



## *Small Groups in Asian-American Culture* Nancy Sugikawa

### How to Use This Tool

This *Conference Classics* process tool is designed to accompany an audio recording of a Willow Creek Association conference session. You can refer to the tool while listening to the session and use it afterward to dig deeper into the content, or you can use the tool to get the highlights without even listening to the session.

#### **This tool consists of three parts:**

- The **PREVIEW** section lists the problem that the session addresses and the recommendation that the speaker makes.
- The **KEY CONCEPTS** section breaks the session down into the core ideas most important for you to understand.
- The **REFLECT** section includes questions to help you practice, apply, and implement what you've learned. Although the questions are geared primarily to individuals, groups can use them as a discussion guide.

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## Preview

- Problem:** Christians from an ethnic majority often don't understand the cultural differences that affect the success of Asian-American small groups.
- Recommendation:** Understand the values of Asian cultures to successfully navigate the challenges of Asian-American small groups.

## Key Concepts

### Culture Matters

- Culture affects how you minister.
- Culture impacts how you share the Gospel.
- The Bible shows many examples of this.
  - In the New Testament, we see that Jews were the predominant culture who knew about Jesus, and when the Gospel went out to the Gentiles, the apostles had to deal with which were cultural values and which were Christ's values.
  - Moses was bicultural, growing up in Egypt as a Jew.
  - Paul was a Greek-speaking Jew, and he understood that culture matters in how people come to Christ, saying that he had become all things to all people so that he might save some (1 Corinthians 9:22).
    - He leaned toward his Jewish side when he was speaking to Jews, referring to their heritage, traditions, and the law.
    - With the Gentiles, he leaned toward an understanding of philosophy and of the presence of God.
- You need to process what you learn and apply it in your own cultural environment.

### Asian-American Cultural Tensions

- Several cultural tensions exist in Asian-American churches.
- The extent of the tensions can vary based on the generational mix of the church, because more recent immigrants will identify more with their Asian identity.
- There is a tension between cultural values and Christ-centered values.
  - Sometimes the Gospel and the grace and truth of Jesus have to come and transform our culture.
  - Some things in Asian-American culture are aligned with what Jesus teaches, and some are not.
  - You need to figure out ways to identify with the current values and create a comfortable environment, but also to challenge some ingrained cultural values.

### Recommended Resources on Asian-American Culture

- *Invitation to Lead* by Paul Tokunaga
- *More Than Serving Tea: Asian American Women on Expectations, Relationships, Leadership and Faith* by Nikki A. Toyama, et. al.
- *Losing Face and Finding Grace: 12 Bible Studies for Asian-Americans* by Tom Lin
- *Following Jesus Without Dishonoring Your Parents: Asian American Discipleship* by