

RACIAL WEALTH GAP

Learning
Simulation

Biblical Study Guide



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As a Christian organization, Bread for the World would like to invite you to put your faith into action to end hunger. We hope the simulation will be a helpful tool to help you and your community advance your understanding about hunger, racism, and the wealth divide.

The following biblical principles and discussion questions are tools for Bible Study. The tools are identified below and can help resource your advocacy to end hunger by applying a racial equity lens. These principles and questions help us understand that God's design of racial/ethnic diversity empower us to find ways to walk in a spirit of racial/ethnic unity.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE:

Racial diversity in our nation and around the world is God's choice. God is the Creator of diversity.

Please read and discuss these bible lessons and reflections.

Genesis 1:27-28 states:²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.²⁸ And God blessed them...

God made each of us in His image. In so doing, God blessed us in our diversity, and desires all of creation to live in peace, love, and inclusion, but our human condition means we fall short of living up to God's hopes and plans for us. Exclusion and discrimination are ways in which we fall short. This happens within relationships and structures. The simulation illustrates structures of exclusion and discrimination.

Psalms 139:14 states: Psalm 139:14 "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well."

We are 'wonderfully and fearfully made.' Some translations say 'wonderfully and uniquely made.' Yet, we see that racial diversity in our nation, and around the world, has been a source of tension. Instead of resenting the diversity that God has made, we should embrace it.

Summary:

From these biblical texts (Genesis 1:26-31 and Psalm 139:14), we see that God was intentional about making each of us. These texts invite us to embrace God's design for diversity and inclusion. In doing so, we move toward a more complete vision of loving and acting in peace with one another, as God desires.

Guiding Questions and Reflection:

1. What do these scriptures mean to you?

2. How do these scriptures reveal God's intent in the creation of each of us?

3. If God designed each of us with intentionality, how do these scriptures reveal God's intention for a diverse community?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE:

God wants us to act in love.

Please read and discuss these bible lessons and reflections.

Mark 12:30-31 'And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.³¹ And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

1 Corinthians 10:24 "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being."

Mark 12:30-31 and 1 Corinthians 10:24 call us to love our neighbor as ourselves. These are just two of many scriptures that reaffirm God's desire for us to love our neighbors fully and not just partially, selectively, or begrudgingly.

If we apply these biblical texts within the context of the simulation, we see that loving our neighbor as we love ourselves translates into equitable access for our neighbor to the resources that we and/or some of the other participants in the group might have.

If you currently have privilege and access, loving your neighbor as you love yourself, may also mean that you desire the same access for your neighbor. In other words, policies should reflect our love of neighbor. Achieving equitable access and denouncing discriminatory practices are important ways for us to live into this scripture to honor God's will for all of us.

Biblical Study Guide

Guiding Questions and Reflection:

1. What do these scriptures mean to you?

2. How do these scriptures reveal God's expectations of us to love one another?

3. How are you currently honoring God by loving your neighbor (Matthew 22:39) without pre-judgement? What are your spiritual disciplines for being vulnerable and open so that you can more systematically engage your heart, mind, soul, and strength to end racial inequities (Mark 12:30-31)?

4. How are you putting the needs of others above your own (1 Corinthians 10:24)? How does bias affect your response?

5. Given this recognition, what steps can you take to dismantle personal and historic biases?

6. How does loving our neighbor relate to standing for racial equity?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE:

God wants us to live in peace with one another.

Please read and discuss these bible lessons and reflections.

Colossians 3:15 “And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.”

Hebrews 12:14 “Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.”

Genesis 1:27 “So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

God intends for us to “let the peace of Christ prevail in our hearts and actions with others. We are members of one body called to peace,” (Colossians 3:15). In so doing, we can find a way to live in just peace, as God intends.

In this biblical text, we are challenged by God’s design for a just peace that resides within the gifts of diversity. This includes finding ways to acknowledge and celebrate different racial and ethnic groups. The text helps us understand that we should not look at our neighbors as separate from us, but instead as being part of the same body—the body of Christ. In order to function properly as a body, all parts need to be healthy, empowered, and nurtured. This leads to peace within the body. It is the same with our nation. National leaders should help ensure that policies and practices embrace racial equity in order to establish peace. For the nation to function well, each racial group needs to be healthy and empowered, which in turn means that all parts of the political system (e.g., voters/constituents, policymakers, and implementers) need to adopt racially equitable practices.

Hebrews 12:14 calls us to “make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; “without holiness no one will see the Lord.” As children of God, we are called to a higher standard of holiness, which is total devotion to God. This encompasses the way we think and speak about others, as well as our interactions with others. All aspects of our life should be devoted to honoring God. In honoring God, we are called to embrace people from other racial groups that are not our own.

Genesis 127 reminds us that all of us are made in the image and likeness of God.

In sum, we are called to make every effort to live in peace with our brothers and sisters in God’s image. But if we are to do so, we need to ask ourselves, what is required of me and my community to live in peace with my brothers and sisters. How does inequitable treatment not generate peace? How does peace require supporting equitable policies and practices that foster racial and ethnic inclusion and eliminate disparities?

Biblical Study Guide

Guiding Questions and Reflection:

1. What do these scriptures mean to you?

2. What is God's expectation of us related to peace?

3. In Colossians 3:15, what is the connection between diversity and peace as it pertains to being one body in Christ? How does this biblical text invite us to honor our neighbors who are different from ourselves?

4. What are some examples of how you, your church, or your community may reconsider how to practice just peace with our neighbors? What action steps could be taken in response?

5. How do the principles of racial equity help us build peace among the different groups of the body of Christ?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE:

God Invites us to Address Racial-Ethnic Bias. (John 4:1-42)

Please read and discuss this bible lesson and reflection.

⁷There came a woman of Samar'ia to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."⁸ For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samar'ia?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water?"

This passage is most widely known as "the woman at the well," and many of us are probably very familiar with the story. The story about the woman at the well raises questions about racial-ethnic divisions during the course of Jesus' ministry.

Before Jesus was born, there was tension between the Samaritans and the Jews. The Samaritans were descendants of the Israelites of the northern kingdom who had intermarried with foreign settlers after the fall of Samaria in 722 BC. As a result of this intermarriage, they were no longer considered to be truly Jewish, and there was cultural tension between the two groups. Therefore, Jews who were traveling from Jerusalem to Galilee often took the longer, more indirect route east of the Jordan River through Perea so they could avoid interacting with Samaritans.¹

We see Jesus doing the opposite in this passage. Jesus decided to take the shorter, more direct route,² traveling through Samaria (John 4:3-4). Jesus was intentional in his ministry and showed us how to be the same. Jesus had choices just as we do. He could have followed the cultural norms of that time and avoided contact with Samaritans, but he did not. He chose to walk through Samaria with his disciples. The disciples were Jewish and held the historic racial and ethnic biases against Samaritans. The story demonstrates that God is calling us to loving, mutual interactions within our diverse communities.

Secondly, Jesus decided that he and his disciples would not only *walk through* Samaria, but *stop in* Samaria (John 4:5-6). While this was the shortest route from Jerusalem to Galilee, the meeting was not

¹ References to historical places, location, customs, and geography are cited from the Life Application Study Bible, NLT, pages 1304-1306, compiled by Chris and Jennifer Taylor and their relationship to The Royal Geographical Society.

² Ibid.

Biblical Study Guide

just transactional. It was intentional. This demonstrates how we can model interactions with people from different racial and ethnic groups—with love, despite societal pressures not to do so.

When he stopped, he asked the Samaritan woman at the well for water (John 4:7-11), demonstrating that he was not interested in showing bias based on racial or ethnic identity. This reaffirms the higher standard that God has for us—not to treat communities differently based on their racial or ethnic makeup. Further, Jesus is extending an invitation to the woman and the rest of the Samaritan people to follow him as the Messiah, and as Lord and Savior—something that Jesus invites everyone to do. This is not just an invitation to the Jews, but to everyone. We are invited to love our neighbor because God loves our neighbor.

The disciples marveled (John 4:27) when they saw Jesus and the Samaritan woman speaking. One reason for this could have been that they were held captive by their own cultural biases. Still, they were also willing to trust Jesus to teach them how to critically reflect on their conscious and unconscious biases against those not like them.

In sum, the story encourages all believers to understand how they have been socialized through their belief systems and societal teachings. If we do not consider this, it can lead to unconscious and conscious unfair treatment, particularly with different racial or ethnic groups.

This story teaches us how to show grace for ourselves and our communities. It encourages us to receive the Christian principle of love that Jesus demonstrated for us. May we too marvel at what God can yet do in teaching us to practice love with our neighbors, no matter what our—or their—racial or ethnic identities.

Guiding Questions and Reflection:

1. Read John 4:1-42. What does this passage mean to you?

2. What are some ways we avoid interacting with different racial or ethnic groups? How does this biblical narrative help us to have interactions that advance racial equity?

3. How have you learned to have biases against different groups? How can you address this?

4. If you identify with a racial or ethnic group that might share experiences similar to those of the Samaritans, how does it make you feel that Jesus reached out and extended an invitation to engage in a relationship? If you do not identify, what does it say about God's expectation of us to do the same?

5. What are some ways that we can practice love and unlearn the negative attitudes and actions that society has taught us?

6. In reading this passage, what have you learned about God's call for inclusion, peace, and love to take place between different racial and ethnic groups?

Notes

