

Mixed Ministry Table Talk for Native InterVarsity

PURPOSE AND VISION

It often feels like we as Mixed people have to choose a breakout or a room which can bring up anxiety, pain, and insecurities. In the kingdom of God however, we are fully accepted and embraced for all of who we are and aren't expected to "pick a side."

We want to offer this space in order for you as people created with more than one ethnicity to be free to be you. Not having to hide or try to fit into a mold to meet the expectations of others. Jesus understands our experience as someone who was Mixed – fully God and fully man, as well as multiethnic. Mixed ministry exists for people like us to embrace the fullness of our multiethnic identity in Jesus and to be empowered, equipped, and encouraged as Mixed students, faculty, and staff.

INTROS

Have everyone share their name, school or year in school, ethnic identity, and their favorite thing about their culture.

ICE BREAKER ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL)

Bring your own game that can be played in 5-10 minutes. Examples: cookie game (moving a cookie from forehead to mouth with no hands), human knot, rock, paper, scissor tournament, two truths and a lie, etc.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Have you given thought to reflecting on how being Mixed has impacted your life experiences? If so, what have you learned? If not, what feelings are coming up for you?
- What has brought you joy in being Mixed and what do you appreciate about being Mixed?
- What about your Mixed identity journey has been hard?
- Have you wrestled with feeling enough in your ethnic identity?
- In what ways have you noticed Jesus shepherding you through your journey as a Mixed person?

Validating Our Mixed Native Identity

Many of us Mixed Natives feel like we aren't Native enough, but Creator made us who we are. He put a lot of thought into who he made all of us to be. Be welcomed to explore what it means to be Mixed and to accept all of who you are.

You are Native Enough

Native peoples value genealogy and family history. So just one Native ancestor means you do belong here!

- If you don't have a tribal ID or government card, you are Native enough.
- If you didn't grow up around your Native culture, you are Native enough.

Your upbringing or a piece of paper can't take that away from you.

A Community of Loving Actions

We love spending time together, often around a table of food! We show our love, not just through words, but actions as well, and that includes making food for each other.

Another way we show love is to allow space for everyone to share their stories. We don't worry about strict schedules and we aren't worried about what's next. We live in the moment.

- Share the last time you went to a gathering with your family (with your tribe).
- Were there any traditional foods there from your tribe? What special foods were there from your family (even your non-Native family)?
- What kind of actions do you like to do to show love to others? (Examples: sharing food, helping with needs, spending time telling jokes, etc.)

BREATH PRAYER EXERCISE (2-3 MINS)

Framing: "Our journeys of being Mixed are often full of beauty and brokenness. Jesus wants us to rest in him and be formed by what he says about us. How amazing would it be if the primary narrative around our identity was that we are fully loved, accepted, and enough in Christ just as we are. Let's take time to do a breath prayer exercise as a way to let Jesus form us in our Mixed identity."

Instructions: Start by having students close their eyes. Then have them follow the breath prayer.

Inhale...*Jesus formed me*, Exhale...*We are enough*

DEBRIEF

Have everyone share their name, school or year in school, ethnic identity, and their favorite thing about their culture.

- How did you experience God?
- What surprised you from this time?
- Was there anything you learned about yourself or about God that's worth holding on to?
- Is there a next step God might be inviting you towards?

Curated Questions

- As you've listened and shared, what are the ways you've resonated with the thoughts, experiences, and stories of your fellow Native Mixed people? How have they differed from your own?
- As Mixed people, we can often feel in-between—never quite existing in one identity or another. What gifts do you think your Mixed Native identity has given you?



A MIXED BLESSING

Adapted from the "Prayer of St. Patrick"

As I step forward today
may the strength of God direct me and
the wisdom of God guide me
through all my Mixed feelings.

May the ear of God hear me
and the eye of God look at me with love
in the Mixed body that God created.

May Christ hold me today
Christ with me, Christ before me
Christ all around me, and Christ in me.

Jesus the Christ, our Brown, Mixed,
Middle Eastern/North African
Savior who dwelt among us
and whose Spirit dwells in my Mixed body.

May Holy Spirit be in the heart of everyone
who thinks of me, as I think of them.
May Holy Spirit affirm me to worship and serve
through my Mixed experiences.

As I step forward today
may every step be proof of God's care
and intentionality in creating me
to receive love and care
and to be a Mixed blessing.



Best Practices for Non-Mixed Leaders

As a small group leader, your primary focus will be to provide a safe and hospitable place for students and faculty to process and debrief their conference experience. We want to create a safe space for small group members to be seen and heard. We expect students to be across the spectrum in terms of their ethnic journeys, as well.

Some best practices of leading these spaces include:

- Allow for introductions to create a hospitable environment.
- Start with yourself (name, ethnic background, what university you're connected to, favorite thing about your culture or upbringing, what you hope to learn from this time?).
- Be warm, smile, say hi to each person as they enter.
- Intentionally observing each member in the small group to discern how they are experiencing the time.
- Watch body language – look for posture, facial expressions, reactions to what is being shared.
- Frequency of sharing – who is sharing a lot; who has not shared much; make space for people by giving indirect invitations.
- Be cautious of trying to over relate your experience to the Mixed experience.
- Try not to insert your assumptions about Mixed people as they're sharing.

Contextualized Hospitality

Each community has different norms and taboos. Here are some general keys to facilitating a hospitable space for Mixed Native Americans:

Make space for discussions of hard things. It is very likely that Native people (especially younger folks) will know someone in prison, have attended many funerals, and have experienced abuse of all types. It's important to find a balance in addressing these issues and also not sensationalizing them. Press into the both/and of the Mixed experience by allowing Native folks to be open about their experiences and then not making a big deal out of them.

Native America is not a monolith, so each Native person is unique. There are 575 different federally recognized tribes and about 400 unrecognized tribes in the United States (according to articles from 2024). Each of these tribes has different languages and customs. This means that there are a lot of different experiences of Native people and many ways to be Native. Remember to provide space for the diversity of Native experiences.

Native Americans already understand the reality of the spiritual world. Unlike in other cultures, spiritualism is part of the Native experience, so most Mixed Native people won't be alarmed by a mention of spiritual things. This will shape discussions in a unique way, so keep in mind that many Mixed Native folks won't be coming from a Western evangelical mindset. Native folks are very aware of "powers and principalities" and how the spiritual reality of the world affects everyday life.

Remember that you don't have to get through the entire Table Talk! Follow Holy Spirit's leading as you evaluate what's best for this time.

