

UNITED

A CONVERSATION ABOUT
RACE, FAITH & OUR RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

Thanks for choosing to journey as a group through the conversations in this study. We created it in response to the racial unrest we've all seen expressed in numerous ways over the last several years.

Ferguson, Baton Rouge, and Charlottesville are all evidence of racial division within our nation. That's why we think it's important to have an open discussion about race. While the principles you'll discuss are applicable across any racial group, the content is focused primarily on the dynamic between white and black people. That doesn't mean the experience of other people of color aren't important. It's just a reflection of the central role that relations between white and black people play in race in America.

If you're a non-minority entering into this conversation, you may feel we're asking more of you. We are. Because you are part of the majority population, you have power and influence. That's true even if you don't feel like it is. Having power and influence means you also have responsibility. *United* will challenge you to think in new ways about that power, influence, and responsibility. That may stir some emotion. It may be uncomfortable. We ask that you allow yourself to sit in that tension. Discomfort isn't always a bad thing. In fact, we can't really grow and be comfortable at the same time.

During the study, you'll hear different people's stories. One person can't speak for the experiences of an entire group of people, but we want to present you with different perspectives. Keep in mind that we're not trying to solve a problem. We want to start a conversation that points in the direction of unity within the body of Christ . . . and beyond. As we engage and have conversations with others, our understanding grows and the space between us shrinks.

We want to challenge you open your hearts and minds, and continually ask the question, "What does love require of me?"

Here are a few things to help create a safe place (these will look different depending on the diversity within your group):

Pray. Pray for your discussion time and pray for our nation. Repent of past sins done in the name of racism as a collective whole. Ask for forgiveness on behalf of our brothers and sisters. Ask for grace to cover your meetings and for a spirit of unity (John 17:20-23).

Cast Vision. Let your group know this might get uncomfortable and that's okay. We are learning how to have this conversation. As we seek to understand, rather than make a point, we can help to bridge the gap of understanding/experience.

Create Ground Rules. As a group, create ground rules for the discussion. Focus on positive behaviors: respect, listening, validating, forgiveness, being slow to anger/take offense, filling the gaps with grace. Build in time-outs and pauses to keep the conversation from escalating.

Facilitate the Discussion. More than other discussions, you may need to play the role of moderator. If things are getting heated or one-sided, jump in and remind everyone the goal is to create common ground and unity.

OVERVIEW

The four sessions help launch us into conversations about race and faith. While the videos launch off the history and current events affecting the African American community, the principles translate beyond racial lines. When handling the material, we encourage you to bring in different perspectives and experiences. This will ensure a rich and meaningful discussion. Additionally, notice in the title that this is a conversation about race, faith, and our response. There is an action part to this study. If it simply stays a conversation, we've missed the mark.

STUDY GUIDE

Your group should all have access to the study guide. You can either have it up on the screen so everyone can read through it or people can access it on their own devices.

VIDEOS

The main video content was pulled from previous talks at North Point Ministries Campuses. We have edited for time and relevant content, so you will see breaks in the messages.

LEADER GUIDE

The Leader Guide is an essential tool to this study. Please prepare for each session by reading through this guide prior to your meeting. The guide will help you navigate what to do and how to handle some of the questions and exercises.

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SESSION 1: ANDREW YOUNG – LEADER GUIDE

FOCUS:

We will focus on the definition of “racism” and the history behind it ending on the posture of investing in relationships as Mr. Young did.

In Session 1, you will hear from Andrew Young, who was a key voice in the Civil Rights movement and beyond. By beginning with past racism, we are acclimating people to the ideas in this discussion. As we move through the study, it will become more personal, current, and practical. In this session, you will be dealing with concepts, ideas, and ways of thinking about racism.

There are several video elements to session one. Make sure you are prepared for easy transitions between discussion and videos.

INTRODUCTION

Andrew Young has had a long and illustrious career as an activist, politician, and diplomat. He was a close friend of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and has served as a congressman, Mayor of Atlanta, and a United States Ambassador to the United Nations. The following video is from an interview at Gwinnett Church with Jeff Henderson.

There is an introduction to each session that sets up the context for the video. Read or have someone read (or have the group read silently) the introduction.

[SHOW ANDREW YOUNG VIDEO: SESSION 1, VIDEO 1 (12:54)]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Andrew Young makes the point that racism is a sickness and you don't get mad at sick people; instead, you help them. If this is true, how do you help them?
(Not everyone will agree that racism is a sickness. The idea is to lean into what can we do to help, rather than blame.)
2. Have you ever seen someone change a strongly held belief? If so, what do you think it takes for someone to make such a big change?
(This question leans into practical ways to get people to explore options for change. Sometimes our strongly held beliefs can be considered stubbornness. Addressing the issue from the position of stubbornness may add to the discussion. Bring out the need to involve others; you can't do this alone.)
3. “Don't get mad, get smart,” can be hard advice to follow. Do you think it's ever appropriate to get mad? What are some ways one could be angry and still be heard? [Ephesians 4:26; Matthew 21:12-13, Luke 17:2]
(This is in reference to mad, in general, not asking in reference to a specific situation.)
4. Think of a time when you have been wronged and were powerless to do anything about it. How did you react?

(Help your group put themselves in the emotion. Bring this closer for them. Have an example you can share to start off the conversation, if needed.)

5. What are some ways you can de-escalate a conversation when someone is angry? What are some things that fuel anger?

(The Martin Luther King Jr. quote is in reference to things that fuel anger. Riots can be seen as the language of the unheard. You can tie in question three to this idea.)

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. ON RIOTING:

“But it is not enough for me to stand before you tonight and condemn riots. It would be morally irresponsible for me to do that without, at the same time, condemning the contingent, intolerable conditions that exist in our society. These conditions are the things that cause individuals to feel that they have no other alternative than to engage in violent rebellions to get attention. And I must say tonight that a riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it America has failed to hear? It has failed to hear that the promises of freedom and justice have not been met. And it has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice and humanity.”—“The Other America” 1968

6. Andrew Young took the low place in order to build the relationship with the jailer. Share a time when you took the low place in a relationship. What can we learn from his posture?

(Our hope is to lead people more toward taking the low place, being curious, taking steps to understand positions they might not even agree with. This idea will be further explored in other sessions.)

GETTING REAL

“Racism” can be a complex and emotionally charged word. How would you describe what it means? Here are some helpful definitions from Merriam-Webster.com:

Racism - a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of particular race

Bigotry - obstinate or intolerant devotion to one’s own opinions and prejudices

Prejudice - 1: injury or damage resulting from some judgment or action of another in disregard of one’s rights; *especially* : detriment to one’s legal rights or claims

2a (1) : preconceived judgment or opinion (2) : an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge **b** : an instance of such judgment or opinion **c** : an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics

Discussion Questions

1. What strikes you about these definitions?
2. What are some examples of racism today?

(Racism definition: be prepared to set the tone for this discussion. It can get emotional. Remind them we are here to learn and grow. We don’t necessarily have to agree, but we can still validate other people’s opinions.)

FILTERS EXERCISE [SHOW FILTERS VIDEO: SESSION 1, VIDEO 3 (1:29)]

(This is a big part of Session 1 and the entire study. If you run out of time, please make sure to watch this video and discuss it in Session 2. A key idea is to help people see that we all have things that affect our views of reality. We need to be able to identify our own filters and seek to understand what affects other people’s perspectives. Seeking to understand is a Christian value. It communicates value and worth.) Matt. 5:9; Rom. 14:19; Heb. 12:14; 1 Cor. 13:4–7; Mark 12:31

After watching the video, use the PDF to identify some of your filters. Once you have filled in your filters, try to fill in some filters that may be affecting the conversation from the other side.

Discussion Questions

1. How can understanding filters affect the race discussion?
2. What are some common filters we may be blind to? Why is that so?

(Work through this question as a group. Spend some time here. Toni listed a lot of filters, this is the opportunity to break them down as well as add to the list.)

“Most people listen with the intent to reply, not to understand.” —Steven Covey

Cast vision for the next three sections for the next few weeks to your group. You will explain what each section is and how they are to leverage them between sessions.

THIS WEEK (HOMEWORK SECTION)

We must know where we have been in order to move forward. Investigate U.S. history and racism (see Resources below for suggestions).

1. What did you learn?
2. How can you leverage what you’ve learned?

Go over the “This week” section and encourage them to do it at home in order to engage with the material more fully.

REFLECT

And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. - Micah 6.8

Encourage group members to read and reflect in-between sessions on the verses assigned.

RESOURCES

(The Resources Section provides further opportunities to explore Black history/perspectives in America and other topics relevant to these conversations. They do not represent all perspectives but should help to provide a glimpse of some of the undercurrents that are affecting current events.)

10 Must-Watch Black Documentaries

<http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/explore/10-black-history-documentaries-to-watch/#.WKiGPrHMxPM>

History of Racism and Immigration Timeline

<http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415892940/data/8%20history%20and%20immigration%20timeline.pdf>

Dr. Condoleezza Rice reflects on Civil Rights (5 min.)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=jqEPRSJkCo>

History of the Civil Rights Movement

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=URxwe6LPvkM>

Each week, we will offer resources for group members to explore topics further. Cast vision that they might not agree with everything posted under Resources, and that’s okay. The hope is to provide materials that give other perspectives and context.

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SESSION 2: BENJAMIN WATSON — LEADER GUIDE

FOCUS:

Bring the conversation to today. Explore what to do when we don't see what our neighbors see. Uncover what love requires of us to build a beloved community with a neighbor who experiences the world differently, who sees the world differently, and who is different.

Last session was more looking at racism at a distance. This session brings it more to current events, but we are still on the outside looking in. Benjamin's position was one of spectator, not participant. This progression is intentional in order to give people time to deal with emotions and blind spots. In the next session, you will have the opportunity to deal with racism at a more personal level.

If your group is not racially diverse, the discussion will look quite different. We encourage you to have outside conversations in order to understand more fully the issues that are facing our nation.

This session we are starting with a video to help set up the discussion. Chris Kim works in GroupLife at Woodstock City Church (One of our local North Point Ministries Campuses.) His introduction is to help bring in the broader racism issue.

INTRODUCTION

Benjamin Watson is an NFL tight end for the New Orleans Saints, as well as an author. He was named one of CNN's extraordinary people in 2014 because of his "thoughtful, balanced Facebook post" in response to the grand jury's decision to not indict a white officer in the shooting of an unarmed black teen in Ferguson, Missouri. Jeff Henderson interviewed Benjamin Watson at Buckhead Church as part of the Wish You Were Here series.

BACKGROUND ON FERGUSON

As we seek to understand, we must take into consideration the importance of perspective. Often, we will say we are looking at the facts and can agree to disagree or, even more damaging, that the other person is wrong. This shuts down conversation. In order to engage, we must hear what it is like from his or her perspective. Our next video is a conversation with Benjamin Watson, a professional football player who was thrust into the limelight for his Facebook post in the aftermath of the Ferguson decision.

HERE'S A QUICK SUMMATION OF THE EVENTS:

- Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager, was shot and killed on August 9, 2014, by Darren Wilson, a white police officer, in Ferguson, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis.
- The shooting prompted protests that roiled the area for weeks.
- On November 24, the St. Louis County prosecutor announced that a grand jury decided not to indict Mr. Wilson.
- The announcement set off another wave of protests.
- In March, the Justice Department called on Ferguson to overhaul its criminal justice system, declaring that the city had engaged in constitutional violations. (The New York Times, updated August 10, 2015)

In order to understand the impact this had on the African American community, we need to consider context. The reaction was not limited to this incident; there is more to the story. As we try to understand others' perspectives, we are more able to engage in a helpful manner. The next article helps to give a perspective of the events leading to what happened in Ferguson.

WHY FERGUSON?

The response to Brown's death turned violent because of a convergence of factors, observers say, including the stark nature of the killing in broad daylight, an aggressive police response to protests, a mainly black city being run by white officials, and the cumulative effect of killing after killing after killing of unarmed black males.

The nature of Brown's killing fueled anger. He was shot six times in broad daylight, in the middle of the street, in his own housing complex. Then his body lay in the street for hours—uncovered, in a pool of blood—before being taken away.

Ferguson is 67 percent black. The mayor, the city council, the school board, and the police force are almost all white. Schneider said that the riots of the 1960s gave rise to individuals and groups who could effectively negotiate tensions with police. That infrastructure may not exist in Ferguson, where the population has rapidly changed due to "white flight," she said. Local officials promised to make changes and be more receptive to community concerns.

Michael Brown can be seen as a bookend of sorts to Trayvon Martin*. "Many of us who were involved in [the incident] Trayvon thought we could get through this summer without another incident," he said. "Sad to say, this lit another fire." [Article adapted. Read full article here: <http://nypost.com/2014/08/21/police-killings-happen-so-why-did-ferguson-explode/>]

*<https://www.biography.com/people/trayvon-martin-21283721>

[SHOW BENJAMIN WATSON VIDEO: SESSION 2, VIDEO 2 (20:57)]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read through Benjamin Watson's Facebook post found on page 5 of your group members discussion guide, and on page 9 of this leader guide.

1. Which parts of Benjamin's FB post resonated with you? Why? Which parts didn't? Why?
(It's helpful if you have the Facebook post printed out or people pull it up on their devices. Be prepared to lead out with your own thoughts. If you do not get answers, read a few and get them to discuss. Remember to bring the conversation broader to other races.)
2. If one is not familiar with or doesn't have personal ties to the events, it may be difficult to understand the weight of the Ferguson decision and its aftermath. We may even disagree. What is the value in seeking to understand someone with whom you disagree? What are some ways to seek that understanding?
(If you didn't read the information on Ferguson, you may want to read it to others if they are not familiar with the situation.)
3. Benjamin makes the point that we don't have a skin problem; we have a sin problem. How might treating racism as a sin problem address its root cause? How might this perspective fall short?
(Some people may disagree with Benjamin's assessment. The questions allow for people to disagree and to let them voice their perspectives.)
4. Benjamin mentions that his daughter was watching and listening and picking up cues from her parents. What cues are you passing along to those who are watching and listening to you? How can you be intentional about what you communicate?
(The idea is to help people see they are communicating something whether they are intending to or not.)
5. What role should prayer play in racial reconciliation? What should we be praying for collectively and individually?
(Stress the importance of prayer: collective and individual.)
6. Jeff references Dr. King's idea of The Beloved Community, which Paul wrote about in Galatians as a model of oneness and unity. How can we, as the church, model "beloved community" today?
(See the resource on "The Beloved Community.")

Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision in which all people share in the wealth of the earth. In The Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. An all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood will replace racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice. In The Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict resolution and reconciliation of adversaries instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict.

THIS WEEK:

Ask God to expose situations where you didn't do for someone what love required of you, where you need to repent.

Make a list of some practical things we can do to be distributors of peace, brokers of hope, and bridge builders. Pick one and do it this week.

The homework is intended to get people to think further about confession and our parts.

REFLECT:

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. – Psalm 139:23-24

RESOURCES:

(The Resources Section provides further opportunities to explore Black history/perspectives in America and other topics relevant to these conversations. They do not represent all perspectives but should help to provide a glimpse of some of the undercurrents that are affecting current events.)

Sam Collier with Sho Baraka on Rioting — <https://vimeo.com/212487411/60c58f0370>

Beloved Community <http://www.thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy#sub4>

Ferguson Report — https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson_police_department_report.pdf

Continue to encourage reflection and exploration of resources.

The resource on rioting helps to explain some of why rioting takes place. You can also reference Dr. King's quote from Session One.

BENJAMIN WATSON'S PRAYER

Lord, man looks at the outward appearance, but you look at the heart. Lord, convict our hearts when it comes to race Lord, lead us to repentance because of your blood Lord. Let us be honest. Let us be honest with our feelings that aren't from you. Lord remove guilt from us God, but give us grace. Let us be motivated by love and not hate. Lord, may we purposely do things to spread your gospel demonstrating it through love. And Lord, I pray for forgiveness. I pray for those who have been offended when it comes to this issue God, that they will be able to forgive because you have forgiven us seven times over. Lord, you have forgiven us and loved us so much sent Jesus Christ to die for us when we didn't deserve it. While we were yet sinners you died for us because you loved us so much. Lord may we please, extend that same grace to others.

And I pray for this country while still reeling from so many different issues. I pray the Body of Christ strengthened. I pray the Body of Christ shoot out from here like arrows affecting positive change. Lord, let us go out to work places, to our schools, to our teams and most importantly to families. And lead our families by teaching our children what it means to be Christians and what it means to be followers of you. Lord, not affected by the outside but by doing things that are for you. Leading people in the right direction, being an example always confessing Lord, where we fall short in this area of racism.

We thank you for this church, I pray for the leadership of this church to continue to give the Word of God unadulterated to the people. I pray that they will never say things Lord to appease ears, but simply say things that are from your Word speaking truth in love. And I pray for those who hear, that they would be doers of the word and not just hearers, that they would take it to heart and allow positive change in their hearts Lord, because, again, it is a heart issue. We thank you for the Gospel In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

BENJAMIN WATSON'S FACEBOOK POST

I'M ANGRY because the stories of injustice that have been passed down for generations seem to be continuing before our very eyes.

I'M FRUSTRATED, because pop culture, music and movies glorify these types of police citizen altercations and promote an invincible attitude that continues to get young men killed in real life, away from safety movie

sets and music studios.

I'M FEARFUL because in the back of my mind I know that although I'm a law abiding citizen I could still be looked upon as a "threat" to those who don't know me. So I will continue to have to go the extra mile to earn the benefit of the doubt.

I'M EMBARRASSED because the looting, violent protests, and law breaking only confirm, and in the minds of many, validate, the stereotypes and thus the inferior treatment.

I'M SAD, because another young life was lost from his family, the racial divide has widened, a community is in shambles, accusations, insensitivity hurt and hatred are boiling over, and we may never know the truth about what happened that day.

I'M SYMPATHETIC, because I wasn't there so I don't know exactly what happened. Maybe Darren Wilson acted within his rights and duty as an officer of the law and killed Michael Brown in self defense like any of us would in the circumstance. Now he has to fear the backlash against himself and his loved ones when he was only doing his job. What a horrible thing to endure. OR maybe he provoked Michael and ignited the series of events that led to him eventually murdering the young man to prove a point.

I'M OFFENDED, because of the insulting comments I've seen that are not only insensitive but dismissive to the painful experiences of others.

I'M CONFUSED, because I don't know why it's so hard to obey a policeman. You will not win!!! And I don't know why some policeman abuse their power. Power is a responsibility, not a weapon to brandish and lord over the populace.

I'M INTROSPECTIVE, because sometimes I want to take "our" side without looking at the facts in situations like these. Sometimes I feel like it's us against them. Sometimes I'm just as prejudiced as people I point fingers at. And that's not right. How can I look at white skin and make assumptions but not want assumptions made about me? That's not right

I'M HOPELESS, because I've lived long enough to expect things like this to continue to happen. I'm not surprised and at some point my little children are going to inherit the weight of being a minority and all that it entails.

I'M HOPEFUL, because I know that while we still have race issues in America, we enjoy a much different normal than those of our parents and grandparents. I see it in my personal relationships with teammates, friends and mentors. And it's a beautiful thing.

I'M ENCOURAGED, because ultimately the problem is not a SKIN problem, it is a SIN problem. SIN is the reason we rebel against authority. SIN is the reason we abuse our authority. SIN is the reason we are racist, prejudiced and lie to cover for our own. SIN is the reason we riot, loot and burn. BUT I'M ENCOURAGED because God has provided a solution for sin through the his son Jesus and with it, a transformed heart and mind. One that's capable of looking past the outward and seeing what's truly important in every human being. The cure for the Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice and Eric Garner tragedies is not education or exposure. It's the Gospel. So, finally, I'M ENCOURAGED because the Gospel gives mankind hope.

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SESSION 3: SKIN IN THE GAME (PART 1) — LEADER GUIDE

FOCUS:

With regard to racism, what does love require of me? Our responses must involve action.

This video is broken into two parts so that we can dig into the content with more depth. Part One will be more of the conversation with Joseph and Sam and in Part Two, we will concentrate on Andy's call to be united as the Body of Christ. Because the talk is broken in two segments, the first segment ends somewhat abruptly, prepare your group and let them know the discussion will be picked back up in Part Two.

Additionally, there are several videos to help bring in personal examples of racism today. These are an important part of this session's content. Please allow time for the viewing and discussion.

INTRODUCTION

In the summer months of 2016, racial tensions came to a head resulting in an armed sniper gunning down police officers in Dallas, Texas. The shootings were during a peaceful demonstration against violence committed by officers in Louisiana and Minnesota. In order to help navigate the pain, tension, and emotions, Andy Stanley invited Sam Collier and Joseph Sojourner to a discussion at North Point Community Church.

[SHOW SKIN IN THE GAME PART 1 VIDEO: SESSION 3, VIDEO 1 (15:29)]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When have you experienced a disconnect between your experience of a situation and someone else's experience? How did you handle it?
(Lean into the filter exercise from Session One, if needed. You may need to lead out with your own experiences. This can be something as mild as not enjoying a movie a friend really thought was great. Move them toward more personal and/or emotional situations.)
2. When you were learning to drive, what instructions or advice were you given about what to do if you were pulled over by a police officer?
(Depending on your group, this could be very mild. Compare situations and if your group is not diverse, encourage them to explore what it may be like for people of other races.)
3. Andy suggested, "The further we are from a problem, the simpler it looks," and "The closer you get to problem, the more complex it becomes." How can non-minorities move closer to the problem? How can minorities help expose the complexities of the issues while inviting further discussion?

(This question has the potential to lead toward lecturing. Remind the group the idea is to help each other. Encourage humility and curiosity. The question addresses minorities so minorities in group can also move towards unity and have an action step.)

4. Genesis 1:26 says that people are made in God's image. That gives every person inherent dignity and worth. What are some things in our culture that can that diminish the dignity and worth of a person?

(You can also discuss as a group what it means to be made in God's image and why this is important.)

5. Dr. King said, "In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." What might keep people silent? How can you communicate value and worth and love? How does racism diminish the dignity and worth of a person?

(In diverse groups, explore the personal ramifications of silence.)

GETTING REAL

These videos are intended to help people see that racism still exists and to bring it closer, especially for those who don't have relationships with other races. If your group is diverse, invite people to share their own experiences.

In the next four short videos you will hear personal stories of racism from people in our church. As you watch the videos, put yourself in their shoes. Remember your filters and lay them down as much as you can.

[WATCH RACISM UP CLOSE VIDEOS: SESSION 3, VIDEOS 2-5]

After watching the videos, discuss the following questions:

1. Which of these stories stands out to you? Why?
2. How do you think their stories impact their views?
3. If you were speaking with them, what would you want to ask/say?
4. When someone shares a story like these, how should we respond?

Each video has a different nuance of racism. In your discussion bring in the many different ways racism can look like.

There has been lots of discussion about the Black Lives Matter movement. This video is to help give context.

The next video offers a perspective on the Black Lives Matter movement. Before watching it, take a minute to identify some of your emotions about this topic. When you hear Black Lives Matter, what are your thoughts? Remember the goal of this study is to identify and consider other perspectives. Lay down your filters as much as you can and try to understand the heart of the message—even if you don't agree with it. One more thing to note, there are fringe people on all sides that that don't represent the majority even if their voices are loud. These radical extremes are not helpful when trying to understand most perspectives.

[SHOW BLACK LIVES MATTER VIDEO: SESSION 3: VIDEO 6]

Please note: We wholeheartedly affirm the statement that Black Lives Matter, because every human being bears the image of God with inherent dignity. However we have chosen not to align with the blacklivesmatter.com political platform.

One of the responses to "black lives matter" is that all lives matter. This is an example of simplifying a very complex issue. Yes, all lives matter. Sam makes the point that there is a group of people who do not feel their lives matter and this is giving them a voice. Lead your group to try to understand the complexities of the issue. Invite them to explore filters and feelings of the other side.

After watching the videos, discuss the following questions:

1. What is the heart of this perspective?
2. Why might the black community think their lives do not matter?
3. From this perspective, does “black lives matter” negate the idea that “all lives matter”?

THIS WEEK

Harvard created an assessment to help us identify things we may not be able to see in ourselves when it comes to racism. We encourage you to take the test and prayerfully consider the results and your reactions to them. Spend some time identifying your emotions. Consider the following:

Do you agree with the assessment? Why or Why not?

How would you know if you had racist thoughts or tendencies?

Is there anything you can take away from the assessment to help you understand things affecting your perspective?

HARVARD IMPLICIT ASSOCIATION OVERVIEW:

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>

The Harvard Implicit Association Overview offers many tests you can take. We are encouraging the one on race. This may have some results people don't like. We want people to start thinking and being open to seeing things they don't see. Cast vision for people to consider blind spots.

REFLECT

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy. – Proverbs 31:8-9

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. – Isaiah 1:17

The verses connect with Dr. King's reference to the silence of friends. As Christians, we should speak up for

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SESSION 4: SKIN IN THE GAME (PART 2) – LEADER GUIDE

FOCUS:

Our response to the call to be united affects our gospel message to the world.

[SHOW SKIN IN THE GAME PART 1 VIDEO: SESSION 4, VIDEO 1 (13.29)]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Andy makes the point that both groups made theological, religious, and cultural concessions in order for there to be unity in the church. What changes do we need to make in order to build unity?

(Get people to explore corporate changes, we'll go more personal in the next question. A key idea here is that our churches are one of the most segregated places in society.)

2. Sam references Dr. King's quote, "Men often hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don't know each other; they don't know each other because they cannot communicate; they cannot communicate because they are separated." What keeps us from being in relationship with one another? As the church, what do we need to do to overcome these barriers? As individuals, what can we do?

(Dr. King's quote emphasizes movement toward relationships.)

3. Read Acts 10:27-28. What can we learn from the first-century church with regard to racism?

(Focus in on that it is part of our fallenness. It's not new, BUT there is hope!)

4. Andy states, "Prejudice and racism are almost impossible to see in the mirror because it is hidden in our hearts." What keeps us from seeing ourselves accurately? What can we do to change this? As the church, what hangs in the balance of us getting this right?

(This question is key. We must understand we are blind and need to take steps to see what we cannot see. This is why groups are so important . . . to have a safe place to explore even the harder things.)

5. Read Ephesians 4:1-6. What are we called to as believers? What does this look like practically? How does this involve our "invest and invite" strategy, especially if we have a tendency to live in neighborhoods and areas of town with people who are similar to our own cultures? **(See racial dot map under references.)**

Some ideas of what this looks like practically:

- Start looking for places to engage that are diverse.
- Watch movies (give examples).
- Read books. (Point out that many of the books will be written by people with whom you have political disagreements, but their experiences are valid even if you disagree with their solutions. Engage with their stories and be a learner. The more exposure you have to stories that are not your own, the more empathy you will gain and the more able you will be to partner in building the "beloved community.")

6. Andy makes the statement: “We have the message; we have the leverage. And if you’re a Christian, what you don’t have is an excuse.” How does racial division affect the church and our message? How can we move beyond excuses and leverage this call to be united?

(This is the key to our call as Christians. Encourage them to uncover the excuses and take small steps.)

7. The more we understand each other, the more our compassion grows for each other. What is one thing you can do over the next couple of weeks to take a step towards unity?

Encourage Group members to look back over the This week, Reflect, and Resources from each session. These hold key ideas and areas to explore further.

As a group, you may want to pray through what you have learned and what next steps you can take.

THIS WEEK

In our trainings, we encourage our leaders to be humble, curious, teachable, and intentional. These are some postures that help create a safe and growing environment. What if we took these postures and applied them to racial division?

What could this look like if we were intentional about reflecting the church Jesus describes? What is your part?

IDEAS TO BUILD UNDERSTANDING

- Be intentional about making friends who are different than you.
- Invite people from a different race to coffee in order to get to know them.
- Expose yourself to materials from other perspectives (books, podcasts, movies, magazines, Tedtalks, etc.)
- Brush up on the history of other races and people groups.

REFLECT

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. – John 17:20-21

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and all. Ephesians 4:4-6

RESOURCES

(The Resources Section provides further opportunities to explore Black history/perspectives in America and other topics relevant to these conversations. They do not represent all perspectives but should help to provide a glimpse of some of the undercurrents that are affecting current events.)

Under Our Skin: Getting Real about Race. Getting Free from the Fears and Frustrations that Divide Us.
https://www.amazon.com/Under-Our-Skin-Getting-Frustrations/dp/149641330X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1488483233&sr=8-1&keywords=ben+watson

13th Netflix Original Documentary

Racial Dot Map: <http://demographics.coopercenter.org/racial-dot-map/>

This resource provides a map of the United States. It uses census data to put a dot on the map for each person in the U.S. Each dot is color coded for their race. It is a stunning example of just how segregated the U.S. continues to be.