

## Introductory Session

For intercultural bible studies to be effective, it is important that relationships of trust and openness are established, especially as the two groups may never meet face to face. Therefore, this session outline is designed to be used as the first in a series between two groups that are wanting to get to know each other better. Frequently, the feedback we hear from Just Scripture groups, especially those in the Global South, is that before embarking on a study of scripture, they just want to know the other group a bit more. The activities in this session have been written with that goal in mind. They follow a path in which we move outwards from ourselves, through our churches to our countries. The activities could be done in any order however.

### 1. What's in a name

Go round every member of both groups and encourage them to introduce themselves by name saying something of what both their first and surnames mean. Names often have significance and this activity can introduce something of our cultural context as well as how we like to be addressed.

### 2. A daily object

Ask everyone in both groups to bring with them and talk about an object they use in their daily lives. It could be something they use in their house or work (a favourite mug; a planner); it could be something from their devotional life (a bible; a candle); it could just be a picture they have hanging on their wall. The key is that it is something they interact with on a daily basis.

As an addition to this activity, you could ask everyone in the UK group to talk without using any words with the letter K in them. The rest of the group can call them out if they accidentally use such a word. The purpose of this is to give them a very small sense of how hard it is to speak in another language. It will be important to ensure that the UK group doesn't just resort

to using less-common words. The activity could be done as pre-task for the UK group alone.

### 3. Who you live with

Family can mean different things in different contexts. This idea explores that topic. One of the group facilitators should read out each of the following relatives, and people in the group should indicate whether they have ever lived with the people listed. In each case, it is whether **during their adult life** they have lived **for a few weeks** with any of:

- their adult children
- their parents
- their grandparents
- their grandchildren
- their siblings
- their aunts / uncles
- their cousins
- their more distant relatives

Discuss how common it is for people to live with relatives in their particular country.

An alternative to this idea is to discuss which of these relatives typically visits during the course of the year and how often.

### 4. Your church

We may be surprised at how different churches are across the world. As a monocultural group, have a discussion to see if you can reach agreement on these questions, then share the answers with the other group. This task would need to be adapted if participants are from multiple churches:

1. On average, how many people (adults & children) attend the Sunday morning service?
2. How many children (under 18s) are there?
3. What is the gender split?
4. What other weekly services do you hold?
5. How is your church led?
6. How much clapping, dancing and raising of hands is there in your services?
7. How long are your typical sermons?
8. What other ministries is your church involved in? eg. youthworks, schoolwork, health, education, prisons

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Having shared with each other, open up to dialogue to see if either group has questions they would like to ask about each other's worship life.

## 5. Your country

Encourage each person in each group to think of three words that they would use to describe the people in their country. They might, for instance, think of emotions (happy or sad), outlook on life (pessimistic or optimistic), attitude to government (rebellious or obedient), attitude to work (hardworking or fun-loving). Other possibilities might be ambitious, family orientated, self-centred, consumerist and so on. Remember, they are not describing themselves so much as typical people in their country.

Go round in turn asking each person to share their three words. The point of this is to spark conversation. Once everyone in one group has shared, see if the other group has any comments or questions about what has been said.

## 6. Your hopes and fears

Finally, it might help to go round the groups again encouraging people to share what their hopes and fears are for the series of studies that you are about to start. This can help provide a baseline of expectations for each other.

## 7. Other possibilities

Other options that you could use for this introductory session are the following:

### a) Sharing artwork

Art is very important in many cultures. Share and talk about an example that reflects your church or culture in some way. This could be a picture, a sculpture a video of a dance or song.

### b) Cultural values

Use the following list of statements and get people in both groups to vote as to whether they agree or disagree with the statement.

- The future is more important than the past
- Older people should be given more respect than the young
- It's more important to be kind than to be right
- It's rude to be late
- Individual rights matter more than community rights
- If a family member asks for money, and you can give it, you should always do so

Then discuss any differences that emerged.

### c) Word association

This can be an interesting way to highlight significant differences between groups. Turn off the sound so that each group can't hear the other, then play a quick word association game with your group. Ask everyone in the group to say out loud the first word that comes to mind when you say these words. Everyone in the group needs to speak immediately and simultaneously. The group facilitator writes down the words that are said, and then once you've done all the words, turn the audio on again and share with the other group what your group associated most clearly with these words, then discuss:

- Family
- Church
- Politicians
- School
- News
- Money
- Hospital

### d) Faith-based activity

None of these activities have been especially faith-based, but you might want to also open or close this session with some form of collective worship eg. a song or prayer or reading, or even a short reflection from one of the group facilitators about what is hoped for from your studies together.