

STARTING  
INTERNATIONAL  
SMALL GROUPS

SESSION  
HANDOUTS

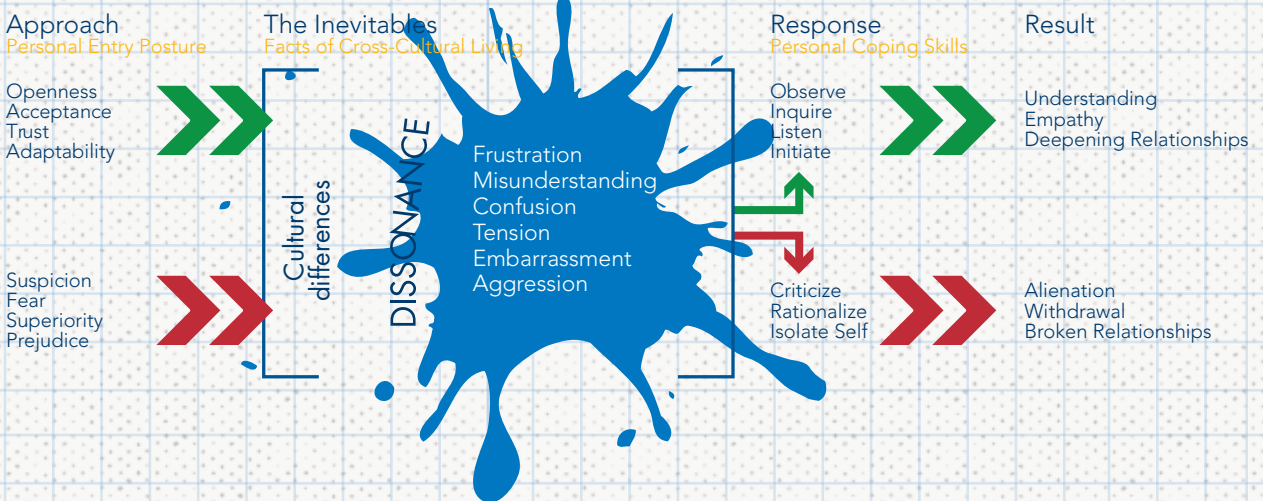
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# SESSION 1: APPROACHING DIFFERENCES

## approaching differences



This diagram shows that cross-cultural dissonance happens to everyone. The key is to understand the different approach between the green line and the red line. When we choose to be open and trusting, cultural differences lead us to listen and to deepen relationships.

However, if we allow ourselves to be afraid or suspicious, cultural differences can lead us to criticize others and miss out on relationships.

Share about a time you experienced dissonance because of cultural differences. How did your approach affect your response?

# SESSION 2: NETWORK MAPPING

## WHO DO YOU KNOW?

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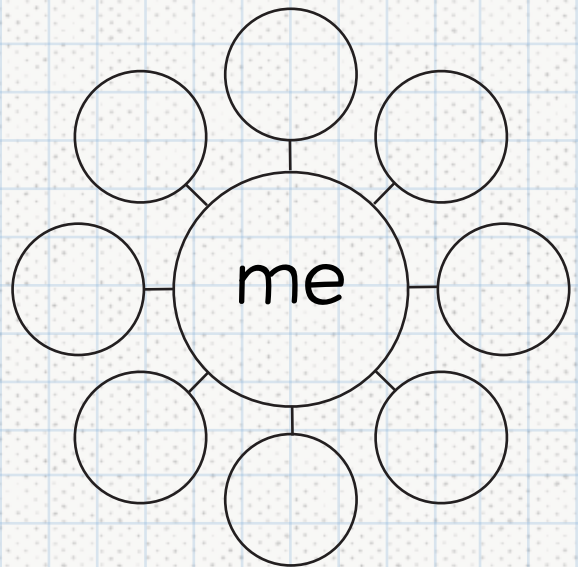
For each space on campus where there are international students, write down people you are connected to and the people who are connected to them. This creates a “network map” of the international student community and can help you identify people to partner with and invite to events.

Pray for the networks you have identified on your network map.

Plan an event that would appeal to international students on your campus.

Use the following event planner to think about goals and next steps.

Visit a language center, tutoring service, international residential building, or cultural club. What are you excited to learn about or experience?



There are three primary ways to meet international students:

- Inviting to our networks
- Hosting events
- Participating in campus organizations



# SESSION 2:

## EVENT PLANNING



### BRAINSTORM

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Think of an event that appeals to international students: a potluck, a make your own pizza night, an Ikea trip, a game night, a food crawl, or a holiday party.

What activities during the event will connect people to each other? Plan ice breakers, discussions, or "minute-to-win-it" games.

What next step do you want to invite people to? How will you get contact information? How will leaders meet everyone?

### DEBRIEF

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Where did you see God at work?

What step is he leading you to?



### PLAN

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Event name:

Date & time:

Meeting location:

Transportation options:

How many people you are hoping will come:



### CHECKLIST

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- Personally invite others via a text, a call, or face-to-face.
- Provide familiar food and drinks (be aware of cultural/religious food restrictions).
- Prepare decorations and music.
- Avoid using Christian lingo.
- Figure out who will welcome people and what you want to say about your group.
- Pray each person would encounter God.
- Don't forget to show up early!

## NEXT STEPS

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For each person try to have a face-to-face interaction after you meet.

Have a conversation beyond small talk.

Have them come to small group more than once.

Try to meet with each contact face-to-face three times. Invite everyone together to watch a movie or to attend small group.

## SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

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Send a text or give them a phone call.



Add them on Facebook.



Download other chatting apps such as Line, Kakao Talk, WhatsApp, etc.

# SESSION 3: FOLLOW-UP GUIDE

## QUESTIONS TO ASK



What are you hoping to experience in the US?

What are your career goals?

What do you enjoy about what you are studying?





## FIRST CONTACT

It's so nice to meet you!  
I'd love to hang out more to  
get to know you better.  
Can I get your contact  
information?



## 24 HOURS

### **Initiate:**

Send a message.  
Be friendly and try to  
include a question.

Hi Yuki! It was nice meeting  
you at orientation! Do you  
want to get lunch this week?



## 48 HOURS

### **Get face time:**

Grab a meal, hit the  
gym, shop for groceries,  
study together, or  
get boba!

Do you want to come over  
Wednesday night? My  
Christian international group  
is hosting a dinner at my  
house, if you want to come  
and meet new people! What  
do you think?

Because international students come from many different spiritual and cultural backgrounds, it is helpful to think of small group meetings as mini-events instead of year long Bible studies. Combining food, fun, and Scripture creates a community that is entertaining, meaningful, and lasting.

What are you looking forward to in each of these aspects?

## THE BASICS OF AN ISM SMALL GROUP



### **Bond over food:**

Whether you take turns cooking, order a pizza, or do a potluck, start off your small group with a meal together. This can be a great way to share about the homes we come from. Be mindful of dietary restrictions!

# SESSION 4: SMALL GROUP TOOLKIT



### **Become friends:**

Play games or teach each other traditions from your home. Play music that is popular where you are from or share stories about friends and family. You can also provide English conversation practice.



### **Experience God:**

Not everyone you meet will believe in God, so be aware of how they feel talking about faith. Start with spiritual discussions, a Group Investigating God (GIG), or a Q&A about Christianity. If they are comfortable, then suggest doing a Bible study.

Ultimately, we want international students to be welcomed and to feel accepted no matter where they are in their spiritual journeys.



# HELPFUL TIPS

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1. Choose a location that is easy to find and make it amazing.

Make sure your group is easy to get to and that everyone has a way to get there. Play music, use international decor, and arrange seats to encourage conversation.

2. If more people come than you expect, consider discussing things in smaller groups such as men and women, undergraduate and graduate, country/language groups, major or department.

3. Prioritize people over tasks. Instead of focusing on making a complicated meal or leading a perfect discussion, concentrate on building friendships and loving people.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

*I-GIG: A Guide for International Groups Investigating God:*  
[tiny.cc/i-gig](http://tiny.cc/i-gig)

*I-DIG: International Disciples Group guide:* [tiny.cc/idig](http://tiny.cc/idig)

*Crossing Cultures with Jesus* by Katie Rawson (InterVarsity Press, 2015): [tiny.cc/cwj](http://tiny.cc/cwj)

# WHAT TO STUDY

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When starting a small group, pray for guidance about how to serve the people you've met.

As you pray, ask these questions:

What are the international students I've met looking for (community, spiritual growth, cultural experiences, etc.)?

What is their spiritual background? What are they curious about?

What stories about Jesus would be intriguing to them?

## **Small groups for a mixed group:**

Use the study guides in this book as a series for both Christians and non-Christians.

Build community by sharing "life stories" or testimonies each week.

## **Small groups for non-Christians:**

After dinner and games, invite people to join an English conversation group, Q&A about God, or a Group Investigating God (GIG).

Host culture nights for students to share songs, traditions, or food from home.

If students are open to spiritual conversations, invite them individually or in pairs to participate in a GIG.

## **Small groups for Christians:**

Learn about worship, prayer, and evangelism from different perspectives.

Honor different languages as you study Scripture.

Go through the *International Disciples Group Guide (I-DIG)*.



# CROSS- CULTURAL LEADERSHIP

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Similar to the barriers international students face arriving on campus, there are religious and cultural barriers they might face when they join a small group. Here are two common barriers international students encounter and phrases you can use to help them feel welcome in discussions.

## **Approaching Religious Differences:**

Some students are new to a Christian environment. Some students are not Christian and may not believe that God exists. Introducing these students to faith requires interpreting Christian practices like prayer, Scripture reading, and worship songs. For other students, discussing apologetics can be beneficial.

## **Approaching Communication Differences:**

Some students communicate differently. Some students are accustomed to learning in lectures. Because they expect the teacher to be the expert, it is helpful to encourage discussion and affirm everyone's contributions. Some students might feel vulnerable when asked personal or direct questions.

One way to serve them is to ask open-ended questions to the group:

Christianity is a faith that encourages questions. Everyone has something to learn! If God exists, what would you like him to do in you?

Make a list of all the questions you have about this passage.

What is something you are taking away from this discussion?

What nations are  
being impacted by your  
small group?

Write your group  
members' names on their  
home continent as you  
pray each week!







