

Faith & Culture



Anti-Racism:
Colors
and Cultures



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Main Idea

God made us to be diverse, from our skin color to the expressions of our cultures and families.

BIBLE CONNECTIONS

Revelation 7:9

After this I looked, and there was a great crowd that no one could number. They were from every nation, tribe, people, and language. They were standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

Kids as young as four and five begin to notice racial and cultural diversity. They see difference among people and seek to place those differences into cognitive categories. So the sooner we can note difference, celebrate it, and name God's goodness in our difference, the sooner children will start building their foundation of seeing all kinds of people in the image of God, the core of Christian anti-racist theological ethics. This lesson will offer insight into the beauty of cultural expressions and diversity, and help learners build gratitude and curiosity as they interact with people different than themselves.

GATHERING ACTIVITY

What Is Culture?

Ask: Does anyone know what the word *culture* means?

Say: A culture is the habits, beliefs, and traditions of a particular group of people. This might include the language they speak or the style of art they make.

Ask: Can you think of other characteristics a group of people might share?

Supplies:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Crayons or markers
- Posterboard or whiteboard

Say: Food, music, clothes, games, work and play, manners, and religious practices are all good examples. As your group names forms of cultural expression, write them on a posterboard or white board so that everyone can see.

Say: When we spend time with people who share our culture, we may think everyone speaks the way we do or eats the kind of food we eat or greets people the way we do. Sometimes it isn't until we meet someone from another culture that we notice our own! We're going to practice identifying our own culture using the categories we've just listed. Pick three of the categories, and draw pictures representing your food, clothes, games, music, and so forth.

Give each learner three pieces of paper along with drawing materials. Offer support if they need help brainstorming. After they finish their drawings, invite them to share with the group or in partners.

Say: There are so many different cultural expressions just in this group! Your pictures show all the ways that God has made you and your family and people creative and beautiful. All these ways of expressing your culture give honor and glory to God.

STORY CONNECTION

Say: Did you know that the Bible tells us a story about how different languages and cultures came to be?

Say: After Noah and his family survived a great flood that swept over the earth, they had to start over. There weren't many people at first, but as Noah's family grew, people started to fill the earth again. Now they all spoke the same language and had all the same cultural expressions. They looked alike, talked alike, and, maybe they even thought alike.

Say: All the people came together and started to build a big city and a tall tower. They wanted to live all in the same place and make a name for themselves. When God saw this, God was troubled. "They're all one; they're all speaking the same language; they're all doing the same thing!" So God went and mixed up their language and sent them all over the good earth.

Say: After that, people began to develop their unique cultures and tend to the earth, making their homes in new places. They began to see the world differently, express themselves differently, and look different from one another. It was just as God had planned in the beginning.

TIP: Telling the story in a calm, smooth voice will draw the children into the story.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Ask: Why do you think the people wanted to be the same, speak the same way, and live in the same place? Do you ever feel more comfortable with people who are like you? Why do you think God mixed up the people’s languages? How do you think the people felt? How do you feel when you meet someone with a very different culture from your own?

PRACTICE AND REFLECTION

The Colors of Us

Read together the book, *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz. If you don’t have access to this book, you can watch it here: <https://youtu.be/679Sw4IACAk>.

Say: We’re all beautiful colors! Let’s paint a portrait of ourselves and our friends.

Using paint, help the children mix together the different colors to make the skin tones of themselves and their friends.

Equality and Fairness Covenant

Before gathering with the learners, write “Fair and Equal Community” as the title for your posterboard.

Cut yarn into 12-inch pieces; sort into bunches of three with different colors; and making a small knot on one end, tape the end of the strands onto a desk or tabletop, one for each learner.

Say: The Bible story about languages shows us that it is God’s joy that we should be different-looking, -thinking, -speaking, and -expressing. It is a gift that we have different colors and cultures, and all should be celebrated equally. But unfortunately, we live in a society that doesn’t always treat people with different colors and cultures the same way.

Ask: Do you know of ways that people are treated unfairly because of their skin color, language, the way they worship God, or some other cultural expressions?

Ask: What do you think we can do about that in our community?

Write the learners’ ideas on the posterboard for everyone to see. You may need to help the brainstorming along. Help the learners focus on treatment, communication, curiosity, and a loving community.

Ask: How can we remember to act and think like this, to remember that we are all equal and our differences are a beautiful gift from God?

Supplies:

- *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz
- Card stock
- Paint
- Paintbrushes
- Smocks

Supplies:

- Posterboard or butcher paper
- Markers
- Tape
- Colored embroidery thread or yarn (at least three colors)
- Scissors

Write down any suggestions for practice on the posterboard.

Say: One way we can remember is by making a symbol to take with us. Today we're going to use different colors of yarn (*or thread*) to make a bracelet. The different colors woven together will remind us of our differences, and that God gives us diversity in our colors and cultures, weaving together difference to make us beautiful and strong.

Help the learners braid or twist yarn together, then tie their bracelets on. Encourage older learners who may already know how to make a braid to help others when their project is finished.

Send home the "Practice and Reflection at Home" sheet on page 5 with each child. This will help engage the whole family in this spiritual practice together.

PRACTICE AND REFLECTION AT HOME

Today your child learned about how everyone has a color and culture. This week talk together about your family history and culture. Use a computer at home or at the library to look up the ethnic background of your family name. If this name doesn't accurately represent your family lineage, explore why that might be. Many indigenous people or people of African descent have anglicized names that were assigned to them, and that, too, is part of your racial and cultural story.

FURTHER READING

To read more about how God's people are of all different cultures, colors, places, and expressions, check out the story of Ruth (with notes in the *CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible*). Ruth was a Moabite, from a different people and culture than Israel, but she belonged to God and honored God with her life and love, just like people from Israel.