

Grace Pasadena

A Self-Study Guide: Justice and Reconciliation

INTRODUCTION

When asked which commandment is the greatest, Jesus replied, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* (Matthew 22:37-39, ESV) In these short verses, Jesus summarizes and recapitulates the social, ethical, and moral core of Old Testament Law and all the writings of the Prophets: intimate life with God requires a radical orientation towards our neighbor, or the other.

This radical orientation includes a gracious love for the disenfranchised. Using the words of Isaiah, Jesus affirms this at the beginning of his earthly ministry when he proclaims, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim **good news to the poor**. He has sent me to proclaim **liberty to the captives** and **recovering of sight to the blind**, to set at **liberty those who are oppressed**, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”* (Luke 4:8, ESV) This good news is universal and reminds us all of our common captivity to sin and its consequences. At the same time, Jesus highlights God's special care and heart for those on the margins. All through his ministry, Jesus embodies these words in his constant welcome and association with the unlikeliest of people. And all through his ministry, he calls his followers to do the same. Indeed, his is an upside down kingdom in which the lowly of heart, mind and body—the last of the world—are made first.

It is with this call to love God and embrace our neighbors in mind that we offer this self-study guide of readings and other resources regarding justice and reconciliation. The majority of the resources highlight the perspectives of Black Americans. Although these resources speak specifically to the racial and social divisions between Black and white America, they also speak broadly to dynamics affecting peace between all of us. Additionally, the majority of voices represented in this syllabus are Christian ones, including those from the denomination and theological traditions of this Grace Pasadena. These voices call us to love and they help us remember the hope we have in Jesus Christ for the breaking down of walls and comprehensive restoration to one another.

As with any course syllabus or reading list, this one has its flaws and limits. For some it may be too conservative. For others, too progressive. Some may wonder why certain resources were included and not others. Some may wonder why “secular” resources are included, and some may want more. Some may want greater diversity of voices. Such observations, criticisms and suggestions merit more conversations; may those conversations happen!

With that said, take this self-study guide as a spur (albeit an imperfect one) towards love and good deeds. Despite its limits and flaws, may this syllabus challenge and prompt us towards

deeper questions, a fuller understanding of our histories, an active charity and civility, and, above all, a more embodied experience of God's love.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THIS SYLLABUS

- Before you begin this guide, revisit the prayer guide titled “*A Call to Listen, Abide and Fast*,” which Grace Pasadena made available in the wake of the protests of 2020. The scriptures and questions in that guide provide a helpful foundation for weeks ahead.
- Immerse yourself in scripture daily. As the Apostle Paul says, “*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*” (2 Timothy. 3:16, NIV). God's Word provides our ultimate rule of life, and we must submit all things to it.
- The timeline in this guide is a recommendation. Work through the resources at your own pace. No matter your speed, take time to reflect prayerfully on the resources.
- The resources begin with an invitation to reconciliation and justice. Then it moves to an examination of our historical context, a re-reading of Scripture through the eyes of Black Christians, practical wisdom for Christian congregations, and, finally, an invitation to find common ground. You do not need to stick to the prescribed sequence. Keep in mind, however, that the sequence has a logic and flow that helps tie everything together.
- Keep a journal and pen handy as you read.
- Although a self-study guide, consider using it with a friend or another member of your household. If you're interested in working through the materials with a cohort of others, reach out to [Pastor Marc](#). We'll find a way to gather monthly to discuss and pray, even in these times.

FINAL ENCOURAGEMENTS

Echoing the Prophets and the 2 greatest commandments, Jesus speaks eight blessings, or Beatitudes, in his Sermon on the Mount:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 3-10, ESV)

May the Spirit cultivate humility in us, manifest these blessings in us, and may we, in turn, bless one another and our neighbors.

With great love for you all,

Pastor Marc Choi

Books to Purchase

- *Divided by Faith* by Emerson and Smith
- *Reading While Black* by Esau McCaulley
- *The Beautiful Community* by Irwyn L. Ince
- *Uncommon Ground* edited by Timothy Keller and John Inazu

Pre-Work

- Revisit Grace Pasadena's "Call to Abiding, Listening and Fasting". (Available at the Grace Pasadena website under [Prayer Guides](#).)

Week 1: An Invitation

- Watch "[We Need to Talk About Injustice](#)" by Bryan Stevenson at TEDx.
- Watch "[Grace, Justice and Mercy: An Evening with Bryan Stevenson & Tim Keller](#)".
- Watch "[Grace, Justice and Mercy Q&A with Bryan Stevenson & Tim Keller](#)".
- Read "[Is God Anti-Racist](#)" by Amy Julia Becker.

Week 2: An Invitation

- Read "[Letter from A Birmingham Jail](#)" by Martin Luther King, Junior.
- Read "[Who's Afraid of Social Justice?](#)" by Bryan Dijkema.
- Read "[Advancing Gospel Reconciliation – Overcoming Logical Fallacies in Dialogues on Race](#), Parts 1-4," by Kenny Gibs.

Additional Resources for Weeks 1-2

- Read *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson, or watch the movie also titled *Just Mercy*.
- Read "[The Friend We Need but Do Not Want: Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)" by Greg Thompson.
- Read "[An Evangel AND an Ethic](#)" by Thabiti Anyabwile.
- Read "[The Debate About Ethics We Are Not Having](#)" by Thabiti Anyabwile.

Week 3: Understanding the Historical Context

- Read *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* by Emerson and Smith, Preface to chapter 2.

Week 4: Understanding the Historical Context

- Read *Divided by Faith*, chapters 3-6.
- [Watch "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration"](#) by Equal Justice Initiative (EJI).

Week 5: Understanding the Historical Context

- Read *Divided by Faith*, chapters 7-Conclusion.
- [Watch "Reconstruction in America"](#) by EJI.

Additional Resources for Weeks 3-5

- Read [*Reconstruction in American: Racial Violence after the Civil War, 1865-1876*](#) published by Equal Justice Initiative.
- Read *The Color of Compromise* by Jemar Tisby.
- Read *God's Long Summer* by Charles Marsh.

Week 6: Revisiting our Local History

- Watch the film "Can We All Get Along? The Segregation of John Muir Highschool". Check your video streaming service for availability.
- Read about the racial history of South Pasadena from the [Tiger News Paper](#).
- Read about the racial history of Pasadena in the [Pasadena Star News](#).
- Read about the [Japanese internment camps](#) in California in the Los Angeles Times.
- What issues of housing, education, politics and economic development can you further explore?

Week 7: Revisiting our Local History

- Read "[The LA Riots: 25 Years Later](#)" in the LA Times.
- Read "[25 Years later, how did the riots transform LA? And has the city changed enough](#)" in the LA Times.
- Read "[When LA Erupted in Anger: A Look Back at the LA Riots](#)" by NPR.
- Read "[The Chicano Moratorium 50 Years Later](#)" in the LA Times.
- What issues of housing, education, politics and economic development can you further explore?

Additional Resources for Weeks 6-7

- Watch "Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown, Exploring Koreatown in Los Angeles," Season 1, Episode 2 (2013).
- Read *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander.

Week 8: Reading Scripture With Our Neighbor

- Read *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*, by Esau McCaulley, chapters 1-2.

Week 9: Reading Scripture With Our Neighbor

- Read *Reading While Black*, chapters 3-4.

Week 10: Reading Scripture With Our Neighbor

- Read *Reading While Black*, chapters 5-6.

Week 11: Reading Scripture With Our Neighbor

- Read *Reading While Black*, chapter 7-Bonus Track.

Additional Resources for Weeks 8-11

- Watch Tim Keller on "[Racism and Our Corporate Sin](#)" and "[Our Cultural Tension](#)".
- Watch "*13th*" on Netflix.

Week 12: Becoming Peacemakers

- Read *The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity and the Church at Its Best*, by Irwyn L. Ince, Jr., introduction-chapter 2.

Week 13: Becoming Peacemakers

- Read *The Beautiful Community*, chapters 3-4.

Week 14: Becoming Peacemakers

- Read *The Beautiful Community*, chapters 5-7.

Week 15: Becoming Peacemakers

- Read *The Beautiful Community*, chapters 8-10.

Additional Resources for Weeks 15-17

- Read *Reconciling all Things* by Chris Rice and Emmanuel Kontogole.
- Read *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0* by Brenda Salter McNeil.

Week 16: Finding Understanding in Difference

- Read *Uncommon Ground*, edited by Timothy Keller and John Inazu, part 1.

Week 17: Finding Understanding in Difference

- Read *Uncommon Ground*, part 2.

Week 18: Finding Understanding in Difference

- Read *Uncommon Ground*, part 3 + conclusion.

Additional Resources for Weeks 16-18

- Read *Uncommon Decency* by Richard Mouw

Week 19: Reflection & Catching Up

- Spend the next two weeks re-visiting the readings or catching up. Take time to reflect on the ways you've been challenged and encouraged during this time. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you discern next steps.

Week 20: Reflection & Catching Up

- Continue re-visiting the readings or catching up. Take time to reflect on the ways you've been challenged and encouraged during this time. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you discern next steps.