

## PURPOSE

Racism has negatively impacted our ability to honor the image of God in ourselves and in others. This is an opportunity for you to self-disclose, by sharing your personal story about how racism has affected you in a safe and nurturing environment. I ask that those in your group simply listen and empathize, and refrain from engaging in a conversation or offering any commentary in response to the stories that are offered.

As each of you take time to listen and share, I pray that your hearts will be filled with compassion, empathy, and grace. The experiences and stories shared are meant to bring the truth into light, and help us all avoid making false judgments or assumptions about the experiences and realities of “others.” As Jesus said, “the truth shall set you free,” and I pray that everyone who participates experiences such freedom.

I know that an intimate discussion like this with virtual strangers can be difficult, uncomfortable, and emotional. I pray that God fills your heart with courage and vulnerability, and that the time and energy you invest into this discussion transforms your hearts, so that you are empowered to love and honor your brothers and sisters of all colors in bold new ways.

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## GUIDELINES

Please adhere to the following guidelines as you engage in your small group discussion:

### 1. Form groups of 3-4 people, comprised of 2 or more racial groups.

The purpose of this discussion is to share and learn from each other’s personal experiences. Find people who don’t look like you – those who don’t share your race, skin color, or ethnicity – and partner with them in this exercise. The smaller your group, the better.

### 2. Pray together before starting the discussion.

After introductions, take a moment to pray together for the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion.

### 3. Affirm your group’s intentions at the start of the discussion.

Everyone in the group should repeat the following: “Thank you for being vulnerable and sharing your stories with me today. I am here to listen to and learn from everything you tell me, so that I can better love and honor you and my neighbors. I will not judge or offer my own commentary in response to your stories. I am here to simply listen and give you a platform to self-disclose how racism has negatively impacted your life.”

**4. Raise your hand and say “FAMILY” if you need to pause or recalibrate the conversation.**

Race is a sensitive subject, and is bound to cause all sorts of feelings to arise. Anyone who feels upset during the discussion should raise their hand at an appropriate moment, and say the word “Family,” to remind everyone of who we are in God’s eyes, and in relation to each other. At that moment, everyone should stop talking, pause, and look at each other and say, “You are my brother/sister, and I love you.” After that you can pray together if you’d like, and reset the tone or direction of the conversation.

**5. Seek to understand, rather than talk back, argue, or invalidate a point.**

The point of this discussion is to learn about the experiences and perspectives of others through their self-disclosure. We do that best by listening, rather than speaking over others or re-telling or interpreting their story through our own lens. Listen to learn, rather than respond or “fix” the person speaking, which invalidates their emotions and shuts them down.

**6. Be honest about your experiences.**

I recognize that it can be embarrassing and painful to talk about your stories, but the only way we’ll ever learn from each other is to speak from our hearts, in vulnerability and honesty.

**7. Give everyone an opportunity to speak.**

Resist the urge to monopolize the conversation, by limiting your stories to a maximum of 1 minute per person, per response. If you’re uncomfortable speaking, you can choose to simply listen, but recognize that the discussion will be vastly improved if everyone in it shares their experiences and perspectives.

**8. Close in prayer.**

Pray for one another, and ask God what next steps He wants you to take in an effort to honor your neighbor of a different culture, ethnicity, or race.

**9. Share contact information with each other.**

Continue the conversation with your small group members after you return home, and ask God how He’d like you to build relationships with their communities. Some ideas include making plans to attend their church, having dinner with them in their neighborhoods, meeting their families for a day at the park, or identifying a community or ministry project to do together or participate in a “Walk in My Shoes” field trip (detailed in Chapter 10 of my book, *The Third Option: Hope for a Racially Divided Nation*).

## **FORMAT**

A short video that outlines these guidelines will be played during the simulcast. This video will demonstrate the small group discussion in action, with an emphasis on the “Family” recalibration moment.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & FORMAT**

- 1. Introduce yourself, single/married? Children? Where you're from, and greatest fear?**
- 2. What race or ethnicity are you, and how do you identify?**
- 3. Describe the first time you were conscious of your ethnicity and what it communicated to you about yourself, your family, and others in your group.**
- 4. What did you learn about other ethnicities or races from the stories that those in your group just told?**
- 5. What are some barriers in your heart that have prevented you from engaging with “others”?**
- 6. What would help you develop a more honorable understanding and relationship with those you describe as “others”?**
- 7. What is one way you can commit to experiencing someone else's culture to learn more about their race or ethnicity? For example, you may choose to visit a different church, attend a cultural festival, dine at an ethnic restaurant, travel to another country, etc.**

Please remember to limit your responses for each question to 1 minute or less, so that everyone in your group can participate. Begin with question #1 and allow each person to respond before moving to the next question. End your discussion on a high note, by giving each member of your group a word of encouragement. It might be something you appreciate about them, something you learned about them or the racial group they represent, something they said that broke your heart, a commitment to pray for them, or any number of other encouraging words. The key is to speak from the heart, and follow through with any commitments you make.

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This content was created in collaboration with Dr. Zachary Green, Game Changer and Pastor Miles McPherson.