

ETHNICITY MATTERS: DISCUSSION GUIDE

By Phil Bowling-Dyer and James Choung

Total time: 45-55 minutes

INTRODUCTION

5 minutes

- What are the thoughts and beliefs about ethnicity and culture that you received from where you grew up?

VIDEO: "Ethnicity Matters"

7 minutes

In this seven-minute video, James will unpack some biblical passages to help shape our views on ethnicity and culture, while also beginning to address some applications to our ministry. As you watch, pay attention to what connects with you, what doesn't and what questions you have.

- Watch the video here: <http://mem.intervarsity.org/resources/ethnicity-matters>

DISCUSSION

20 – 30 minutes

1. What are some of the things said in the video that connected with you? What are some of the things said that didn't connect with you?
2. Take some time to look at three passages in particular — Genesis 12:1-3, Acts 2:1-21, Galatians 2:1-10 — and answer these questions:
 - How might each of these passages reflect on God's view of ethnicity and culture?
 - In what ways has this affirmed your views on ethnicity and culture? In what ways has it changed your previous views?

PASSAGES REFERENCED:

- Genesis 1:28 – *Fill the earth.*
- Genesis 11 – *Babel and different languages.*
- Genesis 12:3 – *Abram's call.*
- Acts 2 – *Pentecost and different languages.*
- Galatians 2:1-10 – *Paul's and Peter's focused ministries.*
- Galatians 3:28 – *Jew nor Greek, male nor female.*
- Revelations 7:9 – *Every nation, tribe, people, and language.*

3. Do you find yourself leaning more toward a more ethnic-specific or ethnic-general ministry context? What about in your ministry context?
4. What are the benefits of a more focused ministry? What are the benefits of a more integrated ministry?
5. What are the unintended consequences of a more focused ministry? What are the unintended negatives of a more integrated ministry?
6. If you or your ministry leans more towards ethnic-specific ministry, how might you benefit by having integrated elements in your ministry? What could you do?
7. If you or your ministry leans more towards ethnic-general ministry, how might you benefit by having focused elements in your ministry? What could you do?

Whether or not you are a part of an ethnic-specific ministry or an ethnic-general ministry, both models are intended to reflect multiethnicity in different ways. Both need to be intentional to emphasize ethnic identity and racial reconciliation in discipleship, knowing that each value empowers the other.

APPLICATION AND RESPONSE

13 minutes

- REFLECTION:** What is one thing that God might be inviting you individually and as a community to next, keep doing, improve or change?
- GROUP SHARING:** If time permits, share what you heard in pairs or in a larger group. Are there any trends you notice?
- PRAYER:** Take some time to pray for one another, your community and God's mission.

FOR MORE RESOURCES, VISIT
www.mem.intervarsity.org/resources

LEADER'S NOTES

Feel free to change questions and lengthen or shorten times according to your context, to help the conversation be more organic and effective.

- ❑ Introduction: It's an open-ended question meant to start conversation. Answers can be about one's own ethnicity or those of others, received from his or her family, friends, church, community, school, and elsewhere.
- ❑ Question 1: Again, these are conversation starters. Don't feel the need to correct someone right away at this point. Let them share openly, but helpfully direct the conversation if they begin to offend others with their comments.
- ❑ Question 2: To help people answer this question, you may throw in a few more questions to help generate thought.
 - What is going on in this passage?
 - What is the main character or narrator saying?
- ❑ Questions 4-5: If time allows, you can use the framework of a polarity map to frame the discussion for questions 4 and 5. Polarities happen when two seemingly opposing ideas are held together in tension. If both options are needed, then no one right answer can provide a solution. A polarity map, therefore, allows us to look at a situation as a "both/and" instead of an "either/or." They allow us to hold two seemingly opposing ideas in tension, offering a dichotomy or continuum that needs to be managed. For your discussion, you print out the blank polarity map on page 4 and have your group fill it out. We have also included a filled-out polarity map on page 5.

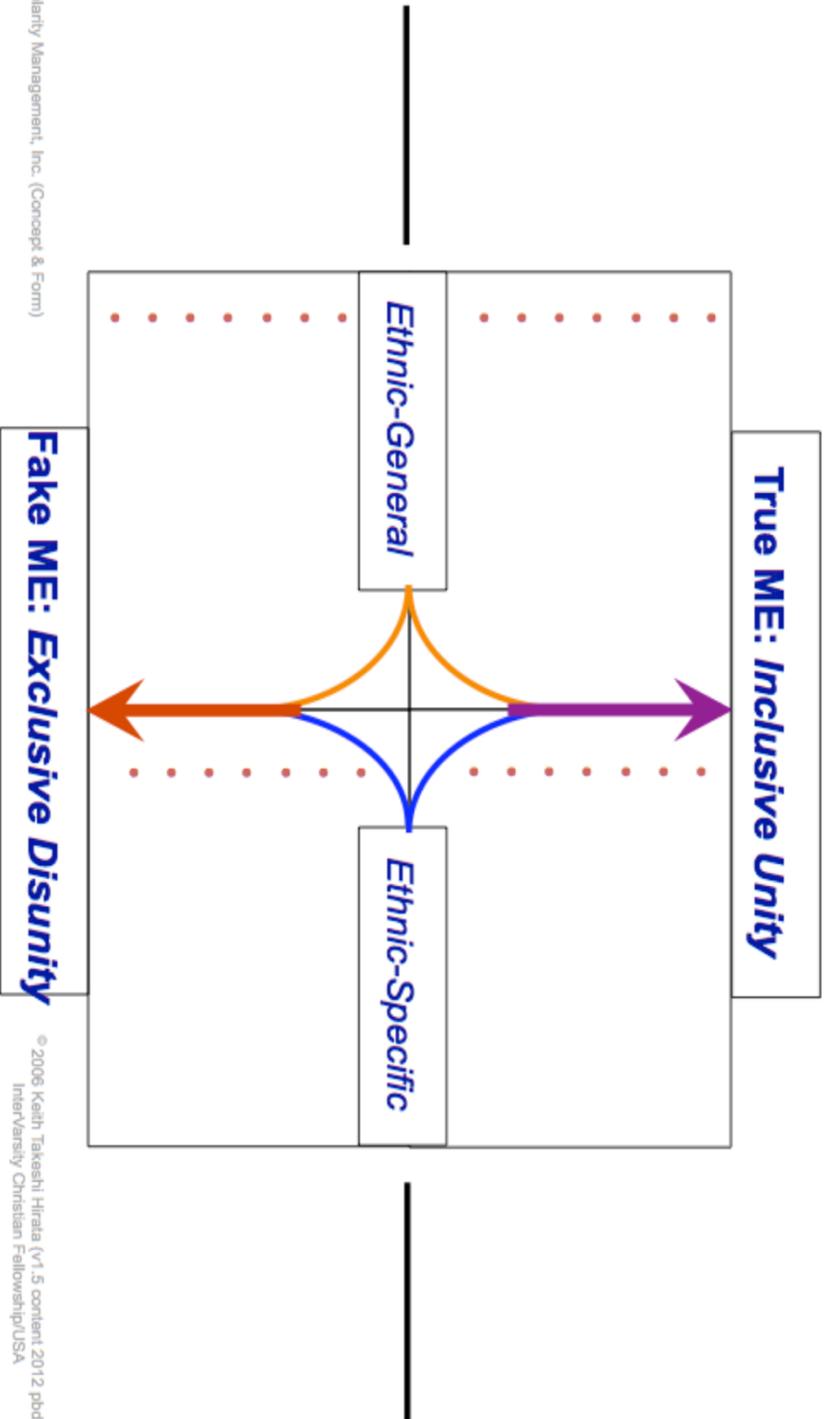
MAIN IDEA:

Ethnicity and culture are affirmed in Scripture — though our primary identity is in Christ — and both focus and integration are needed in ministries that seek to be truly multiethnic.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

- **Phil Bowling-Dyer** is the director of diversity training for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.
- **James Choung** is the national director of evangelism for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

Ethnic-General vs. Ethnic-Specific Ministry



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Ethnic-General vs. Ethnic-Specific Ministry

How to gain/maintain positive results

- Ensure that everyone's voice is welcome at the table and has influence
- Promote leaders and role models from various ethnic groups
- Teach each other's histories/stories/ways
- Engage and risk cross-cultural in new and creative ways
- Maintain ethnic-specific tools in your cross-ethnic program

True ME: Inclusive Unity

- Fosters creativity & innovation
- Openness to multiple points of view
- Reflects Kingdom (Rev. 7) reality
- Creates learning opportunities
- Promotes humility
- Powerful prophetic witness
- Exposure to multiple cultures
- Reflects a growing U.S. campus/societal reality
- Effectiveness in mission
- Fosters grace

How to gain/maintain positive results

- Fosters healthy ethnic identity
- Attracts and is safe for "low assimilation-high identity" people
- Reflects Incarnational (Jn. 1) reality
- Deep sense of connection & "family"
- Focused, contextual missional work
- Simplicity of common cultural foundation allows for depth, freedom, and accessibility for ministry
- Strong/healthy ethnic identity enables true cross-cultural interaction

Red Flag Indicators

- "We're all the same" mentality
- Condescending attitude toward ethnic-specific groups
- Complacent attitude regarding representation

Ethnic-General

- Cultural blinders/misunderstandings
- Potential under-developed ethnic identity of individuals
- Ethnic/cultural distinctives are diminished or devalued
- ME concepts are unhelpfully simple or disabbingly complex
- Fosters a complacent or prideful attitude
- Inefficient

Ethnic-Specific

- Exclusivity and ethnocentrism prevents crossing cultures
- Ethnic arrogance
- Inhospitable and intimidating group dynamics
- Self-centered, self-absorbed
- Parochial
- "Self-Out" mentality abounds
- Pressure to conform or perform

Red Flag Indicators

- Visitors/guests don't return a second time
- Language is "us/them"
- Majority of relationships for members are only with one another and those like them
- Overall defensiveness

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Fake ME: Exclusive Disunity

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