

## Mixed Ministry Table Talk for Middle Eastern & North African (MENA) 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?

#### *Honoring Our Mixed MENA Identity*

There is no "script" for how to be MENA but we do value hospitality! You belong in this space and are a blessing because of who you are and the people that you belong to. When we honor our Mixed MENA identity, we honor our entire MENA community.

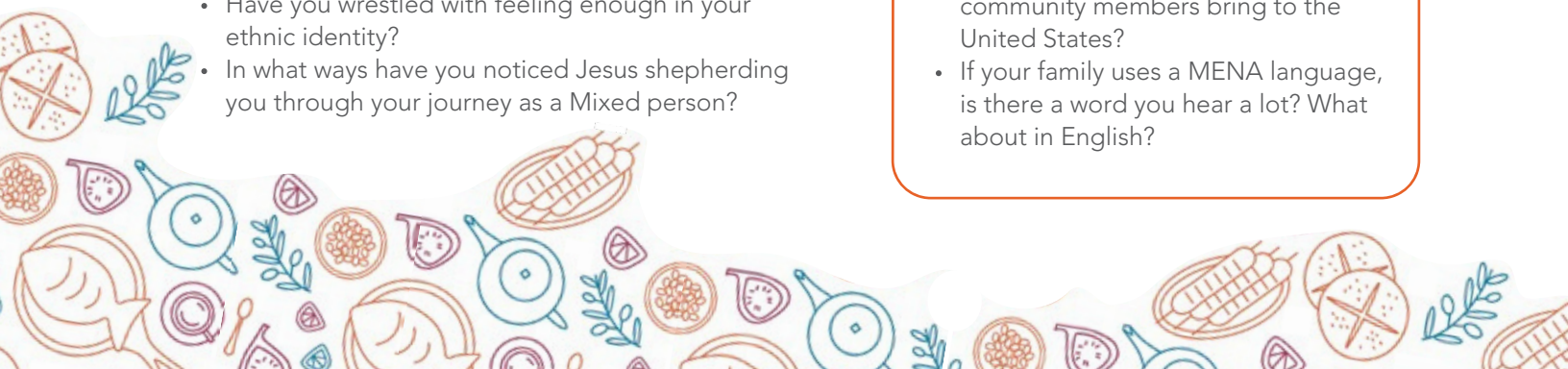
#### *You are MENA Enough*

To be MENA is to be diverse, and even more for Mixed MENA folks. Some of us are multiethnic, some have monoethnic immigrant stories, some of us have both—there's no single way to be MENA! There are many different cultures, countries, philosophies, and languages represented in our overall MENA culture. "We are enough!" means our neighbors and family members are enough, too.

#### *A Menu of Hospitality*

One way MENA folks tend to welcome others is with food. As a culture made of many cultures, we value understanding & celebrating one another. We Mixed MENA folks uniquely show Pentecost hope in our bodies: unity among diversity. We're a beloved part of the of people at God's table.

- Do you have a favorite MENA food? A favorite family dish from any culture?
- A lot of MENA folks have similar foods. If your family/people group have a food with stuffing (grape leaves, figs, dumplings, etc.), describe them. When do you eat them?
- Is immigration part of your MENA story? What customs did your community members bring to the United States?
- If your family uses a MENA language, is there a word you hear a lot? What about in English?



## 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 MENA 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 MENA 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 MENA people:

#### **MENA peoples have a rich blend of many cultures.**

MENA folks span many customs, languages, religions, and even continents and centuries. Each MENA person is unique, and many MENA people groups are also unique from other MENA people groups.

*NOTE: one value that is common among MENA folks is offering food. If it's at all possible, bring some sort of treats, candy, etc. to share. Even something small will still be very welcoming.*

#### **MENA culture tends to be very time fluid and indirect.**

If you're starting a session at 5 after, you're still 5 minutes early! A Native saying goes that majority culture people "might think they're on time, but really, time is on them!" Be relaxed about timing and don't judge "lateness" as disrespect. MENA folks want to honor everyone in the group. So don't pressure them to share; provide space for sharing and be patient. Mirror the pace and feeling of the group.

#### **We are one.**

MENA culture is very collectivist, with identity usually set in the context of family. Lineage and respect for family and cultural elders is key. Allow group members space to honor each other and not draw attention to themselves, which they might find embarrassing or even shaming. MENA folks will also want to honor natural leaders, so make space for them.

#### **The stories of immigrants.**

MENA folks in the US are often new immigrants (or 1st/2nd generation) so some Mixed MENA folks are monoethnic but multicultural. Others are multiethnic from 2 or more MENA cultures/countries. Some Mixed MENA folks are multiracial (MENA and other non-MENA heritage). Honor where each person's people groups are from and where they call home now.

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.

