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Indigenous Bible College
Historically Indian Bible College

INDIGENOUS VOICES



**The Journal of IBC
for Church Ministry
and Personal Growth**

**Focus:
Core Value #2 –
Relational Disciplemaking
& Spiritual Mentoring**

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INDIGENOUS VOICES

Who we are

Indigenous Voices (IV) is published by Indigenous Bible College (IBC) in Flagstaff, AZ. Articles are usually written by IBC students and staff from various North American tribes.

Our Mission

Serving the Indigenous church in North America through publishing Christian literature written or produced mostly by Native authors to strengthen churches and personal faith in a Native context.

Indigenous Bible College (historically known as Indian Bible College)

PO Box 30880
Flagstaff, AZ 86003-0880
Phone: (928) 774-3890
Toll Free: (866) 503-7789
Email: info@indianbible.org

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Authors: *Relational Disciplemaking & Spiritual Mentoring*: Larry Whitehair, Robby Little, Christina Tree, Logan Davis, Kelly Johnson, Felicia Tillequots-Umtuch, Efraine Saune, Barlow Gasper, Donna Dayzie, Jamie Covington, Joshua Ortiz
The God Who Laments and Grieves: Joshua Ortiz
Truth & Grace at Home: Tim Key
Image Bearers: Daniel Esplin
Head, Heart, Hands, Habits: Cenovia Dayzie

Editor: Irish Noble
Cover Photo: 2025 Indigenous Bible College Student Life Team (Christina Tree-Lasiloo, Will Axtell, Coreen Esplin & Joshua Ortiz)

Dear Reader,

It was April 2008 when I asked Richard Standley, IBC's previous president, if he had any ideas regarding how I might use my required dissertation to help IBC, should my wife and I come to the college. Richard identified the need for an intensive discipleship process and materials designed specifically for Native Bible college students. Nine months later, five of us began a collaborative process of designing what is now IBC's Spiritual Formation process. At the time we had no idea just how important this would be for IBC's students – and for the wider American church. Just four years later, Core Value #2 was board approved to express just how important Relational Disciplemaking and Spiritual Mentoring are for the church. You can see the central concepts of Spiritual Formation and this Core Value on the next page.

Making disciples is the one imperative (mandate) of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 but has been tragically neglected in the church of the 20th and 21st centuries. Making disciples like Jesus (which includes large groups, intimate small groups, and one-on-one discipleship) is incredibly hard work and feels very inefficient, but it is the only way to have effectively changed lives. I am so grateful for how enthusiastically IBC staff and students have embraced the commitment to disciple like Jesus and am so excited for you to glimpse the depth of the students' grasp of both shepherding and scholarship around this subject.



Dr. Jason Koppen
Indigenous Bible College President

Dear Reader,

You can't read this journal without being inspired. These Native graduating students speak to the transformative power of living and growing spiritually in community. Each perspective resonates with our God-given need to be seen, heard, and valued. Their words illustrate what IBC's core value of *Relational Disciplemaking and Spiritual Mentoring* looks like in real time. This core value is especially dear to my heart, as I am the Founder of Indigenous Mentors—a network of women impacting the next generation for Christ.

There are two ways to learn: through mistakes or through mentors. I've had many mentors in my life. Years ago, I was in denial about drug abuse. A Native colleague and mentor whom I trusted loved me enough to break through my deception. Her intervention played a key role in getting my life back on track. A friend loves you where you are; a mentor loves you too much to let you stay there.

God works through people. Sadly, many believers don't realize that we need others to get where God wants us to go. These students understand that no one gets there alone. They know we need each other to grow spiritually. *Relational disciplemaking and spiritual mentoring* are desperately needed for Native believers on and off reservations as well as believers throughout the Body of Christ. I enthusiastically endorse this student-led journal as both a call to action and a love letter to Native churches, ministries, and leaders.



Siera Taketchera Russell, M.Ed., J.D.
Yavapai-Apache
Indigenous Bible College, Board of Trustees

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Thank you to all the Indigenous Bible College board, staff, and faculty who sacrifice so much of their lives to invest in Native Christian leaders. We would like to express profound gratitude to all the financial supporters and volunteers who help keep student costs low enough that they may graduate debt free. Most of all, we praise and worship our Lord Jesus Christ who is forming HIS character and wisdom in the lives of Indigenous Bible College students.

Indigenous Perspectives on Relational Disciplemaking and Spiritual Mentoring

In studying what a redemptive relationship looks like, I have seen four steps to a loving ministry relationship. Step one is entering the person's world, step two is incarnating the love of God, step three is identifying with suffering, and step four is accepting without agenda. **In disciple-making God gives us the means of entry from a casual relationship to a life changing one** (Larry Whitehair, Navajo).

Relationships are crucial in discipling and mentoring if the desired outcome is a transformation into Christlikeness. To effectively teach obedience (Matthew 28:20) trusting relationship is required. Building relationships with the young men I was mentoring was complicated because it forced me out of my element, and I grew tremendously (Robby Little, Navajo).

Discipling people isn't just a one-time event that is done within a matter of minutes. I see discipleship as a continuous relationship between you and another person or persons. **Discipleship isn't about the number of people you shepherd, but how deep those relationships are.** If we look at how Jesus modeled discipleship, we can see that though he reached and taught many, his focus was on 12 and out of those 12 came three, whom he was more intimate with. Jesus didn't just see these men once a week or month, but it was a continuation of being in community with them. He lived with them so that every day was an opportunity to teach these young men. They were able to see how Jesus faced every day of life, in both the blessing and conflicts.... In discipling someone, I believe it is good for them to see your good and hard times, to see you deal with it. Another lesson I've learned is that we shouldn't hoard or be selfish with those we are discipling, that others can pour into their lives as well. But being aware of who is speaking into their lives is a part of being their shepherd (Barlow Gasper, Zuni Pueblo).

I now understand why relational disciple-making and spiritual mentoring are so difficult to do in the church. **It takes years of hard work dealing with all the baggage of things in our lives.** Dealing with matters of the heart is messy for both sides and is a process which takes a long time to develop... God has used many older, more mature men in my life to help me grow and get to see the "real me" - broken and vulnerable. I got to see transparency from these men which I can now model for others, knowing God has dealt with a lot of pain and hurt from my past to refine me to be more like His Son. Native peoples are relational by culture so applying this to the Native church would be hugely beneficial (Stephen Hunkup, Paiute-San Carlos Apache).

One way I plan to live this out is not just to have events like church or Bible study. Don't get me wrong, these are important in our walk, but it's not only that. **It's about sharing life with people; it's about coming together to break bread and have a meal together.** Food is biblical in my eyes. It builds friendship and trust and makes everyone happy. We need to focus on people and not numbers. Numbers don't get people to walk in relationships, but one-on-one contact shows people we are interested in them and not their commitment to being a seat-filler on Sundays. We start by equipping the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12) and to restore our relationships with the Creator and his people (Logan Davis, Blackfoot).

I have seen the camp meetings, altar calls, and the events held on the reservations back in my home community. A lot of the time we see others trying to "fix" people within a short amount of time (a couple of hours in an event or within a couple of days on a mission trip). **The reality is that you cannot build lasting, trusting relationships that way** (Kelly Johnson, Navajo).

It is not the problem the person wants to talk about. **We can focus on the problem and miss the person in the middle of it.** Biblical personal ministry certainly includes problem solving, but it must be person focused. God's work of change certainly involves changes in situation and relationship, but it has radical personal transformation as its core goal (Larry Whitehair, Navajo).

This Core Value was easier to see and understand for me because of how I was raised traditionally and spiritually. The Yakama people are all about tradition and culture and the importance of living the practices out correctly. It was almost legalistic how they taught on the ceremonies, songs, and dances. Natives would understand this Core Value the most because it is how they live their lives mentoring their students. I was one of them. I was raised to be a medicine dancer/singer for my people, and I was taught by 4 different people in 4 unique and different ways. I was met with patience at every obstacle I faced when I did not understand or get the steps, words, or song right. **There was no shaming because what I was trying to do was something that would be beneficial to the people when I was effectively taught and trained.** The same could be said during my learning and training at IBC (Felicia Tillequots-Umtuch, Yakama).

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mathew 28:19-2). Many times, we omit greatly this wonderful great commission given to us. We omit by worshipping the Lord behind closed doors, feeding the already mature Christians with more spiritual feed...We think a week of conference will make disciples, that filling heads with massive accumulative information will somehow make disciples. We miss the point. How could we make disciples effectively? **Disciple-making does not occur overnight but is a process without a deadline.** Disciple-making is taking a believer under our wings and eating with them, learning with them, training them and if it is possible, living with them. When disciple-making, we must be open, transparent, honest, loving, graceful, forgiving, and all these good and positive characteristics. The idea of promoting Christlike character is not only to glorify and honor God, but a demonstration and teaching to the person under our wings. We need to teach them not only with words, but actions how we deal with different areas of life such as managing finances, time, and temple; how to approach conflict; how to love your wife and children and other people (Efraine Saune, Inca-Quechua).

It's been a very challenging process to humble myself in being mentored and in mentoring others. Yet it is such an amazing process as my relationships deepen with those mentoring me, those I am mentoring, and ultimately with God. I have been challenged to teach people and not lessons, and to not teach what I am not living out. Both require trust in the relationship between myself, as the mentor, and the mentee. As a mentor, it has pushed me out of my comfort zone to be intentional at reaching out to these girls. In the process of building trusting relationships, I began to share my life by allowing them to see that I, too, am doing my best to live out the Spiritual Formation materials and **allow them to see my weakness and failures to encourage them that they are not alone in the growing process.** As Native people, we are social and relational in the powwows, ceremonies, gatherings, etc. we hold, but we fail to be relational in the church on a deeper level. I believe that once we allow ourselves to be open and honest, we could implement relational disciple-making and spiritual mentoring in the church, and a real revival of spiritual growth could take place. This is a deep longing and burden the Lord has placed on my heart to take back with me to Dennehotso (Christina Tree, Navajo).

Transformation doesn't happen quickly for anyone; it takes time, Holy Spirit time. It gets overwhelming and discouraging when you don't see the changes if you're not constantly humble and dependent upon the Lord's transformational work in your mentees and in yourself... I think we can't build trust without transparency and compassion. **We expect our mentees to be open, but we also need to be open ourselves about our heartaches, shame, and embarrassments.** We can't extend compassion if we don't share the same experiences as our mentees. If I had kept those to myself, the ladies wouldn't have opened up as much as they did, and I wouldn't have given them the comfort to know that they're not alone. When the missionaries came, many of their efforts were to convert as many as possible. I think the same standard and mentality has remained in our Navajo churches, giving in to the deceit that the church is built on quantity and not quality. I think that's why some of our Navajo churches have diminished to either a remnant of faithful followers or none. If one mature, Spirit-led believer within a church fruitfully discipled even one, two or three, and they reproduce the process, the church could be thriving (Donna Dayzie, Navajo).

Relational disciple-making and spiritual mentoring is all about a trusting relationship. In order for me to live this out in the future I do not plan to invite people to church; I plan to meet them in my own home, their home, less threatening turf. First, I want to build a relationship with women in my community, or youth, and be intentional about spending time together. We will spend time in nature together, go for coffee, or I will serve them food in my home. Ultimately, the goal is to spend time together and build trust in our relationship, so we will find out ways to do fun or serious things together...Recently, I reached out to a good relative of mine who knows a lot about our Spokane tribal history, so we got together and he shared many historic things about our tribe. What he showed me was enlightening and beautiful, but also maddening and grieving. What I saw was that before we (the Spokane Indians) ever came in contact with non-Native peoples (white folk)—we *were* relational, we *were* family oriented, we taught one another, we shared with one another, we helped one another, we worked together, and we trusted one another. We lived life together, not separately as we do now. Every person in the tribe had value—a role and responsibility—all people mattered. It made my heart glow, I felt proud! The Spokane people appeared to be more relationally based before European contact and Christian contact. Now, the only time there is a sense of togetherness and relationship is when there is a death or tragedy in the community, otherwise we are all separate. **God created Native people, He created the Spokane, and He set eternity on their hearts—so my mission is to make that connection and help people rediscover their original inclination toward relationships and community** (Jamie Covington, Spokane).

Relational disciple-making and spiritual mentoring were not modeled for me at all when I first came to know Christ. I do not want to repeat this cycle, especially in the Native church. I believe the people of the Native church could be some of the best and most effective disciple-makers the world has ever seen. We have been through so much pain and abuse. To come back from that stronger and willing to make a difference, instead of cower, blame shift and do nothing about it, would say a lot about the God we serve and seek to reflect. Plus, disciple-making is in our DNA. Back when I was living at San Juan, learning about the Old Ways, my grandfather, father, and uncles, all took me under their wings and disciplined me. I think that is why I was so attracted to it because the men, who were my role models, were actively involved and engaged with a fierce passion, and that spurred me on to do the same. And this came about naturally. **We did not have classes about it and it certainly was not a one-time thing. It was all done as we lived life together and shared with one another.** No wonder Native people are so turned off to Christ and the church these days. They see it as fake and shallow compared to how they live spiritually. When you're in that environment, everything seems so real and natural, and there is much honor and respect involved in the process because they are carrying something sacred and much bigger than themselves. This is how I felt when I was involved in all that, and I seek now to hone that ability within myself and pass this on to others, through sharing life and revolving our lives around attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. And that same honor and respect I felt for that, I want to convey that to my brothers in the Native church, who I pray will carry this on as a noble and sacred process (Joshua Ortiz, Ohkay Owingeh/Navajo).

Introducing *Native Mending the Soul*

They say that **“hurt people hurt people”** and conversely, **“healed people heal people.”** Our hope is to see healthy Native leaders bringing healing to their people and the world. At IBC we are witnesses to the impacts of the trauma and abuse our students experience. Their pain and stories reflect the state of reservations across North America. High prevalence of violence. Sexual assault rates. Historical trauma impact. Addiction. Fatherlessness. Suicide. American Indians and Alaska Natives are 2.5 times more likely to experience violent crimes and at least 2 times more likely to experience rape or sexual assault crimes than any other race. **Our experience is that over 95% of young Native Americans have experienced abuse.** Since 2013, *Mending the Soul* (MTS) has offered healing to our students through the hope and freedom only Jesus can provide.

In 2017, the original MTS authors recognized the need for a uniquely “Native” process of healing and asked IBC to help write a new workbook to address this need. This began a collaboration between Native staff members from various tribal backgrounds who had walked through and/or facilitated MTS groups in the past. Unique areas of healing were identified, such as the dynamics between faith and culture, historical trauma, and the generational effects of boarding schools. The process extended beyond written content to design and artwork, as we wanted to be sure that any Indigenous person could pick up these materials and see themselves represented on the pages. Throughout the process we saw God uniquely but corporately equipping us with writing skills, design experience, and even financial provision from donors. **There is no question that Jesus’s heart of healing is for our Native people!**

After six years of writing, designing, and beta testing the *Native Mending the Soul* (NMTS) workbook, we are so excited to share some of its contents with you in the next four pages of this journal. To learn more about NMTS, check out our YouTube channel ([youtube.com/@nativemendingthesoul](https://www.youtube.com/@nativemendingthesoul)). To order a copy of the workbook, email nativemts@indianbible.org. **May our Native people represent “healed people healing people” for generations to come.**

- *The NMTS Writing & Design Team*



Joshua Ortiz (Ohkay Owingeh/Diné), Christina Tree-Lasiloo (Diné), Coreen Esplin (Tonawanda Seneca), Daniel Esplin (Diné), & Sarah Koppen






IVE
THE SOUL

The *Native Mending the Soul* cover art was designed to reflect both the resilience of Native culture and the hope found in healing. The vibrant colors symbolize the strength and beauty of Native heritage, while the figures facing away represent the unseen pain of abuse and the journey toward restoration. Their gaze into the distance evokes a sense of hope, pointing toward the transformative healing found in Jesus.

– Daniel & Coreen Esplin
(Diné & Tonawanda Seneca)

The God Who Laments and Grieves

Healing a Broken Heart

“In our tribe, when someone dies, we’re only allowed to grieve for three days, and then we can no longer talk about them.” – Fishii, Yakama

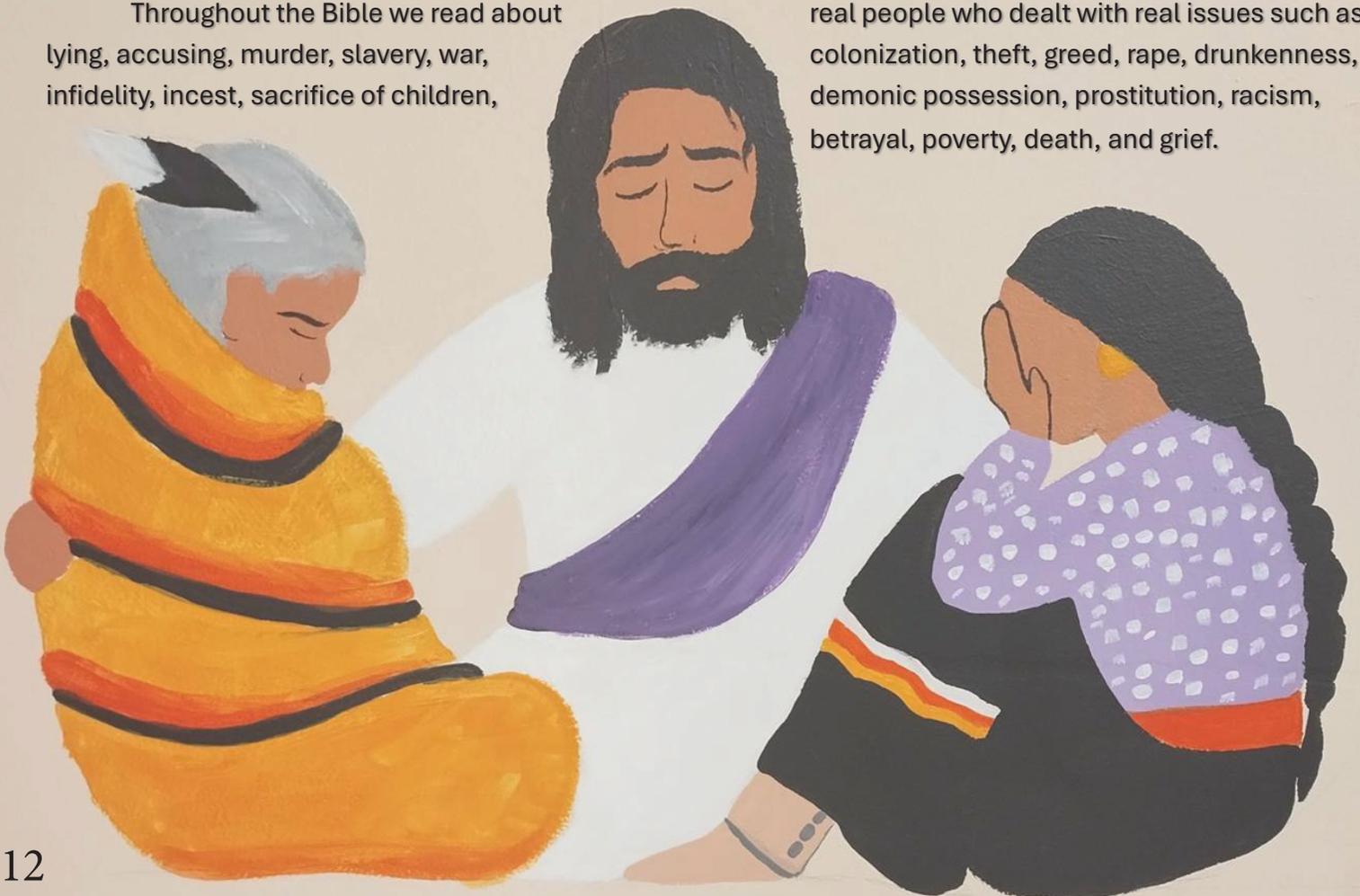
This is the case in many tribes. We’re only allowed to grieve for a certain time. Anything beyond that might bring bad luck or harm to the family. In the case of my tribe, we’re allowed to grieve for a year. But grief never ends. Sometimes it takes a lifetime. And people, bless them, say to us “be strong” but how can we be strong when we feel so weak? Are we not allowed to be weak?

Are we not allowed to cry?

God allows us to be human, because to be human means to feel, to grieve. He not only allows this but desires and welcomes it. He created us as human, reflections of his image. And because of this, we’re sacred. And since we are sacred, our thoughts and feelings are sacred as well. But sacred as they are, because of evil, sin, and abuse they are distorted. Think of it like a lake, when it is calm and clean, we can see ourselves, the sky, the clouds. There are fish and birds, and it is good to drink. But when it is dirty and polluted, we see nothing. It’s the same with our life. We have God’s image because we are still human, but it is disrupted, it isn’t harmonious, at least not without him.

Throughout the Bible we read about lying, accusing, murder, slavery, war, infidelity, incest, sacrifice of children,

real people who dealt with real issues such as colonization, theft, greed, rape, drunkenness, demonic possession, prostitution, racism, betrayal, poverty, death, and grief.



Amid the chaos, there were people who chose to wallow in their misery, which only multiplied the issues and pain that came with them. And there were others who chose to lean into God, to cry out to him, to feel the pain they were in, and recognize God in their pain. In other words, they chose to worship God in those struggles.

Jesus, before he was crucified, shared with his disciples the grief and sorrow he felt in his soul. He also cried out to God the Father, “let this cup pass from me.” He was in deep mental distress over what was going to happen to him. He was so stressed he started sweating blood! But even during this time he said, “not my will, but your will” (Luke 22:42). He was willing to sacrifice himself, his body and decisions, so that God’s plan would be complete, so that the sins of humanity would be forgiven, souls redeemed, and hearts healed. And he wouldn’t stay dead, but he would become alive again, having victory in the war against death and pain.

Only Jesus could do this, only he was perfect. He encouraged and supported women, he protected those who were weaker than him, he wielded authority without cruelty, and in his holiness and Godhood, he was humble. He washed the feet of those he loved yet would hurt and betray him. However, just because he was perfect did not mean he didn’t mourn or grieve. Throughout his life we see him cry for his friends, his people, and the unbelieving hearts of humankind. Even Jesus grieved. With all his power, even power over storms and demons, he cried. And he cries for you.

We need to let ourselves mourn and grieve. And not only feel these but be overwhelmed in them by Him. In this space, Jesus meets the person we really are, not the one we want to pretend to be. This is where the healing is, at the heart of our humanness, through the cross and the empty tomb. Symbols of pain and power respectively.

You see, pain and power go hand in hand, you can’t have one without the other. I pray that as you explore your pain, you discover the power you have in Jesus. And that you will know him, the God who Laments and Grieves, the Healer of Hearts.

- Joshua Ortiz (Ohkay Owingeh/Diné)

Truth and Grace at Home

Relational Disciplemaking and Spiritual Mentoring in the Context of Family

Has childhood been traumatic due to intemperate truth or conscienceless grace? Is truth without grace still honest? Is grace without truth still loving? Truth without grace is judgmental and condemning. Grace without truth is total deception. Dr. Henry Cloud states it quite well, “Truth is what is real, and grace is the unmerited favor of God toward people that is not earned” (23). “Truth is the structural aspect of His character and grace is the relational aspect of His character” (24). But truth and grace have too often been avoided and misapplied in family upbringing. Unwholesome reactions are amplified, and enlightening responses are rare from those who are entrusted to lead families. God’s truth and grace can be utilized together as a tool to transform family households, but the separation of truth and grace can instigate cycles of re-enactment, dominance, and control/enablement. Either truth without grace or grace without truth harms adults and children.

Cycles of Re-Enactment

Reliving and expressing childhood memories and experiences toward our children is known as re-enactment.

The neglectful parent is the one who is careless about nurturing, who is ill-equipped to protect, and who has few if any parenting skills. Often this parent was raised in a neglectful environment as well. These families interact less with each other but when they do interact, it is more negative (Mains 21).

Situations may arise that ignite memories passed down from our parents, legal guardians, or other parental influences. Priscilla Dean, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor claims, “If there is abuse, neglect or other harmful patterns in our family of origin, therein lies our trauma pattern, waiting to be re-enacted”. The outcome of this generational thread can veer in different directions such as self-protection, emotional pain, negative reactions, lack of communication, surface-level relationships, etc.

People have undergone such upbringings for thousands of years. 1 Samuel 8:1-3 is the story of

Samuel and his two sons Joel and Abijah. Samuel conformed to a cycle of re-enactment from his predecessor, Eli the prophet:

When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel's leaders. The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice (NIV).

Samuel repeated what he had witnessed in Eli toward his sons Hophni and Phinehas (1 Samuel 2:12-36). "There is a very normal, human phenomenon as we age: the need to re-enact our primal, childhood relationship patterns in adulthood" (Dean).

Family is very important as it shapes our development and personality. Our families protect our dignity and take care of our wellbeing. Family also gives us teachings that guide us throughout our lives, and these are the values we carry everywhere we go. In addition, family comes to our aid during hard times. But backlashes from childhood surroundings are stored deep within us during early social development and can impact us on a chronic level, integrating into our character, personality, and habits.

Family is the building block of a successful person. Family is the first friend, first brick and first memory of a person. It can either make you or break you into pieces (Gul 32).

Dominance

Dominance is abusing the authority one is given over those who are considered dependent. It is a reaction of self-image, pride, apathy, passionate anger, and legalism with no vulnerability (Manning). Communities experience destructive universal bondage that disrupts the opportunity to thrive when families model dominance from the father or the mother toward each other and/or their children. The dominance displayed is nothing new but rather inherited from a distorted authority figure. Genesis 3:16b states, "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." God knew that the challenges within marriage would result in the family being distorted.

Dominance can easily be understood as truth without grace. This is also known as behavioralism, which stirs up emotions in the parent that are usually put forth in a negative

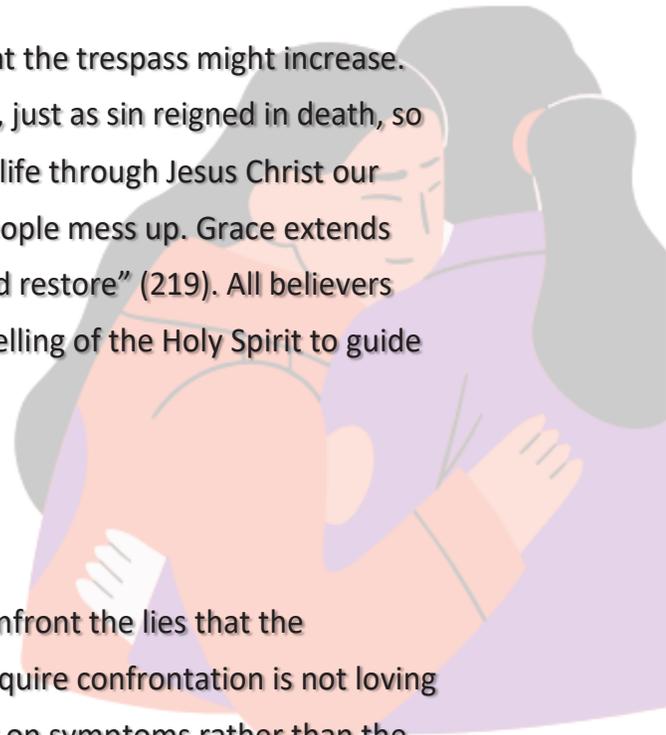
manner. Romans 5:20-21 says; “The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Ken Blanchard clarifies, “Grace is love in action after people mess up. Grace extends fellowship to others like Jesus reached out in grace to heal and restore” (219). All believers ought to do the same as followers of Jesus. Without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us, calamities will result.

Control/Enablement

Grace without truth can cripple an individual as it does not confront the lies that the individual may believe. Excusing the truth in situations that require confrontation is not loving or gracious (Manning). Dr. John Perkins declares, “By focusing on symptoms rather than the underlying disease, we are often hurting the very people we are trying to help. Surprisingly hurting ourselves in the process” (12). This implies that leaving the truth out of a confrontation will mangle the desired outcome. Additionally, passing the responsibility of discipline or correction on to someone else is an expression of passivity and apathy that enables the receiver to be negligent and undermine authority. Conflict can and should result in reconciliation which ought to be hopeful and joyful for all involved.

Grace is not a license to sin but rather discourages believers from sinning (Strombeck 15). The freedom of indulgence is selfishness, contradictory to the truth, and is never aimed toward the good of others (Galatians 5:13). Because grace can be mistaken for pity, weakness, or dependency, people are in dire need of the right perception of grace (Bigman). “There can be no danger in teaching too much grace, only danger in misunderstanding and not teaching it enough” (Strombeck 17). A correct comprehension of grace should be motivation to grow and mature. “Confronting through truth and grace, redemption is seen. Grace is the ultimate standard of truth” (Manning).

Grace is abused in countless situations due to the misunderstanding of how to receive it. People tend to accept grace as lenience when no discipline is implicated. This kind of response is dangerous as the receiver is not acknowledging the repercussions of their actions, and their growth remains stagnant. Grace ought to be extended in the manner of Ephesians



2:7, in which Christ extends grace out of His kindness toward us. “Jesus reached out in grace to heal and restore” (Blanchard).

Protecting an individual from the ramifications of their actions, whether an immediate family member or a dear friend, can result in control or enablement. The overseer can control the situation believing they know what is best as a means of self-satisfaction. This is not loving others but rather focusing on personal self-interest. The sheltered individual experiences an unhealthy security which results in enablement, preventing growth and creating a lack of responsibility and accountability. This is not to say that safe-guarding a loved one is always negative, but needs to be executed with prayerful discernment.

John 8:1-11 is a beautiful example of how to shield a loved one from an unpleasant consequence. A woman was caught in adultery, and in the context of that culture, death was the verdict. Jesus defended the accused from a heinous judgment with a single statement in verse 7, “Let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” Eventually, one by one, the accusers left. Jesus responded to the woman with grace, and sent her on her way with the truth in verse 11, “Go and sin no more.”

Conclusion

Truth and grace can be applied together in all situations, challenges, and issues that may arise in our families. The world is broken and dark, full of rebellion in all directions but hope never fails for the believer in Christ.

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love (Romans 5:3-5).

The Native American perspective is relatively similar to most if not all that has been stated. Unfortunately, Native Americans struggle with belief in Christ as Christian missionaries historically brought judgment upon Native people. Jesus was not presented in a truthful and gracious way in order for a response to happen to the gospel. Granted, there were Native Americans who received Christ but only a brave few accepted.

Native people generally see grace as a license to do whatever a person wants without consequence (Ortiz). That being so, accountability is rare. For example, Native grandmothers are often “over-gracious” to the following generations. They give excessively and expect nothing in return which can damage the person who receives as they take advantage of and abuse the grace and love given. Consequences are undermined and protection takes place with little to no truth offered. This creates a cycle of re-enactment that the next susceptible generation mirrors and at times, does much worse than witnessed and modeled.

Practicing and living in truth and grace in the Native context is quite rare (Ortiz). Native cultures are based around a belief system that parallels Christianity but is not identified with God. Native America desperately needs God’s truth and grace to mend the shattered family and home.

The ultimate example of grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17b). Hebrews 12:6-7 is a picture of training and discipline that results in the perfect balance of truth and grace that equals love - God’s unconditional love. Truth and grace blended with balance is unconditional love and acceptance with full realization of who a person truly is (Cloud 31-32). Peter voiced, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” in 2 Peter 2:18 which is motivation to commit to the understanding of truth and grace lived out.

In closing, the children of God can make a difference and lead a life for all to observe who desire the life God wants to give to all. Galatians 2:20 states, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Christians are in a blessed and privileged position to break the cycles of re-enactment, dominance, and control/enablement that are so rampant and destructive in all relationships, specifically in families. In responding to God’s truth and grace, restoration and reconciliation can occur between people and God for a healthier, more abundant life.

Truth is necessary and can be hurtful, but it is needed. Truth helps us to be grounded; to let it hurt is betterment for the Kingdom of God. Truth was at the beginning, and God is truth. Truth will always remain as truth which cannot be escaped. Those who understand and accept grace ought to be compelled to do right,

which is rooted in love (Ortiz).

All truth comes from God and ought to be expressed through His grace. Incorporating truth and grace within family cultivation will bring nothing short of flourishing, healthier family members.



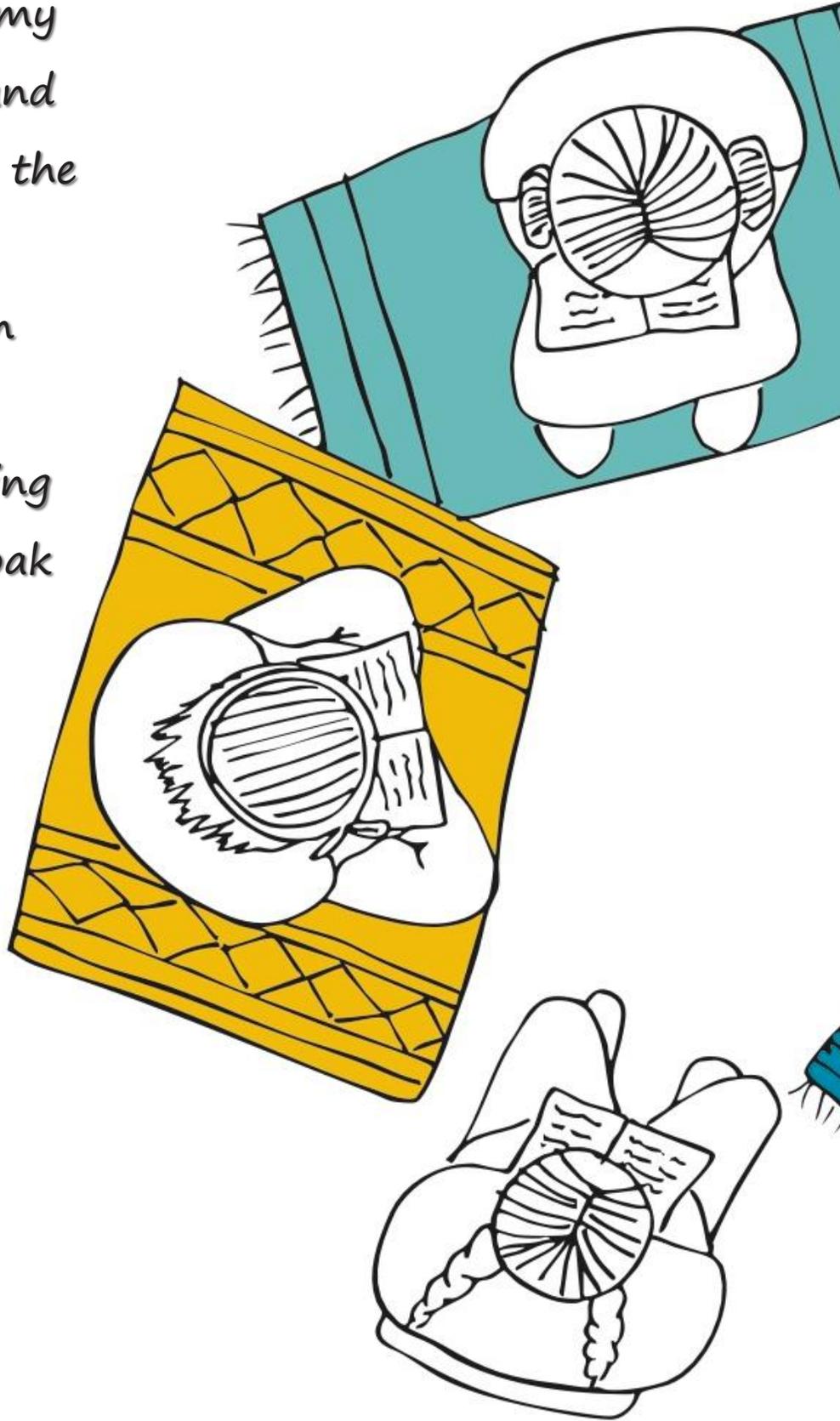
Tim Key – Navajo

Tim is a 2025 IBC graduate and was recently hired onto the college's staff as the Director of Fifth Wind (IBC's entrepreneurial initiative). A husband and father of two boys, Tim is passionate about seeing Jesus' example of servant leadership modeled in home and family life.

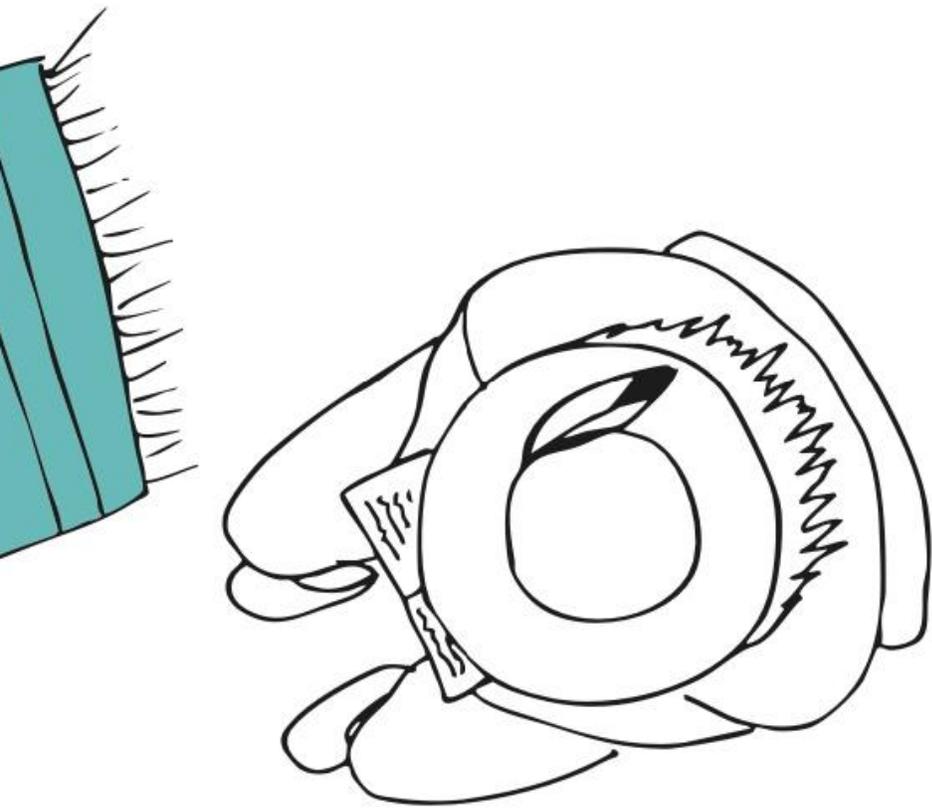
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“The women I learned from in my life were my Gramma, my mom, and my auntie. They were the ones I looked to for wisdom and growth in life. I used to love listening to and learning from them. I would soak up all they had to say about life; any lessons or stories they could tell me, I wanted to know.



Artwork by Christina Tree-Lasiloo (Navajo)



Learning wisdom and experiences from our elders is cool, but how much cooler it is when a wise woman or man of God is discipling and mentoring us!”

(Jamie Covington, Spokane)

Created for Greatness

Image Bearers

Native Men Devotional #3



READ GENESIS 1:26-27

Then God said, "Let Us make man in our image, according to Our likeness..." So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male & female.

1. What might people say is the most important relationship to a man?

A man's most important relationship will influence his manhood. In Genesis 1:26-27, we see that we are created to have a relationship with God. The most important relationship for a man is with God through Christ. God is a living, personal, loving being, and he made us to have relationship with him. Men must protect and cultivate this relationship.

READ JEREMIAH 9:23-24

Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."

2. What are three areas in which we are NOT to boast?

3. What is the ONE thing we should boast about? What does it mean to KNOW God?

Humans are made to mirror – this means we're all looking up to someone to show us how to live. As men, we are looking to other men to show us how to be a man. Sometimes this might be a toxic example.

4. What are toxic examples of manhood? What are some toxic behaviors you've mirrored in the past?

I love to play basketball. It's a way to deal with stress and anxiety. From time to time, I tend to get too competitive and lose my temper. One day, while I was playing ball at the local gym, I found myself in the middle of a heated 5-on-5 game. I was already having a rough day because my uncle passed away and I brought my frustrations and grief onto the court. I was quickly annoyed by one guy playing who kept calling "cheap" fouls which made me upset and annoyed. Finally, I lost my cool and began to play rough and clap my hands in his face. Looking back at the situation I could have handled it a lot better by representing God on the court.

- Joel from Pine Ridge, South Dakota



The only person we are supposed to mirror is God. If we don't mirror God, we will mirror someone else.

JESUS IS THE PERFECT REFLECTION OF GOD AND THE ROLE MODEL FOR MANHOOD.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:4

...Christ is the image of God...

READ COLOSSIANS 1:15

He is the image of the invisible God...

5. How does Jesus perfectly reflect the love, goodness, grace, mercy, truthfulness, and courage of God?

If we want to see true manhood we need to look to Jesus. Men are created to function like a mirror, reflecting the image of God into the world. Every man, made in the image of God, was created to be an earthly representation of who God is.

6. In what ways can you reflect or mirror the image of God in your life?

7. What are some challenges or obstacles you might face?

PRACTICAL WAYS TO REFLECT OR MIRROR GOD AS MEN:

- We **love** people because God loves.
- We **forgive** others because God forgives.
- We are **generous** because God is a giver, not a taker.
- We **serve** because God is humble, and he serves.
- The hope is that the **character** of God would be seen in the men of God.

8. What are some other ways we can reflect God in our lives?

The unique struggles of Native men are well known. The effects of European settlement and the reservation system decimated the man's role within his own culture. In 2011, Navajo staff member Daniel Esplin began a collaborative effort with students to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges that Native men face and to generate a set of discipleship materials that would be uniquely designed for them.



Head, Heart, Hands, Habits

Discipleship in the Native Church

When I look back on much of the leadership I have witnessed in the Native Church, my heart breaks, and I wish it were not so. But I want to give these leaders the benefit of the doubt because they did as best as they knew how in the absence of discipleship and mentoring. A lack of discipleship and mentoring can result in abuse, trauma, and failed leadership. I did not know this until I became a student at Indigenous Bible College (IBC), where I saw discipleship and mentorship in action, resulting in the healing of future Native leaders.

The lack of discipleship and mentorship in the Native Church is not because the leaders disagree with the idea; they are all for it. The main issue is getting the Native Church to act upon it, tying in the four principles of leading like Jesus: Head, Heart, Hands, and Habits.

Head

Most church leaders know what Matthew 28:18-20 says about making disciples.

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”

They also know what it says in Mark 3:14 and 2 Timothy 2:2—each alluding to disciple-making and living the life of a disciple-maker. The knowledge of Scripture is the Head, “where one examines their beliefs and theories about leading and motivating people” (Blanchard 36).

Most Native Church leaders have a pretty good Head. Yet when they teach, preach, and proclaim God’s Word, nothing changes. For example, my family has visited different churches where the pastor would give a great sermon that the congregation would nod and say their “amens” and “mmhm’s” to, but when we would come back, it was still the same—the exact number of people, the same people, and the same leaders. Head-knowledge alone will not make a disciple who makes disciples.

Heart

“Leadership is first a spiritual matter of the heart. Whenever you have an opportunity to influence other people’s thinking and behavior, you first need to decide whether to act out of self-interest or to benefit those you are leading” (Blanchard 36).

The Navajo culture is about knowing where one is from, including knowing one's parents, grandparents, homeland, and clans, which can strongly influence new relationships either positively or negatively. In the Navajo context, it is hard to push aside the wrongs done to one's family members, which can perpetuate the lack of mentorship and discipleship in the Church. However, through a healing journey of identity, love, forgiveness, conviction, confession, and reconciliation, many existing and upcoming Native Church leaders can come to healing and reconciliation with God and others so that they are able to carry out mentoring and discipleship.

Building relationships is about building trust, knowing what others are going through, their home life, spirituality, prayer life, church life, work life, school life, emotional life, etc.

Trust is extended first by loving hearts committed to serving and supporting one another, and trust grows with promises kept, encouragement, and appreciation expressed, support and acceptance offered, repentance and apologies received, and reconciliation and restoration established. Yet the stream of trust has a fragile ecological balance: once it is polluted, it will take time and effort to restore it (Blanchard 28).

Hands

Many church leaders do not take the time to step out and engage in people's lives as Christ Jesus did. Matthew 20:28 points to the Hands principle: "...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Are you a serving leader or a self-serving leader? Many church leaders have an understanding of what it means to be a servant leader, yet most see serving only as their preaching, teaching, and praising God's Word, and sometimes physical labor for the local church building. But serving has to go beyond the physical church building; it should encompass every aspect of the church community's wellbeing.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 says, "...so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well." Serving the church community requires leaders to build trusting relationships with their local congregations. I mention trust in relationship-building because it provides the opportunity to start mentorship. After all, mentorship starts when one earns the right to speak into a person's life.

Habits

Unfortunately, as I mentioned, mentorship is lacking among Native Church leaders; I mainly believe this is because there is no accountability, and no opportunity for them to heal. Most (not all) Native Church leaders still carry their past hurts, abuse, and/or traumas. This can result in returning to past sin struggles.

“Habits are those activities you do in order to stay on track with God and others” (Blanchard 37). Habits are the results of mentoring and discipleship. These train us in “Being Habits” such as “solitude, prayer, study of God’s word, application of Scripture to real life, and supportive relationship– all of which are rooted in and fueled by accepting and abiding in God’s love” (Blanchard 37). “Being Habits” help us to live out Jesus’s leadership model in our own Native contexts of leadership.

Conclusion

In my observation and experience with the Native Church and its leaders, it is discouraging and heartbreaking to see that there is no continuation of bearing fruit in that there is no equipping of new Native leaders to replace current ones. I often ask the Lord, “Why do our strong Native leaders have to get old?” The current Native Church leaders are aging; they cannot do as much as they used to, and their time is limited. It hurts me to think and see it. It is an excruciating pain to witness because these are my people. My heart is for my Navajo people; I want them to move for Christ again. I love Christ Jesus, and I love my Navajo people. I am afraid of what will become of the Navajo people if we do NOT learn to lead like Christ.

As a student at IBC, I am learning to look to Christ as my life model and act upon it; hence, why I agree with the school’s mission: IBC exists to empower Indigenous followers of Jesus for ministry to the Nations. In order to accomplish this purpose, the goals of IBC are:

- 1) To provide the necessary training for accurate interpretation of God’s Word so that students develop a BIBLICAL worldview and lifestyle.
- 2) To biblically develop and maintain RELATIONAL lifestyles and ministries through intentionally modeling, mentoring, and training students with grace and truth.
- 3) To cultivate TRANSFORMATIONAL change in the lives of students through the internalization of biblical and relational principles.

IBC’s institutional goals can be applied in the Native Church context to resolve the lack of mentorship and discipleship. Do note that I am not saying that IBC is the answer, I am merely alluding to its mission; I want to point out that the answer is found in looking at Christ Jesus. To understand how to live out the four principles of leading like Jesus (Heart, Head, Hands, Habits), we must first get our Head and Heart in line with God’s mission:

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age’” (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV).

And...

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your

***neighbor as yourself.’ the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments”
(Matthew 22:36-40, NIV).***

These two passages are Jesus’ own words, proclaiming God’s will to His earliest followers; it is as true to us today as it was to them. Native Church leaders can be redeemed to God in their mission, vision, and values by looking toward Jesus Christ as their model for leadership because “followers of Jesus have more in Jesus than just a spiritual leader; we have a practical model of effective leadership for all organizations, for all people, for all situations” (Blanchard 12). I place my faith in Jesus to see the Native Church become a strong, self-sufficient ministry - a blessing to their own Nations and the rest of the world.



Cenovia Dayzie – Navajo

Cenovia is a junior student at IBC and currently serves as Student Body Vice President. Growing up in a family that was deeply involved in the local church helped her develop a heart for seeing reservation churches thrive and become a blessing to their communities.

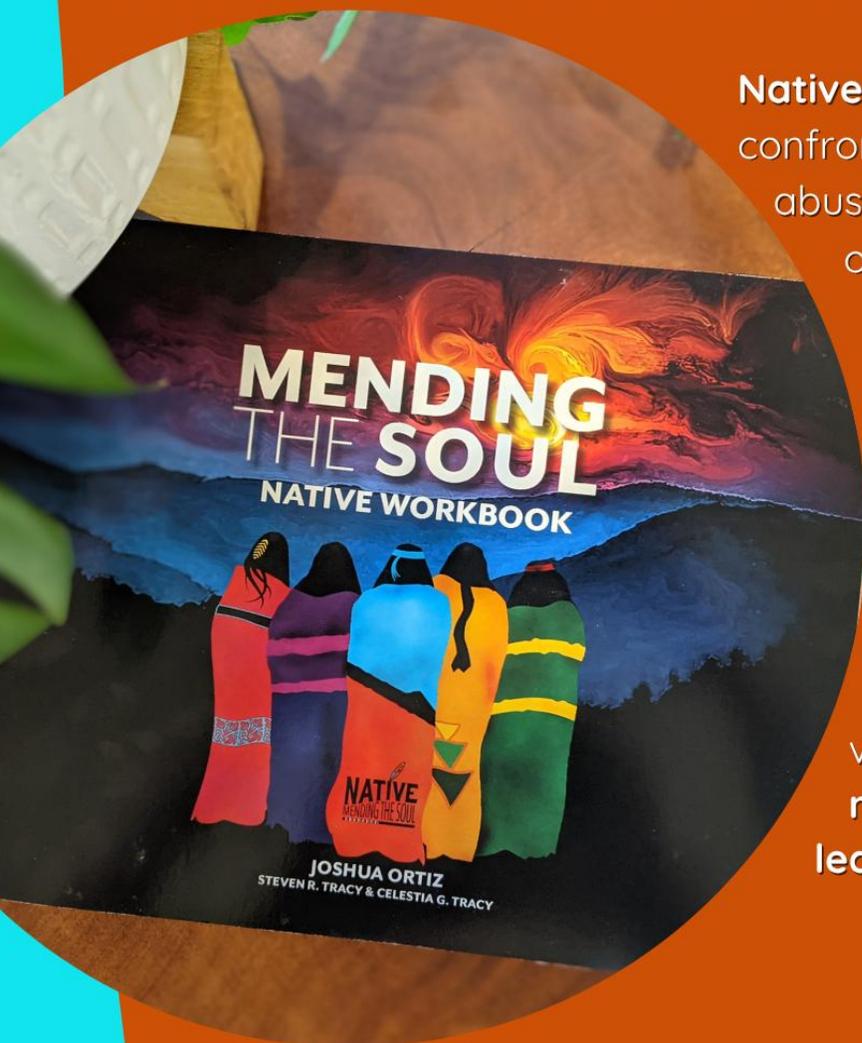
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Learn more about

NATIVE MENDING THE SOUL

...a resource crafted to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities with the healing love of Jesus. Indigenous Bible College is dedicated to making this transformative journey of healing accessible to all.



Native Mending the Soul helps us confront the wounds caused by trauma, abuse, and broken relationships, and offers tools for healing rooted in both Native values and the Christian faith. Join us as we discover ways to mend our hearts and spirits, strengthen our communities, and reclaim our strength as Indigenous people. We believe in walking this journey together, united in hope and guided by a Creator who deeply loves and values every person. **Email nativemts@indianbible.org to learn more.**

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Disciples who make disciples who make disciples...this is the goal of IBC's second Core Value. This value has been in operation at IBC for 15 years, and we are now seeing the fruit of that sustained effort—fruit displayed in the pictures featured on the front and back covers of this journal.

These pictures show the five Native graduates of IBC that served on staff as the Student Life team in the 2024-2025 school year. All these graduates were disciplined and mentored as students and are now leading the way in the disciplining of others. This is what biblical discipleship “looks” like!

