

**“VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY”
DISCUSSION GUIDE
FROM THE ANTI-RACISM MINISTRY TEAM OF
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA
PUBLISHED AUGUST 2020**



THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IDENTITY STATEMENT

“We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.”

WHAT IS THE ANTI-RACISM MINISTRY?

In 2002 the Alabama-Northwest Florida Regional Board of the Christian Church (DOC) adopted a formal statement embracing an anti-racist identity. Working against the sin of racism in the culture and in the church has been a priority for almost 20 years. An anti-racism team of ten persons is formally approved each biennium and charged with the task of leading efforts to provide anti-racism training and to encourage “true community” among congregations that seek to work against racism and toward reconciliation. This team also monitors the decision-making bodies of the Region to make sure the Region is being appropriately inclusive as it orders its ministry.

SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The myth of white supremacy was a foundational concept upon which many of the institutions of this country were established. Fueled by greed, it was convenient for white settlers to believe that Native Americans who occupied the land were less than fully human and not deserving of the land and its riches. It was also convenient to believe that African slaves were less than human and, therefore, useful as slaves for the white settlers. White theologians and preachers proclaimed false interpretations of scripture to justify these actions. White anthropologists

developed false theories and presented them as factual about biological differences that justified the maintaining of white superiority.

With the myth of white supremacy as a backdrop, the systems and institutions of this country were created for the purpose of serving white persons. The rules, policies, and procedures were designed to be helpful to white persons while denying access to non-white persons.

Over the years there has been a growing awareness of the fact that white supremacy is indeed a myth. Supreme Court cases, the civil rights act, and other legislation have been efforts to provide a more equal system in our nation. Biblical scholars and anthropologists have tried to correct false teachings that had been used to justify white supremacy. Although these advances are to be celebrated, persons of color tell stories of how institutional systems, policies, and procedures continue to create disadvantages for persons of color. Even though the people who run those systems may not believe or act in ways that promote white superiority, they administer policies that continue to negatively impact persons of color.

A DEFINITION OF RACISM

*(See the Glossary in **Appendix A** for other terms and definitions)*

Racism is not understood to be an act or mindset of an individual; rather, it is the combination of institutional power, plus race prejudice, which creates racism. We all live in a nation built on racist systems. We were born into it. The institutions that govern our lives were formed out of race prejudice and continue to have the power to advantage some while disadvantaging others.

INTERNALIZED RACIAL SUPERIORITY AND INTERNALIZED RACIAL INFERIORITY

In a diverse nation, where the structures and systems are constructed and continue to support and favor one race, many have developed notions of superiority. Conversely, many others have developed notions of inferiority. The unhealthy systems into which we were born, function to produce internalized racial superiority as well as internalized racial inferiority both of which are false narratives. Both of which are destructive in our efforts to become the persons God

created us to be. Both hinder our ability to function as community, and as people of God. There is much work to be done by the church in affirming the worth of every person as a child of God and working to dismantle the systems that treat persons differently based on race or ethnicity.

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RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

R = take **RESPONSIBILITY** for what you say and feel without blaming others

E = use **EMPATHETIC** listening

S = be **SENSITIVE** to differences in communication styles

P = **PONDER** what you hear and feel before you speak

E = **EXAMINE** your own assumptions and perceptions

C = keep **CONFIDENTIALITY**

T = **TRUST** ambiguity because we are *not* here to debate who is right or wrong

(from *The Bush Was Blazing but Not Consumed* by Eric H. F. Law)

I agree to uphold these guidelines for the time we have together.

SIGNATURE

DATE

(Play entire video at this point, OR play Session One if your group is discussing the video in segments)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Obviously, the song John Mobley quotes is quite dated, using dated terminology for different races, but the reason he quotes it is because it does emphasize is that for a long time the church has been proclaiming that all persons of all races are precious to God. The problem is many Christians have never been comfortable TALKING about racism and have not had the tools to know how to act in an anti-racist manner.

- 🗣️ Talking about certain topics makes people uncomfortable; racism is one of them. Why do you think this is?

- 🗣️ Some white Americans believe that talking about racism just makes things worse. Do you agree or disagree?
 - 🗣️ Have you encountered ways that made it easier for you to talk about it?

- 🗣️ Do you believe that learning about the history of racism can shine a light on issues that still exist today? If so, how and why?
 - 🗣️ How can making more and more people aware of the realities of racism move us towards becoming an anti-racist country”?

In recent months stories of police brutality against persons of color have received much attention and an ongoing public demand for systemic change has been seen through protests in cities all across the nation.

- 🗣️ What feelings have you experienced in recent months about racial division and injustice?
 - 🗣️ Why do you think you had those feelings?

- 🗣️ As you listen to the introduction in the video, are you convinced that the Christian faith directs us to work against racism (becoming anti-racist)? If so, what scriptures convince you that our faith directs us to be anti-racist?
 - 🗣️ If not, what Scriptures do you believe support that?

*For further study, see **Appendix B** for more Scripture references...*

(Play “Voices from the Community” (Session Two) if your group has not already viewed the entire video)

I. LESSONS FROM CHILDHOOD

“...I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; so that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” (Genesis 18:19)

- Q As you listened to voices of persons describing their experiences of racism in childhood, what experiences of your own come to mind?
 - Q Was there ever a time that you were told you could not participate because of your race?

- Q What were the beliefs of the people around you that contributed to the racist behavior you experienced?

- Q In reference to the scripture above, why is it so important that we actively teach children to behave justly?
 - Q In what ways are children taught to behave unjustly (either directly or indirectly?)



MIRRINETT BARNES HUFFMAN

“For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.” (Romans 12:3)

Mirrinett tells us a story about wanting to go to Kiddie Land Park as a young child. When her parents told her only white children could go there, she asked, “why? am I not good enough to go there?” As she shared her story,

- Q what could you imagine was felt by the parents in those moments?

- Q What can you imagine was felt by the child in those moments?

- Q How would you respond to Mirrinett’s question, “when did white people decide they were entitled and superior to black people?”
- Q The Jim Crow laws mandating public segregation are no longer in effect, but in what ways does the spirit of Jim Crow laws live on today? (See “For the Leader” for suggestions)
- Q What does Romans 12:3 teach us about God’s view of us?
 - Q How should that inform our view of each other?
 - Q Why do you think Paul invokes grace in this moment?
- **For the Leader** – suggestions of how a Jim Crow mentality continues: Public pools not available to children of color, children [and adults] that separate themselves in the lunch room, customer service workers who give poor service only to people of color, police officers who use racial profiling, schools and communities that are still segregated by district lines.



BETH THOMASON

“But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.’ But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; ... So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized...” (Acts 9:13-18)

Beth shared the story of being taught racial prejudice in her upbringing, yet she also shared that it was relationships with persons of color (first a classmate and then later her students) that caused her to question and overcome the racial prejudice she had been taught.

- Q Can you think of a time in your life when someone was teaching you by words or action to believe that white people were superior, and people of color were inferior?
- Q Why do you think that white people don't HAVE to acknowledge racism in their midst? (Why are so many white people able to go their whole lives without thinking about racism?)
- Q Do you think racial prejudice is always intentional?
 - Q Are the effects different when it is unintentional?
- Q Why and how do you think that Beth's new relationships caused her to question what she had been taught in childhood?
 - Q Has that ever happened to you?
- Q What are ways we can intentionally build meaningful relationships with persons of different racial/ethnic backgrounds?
- Q How can congregations help members build those relationships?
- Q What are the common, contributing factors that allow Paul, Ananias, and Beth to all see anew? (Answer: Risk, trust, admitting when they were wrong, stepping outside of their comfort zone, eventually building new relationships- not easy but potentially productive)
 - Q Ponder and share moments of trust where you engaged someone of a different race. Do you have friends from a different race with whom you can have open and honest conversations?



MELVIA CARTER

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature... for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.’” (1 Samuel 16:7)

When **Melvia** shared the stories of being accused of stealing, she opened up about the painful messages she got as a child. She learned that that others may have seen her as a child that should not be trusted, simply due to her race.

🗣️ All these years later, her memories still cause her pain. What feelings can you imagine that this causes a child at the age of 10?

🗣️ How might experiences like that have influenced the way a child saw or felt about him or herself and others?

*see glossary for definition of “Internalized Racial Oppression.”

🗣️ Why do you think that the woman who accused Melvia of theft never offered her an apology?

🗣️ What did that action do to contribute to superior and inferior thinking?

🗣️ Do you think this assumption that people of color are thieves persists?

🗣️ If so, how does this affect the way the system of racism continues?

(See “For the Leader” for suggestions)

🗣️ Is it possible for one to look or speak differently than their capabilities or their intentions?

🗣️ Can you think of someone who far exceeded expectations or judgments that were made about them?

🗣️ Can you see how the white woman’s judgment on race alone contributes to the many degrees of internalized racial oppression?

🗣️ Why do you think 1 Samuel’s message of looking at a person’s inner self is important?

- **For the Leader** – The way customers are treated when shopping (white vs POC), the way customers ACT when shopping (POC have to go out of their way to prove they’re not stealing while shopping; they have a heightened sense of caution / Vs white people who never have to think about that). Assumptions often made by police officers, teachers, and other people with authority. Disparity between sentencing between black thieves vs. white thieves.

II. STORIES OF INJUSTICE

“In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.” (Romans 7:4-6)

Systemic racism is experienced in big and small ways by persons of color. It is so prevalent that many persons of color adapt and come to expect that they will be discounted and treated as lower priority.

🗣️ The “law” that The Apostle Paul is talking about in Romans 7:4-6 is the Jewish law. However, how does this statement also speak to us in the U.S.A., living under old laws?

🗣️ How can we “die” to the current laws of our land that might be unjust?

🗣️ What does Godly fruit look like in our world today?



KANESSA DOSS

*“You will hear the cries of the oppressed and the orphans;
you will judge in their favor,
so that mortal men may cause terror no more.” (Psalm 10:18)*

Kanessa shares a story of being pregnant and giving birth to her daughter. She talks about how dismissive her doctor was about her concerns, and how the doctor’s dismissiveness led to her losing her sight, almost permanently.

🗣️ As **Kanessa** shared her story of interaction with the health care professionals during her pregnancy, what do you recall about your own experiences with health care professionals?

- Q Although this experience with many medical professionals is not unique to people of color, do you think a person’s gender increases their chances of being dismissed?
- Q Do you think race further complicates the issue?
 - Q Did you relate to her fear and frustration of being dismissed?
- Q Does the statistic she shared that women of color are 3-4 times more likely to die in childbirth surprise you? If so, why?
- Q What can the church do to decrease these kinds of systemic problems?
- Q Does this shine a light on an area of systemic racism that needs serious attention?
- Q If so, what kind of attention?
- Q How might Psalm 10:19 speak to Kanessa’s experience of not being heard?
- Q How does it speak to us, people who are hearing her claims of oppression?



PAUL ALLEN

“When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” (Leviticus 19:33-34)

White privilege refers to inherent advantages possessed by a white person on the basis of their race in a society characterized by racial inequality and injustice.

Paul spoke candidly about having to come to grips with “white privilege” as he noticed how differently his adopted brother from Honduras was treated compared to how he was treated.

- Q Do you believe “white privilege” (or as Paul called it, “white advantage”) is real?
- Q If so, how have you seen it at work in your experience?
- Q Are you uncomfortable with the concept of “White Privilege” or “White Advantage”? If so why?
- Q If you feel resistant to talking about “White Privilege”, what could help you move past that in order to have a productive conversation about racism?
- Q If white people have an advantage because of their skin color, how can they use it to create positive change?
- Q Leviticus 19:33-34 tells how God wants us to treat people from other countries. Do you think we are following this command in our country today?
- Q If not, how can we do things differently in order to please God?



RECENNAH BRAXTON

“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1)

Internalized racial oppression is a concept in which an oppressed group uses the methods of the oppressing group against itself. It occurs when individuals or groups who have experienced some form of devaluing then embrace and employ the practice of devaluing against other individuals or groups, including members of their own group. Members of marginalized groups may have an oppressive view of their own group, or affirm negative self-stereotypes. Internalized oppression may manifest on an individual or group level, and may result in conflict or discrimination within the group.

Recannah talks about the racial disparities she experienced working as a pharmacist. From the ways customers dismissed her to, the trouble she had with

a supervisor who treated her and other employees of color differently than the white employees, to the reaction her African American boss had when she accused her supervisor of behaving in a racist way – she expresses frustration with the injustice. She also expresses concern for her 2-year-old son and whether or not he will be safe venturing out into the world as he gets older.

As you listened to **Recannah** share how she is not given the respect she has earned in becoming a pharmacist,

- Q How do you imagine that makes her feel?
 - Q Are you conscious of the race of your pharmacist and,
 - Q are you less confident in a non-white pharmacist?

- Q When her supervisor discouraged her from “calling out” racism, was her supervisor complicit in perpetuating a racist system?

- Q Why do you think her supervisor (a Person of Color herself) would perpetuate a racist system?

When Recannah expressed concerns about her son one day leaving the house and perhaps not returning home safely due to police brutality (implied),

- Q could you feel the emotion she was feeling as a parent?
 - Q Were Recannah’s concerns for her child similar to your concerns for your children?
 - Q What concerns were the same? What concerns were different?

- Q The “Yoke of slavery” mentioned in Galatians 5:1 is talking about being slaves to sin. Do you believe racism is a sin? Why or why not?
 - Q If so, How do we “Stand Firm” against it?
 - Q Do you think Recannah was doing God’s will in the way she stood up to her supervisor?



FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- 🗣️ In addition to the things shared in the video, have you had any experiences with systemic racism in your world?
- 🗣️ How do you see institutions, policies, and practices working to create advantages for some and disadvantages for others? (*See “For the Leader” for suggestions*)
- **For the Leader** – Employment opportunities (affirmative action is no longer a ruling action in many states), policies that are created by those in the majority (look at the Alabama Gov.’s cabinet – all white), district lines are intentionally drawn to give advantages to white communities vs. communities of color (which affects funding for schools, business loans, home owner loans, etc.), etc...



(Play “Voices from the Community” (Session Three) if your group has not already viewed the entire video)

III. WHAT CAN WE DO? (A CALL TO ACTION)

“But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!” (Col. 3:8-11)

There is much attention being given today to the “Black Lives Matter” movement.

- 🗣️ How do you see this movement serving a purpose for equality and justice today?
 - 🗣️ Why do you think affirmation of those three words (Black Lives Matter) felt needed by the African American Community?
 - 🗣️ Do you think those three words mean that other lives don’t matter?

- Q Do you have concerns? What are they?
- Q Colossians 3:8-11 talks about stripping off the old self with its practices and being clothed with the new self with renewed knowledge in the image of the Creator. In light of our dialogue about Racism and Racist Systems, what is our “old self”, and what are our “old practices”?
- Q And how does new knowledge move us to become more like the image of God?
- Q To which new practices could God be calling us?



DALE BRAXTON

“Then Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.’” (Acts 10:34-38)

The video urges white Christians to join the struggle for equality if they are not already doing so. For too long, persons of color have felt they were crying out for change with inadequate support from white people. **Dale** issues a plea for the whole church to come together to make a difference in addressing systemic racism, and particularly emphasizes the need for white churches and leaders to join the fight.

- Q Why do you think Dale repeated the phrase, “I can’t breathe?”
- Q How can we the church respond to help create a world where phrases like “I can’t breathe” are no longer uttered?
- Q Do you think that Anti-Racism work must include white people?
- Q Why do you think that?

Q What are some specific ways that white Christians can send a message to persons of color in our local communities to indicate advocacy and support?

Q What are ways that white Christians can send a message to the world?

Q Peter says in Acts 10:34-38 that the message of Jesus is Peace, and that this was the message that was preached to all the lands. What do you think Jesus' peace looks like?

Q Do you think Jesus' peace is only an inner peace, or is there a worldly peace that comes with salvation as well?

Q How can we, as Christians, preach the message of peace more loudly than we already do?



SHANE ISNER

“People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.” (Mark 10:13-16)

Shane expresses his pain, frustration, and anger at racism as well as at the ways in which we ignore it. But he does not just share just his frustration, he guides us to what kind of action he believes frustration and anger should lead to; he reminds us that we have some power in addressing the issues before us. His anger directs him to action, and he uses it to challenge *us* into action. He suggests ways that Christians can express their faith through tangible acts. Discuss these and other ideas for concrete action in challenging the systems and institutions that perpetuate racial injustice.

Q How does his anger make you feel?

Q Why do you feel that way?

Q Is anger toward injustice warranted?

- 🗣️ Should racism or any injustice make Christians angry?
- 🗣️ Do you think racism as it is expressed today makes Jesus angry?
- 🗣️ How does our claim to be “Christian” result in our being a “movement for wholeness in a fragmented world?” (*see page 1*)
- 🗣️ How can we effectively engage persons in power with our concerns? How can individuals work to challenge unjust institutional practices?

Jesus is clearly not uncomfortable with anger. The key is what he uses his anger to accomplish. In Mark 10:13-16, when the disciples displayed discriminating behavior, behavior that indicated they were the deciders of who could come into the presence of the savior, Jesus uses his anger to challenge the disciples and include the excluded. Both Jesus and Shane use their anger to speak on behalf of those whose voices are easily and often ignored (like children, the poor, and People of Color). They used their voices to challenge those with power in that moment. We all have some power, sometimes.

- 🗣️ Question: Have you ever experienced anger as a result of maltreatment, or discrimination?
- 🗣️ Who are those for whom we need to use our voices today?
- 🗣️ Shane gave us some ways to do that, were you familiar with any of them? Would you like to be? (*See “For the Leader” for suggestions*)

- **For the Leader** – If we’re not going to be protestors, we can support them in word and action. We can financially support causes that are actively working to dismantle racist systems in our country and communities. We can participate in bible studies that help us recognize our mission as anti-racist activists. We can learn more about racism, its history, its systems, and how it affects our lives. We can be intentional about building relationships with people who are different from us...

IN CLOSING

FANNIE ASHLEY & LAURA HUTCHINSON

“For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.”
(Esther 4:14)

Fannie and **Laura**, the co-chairs of the Anti-Racism Team in Alabama-Northwest Florida, express hope that by watching the video and giving time and attention to dialogue and introspection, people will move farther along in their commitment to being anti-racist.

- 🗣️ What are some promises you are willing to make personally that are a part of your commitment to being anti-racist?

- 🗣️ What are some commitments that you believe your congregation needs to make to help heal the wounds that racism has brought to communities?

- 🗣️ Esther was a Jewish woman who was given an unprecedented opportunity to use her elevated position for Good. When we speak in the name of Jesus, how can we use our position for good?
 - 🗣️ How can we help make this world safer and more just for ALL people?
 - 🗣️ Esther risked her life to save her people. What risks do we take in speaking out against racism? Are those risks worth it? Why or why not?



HELP IS AVAILABLE

The Anti-Racism Team in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida is ready to assist your congregation or district in promoting meaningful conversations about racism and how to work toward systemic change. You may request assistance from the Anti-Racism Team by contacting the Regional Minister at 205-425-4245 or emailing jpmobley2@aol.com

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080



Appendix A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Equity – When everyone has access to opportunities necessary to satisfy essential needs, advance their well-being and achieve their full potential.

Ethnicity – Refers to groups of people that share some common ancestry, traditions, language, or dialect.

Internalized Racial Oppression - when an oppressed group uses the methods of the oppressing group against itself. It occurs when one group perceives an inequality of value relative to another group, and desires to be like the more highly valued group.

People of Color (POC) – an umbrella term for people who share the common experience of being targeted and oppressed by racism.

Prejudice - is an affective feeling towards a person based on their perceived group membership. The word is often used to refer to a preconceived, usually unfavorable, evaluation of another person.

Privilege – An unearned advantage granted to individuals by society based on visible characteristics such as race, perceived gender, age, language, etc.

Power – The ability to get what you want. This is a neutral term, neither good nor bad but a tool towards an end goal.

Race – A political construct, with no basis in biological or scientific distinction, to legitimize the dominance of white people over people of color.

Racism – Applying race prejudice while having race privilege to maintain dominant systems of power and white supremacy.

Racial Prejudice - a preconceived judgment or hostility toward people of another race.

Stereotype - a widely held but fixed, oversimplified or distorted image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

White – People of European descent who benefit from the privilege and power of racism.



Appendix B

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:27 ESV

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 18:19 NRSV (*Lessons from Childhood*)

...I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; so that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” (Genesis 18:19)

Exodus 6:6 NRSV

Say therefore to the Israelites, “I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement.

Leviticus 19:33-34 NRSV (*Paul Allen*)

When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 10:17-35 NRSV

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the Lord your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen. Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy persons; and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in heaven.

1 Samuel 16:7 NRSV (*Melvia Carter*)

But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature... for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.’

Esther 4:14 NRSV (*Fannie Ashley & Laura Hutchinson*)

For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.’

Psalms 10:18 GNT (*Kanessa Doss*)

You will hear the cries of the oppressed and the orphans;
you will judge in their favor,
so that mortal men may cause terror no more.

Micah 6:8 ESV

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?



Mark 10:13-16 NRSV (*Shane Isner*)

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Luke 4:18 NRSV

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free...

John 7:24 NRSV

Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgement.'

John 13:34 NRSV

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.

Acts 9:13-18 NRSV (*Beth Thomason*)

But Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.' But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.' So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid

his hands on Saul and said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized...

Acts 10:34-38 NRSV (*Dale Braxton*)

Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Acts 17:26 ESV

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

Romans 7:4-6 NRSV (*Stories of Injustice*)

In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. 5While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. 6But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

Romans 12:3 ESV (*Mirrinett Barnes Huffman*)

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

1 Corinthians 10:20-21 NRSV

No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

Galatians 3:28-29 NRSV

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 5:1 NRSV (*Recannah Braxton*)

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Colossians 3:8-11 NRSV (*What Can We Do?*)

But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!”

☞ May God Bless the Reading of the Word ☞