



JUSTICE & RECONCILIATION

Restoring people, places, and systems from hostility to harmony with God, others, and creation

God's Heart for Justice & Reconciliation

Up until now, our Spiritual Formation series has been focused on deepening our ability to be with Jesus. We've zeroed in on words and practices — Scripture, prayer, Sabbath — that, while they may sound foreign to skeptics or new believers, still feel right at home in a church setting.

But justice & reconciliation may not be words you've heard preached from the pulpit before. Perhaps they seem more at home printed in history books, yelled from television screens, or hashtagged on social media. The wounds or baggage you might carry from these concepts may not be from a distant past, but fresh from your workplace, your school, or even your family.

Many of us have never had a healthy, holistic, gospel-centered understanding of these concepts. But justice & reconciliation are inherent to the covenant story of God's relationship with his people and to the gospel story of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and return.

A Gospel View of Justice & Reconciliation

As Christians, we believe in a broken, fallen world. The recognition that the systems and structures of our specific time and place in history are broken shouldn't be controversial for Christ-followers.

At the same time, we believe in a God who restores, who brings justice for the oppressed. We work alongside God in the world to bring about justice & reconciliation, understanding that we cannot have peace through our own power, but only through the power of the Holy Spirit. To quote an old Jewish teaching, "It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it."

Our hope for this series is that this will be a safe place to deconstruct some of our worldly understandings of justice and reconciliation and to reconstruct these important, biblical concepts on the foundation of the gospel. Justice and reconciliation cannot be merely safe, academic

concepts that live in our heads or political ideas that only exist “out there” in the world; they must transform our hearts and our communities and lead us to live like Christ.

Community of Practice

Significant and sustainable change requires a community of support. We highly recommend that you work through this guide with your missional community (MC), discipleship group, family, roommates, or coworkers.

Ideally, this “community of practice” should gather weekly or biweekly at a set time (approximately an hour) with some delicious food or drinks to set the right atmosphere. The goal isn’t to rigidly follow the guide, but rather to stimulate healthy conversations, reflection, experiments, and accountability.

We also believe it’s important that while we work through this guide in a shared space, we also do so with a shared language. **That’s why we’ve assembled a glossary of terms and definitions at the end of this guide.** We highly encourage you to familiarize yourself with these terms so your MC can offer the most generous interpretations of one another’s thoughts during discussion.

If you have a question you’d like answered anonymously, please fill out our Question Box form at www.somaindy.com/justice. Your question will be forwarded anonymously to your MC leaders so you can discuss it safely in a group setting.

After this sermon series, we’ll continue the conversation on justice and reconciliation into small groups going through the Be the Bridge curriculum. To be assigned to one of these groups, please fill out our form at www.somaindy.com/justice by October 1.

WEEK ONE: PREPARATION

Pre-Meeting Assignment

In preparation for our first MC meeting during this teaching series, we encourage everyone to prepare a short (no longer than 10 minutes) story, thread, or theme from their experience with race in America and/or in church.

This will be easier for some than others, but everyone has had experience with race — even if that experience is characterized by a lack of memorable “experiences.” The story, thread, or theme could be lifelong or characterized by one incident. It could be from childhood or adulthood, positive or negative, clear or confusing. If it comes to mind, it could be that God has put it on your heart.

Read This Overview

When sin entered a perfect world, relationships were broken — between people and God, between people and other people, and between people and the world. **Reconciliation** is the term for God’s plan and God’s initiative to restore broken relationships to wholeness through Christ. **The gospel is the good news of reconciliation.**

As God created all people in His image, all people have rights as His image-bearers. **Justice** is the rendering to people of those rights. **Injustice** is depriving people of those rights. In His word, God openly declares Himself to be a God of justice, and He wants His image-bearers to likewise do justice.

In our series on justice and reconciliation, we will focus on God’s description of, and call for, justice and reconciliation in the Bible. We will see ourselves in the story — and see the story in ourselves — and that may be challenging. But this is God’s story and God’s plan, and nothing can separate us from His love.

Set Expectations for the Month (5 minutes)

Since issues around racial justice and reconciliation are deeply personal and emotional, it’s important that our MC leaders set the tone from the beginning. Here are some things to consider for the first session:

- **Model the Way:** Set the pace by going first in telling your story and modeling what it looks like to “speak the truth in love.”
- **Cast Vision:** Remind people that we aren’t teaching this series because it’s a trendy cultural topic right now, but rather because we want to glorify God by living into his vision of a just, reconciled, diverse people (John 17; Revelation 7).

- **Be Realistic:** We aren't going to solve 400+ years of racial injustice and division during the course of the next month. Our goal, however, is to see progress both individually and organizationally. Help each person and the group as a whole think through some realistic goals that could serve as a reference point for this season.
- **Be Humble:** Everyone should aspire to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Assume that your perspective is limited, incomplete, and in need of ongoing transformation.
- **Create Safety:** It's important to establish the MC as a safe space for vulnerability, authenticity, and sometimes even inappropriate statements. People may "cross the line" in their efforts to disentangle complexities in their hearts and minds. You'll need to use discernment as to when that needs to be curtailed or redirected, but don't feel the need to automatically censor people as they're processing.
- **Clarify Definitions:** Use our glossary at the end of this guide to ensure that everyone is on the same page with how we are using certain contested or ambiguous words.

Begin with Silence, Reflection, & Prayer (5 minutes)

Create a space to meet where your community can be comfortable yet alert. Open your time with a few minutes for silent reflection on your day. Choose a prayer to silently repeat that expresses your openness and desire to welcome God's presence into this moment. Examples could include, "Be still and know that I am God," or, "Come, Holy Spirit."

Consider opening with the following prayer:

Father, please grant us Your grace in today's discussions. Remind us that every person is created in Your image. Remind us that if we say we are without sin, we deceive ourselves. Remind us that Christ, who knew no sin, became sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God. Remind us that when You look at us, You see the righteousness of your beloved Son. Search our hearts and know us, and if you find any false way in us, graciously remove it. Help us to build Your kingdom, brick by brick, as we remove divisions between us, stone by stone. Give us the will and the strength to reconcile with others the way You have reconciled us to You. In the matchless name of Jesus Christ the Reconciler, amen.

Share Your Story (30 minutes)

Split into smaller groups and share the stories, themes, and threads you prepared. Remember, they may have conclusions, and they may not. They may spark, or even be, more questions than answers. They may be uplifting or crushing. Be slow to speak and quick to listen, and practice the empathy that Jesus graciously practiced (Hebrews 4:15).

Reconvene as a missional community and weave Sunday's lesson into tonight's stories, themes, and threads. How does the gospel relate to what you shared and heard? What questions do you still have? We don't expect to answer all questions — or solve all problems — in one MC discussion. We want to begin the hard work of opening our eyes and ears while making ourselves vulnerable. Remember, Christ bore the wrath of God to reconcile us. We can make ourselves vulnerable to some hurt feelings, bruised egos, and confused minds to do the same.

Discuss the Sunday Teaching (10–15 minutes)

Discuss the following questions together or in smaller groups:

- Read Galatians 2:11–14. What does this passage say about the link between racial reconciliation and the gospel?
- What challenged or surprised you from the teaching this week?
- If justice and reconciliation are central to God’s plan of redemption, why do you think so many Christians are hesitant to embrace them as a lifestyle?
- John M. Perkins argued that “to achieve racial reconciliation in the church, gospel proclamation must remain the central theme.” What do you think he meant, and why?

Practice for the Week Ahead (5 minutes)

We would like everyone to take the time (two hours total) to watch the documentary, “Attucks: The School That Opened a City” before the next MC meeting. The film may be watched for free using this link: <https://tinyurl.com/attucksformc>

As you’re watching, pray! Pray for open minds, ears, eyes, and hearts. Pray for reconciliation in our church and city. Thank God for His gracious plan to reconcile us to Him.

PRACTICE FOR FAMILIES WITH KIDS

If you have pre-teens or above, we would highly encourage to you watch and discuss the documentary together with your kids. Also, consider having them read books like Beverly Tatum’s [“Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?”](#)

For elementary-aged children, we recommend listening to [Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech](#) together and discussing the opportunities and challenges he references throughout.

For children of all ages, we would encourage you to download a FREE PDF copy of the book *The Gospel in Color* by Jarvis Williams and Curtis Cook. This book is an excellent introduction to the biblical story of race, ethnicity, the gospel, and reconciliation. Soma Church has purchased licenses for this material from the publishers, so please only use these for your family. To download, fill out the form on our Justice & Reconciliation page: www.somaindy.com/justice

Close with Reflective Prayer (5–10 minutes)

End your time with a few moments of silence to reflect on and be grateful to God for all that he has done in your community during this meeting. Listen for an invitation that the Holy Spirit may be impressing on your heart to take with you this week. Consider slowly praying the Lord’s Prayer together (Matthew 6:9–13).

WEEK TWO: AWARENESS

Read This Overview

One of the biggest obstacles to practicing biblical justice and reconciliation is a lack of awareness of the problem. Jesus warns the Pharisees of this very problem in Matthew 23:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!”

Often in conversations about race, people will say something like, “Why are we always talking about racism? Slavery and segregation are in the past. Continuing to talk about race and racism creates division in the church instead of allowing us to move forward.”

The truth, however, is that the past always shapes our present (just think about your family of origin). Healing the past starts with remembering it accurately so that we can understand how we got to where we are, how racism continues to persist in hidden forms in the present, and what the full scope of redemption might look like for the future.

As author Latasha Morrison puts it in *Be the Bridge*,

Because so much of our country remains racially segregated along geographic lines, it’s possible for people to live for many years without any awareness that relationships between racial groups are still broken and in need of reconciliation. Perhaps you were taught to be “colorblind” — to “look beyond” someone’s race and see them simply as a human being. While there are often good intentions behind this colorblind approach, it actually nurtures a problematic type of blindness, or unawareness, about our country’s racial history and its current racial realities. For this reason, it ends up doing more unintended harm than accomplishing intended good.

Begin with Silence, Reflection, & Prayer (5 minutes)

Create a space to meet where your community can be comfortable yet alert. Open your time with a few minutes for silent reflection on your day. Choose a prayer phrase to silently repeat that expresses your openness and desire to welcome God’s presence into this moment. Examples could include, “Be still and know that I am God,” or, “Come, Holy Spirit.”

If you want a guide for your time of silence, consider using this Prayer of Examen:

Holy Spirit, we welcome you into our community, and we feel your love for us. Guide us as we think about our day today. Help us to remember all the moments both big and small. (Pause.) Help us to remember moments of kindness and generosity and how to be thankful for them. (Pause.) Help us to remember moments where we did not listen to your voice. Holy Spirit, what should we ask for forgiveness today, and what behavior should we turn away from? (Pause.) Help us to look toward tomorrow with the confidence that you will guide and take care of us. May we see you at work once again.

Have someone close this time with prayer for discernment and guidance.

Discuss the Sunday Teaching (10–15 minutes)

Discuss the following questions together or in small groups:

- What resonated with you and challenged you from Sunday's teaching?
- Do you tend to think of racial injustice and division in more spiritual, personal, or systemic categories? Why?
- Where is God inviting you to grow as a result of this teaching?

Debrief the Attucks Documentary (45 minutes)

Last week, we asked everyone in the MC to watch the documentary *Attucks: The School That Opened a City* ([available for free on PBS](#)). Discuss the documentary together using these questions:

- What did you learn about the history of injustice toward African Americans in Indianapolis? How is this similar to or different from what you learned growing up?
- Why do you think white people have such a hard time talking about and acknowledging the historic facts of injustice toward people of color in Indianapolis?
- What impact do past systemic injustices have toward people of color in the present?
- What role did the church in Indianapolis play in race relations? How does this legacy continue to affect race relations between Christians today?

Practice This Week

Continue practicing awareness this week by intentionally exposing yourself to people and places with different cultures than your own. Eat lunch in a different place. Bike or drive through a different part of your neighborhood. Start engaging one of the supplemental resources listed at the end of this guide. Pay attention to what you're learning about yourself, others, and God as you engage. What's broken? What's confusing? What can be celebrated? What needs to be redeemed?

PRACTICE FOR FAMILIES WITH KIDS

Take your kids with you as you visit new places! Visit a different restaurant, park, or sporting event. Ask them what's similar and what's different to how your family normally does things, and take time to give thanks to God for the diversity of our city. Pray for justice and reconciliation to come through the church.

Remember, for children of all ages, we would encourage you to download a FREE PDF copy of the book *The Gospel in Color* by Jarvis Williams and Curtis Cook. This book is an excellent introduction to the biblical story of race, ethnicity, the gospel, and reconciliation. Soma Church has purchased licenses for this material from the publishers, so please only use these for your family. To download, fill out the form on our Justice & Reconciliation page: www.somaindy.com/justice

Close with Reflective Prayer (5–10 minutes)

End your time with a few moments of silence to reflect on and be grateful to God for all that he has done in your community during this meeting. Listen for an invitation that the Holy Spirit might be impressing on your heart to take with you this week. Consider slowly praying the Lord's Prayer together:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

WEEK THREE: LAMENT

Read This Overview

Last week, we explored the presence of injustice in the history of the U.S., Indianapolis, and the church.

With sin this deep and complex, it is easy to feel hopeless despair, toxic shame (rather than conviction that leads to repentance), or to throw up our hands in indifference. Is there anything that can be done?

Action is the right desire, but when problems and sins are God-sized, the first response of God's people continually through the Bible is lament.

Lament is the individual or communal expression of grief, sorrow, frustration, and/or regret. Forty percent of the Psalms are prayers of lament. The book of Lamentations is one big, corporate lament.

Lament can feel unproductive, but in taking the initiative to lament, we unify and prepare our hearts to be used by God as a prophetic community aligned with God's Spirit. We identify with those suffering from injustice and help bear their emotional burdens. Most importantly, we call out to a God who constantly shows Himself to be moved to action through the cries of His people.

When lamenting, you do not need to feel pressure to force emotions of sadness or frustration. Regularly practicing lament often will lead your heart to be aligned to God's and how He feels about something, but to start, simply be faithful to be led through scriptural laments and let God's Spirit do what He chooses.

Practice Right Now (25–35 minutes)

Practice lamenting by using scriptural laments as a template. Read Psalm 74 (see next page). Then spend 10 minutes praying words and ideas directly from or inspired by the text.

When the psalm talks about the wrath of God upon us or Him forsaking us, if you do not feel personally afflicted by injustice, try praying on behalf of those who do.

When the psalm curses our enemies, while few of us can claim God's just wrath against a specific oppressor, remember “. . . we do not wrestle against flesh and blood . . .” (Eph 6:12a), but with forces of the devil, the sinful desires and idols in our hearts, and the sinful desires and idols of our culture.

After Psalm 74, read and do the same for Isaiah 58 (see page 11).

Psalm 74

¹ O God, why do you cast us off forever?
Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?

² Remember your congregation, which you have purchased of old,
which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage!
Remember Mount Zion, where you have dwelt.

³ Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins;
the enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary!

⁴ Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place;
they set up their own signs for signs.

⁵ They were like those who swing axes
in a forest of trees.

⁶ And all its carved wood
they broke down with hatchets and hammers.

⁷ They set your sanctuary on fire;
they profaned the dwelling place of your name,
bringing it down to the ground.

⁸ They said to themselves, “We will utterly subdue them”;
they burned all the meeting places of God in the land.

⁹ We do not see our signs;
there is no longer any prophet,
and there is none among us who knows how long.

¹⁰ How long, O God, is the foe to scoff?
Is the enemy to revile your name forever?

¹¹ Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand?
Take it from the fold of your garment and destroy them!

¹² Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the midst of the earth.

¹³ You divided the sea by your might;
you broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters.

¹⁴ You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

¹⁵ You split open springs and brooks;
you dried up ever-flowing streams.

¹⁶ Yours is the day, yours also the night;
you have established the heavenly lights and the sun.

¹⁷ You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth;
you have made summer and winter.

¹⁸ Remember this, O Lord, how the enemy scoffs,
and a foolish people reviles your name.

¹⁹ Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild beasts;
do not forget the life of your poor forever.

²⁰ Have regard for the covenant,
for the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence.

²¹ Let not the downtrodden turn back in shame;
let the poor and needy praise your name.

²² Arise, O God, defend your cause;
remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day!

²³ Do not forget the clamor of your foes,
the uproar of those who rise against you, which goes up continually!

*The Holy Bible: English
Standard Version. (2016).*

Isaiah 58:1 – 12

¹ Cry aloud; do not hold back;
lift up your voice like a trumpet;
declare to my people their transgression,
to the house of Jacob their sins.

² Yet they seek me daily
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that did righteousness
and did not forsake the judgment of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments;
they delight to draw near to God.

³ 'Why have we fasted, and you see it not?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?'
Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,
and oppress all your workers.

⁴ Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.
Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.

⁵ Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a person to humble himself?
Is it to bow down his head like a reed,
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?
Will you call this a fast,
and a day acceptable to the Lord?

⁶ "Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

⁸ Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you;
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'
If you take away the yoke from your midst,
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

¹⁰ if you pour yourself out for the hungry
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness
and your gloom be as the noonday.

¹¹ And the Lord will guide you continually
and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters do not fail.

¹² And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to dwell in.

*The Holy Bible: English
Standard Version. (2016).*

Practice This Week (20–30 minutes)

Take time to write a personal lament to God. Express the pain of injustice you have experienced. Confess specific sins or heart idols that have promoted injustice in our world. Call out for God to move in specific areas of your life and our world. If you don't know how to start, use Psalm 74 or Isaiah 58 as a template to express your personal laments and experiences.

Consider sharing your lament with a person or people in your community.

PRACTICE FOR FAMILIES WITH KIDS

Have each member of the family share an experience where they felt sad, hurt, or angry. Explain that while prayer to God often expresses thankfulness, God asks us to pray to him to tell him about our sadness, hurt, and anger, too.

Go around and have everyone pray to God to tell him about the sadness, hurt, and anger they feel. Don't worry about everyone being theologically accurate or everyone praying in a way that expresses forgiveness toward those who wronged them. There is a time for that later. This moment is about learning how to honestly express these emotions to God.

Consider going around again and having each person pray for another person's sadness, hurt, or anger.

WEEK FOUR: REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION

Debrief (30 minutes)

Take some time as a whole group to debrief this teaching series. Give people who may not be in a space to process right now the freedom to just listen. Use these questions:

- Has this series revealed attitudes or actions in you, our church, and our society that you weren't expecting? What are they?
- Is there some aspect about practicing reconciliation and justice that you're feeling resistant toward? Why do you think that is?
- What scares you about moving forward with the practice of reconciliation and justice? Would you like the group to speak into that fear and help you process it?
- What next steps do you believe God is leading you to take in pursuit of justice and reconciliation?

Read This Overview

As we face the division, polarization, and discord in our country over racial justice, we're right in feeling like we should do something. Indifference and apathy are not options for those who follow Jesus.

Some start by looking to make a big, public splash. Others believe that what they could do wouldn't make much of a difference anyway. There's another way to look at it, though: the way Jesus transforms the hundreds of small, daily decisions we make into a powerful, significant whole.

We can choose to make reconciliation and justice part of the way we live each day. This will be a costly choice. It may require giving up what seems natural and feels comfortable. It may require redirecting our time, energy, and possibly our finances. Whatever the cost, this is what it means for Christ-followers "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8, New International Version [NIV]).

Scheme Together

The following are practical ways we can engage in reconciliation and justice.

AWARENESS

- Watch documentaries and/or read books about the racial history of the United States. (See the list of resources at the end of this guide for recommendations.)
- Follow racial and ethnic minorities on social media, especially those with different political outlooks than yours:
 - » Jemar Tisby: author, historian, cohost of [Pass the Mic podcast](#) ([Facebook](#)) ([Twitter](#)) ([Instagram](#))
 - » Ekemini Uwan: theologian, cohost of [Truth's Table podcast](#) ([Facebook](#)) ([Twitter](#)) ([Instagram](#))
 - » Judy Wu Dominick: writer ([Website](#)) ([Twitter](#)) ([Instagram](#))
 - » Duke Kwon: pastor ([Twitter](#))
 - » Skye Jethani: author, cohost of [The Holy Post podcast](#) ([Facebook](#)) ([Twitter](#)) ([Instagram](#))
- Listen to podcasts by racial and ethnic minorities:
 - » [Pass the Mic](#)
 - » [Truth's Table](#)
 - » [The Holy Post](#)

RELATIONSHIPS

- Regularly share meals with people of different races and ethnicities.
- Ask someone of a different race or ethnicity about their personal experiences and perspectives of race and justice.
 - » Please respect if the person you ask does not have the time or energy or does not feel comfortable having such a personal discussion with you. It is not the responsibility of people of other races or ethnicities to answer all of your questions.
 - » Please keep in mind that the person you ask can only share their personal story and perspective. It is not their responsibility to be the representative of an entire race or ethnicity.
- Frequent places that are less familiar or comfortable for you where you can encounter those who are different from you. Go to different grocery stores and restaurants. Spend time at different parks and rec centers. Ask yourself why you may have previously avoided these spaces, intentionally or unintentionally, and if any past or existing structures or systems affected your previous understanding of these spaces.
- Join a sport, club, or activity with people who are different. Involve your kids in youth leagues and after-school activities where they will be with other kids of different races and ethnicities.
- Look for opportunities in these spaces that may lead to organic friendships with people who are different.

COMMITMENT

- Donate to organizations that advocate for racial and social justice. Support ministries that are serving and ministering to racial and ethnic minorities:
 - » [Young Life](#)
 - » [Like a Lion](#)
 - » [Safe Families](#)
 - » [Exodus Refugee](#)
- Volunteer with an organization or ministry that advocates for racial and social justice.
- Speak with candidates for elected office in your township or city. Ask them about their views on racial justice and the policies they advocate.
- Vote! [Register and find your polling place](#). Soma Church knows that no single political party has a clean record on justice and reconciliation. Voting is merely one way to take action on behalf of the poor and powerless. We would encourage you to take this issue into account when researching candidates for local, state, or federal office.
- Hold elected officials, school administrations, neighborhood associations, and other public institutions accountable for any unjust or discriminatory practices: attend public forums, write letters to officials, vote, etc.
- Take a stand. Speak out against racism and injustice on social media. Share articles, blog posts, and what you're learning. Graciously engage in conversation with your friends and followers.
 - » Remember, the call to reconciliation includes being reconciled to those who may disagree with you online. Speak the truth in love and represent the love of Christ well in your online discussions. Try to move difficult or painful conversations offline, and have them in person over a meal together to remove barriers and encourage gracious, productive conversation.
- Regularly pray for God's transforming power to bring reconciliation and justice to our city with brothers and sisters of different races and ethnicities.

Practice This Week

Is there a practice in each of these categories that stands out to you? Are there practices that groups of us can commit to do together? Which practices do you need to pray for courage to participate in?

Practice Right Now: Pray (10–15 minutes)

Join us in praying that Soma Church will experience “the unity of Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). Pray that our church will increasingly reflect the diversity of our neighborhoods and serve the specific needs of our communities. Ask the Lord that our unity and courage to pursue reconciliation and justice will make Jesus known in our city, and ask for protection against a spirit of fear and discouragement when we face spiritual and interpersonal opposition to racial justice. Pray for racial and ethnic barriers to be broken in our neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and government institutions.

RESOURCES FOR THE JOURNEY

Books*

- [*Divided by Faith*](#) by Michael O. Emerson & Christian Smith
- [*The Color of Compromise*](#) by Jemar Tisby
- [*Just Mercy*](#) by Bryan Stevenson
- [*One Blood*](#) by John Perkins & Karen Waddles
- [*Let Justice Roll Down*](#) by John Perkins
- [*Bloodlines*](#) by John Piper
- [*“Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?”*](#) by Beverly Tatum
- [*Disunity in Christ*](#) by Christena Cleveland
- [*Prophetic Lament*](#) by Soong-Chan Rah
- [*Generous Justice*](#) by Tim Keller
- [*Oneness Embraced*](#) by Tony Evans
- [*One Race One Blood*](#) by Ken Ham

**Please consider borrowing books from [your local library](#) or purchasing from [a local bookseller](#).*

Videos/Podcasts/Websites

- [*“Attucks: The School That Opened a City”*](#)
- [*“The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross”*](#)
- Pass the Mic podcast: [*Why Do Multi-Ethnic Churches Fail?*](#)
- The Holy Post podcast: [*The Christian Case for Reparations with Dr. Theon Hill*](#)
- [*The Bible Project: Justice*](#)
- [*Duke Kwon, Race Reparations*](#)
- [*Be the Bridge*](#)
- [*Brenda McNeil, Reconciliation & Justice*](#)

For Families with Kids

- *The Gospel in Color* by Jarvis Williams & Curtis Cook ([fill out the form for free access](#))
- [*God’s Very Good Idea*](#) by Trillia Newbell
- [*God Made Me and You*](#) by Shai Linne

GLOSSARY

Biblical Terms & Concepts (with Scripture References)

RECONCILIATION The restoring and healing process that grows out of God’s divine act, involving the continual practice of forgiveness, repentance, and justice that transforms broken relationships, systems, and structures into the way God intends them to be. ¹ (2 Cor 5:14–21; Eph 2:11–22)

JUSTICE Rendering to every person their rights as image-bearers of God. ² (Exodus; Deut 15; 24:12-13; Lev 19; Job 31; Ezek 18; Dan 4:27; Micah 6:8; Amos 1:3-2:3; Isa 1:17; 11:4; 58; Jer 22:15,16; Ps 37:21,26; 82:2-4; 112:4-6; Matt 5-7; 11:4-5; Luke 14:12-13; James 2; 1 John 4)

INJUSTICE (UNJUST) Depriving people of their rights as image-bearers of God. (Exodus; Deut 16:19; Lev 19:15,35; Prov 11:7; 28:8; 29:27; Amos 5:11,12; 8:5,8; 1 Thess 4:6)

CORPORATE IDENTIFICATION/RESPONSIBILITY God relates with humanity covenantally as both “me” and “we,” or individually and corporately. We are shaped by, connected to, responsible for, and even encouraged to confess the sins of our theological and biological families. While it is appropriate to repent of collective sins of the broader covenant family — both past and present — this does not mean that God holds individuals guilty for the sins of others in the same way. ³ (Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Deut 5:9; Lev 26:40; Num 14:18; Ezra 9:6-16; Neh 9:25; Daniel 9:5-16; Rev 2-3)

GOSPEL The good news that God himself has come to rescue us from sin and to renew the world through the person and work of Jesus on our behalf, and to establish his kingdom through his people in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Mark 1:14-15; John 3:16; Rom 1:16-17; 6:23; 1 Cor 15:1-4; Eph 2:8-9)

ETHNICITY “Ethnicity refers to shared cultural practices, perspectives, and distinctions that set apart one group of people from another. That is, ethnicity is a shared cultural heritage. The most common characteristics distinguishing various ethnic groups are ancestry, a sense of history, language, religion, and forms of dress. Ethnic differences are not inherited; they are *learned*.” ⁴ (Matt 28:18-20; Rev 5; 7)

Extra-Biblical Terms & Concepts

RACE A Western social construct that developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to distinguish groups of people on the basis of selective physical characteristics such as skin color, facial features, and hair type. ⁵

¹ [Brenda Salter McNeil](#)

² Adapted from *Generous Justice* by Timothy Keller and *Hearing the Call* by Nicholas Wolterstorff

³ Adapted from “Why We Must Confess Corporately” by Duke Kwon in *Heal Us, Emmanuel* by Doug Serven

⁴ [Cliff Notes](#)

⁵ Adapted from *Divided by Faith* by Michael Emerson & Christian Smith, and *Bloodlines* by John Piper

RACISM “The sinful devaluation, subordination, and exclusion of God’s image-bearers on the basis of ethnicity, culture, or race. Racism is individual and systemic, behavioral and attitudinal, conscious and subconscious, explicit and implicit, active and passive.” ⁶

SYSTEMIC/STRUCTURAL RACISM “The cumulative effect of racist feelings, beliefs, and practices that become embodied and expressed in policies, rules, regulations, procedures, expectations, norms, assumptions, guidelines, plans, strategies, objectives, practices, values, standards, narratives, histories, records, and the like, which accordingly disadvantage the devalued race and privilege the valued race.” ⁷

RACIALIZED SOCIETY “A society wherein race matters profoundly for differences in life experiences, life opportunities, and social relationships . . . a society that allocates differential economic, political, social, and even psychological rewards to groups along racial lines; lines that are socially constructed.” ⁸

REPARATIONS According to the International Center for Transitional Justice, “States have a legal duty to acknowledge and address widespread or systematic human rights violations, in cases where the state caused the violations or did not seriously try to prevent them. Reparations initiatives seek to address the harms caused by these violations. They can take the form of compensating for the losses suffered, which helps overcome some of the consequences of abuse. They can also be future-oriented — providing rehabilitation and a better life to victims — and help to change the underlying causes of abuse. Reparations publicly affirm that victims are rights-holders entitled to redress.”

CULTURE A social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors, and styles of communication. ⁹

SOCIOECONOMIC “Of, relating to, or involving a combination of social and economic factors.” ¹⁰

SEGREGATION “The enforced separation of different racial groups in a country, community, or establishment.” ¹¹

JIM CROW Jim Crow laws were a collection of state and local statutes (in the United States) that legalized racial segregation. ¹²

ABOLITION The act of ending or getting rid of a system, practice, or institution. Often used in reference to the termination of legal slavery.

CHATTEL SLAVERY “Chattel” is movable property, or property other than land or something tied to the land. “Chattel slavery” is slavery in which slaves were considered to be actual property that could be bought, sold, traded, or inherited. ¹³

⁶ Duke Kwon, [“What Is Racism,”](#) 2018 The Gospel & Our Cities Conference

⁷ John Piper, [“Structural Racism”](#)

⁸ *Divided by Faith*, Michael Emerson & Christian Smith

⁹ [“A Community Builder’s Toolkit”](#)

¹⁰ Dictionary definition

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² [“Jim Crow Laws”](#)

¹³ [“Chattel Slavery”](#)

CIVIL RIGHTS “The rights of citizens to political and social freedom and equality.”¹⁴

PEOPLE OF COLOR (POC) Inclusive reference for people with visibly darker skin such as African Americans, Caribbean Americans, Asian Americans, Japanese, Koreans, Pakistanis, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, Latinos/Latinas. This term may not be preferred by everyone; therefore, one should ask for preferences when possible.¹⁵

IMMIGRATION The international movement of people into a destination country of which they are not natives and where they do not possess citizenship in order to settle or reside there, especially as permanent residents or naturalized citizens, or to take up employment as a migrant worker or temporarily as a foreign worker.¹⁶

MAJORITY & MINORITY CULTURE “Every society has a dominant (majority) culture and at least one sub-dominant (minority) culture. Each of these has a corresponding cultural agenda and intra-cultural consciousness. Those in the dominant culture tend not to realize they have a culture, and those in the sub-dominant culture know very well that everybody has a culture. All in the sub-dominant culture are exposed to the dominant cultural agenda. But few in the dominant culture are even aware that there is a sub-dominant cultural agenda. Therefore, to those in the dominant culture, the concerns of the sub-dominant culture tend to be marginalized. We can define these dominant and sub-dominant cultures in terms of race, generation, gender, geography, language, etc.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Dictionary definition

¹⁵ [Brenda Salter McNeil](#)

¹⁶ [“Immigration”](#)

¹⁷ “The Sovereignty of God and Ethnic-Based Suffering” by Carl Ellis in *Suffering and the Sovereignty of God* by John Piper