



## **Group Leader Guide** **“Jesus and Racism” - Even Though** **June 6-7, 2020**

### **Group Creed**

We come together as a Group with the goal of Spiritual Formation; encouraging one another to become the same kind of person that Jesus is, so that we can live out every part of our lives inside of His Kingdom.

### **// Leader Preparation**

This weekend, Ben addresses the racial tension that we all are feeling in our country right now. While many churches, including Flatirons, are guilty of not bringing enough attention to this very real & difficult struggle in our nation in the past, we are changing that starting this weekend.

You are leaders in this church. We believe that each of you has been hand-chosen by God for this time, that God knew these conversations would happen this weekend, and He trusted YOU to lead them. We, Flatirons, trust you as well. These conversations with your groups are going to be uncomfortable. They should be. With such an important and relevant issue as race and racism, we are all going to feel different levels of shock, offense, sadness, anger, and defensiveness. Lean into the discomfort. Don't shut it down or prioritize peace over purpose. Jesus leaned into the hard issues and encouraged people to address what was uncomfortable, controversial, and unjust.

Most importantly, as you prepare, PRAY!! Pray for the individual members of your group to come to the table with softened hearts, humble attitudes, and a willingness to listen and learn. Invite the Holy Spirit into the conversation and ask Jesus to use you & guide you as you lead them.

You don't have to have all of the answers. Don't attempt to answer a question that you aren't sure about. The best answer you can give is, "I don't know the answer to that, but let's seek those answers out together." None of us have the answers right now, but we are committed to doing the hard work & having the uncomfortable conversations in order to do better and make lasting change & we pray that you will join us in that.

If you do have a black person or person of color in your group and notice that the group is looking to them for all of the answers, explanations, or representations, try to step in and remind them that we have to all do our own individual work and not put pressure on others to educate us on these issues.

If you find that the conversation is escalating or becoming heated, continue to remind the group that this is a conversation and not a debate. Carry the core values of meeting members with grace and truth as you walk into these difficult but important conversations. If you or a member of the group are offended by something that is said, address it with grace. Jesus never used guilt or shame to point out our offenses. We are here to learn from one another and to examine and own our individual behaviors and brokenness while being met with grace, love, and empathy with the goal of learning how to become more like Jesus in every area.

## // Biblical Context

As Ben said in his message this weekend, racial division and discrimination began when sin entered the world three chapters into the Bible. We see it when Jews wrongly assumed that being “God’s CHOSEN people” meant that they were God’s “FAVORITE people.” Racial tension was at a boiling point when Jesus appeared on the scene. There were laws preventing a Jew from eating or communing with a Gentile, and the Jews were also living under the oppressive Roman (Gentile) regime. Racism went both ways. Jesus was a person of color living in ancient Israel. Jesus was oppressed by Gentiles... and as a Jew, he was also associated with a group of people who oppressed Gentiles right back. But what we see over and over again in moments of racial or systemic injustice is that Jesus STEPS IN between the oppressed and the oppressor. He stood in what Ben referred to as “the dangerous middle.” He was always being accused of spending too much time with “sinners,” “Gentiles,” “people who aren’t like us.” And as we should always do in any area of our lives, we look to Jesus as our model and example for how we should respond and act now.

**BEGIN WITH PRAYER:** As a group, pray for the conversation to be filled with grace, love, and understanding. Pray for humble, open hearts to listen, learn, and grow. Pray that at the end of the conversation, we would all look a little more like Jesus in these areas of our lives.

**// Rules For Discussion** *(Prior to the start of discussion, it will be extremely important to read through each of these and to ensure that everyone in the group understands and commits to engaging within these guidelines. If anyone has negative feelings about any of the rules, assure them that these were put in place to ensure that the discussion stays safe, productive, and focused on what Jesus has to say about this topic.)*

**Our purpose:** to come together in humility, vulnerability, empathy, and with a willingness to have open conversations about race and racism, and to look more like Jesus as a result.

1. Speak from a place of grace, humility, and with a willingness to learn, listen, and understand another’s experience
2. Be aware of your body language, facial and audible reactions. We communicate volumes with our body language and can quickly make others feel unsafe without realizing it.
3. Be willing to examine your heart, to own and acknowledge your sin and brokenness in these areas, and lean into your own discomfort.
4. Allow each person time to share and speak without interrupting, commenting, or offering unsolicited advice during their sharing.
5. Refrain from talking about issues of politics, government institutions, or focusing on details of specific tragedies and events. Approach this conversation through the lens of what Jesus has said concerning issues of oppression and injustice. “Caring about the life of another isn’t political. It’s human.”

## Group Discussion Questions “Jesus and Racism” - Even Though June 6-7, 2020

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### // Bible References *What does Jesus say about this? How did He fight injustice?*

Genesis 1:27; Genesis 12; 1 John 2:9-11; John 8:1-11 (Woman Caught in Adultery); John 4:1-39 (The Samaritan Woman); Acts 10:34-45; Mark 11:15-19 (Jesus cleanses the temple); Luke 10:25-37 (The Good Samaritan); Jeremiah 7:5-7

### // Discussion Questions *(Remind the group that not everyone has to answer every single question. Opting to listen & learn is permitted, welcome, and encouraged.)*

1. How are you feeling about having this conversation? (We operate within 6 primary emotions. Sad. Angry. Scared. Happy. Excited. Tender. Use these as your framework for sharing how you are feeling. Use emotive language, rather than your opinion or judgment of circumstances.)
2. Have you directly or indirectly experienced racism or injustice? If yes, please explain. If you have not experienced either, how do you think you would feel putting yourself in the shoes of someone who has experienced racism or injustice?
3. Read John 8:1-11; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 10:25-37; How do we see Jesus respond and ACT on oppression & systemic injustice?
4. Why do you think it's so hard or scary for us to stand in the “dangerous middle” where Jesus stood?
5. What have you been wrestling with since hearing Ben's talk? What came up for you that has been difficult or uncomfortable for you to look at in your own life??

### // Challenge

Racial injustice is an issue that is not going to disappear or be fixed overnight. We all have a lot of work to do with each other and for each other. Thankfully, we have a God who will never give up on us. He understands that change takes time, and He is patient with us as we stumble and fumble, and as we try to get it right. And He knows that many times we will get it wrong. This side of Heaven, we will always battle the sin and brokenness in ourselves and in our world.

The challenge for ALL of us is 2-fold this week: First, we have to take a deep, hard, uncomfortable look at our lives, our words, and our actions to identify where we have intentionally or unintentionally allowed prejudice, racism, and tolerance of injustice to take root in our lives. And we need to repent. Repentance just means asking for forgiveness & then changing direction and changing your mind & heart. Jesus is the only one who can change our hearts and heal those areas. Ezekiel 36:26 says, “And I will give you a new heart,



and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” In the Psalms, David asks the Lord to “Create in me a new heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Pray those words over yourself this week.

As Jesus shows you areas of your heart and mind that need healing and repentance, your 2nd challenge is to share that with someone in your life. That could be someone in your group, someone in your family, our church, or a close friend; someone who you trust and know will speak truth into your life as you are on this journey. Share how Jesus is working on you in these areas & ask them for prayer and accountability. We are in a constant spiritual battle, so it will take hard work to undo years of conditioned thoughts and behavior and heart posture. But with Jesus, it is absolutely possible! As we uproot the brokenness in our hearts, only then can we start to take active, meaningful steps towards being a part of the solution.

This is our first try at really diving into this. We know we won’t solve anything in one weekend, but we are committed to continually take steps, mend relationships with the people in our lives, and to step towards people that are hurting. Keep leaning into this with us, keep allowing Jesus to work in and on your life. The only answer to injustice is Jesus, so we are going to keep chasing after Him.

**// Resources** *(We have provided a preliminary list of resources below for you to begin to work through, including books, podcasts, and organizations that you can learn more about to start taking steps toward action and change.)*

## Websites

[bethebridge.com](http://bethebridge.com) - “Empowering people and culture toward racial healing, equity and reconciliation”.

## Books

[How to be an Anti-Racist by Ibram X. Kendi](#)

[Divided by Faith by Michael O. Emerson & Christian Smith](#)

## Podcasts/Sermons

Unlocking Us with Brené Brown-Brené with Ibram X. Kendi on How to Be an Antiracist  
Red Rocks Austin - How Do We Make Harmony?// Ethan Matott // Fruit Trees & Fig Leaves

## Films

“13th” (Netflix)

“Selma” (Available for rent on Amazon Prime)

“LA 92” (Netflix)

“The Help” (Netflix)

“Just Mercy” (Available for free during the month of June on ALL streaming platforms including YouTube)