded her that her entire journey had led her to this position for a reason. She could use her prominence for self-preservation, but there might be a greater meaning to her life as a Persian-passing Jewish queen of the country.

In this story, Esther ultimately chose to actively reaffirm her Jewishness. By doing this, she wound up playing a part in God's larger plan. She went to the king and wound up saving the Jewish people and helping the nation flourish. Even more importantly for us, this action offered her an opportunity to honor and bring peace to the fullness of who she was, particularly the Jewish migrant identity that she was previously hiding.



LEADER TALK: *Being a migrant from Asia is often seen as socially undesirable:*

terms like “FOB” (Fresh Off the Boat) or phrases like “That’s so Korean/Chinese/Indonesian/etc. of you!” can subtly pressure us to downplay or disown our and our family’s experiences of migration. There’s a social pressure to emphasize our Americanness by saying things like “I’m not that kind of Asian” or receiving compliments like “You’re not like other Asians!”.

The story of Esther provides an example of someone ambivalent about her migrant heritage coming to own and understand that piece of her identity, complex as the relationship between her community and herself was.

Now, this is very important to stress: we’re not saying “be more Asian!” The point is, God wants you to be at peace with all of who you are, whatever that healing may look like.



LEADER NOTE: *Spend 2-3 minutes reading the following paragraphs, then ask the group to discuss the following discussion questions.*

Discussion Questions



LEADER NOTE: *Use the following questions to prompt reflection on integrating faith with wrestling through migration issues.*

- We move through many different spaces in life: work, school, home, and various circles of friends. How comfortable are you to own this aspect of your life in each of these environments?
- How could it transform your (or your family’s) experiences of migration to know and believe that God has been in the midst of those experiences? What does it change, and how do you feel about that?
- Some of us may be carrying migration-related hurts that still weigh us down, even years or generations later. No matter how distant the experiences were that caused this pain, we may still suffer from the negative aspects of migration. Can you imagine inviting God into this aspect of your life, to bring clarity, healing, and wholeness?



LEADER NOTE: *After allowing conversations to die down, close in prayer.*

For This Week

- Reflect and journal on your own or your family's migration story. What were the circumstances that allowed you or your family to enter into the United States? What might have changed if you or your family had immigrated earlier or later? In what way can your or your family's story help you to empathize with those who are immigrating today?

Additional Resources

Books:

The God Who Sees Us by Karen Gonzalez

American Born Chinese (graphic novel) by Gene Luen Yang

Podcasts:

Only in America - <http://onlyinamerica.libsyn.com/>

Immigration Nation - <https://www.npr.org/2018/06/27/623662992/immigration-nation>

Other Resources:

Documentary: New Year Baby - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Year_Baby

Documentary: Chinese Exclusion Act - <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/chinese-exclusion-act/>

Documentary: Chinatown: Immigrants in America - <http://www.dctvny.org/documentaries/chinatown-immigrants-america>