

MISSION PORTLAND

We exist to be an authentic community that makes Jesus fully known so others may fully know him

This guide was compiled to guide you through scripture and a time of reflection as we seek God's heart for justice and racial reconciliation in our city and country. Our prayer is that through this 40-day journey we make space for the word of God to change the way we see and respond to a world in need of hope of Jesus Christ.

What you'll need:

- Journal or paper
- Pen
- Bible

Instructions:

1. Read through the devotion of the week.
2. Then read the passage of the day.
3. In your journal or on paper begin the abiding process through SOAP.

SCRIPTURE

- What gets your attention from the scripture of the day?
- Write it down. Why? We begin the abiding process as we write.
- As you write it down, you slow down and God begins to have room to speak.

Note: Not trying to figure out what the passage means. Not information gathering. Not inductive study.

OBSERVATION

- What **1** thing is God highlighting to you through the scripture?
- What do you see or hear God saying or doing?
- To start, write just a sentence or two in 1st person as though you are talking to God and He is Present. Really!

Example - Father, I am reminded of your great and perfect love for me. You are a generous and giving God! Thank you for giving me the gift of life and freedom in Jesus!

ACTION

- How is God inviting you to be like Jesus or do like Jesus?
- Make action tangible, measurable, and doable - something you can do, make it simple!
- The small things are the big things! Faithfulness in the little things leads to much fruitfulness.

PRAYER

- Write out your prayer to God in response to what you have read, observed and desire to take action upon.
- When we spend time with God in his word: Impression by God → Expression through humanity.

Week 1 (August 3 - 8): Justice

YouVersion Bible App - The Urban Alternative (Tony Evans) <https://tonyevans.org/>

Life is all about relationships. Most of the time, friction arises in relationships because of misunderstandings. One person sees a situation one way, but the other person sees it another way. Each person can't figure out why the other person can't see the situation like they see it, and sometimes these situations become huge arguments. The problem lies in the fact that sometimes we look at situations in different ways because we think differently than other people.

Justice is one of these misunderstood situations. Specifically, social justice has become a convoluted term meaning different things to different people. It is often used as a catchphrase for illegitimate forms of government promoting the redistribution of wealth and expansion of civil government. This view of social justice is a denial of authentic justice. For example, the biblical command of "Thou shalt not steal" includes government-sanctioned theft through state-enforced redistribution of wealth and illegitimate taxation.

Biblical justice seeks to protect individual liberty while promoting personal responsibility. It is the equitable and impartial application of the rule of God's moral law in society. There is no clear and right definition of justice that excludes God. So to grasp justice, we must go to God's Word. The Bible condemns injustice because God is just. As the ultimate lawgiver, He strongly opposes injustice. His laws are righteous and must be applied without partiality because justice identifies the moral standard by which God measures human conduct.

So at the heart of Biblical justice is the impartial application of God's moral law within all realms of society including economic, political, social or criminal justice. Any other definition of justice won't suffice.

What enters your mind when you hear the phrase "social justice"?

Day 1

Deuteronomy 32:4

Day 2

James 4:12

Day 3

Psalms 19:7-9

Day 4

Deuteronomy 1:17

Day 5

Psalms 82:3-4

Day 6

Luke 4:18-20

Week 2 (August 9-15): Ethnicity in the Story of God

YouVersion Bible App - InterVarsity Press (Sarah Shin) <http://www.ivpress.com/beyond-colorblind>

At Pentecost and Revelation, we get a glimpse into the heart of a God who sees every language, culture, and race or ethnicity. However, our churches often avoid the topic of ethnicity and race because we don't think it's relevant to our faith, or we're afraid of offending people and trying to avoid being "political." More often than not, we don't know how to talk about it and withdraw from conversations about race or ethnicity. We lack the skills, language, and understanding to be able to share the gospel in our diverse and divided contexts.

Buying into colorblindness, we do not examine the Scriptures' rich depth of insight into God's creation and intent for ethnicity, and we lack biblical literacy on the issue, leading to a lack of theological reflection, formation, and repentance. The result? We either deny ethnicity as valuable or bought into the secular world's understanding of ethnicity.

This robs us of the opportunity to hear the stories of people who are ethnically different from us. Our lack of ethnic-identity understanding, for ourselves and for those around us, leads us to proclaim a gospel that is irrelevant or powerless in addressing real aches, pains, and questions. Racially and culturally unaware witness and involvement in our communities cause distrust. Sometimes we do more harm than good and push people away from us—away from opportunities to hear the gospel and away from trusting Jesus. The results are a distant and often irrelevant, unaffected church.

But the Christian story is one that acknowledges our fundamental brokenness. Why would the realm of ethnicity and race be exempt from the influence of sin? We need something beyond colorblindness, something that both values beauty in our cultures and also addresses real problems that still exist in our society decades after the civil rights movement. Our world is in need of the gospel—a good news that is not afraid of addressing ethnic differences. And we need Christian voices to call for change and reform—with Jesus as the transforming center of it all.

What can you do to see the beauty of other cultures?

Day 7

Acts 22:3-21

Day 8

John 4:9-10

Day 9

Galatians 3:28

Day 10

James 2:8

Day 11

Ephesians 2:4-5

Day 12

Colossians 3:11

Day 13

Deuteronomy 10:17

Week 3 (August 16-22): Pain that leads to Prejudice

YouVersion Bible App - Race and Ethnicity: God's Word for Our World (Modern Life Study Bible)

Anyone hurt by a member of a different ethnic or racial group is at risk for developing prejudice against all members of that group. Even slight offenses may powerfully reinforce old biases, as the conflict between Israel and Edom shows.

The king of Edom refused to open the King's Highway to Moses and his people, a hostile act that likely grew out of a prejudice with roots going back hundreds of years to a feud between two brothers: Jacob, the ancestor of Israel, and Esau, the ancestor of the Edomites. Jacob obtained Esau's birthright and cheated him out of their father's blessing. Esau swore he would get even.

Years later the brothers reconciled. But until this incident in Numbers 20, the Bible doesn't again mention Esau's descendants, the Edomites. Apparently those descendants never forgot the wrongs that Jacob had committed against their ancestors. As the Israelites struggled to traverse the desert, the king of Edom perhaps saw an opportunity for payback.

Refusing Moses' request made life difficult for the Hebrews. Had Edom let Israel pass, the Israelites may have escaped the fiery serpents. Worse yet, the Edomites' action perpetuated hostility between the two ethnic groups. Even though God commanded His people not to "abhor" an Edomite, the Israelites did not stop nursing their hurt feelings. Later, Saul harassed the Edomites. David slaughtered thousands of Edomites and turned their land into a military possession. David's general Joab then carried out a campaign of genocide against them.

The cycle of hate continued for centuries. Even baby Jesus felt its impact: King Herod, who ordered the slaughter of infants at Bethlehem, was descended from the Edomites.

As Christ's followers we are called to break the cycle of prejudice. If we are offended or attacked by someone of another ethnicity, we gain nothing by amplifying our pain into general mistrust and hatred of an entire group of people. Rather than furthering stereotypes, we can reach out and seek better understanding.

What can you do to guard against prejudice and keep it from compromising our integrity as Christ followers?

Day 14

Luke 9:51-56

Day 15

Joshua 5:13-15

Day 16

Matthew 22:37-40

Day 17

1 John 4:20

Day 18

Isaiah 30:18

Day 19

Psalms 37:27-29

Day 20

Luke 6:37

Week 4 (August 23-29): An Extremist Transformed

YouVersion Bible App - Race and Ethnicity: God's Word for Our World (Modern Life Study Bible)

Paul sets up his message to the Galatians by recounting his dramatic meeting with Christ on the road to Damascus and his subsequent conversion. In those long hours he must have been under deep emotional strain. He learned that the reports that Jesus had risen were true. He realized he had dedicated his life to killing the Messiah's followers. It was a life-altering experience for one "advanced in Judaism" and "exceedingly zealous for the traditions" of his fathers.

That may be why God struck Paul with blindness for three days. He had a lot to sort out after meeting the risen Lord. He had to reverse the entire theological basis of his life. Yet God intended to change more than Paul's theology. He was determined to transform his extremist view of the world. At the heart of Paul's intense hatred of the Christian movement might have been a belief that it would destroy Judaism by mixing it with foreign, Gentile elements.

Imagine Paul's shock when Ananias informed him that God had chosen him to take the message of Christ to none other than the Gentiles. Such a task would have been unthinkable. Jews like Paul, who were wholly committed to living by all the laws and traditions of Judaism, had nothing to do with Gentiles. It took years for Paul to reevaluate his perspective and align it with God's. Paul's dramatic transformation challenges us to examine the prejudices that keep us from living out God's love for the world.

When you find racial and cultural biases where you live, work, or worship, do you challenge that thinking?—or keep silent?—or worse, go along with hatred or even promote it? Can God use you to take His name to people whom you consider outsiders?

Day 21

John 8:32

Day 22

Acts 9:1–30

Day 23

Romans 12:2

Day 24

Psalms 51:10-12

Day 25

2 Corinthians 5:17

Day 26

Acts 1:8

Day 27

James 1:22-25

Week 5 (August 30 - September 5): Restoring Our Stories

YouVersion Bible App - InterVarsity Press (Sarah Shin) <http://www.ivpress.com/beyond-colorblind>

We need to recognize what we are meant to be in our ethnic stories and identities so that we can ask Jesus to restore us. It's not only about being racially aware and sensitive so that we can be cross-culturally savvy navigators of multiethnic groups. It's also about Jesus redeeming and restoring our ethnic identities. This makes for a compelling narrative that causes non-Christians to ask us about our faith as they wonder, How could that kind of hope and healing be available to me?

When Jesus interacts with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, she responds with astonished cynicism: "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (John 4:9). Jesus' attempts at conversation are parried by the woman's multiple pointed questions about their people's historic ethnic tensions. But by choosing to speak with her, Jesus the Messiah is embodying what Israel was meant to be: the priesthood nation and light to the Gentiles.

Jesus is redeeming what it means to be an Israelite Jew. And as the Samaritan woman experiences Jesus redeeming his people's ethnicity, she starts to desire such living water. Jesus is transforming the disciples' understanding of what it meant to be Jewish and the Samaritan woman's understanding of what it meant to be Samaritan. Ethnicity no longer serves as the confines of mission. It becomes the vehicle, the sacred vessel in which God's story comes to light.

Our ethnic stories are rarely formed in isolation. They often involve encounters and altercations with those around us. It's knowing our ethnic stories and the ethnic identity narratives of those around us that helps us realize the complexity of values, scars, trigger points, and words to avoid. It helps us know more how to sensitively share the gospel and boldly invite even those that were considered ethnic enemies or strangers to become believers.

Knowing and owning our ethnic narratives helps us understand the real issues of injustice, racial tension, and disunity that exist in the world. Ethnicity awareness helps us ask the question of how to prophetically engage in pursuing justice, racial reconciliation, and caring for the poor while we give the reason for our hope: Jesus, the great reconciler of a multiethnic people.

What assumptions and idolatries can you lay down to allow Christ to bring healing to you?

Day 28

Psalms 139:1-16

Day 29

Hosea 6:1

Day 30

John 3:16

Day 31

Hebrews 12:14

Day 32

Matthew 5:24

Day 33

Romans 3:23

Day 34

Galatians 2:20

Week 6 (September 6-11): Talk Is Cheap

YouVersion Bible App - The Urban Alternative (Tony Evans) <https://tonyevans.org/>

All houses are built upon foundations that support or hold the weight of everything that is built upon them. Scripture says that righteousness and justice are the foundation of God's throne. This is where I get my definition of biblical Justice (the equitable and impartial application of the rule of God's moral law in society).

Righteousness is God's standards for humanity which He has laid out in Scripture, while justice is a term used for "what is right" or "as it should be." When you put those two together, biblical justice becomes an action of applying God's moral standards toward each other. In other words, we shouldn't just talk about justice, we are to exercise it. This is why Scripture clearly commands us "to do justice."

Biblical justice is rooted in seeking the welfare of those who are unable to fend for themselves. Why? Because these are the kinds of people who frequently get abused and treated unjustly. Scripture tells us to show care and concern for the poor, widows, orphans and foreigners. It also applies to groups of people who get targeted by systematic oppression based on race. Simply put, we are to defend and seek the welfare of those who are most vulnerable to suffer from injustice. The Bible tells us to "do good to everyone," so justice extends to anybody who is being treated unfairly. So when we see situations that aren't right, meaning they go against God's moral standards, it is our duty as believers to take action. We can't just talk about justice; we must do justice. That's why Micah 6:8 says, "Do justice." It does not talk about how we should feel or not feel toward justice. It says we are to do it.

What are some practical ways you can "do justice" in your life?

Day 35

Acts 2:1-11

Day 36

Revelation 7:9-10

Day 37

James 2:14-17

Day 38

Hebrews 13:16

Day 39

Galatians 6:9

Day 40

Hebrews 6:10