

Small Group Ministry  
Group Session Plan  
**Ancestry: Personal**

**Opening Words:**

Some people are your relatives but others are your ancestors, and you choose the ones you want to have as ancestors. You create yourself out of those values.

— Ralph Ellison, American writer

**Check-in/Sharing**

**Topic: What Does it Mean to Be A People of Ancestry?** Soul Matters Packet, Carie Johnsen, Nov. 2015, Excerpt

Our faith agrees with Ellison: there is a difference between relatives and ancestors.

Relatives give us our brown eyes and bowed legs; ancestors bless and burden us with a legacy.

Relatives are those we tell stories about; ancestors call us to carry the story forward.

Relatives allowed us to be here; our ancestors tell us *why* we are here and why being here right now matters.

The difference is huge. It is — as Ellison also points out — all about choosing to see yourself differently and live by a different set of values.

**Questions:**

1. Reflect on the distinction between relatives and ancestors.
2. Name some of your ancestors. These may or may not be relatives.
3. What is the impact on ancestry when relatives are unknown, for whatever reason?
4. How does your ancestry influence you today? How do you see your ancestry now?

**Check-out/Likes and Wishes:** How was the session for you?

**Closing Words:**

Prayers fall on us or  
Rise up through archeological debris.  
No place is free of them.  
And we in turn are free to absorb them --  
Not their tenets,  
Not their rules,  
Not the evil that may have lurked around the  
edges  
But the spirit --  
The shards of light.  
We are responsible for transmitting that light,  
Moving it through the universe,  
Giving it to each other.

— Mim Neal, writer, poet & Soul Matters Member