

5 PRINCIPLES FOR RECONCILIATION

Pastors and Leaders Guide



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INTRODUCTION

When Jesus saw someone hurting, He stopped for the one. We are His disciples. We recognize the particular grief present in communities of color, people whose unique perspective and history have often been ignored by the majority.

The message of the Gospel reveals an unconditional love that breaks down dividing walls. As people of different backgrounds, we desire to connect and explore what reconciliation looks like. Similar to any process of grief, these five actions are cyclical and ongoing rather than sequential. Specific action items for local churches are included below. In Appendix A and B, we have included research sources and specific stories to illustrate each of the five principles.

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” – James 5:16

“You can’t heal a wound by saying it’s not there!” – Jeremiah 6:14 (TLB)

A good starting place is to recognize that such a thing as white culture exists. Yet when you’re a fish, you don’t see the water you’re swimming in. The majority culture has long used the color of someone’s skin to dehumanize and treat people differently. We need to confess historical, social and personal sin, even if we don’t feel like it.

We have assaulted the very image of God reflected in each person. As part of the white majority, we confess our part in hurting our black and brown brothers and sisters. Not only has discrimination created trauma and strife individually. Such sinful actions and theology have been a driver of unfair treatment and inequality in American society for centuries. Jesus offers forgiveness to all, adopting us into His family and showing what perfect love looks like.

“My mother, Mrs. Naomi Ruth Barber King—the wife of my father, slain civil rights activist Reverend A.D. King—often said, ‘You cannot clean house by sweeping all of the dirt under the rug.’ You have to roll the rug back, beat it, get all the problems out, clean the house and clean the floor, then you can be happy. I believe what’s happened this year is that America’s carpets have been rolled back: we see all the dirt of racism and prejudice. Now it’s time to move forward, to clean the house.” – Dr. Alveda King, niece of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

2. LISTENING

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.” – James 1:19

“Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance.” – Proverbs 1:5

We want to create space to listen as brothers and sisters in Christ share their stories. We realize the church has caused pain that needs to be heard. Whether the voices are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American (First Nations) or others, we can only empathize if we hear the intense emotion and understand the personal injustices that have occurred.

Nationally, 79 percent of Americans believe bringing people of different racial backgrounds together to talk about race will help blacks achieve equality. We are here to be present with those hurting and validate the reality of what is felt, rather than disagree on some small point of history or public policy.

"We cannot bear each others burdens if we don't know what those burdens are."
– **Trip Lee (Christian Hip-Hop Artist)**

3. REPENTANCE

"A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, and quarreling is like the bars of a castle."
– **Proverbs 18:19**

"For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility." – **Ephesians 2:14**

Repentance means "to turn around." The path to forging real bonds of trust starts with doing something different than we've always done. Our quest is to get to know who our neighbors are, understand them and support them. We take personal responsibility to turn from unloving to loving actions. We will take steps to establish primary relationships across races. It's not out of pity, but out of love for who our neighbors are—a beautiful reflection of the image of God.

"We need to come together and lament together, so we can then find joy together." – **Dr. John Perkins**

"Four hundred years of sinning cannot be canceled out in four minutes of atonement."
– **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

ACTION: Use Our Voices for Truth. We will not let bigotry in the church or among friends go unchallenged. We commit to learning more and using our voices on social media for justice. When a hateful remark or insensitive meme is posted, we realize a white person's civil response against it can de-escalate the rhetoric and help people realize their error. We will share messages that uphold the uniting truth and bold justice of God's Word.

ACTION: Live Out Compassion. We commit to be missional in ways that are vulnerable. Each of us have the option to live in our own neighborhood and never see the others. When we go and see others where they live, it confronts what we know about the world. For those seeking a hand out, perhaps we have Subway sandwich gift cards at the ready. For those who need a hand up, we need to know the local resources to refer people to. As agents of healing on a mission, we are called to be personally connected and compassionate. We are willing to get out of our church and go where the hurting, vulnerable and needy people are.

4. RECONCILIATION

"Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."
– **Hebrews 12:14**

"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."
– **2 Corinthians 5:1**



As the white church shunned our brothers and sisters, the natural response has been for black and brown people to set up walls of hostility. Christian leaders in communities of color call for these walls to fall. We accept the true apologies given and commit to moving past bitterness. We recognize forgiveness as a process; it will take time to release decades of baggage. We commit to pursuing peaceful fellowship with past enemies.

"Love builds up and unites; hate tears down and destroys... The aftermath of the love method is reconciliation and creation of the beloved community." – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1957

ACTION: Solution Sundays. Have Dinner Once a Month with Someone of Another Race. Two members of Congress, Senators Tim Scott of South Carolina (whose voice as a black Republican leader is rare), and James Lankford of Oklahoma (a former youth pastor), have been promoting what they call "Solution Sundays" over the past year. "We challenge each family to give one Sunday lunch or dinner for building relationships across race, to literally be part of the solution in America," the two Senators wrote in a [joint op-ed](#) last year.

5. RESTORATION

"Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause." – **Isaiah 1:17**

"But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." – **Jeremiah 29:7**

Our love is not silent or without action. We've come to learn our stories aren't so different from each other, though our challenges often are. We will challenge social systems of injustice and inequality, present in many spheres. We will seek justice wherever we have the power to act or to influence those in authority.

“The Bible commands us to seek justice... But there were, and always will be, human emotions. Such as sadness at seeing those that I knew as brothers in Christ insist on a Sunday religion that didn’t sharpen their sense of justice.” – Dr. John Perkins, Let Justice Roll Down

ACTION: Promote and Support Family Enrichment. Families in America are in crisis. A significant driver of this is men not taking their place as fathers, a problem pronounced in communities of color. This trend has some of its origins in criminal justice issues which persist today. National research reveals that 67 percent of black children live in single-parent homes, compared to 42 percent of Hispanic children and 25 percent of white children.

Marriages are falling apart or never chosen in the first place. Only 35 percent of blacks nationwide are married, compared to 60 percent of whites. We will proclaim the value of intact families, which research shows provides children of all ethnicities the best environment to flourish. Even as we seek to reconstitute intact families, we recognize the realities of our fallen world. We see the possibilities and unique needs of single-parents families as well.

The church also historically rejected the beauty of interracial marriage. As a man and woman of different ethnic backgrounds build a family together, this reflects crossing dividing lines in a tangible way. Scripture records many interracial couples, including in the lineage of Christ.

ACTION: Promote and Support Child Welfare (foster care and adoption). The fallout from broken families has been emotional and psychological damage, most severely affecting children. It’s never a parent’s dream to surrender their child to the state’s care. Today, more than 100,000 children in the U.S. foster care system are waiting for forever families. Those who wait the longest, often to no avail, are youth ages 10 and older who are predominantly black and brown. They need parents who are willing to be an interracial family and to recognize such children have complex emotional needs. Christians in communities of color sometimes have fears to overcome regarding supporting interracial adoption and fostering by white families.

If you have a room in your house and room at your table, you’re qualified. Those who are shown to have such capacity, especially if willing to take in two or more siblings, often find the state placing them at the head of the line. Even if you are not at a life stage to expand your family, we the church can build community around supporting children including coming alongside fostering and adoptive families.

APPENDIX A:

STORIES AND STATISTICS FOR THE FIVE PRINCIPLES

Research Sources Cited:

1. “Views of racism as a major problem increase sharply,” Pew Research, Aug. 29, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/29/views-of-racism-as-a-major-problem-increase-sharply-especially-among-democrats/>
2. “On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites Are Worlds Apart,” Pew Research, June 27, 2016, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/on-views-of-race-and-inequality-blacks-and-whites-are-worlds-apart/>
3. “Children in single-parent families by race,” Kids Count, updated January 2017, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/107-children-in-single-parent-families-by#detailed/1/any/false/573,869,36,868,867/10,11,9,12,1,185,13/432,431>
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10. “The New Face of Adoption Isn’t a Newborn Baby,” Charisma News, Nov. 5, 2015, <https://www.charismanews.com/opinion/53052-watch-the-new-face-of-adoption-isn-t-a-newborn-baby>
11. “Charlottesville Faith Leaders Unite for Public Prayer to Heal Community Wounds,” The Stream, Dec. 4, 2017, <https://stream.org/charlottesville-faith-leaders-unite-public-prayer-heal-community-wounds/>
12. “How Far Do Americans Drive to Church?”, Facts & Trends, Sept. 21, 2017, <https://factsandtrends.net/2017/09/21/far-americans-drive-church/>

STORIES FOR THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF RECONCILIATION

These documented stories could be used in sermons, blog posts or as basis for short videos.

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Story: *Family of Justice Roger Taney Delivers Public Apology to Descendants of Dred Scott*

Few events in American legal history left deeper scars than the 1857 court case ‘Dred Scott v. Sanford,’ when the U.S. Supreme Court led by Chief Justice Roger Taney stated that no person of African ancestry could

claim U.S. citizenship. After having lived free for four years, Dred Scott, his wife, and children were again declared the property of a white man.

On March 6, 2017, descendants of the infamous U.S. judge took an important step standing next to the great-great-granddaughter of Dred Scott at the Maryland State House. “We offer our deep apology to the Scott family, and to all African Americans—for the injury caused by Roger Brooke Taney and this decision,” said Charles Taney III.

Lynne Jackson, who leads the Dred Scott Heritage Foundation, replied: “On behalf of the Scott family, and all those African Americans who have the love of God in their hearts, we accept your apology and I thank you for it.” She stated later in an ABC interview: “This is about relationship-building and trust.”

2. LISTENING

Story: *St. Louis Pastor Listens to Protestors’ Concerns, Calls Christians to Be Peacemakers*

On September 15, 2017, a Missouri court found that a white officer was operating in self-defense when he fatally shot black man Anthony Lamar Smith following a high-speed car chase. The court’s decision set off a wave of protests downtown. Thousands gathered Friday afternoon in downtown St. Louis to voice their views on the decision.

Local pastor Jonathan Tremaine Thomas joined the crowd downtown to urge a nonviolent response. “This is an incredibly and seriously painful situation for hundreds of thousands of Americans,” he said after listening to protestors. “St. Louis has been a historic boiling point for racial tensions. Missouri has a history of making decisions that were based on race, that influenced the racial crisis in America.” He referenced the ‘Dred Scott’ decision.

For Thomas, on staff at Destiny Church in a St. Louis suburb, the situation presents an opportunity. “As a black man, I am somewhat emotional in this hour. I feel a lot of things in light of what has happened,” he



said as he walked downtown and heard the chants. “My heart is heavy today. But the presence of anger does not mean the absence of love.”

He spoke of our commission in times of crisis. “God’s Word says, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for you shall be called the sons of God,’” he cited the Beatitudes. “Jesus looked upon crowds and He was moved with compassion. He saw those who were beaten and harassed, legitimately oppressed. Then he was moved with compassion. It’s the compassion piece that we’re contending for in the church right now.”

3. REPENTANCE

Story: *How the White Majority Blew It in Responding to Tragic 2016 Shootings*

It was anything but a holiday week. Three major shooting incidents on July 5-7, 2016—in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Falcon Heights, Minnesota; and Dallas, Texas—traumatized the black community and [rocked all of America](#).

However, how many white people responded only magnified the hurt in communities of color. So two shootings of unarmed black men happened on two consecutive days: Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge and Philando Castile in Minnesota. These are names you should know, by the way; nearly every black person in America knows them well. Following those two incidents, thousands gathered in downtown Dallas to peacefully protest the shootings. Tragically, a lone sniper took advantage of the event to kill five police officers. The nation mourned.

How did we in the white community respond? We put out the hashtag “Blue Lives Matter” on social media. We never acknowledged the two black lives lost who brought about that Dallas protest, and that’s wrong. Every human life has value: the unarmed black men, and the police officers gunned down by a sniper. By the way, the officers in both those cases were let off with no charges. In the case of Mr. Castile, a school cafeteria worker who complied with an officer who then shot him while a little girl was in the backseat, we see it as a miscarriage of justice.

4. RECONCILIATION

Story: *Charlottesville Unites for Public Prayer to Heal Community Wounds*

Only months after the August 12 white nationalists’ rally that claimed three lives, faith leaders in Charlottesville condemned racism and white supremacy in a united response. A large contingent hailed from Faith, Hope and Love Church of Deliverance, an historically black church. Hispanic and white believers joined with them for a prayer walk to the assembly.

In a sight that turned some heads on Charlottesville streets, many walked arm-in-arm singing “Amazing Grace,” “I Shall Not Be Moved” and other choruses. The march silently passed the 4th Street intersection where Heather Heyer [was killed](#). The 32 year-old white woman had been standing in solidarity with the black community when a neo-Nazi activist drove his car into counter-protestors. Two police officers monitoring the riots were killed when their helicopter crashed.

Apostle Sarah Kelley, leader of the historically black church, recast these events in spiritual terms. “We recognize that the forces of hell showed their ugly head on August 12,” prayed the clergywoman. “God says there is nothing hidden that will not be uncovered. It’s uncovered and now it will be covered with the prayers of the righteous. This is the beginning of a new day. What we need is change in our hearts. Lord, take away the veil that blinds people.”

5. RESTORATION

Story: *“The New Face of Adoption Isn’t a Newborn Baby”* by Natalie Brumfield

When we hear the word adoption, most of us immediately think of a baby. That’s what our American culture teaches us it looks like. Yet there is another route of making a beautiful decision to adopt a child, one who is actively waiting.

America’s foster children count each day they live without a forever family. They are waiting to be adopted, perhaps by a family like yours. One of their strongest desires is having “a kind mom and dad.” Every time I look into their eyes and truly listen to these children in foster care, my heart breaks. I believe yours will too.

As a foster mom, I see up-close the divinely inherent need for forever attachment. They desperately need the simple opportunity to call out for “mom” or “dad.” They need to feel an embrace of a dad’s scratchy beard and know there will be plenty more safe embraces like that. They need to know they are irreplaceable, valued and desperately wanted. Watch video: [youtube.com/watch?v=WiHKbjLBQ3A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiHKbjLBQ3A)

So I’m going to ask you a favor. I want to give you a face to see and a voice to hear so you don’t forget. The favor I’m asking of you is only to watch and listen. Mario, age 17, has been in the foster care system since he was “one or two years old” in his words. He still dreams of having a family—“Any family,” he says.



APPENDIX B:

RESOURCES TO GO DEEPER

BOOKS

Why We Can't Wait by Martin Luther King, Jr.

March: A Graphic Novel Trilogy featuring John Lewis

Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America by Michael Emerson and Christian Smith

My Grandfather's Son by Clarence Thomas

Unshamed by Lecrae Moore

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass by Frederick Douglass

Under Our Skin: Getting Real about Race by Benjamin Watson

Dream with Me: Race, Love, and the Struggle We Must Win by Dr. John Perkins

The Lamb's Agenda by Rev. Samuel Rodriguez

False Justice by Stuart Greaves

FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES

Hidden Figures

Amazing Grace

42: The Jackie Robinson Story

Selma

The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross featuring Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Black America Since MLK: And Still I Rise featuring Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

13TH: From Slave to Criminal with One Amendment

Accidental Courtesy: Daryl Davis, Race & America

I Am Not Your Negro featuring James Baldwin

The Bible Project: Justice Video

[Videos of Senator Tim Scott](#)

ONLINE MEDIA OUTLETS

The Witness: A Black Church Collective <https://thewitnessbcc.com>

Faithfully Magazine <http://faithfullymagazine.com>

Seeing Color (blog) <https://www.seeingcolor.net>

Pass the Mic podcast <http://www.podasterystudios.com/podcast-pass-the-mic/>

Be the Bridge to Racial Unity <https://beabridgebuilder.com>

