



CONVERSATIONS

on **RACE** & **JUSTICE** GOD'S HEART for



For Communities

“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.”

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
“Letter from a Birmingham Jail”
April 16, 1963

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For Communities: February 2021

CONVERSATIONS on RACE & GOD'S HEART for JUSTICE

Outline of Sessions

Part 1: Conversations on Black/White Relationships in America

- Session 1—Starting the Conversation
- Session 2—Identifying Personal Bias
- Session 3—Acknowledging Systemic Injustice
- Session 4—Exploring Race and the Church

Part 2: Conversations on Other Ethnicities in America

- Session 5—Starting the Conversation with Asian-Americans
- Session 6—Starting the Conversation with Indigenous People
- Session 7—Starting the Conversation with Hispanic/Latino-Americans
(coming soon)

Overview

Matthew 7: 3–5 (ESV) – “And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? 4 How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.”

In **Part 1 (Sessions 1-4)** we will focus on historic and current Black/white racial tensions—one of the logs in America’s eye. But before we focus there, let’s be honest. Racism and the injustice it spawns was an ancient problem, and it still is a modern problem, too. Every ethnic group in every culture has some form of ethnic bias or tribalism or racism. It is an America problem, yes, but it’s not just an American problem. A quick look around the world reminds us of apartheid in South Africa and the extermination of Jews in Germany. History also reminds us that racism is a white problem, but it’s not only a white problem. Remember the “untouchables” discarded by India’s caste system, the genocide unleashed by Black-on-Black tribalism in Rwanda, and the one million Uighurs interned right now in detention camps in China.

Closer to home geographically, did you know this about the peoples of the Caribbean and Central America? Many Cubans think they are better than Puerto Ricans because they are more educated. Some Puerto Ricans think they are better than Dominicans, and there are Dominicans who think they’re better than Haitians. People from Guatemala and Mexico who descended from Spaniards consider themselves better than indigenous people because they are “white” and the others are “Indians.” So we can all agree that stereotypes and biases can go in many directions . . . and that no race or ethnic group or century is immune to Satan’s attempts to divide us.

We don’t remind ourselves of these examples of racial abuses so that we can point our fingers at those outside our borders, even as horrific as they are. Rather, we who belong to Jesus are commanded by our Lord not to “...worry about the speck in your brother’s eye when you have a log in your own,” (Matthew 7:3, NLT). We in America will have to answer to God for how well we honor one another’s God-given value and dignity and how we act justly toward the oppressed, the marginalized, and the “outsiders” among us within our contexts and on our watch—or how we fail to do so. Most of us would agree that one blatant log historically has been the suffering of our Black friends. This is about relationships we have with one another, individually and corporately. That’s why we’re devoting **Part 1 (Sessions 1-4)** to Black/white relationships.

Then, in **Part 2 (Sessions 5-7)**, we will focus on several other logs in America’s eye, such as the prejudice and injustices experienced by Native people, Latinos, and Asian Americans among us. So these sessions should not be seen or felt as a matter of “shaming white people,” but rather as “Log Removal 101” for all logs in all eyes, regardless of their color.

But don’t despair. We who belong to the King’s Son, Jesus, live in two kingdoms simultaneously. We do live in this world, which is filled with injustice, but we also live in the Kingdom of God (John 16:33). And in the gospel, He has given us the keys to unlock the chains of racism. These sessions will challenge us all: What will we do with those keys?

CONVERSATIONS on RACE & GOD'S HEART for JUSTICE

Leaders' Guide

The Opportunity. “God’s creation reveals the dignity and value of humanity,” (from *God of Justice*, by Abraham George & Nikki A. Toyama-Szeto). However, racial tension and injustice have always been present and powerful in our country and worldwide. Many of us find ourselves overwhelmed or confused by what we’re experiencing in the aftermath of the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and others. As followers of Jesus, we know we need to engage in conversations and move toward healing, but we don’t know where to start. Maybe that’s you, or maybe not. Either way, we want to see you resourced for this moment, if possible.

People in your ministry and their friends may have several good options if they want to learn more. However, the Body of Christ has a unique contribution to offer. You can point people to the remedy for racism found in—and only found in—the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus and His Kingdom. What an opportunity!

The Remedy. Our God is absolutely sovereign and absolutely good, and His gospel is where we find real hope. The Apostle Paul emphatically reminds us of the real oneness we have in Christ (Col. 3:11 and Gal. 3:26-28). Right here, right now. Squarely in the midst of this racism-riddled, broken world that we live in. Paul doesn’t deny that within God’s family, we His children are still different from one another. We are still imperfect men and women from diverse ethnicities, and we are all still in process. Our oneness is a spiritual reality that Christ calls us to live out amidst the broken social constraints pushing against the Kingdom of God on earth, His purposes, and the hope of the gospel.

This gospel of oneness in Christ should compel us to care about the stronghold of racism wherever we find it—within us or around us—so that His Kingdom will “come on earth as it is in heaven.” But we know that Satan won’t surrender an inch of territory he occupies with racism, whether in the hearts of individuals or embedded in systems or institutions. You are equipped for this spiritual battle (Eph. 6:12). Even the most helpful secular diversity experts or movement leaders will not be able to offer the fullness of this remedy found in the gospel to the people in your ministry and your community.

The Request. That is why, in July 2020, Ben Nugent (Collegiate Director) and other field staff asked a very diverse team of about 40 Navigator staff to design a ministry tool. We hope it will help you and those in your ministry engage in conversations happening all around you. We’re calling it “Conversations on Race and God’s Heart for Justice.”

The Goal. We have one simple goal: to offer you a tool that will help you create an opportunity to talk about race and injustice in ways that bring us to the God of the Bible, who is the God of inclusion and justice for all. And He has called us to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19-20). How we respond to this issue can greatly impact our fruitfulness as disciplemakers.

The Tool. “Conversations on Race and God’s Heart for Justice” consists of seven 60-90-minute sessions that you could use in person or virtually. It is not drawn from the three waves of Cultural Development training, either. It’s a brand-new tool designed with you and your ministry participants in mind. No participant preparation is required. In each session you can expect to:

1. **WATCH** a short, thought-provoking video featuring well-known Christians Emmanuel Acho (former NFL linebacker) and Phil Vischer, whose videos are trending well. Their views are their own and helpful for starting conversations, but they don’t necessarily represent the view of The Navigators.
2. **JOIN** an engaging dialogue to clarify topics raised in the videos, ask questions, and process how these things impact you and others.
3. **EXPOSE** some things you may have been blind to or haven’t wanted to see.
4. **EXPLORE** a few key Scripture passages to help us look at the issues through the lens of the gospel and God’s Kingdom.
5. **BE ENCOURAGED** and **BE CONFRONTED**, wherever you are today, to take a few concrete steps including Understanding ... Acknowledging ... Grieving ... Repenting ... Taking Action.
6. **BE UNCOMFORTABLE.** It’s OK because Jesus regularly made people uncomfortable—especially His own disciples. Discipleship doesn’t happen without discomfort.

Wondering why we chose videos featuring a football player and an animator/writer instead of videos by acclaimed scholars, economists, historians, or preachers? Answer: Precisely because they are not experts and don’t claim to be. Acho and Vischer are known, approachable Christ-followers. They offer just enough of their own questions and perspectives to get our conversations going, and that’s all we wanted in a ministry resource as limited in scope and time as this. Of course, the issues they touch on are so complex that not even the “experts” could give a complete picture in 10 minutes. But what Acho and Vischer (and other in-house Navigator video speakers) do is offer glimpses into their personal thoughts, opinions, and experiences related to race. They certainly do not speak for or try to represent all Black people or all white people or all Navigators or any other people—only themselves (and their views do not necessarily reflect the views of The Navigators as an organization). By putting themselves out there in a conversational way, they provide a short, down-to-earth springboard for all of us to talk and listen in ways that lead to the Scriptures.

Here’s what these sessions will NOT try to do: answer all questions, be exhaustive, make you an expert, fix problems or people, twist anyone’s arm, or guilt anyone.

The Extras. In addition to watching a short video, discussing it, and studying some key passages of Scripture, each session includes some extras:

- **Possible Action Steps**—for practical application
- **Prayer Guide**—to allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart, to process and possibly express sorrow and repentance, and eventually to lament what grieves God’s heart (Lam. 3:19-23).

The Options. Using this tool is completely optional—not required. You are free to use all, some, or none of the sessions. While there is a flow and sequence, each session can be used as a stand-alone. This Leaders’ Guide comes with a list of more recommended books, movies, articles, websites, etc., for those who want to learn more. You may find something on the Recommended Resources list (p. vii) (for instance, Tim Keller’s excellent articles) that you prefer to use after you finish the sessions. We trust that, as you pray, God will lead you toward the best use of this tool in your context.

The Structure. The seven sessions are divided into two parts, flowing from Matthew 7:3, 5, where Jesus called us to “first take the log out of your own eye.” So in **Part 1 (Sessions 1-4)**, we will explore the history of injustice against our brothers and sisters in the Black community. The perspectives and biblical principles learned in Part 1 will prepare us for **Part 2 (Sessions 5-7)**, where we will continue by exploring injustice against our brothers and sisters in Asian-American, Indigenous, Latino/Hispanic, and other diverse communities.

The Session Guides. So, practically, how might you use each session’s guide? Here are options:

- As your personal notes (only you see it)
- As a hand-out (paper or electronic for participants)
- As a PowerPoint (for in-person gatherings)
- As a screen share (on Zoom calls)

The Contexts. Your ministry gatherings may be primarily black or Asian or Latino—or a mixture of people of color. Since current events have focused our attention on the Black/white divide, we’ve chosen for Part 1 to use two video speakers who do the same. That may cause some people in your ministry to feel overlooked. We recognize that everyone’s cultural journey looks different. We humbly believe that if we can learn to reduce tensions in Black/white relationships, the same principles can help expose and dismantle prejudice wherever it exists, which we will explore in Part 2.

Or your gathering may be primarily white. We encourage you to welcome and honor the voices of people of color among you. However, don’t pressure them to participate or look to them to have the “right” answers for their group or make them feel like a “project.” Many people of color are feeling overwhelmed with their own emotions right now, and don’t want to be considered “the representative” for their whole group. They may appreciate a check-in or encouraging word from you before or after each session. Some white people may also need to process with you later.

So we trust you to adapt to the racial/ethnic makeup of your local community. We trust that even questions weighted toward Black/white tensions can be relevant in other ethnic contexts. The Scriptures certainly will be. If some questions don’t seem relevant, just skip over them.

The Risks. Racism is a human issue that infects all people groups. We’ve tried to avoid politicizing, polarizing, and shaming, and hope that you can do the same. However, on a topic as contentious as this, there is a risk that you will run into obstacles. So here are some tips for facilitating these sessions.

In preparation, try to fully process the content yourself. We’re all at different places on the journey, so it’s OK to feel uncomfortable in leading others. Just be honest with yourself about where you are, because that will help others be honest about where they are. Also, we encourage you to have a co-leader to share the technology (if you’re on Zoom), the facilitating, and the sensitive listening and caring for people’s hearts that this topic may require.

More than likely, tense and uncomfortable moments will happen. Here are six tips for diffusing tension in those moments and moving forward toward—not conformity—but understanding.

1. At the beginning, establish the group norms of **mutual respect and listening**, and reinforce the importance of protecting a safe place for all to process and raise honest questions. This includes not having a critical spirit and “*speaking the truth in love*” (Eph. 4:15).
2. When **spiritual strongholds** show themselves—don’t be afraid to pause, take a moment, and pray with the group if necessary. This work is deeply spiritual, so we cannot deny that the enemy wants to derail these conversations at all costs.
3. When it gets **political or defensive**—acknowledge the person’s view, if expressed respectfully. Then redirect the conversation back to Jesus and the gospel message.
4. When people argue about **terms and words**—acknowledge that terms can have many shades of meaning. Ask them to explain what they mean before you assume everyone understands.
5. When someone is obviously **hurt or frustrated**—feel the freedom to pause and pray. Connect later to show that you care. If you aren’t the right person to do that, ask your co-leader, or connect them with someone who is.
6. If someone is being **hostile or mean**—reinforce the ground rule of respect. If it continues, you can mute them on a Zoom call, or you can ask them to leave the session. Either way, connect with them afterwards. We want everyone to be able to process, but the goal is to create a safe space for everyone, and hostility should not be tolerated.
7. You can expect **lots of questions**. Some of these might be too complex or distracting to answer on the spot. Consider setting a later time with the person to talk about it one-on-one.

Finally. Remember that promoting racism is one of Satan’s oldest and most divisive tactics, and more information won’t root it out. Deep change is God’s business, and He calls us to play a role. The people you serve are longing to hear your own vulnerable, transparent wrestling with these questions. They will appreciate your posture of humility and your learner’s heart.

So let’s seize this moment in time to listen and learn, and to talk about race and God’s heart for justice, even if it feels uncomfortable. Together.

Recommended Resources on Race & Injustice Part 1

BOOKS

Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation by Latasha Morrison. In *Be the Bridge*, Morrison brings the reader into the work of racial reconciliation. Not only does she discuss the history of racism in America and take the reader through her own personal journey, but she also explores biblical principles such as lament, confession, forgiveness, and walking with each other in community on this journey to reconciliation.

The Third Option by Miles McPherson. In a world filled with “us versus them” and “one versus the other,” *The Third Option* gives us another viewpoint on the racial tensions plaguing our world. Pastor Miles McPherson offers biblical and practical insight through personal stories from his life and the lives of others. This book will help you examine your own heart and give you hope for our world.

MOVIES

Just Mercy. *Just Mercy* is a 2019 movie, set in 1987, about an idealistic young Harvard law graduate, Bryan Stevenson, who travels to Alabama to defend those wrongly condemned or those not afforded proper legal representation. One of his first cases is that of Walter McMillian, who is sentenced despite evidence proving his innocence. The movie vividly illustrates real life examples of racial injustice in modern America that should shake us to the core.

Selma. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 legally desegregated the South, discrimination was still rampant in certain areas, making it very difficult for Black Americans to register to vote. In 1965, an Alabama city became the battleground in the fight for suffrage. Despite violent opposition, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (played by David Oyelowo) and his followers pressed forward on an epic march from Selma to Montgomery. Their efforts culminated in President Lyndon Johnson signing the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

ARTICLES

Tim Keller – “The Bible and Race.” <<https://quarterly.gospelinlife.com/the-bible-and-race/>>

Tim Keller – “The Sin of Racism.” <<https://quarterly.gospelinlife.com/the-sin-of-racism/>>

Tim Keller – “A Biblical Critique of Secular Justice and Critical Theory.”
<<https://theparish.church/resourcelibrary/biblicalcritiqueonsecularjustice>>

BIBLE STUDIES

“Loving People Different from Me.” An inductive Bible study exploring ethnic, racial, and other differences among people. The study can be done in 3 short parts, and points us to how Jesus both modeled and taught us how to cross cultural barriers to form inclusive relationships for the sake of His Kingdom.

—<<https://tinyurl.com/Loving-People-Bible-Study>>

Navigators Bible Study on Corruption/Injustice – <<https://tinyurl.com/Injustice-Bible-Study>>

Old Testament Chapters

Amos—God’s heartbreak over injustice

Ruth 1-4—Story of God using a cultural “outsider” in His redemptive story

New Testament Chapters

Acts 10-11 (Peter’s transformation out of ethnic bias)

Ephesians 2 (especially verses 11-22)

Galatians 3 (especially verses 7-29)

YOUTUBE VIDEOS

Charlie Dates – “The Most Segregated Hour in America.” <<https://bit.ly/3drPfDR>>

Emmanuel Acho—”Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man,” all episodes.

PODCASTS

Emotionally Healthy Leader podcast, July 6th and 13th. Peter Scazzero. “God’s Revelation that Burns Through Racism, Part 1.” <<https://tinyurl.com/Podcast-Part-1>>

Emotionally Healthy Leader podcast, July 6th and 13th. Peter Scazzero. “God’s Revelation that Burns Through Racism, Part 2.” <<https://tinyurl.com/Podcast-Part-2>>

ONLINE RESOURCES

Race & Ministry Webinar by Fran Sciacca, Ben Sciacca, & Dana Thomas. <<https://store.fransciacca.com/item/the-joshua-question-webinar-july-23-2020>>

Be the Bridge Facebook Group. <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BetheBridge>>

OTHER

13th. (Netflix documentary about the 13th Amendment)

“United Shades of America.” (TV series with W. Kamau Bell)

“The Navigators Resource List for Cultural Development.” <<https://bit.ly/338pRxE>>

CONVERSATIONS on RACE & GOD'S HEART for JUSTICE

Session 1: Starting the Conversation

OVERVIEW

(05:00) Give participants an overview of the whole Conversations tool. See page ii for details.

INTRODUCTION

(01:30) Emmanuel Acho kicks off some safe but perhaps uncomfortable conversations about Black/white relationships and racism in American culture. He fields several questions many people are asking today. Of course, he speaks for himself, not for all Black people. It's about getting some uncomfortable questions out on the table and starting conversations across races. In this session, we'll also touch on where race fits into the culture of God's Kingdom.



TERMS

In this first video, you'll hear these terms. Here are some working definitions to start with.

Race Genetically speaking, all humanity is only one race: the human race. But when people use the term "race" today, it revolves around the idea of biological traits, while "ethnicity" is based on a shared cultural heritage.

Racism Bias or prejudice against individuals or people groups based on race/color (and sometimes based on ethnicity, culture, or social "caste.")



WATCH



(09:00) "Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man" by Emmanuel Acho.
<<https://bit.ly/3gSan53>>.



DISCUSS

(15:00) Process the Session 1 video together using a few of these questions, or others.

1. Emmanuel seems comfortable having “uncomfortable conversations” across races. We realize these conversations can cause discomfort, no matter what our ethnicity is. **How would you describe Emmanuel’s heart for making these videos? How do you want to respond if conversations in this group (or elsewhere) begin to feel uncomfortable for you?**
2. Acho quoted Martin Luther King, saying, “Rioting is the language of the unheard.” He adds, “Pain and hurt do not know how to express themselves” and “Black people and hurt people are trying to get the attention of the oppressor.” Sometimes the rioting itself gets more attention than the injustices fueling the rioting. **Of all the troubling things going on these days related to racial tensions, what’s really getting your attention most, and why?**
3. **What feelings arose in you as you watched Emmanuel’s video? If you could ask him an uncomfortable question, what would you ask, and why?**



SCRIPTURE

(20:00) Read and discuss these passages to glimpse the BIG picture of God’s design and destiny for racial diversity.

1. Creation

What principles about celebrating human diversity (including racial diversity) do you see in this passage?

GENESIS 1:26-28 (ESV) – Then God said, “Let us make man [mankind, humanity] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

2. Peoples Disperse and Diversify

Genesis next tells us that “from these [three sons of Noah] the people of the whole earth were dispersed” (Gen. 9:19) and that “they developed their own languages, their own families and cultures, and they would eventually become separate people” (10:5, VOICE). The Old Testament’s “Table of Nations” in Genesis 11 lists 70 different peoples that Moses knew about when he wrote Genesis, people who had already spread out to modern-day Europe, Africa, and Arabia. But how did they get there?

Read Genesis 11: 1-9. **What do you think God was doing at the Tower of Babel? How did God’s dispersion and diversification of humankind advance God’s purposes and bring Him glory?**

ACTS 17:26-28 (ESV) – And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for “In him we live and move and have our being” . . .

What additional insights does this passage give you on God’s purposes for human diversity?

3. Nations Gather and Unify

Generations later, God did a miraculous new thing that transcended racial divisions with something even better. Read about the New Testament’s “Table of Nations.”

ACTS 2:1-12 (ESV) – When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” . . . [Here Peter explains Jesus’ deity and resurrection and invites everyone present to believe in Him.] 39 For the promise of the Spirit is for you, for your children, for all people—even those considered outsiders and outcasts—the Lord our God invites everyone to come to Him.”

What do you think God was doing at Pentecost? How does gathering and unifying people of all ethnicities serve to advance God’s purposes and bring Him glory?

4. All Peoples in Heaven

Picture this scene from heaven as shown to John in a vision:

REVELATION 7:9-10 and 21:24, 26 (ESV) — 9 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, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” . . . 24 And all peoples of all the nations will walk by its unfailing light, and the rulers of the earth will stream into the city bringing with them the symbols of their grandeur and power. . . 26 The glory and grandeur of the nations will be on display there, carried to the holy city by people from every corner of the world.

Who will be in the crowd worshipping before the throne of Christ in heaven?

How do you think “the glory and grandeur of the nations” will bring glory to God?

5. Hope for Change

Clearly something has gone very, very wrong between creation and eternity. That’s what we’ll explore in coming sessions, from the perspectives of history, current events, and God’s Word.

Emmanuel hopes that full understanding of the pain endured by Black people and other people of color (POC) will result in increased care and compassion leading to genuine change. **In light of what God says in His Word, how hopeful or skeptical (or something else) do you feel now about change coming for yourself? How do you foresee change coming to society?**



POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

(01:00) Pray for wisdom and an open heart as you dig into this topic.

1. Use this passage as a guide to start praying during the coming weeks.

PSALM 139:23-24 (ESV) – Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

2. Have a conversation with someone you know about what you’re learning in this journey.



PRAYER

(05:00) Before we close, let's pause for a few minutes of personal reflection and prayer. Perhaps today some of us have been drawn to align our hearts with God's heart, and to care about what He cares about. David prayed these words:

PSALM 9:9 (NIV) — The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

Let's take one minute of silence for each of us to ask God to search our hearts, too. After one minute, we'll close in prayer. . . .

Lord, as we move through the hard and painful awareness of our intense racial divides, our hearts are breaking. Help us not to rush from this place of hurting too soon. Some of us are tempted to despair; some of us are tempted to grab for easy answers, aching for quick repair. Instead, help us to grieve over this division as You call us to do. As we begin this journey, help us move toward Your Kingdom view of all people You created. In Jesus' name, amen.

This kind of prayer can't be rushed. So consider finding some time later this week to get alone with God. What might you bring to the Lord in this time of prayer?



CONVERSATIONS on RACE & GOD'S HEART for JUSTICE

Session 2: Identifying Personal Bias

INTRODUCTION

(02:00) In episode 2, Emmanuel Acho talks with actor Matthew McConaughey primarily about how Black people in America are still feeling the effects of slavery on the individual level through others' personal bias. He reminds us that we can all make a difference if we admit our biases and mistakes before they harden into prejudices, and then work to improve the world around us.



WATCH



(13:00) "White Allergies? - Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man - Ep. 2 w/ Matthew McConaughey"

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwiY4i8xWlc>>



DISCUSS

(18:00)

Process some of these questions together.

1. Consider this thought: “As soon as we agree that ‘Curing COVID Matters,’ then we can get back to waving the flag that ‘All Diseases Matter’—but not until.” Similarly, Emmanuel said, “Once we agree that ‘Black Lives Matter,’ then we can wave the flag that ‘All Lives Matter’—but not until.” **What have you learned about COVID-19’s effects on people of different ethnicities in America? When you compare the damage of COVID to the damage of COVID to the damage of racism, what comes to mind?**
2. Emmanuel told Matthew, “[Racism] isn’t just going to die off with the older generation. . . . You have to acknowledge there is a problem so that you can take more ownership for the problem.” **What biases, racial or otherwise, might be present in your heart that you weren’t aware of before? Where do you believe these biases come from?**
3. Emmanuel gave two examples of a personal bias called a micro-aggression (or a “back-handed compliment”). First: “I went to an affluent high school in Dallas. When I was a kid, they would all say, ‘Acho, you don’t even talk like you’re Black ... or dress like you’re Black.’” The unspoken assumption or micro-aggression is that Black men don’t speak or dress well. Second: “You’re so pretty for a Black girl.” The unspoken assumption is that Black girls aren’t pretty.

What micro-aggressions against people of color have you heard—or have you said yourself?

How could you be intentional when expressing a genuine compliment that is not rooted in personal bias?

4. Emmanuel said, “The wake of slavery is still hitting African Americans. When you get on a boat, there is a wake that follows the boat. Although you may not still be driving the boat, there are African Americans getting smacked by the wake left by slavery.”

More recent examples of “wakes” are poor schools and voter suppression. **What potential “wakes” should we acknowledge corporately—as a nation? How can we best acknowledge the ongoing impact and legacy of slavery still affecting some Black people?**



SCRIPTURE

(18:00) Read and discuss some of these passages.

1. Jesus was born into a society fiercely divided by race, specifically between Jews and Gentiles (all of whom were oppressed by the Romans). The Jews were born into privilege as heirs of Abraham, in covenant relationship with God; theirs the promised Messiah. All non-Jews were called Gentiles and lived as minority “outsiders.” Paul described them as “foreigners and strangers” who were “far away, separated, and excluded” from full participation in the Jewish society and religion. The wall of hostility dividing these two ethnic groups was centuries long and insurmountably high. Sound familiar? Read:

EPHESIANS 2:13-16 (NIV) – But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, **who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility**, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was **to create in himself one new humanity out of the two**, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

According to this passage, how did Jesus handle ethnic hostility and invite these ethnic enemies into one people, even one family?

Even though Jesus destroyed the wall, we still feel its effects of divisiveness. Pause to identify one specific “wall of hostility” between people that you deeply long to see destroyed. Only Jesus is capable of transforming the hearts of people divided by this wall. **In what ways could you help remove just one brick from that wall?**

2. God celebrates our diversity, but He also calls us into something larger—an integrated life.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-13 (MSG and VOICE, emphasis added) – Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you’re still one body. It’s exactly the same with Christ. By means of his one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to **independently** call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and **integrated** life in which he has the final say in everything. . . . Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain—his Spirit—where we all come to drink. The old labels we once used to identify ourselves—labels like Jew or Greek, slave or free—are no longer useful. We need something larger, more comprehensive. . . . [—no matter our heritage—Jew or Greek, insider or outsider—no matter our status—oppressed or free.]

Jesus Christ calls us out of our “partial, piecemeal, independent” label-driven lives into something “larger, more comprehensive, and integrated.” But how?

How does your following Christ begin to help you move out of individualism toward acknowledging your need for others? Explain.

In Christ, what differences should no longer matter, and what commonalities really do matter?

3. Many people believe that we will have achieved the goal when we all have equal rights, but equality is a low bar for God's people.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-11 (ESV) – Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped [did not demand and cling to his rights as God (TLB) ... gave up his divine privileges (NLT)] 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

From this passage, how would you explain Jesus' understanding of "equal rights" in His Kingdom?

If everyone were to live this way, how would this impact our society?



POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

(02:00) Pray for wisdom and an open heart as you dig into this topic.

1. Seek a practical way to put another person before yourself this week (Philippians 2).
2. Watch either the movie *13th* or *Just Mercy* along with some friends. Journal your thoughts as you watch, and talk about its message and impact on your thinking.
3. Select one truth or observation from this session and pass it on this week.



PRAYER

(05:00) Pause to reflect and pray over whatever has touched you personally. Some of us may have been harmed by racism or injustice. Some of us are realizing how blind we've been, or even how we may have unknowingly participated in racism and its effects. Wherever you are, bring these feelings and wounds to God in prayer. David admitted his own blindness and needs as he prayed these words:

PSALM 19:12-13 (VOICE) – Who could possibly know all that he has done wrong? Forgive my hidden and unknown faults. 13 As I am Your servant, protect me from my bent toward pride, and keep sin from ruling my life. If You do this, I will be without blame, innocent of the great breach.

Take 1-2 minutes of silence to ask God to search your heart. Then close in prayer.

CONVERSATIONS on RACE & GOD'S HEART for JUSTICE

Session 3: Acknowledging Systemic Injustice

INTRODUCTION

(01:30) “Why do events that happened before I was born matter?” Wading through American history can get messy. Since the formation of America, the sin of racism has contradicted the Christian values on which this country was founded. It is important to be reminded of these painful events from our country’s past so true healing can begin. Phil Vischer offers us a historical overview of racism toward Black people. Racism and other injustices and sins get embedded as normal practices within a society’s systems and institutions (such as housing, criminal justice, health care, politics, and education). That’s why it’s called “systemic.”



(18:00) “Holy Post - Race in America” by Phil Vischer.
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGUwcs9qJXY>>



For further reference, check out this transcript of the video.
<<https://www.holypost.com/post/racism-video-transcript-w-citations>>



DISCUSS

(17:00) Use some of these questions (or others on your mind) to process Phil's video.

1. Throughout the video, Phil presented a lot of facts and data. **Thinking about your own background, can you recall an example in your life where any of these past events impacted you, your family, or your community? Explain.**
2. The Jim Crow Laws that Phil mentioned were passed in the South during the Reconstruction Era after the Civil War ended. Their intent was to reinstate and protect white supremacy and power by enforcing segregation; their effect was to deny equal opportunity and equal rights to Black Americans. Many of these laws lasted until 1964 with the passing of the Civil Rights Act. **What remnants of segregation, Jim Crow Laws, or white supremacy do you still see impacting our society, and what does that stir up in you?**
3. Phil discussed the income and wealth disparities between some Black people and white people. **Which of the factors Phil mentioned are surprising or new to you?**
4. Phil explained why the war on drugs starting in the 60's, though supposedly intended to curb the rampant use of drugs throughout society, disproportionately burdened families of color. And it still does today. **What do you think Phil meant by "we criminalized the drug problem" and "we militarized our response"?**



SCRIPTURE

(17:00) Discuss these passages of Scripture to get a Kingdom perspective.

1. Read the story of the Good Samaritan.

LUKE 10:30-37 (NLT) – Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

31 "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. 32 A Temple assistant [a Jewish Levite] walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

33 "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. 34 Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 35 The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'

36 "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.

37 The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy."

Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

What could have caused the Jewish priest and the Jewish Levite to pass by the victim, even though he was Jewish, too?

How did the Samaritan respond, even though he was “despised” by the Jews?

If the Holy Spirit is moving you to care more deeply about racial injustices, describe what that looks like.

2. In these prophetic verses, notice how Jesus is described, especially what He is like, what He will do, and how He will go about doing that.

ISAIAH 42:1, 3-4 (ESV) – Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. . . 3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.

ISAIAH 9:7 (ESV) – Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

All cultures are broken in places. **How might we as individuals partner with Jesus in our contexts as He is still working to “bring forth justice” in biblical ways?**

3. According to Paul, God’s love for diverse humanity flowed from His desire to include people from all nations and ethnicities in His forever family. Read this passage and listen for God’s heart.

GALATIANS 3:7, 14, 26-29 (NLT) – The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God. . . . 14 Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith. . . . 26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. 28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God’s promise to Abraham belongs to you.

When we recognize that our true core identity is in Christ, how should that influence how we relate and interact with others?

In a nutshell, what is God’s remedy for racism?

4. Putting an end to your slavery to sin and mine is at the heart of His gospel. Read Jesus' words to the "slavery-denying" Pharisees of His day.

JOHN 8:33-36 (ESV) – They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?" 34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Getting rid of slavery in our past hasn't solved the core problem that caused it to begin with: sin in every human heart. **How is Jesus' offer of freedom different from the world's solutions to slavery and its effects?**



POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

(02:00) Pray for wisdom and a humble heart as you dig into this topic.

1. Research the history of racial injustice against people who live/lived where you live (Indigenous, Black, Asian American, Latino, immigrants, others). Consider how this impacts your present-day community. If there are museums or other places you can visit in your community that focus on this heritage, consider going with a friend or two. Then process together and with God.
2. Select one truth or observation from this session and pass it on this week.



PRAYER

(04:00) This session has given us a lot to think about, especially revealing structures and policies and systems that have harmed Black people and other people of color. It has also given us lots to pray about. In Romans 12, Paul encourages us to bless those who persecute us, to try to live in harmony with all people, and “rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn” (Romans 12:15, NIV).

Take one or two minutes of silence just to process. As the Holy Spirit leads, mourn—for yourself, for our society, or for others. Also ask the Holy Spirit if there’s anything you need to ask forgiveness for, or anyone you should forgive. Then close with this prayer for healing racism.

Loving God, our hearts grieve over the places and ways in our country’s past that Black Americans have been damaged in countless ways. We confess that You call us to be a better country than we are. We repent for forgetting that You created everyone equal. We lament over how many of our systems still protect the rights of some but deny the rights of others. Please forgive us and lead us in repairing our country’s wounds.

Lord Jesus, thank You for sacrificing Your holy life on the cross to free us from our slavery to sin. We celebrate our new identity as much-loved, forgiven, and true children in Your family.

Holy Spirit, help us look beyond our differences in order to care for and love one another deeply as the brothers and sisters we truly are in Christ. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Movies: *Jim Crow of the North* or *The Color of Compromise*.
2. Research the history of racial riots. Suggested article: “A Timeline of Race Riots Since 1965” <<https://www.voanews.com/usa/timeline-us-race-riots-1965>>



CONVERSATIONS on RACE & GOD'S HEART for JUSTICE

Session 4: Exploring Race and the Church

INTRODUCTION

(01:00) There is much that is beautiful in the history of Christ's Church when it comes to fighting racism and injustice. Sadly, however, the church has also been guilty of passivity toward social injustices or, worse yet, complicity. In today's session we'll wrestle with the church's checkered history. Racial divides still exist in some churches. Why is that so? There is no video for this session, so let's dive in.



DISCUSS

(25:00) Use some of these questions (or others on your mind) to think about this topic.

1. Although some Christian churches/spaces try to be “diverse,” people of color often still feel uncomfortable. **Why do you think trust might be lacking? What experiences come to mind that you might share?**
2. Think about your current local ministry context. **How would you say different ethnicities are valued?**
3. Amos was an Old Testament prophet who came down hard against the religious people of his day for using their power unjustly and twisting God's laws, especially against the poor. As you read his accusations on the following page, consider whether any of them might apply today.

- 5:7 You twist justice, making it a bitter pill for the oppressed. You treat the righteous like dirt.
- 5:11 You trample the poor, stealing their grain through taxes and unfair rent.
- 5:12 You oppress good people by taking bribes and deprive the poor of justice in the courts.
- 6:12 You turn justice into poison and the sweet fruit of righteousness into bitterness.
- 8:4 You who rob the poor and trample down the needy!
- 5:24 Do you know what I want? I want justice—oceans of it. I want fairness—rivers of it. That's what I want. That's all I want. (MSG)

Do you think any of these are ongoing issues in America, or not? Explain.

Do you think these are issues the church should address, or should they be left to secular authorities? Explain.

4. Jesus was no stranger to confronting people about their prejudices and blind spots when they needed it. Expressions of racism have occurred in every people group that ever lived. But Jesus said, “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? . . . 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).

Obviously it’s easier to see specks in others’ eyes. However, during these sessions, have you sensed Jesus identifying any “log” in your eye, or not? If so, explain.

5. Jesus gave His followers the Great Commission to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations [people groups]....” (Matthew 28:19 ESV), starting right where we are. Racism is just one tool that Satan has used to impede the discipling process.

How do you believe His Great Commission will be furthered if we eliminate cross-cultural barriers and racial divides in our disciple-making?

How will it be hindered if we don’t?



SCRIPTURE

(25:00) Read this story of the apostle Peter’s struggle to overcome his ethnic biases.

Background: Ethnic divides also threatened to separate the early church in Jerusalem, which was led by the apostle Peter. Like most other religious Jews, his religion had taught him that non-Jews (called Gentiles) would contaminate him if he got too close. Even after three years of walking with and watching Jesus cross ethnic, social, racial, gender, and religious barriers, Peter still didn’t get it. Even after Pentecost, Peter was skeptical about the Holy Spirit coming into Gentiles. He still didn’t get it. To awaken him to the vast inclusiveness of the gospel of Jesus and His Kingdom, Peter needed a serious intervention—in fact, two interventions! As you read the story, ask yourself how God might want to intervene in your life regarding people who aren’t like you.

1. Read the First Intervention: **Peter and Cornelius.**

ACTS 10:1-48 (selected verses in ESV) – *Peter and Cornelius.* At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a [Roman, Gentile] centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, 2 a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. ... 3 An angel of God come in and [said] to him, "Cornelius, ... send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter...."

Peter's Vision. 9 The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter ... became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance 11 and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14

But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." 15 And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." 16 This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven....

19 And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. 20 Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them...."

An Uncomfortable Conversation with a Gentile (a Roman "oppressor" and a centurion). 24 And on the following day they [Peter and some of his friends] entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.... 25 and he [Peter] found many persons gathered. 28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. 29 So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me." 30 And Cornelius said, ... 33 "We are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

Gentiles Hear the Good News. 34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),... [and Peter taught them about Jesus]. 42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles. 44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 And the [Jewish] believers . . . who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.... 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

What could be some reasons that it was so difficult for Peter to embrace people different from him?

What truths did God open Peter's eyes to about Gentiles? (See verses 15, 28, 34, 35, 47.)

2. Read the Second Intervention: **Peter and Paul.**

But Peter relapsed. His old biases came back when he got among Jewish friends. So Paul provided another intervention to help Peter repent of his biases and hypocrisy.

GALATIANS 2:11-16 (ESV) – *Paul Opposes Peter.* 11 But when [Peter] came to Antioch, I [Paul] opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. 13 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to [Peter] before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Justified by Faith. 15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

Paul saw that underneath Peter’s bias against Gentiles were two root sins that fueled it: hypocrisy (verse 13) and self-righteousness (verse 16). **What does the gospel offer us when we—like Peter and Paul—identify self-righteousness or hypocrisy in our own hearts?**

3. It was a long, hard transforming process for Peter to recognize and forsake his prejudice, but the gospel required him to. Like Peter, for some of us, recognizing our own racial biases is also a process, not a one-time event. And healing from the wounds of racism is a process, too. **In light of Peter’s journey, where are you in your journey or healing process? What is your “Journey-through-Racism” testimony—so far?**



POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

(02:00) Pray for wisdom and a humble heart as you dig into this topic.

1. Attend a worship service at a church in your community that is ethnically different from what you’re used to; better yet, go with a friend who attends that church. Look for an opportunity to connect with someone in the congregation to learn the history of the church and context in which they serve their community.
2. Discover the inspiring story of Nigerian Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther—enslaved at 12, freed, became a scholar, linguist, evangelist, and the first Black African Anglican Bishop in 1864. Sadly, near the end of his life he was re-victimized by racism within the church. In this article (two-minute-read) hear how the Anglican church leaders finally repented of their past racism in tribute to Bishop Crowther—a model for church repentance everywhere.
<https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2014/06/archbishop-welby-on-the-first-black-anglican-bishop.aspx>



PRAYER

(04:00) In this session, we've been reminded that the white American church has much to own and repent of. Maybe you've been hurt in a church or other Christian setting. There is a prayer written in Ezra 9:6-7 that can help us. In it, Ezra wasn't focusing so much on his own biases or individual sins. Instead, he was lamenting over the sins of his people, their kings, and their religious leaders, and he was entering into a place of deep sorrow over them. Here's what he prayed:

EZRA 9:6-7 (ESV) – O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens. 7 From the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt. And for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as it is today.

As we close, let's acknowledge and confess how we Christians and people in all churches everywhere have fallen short.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. *Church Diversity* by Scott Williams
2. *Insider/Outsider* by Bryan Lorrits
3. *Woke Church* by Eric Mason





CONVERSATIONS on **RACE** & **GOD'S HEART** for **JUSTICE**

Part 2: Conversations on Other Ethnicities in America

Session 5—Starting the Conversation with Asian-Americans

Session 6—Starting the Conversation with Indigenous People

Session 7—Starting the Conversation with Hispanic/Latino-Americans (coming soon)



CONVERSATIONS on RACE & GOD'S HEART for JUSTICE

Session 5: Starting the Conversation with Asian Americans

INTRODUCTION

(04:00) As we mentioned in the Overview, the sins of racial bias and injustice have not only affected Black and white communities, but also all communities of color. For instance, during COVID-19, many Asian Americans have been abused and accused of causing the pandemic. In this session, we'll explore additional ways that Asian Americans have been treated as "foreign" or not belonging here.



TERMS

Asian American Coined in 1968 by student activists to try to describe, unify, and encompass a diverse group of people from dozens of ethnic identities, who share Asian descent, who are from or have ancestry from one or more of the following regions: East Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia/the Middle East

Model Minority Coined in 1966 by sociologist William Petersen, this term refers to minority groups that have achieved a high level of perceived success in U.S. society. Most often, it is used to describe Asian Americans, who seem to have succeeded educationally and financially to a greater degree than other immigrant groups. The "model minority" label seems to praise Asian Americans for their achievements, but a critical analysis of the term's use suggests that there are negative effects. (adapted from depts.washington.edu)



WATCH



(04:19) “How The Coronavirus Is Exposing America’s Anti-Asian Racism”
 <<https://bit.ly/3u4hRcf>>
 (Note: The source of this video has a strong individual perspective.)



(03:10) “Shirley Kuang — Pandemic Story” by Navigators Collegiate staff Shirley Kuang.
 <<https://bit.ly/2ZkIrzK>>

A Psalm of Lament

By Shirley Kuang

*How long, God?
 You are God and so You know
 My heart and my insides gasp for breath every time I think of the pain to confront.
 I think, “I don’t want to lament, I don’t want to hurt, I don’t want to become undone.”
 And then I think of 7-year-old me, who would tell myself,
 “Stop crying! Why do you always cry?”
 As I walked up the stairs with my 2nd grade class, as another class walked down the stairs,
 And someone on the other side of the stairs yelled out, “Ching chong.”
 Why did I hate myself years later for tearing up every time someone said, “Ching chong”?
 Where were You, God, for 7-year-old me who started wondering,
 “Am I not supposed to be me? Am I not supposed to be here?”
 God, you say to me, “You are who I made you to be. You are here because I made you to be here.”
 God, I believe. Help my unbelief.
 May I believe You as You say to me, “Love”
 May I trust You as You say to me, “Love”
 I praise You as You say to me, “Love”*



DISCUSS

(15:00) Use some of these questions (or others on your mind) to discuss the videos.

1. Shirley cried out to God, “Am I not supposed to be me? Am I not supposed to be here?” **When you think about who is “supposed to be here,” who do you think of? If you have thought of someone as “not supposed to be here,” share that.**
2. Many Americans believe the “model minority” stereotype, which has had negative consequences on some Asian Americans. **What are your thoughts on this?**
3. Shirley felt some shame, triggered by her classmates’ comments, about her ethnicity. **How do you feel about your own ethnicity—proud, ashamed, other? Where did that come from?**
4. Recall how God met Shirley in that hard place of feeling “different” and how she processed her pain. She heard God say to her, “You are who I made you to be. You are here because I made you to be here.” Share a time when you have felt rejected by others for being different, new, or the outsider. **How have you experienced (or not experienced) God meeting you in that hard place?**



SCRIPTURE

- (20:00) 1. Read this Old Testament verse, where God commanded Israel to treat the strangers and outsiders among them as their own.

DEUTERONOMY 10:19 (ESV) – You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Have there been moments when you explicitly or implicitly treated someone who looked Asian as inferior or threatening? Why did you feel this way?

2. Jesus took this Old Testament truth and went deeper.

MARK 12:31 (ESV) – “The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Jesus didn’t bother with making a distinction between strangers or foreigners, but implied that they, too, should be neighbors. Imagine that some foreigners or people of a different ethnicity moved into the house right next door to you.

What do you think it would take for you to:

- **Welcome them as neighbors**
- **Befriend and get to know them**
- **Appreciate the added value they bring to the neighborhood**
- **View them as people who belong in the neighborhood just as much as you do?**

What attitudes or fears might prevent you from viewing and treating them in these ways?

3. According to these passages, who else viewed themselves as strangers or foreigners?

HEBREWS 11:13-16 (NLT) – 13 All these people [Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, etc.] died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it. They agreed that they were foreigners and nomads here on earth. 14 Obviously people who say such things are looking forward to a country they can call their own. 15 If they had longed for the country they came from, they could have gone back. 16 But they were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

MATTHEW 25:37-40 (NLT) – 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ 40 And the King [the Son of Man, Jesus] will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’”

1 PETER 2:11 (NLT) – Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” [sojourners and exiles, strangers and pilgrims—various translations] to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls.

(question continued on next page)

Notice that these great people of faith in the Bible—and even Jesus Himself!—considered themselves foreigners and strangers on this earth. They identified themselves more closely with citizenship in their heavenly country and homeland than with their earthly citizenship.

- **What could be dangerous about putting our ethnicity at the center of our lives instead of our Kingdom identity?**
- **God has a purpose for our ethnicity; it's a vital part of His plan (Acts 17:24-28). So how do we prioritize our identity in Christ without throwing out the beauty of our ethnic identity?**
- **If our primary identity and allegiance is with our heavenly citizenship, how would that impact how we view and treat the foreigners and strangers in our social circles?**



POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

(02:00) Pray for wisdom and a humble heart as you dig into this topic.

1. Self-check: In your interactions with people throughout each day, do you:
 - give more attention to some,
 - actively or passively avoid some,
 - give greater weight to the opinions of some,
 - give more respect to some, or
 - think less of some?

Why or why not?

2. Consider where you turn: When David felt threatened by people who should have accepted him, he “found his strength [took comfort] in God” (1 Samuel 30:6). When Shirley was shamed for her ethnicity, she chose to go to God first and “seek His face” (Psalm 27:8). She also came out of hiding and shared her shame with trusted others, leading to restoring her sense of personal dignity. The next time you are triggered by shame over your ethnicity or culture (or anything else), determine to let David and Shirley’s examples shape your response.



PRAYER

(05:00) Read (or have someone read) the following lines from Shirley's "Psalm of Lament" out loud, while anyone else present closes their eyes. Take a few minutes to pray for Shirley and for other Asian Americans—past and present, known and unknown. Also pray for yourselves.

*God, you say to me, "You are who I made you to be. You are here because I made you to be here."
God, I believe. Help my unbelief.
May I believe You as You say to me, "Love"
May I trust You as You say to me, "Love"
I praise You as You say to me, "Love"*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Video: "Ugly history: Japanese American incarceration camps-Densho"
< <https://bit.ly/3ppZ0oq> >
- "What Is the Model Minority Myth?" (3-minute read)
< <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/what-is-the-model-minority-myth> >



CONVERSATIONS on RACE & GOD'S HEART for JUSTICE

Session 6: Starting the Conversation with Indigenous People

INTRODUCTION

(05:00) Five hundred years ago, there were 60 million Indigenous people who inhabited North America. Today, there are only 5 million. Unfortunately, the colonization of the Americas led to the decimation of these people groups. Because of this history, Native Americans are almost invisible to the average person living here today. Indigenous people are routinely caricatured, romanticized, or stereotyped. When we become aware of these past and current sins, we can be part of making things right.



TERMS

Indigenous

Indigenous peoples (also referred to as Native Americans, First Nations, Aboriginal peoples, or American Indians) are ethnic groups who are native to a particular place on Earth. They lived or live in an interconnected relationship with the natural environment for many generations prior to the arrival of non-Indigenous peoples. Also identified in the US Constitution as “merciless Indian savages.”

Manifest Destiny This phrase, coined in 1845, expresses the ideology that the U.S. was chosen and destined by God to expand its dominion and spread democracy and capitalism across the North American continent, paralleling the biblical narrative of the Israelites settling in the Promised Land.



American Progress
by John Gast, 1872
Image credit: Wikimedia



WATCH AND DISCUSS

Choose one or more of these video options



(02:48) “Richard Twiss: A Theology of Manifest Destiny”
<<https://bit.ly/37fGWHG>>

1. According to Richard Twiss, who begins to explain the thinking behind the treatment of the Indigenous people at the beginning of European settlement of the U.S., **what has been the result of Manifest Destiny for Indigenous communities? Has Manifest Destiny hindered or advanced the spread of the gospel?**
2. Study the famous painting *American Progress* on the previous page.
What do you observe in this painting, and how do you interpret it in light of Richard Twiss’s discussion?



(04:20) “Racism, Protests, and Justice wk 3 - Loving Our Indigenous Neighbors clip 1”
<<https://bit.ly/3jYTyb9>>

3. Many of us have been taught to say, “I don’t see color” when it comes to race, meaning that we want to be inclusive and non-discriminating. **Now that you have heard Shaniya Smith (Navajo) and Tom Johnson (who lived on a Navajo reservation for 25 years) talk about colorblindness, what are your thoughts about “not seeing color”?**

Suppose we saw all people as God’s image bearers (Genesis 1:26), including their culture and ethnicity. **How might this have made a difference in:**

- **the treatment of Indigenous people in our history, and**
- **the ways Indigenous people like Shaniya saw (and still may see) themselves?**



(1:27) “Racism, Protests, and Justice wk 3 - Loving Our Indigenous Neighbors clip 2”
<<https://bit.ly/2Nu8gL4>>
Delphina Johnson shares about stripping away culture

And



(4:25) “Racism, Protests, and Justice wk 3 - Loving Our Indigenous Neighbors clip 3”
<<https://bit.ly/3pjPnrm>>
Delphina Johnson shares about her parents’ experience

4. **What do you hear as you listen to Delphina talk about the schooling of Indigenous people, the pain of her Indigenous roots, and the “stripping away” of culture at residential schools imposed on her parents?**



SCRIPTURE

(20:00) Read and discuss several of these passages.

1. Read these verses to identify how God expected humanity to take care of the earth.

GENESIS 1:26,31 (MSG) – God spoke: “Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can **be responsible for [have dominion over—קַיָּב]** the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of the Earth.” . . . God looked over everything he had made; it was so good, so very good!

What do you see as differences between “having dominion” and “dominating” or “decimating”?

How do you see these different dynamics being played out by or against Indigenous people?

2. Hagar was an Egyptian servant girl who lived with Abram’s family (circa 1920 B.C.), where she became a surrogate mother on behalf of Abram’s barren wife, Sarai. Then one day, pregnant and harassed, she was forced to run away into the desert where God (through His angel) met her with words of comfort and hope. Read her response:

GENESIS 16:13 (NIV) – She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”

What do you think it is about Hagar’s story and her experience with God that still resonates with Indigenous Christians today?

3. The ancient Israelites, while in exile in Babylon, came horrifically close to being massacred by the Persian King Xerxes, whose vast empire stretched from Ethiopia to India (circa 500 B.C.). Read how God’s people, led by Mordecai, responded to this threat:

ESTHER 4:1, 3 (NIV) – When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. . . . In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

Try to imagine these Jews (or any people slated for genocide and ethnic cleansing) crying out to God in their desperate mourning. What do you imagine they might have said to Him? In addition to pleading to God for rescue, the Jews also needed someone inside the court to beg the king to spare their lives. But who? Mordecai’s young cousin Esther had just been selected as the king’s second wife and new queen. Until this crisis, she had been enjoying her royal privileges, but had kept her Jewish heritage a secret. So Mordecai sent her a desperate plea through a messenger:

ESTHER 4:8, 13-14 (V) Mordecai: Show it [a copy of the order for mass murder of the Jews] to Esther. Tell her everything I have told you. Convince her to go before her king and plead for his favor, not only for her life, but also for the lives of her people. . . . Tell Esther, “Don’t be fooled. Just because you are living inside the king’s palace doesn’t mean that you out of all of the Jews will escape the carnage. You must go before your king. If you stay silent during this time, deliverance for the Jews will come from somewhere, but you, my child, and all of your father’s family will die. And who knows? Perhaps you have been made queen for such a time as this.”

With whatever voice or platform or privilege you have during these racially troubled times in our country, is there anything you sense God calling you to be or say or do “for such a time as this”?

4. Under Moses’ leadership, God delivered the Israelite people out of slavery in Egypt (circa 1450 B.C.). Then He led them on foot to a land He’d promised to Abraham: a land called Canaan (1 Chronicles 16:15-19). There was only one problem: at least seven Indigenous tribes of people had been living there for centuries (Deuteronomy 7:2)—people viewed as almost sub-human “dogs.” So the Israelites systematically killed them, took over their land, and launched the bitter ethnic rivalry that burns even today between Palestinians (descendants of the ancient Canaanites) and Jewish people.

By the time Jesus was born 1,450 years later, a few remaining Canaanites lived in the land. Let’s pick up the story of when Jesus went out of His way to visit this region and met an Indigenous Canaanite woman with a terrible family problem and generations’ worth of ethnic shame.

MATTHEW 15:21-28 (ESV) And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.”

But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.”

He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.”

And he answered, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”

Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.”

And her daughter was healed instantly.

Consider this thought: Was Jesus challenging the Canaanite woman to see herself differently than the way the culture defined her—to see herself as He saw her? If so, how? How was Jesus also challenging His disciples to “see” differently?

5. Jesus exposed the Canaanite woman’s ethnic shame so that He could heal it. He did this by inviting her “to stand from a low position” (*Yiizìh* in Navajo) so she could take her place at her Father’s table where, by faith, she truly belonged. After 500 years of systemic racial injustice, struggles with inferiority still impact many Indigenous people of America. They connect with the Canaanite woman’s feelings in this story about Jesus—believing that they, too, only deserve the crumbs that fall from the table. **How might Jesus—who focuses on faith, not ethnicity—be challenging us in the body of Christ, to acknowledge that everyone from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 7:9) has a place and a voice at the table? What about this gives you hope?**



POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

(02:00) Pray for wisdom and a humble heart as you dig into this topic.

1. Do a Google search for the painting *American Progress* (on the first page of this lesson). Print off a color copy and post it in your space to remind you to pray for and speak up for Indigenous people.
2. Use Native-Land.ca to look up the Indigenous people who first lived where you grew up or where you live now. Do a Google search to find out their history and who they are now.
3. Visit a Native American museum, memorial, or sacred place if there is one near you.



PRAYER

(05:00) As you have listened, learned, and tried to understand the pain of Indigenous people, from Bible times to American history to our own generation, perhaps you have been moved to grieve for their losses. Begin your prayer of lament by reading Delphina's words here, and then praying from your heart.

*I am lamenting
the loss of generations of Indigenous people
the loss of the beautiful languages
the loss of our cultural heritage AND
the loss of our sacred land.
Allowing myself to feel this deep rooted pain
has allowed God to shed light on a part of my being where I grieved.*

—Delphina Johnson

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Watch “The truth behind ‘We the People’ - the three most misunderstood words in U.S. history,” a TED Talk by Mark Charles about why “We the People” included only white, land-owning males. < <https://bit.ly/2ZiuMtd> >
- Watch *Indian Horse* on Netflix to get a better picture of the pain caused by boarding schools for Indigenous people in Canada and the U.S. Or, to see other book and movie suggestions, go to < <https://bit.ly/3b8xYNs> > (NavWeekly article “Watch a Movie! Read a Book! Native American Heritage Month”)
- Study the story behind the Code Talkers who used Indigenous languages to help win World War 2. One movie on this true story is *Windtalkers*.



CONVERSATIONS on RACE & GOD'S HEART for JUSTICE

Session 7 : Starting the Conversation with Latino Americans

INTRODUCTION

(04:00) In this last session of “Conversations,” we will hear from some Latino Americans—some of mixed ethnicity—as they explain the challenges of navigating their identity. Whether your own ethnicity is mixed or not, try to relate by considering multiple cultural influences that have impacted you so far in your life.



(06:41) “A Conversation With Latinos on Race | Op-Docs” by The New York Times.
<<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=tLLCHbCgJbM>>



(03:48) “Defining Latino: Young People Talk Identity, Belonging” by NBC News.
<<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=QePAmImu2wA>>



DISCUSS

(15:00) Use some of these questions (or others on your mind) to discuss the videos.

1. How would you describe your own ethnic heritage and national identity to someone you've just met?
2. What parts of your ethnic or national heritage do you embrace and enjoy? What parts, if any, feel lost to you, or have you not engaged with?
3. Do you identify with two or more cultures? What has helped you bridge them?
4. The next time you are with people of Latino ethnicity (or any other heritage or ethnicity), intentionally ask them one or two of the same questions above that you just answered.



SCRIPTURE

(20:00) Read and discuss some of these passages.

1. We mentioned Esther in the previous chapter, but let's revisit her story with a brief recap. The book of Esther opens a window on the OT world of violence directed against God and His people. In this case, there was a horrific scheme to massacre all the exiled Jews living in the vast expanse of 5th century B.C. Persia. This would have been nothing short of genocide, had it succeeded. One of those Jews, Mordecai, had a young, orphaned, and ravishingly beautiful cousin named Esther. When she was selected to become the Persian King Xerxes' new queen, Mordecai commanded her to keep her ethnic descent and nationality secret. So when the planned genocide was about to be executed, Esther had a difficult decision to make: reveal her identity to the king to beg for his mercy on her people (thus risking her own life) . . . or protect herself by remaining silent. As you unpack her story, think about what you would have done.

ESTHER 4:13-17 (ESV) 13 Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" 15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, 16 "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish." 17 Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

Put yourself in Esther's shoes. She had navigated the challenges of living cross-culturally. But then she was confronted with the opportunity to speak up for/defend an oppressed people—her own people. Try to imagine what she was thinking. What might have been some of the pros and the cons of embracing and revealing her ethnicity to the king?

Have you ever sensed God putting you in a risky position "for such a time as this"? If so, what did you risk and how did you respond?

In what ways can you speak up for and defend those who are looked down on because of their ethnicity?

2. As we wrap up these *Conversations on Race & God's Heart for Justice*, let's revisit the big story. Paul reminds us of the biggest dream on God's heart that moved Him to create the world and humanity.

EPHESIANS 1:4-6 (V) 4 God chose us to be in a relationship with Him even before He laid out plans for this world; He wanted us to live holy lives characterized by love, free from sin, and blameless before Him. 5 He destined us to be adopted as His children through the covenant Jesus the Anointed inaugurated in His sacrificial life. This was His pleasure and His will for us.

Of course, our ethnicity, our gender, and our nationality are parts of who we are. But when God adopted us into His eternal family, He gave us an entirely new identity. Where/How do you believe your ethnic identity fits into your new identity as God's child?

3. As you read this astonishing description of God's multi-ethnic family gathered around His throne one day in heaven, pay special attention to the mentions of "glory."

REVELATION 5:9, 21:22-26 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation," . . . And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations."

Why do you think every ethnicity (all the ethne) is needed to reflect God's glory?



POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

- (02:00)
- Pray for wisdom and a humble heart as you dig into this topic.
 - Select one insight or passage from this session. Identify someone who isn't here and plan when you will share it with him/her.
 - Consider whether there is a group or person you want to invite to go through *Conversations* with you. Ask God to speak to you about this possibility of passing it on.



PRAYER

- (03:00)
- Suggestion for closing in prayer: To embody the picture of every ethnicity in heaven, invite someone to close by praying in another language. This could be someone in your group or a bilingual person you invite to join you.