



THREADED  
small group curriculum

A GUIDE FOR DISCUSSING **race**  
& **RECONCILIATION** IN THE CHURCH





Dedicated to

**Javier Russell**

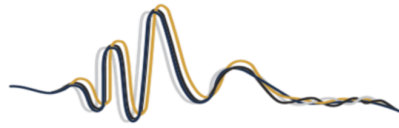
*December 7, 1977 – September 4, 2017*

— father, husband, brother,  
pastor, servant, leader, and friend.

May your life of humility, service, and Christ-like love  
continue to inspire many others on the path to unity  
and racial reconciliation in the Church.







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## Who is THREADED?



## THREADED LEARNING GROUPS



### **Vision**

We want the body of Christ to be seen as a mesmerizing tapestry - restored to unity, displaying its dazzling colors, and stitched together in purpose and love. As such it will captivate the world and draw it closer to the God who threaded it together.

### **Mission**

To inspire relationships, reconciliation and collaborative action between the diverse body of Christ.

**Learning groups** are a part of Threaded's history and are a critical part of our future. We believe that **relationships** are developed and cultivated in small groups.

With this in mind, we work to create diverse small group experiences that utilize vulnerable questions and unity-centered reading materials to inspire relationships, reconciliation, and collaborative action among the diverse body of Christ.

The road towards racial reconciliation can be a scary and somewhat daunting path. For some, as they stand at the starting point and gaze down the road, they cannot help but remark about the potholes, the overgrown weeds and the many twists and turns that seem to lead to nowhere in particular. It is true, racial reconciliation is difficult and in our current cultural climate it may, to some, seem impossible.



What if you were told that it is not impossible? What if you found out that it has already happened? Would that give you hope? The good news is that it HAS already happened!

*"From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." - 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (ESV)*

**Reconciliation** has come through the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. He has broken down the walls of hostility between His people and made them one (Eph. 2:13-16). So then, why are we still so divided? Why is the Christian church still the most segregated institution in America? Why after reading the scriptures and committing ourselves to Christ do we still battle across racial lines?

This study is designed to help get to some of the deep and hidden things that keep us divided. It seeks to bring you face to face with your own prejudices and lovingly guide you into humble repentance, rich relationships, and an enlarged perspective of the world around you. It is not a silver bullet and this will not happen overnight. This is just a step on the long journey ahead and if you decide to take this step, be prepared for the long haul.

**Are you ready to begin the journey?**

## THE LONG HAUL



# WHO IS THIS FOR?



- Those who are tired of seeing the Church segregated and divided and want to do something about it.
- Those who long to see the name of God restored in our world through the unity of His Church.
- Those who seek to create pathways to their ethnically diverse neighbors for the purpose of building relationships with them and sharing the Gospel.
- Those who believe that the expansion of their perspective will bring an expanded understanding of God.
- Those who desire to experience greater diversity and richness in their relationships.
- Those who are tired of the injustice, apathy, and fear practiced in our churches, our country, and our communities.





# COMPONENTS OF THE STUDY



Each session will address and develop the three aspects of the threaded vision with the following components:

- ◆ **Personal Storytelling** for multi-ethnic friendships.
- ◆ **Biblical guidance** for a growing theological understanding and skill development in reconciliation.
- ◆ **Inspiring readings** to encourage conversation and collaborative action among individuals, ministries, and churches for racial reconciliation and multi-ethnic relationships and experiences.





**CORE**  
VALUES



When something matters to us, we value it. Shared values are more often revealed in a group rather than stated. They influence a group's motives and experiences together. These Threaded core values provide both the overall direction of each session and the desired shared experiences of everyone in the group.

### **KINGDOM-ORIENTED**

The eternal vision of heaven is a multi-ethnic church (Rev. 7:9-12). Jesus leads us to pray, seek, and serve for that kingdom reality on earth, now as it will be in heaven (Mt. 6:10; Eph. 2:14-22). That is the aim of our hearts and efforts together. This group is not about a church. It is about The Church, beautiful in her diversity, united in Christ's headship, and more satisfying than we can imagine.

### **CONFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS**

There is no resurrection without a cross and no healing without addressing the pain. Vulnerability breeds vulnerability. Therefore, in moving forward together, the first steps must be made with a humble willingness to confess how we have sinned in the area of race relations, and a readiness to share and listen to personal stories of Christ's redemption.

### **GRACE EXTENDING**

The grace of Jesus Christ has been lavished upon us. Therefore, we must extend it to others as we engage in conversation. Everyone is welcome and adds meaningfully to our growing understanding. We are not all at the same point on the journey and there is nothing that makes someone want to quit like the lack of grace.

### **COMPASSIONATE & COURAGEOUS CONTENDING**

Everyone's experience and contribution is valid, so we will fight to let their voice be heard and show empathy and compassion even if we do not agree with them. Compelled by the love of Jesus Christ we will suffer with, speak truth lovingly, and move into conflict and areas of injustice for the sake of others coming to know the reconciling power of Jesus Christ.

### **REJOICE ALWAYS**

In a broken world of difficulties and divisions, the Spirit leads us to celebrate any places where the Kingdom advances against the walls of racism. Things may be bad and they are certainly are not perfect, but we seek to rejoice at the victories we can find and pray for the power to carry on through the defeats.

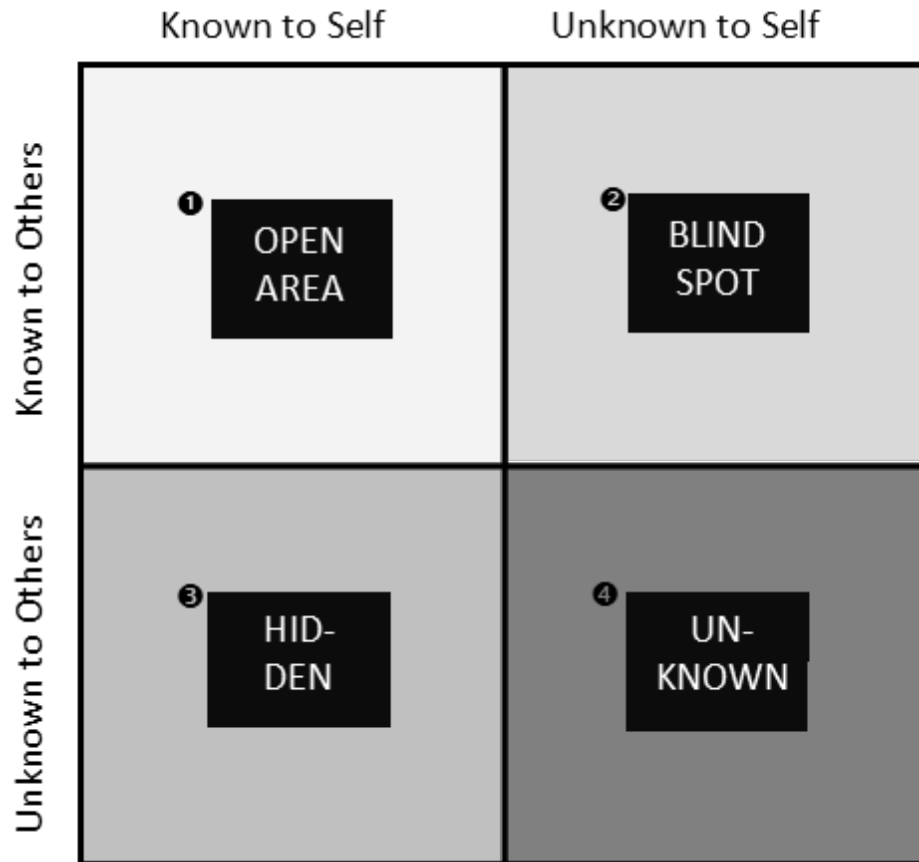


# curriculum outline

Session	THREADED Value	Readings
ONE   The Journey Begins	<i>Kingdom-Oriented</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Corinthians 5:16-19</li> <li>• Introduction to Curriculum</li> </ul>
TWO   Homing Beacon	<i>Compassionate &amp; Courageous Contending</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micah 6:8</li> <li>• Letter from a Birmingham Jail</li> </ul>
THREE   The Destination	<i>Vision of Diversity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revelation 7:9-12</li> <li>• LTABJ* Chapter 5</li> </ul>
FOUR   Taking the Wheel	<i>Compassionate &amp; Courageous Contending</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ephesians 2:14-16</li> <li>• LTABJ* Chapter 8</li> </ul>
FIVE   Headlights	<i>Confessional Conversations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matthew 7:3-5</li> <li>• LTABJ* Chapter 3</li> </ul>
SIX   Two Paths	<i>Grace Extending</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colossians 3:12-14</li> <li>• LTABJ* Chapter 6</li> </ul>
SEVEN   Uncharted Territory	<i>Compassionate &amp; Courageous Contending</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Luke 10:36-37</li> <li>• LTABJ* Chapter 2</li> </ul>
EIGHT   Right-of-Way	<i>Grace Extending</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philippians 2:1-5</li> <li>• LTABJ* Chapter 4</li> </ul>
NINE   Arrivals	<i>Rejoice Always</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isaiah 11:6-9</li> <li>• LTABJ* Chapter 10</li> </ul>
Ten   Rejoice	<i>Rejoice Always</i>	ELEVEN   Rejoice



# The JOHARI Window



One of the key processes in this group experience is for each participant to increase his or her **self-awareness** and **personal development** - particularly in the area of race relations.

According to the Johari Window model for understanding perception of self and others, two processes are necessary for increasing awareness: **feedback** and **disclosure**. According to the Oxford dictionary:

#### FEEDBACK

Information about reactions to a product, a person's performance of a task, etc., used as a basis for improvement.

#### DISCLOSURE

The action of making new or secret information known.

Building trust is an important part of any group experience in which we participate. It takes trust to share (disclose), and to accept confrontation and listen (feedback).

# The JOHARI Window



Each individual's awareness is represented by the four quadrants:

## 1. **Open Areas:** *Known to Self, Known to Others*

Information in this area, such as attitudes, behaviors, emotions, feelings, skills, and views, are known by the individuals as well as by others. When two people engage in this area, there are opportunities for growth and honest communication. An individual brings information from the hidden area to the open area through self-disclosure (sharing and confessing), while others help bring information from blind spots to the open area through giving feedback (confronting and exhorting).

## 2. **Blind Spot:** *Unknown to Self, Known to Others*

The information in our blind spot is known or observed by others but not ourselves. It can be uncomfortable at times to have our negative blind spots (weaknesses, sin) pointed out; yet it may be a blessing to have our positive blind spots highlighted (strengths, gift) by others.

## 3. **Hidden Area:** *Known to Self, Unknown to Others*

This area is also known as the "facade" and is information that we know about ourselves but choose to keep secret from others. We hide information for various reasons: shame, guilt, fear, pain, privacy, or self-protection. Through confession, we can bring our "dark" thoughts about race to the surface in order for healing to begin taking place.

## 4. **Unknown Area:** *Unknown to Self, Unknown to Others*

This area covers information of which both you and others are unaware. It can vary greatly from the hidden gifts and talents that God has given you to the painful traumatic memories you have chosen to forget. Communication in community and a rich spiritual, devotional life are some ways to help uncover our "unknown areas", for the Holy Spirit works make known all things that are unknown.

Building trust is an important part of any group experience in which we participate. It takes trust to share (disclose), and to accept confrontation and listen (feedback).



# Group RULES & Guidelines



## rules

### RESPECT

- ❖ Respect one another with our words and actions as we talk about our differences.
- ❖ Expect different points of view and be willing to consider perspectives outside of our own.

### LISTEN

- ❖ Commit to listening (actively) to one another. Avoid dominating the conversation.
- ❖ Seek to understand others, not just to be understood.

### WRESTLE

- ❖ Be ready to wrestle with our agendas (both open and hidden). We are not here to simply defend our past positions.
- ❖ Expect to be stretched outside your comfort zone intellectually, emotionally, and theologically.

### LEARN

- ❖ Come to each session expecting to learn something new about ourselves, our group members, the Scriptures, and other races and cultures.
- ❖ Remember the goal: It's not about winning; it's about learning.

### GRACE

- ❖ Allow the grace of God through His Holy Spirit to guide us in all conversations. Practice humility and patience as we interact with our group members.

## guidelines

1. Our oneness in Christ means that we should and can pursue these conversations.
2. Our conversations should be seen as "family" conversations with the Christian family as our priority.
3. Our battle is spiritual, not against flesh and blood. Division and disunity are weapons that the enemy uses for stifling the mission of the church.
4. Our responsibility is to respond to Scripture that consistently calls us to engage with gentleness and meekness.

## conflict guidelines

In the midst of conflict it is important to W.A.G.E. war on your preconceived ideas.

### W. *What if I am wrong*

No one is perfect and so it is important that we step back and ponder how we could be wrong in the situation.

### A. *Ask questions*

It is very easy when we are in the midst of a conflict to make statements about what we think is going on. However, asking questions first can give you more clarity and may even reveal that there was no reason for conflict in the first place.

### G. *Get different perspectives*

It is helpful in conflict to ask others who think differently than yourself for advice about the conflict and how to handle it.

### E. *Envision the BEST*

Always envision the most positive options when measuring the intentions, words and motivations of the person with whom you are in the midst of conflict.

# BEFORE YOU GET STARTED



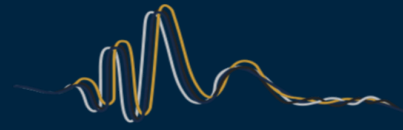
- Contact** your group facilitator / members to establish a time and place for consistent group sessions.
- Look up** a digital or printable copy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" online.
- Purchase** a copy of *Letters to a Birmingham Jail: A Response to the Words and Dreams of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* by Bryan Loritts, editor.

*Reminder: Please note that each group session in this curriculum corresponds with a specific chapter of the book.*

*The chapters are stand alone essays and we will be reading the chapters from the book out of sequence.*

- Write** down two or three personal goals that you hope to achieve as part of this journey.
- Pray** for strength, humility, and courage for the journey ahead. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and your group.





## the journey begins

*“Reconciliation is truly a journey, not a destination.*

*It is a process that leads to personal, spiritual, social and systematic transformation.”*

### session overview

We begin this dialogue about racial reconciliation first, by acknowledging how we see Christ differently because of our beliefs. By recognizing Christ as LORD, we are compelled then to see others not according to the flesh. Instead, we follow His example of love by bringing reconciliation into our world.

### session aims

<b>ORIENT</b>	Review and establish expectations for the group.
<b>EXPLORE</b>	Answer the questions, “Why does a study on racial reconciliation matter?”
<b>ENGAGE</b>	Begin personal storytelling.

### key text

Read the passage out loud and pray together.

*“From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”*

2 Corinthians 5:16 - 19 (ESV)

# biblical exploration

- ❖ Our motivation
  - ❖ What is Paul's motivation in his ministry? What is your motivation for taking part in racial reconciliation ministry?
- ❖ Our Identity
  - ❖ With His resurrection from the dead Christ began His work of new creation to all believers. Anyone who places faith in Jesus Christ begins to have their true identity transformed by Him.
    - ◆ How does the new creation work of Jesus affect our relationship with God and each other?
    - ◆ How does the new creation work of Jesus affect our own identities? What are some ways you identify yourself that may get in the way of your primary identity?
- ❖ Our Responsibility
  - ❖ Participating in the new creation brings the privilege of representing God's Kingdom work on earth. We are ambassadors that are sent by the King, bound by the King's message, and commissioned with making known the King's glory.
    - ◆ What is the focus of the message that we are entrusted to make known through our proclamation and lifestyle?

# discussion questions

- ❖ What was your first experience with race? Recall to the best of your ability your first memory of becoming aware of race and racial differences.
- ❖ Describe a time when you were misunderstood, or even criticized for being different or having a different cultural lens. What concerns or fears do you have about being misunderstood while participating in this group?
- ❖ How have your religious views and spiritual journey influenced your ideas about race and how you see those from a different race?
- ❖ Has your understanding about race changed over the years? How and why?

# reflections

- ❖ Before you conclude the day, observe and share how you are reacting.
- ❖ How can the group function as a whole to make it more comfortable for you as an individual to speak up and share? Are there any additional rules needed?
- ❖ Share one expectation of how you hope this group will impact you as an individual.



## your next steps

Prior to the next session, read “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This can be found after the introduction in *Letters to a Birmingham Jail: A Response to the Words and Dreams of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* Answer these questions as you read:

- ❖ In his letter, how did Dr. King compare negative peace and positive peace? Can you think of a current example to illustrate his point?
- ❖ What does Kings say is the difference between a just law and an unjust law? Based on this definition, can you think of a potentially unjust law in our country?
- ❖ Dr. King claims, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly” (Loritts 20). If this is true, then in what ways have you and/or your ethnic group been harmed by the racial injustices done to other ethnic groups?
- ❖ Knowing what we know now, what would have been an appropriate response by the churches of this nation in response to the racial injustice that Dr. King and his followers were experiencing?

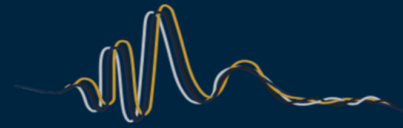
## prayer

- ❖ Make sure you write down the names of each member of your group and pray for them this week.

## experience

Watch a historical documentary or film that deals with racial injustice. Visit [www.wearethreaded.org/resources](http://www.wearethreaded.org/resources) for ideas.

notes



## homing beacon

*“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”*

*- Rev. Dr., Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”*

## session overview

The Holy Spirit serves as our “homing beacon” who guides us towards the kingdom and righteousness. The Holy Spirit enlightens us to care about what Jesus cares about. Micah 6:8 shows us what God cares about and what He wants us to care about as well.

## session aims

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>ORIENT</b>  | Recognize that contending against injustice is part of God’s vision for His people.       |
| <b>EXPLORE</b> | Answer the question, “What role do Christians play in standing against racial injustice?” |
| <b>ENGAGE</b>  | Continue storytelling about your own experience with racial injustice.                    |

## key text

Read this passage out loud and pray together.

*“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”*

Micah 6:8 (ESV)

# biblical exploration

Read Micah 6:8.

- ❖ Contextually speaking, who is the intended audience of the verse?
- ❖ Why could it be important for us to consider our audience when discussing racial issues?
- ❖ Why is Christian involvement in justice so important to God?
- ❖ How do justice, kindness and humility work together and why are they a requirement of God?
- ❖ What could be some of the consequences of the lack of humility in the midst of the racial injustice conversation?

# skills building

What did you read, see or hear from the list of sources below that impacted you and/or your thoughts about race this week? How did it affect you mentally, emotionally or spiritually?

News | Social Media | Historical Events | Readings | Bible Study | Devotion | Personal Encounters

Review Group Rules and Guidelines from page 9.

# discussion questions

The group will be discussing “Letters From a Birmingham Jail” by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This can be found after the introduction in *Letters to a Birmingham Jail: A Response to the Words and Dreams of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

- ❖ “If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me” (Loritts 3).
  - ❖ Was there anything in this letter that was over or under stated?
  - ❖ Was there any part of this letter that moved you more than others?
- ❖ As a group make a list of historical racial injustices that you all can agree are sins in the eyes of God.
- ❖ In hindsight we are able to recognize several racial injustices practiced legally in this country by non-Christians and Christians alike.
  - ❖ How did Christians justify these actions in the past?
  - ❖ What actions can we take to ensure that we don’t allow ourselves to justify injustice in our own time?

- ❖ In describing negative peace versus positive peace, Dr. King wrote “We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive” (Loritts 28).
  - ❖ What hidden racial tensions are below the surface of today’s society?
  - ❖ How can we bring these tensions to light in a productive way?
- ❖ In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say: “Those are social issues, with which the gospel has no real concern” (Loritts 34).
  - ❖ Is the race problem a gospel issue or merely a social issue? Why or why not?

## ministry/church leaders

“I felt that the white ministers, priests, and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows” (Loritts 33).

- ❖ Do you believe white ministers and churches have gotten better in their response to racial injustice?
- ❖ In what ways can the “white church” respond today in order to breed confidence in people of color?
- ❖ In what ways can the “ethnic church” respond today in order to stimulate action among those “white churches” that would be considered inactive.

“So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an arch defender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church’s silent—and often even vocal—sanction of things as they are” (Loritts 35) What are your thoughts when you read something like this?

## reflections

- ❖ Before you conclude the day, observe and share how you are reacting.

## your next steps

Prior to the next session, read *LTABJ* Chapter 5: “Why We Can’t Wait for the Multiethnic Church” by Bryan Loritts. Answer these questions as you read:

- ❖ What are some of the advances in race relations and freedoms that Loritts raises as proof of change in our country?
- ❖ What is the one “brick” that Loritts believes still lingers from the Jim Crow era?
- ❖ How does Loritts describe passivity in this chapter?
- ❖ How aware are you of your surroundings in reference to race? Do you count the number of people who look like you the way Loritts did as a child? If so, why?

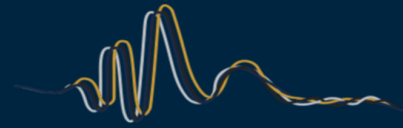
## prayer

This week look for injustice that is happening outside your ethnic community and pray for that community. Pray that God will show you a way to come alongside them.

## experience

Visit a local museum or monument that is connected to our country's racial history. Record your thoughts.

## notes



## the destination

*“If you do not like the diverse church, you are going to hate heaven.”*

*- John Bryson, LTBJ*

## session overview

Next stop, Heaven! Well, not exactly. In order for us to bring to fruition the work of the Holy Spirit on earth, we need to catch a glimpse of heaven. By envisioning the ultimate outcome God has intended for humanity, we become more aware of the work left to be done and can find the energy to press forward when things are difficult.

## session aims

- ORIENT** Recognize awareness of how racial reconciliation fits in the Kingdom of Heaven.
- EXPLORE** Answer the question, “How should the vision of race interactions in heaven affect our approach towards race interactions now?”
- ENGAGE** Continue storytelling about friendships with people of different races. Share the personal value and expectations of racial reconciliation conversations.

## key text

Read the passage out loud and pray together.

*“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.’”*

# biblical exploration

## Revelation 7:9-12

- ❖ Consider the future picture of the heavenly gathering of God's people.
  - ❖ What are they doing?
  - ❖ Who is included?
  - ❖ How are they distinguished?
- ❖ Consider by comparison the reality of the current church. Reflect upon a church you are familiar with such as the church in which you grew up, your current home church, churches you have visited over an extended period of time, or the church in North America.
  - ❖ What are they doing?
  - ❖ Who is included?
  - ❖ How are they distinguished?
  - ❖ Describe the differences between the picture described in the passage above and the present reality of your congregation.
  - ❖ What current responsibility does the local church have to strive towards her heavenly reality?

# skills building

What did you read, see, or hear from the list of sources below that impacted your thoughts about race this week? How did it affect you mentally, emotionally or spiritually?

News | Social Media | Historical Events | Readings | Bible Study | Devotion | Personal Encounters

Review Group Rules and Guidelines from pages 9.

# discussion questions

The group will be discussing *LTABJ*, Chapter 5: "Why We Can't Wait for the Multiethnic Church" by Bryan Loritts

"Our nation is rapidly becoming more and more ethnically diverse, while the church of Jesus Christ has been entrenched in homogeneity" (Loritts 124).

- ❖ Do you agree with this statement?
- ❖ What examples have you seen to support your answer?



- ❖ The Gospel has never found a culture it could not infiltrate. The past and present narratives of each culture determine which part of the Gospel is most influential. For example, in a culture traumatized by the plight of slavery, the gospel of redemption becomes the perfect bridge to salvation.
  - ❖ Think about your own culture. What are some of the cultural narratives?
  - ❖ Which part of the Gospel most strongly impacts that narrative? Share with the group.
  - ❖ Why is it beneficial for Christians to understand other cultural narratives?
  - ❖ How does it affect their ability to fulfill God’s vision of a multiethnic heavenly church?
  - ❖ What are some ways to discover other cultural narratives?
- ❖ If it applies, talk about your first friendship with the member of another race. What was it like? Was it different? Was it difficult to make that first friend?
- ❖ How did your experience as well as your other experiences with interracial friendships shape your understanding about race? How did these friendships influence your view on your own race? How did these friendships influence your views on other races?

## ministry/church leaders

*“Statistics say that by the year 2050 America, for the first time in her history, will become majority-minority.” (Loritts, pp 123)*

- ❖ How then is the American Church uniquely positioned to achieve God’s vision of a diverse heavenly church on earth?

## reflections

- ❖ Before you conclude the day, process your Threaded experience so far.
- ❖ What were some of your reactions to last week’s conversations?
- ❖ What awareness have you gained?
- ❖ How would you know that this experience has positively changed you?

## your next steps

Prior to the next session, read *LTABJ* Chapter 8: “Why We Can’t Wait for Christ Exalting Diversity” by Charlie Dates. Answer these questions as you read:

- ❖ Take a personal inventory on the following:
  - ❖ What authors do you read?
  - ❖ What theologians, mentors, teachers, pastors have you learned from?
  - ❖ What church do you attend?
  - ❖ What race are the last ten people on your text or phone call list? How diverse is your list?
  - ❖ How could diversifying these areas of your life aid you in contending courageously and compassionately for others?

- ❖ “It was King’s conviction that the movement needed those outside the black community to aid its cause, and that the only successful appeal for justice had to come on the basis of the Scripture” (Loritts 172).
  - ❖ Who do you know that is outside the black or any other racially different community that is working to aid the other’s cause?
- ❖ “I want to put forth a clarion call for biblical exposition on race and the gospel, the involvement of the marginalized in our Christian institutions, and a bolder, more aggressive attack on the lethargic pace at which the church is moving toward ethnic diversity.” (Loritts 172-173).
  - ❖ How often does your church speak about race and the gospel? How do they do it?

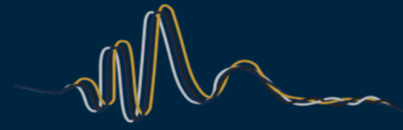
## experience

As a group or as an individual visit a church with a different ethnic majority than the one you attend. Take note of the style and theme of the message and music. How is it the same or different than your own church? How did you feel in the church?

## prayer

Pray that God would bring people from different tribes, tongues, and nations into your community and that they would be drawn into relationships with Christians.

## notes



## taking the wheel

*“Lord make me an instrument of Your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.”  
- The Prayer of St. Francis*

### session overview

Answering the call of the Gospel means accepting responsibility for our role in Christ’s Kingdom. Just as a driver takes control of his journey by steering the wheel, believers need to take ownership of the role the Church plays in reconciling humanity across race. We have a responsibility to overcome the man-made boundaries that divide us.

### session aims

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>ORIENT</b>  | Acknowledge and share the unique provision of Christ’s completed work to bring true peace among racial divisions.   |
| <b>EXPLORE</b> | Answer the question, “What must the church and I personally own and address in order to embrace our role in living out biblical diversity in the church?” |
| <b>ENGAGE</b>  | Continue storytelling about friendships with people of different races. Share the personal value and expectations of racial reconciliation conversations. |

### key text

Read the passage out loud and pray together.

*“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.”*

Ephesians 2:14-16 (ESV)

# biblical exploration

Read Ephesians 2:14-22

- ❖ In your experience, how have you seen man-made rules, institutions, structures and traditions creating boundaries that lead to hostility between races?
- ❖ What does a church or community with Christ as the “cornerstone” look like in terms of race and cultural composition?

Read Ephesians 4:1-7

- ❖ According to Paul what does a life worthy of the calling of Jesus Christ involve?
- ❖ What roles do the virtues of “humility, gentleness, patience, and love” play in our active pursuit for diversity and unity in the Body of Christ?

# skills building

What did you read, see, or hear from the list of sources below that impacted your thoughts about race this week and that reflect the concept: “Be the change you wish to see in the world” (Mahatma Gandhi).

News | Social Media | Historical Events | Readings | Bible Study | Devotion | Personal Encounters

Review Group Rules and Guidelines from page 9.

# discussion questions

The group will be discussing: *LTABJ*, Chapter 8: “Why We Can’t Wait for Christ Exalting Diversity” by Charlie Dates and answering the following questions:

- ❖ “The struggle for racial equality and societal diversity is a church problem” (Loritts 171).
  - ❖ Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
  - ❖ What is the basis for your decision?
- ❖ Dates explains, “Christ-exalting diversity is fundamental to the church’s primary mission” (Loritts 173).
  - ❖ Do you agree? Is that different than your definition of its mission?
- ❖ “ We should call the lack of diversity in our Christian culture by its name: sin. Our sin is our insistence to enjoy the comforts of the status quo at the expense of a relevant testimony for Jesus Christ.” (Loritts 181).
  - ❖ Do you think lack of diversity is a sin?
  - ❖ How have you personally gone against the status quo regarding racial diversity?

- ❖ “There must first be an admission of culpability for the racial division that now exists. And this admission must be both corporate and personal. Particular ethnic groups in America are the beneficiaries of racial segregation, societal prejudice, and historic injustices. Other ethnic groups in America are the payers for such privilege. The church in America needs to speak to these realities.” (Loritts 178).
  - ❖ How is the church culpable for some of the racial division we see in this county?
  - ❖ How are you culpable? Are you benefiting or paying for the current racial division? If so, in what ways?
- ❖ How is the unity of the church being affected by the lack action against the status quo of racial

## ministry/church leaders

“We so desperately need Christian leaders who will no longer approve of the brokenness of culture being hidden away in the file of Christian indifference and irrelevance” (Loritts 179).

- ❖ As a leader in your church what can you do to fight or correct this indifference?

“Since the church universal is comprised of every nation, tongue, and tribe, the local fellowship of believers must give itself to the representation of that diversity” (Loritts 178).

- ❖ As a leader, how have you given yourself and led your ministry in this effort?
- ❖ How do you see your church doing this?

## reflection

Before you conclude the day:

- ❖ Remind yourself that a significant part of the journey will be bumpy and uncomfortable at times.
- ❖ How are you preparing yourself mentally, emotionally, and spiritually for these upcoming challenges?

## your next steps

Prior to the next session, read *LTABJ*, Chapter 6: “Why Traditional Suburban Churches Can’t Wait ” by Sandy Wilson. Answer these questions as you read:

- ❖ Name a few ways Wilson mentions that the church participated in racial injustice. What are your thoughts about this?
- ❖ “The historical record of moral failure and social insensitivity by individual Christians and by the institutional church is a reality that we must face in every generation”(Loritts 133). Where is the church potentially repeating moral failure and social insensitivity around race in our generation?
- ❖ According to Wilson, “white skin in this country is literally worth about one million dollars over a normal life span. Because of this, if white people do nothing to reverse it, they are benefiting from and collaborating with evil”(Loritts 140). What did you think about this statement? Does this need to be reversed? What are you doing to reverse it?
- ❖ What do you or your family need to confess in the area of racism and/or racial injustice?

## experience

Post something on social media in defense of a current racial injustice and then practice using your confrontation skills with those who disagree with you.

## prayer

This week look for people of a different ethnicity than you. As you notice them take note of your thoughts and assumptions about them. Pray that God will reveal any sort of racism.

## notes



headlights

***“As undetected cancer that remains untreated thrives and destroys, so unrecognized depths of racial division and inequality go largely unaddressed and likewise thrive, divide, and destroy.”***

***- Michael O. Emerson, Divided By Faith***

## session overview

Confessional conversation provides opportunities for believers to “shed light” on the darkest parts of our conscious and subconscious. By allowing the Gospel to illuminate our hidden prejudices and preconceived ideas about race, we are able to overcome the shackles of pride, shame, and guilt. Most of our prejudices and biases were learned through our upbringing, family or origin, and culture. Reconciliation requires everyone owning their part through confession instead of offering analysis or blame. The process of uncovering and confessing can be painful.

## session aims

- ORIENT** Confront and confess our prejudices and false assumptions about race.
- EXPLORE** Answer the question, “How do confessional conversations help bridge the gaps of race and class in the church?”
- ENGAGE** Continue storytelling about how our prejudices have affected our thoughts and behaviors toward other races.

## key text

Read the passage out loud and pray together.

*“Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye.’ when there is a log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.*”

Matthew 7:3-5 (ESV)

# biblical exploration

Read Matthew 7:1-5

- ❖ What log has been affecting your ability to see others well in understanding race relationships?
- ❖ What could you offer as confession towards others? List three barriers that have negatively affected your ability to understand the perspective of others who are different from you racially?
- ❖ What could you personally own or offer through confession about your culture of origin concerning other races?
- ❖ As a group, conceptualize why conflicts between races and ethnic groups seem so deep and so difficult to resolve?

Read James 4:1-4

James asks one the most relevant questions concerning personal conflicts: “What causes them?” Most interpersonal conflicts surrounding race are influenced by years and layers of historical injustices.

- ❖ What value would confessing sins to one another provide for a unified community?
- ❖ Why is it hard to do this?
- ❖ What would be required to enable us to confess our sins before others?
- ❖ Practice confessing to one another, as well as responding with grace, forgiveness, and prayer.

# skills building

What did you read, see or hear from the list of sources below that impacted your thoughts about race?

Role play a conversation where you defend your ideas using the W.A.G.E. conflict guidelines from page 9.

News | Social Media | Historical Events | Readings | Bible Study | Devotion | Personal Encounters

Review Group Rules and Guidelines from page 9.

# discussion questions

The group will be discussing *LTABJ*, Chapter 6: “Why Traditional Suburban Churches Can’t Wait” by Sandy Wilson.

- ❖ What do you think the author meant when he said that the church, “tends to focus on individual piety rather than institutional transformation”(Loritts 135). Where do you believe is the best place to start for racial change? Why?
- ❖ Why is it important to face personal prejudices before analyzing the faults of others?



- ❖ How could the confession of prejudice and sin organically lead to more multiethnic relationships in the church community?
- ❖ What does the church in America need to confess in the area of racial injustice? When have you witnessed this confession in the churches you have attended?

## ministry/church leaders

- ❖ How might you as a ministry or church leader utilize confession to break down the racial wall within your church and in the community?
- ❖ Are there any historical racial mishandlings by your church that your church needs to publicly confess?

## reflections

Before you conclude the day:

- ❖ Remind yourself that confession is a key component of reconciliation. If you do not confess to your racial prejudices along the way, you will never move forward. Everyone has something to confess and not owning that can shut down the safety and vulnerability of your group.

## your next steps

Prior to your next session, read *LTABJ*, Chapter 3: “A Painful Joyful Journey” by Crawford W. Loritts, Jr. Answer these questions as you read:

- ❖ How hard is it for you to forgive a wrong that has been done to you? What are the obstacles that keep you from choosing the path of forgiveness?
- ❖ “I was captured by King’s message of love and his refusal to respond with hate and violence” (Loritts 79). Put yourself in the shoes of those fighting for their civil rights. Would you respond with hate or with love?
- ❖ Have you ever allowed societal racial turmoil to distance you from your brothers and sisters in Christ?

## experience

As a group serve together at a local ministry that reaches the hurting in your community.

# prayer

This week list how your own race as a whole may be contributing to the problem of division among the races. Pray over each one and circle the ones that may apply to you.

# notes

## two paths

*“Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future.”*

*- Louis B. Smedes, Author & Theologian*

## session overview

Forgiveness can be compared to arriving at a fork in the road. Each time we come face to face with our transgressors, we are given the choice to choose either forgiveness or resentment. The path we choose repeatedly shapes our heart and soul. The more we choose to forgive, the more we are able to experience personal and interpersonal healing.

## session aims

- ORIENT** Be willing to seek transparency as we confess our ability or inability to forgive others.
- EXPLORE** Answer the question, “What does forgiveness mean to me especially in regards to racial reconciliation?”
- ENGAGE** Continue storytelling about racial issues that might cause us to feel justified in refusing to seek or extend true forgiveness.

## key text

Read the passage out loud and pray together.

*“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”*

Colossians 3:12-14 (ESV)

# biblical exploration

Read Matthew 18:21-35

- ❖ What moved the king to forgive and release the servant from the debt?
- ❖ What do the actions of the king reveal about the character of God toward us?
- ❖ What does the first servant's inability to forgive his fellow servant reveal about our own typical approach towards God and the forgiveness that He freely gives through Christ?
- ❖ What challenges do you experience when it comes to receiving forgiveness?
- ❖ What challenges do you experience when it comes to extending forgiveness?

# skills building

What did you read, see or hear from the list of sources below that impacted your thoughts about race?

News | Social Media | Historical Events | Readings | Bible Study | Devotion | Personal Encounters

Review Group Rules and Guidelines from page 9.

# discussion questions

The group will be discussing *LTABJ* Chapter 3, "A Painful Joyful Journey" by Crawford W. Loritts Jr.

- ❖ When Jesus died on the cross for our sins He was offering forgiveness knowing that many would never even confess their sins against Him.
  - ❖ Have you ever had to forgive someone knowing that you would get no admission of guilt from them? What did that feel like?
- ❖ Most people think that only people of color are the ones who need to offer forgiveness because they have been the victims of oppression in this country but that is not true.
  - ❖ For what offenses do people of color need to experience white forgiveness?
  - ❖ What are the obstacles that keep you from choosing the path of forgiveness?
- ❖ Segregation was a legal divide. When the laws of segregation were abolished, although we were no longer segregated, we were still separated. Separation on Sunday now occurs by choice.
  - ❖ How could the practice of confession and forgiveness change our choices to separate?

- ❖ Below is a poem about forgiveness from the Peacemakers Kids curriculum that can help you practice forgiveness:
  - Good Thoughts (Pledging to garner good thoughts about the person)
  - Hurt you not (You won't bring the hurt up again)
  - Gossip Never (You won't keep talking about it with others)
  - Friends Forever (You will work to build trust and friendship again)
- ❖ What does your ethnic group need to forgive in order for reconciliation to begin? Who do you personally need to forgive for reconciliation to begin? Find someone in the group to practice your forgiveness speech.

## ministry/church leaders

- ❖ What action can your church take to orchestrate confession and forgiveness in the Body of Christ around our racial history?
- ❖ How is our lack of forgiveness demeaning the credibility of the church's message about the forgiveness of God? What do Church leaders need to do to fix this?

## reflection

Before you conclude the day:

- ❖ The last two weeks have required a lot of vulnerability. Check in with everyone to make sure they still feel safe in the group.

## your next steps

Prior to the next session, read: *Letters to a Birmingham Jail*, Chapter 2: "Waiting for and Hastening the Day of Multiethnic Beauty" by John Piper prior to the next session. Answer these questions as you read:

- ❖ Piper learned from his own experience that "it is possible to like someone, and even feel deep affection for someone and treat her graciously, while considering her inferior and as someone to be kept at a distance" (Loritts 61).
  - ❖ Is there anyone in your life whom you have treated graciously, while considering them inferior and as someone to keep at a distance?

## experience

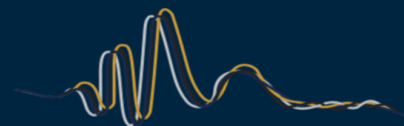
Invite someone from your social network who is from a different ethnic group to your home for a meal.

## prayer

Think of someone in your life that has wronged you. In your prayers to God, ask for help forgiving that person and take note of how your spirit and body react.

Pray for God's guidance.

## notes



## uncharted territory

*“Of all people, Christians should be the most active in reaching out to those of other races, instead of accepting the status quo of division and animosity.”*

*- Billy Graham, Evangelist*

### session overview

There is a recurring theme throughout the Bible encouraging believers to welcome the stranger. From the early days of Israel being established as a nation to the early church council determining whether to allow Gentiles into the fold, the work of the Holy Spirit has challenged God’s people to reconsider exclusionary systems designed to divide and oppress those who are different. This journey towards racial reconciliation may not take us to strange new lands, but it does invite us to begin reconsidering the strangers among us and learn to welcome them as neighbors.

### session aims

- ORIENT** Reflect on the archetype of how you define “neighbor” that you have held in the past.
- EXPLORE** Answer the questions, “How far reaching is the mercy that I extend to others?” and “Where have I set boundaries where they should not exist?”
- ENGAGE** Continue storytelling. Share personal challenges experienced when extending authentic mercy to your “neighbors.”

### key text

Read the passage out loud and pray together.

*“Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”*

Luke 10:36-37 (ESV)

# biblical exploration

Read Luke 10:25-37

The lawyer asks Jesus one of the most significant questions about human purpose and hope.

- ❖ What is the lawyer's expectation towards eternal life?

Jesus actually responds in a way that is consistent with the lawyer's question.

- ❖ How does the lawyer respond to Jesus' response?
- ❖ What qualifications or excuses do you see others provide to stay distant or separate from people of a different race or ethnicity?

Jesus tells a very racially-charged story. Jews and Samaritans despised each other.

- ❖ Why did the first two travelers, the priest and the Levite, avoid the injured man?
- ❖ What moved the Samaritan to stop and help?
- ❖ What did it cost the Samaritan to care for the man?
- ❖ How extensive was the care the Samaritan offered?
- ❖ How does Jesus' "punch line" in the parable change the question posed by the lawyer?
- ❖ In what ways do we evaluate who is worthy of receiving our compassion?
- ❖ What does it mean to be a good neighbor?

# skills building

What did you read, see, or hear from the list of sources below that triggered an emotional response from you about the treatment of others?

News | Social Media | Historical Events | Readings | Bible Study | Devotion | Personal Encounters

Review Group Rules and Guidelines from page 9.

# discussion questions

The group will be discussing *LTABJ*, Chapter 3: "Waiting for and Hastening the Day of Multiethnic Beauty" by John Piper.

- ❖ Piper describes his personal experience of growing up in Greenville, SC like being on "an island of self-concern in a sea of social turmoil" (Loritts 57). How is that similar to or different from your experience? What is the social turmoil in our world around race and in what ways have you isolated yourself from your neighbors on an island of self-concern?
- ❖ How do you plan to break out of your cultural isolation and courageously contend for and love your neighbors?



- ❖ Does your place of worship enhance your abilities and opportunities for connecting with those neighbors who are different from you (heterogeneity) or does it hinder and stifle connections by lacking in diversity (homogeneity)? How?
- ❖ Racial reconciliation often feels like three steps forward and two steps back. Or as Piper calls it, “flashes of hope followed by enduring darkness” (Loritts 59). Why does that seem to feel that way? How do we highlight progress, and yet expose injustice and oppression where it occurs?

## ministry/church leaders

- ❖ By the 1960s, centuries-long oppression had produced two forces in the African American communities, one complacent and the other seething on the brink of violence. What are some specific ways you as a ministry/church leader can build bridges between those who are complacent and others on the brink of violence?
- ❖ Ministry and church leaders are often praised for their patience on one hand, and sometimes notorious for waiting too long to respond to social injustice and racial oppression. Which current conflicts require godly patience and which demand immediate action? What can you do today, this month, and this year to take direct action?

## reflection

Before you conclude the day:

- ❖ Consider the tone of your racial conversations with others in your life and in this group. As a group, check in to see if there are any relationships that need to be reset in light of your shared love of Christ and for each other as the family of Christ.

## your next steps

Prior to the next session, read *LTABJ*, Chapter 4: “Don’t Do It Again” by John Bryson. Answer these questions as you read:

- ❖ “Reconciliation and bridge building are messy, be it organizationally, culturally, or relationally. It is not for the faint of heart. There are tough calls and it can often feel like three steps forward and two steps back. Perseverance is crucial” (Loritts 97-98). What are some ways we can hold on to hope when doing the preparation work toward reconciliation?
- ❖ Displacement is a form of humility that is important to gaining a different perspective on life. Consider some ways to “displace” yourself in other racial cultures.
- ❖ Bryson is concerned with us “doing it again” when it comes to creating homogenous communities with homogeneous habits. Consider where you stand in the conversation of whether homogeneous churches are a good thing. If change is needed, what can you do to take a step toward that change in your church?

## experience

Ask someone from another race to come with you to your church. Then go out to lunch and let them share their experience with you.

## prayer

Pray that God would reveal to you and the other members of your group the ethnic boundaries of your lives. Pray, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way" (Psalm 139:23-24).

## notes

## right-of-way

*“Doesn’t the Bible say we must love everybody?”*

*“O, the Bible! To be sure, it says a great many things; but, then, nobody ever thinks of doing them.”*

*- Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

## session overview

The principle of “right-of-way” keeps drivers safe on the road. By yielding to other drivers, we delay our journey by a brief moment yet this practice ultimately increases our chances of making it to our destination safely. Similarly, the journey towards racial reconciliation requires us to make sacrifices and to “yield” to our fellow journeymen. We respond to Christ’s call to love one another and to practice humility as we work towards reconciliation and unity.

## session aims

- ORIENT** Respond to Christ’s call for His believers to embrace humility and compassion.
- EXPLORE** Answer the question, “How can I yield in this journey by putting others first?”
- ENGAGE** Continue storytelling. Share how Christ is glorified when we follow his example of selfless love.

## key text

Read the passage out loud and pray together.

*“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...”*

Philippians 2:1-5 (NIV)

# biblical exploration

Read Philippians 2:1-5

- ❖ According to Paul, what are some characteristics of those who have salvation and life in Jesus Christ? How do these characteristics benefit the Church in pursuing racial unity?
- ❖ What attitude does Paul exhort his readers to have towards one another (vs. 3-4)? How would our racial history look different in this country if Christians displayed these attitudes? How can these attitudes be used to change our future?
- ❖ To what lengths did Jesus go to bring us unity and reconciliation with himself? What privilege did he have and what did he have to give up and sacrifice?
- ❖ What are you not willing to give up for racial unity in the church?

# skills building

What did you read, see, or hear from the list of sources below that made you feel the need to defend your own beliefs and ideas about race? Find a partner and take turns explaining and defending your ideas using the W.A.G.E. confrontation model.

News | Social Media | Historical Events | Readings | Bible Study | Devotion | Personal Encounters

Review Group Rules and Guidelines from page 9.

# discussion questions

The group will be discussing *LTABJ*, Chapter 4: "Don't Do It Again" by John Bryson. Answer the following questions:

- ❖ When confronted with thoughts and ideas different than our own, we instinctually take the position of defender rather than learner. When engaging in challenging conversations, consider how you might be a better listener. As a group, discuss steps you can take to position yourself as a learner.
- ❖ Bryson discusses several experiences along the path of reconciliatory growth. He lists displacement, friendship, intentionality, and diversity. Of these, which do you find most challenging in your life? As a group, discuss why these are challenging and how you might begin facing those challenges individually, and communally.
- ❖ The yielding of privilege is a consistent topic in racial discussions. What does privilege mean to you? How do you react when you hear the term?
  - ❖ In what ways could you or your ethnic group be experiencing privilege?
  - ❖ In what ways could understanding and using our privilege help us grow in humility and compassion for others?

## ministry/church leaders

- ❖ How can you facilitate a church community that values equally the racial cultures represented in your church's neighborhood? Use the scorecard of relationship, displacement, friendship, intentionality and diversity to evaluate this question.
- ❖ In many cases, being a catalyst for a less homogenous community mindset will cost us something. Discuss some potential costs under the categories below. What on the following list would you be willing to sacrifice or yield, if needed?
  - ❖ Comfort
  - ❖ Financial growth
  - ❖ Membership growth
  - ❖ Reputation

## reflection

Before you conclude the day:

- ❖ Think of someone you know who is from a different ethnic group than you. Take a moment to imagine what it would be like to walk a day in their shoes. What kinds of trials or challenges would they experience as a result of belonging to their race? What are some areas that these individuals might need compassion and empathy from you?

## your next steps

Prior to the next session, read *LTABJ*, Chapter 10: "A More Biblical Sunday Morning" by Soong-Chan Rah. Answer these questions as you read:

- ❖ The vision of the future, a splendidly diverse church, is a long, Biblical tradition. Recall any passages from either our readings or your own Bible study that speak to this glory.
- ❖ In *LTABJ* Chapter 7, Albert Tate explains that 11:00am on a Sunday will not change until the relationships we have throughout the week change. How are your relationships changing now that you have been on this journey?
- ❖ If asked, how would you describe God's desire for the church in regards to racial unity?

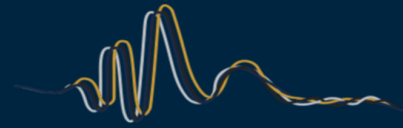
## experience

With a friend, watch a movie or go to a hangout that reflects a different culture. Embrace a curious spirit and ask questions about what you see or hear, and why they are important.

## prayer

Be more present and aware this week, recognizing those around you who may be experiencing displacement (oppression/isolation) because of their race. Pray for those individuals and then engage them.

## notes



## arrivals

*“But the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opposers into friends.”*

*- Martin Luther King, Jr., The Role of the Church in Facing the Nation’s Chief Moral Dilemma*

## session overview

The journey towards reconciliation is long and often arduous. It may be tempting to become discouraged or disillusioned if the end goal feels too far out of reach. We may be better served in the long run if we think in terms of a “series of arrivals.” There is much work left to be done, yet we move towards reconciliation one step at a time, never losing sight of the prize.

## session aims

<b>ORIENT</b>	Recognize the long tradition of envisioning the future in Christian history.
<b>EXPLORE</b>	Answer the question, “How do I maintain a prophetic vision for reconciliation?”
<b>ENGAGE</b>	Continue storytelling. Share about vision for the future of your community.

## key text

Read the passage out loud and pray together.

*“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD and the waters cover the sea. ”*

Isaiah 11:6-9 (ESV)

# biblical exploration

Read Isaiah 11:6-9

The author of the text utilizes several metaphors involving animals in describing his vision for the future of the world.

- ❖ What do the metaphors in the passage have in common?
- ❖ The animals who have existed in a predator-prey dynamic (power-powerless/perpetrator-victim/oppressor-oppressed) can now coexist in peace in the Kingdom of God. How does this vision apply to race relations in our present world?
- ❖ Consider the Gospels in the New Testament. How has Jesus fulfilled the prophet Isaiah's vision of peace?
- ❖ How did the early church attempt to continue carrying out Jesus' example of bringing peace and reconciliation to those whom "the world" considered to be socially incompatible or enemies?

Verse 9 describes how peace will be a result of the earth being filled with "the knowledge of the Lord as water covers the sea."

- ❖ What is our role in spreading and sharing this knowledge to others?
- ❖ How has this knowledge transformed you at a personal level and how can it transform your community?

# skills building

What did you read, see, or hear from the list of sources below that demonstrate growth in race relations and reconciliation in your community?

News | Social Media | Historical Events | Readings | Bible Study | Devotion | Personal Encounters

Review Group Rules and Guidelines from page 9.

# discussion questions

The group will be discussing *LTABJ*, Chapter 10: "A More Biblical Sunday Morning" by Soong-Chan Rah.

- ❖ When you read that between 2040-2050 the minority population will become the majority, what feelings do you have? How do you think that will be received in America? How do you think that will affect our country?
- ❖ According to Rah what are some potential spiritual benefits of a growing immigrant population in America?
- ❖ How has the engagement in the diverse conversation and building of relationships during this small group impacted your life?



- ❖ Now that you have arrived at this point in your journey, what do you perceive as your next goal or point of arrival? What steps will you take to get there? Who will you take with you along the way?
- ❖ If the arrival point is a reconciliation that allows all people, even those who are at odds with one another, to live in harmony, how can a more diverse Sunday morning work as a tool to help achieve that end?

## ministry/church leaders

- ❖ What do you think about the Church Growth Movement or the Homogenous Unit Principle? What are the benefits and what are the costs? How does a church that is committed to the Church Growth Model transition to a more diverse church?
- ❖ Rah gives us a progression, or a series of arrivals, to help us evaluate a church's transition to a true multiethnic congregation: population, participation, power, and purposeful narrative. What stage best describes your church's progress? What will you do to help take the church to the next level?
- ❖ Rah explains that part of the Church Growth Model guides us to identify a target group that we want to reach. What type of person is your church geared to reach? What do you think about that?

## reflection

Before you conclude the day:

- ❖ Reflect on all that you have learned and experienced over the past few weeks. How has your relationship with God changed? How has your relationship with others changed? How has your understanding of Matthew 28 to "go and make disciples of all nations" changed? Who do you know that needs a similar transformation?

## your next steps

Decide as a group how you want to celebrate together. You might decide to have a feast, a party, or some other event.

## experience

Think of three to four people that you know who are interested in gospel-centered racial reconciliation. Invite them to the celebration.

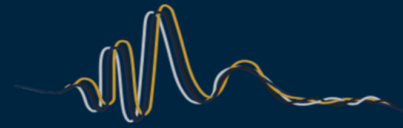
## prayer



Pray daily that God will prepare the hearts of each person that you invited so that they will be ready to enter into the conversation next week.

## notes





## rejoice

*“Our churches will never look differently  
if we allow our homes to remain unchanged.”*

*- Albert Tate, The Multicultural Church Starts in Your Living Room*

## session overview

As our time as a group draws to close, we rejoice in the work of reconciliation that we have engaged in over the past nine weeks. Hopefully, your experience together has reinforced the truth that “all are welcome at the Lord’s table.” As we celebrate our journey, may we continue to remember that God has given us a model of reconciliation and called us to be ambassadors of reconciliation. We must go beyond just learning how to think and talk about racial reconciliation. We must begin to model what we have learned in our actions and our lives.

## session aims

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>ORIENT</b>  | Recall and celebrate positive, transformative moments on this journey.  |
| <b>EXPLORE</b> | Introduce prospective group members to the process and share with them how this experience has helped you grow and build bridges. |
| <b>ENGAGE</b>  | Encourage your visitors and prospective group members to sign up to be in the group.  |

## key text

Read the passage out loud and pray together.

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”*

2 Corinthians 5:17-20 (ESV)

## skills building

As a group discuss these different questions from “Roadmap to Reconciliation” by Brenda Salter

- ❖ Where do you stand on the issue of racial profiling? Do you think people of various races really are singled out and treated differently? Is this practice real, or are some people just hypersensitive?
- ❖ What is your perspective on the reality of discrimination today? Is this really an issue? Some people of different races reportedly get different treatment when buying homes, applying for jobs, renting apartments, shopping in stores or buying cars. Discuss if this has been your experience.
- ❖ What is your opinion on affirmative action in educational institutions? Should every person have the same opportunity for a higher education? Should everyone be held to the same educational standards?
- ❖ What role do the people of God play in the midst of these discussions? What are some major obstacles

## discussion questions

- ❖ Why do people tend to gravitate toward churches and people that are familiar to them?
- ❖ What are some of the other barriers to a multicultural church?
- ❖ What are some areas in your personal beliefs that you have courageously confessed and uncovered?
- ❖ What is something new you learned from listening to someone from a different race?
- ❖ What is your favorite memory from this entire process?

## moving forward

It is time to take what we have learned and share it with others. Gather the friends that were brought to the group tonight, break up into small groups, and begin the journey again with them.

For further resources or ideas for cross cultural experiences visit:

**[www.wearethreaded.org/resources](http://www.wearethreaded.org/resources)**

