



Week One

Opening Prayer

God, thank you for this time we get to be together. As we set aside this time to be here, please help us to grow in friendship with one another and to connect with you and what you have for us. Amen.

Ice Breaker [For New Groups or Groups with New Members]

- Share your name, your favorite thing to eat, and why you decided to check out a growth group.

Talk It Over

This weekend we kicked off our new series, Isms, that aims to help us lean into a Christlike response to topics like racism, politicism, sexism, and pluralism. As we move through our discussion today, let's be mindful of the fact that our group is full of diverse stories and opinions. We are not here to force our ways or opinions on others but in hopes of having a life-giving discussion that empowers all of us to grow, heal, and learn. In fact, even if you are here today and you aren't a follower of Jesus, know this is a safe community to explore matters of faith.

- By nature, how comfortable or uncomfortable are you talking about potentially touchy, heated, or polarizing topics? Have you always been this way? How did you become this way? Explain your answer.
- In order for us to have a life-giving discussion on topics like racism, sexism, pluralism, and politicism, what are some ground rules, values, or guidelines that might help our conversation?
- Jumping into this week's topic specifically, in what ways have you personally experienced or witnessed racism? Your answer can involve microaggressions or news headlines.

During our time today we will be looking at four ways we can respond to racism for the sake of our own benefit and the sake of others:

One: Be aware.

Read James 2:8-9 (GNT) and 1 John 4:20 (GNT)

Jesus came to bring a new way of living and loving. The New Testament teaches us that Jesus was aware of the racial divides in his culture. He didn't turn a blind eye or stay within the culturally imposed boundaries. Moreover, he broke barriers and divides down by the way he spoke and the things he did. Jesus taught that racism is a sin problem. Every human is made by God, for God, and in the image of God. This means all people have the same intrinsic value, dignity, and purpose.

- What were your youngest lessons around the topic of race? These lessons could have been direct or indirect.
- Looking around our present culture, where do you see us not treating people with intrinsic value and dignity? As we talk, let's remind that everyone's opinions are welcome. This is a great chance for us to each practice listening without immediately responding even if you disagree.

(Content continued on the next page.)

Two: Be accountable.

Read Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)

This weekend we looked at this idea that cultural challenges can become spiritual opportunities for the church or people who claim to love and follow God. As sad, disheartening, hurtful, infuriating matters of racism are, by modeling and teaching a Christlike response, we can help people see a better way. In fact, as the world gets darker, may the church get brighter.

- No matter how personal or removed you feel from this conversation, who has served as a helpful guide and model to you on topics involving racism?
- Where are you seeing progress and growth around issues of racism today?
- Where do you see areas where growth is not evident or areas of frustration?

Three: Be active.

Read Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT)

In order for us to be active in a healthy way, we each must do the work of examining all that is in our own hearts. Spiritual wholeness and health — and in turn, healthy activism — comes from being aware and attuned to the bad ideas, the fears, the ego, the hurts, and the drives that are inside our own hearts. As Christ-followers we are each called to give God our whole life. This means giving God access to everything that is in us and being open to our own growth.

- Tell us about a time you realized your own prejudice, stereotyping, or judgments towards another race.
- When it comes to matters of racism, what is the hardest heart issue for you? Are you apathetic and uninterested in seeing the pain around you? Are you bitter? Are you hurt? Are you annoyed?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 (Voice) and Proverbs 31:8-9 (Voice)

While matters of the heart are key, we cannot stop there. As Jesus people, who have been reconciled to God and his family, we are called to help others be reconciled to God and to others too. We are called to teach others to love by the way we love. We are called to model what a healthy community looks like.

- In your own life, what are the concrete things you are doing to help combat racism?
- In what ways do you feel you can better engage on this topic?

Four: Be heaven now.

Read Revelations 7:9-10 (NLT) and Galatians 3:28 (NLT)

There is a oneness depicted throughout the New Testament that is brought by Jesus and sustained by Jesus. This is a oneness that Jesus looks for us to engage in — in the here and now — and a oneness that will continue on into eternity.

- In your own life, where do you see this oneness around you today? In the larger world, where do you see this oneness today?
- In your own life, where do you desire to see more of this oneness? In the larger world, where do you want to see more of this oneness?

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for this time and space. Please continue to stir your truth and desires in us. Help us to embrace our own healing and to be conduits of your healing to those around us. Amen.

Group Logistics [A Reminder for New Groups]

Are there are details or questions we need to cover for next week? Are we meeting at the same time and place? Who is owning snacks? Are there childcare questions to cover?

How To Use this Discussion Guide

The guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create space to grow in friendship and faith. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, consider reviewing the guide before your group to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel pressured to read all the content or to hit all the questions. The guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help foster friendship and faith in your specific group.

In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead.