

## Beauty: Leader's Guide

### CAST VISION: Why are we doing this? (5 min)

This is the start of our four-week series on race, ethnicity, and faith. We are talking about these topics in this series because we believe that God has made us fearfully and wonderfully in his image and wants us to celebrate ALL of how he has made us, including our ethnic backgrounds. We are meant to celebrate our unique identities, but because race and ethnicity are hard to talk about, we are often left either divided from one another, or silent about these topics because we don't know how to engage. I am excited for this series because we are going to look at how we are made in God's image and how we can join God in redeeming and restoring his world. Thank you for spending four weeks of your time on this crucial topic!

### OVERVIEW

Each week we will be looking at our ethnic stories and how they tie to different aspects God's greater story—the gospel. We will be looking at the beauty, brokenness, redemption, and restoration of our ethnic journeys.

Today we will specifically be looking at the beauty with which God has created each of us. Each of us may have an easier or more difficult time discussing one of the circles: Beauty, Brokenness, Redemption, Restoration. All four are important. Please try to join us for all four.

**Introduce yourselves and your ethnicity.** Be as specific as possible.  
(See Teaching Notes)

### CULTURAL DISCOVERY EXERCISE: Things I heard growing up (10 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 surprised you? What questions come up for you?
- **OPTIONAL:** There are some real differences between our different cultures. What do you notice?

### VIDEO WITH DEBRIEF QUESTIONS (20 min)

Play the video and invite everyone to take notes on the handout. Afterwards, discuss in pairs or in small groups.

- What stories or key phrases did you resonate with from the video?
- What are some beautiful things about your ethnicity?
- **OPTIONAL:** Where do you struggle to name beauty?

**BIBLICAL REFLECTION: Psalm 139:1–3, 13–16 (10 min)**

**Context/background:** David, someone that had an intimate relationship with God, wrote this Psalm.

Explain that you are going to read the passage out loud twice. The first time you want everyone to pay attention to what stands out to them in the passage. The second time you want them to listen for “what God is saying to you about your ethnic identity.”

Pray for the group before you read the passage and ask Jesus to speak to them as you read the Scripture.

Read the passage. Pause. Read it again.

Invite the group to quietly write down what God said to them, before turning into pairs to share.

- What stood out to you? What did you hear God say to you about your identity?
- How does this shape your view of self?

**PRAYING THE PASSAGE (10 min)**

Write your own ethnicity(ies) in the blanks provided.

Read your version out loud to your neighbor.

- How did that make you feel? How does this message compare to/contrast with what you have heard or have 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?

**ACTIVE RESPONSE (5 min)**

Invite them to consider one or more of the Active Response options. Ask them to raise hands to show if they will take on the prayer challenge or the stretch goal. Write down their names under each option, so you remember who is trying each one.

**>>Meet & Pray.**

In pairs, take out your calendars and schedule a time to meet this week. Share what God is teaching you about beauty in your ethnic story and pray for one another.

**Stretch Goal – Pass It On.**

Get a meal with someone on your campus (not from InterVarsity) and share what you are learning about beauty in your ethnic story (you may want to show them the Things I Heard Growing Up exercise). Ask how they see beauty in their ethnic background and offer to pray for them to see themselves as beautifully and wonderfully made.

## 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.

### OTHER TIPS

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 OK, too. 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.

**\*\*As the leader, you can reserve the right to hit the pause button at any point in the conversation to debrief and interpret what is happening.**

## 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 (i.e. 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
  - Avoid lecturing. The point of the conversation is to reflect on our stories and to learn from the stories being shared.

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 could somebody please help me understand if there's a more accurate or better way to say this?"

**Note:** If you're on the receiving end, gently correct others if they offend you.

3. **Seek to have a learning posture.**

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.

<b>ACCUSATORY QUESTIONS (to avoid)</b>	<b>LEARNING POSTURE QUESTIONS (to use instead)</b>
<i>"Why do you do that?"</i>	<i>"Could you tell me more? I'd love to understand better what that experience was like for you."</i>
<i>"Why do your people or _____ people do that?"</i>	<i>"I think I missed something back there. Could you help me understand what was happening when ____ happened?"</i>
<i>"That food/event/experience was _____ (gross, inefficient, chaotic). Why is it like that?"</i>	<i>"Forgive my ignorance, but I don't know what ____ is. Could you explain it a little more so I can learn?"</i>
<i>"Aren't you just overreacting? Why did you say that?"</i>	<i>"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?"</i>

Engaging in this important discussion can feel daunting. Please remember that the real danger is not of you being labeled a racist. The real danger is shutting yourself off from the opportunity to love those around you better and the opportunity to experience God's love for you more deeply. Commit to listening to each other, learning from one another's experiences, and reconciling as conflict comes up!

## VIDEO 1: Cheat Sheet

NAME (in order of appearance)	NOTES
TODD (German-American)	"I realized that everyone who was around me was black... in that moment, I realized I was different... I realized that I was white"
LEAH (Puerto Rican, Italian, Polish)	"Trying to figure out how to communicate with [Mamita and Papito] because I didn't speak Spanish and they didn't speak English"
MEGAN (Native American, Irish, Scottish)	"I don't remember knowing anyone else personally who was Native besides family"
CHARLENE (Ghanaian)	"My dad taught us that assimilation was the way to success"
JULIE (Swiss German American)	"I learned early on not to talk about race if I didn't want the conversation to get awkward"
COURTLAND (Native American Lakota Tribe)	"I knew that I was different from everybody else. There were us the Native Americans and then there was everybody else"
ELEANOR (Asian American, Filipino)	"Filipinos are all about community, fun and celebration"
CHARLENE (Ghanaian)	"In our culture, there is a value of family, connection, and respect"
NOEMI (Mexican American)	"[a coed birthday party] was just an indication of our desire to celebrate <i>todos juntos en familia</i> "
COURTLAND (Native American Lakota Tribe)	"There is a Lakota phrase... <i>Mitakuye oyasin</i> , which means we are all related"
SEAN (African American)	"I grew up being taught black is beautiful"
CAROLINE (Malayali)	"We love to laugh, we love to joke, and it's pretty common for us to make fun of each other but joy just overflows when we come together"
TODD (German-American)	"I'm from a rural farming community where people have high values for hard work and community involvement"
JULIE (Swiss German American)	"We were freely encouraged to be innovative, to create and to freely imagine what our lives could look like in the world"
KAITLIN (Chinese American)	"As many immigrants do, [my grandparents] worked countless hours in order to see their children live the American dream"
ELEANOR (Asian American, Filipino)	"One summer my younger cousin was in the hospital and for every day... there were about 15-20 of us that would fill the hospital cafeteria"
BRENT (African American)	"Growing up there was a strong sense of family... family included anybody willing to share in our story"
ANDREW (German, Scottish, Irish, English, Armenian)	"I asked Jesus to remove my blinders so I could see"