

Reach Across Racial Boundaries Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. In general, do you prefer to stick with what you know or to try new things?
2. Describe one friend you have who is very different from you. What do you appreciate about that friendship?

Read the following passage: Read Acts 6:1-6.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Even though the early church consisted almost entirely of Jewish believers, divisions began to emerge along cultural lines. Hellenistic Jewish believers typically spoke Greek as their first language and had greater exposure to Greco-Roman culture. Hebraic Jewish believers grew up in Israel, spoke Aramaic, and read the Scriptures in Hebrew. What are some of the reasons why maintaining unity in a diverse community is often difficult?
2. It appears that the apostles didn't even realize the widows among the Hellenistic Jewish believers were being overlooked. Why do you think we so often fail to notice what those from other ethnicities or backgrounds are experiencing and feeling? What can we do to help close this perception gap?
3. When this issue concerning the distribution of resources arose, the Hellenistic Jewish believers spoke up, and the apostles listened. This was essential for the community to arrive at a healthy solution. Are you engaging in substantive conversations with men or women from other races and ethnicities? Why do you think these conversations often don't take place? What can help such conversations be genuinely fruitful?
4. Stephen used the Scriptures to push back on some of the perspectives of his Jewish countrymen concerning the Temple and the land of Israel. What are some key biblical teachings that might be relevant to the racism that often emerges in our context?
5. Read Acts 11:1-3. Why do you think the Jewish believers criticized Peter's visit with Cornelius? What mistake(s) were they making in their evaluation? Closely related to their response is the attitude of suspicion. Why do you think suspicion often marks our posture toward other cultures or people groups? What can we do to push past such attitudes?
6. Read Acts 15:1-11. Why is this such a critical moment in the early church? Although this issue is first and foremost about the Gospel, it emerged in a multi-ethnic context and is incredibly relevant to building multi-ethnic churches. How so? How do the

truths Peter articulates here address the roots of racism?

7. How can you practically pursue deeper multi-racial relationships? Are there any barriers you anticipate having to work through?

Pray