

# Shrink the Divide

(Small Group Curriculum)



*"Transforming Hearts with the Power of the Gospel"*



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# **SHRINK THE DIVIDE**

## ***OUR PURPOSE***

To shrink the racial divide within the Body of Christ in the Mobile area.

## ***OUR HOPE***

Our hope is to see our community transformed by God's love one person at a time. Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can effectively change a person's heart, regardless of skin color.

## ***WHAT WE DO***

The Pledge Group seeks to fuel a movement within the local church for racial reconciliation to take place by providing opportunities for trusting relationships to grow and to benefit from honest dialogue.

(2 Corinthians 5:17-20)





# GROUP GUIDELINES

*“Let your conversations be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”*

*Colossians 4:6*

## CREATE A SAFE SETTING

Agree together to these discussion norms for your group:

- To believe the best in other people.
- Seek to be a learner, ask questions if you want to know more about what someone is sharing.
- If something is said that you consider offensive, then respond with grace and truth. Try not to be attacking.
- Do not interrupt when another is speaking.
- This is a listening and learning time, not a give advice time.
- Do not dominate or monopolize the conversation.
- If some of you, after watching the video teachings, feel apprehensive and do not want to say anything offensive, we encourage you to acknowledge and talk about your feelings. You may download the [Soularium App](#) and choose an image that represents how you feel talking about racial issues.



# INTRODUCTION

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*“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Colossians 4:6*

## **How can we have healthy conversations on race and show God's love?**

Too often people are opting out of conversations with those who are different from themselves because they do not want to look wrong, say something wrong or be challenged. Choosing our own comfort over honest conversations stunts our growth and moves us away from meaningful and lasting change... instead of towards a greater sense of understanding and unity.

“Lord, help us to humbly and honestly discuss the issue of racial division within the Body of Christ. Help us to ‘Shrink the Divide’ and to genuinely love one another more than we love our own comfort. Grant us the grace to understand more than being understood. We pray that You will strengthen us with the courage to overcome any reluctance to be honest or any concern about being wrong. May we be more committed to being redemptive than being troubled about being right or looking bad. Grant us humble hearts. In Jesus name. Amen”

***“Transforming Hearts with the Power of the Gospel”***







# **DISCUSSION 1 “Satan Divides-God Unifies”**

## **Introduction**

Q: What is “Shrink the Divide”?

## **Scripture**

Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.” (Matthew 12:25)

## **Watch Video**

Ed Litton and Joe Johnson

## **Big Idea 1**

Satan Divides-God Unifies

## **Questions**

Q: Why is this issue (Racial Reconciliation) important?

Q: What is the greatest challenge in confronting this problem?

Q. Read Philippians 3:8-10 (DISCUSS)

## **Reference Material:**

*Abraham Lincoln’s House Divided Speech*

A house divided against itself, cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved — I do not expect the house to fall — but I do expect it will cease to be divided.

## **Scripture**

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (Colossians 4:6)

## **Big Idea 2**

God is a relational God and his Kingdom is a “Kingdom of Relationships”. In fact, you cannot enter God’s Kingdom without a relationship with the King.

## **Questions**

Q: How do we intentionally engage in relationships with people who are different from us?

Q: Should this be a priority for us as Christ-followers? Why?

Q: What are some strategies we can undertake to try to understand others who are culturally or racially different from us?

**Notes:**



# DISCUSSION 1 “Satan Divides-God Unifies”

## AT HOME APPLICATION

1. This week read Mark 3:25 and apply the “SOAP” devotional tool. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you concerning this verse and ask Him to help you see this issue like He sees it.

Mark 3:25

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2. Pray for other conversations to take place and that we would each seek to be learners and move towards each other celebrating our different backgrounds and cultures.

Write your prayer.





## **DISCUSSION 2 “One Accord”**

### **Scripture**

These all continued with one <sup>[a]</sup>accord in prayer <sup>[b]</sup>and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers (Acts 1:14)

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. **2** Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues <sup>[a]</sup> as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1-4) *Footnotes: a: 2:4 Or languages*

### **Watch Video**

Kevin Cooley and David Richey

### **Big Idea 1**

We know what happened on the Day of Pentecost in the book of Acts, but it did not happen until they were all on one accord.

### **Questions**

Q: Describe what “one accord” would look like in our community.

Q: Do you believe that churches in the city and their members should pursue relationships with other churches and their members who are different from themselves?

If so, how might we go about doing so?

Q: If a local church should look like the community it is in, how would our church need to change to match that description?

## **Big Idea 2**

Read (Acts 2:5-21)

Though the pastors in the video had known each other for over 25 years, they had never dug deep into their relationship. When they began to meet regularly, pray together, eat together, go on trips together, share lives together, then a much deeper level of relationship was developed.

## **Questions**

Q: How can we develop these types of relationships to see God move in our city?

Q: What obstacles exist that must be realized? How can we overcome these obstacles?

Q: What elements are essential for us to witness meaningful progress?

Q: What must happen if lasting change is going to take place?

Q: Why did God wait for his church to get into one accord before he poured out his spirit? What is he waiting for today?

## DISCUSSION 2 “One Accord”

### AT HOME APPLICATION

1. This week read John 17:21-22 and apply the “SOAP” devotional tool.

John 17:21-22

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2. NEXT STEPS: Take the Pledge

*“I pledge to love my neighbor and to reject my own tendency to distance myself from those different from me.”*

3. NEXT STEPS: Commitment 1

*In My Daily Context*, I will recognize and engage with persons of other races, speaking warm greetings to them as fellow travelers on the journey of life.

**Notes:**







## **DISCUSSION 3 “Family Resemblance”**

### **Scripture**

**9** After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. **10** And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:9-10)

### **Watch Video**

Robert Brown and Roy Hill

### **Bid Idea**

We naturally gravitate to people like us. It is the homogeneity principle. Yet effectively “Shrinking the Divide” requires intentionality.

### **Questions**

Q: List 3 things you can do to “bridge the gap” with culturally different people.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Q: Are you willing to proactively take the steps to reach a deeper level in your relationship with someone who is different from you?

Q: What might be your next step? With whom?

Q: What do you see in your “neighbor” as a family resemblance?

**Notes:**

# DISCUSSION 3 “Family Resemblance”

## AT HOME APPLICATION

1. This week read Isaiah 46:10 and Matthew 28:18-20 and apply the “SOAP” devotional tool.

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Matthew 28:18-20

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## 2. NEXT STEPS: Commitment 2

*In My Prayers*, I will pray regularly for racial unity, harmony, and spiritual revival in our shared local communities and nation.

## 3. NEXT STEPS: Commitment 3

*In My Personal Initiative*, I will proactively foster and deepen relationships with persons across racial, socio-economic, ethnic and denominational lines.

4. Write an “I AM” essay starting every sentence with **I am from** sharing where you personally have come from and have experienced.

Example:

I am from the beautiful state of Alabama.

I am from the laughter and tears of my parents. I am from a broken marriage.

I am from families who value good food and have a deep love for chocolate.

I am from a family of artists, dancers, singers, and visits to countless museums because we value the arts.

I am from privilege that has enabled me to be able to experience a lot of the world and experience vastly different cultures than mine.

I am from a creator that made me to be creative and engage well with others.

Write your "I AM" essay.

**I am from...**







## **DISCUSSION 4 “*Unified in Christ*”**

### **Scripture**

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. (Romans 12:3)

### **Watch Video 3**

Shrink the Divide Intro/Promo

### **Questions**

- Q. Share something that you were encouraged or surprised to hear from the video clip.
  
- Q. What is your cultural and racial experience? What is your background?
  
- Q. How does the Gospel speak into racism today?  
Read Ephesians 2:11-16
  
- Q. What does it mean to be unified in Christ?  
Read Colossians 3:1-17 (DISCUSS)  
Read Galatians 2:11-14 (DISCUSS)
  
- Q. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 and discuss the importance of being ambassadors for reconciliation.

**Notes:**

## **DISCUSSION 4 “Unified in Christ”**

### **AT HOME APPLICATION**

1. This week, read Psalms 2:8 and Acts 1:8 and apply the “SOAP” devotional tool.

Psalms 2:8

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Acts 1:8

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2. Pray for the families who have lost loved ones or wounded because of racial bigotry and prejudice.

Write your prayer.

3. Pray for change in the hearts of all in this area and that ethnic minorities and law enforcement can work together to make our community and country a safer place for everyone.

Write your prayer.







## **DISCUSSION 5 “*Preconceived Ideas*”**

### **Scripture**

The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.<sup>[a]</sup>) (John 4:9)

### **Watch Video**

Leon Bell Jr. and Ben Kearns

### **Big Idea**

How does Jesus model for us breaking down racist barriers?

Read (John 4: Jesus Talks with a Samaritan Woman)

When Jesus went to Samaria, He was going out of His way. Jews did not try to find ways to hang around Samaritans—they had history and were not on friendly terms. Yet Jesus kept going. He went out of His way to talk to a Samaritan woman there. He was fully aware that He was stepping over not one but two barriers: the social barrier between Jews and Samaritans, and the cultural barrier between men and women. By all rights, this conversation should not have happened. And yet it did.

## **Questions**

Q: If you were to go back into time and talk to a younger version of yourself who had not been converted to the issue of racial unity, what would you want to change and tell yourself?

Q: What preconceived ideas concerning racial divide did you develop growing up?

Q. How can you change the way you build relationships across racial lines?

**Notes:**

## ***DISCUSSION 5 “Preconceived Ideas”***

### AT HOME APPLICATION

1. This week, read Galatians 3:28 and apply the “SOAP” devotional tool.

Galatians 3:28

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2. How can our differences lead us to praise God? How can we move from acknowledging our differences to celebrating them?

Write your prayer.







## **DISCUSSION 6 “*The Message of Reconciliation*”**

### **Scripture**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.  
(2 Corinthians 5:17-19)

### **Watch Video**

Melvin Clark and Randy Butler

### **Big Idea**

Racism does not exist because of social differences; it exists because there is sin in the heart of man. Racism is a sin issue, not a social issue. Therefore, the body of Christ should lead the way in every reconciliation effort and set the standard for spiritual and social healing in our nation. Christ, our Lord, died to redeem us from sin and the effect of sin. We are the image bearers of Christ in the earth. Therefore, reconciliation is not an effort to be made, it is our calling to be lived out. Our calling is confirmed in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

## **Questions**

Q. Reconciliation confronts and defeats self-righteousness. Romans 2:11 says, “There is no favoritism with God.” Believing that one race is better than another is self-righteousness. (DISCUSS)

Q. Reconciliation encourages the body of Christ to obey the Great Commandment. John 13:34-35 says, “I give you a new command: love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (DISCUSS)

Q. Reconciliation encourages the body of Christ to freely obey the Great Commission. Mathew 28:19-20 says, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.” The word “nations” refers to the diverse ethnicities in the world. In what practical ways are you or could you take personal responsibility to obey Christ’s command? (DISCUSS)

Q. Reconciliation honors God’s design. Act 17:26 says, “From one man He has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live.” It was God’s design that all of humanity be created from one man’s blood. (DISCUSS)

## **DISCUSSION 6 “The Message of Reconciliation”**

### **AT HOME APPLICATION**

1. This week, read John 13:34-35 and apply the “SOAP” devotional tool.

John 13:34-35

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2. God has not given up on reconciliation! During the video, forgiveness was spoken of to break tensions by forgiving each other for how we may have felt or feel about racial division. Take a moment to invite the Holy Spirit to recall someone who may have hurt you regarding racial division. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you forgive those who have sinned against you and to extend grace to those who have harmed and hurt you.

**Write your prayer.**





## **DISCUSSION 7 “*Friends on a Mission*”**

### **Scripture**

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. (Ephesians 4:2)

### **Watch Video**

Shree Lovett, Marty Carrell, Charlotte Greene

### **Big Idea**

How do we move forward in creating and building friendships among the racial divides to shrink the divide? Paul has told us the answer is humility. “Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Eph. 4:2). We must humble ourselves before God’s Word and before one another. We must see the idolatrous nature of our hearts toward our cultural comfort and identity and cry out to God to convict us. We must commit ourselves to association. It is not something that will just happen. We must pray for God to enable us to get to know one another across these racial differences, to serve one another, to sit down and eat together, to become friends with one another, to love one another. This is what we are called to do, simply to love one another as Christ has loved us.

## Questions

Q. During the video, the “hearts of racism” is mentioned relating to racism being a heart “sin” issue.

Read James 2:9 (DISCUSS)

Read 1 John 2:9 (DISCUSS)

1 Samuel 16:7 (DISCUSS)

Q. Where do we go from here?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST)

(DISCUSS) What is the churches role in helping shrink the divide?

(DISCUSS) What is your role in helping shrink the divide?

### **Notes**



# DISCUSSION 7 “Friends on a Mission”

## AT HOME APPLICATION

1. This week, read 1 John 4:19-21 and apply the “SOAP” devotional tool.

1 John 4:19-21

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## 2. Read Luke 10:25-37

### The Parable of the Good Samaritan

**25** On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

**26** “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

**27** He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

**28** “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

**29** But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

**30** In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

**31** A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

**32** So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

**33** But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

**34** He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

**35** The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

**36** “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

**37** The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

In the Gospel reading, the question is posed, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus' parable calls us to our obligations as Christians, to be a good neighbor: the one who stops and helps the injured; the one who does not hesitate to accept the responsibility of healing. The signs of this time are asking us to wake up, to stand up and to speak up when we see racism. This is how we love our neighbor as ourselves. This is how we act like Jesus. This is how we do justice and love goodness.

### **A Look at Myself in the Mirror**

1. **Have I** fully loved God and fully loved my neighbor as myself?
2. **Have I** caused pain to others by my actions or my words that offended my brother or my sister?
3. **Is there** a root of racism **within me** that blurs my vision of who my neighbor is?

### **Seek Forgiveness and Reconciliation to Act Justly**

It is written in Ezekiel 36:26: "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

Take some time to be one with the Holy Spirit and ask the questions from above looking at your own heart. Take this time to repent asking for forgiveness from any racial injustice.

**Write your prayer.**

3. Pray for the Lord to fill our hearts with love for Him and our neighbor so that we may work with Him in healing our land from racial injustice.

**Write your prayer.**



## HOW TO SOAP

### WHAT DOES S.O.A.P MEAN?

**S**– The S stands for Scripture- you physically write out the scripture.....you'll be amazed that what God will reveal to you just by taking the time to slow down and actually write out what you are reading!

**O**– The O stands for observation- what do you see in the verses that you are reading? Who is the audience? Is there a repetition of words? What words stand out to you?

**A**– The A stands for Application- this is when God's Word becomes personal. What is God saying to me today? How can I apply what I just read to my own personal life? What changes do I need to make? Is there an action that I need to take?

**P**– And finally P stands for Prayer. Pray God's Word back to Him. If He has revealed something to you during this time in His Word, pray about it. Confess if He has revealed some sin that is in your life.

.

## RESOURCES

Black Fist White Knuckles (YouTube)

Pastor John Siebeling and Pastor Wayne Francis

The Third Option (YouTube)

Pastor Miles McPherson

*The Third Option: Hope for a Racially Divided Nation*

By: Miles McPherson

*Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians  
in America to Confront Racism and Injustice*

By: Eric Mason

*White Picket Fences: Turning Toward Love in a World Divided by  
Privilege*

By: Amy Julia Becker





