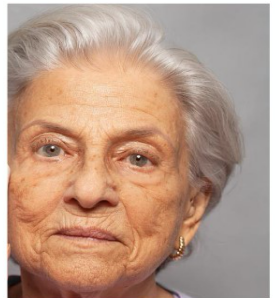
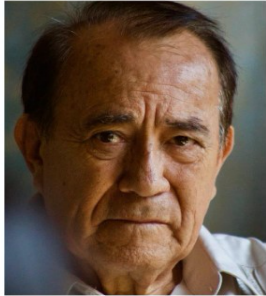




LORD, IS IT I ?



LEADER'S GUIDE

This workshop was designed as a face-to-face experience but may also be used via the internet if your congregation is not yet meeting in person. An “emcee” would be helpful to welcome participants (see point 1 below), facilitate the selection of segment leaders, to announce breaks (if and when needed) and to keep the group on schedule.

Three video clips are used in the workshop (one in segment 4 and two in segment 6). When making advance preparation for the workshop, make sure that there are people in your group who know how to access video links and share or display them on whichever internet platform is being used.

- 1. Welcome (10 minutes):** Thank everyone for coming to participate in the workshop. Direct all participants' attention to page 2 of the handout. Read through the first three paragraphs and solicit volunteers to lead the eight segments of the workshop. (Segments 2 and 3—"Racism: The Word" and "Racism: The Reality"--could easily be led by one person.) Stress that no special knowledge, expertise or advance preparation is needed to serve as a segment leader--just an interested and willing heart. Allow volunteers to choose the segment they wish to lead. Then distribute leader's guides to the segment leaders. Allow them 2-3 minutes to look over the directions for the segment they are leading (so that all leaders' attention will be focused on the agenda and not the leader's guide!) The suggested time allocations for each segment are shown. Close this segment by using the final paragraph of page 2 as an opening prayer.
- 2. The Opening Meditation (20 minutes):** Bibles will be needed for this segment, ideally with all participants using the same bibles. The segment leader may read aloud the three paragraphs of the opening meditation section of the handout. Then lead the participants in a responsive reading of Psalm 139. (If you are face to face, you may choose instead to divide the participants into two groups and have them read and respond to each other.) At the end of the responsive reading pose the question on the handout: **In what ways does this psalm prepare you to confront the problem of racism?** Accept all participants' answers and thank them for sharing. When all who wish to share have finished, remind participants

that God knows us completely and loves us—even with our faults! God eagerly responds to our prayers for a “reality check” (v.23-24) and stands ready with his forgiveness and guidance.

Choose a volunteer to lead the group in prayer for today’s workshop. (If you are fact to face, consider a prayer circle allowing any who are willing to offer prayer petitions.

3. Racism: The Word (10 minutes): Ask for volunteers to read through this section one paragraph at a time, pausing after each paragraph for questions or comments. Accept all participants’ viewpoints—even if they disagree with the reading--and thank them for sharing. The question in the handout for this section is: **How would you describe the worldview of White Americans?** Again, accept all participants answers and thank them for sharing. If any participant takes issue with another participant’s answer, remind the group that what we each see and experience may be very different and we want to gain the benefit of everyone’s viewpoints.

4. Racism: The Reality (30 minutes): Share that the group will be watching a 17 minute video called “RACE IN AMERICA” that offers a little more information about systemic racism in America. (Ask if any members participated in the SED Webinar “Lord We’ve Got a Problem” because they will have seen the clip before.) Suggest that any who have seen the video before may have added insights when the group discusses the clip.

At end of the video, use a question like “So, what do you think?” to give participants a moment to share any comments. Then pose the question in the handout: **In what ways do the facts presented in this video influence your views on racism?** Accept all participants’ viewpoints and thank them for sharing. Read or choose a volunteer to read the next paragraph and allow participants the opportunity to share any comments or questions. Then read the twofold challenge for Christians in a racist society and share the hope that this workshop might help your congregation to embrace that challenge.

5. Identify: Tell a Story! (15 minutes): This segment is designed to get participants in touch with what it feels like to be treated unfairly. Call on a few volunteers to share an experience with unfair or disrespectful treatment. Be willing to share an experience of your own if participants are hesitant to share. Pose the

questions from the handout if the person sharing fails to cover them. Read the closing paragraph for this segment from the handout.

- 6. LISTEN TO SOME STORIES! (30 minutes):** Having heard the experiences of some fellow members with disrespectful or unfair treatment, invite the group to listen to two stories of people who had to deal with disrespectful attitudes of racism and its devastating side effects. Watch a 9-minute YOUTUBE video clip called “THE DOLL TEST”. Solicit the responses of the group after the video. Use questions like: “How do you think children develop these ideas at such an early age?” or “How does it feel to see a child who identifies the bad or ugly doll as the one that looks like him or herself?” Be sure to ask, “How might we be contributing to the problem?”

Watch the second video clip, an 8-minute excerpt from a pastor’s sermon which we have dubbed “Two Women I Love: Mom & My Fiancée”. (Start the clip at 25:22 minutes with the pastor saying, “I’ll tell you a story”. Stop the clip at 33:08 minutes when the pastor says: “...my personal sin”.) Again solicit responses from the group using questions like: “Can you imagine being in that pastor’s shoes?” or “Can you imagine being in that Mom’s shoes?” Be sure to ask, “What hope does that incident offer?” Accept all responses and thank participants for sharing their views. Close the segment with the reminder that racism will not go away on its own. **But God can change our minds and our outlooks if we let Him!**

- 7. WHAT MUST WE DO? SOME GUIDANCE FROM GOD (40 minutes):** Choose readers to read the paragraphs from the handout as well as the two Bible passages. When participants answer questions, accept their responses and thank them.

After all responses to question 1, share or reiterate that just as Jesus could not bear to see God trivialized by the disrespectful behavior of those who professed to believe in him, we do not want to see any Christian hide or distort the love of God that is supposed to show in all of us! Just as Jesus did not accept wrongdoing in the temple—even though it was an accepted norm, we should not be content to accept racism that is inconsistent with God’s love (agape). Just as Jesus got actively involved in upholding God’s ways in his Father’s house, we are called to be actively involved in upholding God’s ways in our world. And just as Jesus was able to answer those who questioned his authority, we too can be prepared to

answer that God has called us to speak (and live!) his truth with love in our world! As you wrap up the discussion of question 1, share that the next reading will remind us of why we have the authority to speak for God.

After all responses to question 2, share or reiterate that we are all the same to God: people who are continuously putting off our old selves (our sinful attitudes and habits) and putting on our new selves (allowing the Holy Spirit to make us more and more like Jesus). Even though our skin colors and incomes and educational achievements may be very different, we are all sinners saved by God's grace. When we recognize and appreciate that we have that in common, we can also recognize and appreciate that none of us is superior to another. There is no room for racism in the Kingdom of God. There is some unbeliever out there who can relate better to a young Christian than to an older one. And there is another **unbeliever** out there who can relate better to a Hispanic Christian than to a White one. God intends for us to use our differences to advance God's kingdom—not to sabotage it!

After all responses to question 3, share or reiterate the importance of:

- Speaking truthfully with love to (and about) others. Not passing along rumors and stories that belittle others but sharing what is beneficial (v. 25 and 29).
- Confessing and constructively addressing anger rather than holding it in (v. 26).
- Not robbing other people of opportunities or recognition; working to overcome selfish and prideful motives in our interactions with others (v. 28).
- Being deliberately kind and forgiving to others, always seeking to mend fences rather than to build barriers (v. 32).

As you wrap up the discussion choose readers to share the two Bible passages in "The Bottom Line" paragraph.

- 8. WHAT WILL WE DO? (30 minutes):** Read the opening paragraph of the segment and then lead the group in a responsive reading of Psalm 51. (If you are face to face, you may choose to divide the participants into two groups and have them read and respond to each other.)

Continue reading and sharing instructions from the handout for the next exercise which each participant is to do on his/her own. Discourage participants from

sharing and talking and remind them that this is an opportunity to make a personal and prayerful commitment. Assure participants that they will not have to share their answers with anyone but God. If anyone is not able to write down their answers, offer to serve as that person's scribe.

After an adequate amount of time, move to the next task which requires the group to work collectively. Ask someone to serve as recorder taking down various suggestions. Encourage the entire group to agree on a few specific steps that they will recommend to the congregation to pursue.

9. **CLOSING (10 minutes):** Ask for volunteers to share any benefits that have come from the time they've invested in the workshop. Ask for a volunteer to share the steps the participants will recommend to their congregation to combat racism. Choose a volunteer or volunteers to lead the congregation in prayer or have a circle prayer allowing all who wish to offer petitions to do so. Singing together does not usually work very well in virtual gatherings; but if you are face to face, close with a hymn chosen by the participants to celebrate their renewed commitment to being the light and love of the Lord in a racist society.