



— *the* BRIDGE *to* —
RACIAL UNITY



— *join us in welcoming* —
diversity and healing into our communities.



be the bridge

— *for* —

IF:GATHERING

The Reconciliation journey is not an easy process.

It can be daunting and scary to launch into the unknown abyss of racial conversations. It takes brave people to have courageous conversations. You may be like me, as you look around at the many racial divides, you want to do something. We have read the scriptures; we have prayed for unity. How do we, the body of Christ, walk out becoming one? How do the words in John 17 come alive and living in each us? How does unity begin to permeate our entire being? How do we become light to a dark world that makes divisions on race? How does the body of Christ become a witness and a voice for race unity? This purpose of this discussion guide is to help get us unstuck. It is designed as step one in relational unity, through conversations that would lead to healing through racial reconciliation.

the GOALS

- 1 God to be glorified
 - 2 Church to be credible
 - 3 Christians authentically being the bridge, bringing healing and being transformed
-

ARE YOU SOMEONE WHO:

- * Is heartbroken by the racial divide you see in your country, your city, your church, your family?
- * Wants to experience greater diversity and richness in your relationships?
- * Wants the church to demonstrate God's heart for diversity to the world?
- * Feels fearful and awkward toward knowing how to connect with others of a different race?
- * Can no longer tolerate the injustice, apathy and fear you see in your country and your community?

EXPECTATIONS

What the leader and/or participants can expect from engaging in this process:

- * Greater awareness of God's heart for diversity
- * Tangible steps to take to transform one's current attitudes, views and vision regarding racial diversity
- * Participation with others in bringing healing and transformation with regard to race in your sphere of influence

WHAT YOU NEED TO BE THE CHANGE:

- * Humility and openness to learn
- * Willingness to trust God as you engage
- * Commitment to the process



Be the BRIDGE.

LEADER INSTRUCTIONS

Explanation of process:

- * It's important as the leader to know why you are doing this. Establish your vision for your group. This desire comes from a leading or a calling you prayerfully sense from God. This should emerge from an inward brokenness to see healing in the body of Christ as it relates to racial reconciliation. During the process, you will need to approach it as a group effort in which everyone plays a small role.
- * Rotate who leads the discussion each time you come together.
- * Have different people plan social events. (Our social events have involved meeting for dinner, family picnics, inviting the group to events you host, and holiday parties.)
- * Have someone keep the conversation going via social media or email during off weeks.

GOAL

- * The more we understand the diversity about each other, the more we will be richly blessed.

read this passage before beginning this study:

JOHN 17:1-26

The Prayer of Jesus:

After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth. I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.

“I have revealed you to the ones you gave me from this world. They were always yours. You gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, for I have passed on to them the message you gave me. They accepted it and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me.

“My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. All who are mine belong to you, and you have given them to me, so they bring me glory. Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are. During my time here, I protected them by the power of the name you gave me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

“Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

“I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!

“O righteous Father, the world doesn’t know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them.”

ORGANIZING A CIRCLE:

- * Circles should consist of 3-12 people of different ethnic backgrounds. Be as diverse as you can as to marital status, age, ethnicity, and locality demographics.
- * Pray that God begins to help you identify who to invite to your first Circle meeting
- * Invite people from within your other natural relationships to join the conversation (e.g. parents of your children’s schoolmates, teammates, colleagues at work/church, etc).

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week 1

AWARENESS

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21 (NLT)

¹¹Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too. ¹²Are we commending ourselves to you again? No, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so you can answer those who brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart. ¹³If it seems we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. ¹⁴Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. ¹⁵He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

¹⁶So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! ¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

¹⁸ And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. ²⁰ So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

FACILITATION GOALS & SET UP:

- * Begin with brief introductions.
- * Communicate the big picture (high level vision) as to why everyone is here.
- * Gain agreement on commitment to participation and any ground rules that can make the environment safe. The more folks are committed to come and be in the discussion, the more value it will produce for self and others.

DISCUSSION

The first goal of this session is for the group to get to know each other and establish trust. The second goal is to establish the “why” - why have you decided to join the circle? Trust is earned and happens over time. Don’t rush anything; let the trust and relationships happen naturally.

The first step to the Biblical Reconciliation process is Awareness. Webster defines awareness as the state or condition of being aware; having knowledge; consciousness. In order for transformation to occur, we must realize the need to be reconciled to one another. The Duke Center for Reconciliation defines reconciliation as “...God’s initiative, restoring a broken world to his intentions by reconciling to himself all things through Christ: the relationship between people and God, between people themselves, and with God’s created earth. Christians participate with God by being transformed into ambassadors of reconciliation”(Sanders, 2013). Step one, Awareness, begins with listening and hearing others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Tell us a story about the most important experience that shaped you into the person you are today.
- 2 Tell us something you love about your own culture and something you wish were different.
- 3 Tell a story about a time when someone of another culture made an assumption about your culture (cause) and it caused you harm (effect). How did that make you feel?
- 4 How can we ensure that this conversation today doesn't end here, but continues and becomes part of our lives?
- 5 Why does building deep friends of a different race matter so much?
- 6 What difference would it make (in your friendships, families, our community, the broader current culture, etc.) if diversity was more of a reality in our life and church?
- 7 What are some ways we can celebrate our differences to communicate an attitude of acceptance?
- 8 In a single sentence, using the beginning statement “I WILL...” please share what YOU are willing do to help make The Church one in which assumptions and pre-judgment don’t affect OUR relationships with one another.

HOMework

- * Pass out notecards pre-addressed to everyone in the group. Make sure everyone in the group receives a notecard. The homework this week is to write a note to the person on the card you receive.
- * Ask yourself if you have ever had anyone of a different ethnicity as a guest in your home. If you have not, be intentional about doing so.
- * Create an experience that involves racial diversity. Go visit a church congregation of a different ethnicity.
- * Watch a race-themed movie or documentary.

PRAYER

Lord, make us ambassadors of reconciliation. Give us your eyes of awareness, open our ears that we may hear you. Allow us to see others as you see them. Teach us to speak your words of truth and forgiveness. Transform our hearts so we may bring wholeness to those that are broken. Lord, use us to tear down the barriers that continue to divide your body. Amen

Latasha Morrison

Supporting Scriptures:

Ephesians 2:16
Colossians 1:20-22

Additional Resources:

Watch a culturally different movie (i.e. My Big Fat Greek Wedding, Our Family Wedding)

week 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ACTS 6:1 (NLT)

But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.

EPHESIANS 2:16 (NLT)

Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us. So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

DISCUSSION

After awareness, the second step in the reconciliation process is Acknowledgment. Acknowledgement leads us, as believers, to practice lamenting. Lamenting is when we express regret or disappointment over something considered unsatisfactory, unreasonable, or unfair. This may be attitudes or actions we have had done to us or what we ourselves have believed or done. We must acknowledge our own brokenness and the brokenness of others. We must acknowledge the racial divide and injustices that plight our nation. We must acknowledge our part within the issue and our part in the resolution.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What have you learned since our time together? What has happened in your life personally that reflects the theme of this discussion?
- 2 Name a time when you assumed something about someone and were wrong.
- 3 Name a time someone assumed something about you and describe how it made you feel.
- 4 How has race affected your faith?
- 5 Tell a story about racism, when you felt it or observed it.
- 6 Do you believe that despite our frequent missteps, the church is the one institution that is best equipped to overcome the racial divide?
- 7 What are the key lies (in us, in our churches, in our communities) that must be exposed for us to embrace and celebrate racial differences?
- 8 How can we as women uniquely foster racial diversity in our personal lives?
- 9 How has the media influenced or affected your understanding and relationship of interacting with people with different backgrounds?

HOMework

- * Draw names within your group. Before the next session, share a meal with the person whose name you chose.
- * Invite a family or friend of a different race into your home.

PRAYER

Lord, Thank you FOR making me aware of my ignorance and apathy. Thank you FOR allowing me to be a part of this circle. Lord, I ask that you would help me to acknowledge my part as it relates to racial reconciliation. Father, reveal both my sin and my strengths so that I may be a credible witness of the gospel. Thank you FOR being a God who is powerful and mighty and able to do what I myself cannot. Amen

Bekah Self

Supporting Scriptures:

Jeremiah 31:15
John 11:31-33
Romans 12:15

Additional Resources:

See back.

week 3

SHAME & GUILT

1 JOHN 1:9

We confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

ISAIAH 1:18

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

EPHESIANS 1:7

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace...

TELL THOSE YOU INVITE:

- * What you are doing (fostering intentional conversation about diversity, racial reconciliation, etc.)
- * Why you are doing it; give your “why”
- * Details regarding your first meeting

TALKING PIECE:

- * At each meeting, have an object to pass to determine who speaks. This keeps the group orderly and gives everyone an opportunity to speak.

CENTER PIECE:

- * Bring items that represent
- * Reconciliation or the elephant in the room. Place them in the Circle. Have participants bring an item that represents their “why” for attending the circle.

ESTABLISH MISSION

Example: Our mission is For God to be Glorified and HIS “CHURCH” to be a credible witness.

GROUP VALUES:

Have the group participate in this during Weeks 1-2. Have each person write one or two values on a card. Read the values that everyone submits to the group. Discuss which values you plan to adopt for your group.

SEATING ARRANGEMENTS:

Use a round table or circle. At each meeting, have participants sit beside someone they don’t know well.

GROUP MEMBERS:

The discussion works best if the group is closed during the sessions. During session 3, have members begin to think about who they would like to invite for session 8.

SOCIAL GATHERING:

The role of a Social Gathering is to assist in building community, as it is for any group.

book RECOMMENDATIONS

Divided by Faith by Michael Emerson

United: Captured by God’s Vision for Diversity by Trillia Newell

Bridging the Diversity Gap by Alvin Sanders

The Post-Black and Post-White Church - Becoming the Beloved Community in a Multi-Ethnic World by Efreem Smith

Reconciliation Blues - A Black Evangelical’s Inside View of White Christianity by Edward Gilbreath

DISCUSSION

The process of reconciliation includes a season of **shame and guilt** for many. As you process injustices, racialization in the world, the brokenness within yourself and others, the feelings of guilt and shame may arise.

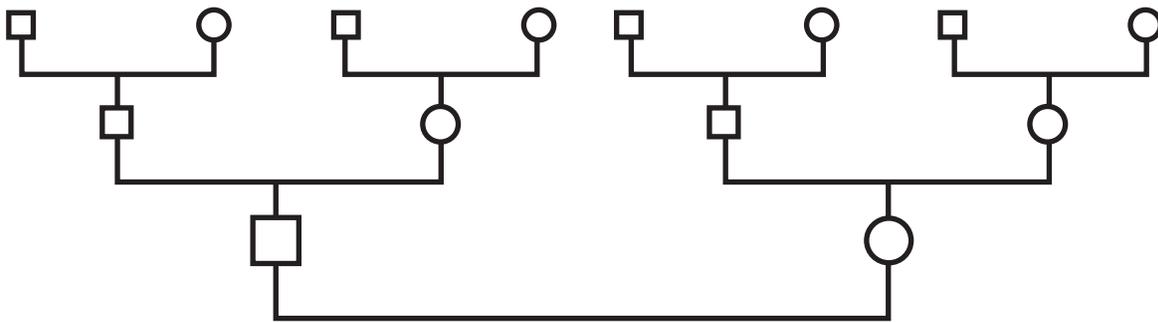
Many of us have experienced family members who have ungodly, unjust views on race. Many of those family members may be believers. We must understand racism is sin and requires the same process of transformation as any other sin. We are careful not to allow shame and guilt to guide our actions during the process of reconciliation. True reconciliation doesn't come from a genuine place when our actions and discussion are driven by shame and guilt. These feelings are normal and should lead us to confession and repentance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What are some racial stereotypes, both positive and negative, that you've grown up with? How do you address prejudiced comments made by friends?
How do you address rationalization in your family? What experiences of prejudices have you had in your family?
- 2 Do you find it more difficult to address issues of racism in your family?
- 3 How has family dynamics affected your perspective on race?
- 4 What biases about others do you need to release?
- 5 What shame or guilt are you carrying?

HOMework

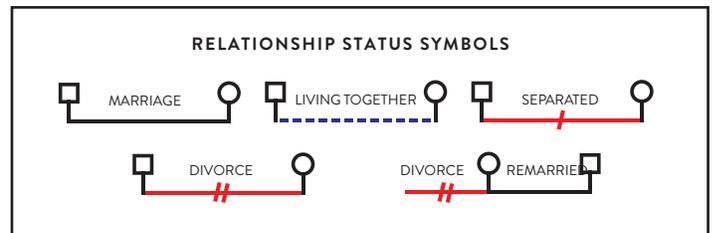
* A genogram is a family diagram which can be thought of as an elaboration of the family tree. Genograms provide a way of mapping family patterns and relationships across at least three generations. Diagram “family race” dynamics using the genogram. Genograms are used to document emotional relationships. The visual can assist in internally and visually processing where many of your racial perspectives and stereotypes may have derived.



PRAYER

God, thank you for your grace and mercy, which you have freely given to us. Because of your unyielding love, I receive freedom from the painful grip of guilt and shame. You are my hope, my strength and my shield. I place my trust in you. Amen

Cheryl Luke



RELATIONSHIP	RELATIONAL DYNAMICS	SYMBOL
Racism	Hatred, intolerance or superiority of another race or other races.	☐ ~~~~~ ○
Cut O	People in the family stop talking to one another or avoid contact due to interracial marriage or adoption	☐ ○
Prejudices	Preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience within relationships.	☐ - - - - ○
Enmeshment	Pressure is created for family members to think, feel and act alike. There is low tolerance for people to be separate, to disagree, or be di	☐ ○
Abuse	A severe crossing of personal boundaries - whether it be sexual, emotional, or physical, severely injuring the dignity and humanity of another.	☐ ○

Supporting Scriptures:

Psalm 34:4-5
Romans 8:1

Additional Resources:

See back.

week 4

CONFESSION

JAMES 5:16

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

PROVERBS 28:13

Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

EPHESIANS 1:7

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace...

DISCUSSION

Confession is the first step to repentance. It's difficult because it begins within a heart of humility. We are all loved by Christ and justified through grace. We all sin and do things that are dishonoring or displeasing to God. Our sins disrupt our fellowship with God. Confessing those sins leads to a pathway of forgiveness and mends our broken fellowship with God. May we be convicted to the pathway of confession. May you feel free to confess dark thoughts, feelings and misunderstandings that need the transformation of the cross.

John R. W. Stott wrote in *Confess Your Sins*, "We reveal not the depth of our love, but its shallowness, for we are doing what is not for his highest good. Forgiveness which by-passes the need for repentance issues not from love but from sentimentality."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 How has the Lord transformed your heart since Week 1?
- 2 Divide into groups of two or three. Discuss two things you want to see the Lord do in your heart concerning your thoughts on race.
- 3 How has your family's history influenced your belief system on race?
- 4 What have you learned about healthy racial relationships from the group?
- 5 What do you find most difficult in confessing your sins on racial relationships?
- 6 Read Proverbs 28:13 and discuss.

HOMEWORK

- * Purchase and begin reading one of the following books:
Divided by Faith (Michael Emerson), **United: Captured by God's Vision for Diversity** (Trillia Newbell), **The Post-Black and Post-White Church - Becoming the Beloved Community in a Multi-Ethnic World** (Efrem Smith), **Reconciliation Blues - A Black Evangelical's Inside View of White Christianity** (Edward Gilbreath)
- * In your time of prayer this week, confess those hidden biases you may carry about race to God.
- * Consider the injustices in our society or your community. Research injustices that you have read about.
- * Listen and journal during this time.

PRAYER

Dear Father, I confess to you my blind heart and eyes that have not even seen or felt the ways in which my actions OR LACK OF ACTION may have contributed to the hurt of others. I confess my inattention to the things that matter so much to you, your people, justice towards your people. I confess my numbness and the way I let things not be important because I prefer comfort than the messiness of digging deeper. God help us! We need to know more of your heart! Amen

Laura Choy

Supporting Scriptures:

Romans 3:23
1 John 2:2
1 John 1:9

Additional Resources:

See back.

week 5

FORGIVENESS

ISAIAH 43:25-26

"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. Review the past for me, let us argue the matter together; state the case for your innocence.

MATTHEW 6:14-15

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

ACTS 3:9

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

DISCUSSION

Forgiveness is for you. It only requires one person to change their attitude and feelings. It is difficult to forgive those who have sinned against us. Extending grace to those who have hurt us can be a hard task.

Forgiveness is a divine act. To forgive does not mean we have chosen to simply ignore or gloss over the evil and injustice we experienced or committed. It's realizing Christ died to erase our sins. He suffered and paid for our sins to identify with the injustice and evil we have experienced.

We are all guilty and in need of forgiveness. It is a process we all must enter. We forgive because we have been forgiven. Sometimes forgiveness begins with ourselves. In our process of spiritual growth we are being transformed into the likeness of Christ. This process does not happen overnight. We must give grace; we must listen; we must embrace a heart of compassion.

Come now, let us argue this out," says the LORD. "No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you as white as wool. Isaiah 1:18

"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you." C.S. Lewis

"Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a constant attitude." Martin Luther King, Jr.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why is forgiveness for you and not for the person or circumstance you are forgiving?
- 2 How does forgiveness prepare my heart?
- 3 Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Is there a process of forgiveness?
- 4 How do I forgive when those I'm trying to forgive continuously hurt me? (Luke 23:34)
- 5 How do I forgive myself?
- 6 Why must I forgive?
- 7 What characteristics in your life might indicate that you haven't fully forgiven past hurts, even if you know in your head what you need to do?
- 8 What do you personally need to be forgiven for?

HOMEWORK

- * Pray and write out your grievances you need to forgive or be forgiven for. Ask the Lord to instruct you.
- * Pray and write a note to someone you need to forgive.

PRAYER

Father in heaven, we hear your call to forgive those who have hurt us, those who have judged us, those who have accused us falsely, and those who have abused us and the people we love. Teach us, Lord, to forgive each other for Your sake and for our own sake, so that we can be refreshed and renewed in You. We choose to turn away from hate and holding grudges and ask you to wipe all of our slates clean – each one of us needs forgiveness just as we all have people we need to forgive. Give us courage to choose this again and again, moment by moment, until our hearts are bound to one another and to You. Amen

Kat Cannon

Supporting Scriptures:

1 John 1:9
Isaiah 1:18
2 Cor. 5:17
Psalm 103:12
Micah 7:18-19

Additional Resources:

See back.

week 6

REPENTANCE

LUKE 13:1-5

About this time Jesus was informed that Pilate had murdered some people from Galilee as they were offering sacrifices at the Temple. “Do you think those Galileans were worse sinners than all the other people from Galilee?” Jesus asked. “Is that why they suffered? Not at all! And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God. And what about the eighteen people who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them? Were they the worst sinners in Jerusalem? No, and I tell you again that unless you repent, you will perish, too.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:10

For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.

2 PETER 3:9 (NIV)

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

DISCUSSION

Repentance calls for us to turn from sin and turn to God. Repentance leads us to genuine faith. We are all sinners who are broken. Repentance requires that we take a whole new point of view. We look at the issue or circumstance from God's viewpoint and not our own. God wants to change our mind, to renew our mind and thoughts. As we surrender our old ways of thinking, God can do His work of transformation.

A.W. Tozer said, "Let us beware of vain and over-hasty repentance, and particularly let us beware of no repentance at all. We are a sinful race...and until the knowledge has hit hard, until it has wounded us...it has done us no good. A man can believe in total depravity and never have any sense of it for himself at all. Lots of us believe in total depravity who have never been wounded with the knowledge that we've sinned. Repentance is a wound I pray we may all feel."

Remember repentance is a gift from God and can be difficult.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the greatest hindrance or barrier to your changing?
- 2 Why are we blind to our sins but we can easily see the sin of others?
- 3 What do you think Tozer means by being "wounded with the knowledge that we've sinned?"
- 4 Are there areas in which you need to seek restitution?
- 5 What are ideologies from childhood about race of which you need to let go?
- 6 Why is true repentance so difficult?

HOMEWORK

- * Write a note of apology to someone or about something you for which you need to be forgiven. Send the note this week.
- * Draw a picture or take a picture of how your heart feels at the moment.

PRAYER

God, we thank you for producing a grief in us over our sins that then leads us to repentance. Your forgiveness towards us who don't deserve it empowers us with the ability to forgive others. We ask that your Holy Spirit would continue to push us towards repentance, for we know that there is great freedom to be found there. We love you Father and thank you for Jesus. Amen

Jamie Ivey

Supporting Scriptures:

James 4:8-10
Mark 1:15

Additional Resources:

See back.

week 7

RECONCILIATION

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

We Are God's Ambassadors

11 Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too. 12 Are we commending ourselves to you again? No, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so you can answer those who brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart. 13 If it seems we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. 14 Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. 15 He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

16 So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! 17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. 19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

DISCUSSION

This week we discuss the journey, navigating from forgiveness to reconciliation. Forgiveness focuses on you apart from the offender. Reconciliation focuses on restoring broken relationships; in many cases, this includes the offender. We have seen the hard work of reconciliation take place in Rwanda, where for decades the Hutus and Tutsis were at odds against each other. This resulted in what we have come to know as the Rwandan Genocide. Over 20 years later, there are hundreds of stories of reconciled relationships between Hutus and Tutsis. The greatest story of reconciliation can be found in John 18 when Peter denies Jesus as Jesus predicted he would. In John 21:15-25, Jesus reconciles Peter to Himself. During this process both parties have to be ready for reconciliation. Everyone is not ready for restored relationships. Reconciliation, unlike forgiveness, cannot be one-sided. It takes genuine repentance to pursue reconciliation. Confession plus repentance can lead to reconciliation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 As you read through 2 Corinthians 5, upon what did you reflect?
- 2 How do we use the ministry of reconciliation in our racial divisions?
- 3 How does our being reconciled to Christ relate to our being reconciled to each other?
- 4 What does it mean to be an Ambassador for Christ?
- 5 How do we move from forgiveness to reconciliation?
- 6 How are people reconciled to Christ? How can we be used in reconciling people to Christ?
- 7 Pray and ask God to show you broken relationships that need mending.
- 8 Write the person's name down here:

- 9 Ask God to create an opportunity to pursue reconciliation.

HOMEWORK

- * Tell others about your journey through the reconciliation process; blog about it; write about it. Bring an interested friend to our final meeting called Launch. This is when we will launch new groups to continue the process of reconciliation.

PRAYER

Father, we come to you, seeking you as not just an answer in a moment of need, but as THE answer for life, asking you Lord to help us to walk in the calling you have given your people to be ministers of reconciliation. Help us to understand what that means. May we be the ambassadors of truth with a godly perspective and not an earthly one. And may your love compel us forward with a single mission – that the righteousness of God may be displayed.

Susan Seay

Supporting Scriptures:

Ephesians 4:32
Matthew 5:23-26
Hebrews 12:14
Ephesians 2:15-18
Luke 17:3

Additional Resources:

See back.

week 8

LAUNCH: RECONCILED *to* RECONCILER

2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-21

We Are God's Ambassadors

11 Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others. God knows we are sincere, and I hope you know this, too. 12 Are we commending ourselves to you again? No, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so you can answer those who brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart. 13 If it seems we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. 14 Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. 15 He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves.

Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

16 So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! 17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. 19 For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. 20 So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"

21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

DISCUSSION

This week we continue in 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. You should have invited someone who is ready to engage with internality in the ministry of reconciliation. These people should join your circle today. Use the newly invited friends to launch a new group. Someone from the old group can choose to lead or co-lead their journey.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 How is God leading you to become more engaged with the process of reconciliation?
- 2 How can we begin to restore broken relationships?
- 3 Through this process, in what ways have you been reconciled to others?
- 4 Write down two things you can do after group to become a reconciler for Christ.
- 5 What restorative things are you planning to do?

HOMEWORK

- * Do something today to reflect what God has done in your heart.
- * Discuss the personal shifts in your own heart with a friend.
- * Make a point to discuss race from a biblical perspective with your family.
- * If you have a daughter of doll age, purchase one of a different ethnicity.
- * Take your family to the library to research civil rights and read about civil rights legends.
- * If you ever visit an historic civil rights city, visit the museums, learn the history.

PRAYER

Eternal life is not a destination but a reality we experience now as we know You, the only true and real God. Our cry is that your will be done on earth as it is Heaven, where every tribe and tongue exists in harmony as they glorify you. In order to make the kingdom of God credible now, through us, your people, our lives must reflect the diversity of our Maker. We have not prioritized connecting with people different from ourselves. We have let fear prevent friendship. We turn to you now, and ask that you give us the specific grace needed to engage vulnerability and authenticity with our sisters. Amen.

Jessica Honegger

Supporting Scriptures:

Luke 22:54-62, John 21:15
Peter's Denial of Jesus
Acts 9:1-22
Paul's Conversion
2 Samuel 9:1-12
David & Mephibosheth

Additional Resources:

See back.

week 9

FOLLOW UP

COLOSSIANS 3:12

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

MATTHEW 5:14-16

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

DISCUSSION

In our first session, we discussed how the church and its people are to be credible witnesses for the unity we find in Christ. Our reconciliation to Christ should cause us to be reconciled to one another or at least desire it. Our reconciliation aims that broken racial relationships be restored. This may involve you specifically or require engagement and solutions from you. As the body of Christ, we must not ignore the issue even if it does not involve our personal hearts. Our goal should be to see the church work with the community in a process of the restoration of relationships. As ambassadors of Christ we are to take part in “making things right”. Reconciliation is the fruit of confession, repentance and forgiveness. Christians should take an active role in doing a small part in helping to bring unity to the world.

PRE - WORK

- 1 For follow-up, send the group questions or have a final gathering to discuss the following:
- 2 Have a social gathering or party to celebrate the group’s progress. (Optional)
- 3 How are you continuously engaging in the conversation on race?
- 4 Email group participants to discuss how they are progressing post-sessions. Have they engaged others in the process of reconciliation? Have they invited those unlike themselves to the dinner table?
- 5 What recommendations do you have to grow the movement?
- 6 How can the process of reconciliation through the group discussions be improved?

HOMEWORK

- * Do something today to reflect what God has done in your heart.
- * Discuss the personal shifts in your own heart with a friend.
- * Make a point to discuss race from a biblical perspective with your family.
- * If you have a daughter of doll age, purchase one of a different ethnicity.
- * Take your family to the library to research civil rights and read about civil rights legends.
- * If you ever visit an historic civil rights city, visit the museums, learn the history.

PRAYER

Father, help us to reflect the essence of who you are by the way we treat one another. We are heartbroken about the brokenness we see around us. We know you are the remedy for the brokenness that we see in our world. Continue to show us the places in our hearts that need healing from prejudices, assumptions and fears. We ask that the Holy Spirit guide us in removing barriers that hinder us from becoming all you created us to be. Help us to become beacons that will penetrate the darkness of the world we live in. We know that your grace can transform hearts. We ask that you would make us one. We ask that the oneness of your church become a credible witness for your glory, in Jesus name. Amen.

Latisha Morrison

recommended

RESOURCES

- * **Divided by Faith** by Michael Emerson
- * **United: Captured by God's Vision for Diversity** by Trillia Newell
- * **The Post-Black and Post-White Church - Becoming the Beloved Community in a Multi-Ethnic World** by Efrem Smith
- * **Reconciliation Blues - A Black Evangelical's Inside View of White Christianity** by Edward Gilbreath
- * **Bridging the Diversity Gap** by Alvin Sanders

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- * **More Than Serving Tea: Asian American Women on Expectations, Relationships, Leadership and Faith** by Asifa Dean, Christie Heller de Leon, Kathy Khang
- * **Leading a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Seven Common Challenges and How to Overcome them** by Mark Deymaz and Harry Li
- * **The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity & Many Colors** by Soong Chan Rah
- * **The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion** by Jonathan Haidt