

# Racial Reconciliation (2019)

## Life Group Leaders Guide

### Objective

This guide contains the information and questions you will need to lead a life group study during our current sermon series. Our aim is to spark Spirit-led, Bible-centered conversations that anyone can participate in regardless of how biblically literate they may or may not be. **The win** that we want you to experience is when your group members **connect** more closely with each other and with God so that they are encouraged to move forward in living out their faith.

### Directions

The *Purpose* and *Move* sections are for the leader to read to the group to provide clarity. **Do not feel pressured to cover all the questions.** Decide which ones may work best for your group. You will see brief notes interspersed between groups of questions to help give the group context for their answers. The *Notes and Commentary* section (when included) is optional reading for the leader to get background information and better understanding of the passages before leading the discussion.

### Series Overview

Each year at The Point Church we do a sermon on the ongoing work of reconciling different races or ethnicities of our society around the cross of Jesus.

### Racial Reconciliation Series Schedule

Sermon Date	Topic of sermon and life group
2/24/19	Peacemakers

# The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

## *Peacemakers*

### The Big Idea

We must work to bring peace to the races through Jesus.

### Flow of Study

**Icebreaker:** What is a group within society that you closely identify with? (Could be a favorite sports team, a community group, a musical group, political party, social group, school, etc...) What does it take to be in that group?

**Move #1:** Since the sermon and life groups are covering similar topics, it might be a good idea (both for content and time) to begin the discussion with some unpacking questions from this Sunday's sermon.

1. Did anything stand out to you from the message this weekend?
2. Is there anything from the message this weekend that you want to apply?

**Move #2:** Historically Jews and Gentiles were not fond of one another. The Jews were the chosen people of God, and the Gentiles were viewed as unclean. Let's look at a passage that tells how Jesus overcame the division between these two people.

#### Read Ephesians 2:11-12 (NIV)

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

**Note:** Gentiles and Jews did not like each other. "Uncircumcised" was a degrading title that Jews used of Gentiles, and was essentially name calling. Jews felt that they had a privileged position as God's chosen people and looked down on those who were not part of their heritage.

3. Why do you think people like to place offensive labels on people groups that they aren't part of?
4. What are some groups of people that come to mind today that struggle to get along in our society and world? Name as many as you can in two minutes.
5. Has the Holy Spirit ever convicted you of a prejudice in your own heart towards a people group? If so, would you be willing to share?
6. What does Paul say life was like for Gentiles in the text above? Describe a time that you felt like you were excluded or didn't belong?
7. Do you think that in any way you have a privileged position in society? If so, how can you work to be a peacemaker for those who don't?

**Move #3:** Now let's continue in this passage and read about how Christ brings peace to a divided world.

**Read Ephesians 2:13-22 (NIV)**

13 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. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

8. What do you think Paul means by saying Christ "has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility"? How does that apply to divided groups of people today?
9. What are some things that verses 14-18 say about "peace"? How does that apply to racial reconciliation today?
10. Compare and contrast verses 12 and 19. What are some differences between the relationship between Jews and Gentiles before and after Christ?
11. Identify and unpack the three images that Paul gives of the unity and oneness that all people groups have in Christ (verses 19-22).
12. How can we as Christ's followers work to bring the same kind of unity and reconciliation to divided people today?

**Next Steps:** The following are things you could challenge your members to do in order to take what you studied in this curriculum farther.

- Read and meditate on Acts 10 this week; ask God to reveal any prejudices in your heart that you need to let go of.
- Attend the Racial Reconciliation Conference on March 23 to dig deeper into this important topic and to be connected in opportunities for ongoing monthly conversations.

**Prayer:** End your study with a time of praying with and for each other. Take requests, but be sure to pray also about what you've discussed today.

## Notes and Commentary

The following are pieces of commentary, facts, and links based on the passages of this study in order. Use them to help supplement your group time or for your personal preparation.

Reconciliation is both a destructive and a constructive act, and verses 14–16 use four expressions to state that both take place in Christ: “in his flesh;” “in himself;” “in one body;” “by which” (lit., “in him”). Not only does Christ take the hostility into himself and destroy it, but also in himself he creates a new being. Implicit in this language is a theology of the resurrection, for that is the source of the new creation.

Notice that the new being (niv, “one new man”) is a corporate idea. Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection identified with and represented humanity. People are incorporated into him, and when he is raised to new life, a new being comes into existence, one in which people are one with Christ and one with each other in him. Grace not only connects us to God and Christ, it connects us to each other.

The purpose of the new being is the creation of peace and unity between Jews and Gentiles. Unity is a major theme of this letter. Four affirmations of unity exist in 2:14–18:

“made the two one” (2:14)

“to create in himself one new man out of the two” (2:15)

“in this one body to reconcile both of them” (2:16)

“we both have access to the Father by [in] one Spirit” (2:18)

The two groups of people are made one. God’s purpose for the unity of all things, introduced at 1:10, treated briefly in 1:22–23, is now expanded. Divided humanity is reconciled in Christ and joined into a unified, worshiping community. In effect, Paul suggests that Christians are a “third race” beside Jews and Gentiles; the two are one in Jesus Christ. The name-calling of 2:11 is over.... In Ephesians 2:16 a double reconciliation occurs—that between God and humanity and that between Jews and Gentiles....

If this barrier has thus been set aside, what other barrier can be justified? If God does not show favoritism (Acts 10:34–35; Rom. 2:11), if all are created in his image, if God’s purpose is unity, if we are to love even our enemies (Matt. 5:44), if Christ took the hostility into himself to destroy it, on what grounds can we justify keeping any barriers in place? Paul and the early church had already extended the unity in Christ to Jew and Gentile, to slave and free, and to male and female (Gal. 3:28). None of our barriers—our ways of devaluing, limiting, and taking advantage of others—has any basis....

The perversion of both active and passive racism must be challenged and stopped. The church must be a place where people know the barriers have been removed, can find solace, and can deal with racial injustice. The witness of the church is at stake. When people are told either implicitly or explicitly that they are not welcome in a church because of their color, the church has become an absurd place. Racism will have to be treated on two levels, both as a general societal problem and specifically within the body of Christ. Racism in any form is prohibited by the equality of all people before God and by his unrestricted love. But the theology of the body of Christ deals with the issue at another level. The point is not merely that all Christians are equal; rather, the point is that all Christians have been joined, which has far more significance and impact. (Klyne Snodgrass, NIV Application Commentary - *Ephesians*)