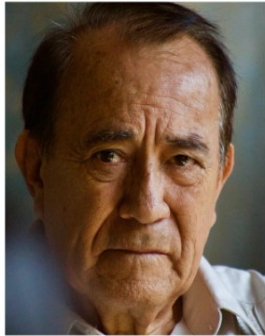
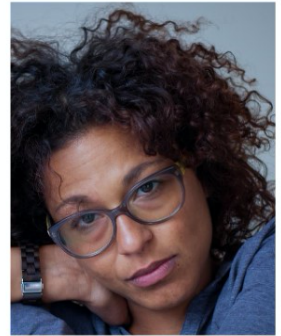




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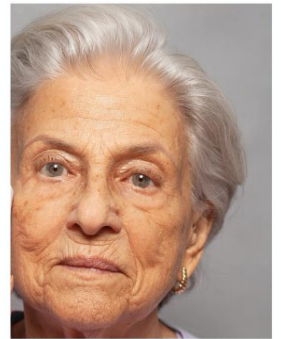
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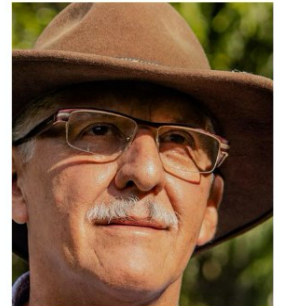
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A Bible study resource to help ambassadors of Jesus Christ combat the sin of racism.
Developed by The Coalition of Lutherans in Black Ministry
for the Southeastern District, LCMS



LORD, IS IT I?

This workshop is designed to be used in church families, in an atmosphere of love and trust, allowing the Holy Spirit to enable you to recognize and reject prejudice and racism and commit to overcome it with the love of God!

The workshop will take approximately three hours and is designed to take place all at once rather than in multiple sessions; but feel free to adjust and customize the workshop to meet your congregation's needs. If the entire congregation does not choose to participate, the workshop may be used by groups within the congregation (e.g. the choir, the Church Council, the youth, the Ladies Aid, etc.) If your congregation is not yet able to meet face-to-face, the workshop can be held online via ZOOM or some other internet platform. The workshop uses three online video clips. If your group does not have internet access, please contact the District office for assistance.

We recommend that different leaders be used for each segment of the workshop so that segment leaders get to participate and participants get to lead. (There are eight segments.) The only qualification for serving as a segment leader is the interest and willingness to advance the Kingdom of God! Directions for segment leaders are provided in the leader's guide.

May the hearts, homes, ministries and congregation of all who participate in this workshop be blessed!

Opening Meditation: *(20 minutes)*

Each of the gospels provide an account of the Last Supper where Jesus is preparing his disciples to understand and appreciate his imminent death. In that conversation, he announces that one of his twelve disciples (his inner circle!) will betray him. The gospel writer Matthew records it this way:

When it was evening, he sat at table with the twelve disciples; and as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." And they were very sorrowful, and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" Matthew 26:20-22

Jesus' followers were concerned, grieved and eager to know—one by one—if indeed he were the one who would betray their Lord. Today we gather with that same eager concern to determine how we, individually and collectively, may be betraying our Lord by committing and/or condoning the sin of racism.

Racism is a very *uncomfortable* term—a subject we'd rather avoid. But there is no better time than now to move past the discomfort, focus on the term and allow the Holy Spirit of God to free us from its influence.

Let's read Psalm 139 responsively, verse by verse.

- **In what ways does this psalm prepare you to confront the problem of racism?**

Let's pray!

RACISM: THE WORD *(10 minutes)*

There's that *ugly* word again. The average White American recoils at being tagged a "racist." But racism is a specific strain of sinful thinking that is habitual to us all: "Everyone should be/think/act just like me." Hostilities rage continuously in the world in which we live because everyone is committed to seeing things his or her own way.

But racism is a dangerous extension of self-centered thinking, based on ethnic identity, that adds LEGITIMACY and AUTHORITY to its views and value system. When the social position of an ethnic group is such that it has the power to impose its "worldview" on the entire society, **you have the potential for racism.** Historically in America, the ethnic group with the social position and authority to cast its worldview on American society was White Anglo-Americans (White English-speaking people of European descent). Over the past four centuries, America has penalized or punished in various ways those who don't look, think and act like White Americans and their worldview became the standard for American society. The language, the culture, the economy, and the political system were each developed around the best interests of White Americans. Those ethnic groups and individuals who adapt themselves to that standard usually "make it" and sometimes prosper. Those who question those standards or "rock the boat" beyond tolerated limits are penalized socially, economically, or even punitively.

- **How would you describe the worldview of White Americans?**

RACISM: THE REALITY *(30 minutes)*

Let's watch a helpful video called **RACE IN AMERICA** (<https://vimeo.com/429037183>)

- **In what ways do the facts presented in this video influence your views on racism? Be honest.**

As malevolent and destructive as systemic racism is, **the individual** who supports and perpetuates that system may have no malicious intent at all. He or she unconsciously presumes that doing what's best for "White folks" is in everyone's best interest. That racist perspective is so deeply ingrained and habitual that it is genuinely difficult for White Americans to recognize their biases. And just as tragically, African Americans and other minorities are extremely susceptible to developing self-images based on what White Americans say they are (second class, intellectually challenged, unattractive, unreliable, etc.) rather than what God says they are (created in His image, good). In the case of African Americans, the self-image problem can be so severe that Black Americans who manage to "beat the odds" and acquire a middle class or better standard of living will sometimes regard other Blacks who don't "make it" the same way **that our society typically does.**

Our challenge as Christians in a racist society is twofold:

- To use our "Kingdom vision" to see through cultural distortions to view every individual as a person created in the image of God and loved by Him; and
- To personally and collectively do everything within our power to recognize and eradicate racist laws and practices in our churches, communities and country.

IDENTIFY! TELL A STORY *(15 minutes)*

Perhaps the most helpful way to sharpen our Kingdom vision is to identify with those who are mistreated. Think of a time when you were deeply hurt and/or extremely angry about the way you were treated. Tell your story and be sure to share:

- What was wrong with the way you were treated?
- What action you wanted to see taken?
- What ultimately happened?
- How you view that incident today?

Hopefully, remembering a time when you believe you were treated unfairly can enable you to better identify with the hearts, minds and spirits of those who live in a society that questions their value and imposes limits on their life options.

LISTEN TO SOME STORIES! (25 minutes):

Listen to the stories that make clear that racism and its devastating side effects do not go away unless we do something!

- ❖ Watch “THE DOLL TEST”: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkpUyB2xgTM>)
- ❖ Watch as excerpt from a pastor’s sermon about two women he loves:
<https://vimeo.com/433227539>

WHAT MUST WE DO? SOME GUIDANCE FROM GOD (40 minutes):

The brutal death of George Floyd has brought the issue of racism into the spotlight for the entire world. And various strategies have been used to protest this social evil. But addressing racism as a sin is something that God calls us, his Church, to do! While we do all that we can (in a God pleasing way!) to change unfair laws and business policies and practices, our ultimate goal is to change hearts. What guidance does God offers us?

Read and consider John 2:13 -18.

People travelled great distances to reach the temple in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. They were required by Jewish law to pay a temple tax and they also needed to bring the appropriate animals to be offered as sacrifices. Unfortunately there were merchants and moneychangers (fellow Jews!) who sought to profiteer from Passover worshippers. Temple taxes could not be paid with foreign money (typically bearing the images of pagan rulers) so worshippers had to buy Jewish coinage. But money changers were known to add exorbitant exchange fees! Likewise unscrupulous merchants sold over-priced animals to Passover worshippers who did not want to bring and care for their own animals for what may have been weeks of travel. When Jesus saw these unrighteous practices underway in his Father’s house, he did not simply shake his head and walk away. He responded to the situation with passion.

- 1. What connections do you see between Jesus’ reaction to the sinful behavior of the merchants, the money changers and the temple leaders and our role and “responsibility” as Christ’s ambassadors in a racist society?**

And read and consider Ephesians 4:17 – 5:2. Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus stressing that new life in Christ brings about a recognizable change in one’s thinking and behavior. When Paul mentions living “as the Gentiles do” in verse 17, he is referring to their old way of life without God. But now, instead of focusing exclusively on themselves and their personal desires, they are called to view and value others with the same love and concern that God has shown to them.

2. Why are racist attitudes and behavior inconsistent with Christianity?

3. What specific “self-help” steps does the Apostle Paul commend to us for purging ourselves of inappropriate attitudes toward other people—regardless of their ethnicity?

The Bottom Line...

The more we learn about the racism, the more we may be tempted to think: “I’m not Jesus! What difference can I make in such a big and far-reaching problem?” But the battle against racism begins with our mindset. We are *not* Jesus but we are *in* Jesus and *of* Jesus. Thanks to Jesus, we operate with God’s power and his authority—so NOTHING is impossible for us! (Matthew 17:20, Philippians 4:13)

WHAT WILL WE DO? (30 minutes):

We began today with Psalm 139 asking God to help us see ourselves as we really are. And we trust that the Holy Spirit is doing that. Hopefully we have seen some ways in which we have been guilty of prejudice or racism or we have recognized the ways in which we tolerate or condone it. So let’s begin our course of action with a prayer of repentance and seeking God’s (and one another’s) forgiveness.

Let’s read Psalm 51 responsively, verse by verse.

We are very special people. Despite our weaknesses and failures, God is still at work in us and through us. Even through our participation in this workshop, God is equipping us to be his agents to combat racism and his ambassadors to offer love and encouragement to those who still fail to see the error of their ways. Every Christian, regardless of ethnicity, has the responsibility to stand against racism. Take a few prayerful minutes to reflect on your own life.

What can YOU personally do, starting today, to combat racism in your own life, in your family or among your friends and acquaintances?

❖ **Write down what YOU will start doing.**

❖ **Write down what YOU will stop doing.**

And now consider your church family. Together, prayerfully consider if there are ways which you as an LCMS congregation support and encourage racism. (Why does the LCMS, in a country that is as racially and culturally diverse as ours, remain a 96% White church body? According to Pew Research.Org, African Americans are more likely to be Protestant Christians than Whites or any other group in America. So why are there so few Black Lutherans in the LCMS? Could racism be a factor?) Talk about it and decide:

❖ **What steps might your congregation take to combat racism in our church and/or in the LCMS? Be as specific as possible.**

CLOSING *(10 minutes)*

- ♥ Pray asking God to call you to faithfulness in keeping your personal and congregational commitments.
- ♥ Sing a hymn to celebrate your refreshed commitment to being faithful ambassadors of God in a racist world.