

JOURNEY TOGETHER SERIES

Conversations on Race and Diversity

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

JOURNEY TOGETHER

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Journey Together Series

Journey Together is a journey for pastors, church leaders, and churches. We seek to grow in awareness of racial inequality. Instead of being passive, we seek to move towards others in love as allies and friends toward justice.

Justice is a significant theme throughout scripture from the Old Testament to the teaching of Jesus and the early church. When we reduce the gospel to personal salvation and ignore God's larger story of the renewal of all creation, it is easy to lose sight of conversations on justice, poverty, racism, etc.

In 2021, CBOQ held a Journey Together experience for pastors and church leaders. Over 50 participants attended four sessions. This totaled over twelve hours of sharing, learning, reflecting, and praying. We have condensed the series into short video stories to help your church engage in these conversations.

Ways that the Journey Together Experience could be shared in your context

Growing Leaders (Church Boards or Leadership)

Church leaders shape the culture of the church. This series could be a means of initiating a conversation on race with your church leadership (this includes your board and all who serve.)

Growing Everyone (Small Groups or Sunday School)

This resource could be used as a video and discussion guide for small groups or Sunday School. This series could be followed up with a book study. (*See book recommendations under Resources section*)

Guidelines for Small Group Discussion

Difficult conversations need to be handled with great care. When we are addressing race conversations, we are often talking about traumatic experiences. Please read these aloud with your group. Feel free to edit these guidelines as suited to the needs of your own community.

- Listening is the primary posture here. Listen empathetically, refrain from giving advice, and pray as the Lord leads (not giving of your own advice through prayer).
- Do not try to fix those who exhibit pain in your context or dismiss their pain.
E.g. "I know your pain. I once experienced something like that."
Rather, allow a few moments of silence to let their story sink in and to give respect to the person who shared and how difficult it might have been to share. Then move on without comment.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to do his work as others share their stories.
You don't need to save the person from their pain.
- Pause as needed. Silence is welcome.
- Patience is required for those with differing opinions than your own.
- Silent intercessory prayer is welcome here.

Potential Schedule

Session 1: Introduction

Session 2: Scripture Reflection

Session 3: David McCleary

Session 4: Roderick Petawabono

Session 5: Paul Lam/Blake Bentley & Tanya Yuen

Session 6: Renee James & Abby Davidson

Session 7: Journey Together Reflection and Next Steps

If you are an organizer, please watch the videos beforehand. It will give you a better sense of how you should build your own schedule. Please adjust your schedule according to the needs of your church community.

The videos can be accessed at: baptist.ca/journeytogetherseries

The CBOQ Journey Together Team

David McCleary (East Toronto Chinese Baptist Church, Pastor)

Tim Tang (Tyndale Intercultural Ministries, Executive Director)

Das Sydney (Westview Baptist Church, Interim Pastor)

Renee James (CBWOQ)

Tanya Yuen (CBOQ Next Generation)

Paul Lam (CBOQ Church Life and Leadership)

Jamila Bello (CBOQ Church Life and Leadership)

SESSION 1

Introduction

Introduction with Tim McCoy

► **Watch Video: Introduction**

Tim McCoy, Executive Minister of CBOQ, invites us to celebrate our diverse family of churches. He reminds us that Jesus reached out to the marginalized in a society marked by racism and inequality. We can start by listening to the stories within our own family of pastors and churches, journeying together towards healing, reconciliation, and hope in Christ.

Scripture

Ephesians 3:7-10

Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

The word for **'manifold'** (*polupoikilos*) means **'many-coloured'** and was used to describe flowers, crowns, embroidered cloth and woven carpets. (John Stott)

Ethnic diversity has been celebrated in our workplaces, media outlets, industry, etc. However, God cares about diversity more than anyone. The church itself is meant to be a demonstration of the manifold wisdom of God. Yet, the church has often been silent or denied that there is a problem.

Sometimes, church is the problem! This is why such a conversation is crucial for the church. The early church wrestled with embracing different cultures. It struggled with how to integrate non-Jewish people and their pagan cultures. For example, how might the Hellenists and Gentiles (consider Acts 6 and the circumcision party) have struggled to become part of a Jewish church? I lament when I hear persons of colour and Indigenous peoples ask, "Do I belong in the church?"

How does the church become a community of radical hospitality and belonging?

This is an important question for CBOQ and its churches if we truly are to be proclaimers of the Good News of Jesus Christ. In 2021, CBOQ held a Journey Together experience for pastors and church leaders. Over 50 participants attended four sessions. This totaled over twelve hours of sharing, learning, reflecting, and praying. We have condensed the series into short stories to help your church answer this important question.

The next session is a scripture reflection on Acts 10. This will be an opportunity to hear God's word and be led by God's word in this journey.

As you go through this study, may the Lord bless you and your church community. May you become a community of love, radical hospitality, and inclusion. May a diversity of leaders rise and may the church become a multi-cultural community.

Locating Ourselves on the Journey

As we continue the Journey Together experience, self-knowledge is crucial. Knowing where you are on a personal level and on a congregational level can begin the process toward transformation. Denying or ignoring the problem will not help anyone to grow.

Reflection Questions

1. What kind of diversity do you have in your church (gender, age, race or ethnicity)?
What kind of challenges have emerged from the diversity or lack of diversity in your church?
2. What kinds of conversations have you engaged in on a personal level?
3. What kinds of conversations have you engaged in on a congregational level?
4. What would it look like to begin to invite different people to share their stories/experiences with race in your congregation?
5. How does your church become a community of radical hospitality and belonging?

The next session is a scripture reflection on Acts 10. This will be an opportunity to hear God's word and be led by God's word in this journey.

As you go through this study, may the Lord bless you and your church community. May you become a community of love, radical hospitality, and inclusion. May a diversity of leaders rise and may the church become a multi-cultural community.

SESSION 2

Scripture Reflection

Scripture Reflection

As we begin this Journey Together experience, we invite you to reflect on scripture with others.

We are all on a journey of continual conversion. This scripture tells the story of two conversions. First, it tells the story of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. Second, it tells the story of the Apostle Peter and his conversion to embrace the Gentiles as the people of God. At the end of this reflection, we will provide some time for you to reflect on your own journey as a community.

We encourage you to read through the reflection and prayerfully respond to them individually.

Please pause and slow down as necessary. After you have done so, please come together to share your reflections and pray for one another.

Read Acts 10:1-8

- What did you learn about Cornelius? What kind of person was he?
- What do you learn about his relationship with God? with others?

Read Acts 10:9-16

- What was Peter's relationship and attitude toward the 'unclean'?
- How did the Lord challenge Peter's view?

Read Acts 10:17-29

- Peter and Cornelius had very different mindsets going into this conversation. In v.19, the Lord commanded Peter to go with the Gentiles. Why did the Lord do this?
- One of the first things that Peter said was that it is against the law for a Jew to associate or visit a Gentile? (v. 28). This is not much of a conversation starter. How would you describe the mindset of Peter toward the Gentiles (*open, closed, excited, disinterested, curious*)?
- What are your thoughts about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles?

Read Acts 10:30-48

Cornelius told his God story and Peter believed his story. Peter experienced his own conversion here based on the testimony of a Gentile. Cornelius and Peter's heart needed to change in order for God's mission to move forward.

- In this text there were multiple occasions where Peter was hesitant to associate with the Gentiles. What happened in Peter's heart? How did God work in Peter's heart through his own experience and through Cornelius's story? How would you describe that work of transformation?

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit was a sign of God's reign here on earth. However, the Jewish followers of Jesus thought that reign was limited only to the Jewish people. When Peter and his friends witnessed this sign upon the Gentiles, they were astonished. The Holy Spirit is the one who fully embraces the Gentiles before anyone else here.

- What do we learn about the Holy Spirit and his work here? What do we learn about God, the Holy Spirit's view on the Gentiles?

Closing Reflection

As you reflect upon the story, this story was a turning point in the book of Acts. Cornelius was the first Gentile convert. Peter was going through his own sense of conversion. The church would eventually follow the Holy Spirit's leading in this area to embrace the Gentiles.

- This story is central to the gospel story. If someone told you that the relationships between diverse cultures (racism and intercultural conversations) had no relevance to the gospel, what would be your response?

Changes in the Church

The church has undergone significant changes. The church has shrunk in Europe and North America but has grown in the Global South (Africa, Asia, and South America). The church in North America has become more ethnically diverse. The church has wrestled and hesitated to embrace these changes.

(See Soong Chan Rah's, "Next Evangelicalism")

- What are your thoughts about the changes to Christianity globally?
- What are your thoughts about the changes to Christianity in North America?
- Why has the church wrestled and hesitated to adjust here?

Examining Your Church Culture

- How are you doing in this area? How is your church doing in this area?
- Pause for a moment and consider the following question:
Who are the 'Jews' in your midst? (*Dominant culture*). Who are the 'Gentiles' in your midst?
(*Marginalized people groups, not included in your leadership, not fitting into your culture*).
- As you consider who the 'Jews' and 'Gentiles' are, what are you beginning to see, hear, and learn about your own church culture?
- What stories are being told that keep us from undergoing our own conversion? What stories are not being told?
- What do you sense God doing in your own heart as you read this story and engaged in this conversation?

What's Next?

The next series of sessions are short stories related to difference experiences of race and ethnicity. Each session includes reflections questions. These stories may be difficult to hear. We encourage you to pray and listen.

- What is God saying to you?
- What is God teaching you about our world?
- What feelings are being evoked in you and in your community?

SESSION 3

David McCleary

Preface

David, pastor at East Toronto Chinese Baptist Church, shares his powerful story of experiencing racism in his upbringing and now in raising his own family. Being treated differently based on the colour of your skin is an on-going reality for our Black Canadian brothers and sisters. Simply saying that we love all people does not change this reality.

► [Watch Video](#)

Reflection Questions

1. As you heard David's sharing, what stood out to you?
2. What has been your experience with our Black Canadian brothers and sisters?
What has their experience been like?
3. David recalled not 'receiving the benefit of the doubt' and concerns that his children would be 'put in the line of fire' and being labeled and understood through the color of their skin. If you have experienced this, are you able to share? If you have not, why do you think it is a concern for David?
4. Take some time to look back at your perspective of children in your church ministry, schools, playgrounds, shopping malls.
 - a. Does the skin tone of a child affect your perception of their behaviour?
 - b. Does the skin tone of a parent affect your perception of how parents discipline or treat their children?
 - c. What stereotypes have you learned about other cultures?
5. Have you ever experienced the feeling of not belonging in a particular area?
 - a. Is that experience because of your ethnicity, heritage, or skin colour?
 - b. How does our church directly or indirectly demonstrate whether someone belongs or does not belong?
 - c. How much of that is unexamined racial bias?

Application

1. What will you take away from this conversation personally?
2. What will you take away from this conversation as a church community?
3. How are you being led to pray? Take some time to pray as you are led.
(Acknowledging the on-going problems without attempting to fix the problem within your prayer).

SESSION 4

Roderick Petawabono

Preface

Racism is a problem that causes deep wounds to many generations. It can destroy a person and nation's identity, marginalizing them. The story of residential schools reminds us that all people are not treated equally. We thank Armstrong & Co Films for allowing us to share Roderick's story. He is the pastor at Mistissini Faith Bible Chapel.

► [Watch Video](#)

Reflection Questions

1. As you heard Roderick's story, what stood out to you? What feelings were being evoked in you?
2. What have your personal experiences been like with our Indigenous brothers and sisters? What has their experience been like?
3. What are your thoughts about the revelations of unmarked graves and abuse at residential schools?
4. What do you think the mindset of government and religious officials was that allowed the residential schools tragedy to occur?
5. How has the plight of our first nations community been a part of your church ministry narrative?

Application

1. What will you take away from this conversation personally?
2. What will you take away from this conversation as a church community?
3. How are you being led to pray? Take some time to pray as you are led.
(Acknowledging the on-going problems without attempting to fix the problem within your prayer).

SESSION 5

Paul Lam, Blake Bentley Tanya Yuen

Paul Lam & Blake Bentley

Preface

Blake Bentley is the pastor at Pickering Community Baptist Church and Paul Lam is an associate at CBOQ. Blake reminds us that there are outsiders and insiders in our neighborhoods and our churches. Paul shares his story of being an outsider and wanting to be an insider.

► [Watch Video: Session 5A](#)

Reflection Questions

1. After hearing these stories, what were your initial impressions?
2. Have you ever experienced the feeling of being an outsider (visiting another country, being in a new environment, going to an 'ethnic' church, etc.)? What kind of feelings were evoked in you? What led you to feel that way?
3. Why would a person of color desire to be 'white'? What are your thoughts on this?
4. There is a notion that some minorities need to see people of colour on screen to help them embrace who they are and to view themselves positively. Why does representation matter?
5. How would your church respond to having pastors/preachers/board members/teachers from different ethnicities? What are some of the positive effects it can have for children, youth, and young upcoming leaders in your ministry?

Tanya Yuen

Preface

Tanya Yuen is our CBOQ Associate focused on Next Generation children and family ministries. She challenges us to engage our youth and children in conversations about race and diversity by creating safe spaces and leading by example.

► **Watch Video: Session 5B**

Reflection Questions

1. As you heard Tanya's sharing, what stood out to you?
2. Tanya mentioned various media (news and films) that shape our culture. She talked about watching the news with our children and processing what happened with George Floyd. What are your thoughts about what happened with George Floyd?
3. What films perpetuate negative stereotypes of various ethnic cultures? How have they shaped you?
4. Has your ministry ever tried to avoid difficult conversations of race and diversity with large blanket statements such as: "God loves everybody. Everybody is equal in God's eyes"?
 - a. How do these types of blanket statements engage or stifle difficult conversations about race and diversity?
5. Children/Youth are intuitive to our leadership on difficult subjects - how are we creating safe and empowering conversations and how are we stifling or restricting healthy conversation spaces?
6. What images/pictures are used in worship videos, Sunday school lessons, illustrated Bibles, devotionals, posters - do they reflect racial diversity, or do they only promote and elevate a particular race?

Application

1. What will you take away from this conversation personally?
2. What will you take away from this conversation as a church community?
3. How are you being led to pray? Take some time to pray as you are led.
(*Acknowledging the on-going problems without attempting to fix the problem within your prayer*).

SESSION 6

Renee James, Abby Davidson

Preface

Renee James is leading race-related initiatives with Canadian Baptist Women of Ontario and Quebec. She helps us to reflect on our own experiences and the value of having diverse mentors and spiritual teachers.

► **Watch Video: Session 6**

Reflection Questions

1. As you heard Renee's sharing, what stood out to you?
2. *"Let us learn from someone who is different from us... Do you have mentors of diverse ethnic backgrounds?"* Have you been taught by a person with a different background than you (race, ethnicity, skin tone, or gender)? Who was this and what difference has that made (school teachers, supervisors, pastors, Sunday school teachers, small group leaders, authors, podcasts, etc.)?
3. Have you learned from others of a similar background to yours? What difference has that made?
4. As you reflect on the various influences in your life, what strikes you about who has shaped your own journey? What do you learn about yourself?

Preface

Abby is the missional discipleship pastor at Spring Garden Baptist Church. She reflects upon her own influences and finds that many of the authors that she was reading were white male theologians. In her course at McMaster Divinity, she was challenged to read from authors of different cultures.

Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on your influences: books, podcasts, sermons for ministry. Create a list.
2. How many of them are written by people of colour? How many of these come from non-Western cultures? How many of them are males vs. females?
3. As Abby shared various authors, was there an author that stood out to you? Please share the name of the book and another resource that you would like to continue to learn from.

Application

1. What will you take away from this conversation personally?
2. What will you take away from this conversation as a church community?
3. How are you being led to pray? Take some time to pray as you are led.
(Acknowledging the on-going problems without attempting to fix the problem within your prayer).

SESSION 7

Journey Together Reflection and Next Steps

► Watch Video: Conclusion

Scripture

Galatians 3:8-9

Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:6

This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

- What does this scripture say about the church and diversity in these texts?
- Is diversity a separate matter from the gospel? Why or why not?

Read Galatians 2:11-14

Peter was “not acting in line with the truth of the gospel.” Paul challenged Peter’s actions when it came to his approach to diversity. He was not relating to Gentiles in a way that was in line with the truth of the gospel.

- How have you been walking a way that was not in line with the gospel on a personal level?
Congregational level?

We invite you to listen to God. Listening to God requires for us to slow down and be in silence.

- If hearing God is new to you, it is something to be learned. Don't be harsh with yourself. If you enjoy a moment of silence, this is enough.
- Look for any themes that emerge from the conversation.
- God may share observations with you but, not always action steps.
- God may say difficult things to you.
- God may speak to you in words or images.
- God does not speak in hate speech or with a lack of decisiveness.
- Don't judge the words or be defensive.
- Gently receive and listen and treasure them in your hearts.

1. As you consider your own life and as you listened to and reflected upon the Journey Together series, you are invited to pause in silence as a group.

Begin with the following prayer: "Come, Lord, Jesus." (*Feel free to repeat this as a group or individually, as you long for Jesus to lead this experience.*)

Sit in silence in the presence of Jesus (3-5 minutes). Then ask Jesus: "You know that I have been through this Journey Together series. Is there anything that you want me to say to me here?"

Please share with the group how the Lord has spoken to you.
(Write down notes as you look for general themes from the conversation.)

2. As you consider your own church and neighbourhood and as you listened to and reflected upon the Journey Together series, you are invited to pause in silence as a group.

Begin with the following prayer: "Come, Lord, Jesus." (*Feel free to repeat this as a group or individually, as you long for Jesus to lead this experience.*)

Sit in silence in the presence of Jesus (3-5 minutes). Then ask Jesus:
"Jesus, would you show us, how are we doing as a church community in this Journey Together, conversations on racism?"

"Is there anything that you want me to say to our church community?"

"Is there anything that you would like to say to our church leadership?"

3. Invite participants to share their responses.

Share any general themes and how the Lord is leading you to continue this conversation. Share and review some of the recommend resources and see if any pique your interest to continue the conversation.

4. Please contact Paul Lam to further dialogue or have any questions for the Journey Together Team:
Email: plam@baptist.ca

LEARNING

Recommended Resources

- **“The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity.”**
by Soong Chan Rah (IVP Books)
 - A crucial challenge for the church to become more self-aware of its own Western culture and the radical changes occurring in Christianity globally, in US, and in Canada in ethnic and racial diversity.
- **“Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities.”**
by Mark Branson and Juan Martinez (IVP Academic)
 - This resource is the one of the best available to engage with pastors and church leaders on shaping a culture around intercultural leadership. It has bible studies and story-telling exercises that help churches to grow in self-awareness.
- **“Subversive Witness: Scripture’s Call to Leverage Privilege.”**
by Dominique Gillard (Zondervan)
 - This is an excellent resource for churches. This book is shaped by the biblical narrative, and it helps us to understand the various forms of injustice (race, gender inequality, etc.)
- **“The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at its Best”**
by Irwyn L. Ince Jr. (IVP)
 - This resource can be used by small groups who want to unpack causes of divisions in order to pursue unity rooted in God’s design for a beautifully diverse community.

LEARNING

Glossary of Terms

Ethnicity

- a social construct that divides people into small social groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group membership, values, behavioural patterns, language, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base (ex: Scottish, Arab, Han-Chinese, Tibetan, etc). Ethnicity is seen more broadly and refers to shared cultural experiences, religious practices, dialect, national origins. This is also different from Nationality which refers to one's passport nation or citizenship, whereas ethnicity refers to ancestral origins (ex: Chinese-Canadian). (*Dr. Sarah Farmer (MDiv, PhD) and her lectures on Youth, Race, and Culture.*)

Race

- Race is a “social construct.” This means that society forms ideas of race based on geographic, historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors, as well as physical traits, even though none of these can legitimately be used to classify groups of people. (*Government of Canada, Building a Foundation for Change: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2019-2022*)

Racism

- Racism includes ideas or practices that establish, maintain or perpetuate the racial superiority or dominance of one group over another. (*Ontario Government Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism*)

Systemic or Institutional Racism

- Consists of patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for racialized persons. These appear neutral on the surface but, nevertheless, have an exclusionary impact on racialized persons. (*Ontario Human Rights Commission, “Policy and guidelines on racism and discrimination”*)

People of Colour

- A term which applies to non-White racial or ethnic groups; generally used by racialized peoples as an alternative to the term “visible minority.” The word is not used to refer to Aboriginal peoples, as they are considered distinct societies under the Canadian Constitution. When including Indigenous peoples, it is correct to say, “people of colour and Aboriginal / Indigenous peoples.” (*Canadian Race Relations Foundation*)

BIPOC

- refers to Black and Indigenous identities, along with People of Colour. (Racial Equity Tools)

Privilege

- The experience of unearned freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access and/or opportunities afforded some people because of their group membership or social context. (*Canadian Race Relations Foundation*)



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