

# Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation

## Leader's Guide

A 4-Part Bible Study Series for  
Canadian Churches as part of National  
Day for Truth and Reconciliation



**CANADIAN  
BAPTISTS**  
of Ontario  
and Quebec

# A Pastoral Word

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

This study guide is being offered during a season when our nation pauses to remember the tragic legacy of residential schools and the ongoing impact on Indigenous communities. For many, September 30 is not just a date on the calendar but a reminder of loss, grief, and injustice that continues to ripple through families and generations.

As followers of Jesus, we cannot remain silent. The God we serve is a God of justice who calls us to “act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly” (Micah 6:8). The gospel we proclaim is not only about reconciliation with God but also reconciliation with one another through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18–20).

This journey is not easy. It requires humility to listen, courage to repent, and faith to believe that God can bring healing where there has been deep brokenness. But it is also a journey of hope, because we know that Christ has already broken down walls of hostility and is making all things new.

My prayer is that as you walk through these four sessions, your heart will be softened by Scripture, your mind will be opened to truth, and your life will be moved toward action. May this study not end with words on a page but with lives that reflect the love, justice, and reconciliation of Jesus Christ.

Justice – Grace – Mercy.

# Introduction

On September 30, Canadians pause to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. For churches, this day is an opportunity to remember the children taken from their families through residential schools, to grieve with survivors and their families, and to commit ourselves to the ongoing work of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

This Bible study series invites your church or small group to engage Scripture with honesty and humility. The Word of God calls us to justice, truth-telling, restitution, reconciliation, and healing. These are not just Canadian values, they are Kingdom values that are central to God's heart.

As followers of Jesus, we cannot ignore Canada's history of injustice toward First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, or the church's complicity in residential schools. But we are not left without hope. In Christ, we are called to be ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:20). This resource is designed to help churches wrestle with Scripture and apply it faithfully in the Canadian context.

# How to Use This Resource

## 1. Format of the Study

This resource is designed as a four-session Bible study. Each session can be used in:

- ◆ Small groups (home groups, Bible studies, prayer circles)
- ◆ Youth, Young Adult, Adult education or Sunday school classes
- ◆ Special gatherings leading up to or following September 30
- ◆ Each session lasts 60–90 minutes and includes teaching notes, discussion questions, prayer prompts, and activities.
  - ◆ Please feel free to adapt, change, add or subtract according to the needs of your congregation or group

## 2. Leader Preparation

- ◆ Read the Leader Background Notes in advance. These provide biblical and contextual insights to guide your facilitation.
- ◆ Pray for humility and courage. This is sensitive work be prepared to lead with gentleness, not defensiveness.
- ◆ Familiarize yourself with local Indigenous history (treaties, residential schools, nations near you). If possible, invite an Indigenous elder or knowledge keeper to join the group during or after the series.

## 3. Tone and Sensitivity

- ◆ Encourage listening before speaking. This topic may stir deep emotions, including grief, anger, or defensiveness.
- ◆ Honour the truth of survivors' stories. Avoid minimizing pain or rushing toward easy forgiveness.
- ◆ Use “we” language where appropriate. This is not about blaming others, but acknowledging collective responsibility and opportunity.

## 4. Structure of Each Session

Each session includes:

- ◆ Goal: The main purpose of the study.
- ◆ Suggested Schedule: A flexible 60–90 min flow.
- ◆ Leader Background Notes: Biblical and historical context.
- ◆ Teaching Outline: Main points for presentation.

- ◆ Discussion Questions:
  - ◆ Observation
  - ◆ Interpretation
  - ◆ Application
- ◆ Prayer Practice: Guided prayer to close each session.
- ◆ Take-Home: A personal challenge or next step.

## 5. Practical Suggestions for Leaders

- ◆ Begin and end each session with prayer.
- ◆ If emotions rise, pause to allow space for lament and silence.
- ◆ Remind participants this is a journey. Truth and reconciliation are ongoing, not completed in four weeks.
- ◆ Encourage follow-up: read the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, attend Indigenous-led events, and keep learning as a community.

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*A Friendly Reminder:*  
*This resource is a guide, not a script. Prayerfully  
adapt it so it serves your people and context well  
and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.*

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# Session 1: God's Heart for Justice

Scripture: Micah 6:6–8; Isaiah 1:16–17

## Goal:

To ground participants in the biblical vision of justice and mercy, connecting it to the reality of Indigenous injustice in Canada.

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## Suggested Schedule (90 mins)

- ◆ Welcome & Opening Prayer (5 min)
- ◆ Icebreaker: Share a time you saw justice done in your community (10 min)
- ◆ Read Scripture (Micah 6:6–8; Isaiah 1:16–17) twice, with different voices (5 min)
- ◆ Leader Teaching (20 min)
- ◆ Small-Group Discussion (20 min)
- ◆ Large-Group Sharing (15 min)
- ◆ Prayer & Lament Exercise (10 min)
- ◆ Wrap-up & Take-home Challenge (5 min)

## Leader Background Notes

- ◆ Do some study on Biblical Justice: Not just legal fairness but restoring right relationships.
  - ◆ Understand the depth and nuances of Hebrews words such as:
    - Shalom (Peace)
    - Mishpat (Justice)
    - Hesed (Loving Kindness)
    - Zedek (Righteousness)
- ◆ Do some study on Prophets' Critique: Worship is meaningless without justice (Isaiah 1).

- ◆ Contextual Connection: Churches in Canada often focused on ritual (worship, mission) but ignored justice in their treatment of First Nations peoples (residential schools, broken treaties).
- ◆ Humility: Micah emphasizes humility. We cannot come to reconciliation as “fixers” but as learners and listeners.

## Teaching Outline

- ◆ God cares more about how we live than religious show (Isaiah 1).
- ◆ Justice (mishpat) = giving people their due; mercy (hesed) = steadfast love; Righteousness (zedek) = justice and righteousness
- ◆ Justice for Indigenous neighbours means listening, lamenting, and acting.

## Discussion Questions

### Observation (What does the text say?)

1. What words stand out to you or what repeated words or themes do you notice in Micah 6:6–8?
2. In Isaiah 1:16–17, which actions does God command His people to take?
3. How does God contrast ritual sacrifice with justice and mercy?

### Interpretation (What does it mean?)

1. Why does God reject Israel’s sacrifices if they were following religious law?
2. What is the difference between acting justly and loving mercy?
3. What does “walking humbly with God” look like in contrast to pride or self-righteousness?
4. How do these passages redefine what true worship means?

### Application (How should we respond?)

1. Where have we, as the church in Canada, focused on ritual but neglected justice?
2. How might our church practice humility in our relationships with Indigenous neighbours?
3. What is one step you personally can take this week to “act justly” in your workplace, school, or community?

## Prayer Practice

- ◆ Silent lament (1–2 minutes).
- ◆ Leader reads Psalm 34:18 aloud.
- ◆ Invite participants to pray one-line prayers of confession.

## Prayer Prompts

- ◆ Lord, where do you want me to “act justly” in my daily life?
- ◆ Show me where I’ve been blind to injustice around me.
- ◆ Teach our church to walk humbly in relationships with Indigenous peoples.
- ◆ Help us not to turn away from hard truths but face them with courage.

## Take-Home

Read Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action 58–61 (church-focused).

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524504325663/1557513116819>

Highlight one that convicts you and bring it back next week.

# Session 2: Making Wrongs Right

Scripture: Luke 19:1–10; Exodus 22:1–4

## Goal:

To explore repentance as restitution, not only apology, and link it to Canada's Calls to Action.

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## Suggested Schedule (90 mins)

- ◆ Opening Prayer (5 min)
- ◆ Check-in: Which TRC Call to Action stood out to you? (10 min)
- ◆ Read Scripture (Luke 19:1–10) (5 min)
- ◆ Leader Teaching (20 min)
- ◆ Small-Group Discussion (20 min)
- ◆ Brainstorm Restitution Ideas (15 min)
- ◆ Prayer Exercise (10 min)
- ◆ Wrap-up (5 min)

## Leader Background Notes

- ◆ Zacchaeus didn't just confess, he repaired. He gave 4x back what he stole.
- ◆ Do some study on Old Testament restitution laws required repayment plus interest (Ex 22).
- ◆ Canada: churches apologized for residential schools, but restitution means ongoing action (funding healing, returning land, supporting Indigenous-led ministries).
- ◆ TRC Calls to Action are examples of modern restitution.

## Teaching Outline

- ◆ Zacchaeus is transformed and generosity flows.
- ◆ Restitution demonstrates repentance.
- ◆ Confession without repair is hollow.

## Discussion Questions

### Observation

- ◆ What do you notice about Jesus' interaction with Zacchaeus before Zacchaeus repents?
- ◆ How does Zacchaeus describe what he will do with his wealth?
- ◆ In Exodus 22, what is required when someone steals from another?
- ◆ What makes Zacchaeus' repentance authentic?

### Interpretation

- ◆ Why does Zacchaeus offer more restitution than the law required?
- ◆ How does his transformation show the difference between words and actions?
- ◆ What does this passage teach us about the relationship between salvation and repentance?
- ◆ How does restitution reveal the heart of the gospel?
- ◆ Why does restitution matter more than an apology?

### Application

- ◆ When has someone made restitution to you, how did it affect your relationship?
- ◆ What restitution is still owed to Indigenous peoples in Canada?
- ◆ What might restitution look like for our church today? (e.g., resources, partnerships, advocacy)
- ◆ What would it cost you personally to make wrongs right in your relationships?

## Optional Activity

- ◆ Brainstorm "Restitution Actions" for your church:
  - ◆ Land acknowledgment with education
    - ▶ <https://baptist.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/A-Guide-to-Territorial-Acknowledgements-10-4-22.pdf>
  - ◆ Support Indigenous-run organizations.
  - ◆ Learn and share Indigenous languages.
  - ◆ Advocate for Indigenous rights.

## Prayer Practice

In pairs: pray for courage to move from words to action.

## Prayer Prompts

- ◆ Jesus, like Zacchaeus, help me not only to confess but to make things right.
- ◆ What wrongs in our nation and our churches still need repair?
- ◆ Lord, give us wisdom to know what restitution looks like today.
- ◆ Give us the courage to sacrifice for the sake of healing.

## Take-Home

Write down one personal restitution step you could take (time, resources, advocacy).

# Session 3: Reconciliation in Christ

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:16–21; Ephesians 2:14–22

## Goal:

To show reconciliation as the heart of the gospel and challenge the church to live as ambassadors of reconciliation.

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## Suggested Schedule (90 mins)

- ◆ Opening Prayer (5 min)
- ◆ Check-in: Share one restitution idea you've been thinking about (10 min)
- ◆ Read Scripture (2 Cor 5:16–21) (5 min)
- ◆ Leader Teaching (20 min)
- ◆ Discussion (20 min)
- ◆ Barriers & Bridges Activity (15 min)
- ◆ Prayer Exercise (10 min)
- ◆ Wrap-up (5 min)

## Leader Background Notes

- ◆ Paul describes reconciliation as both vertical (God–human) and horizontal (human–human).
- ◆ Christ breaks dividing walls (Eph 2).
- ◆ Reconciliation = ongoing process, not one-time event.
- ◆ In Canada: reconciliation means listening, relationship, and structural change.

## Teaching Outline

- ◆ In Christ, we're reconciled to God (2 Cor 5).
- ◆ We're called ambassadors meaning we are visible representatives of reconciliation.
- ◆ Barriers to reconciliation in Canada = racism, denial, ignorance, fear.
- ◆ Bridges = listening, humility, truth-telling, shared worship, partnerships.

## Discussion Questions

### Observation

- ◆ What does Paul mean by “new creation” in 2 Cor 5:17?
- ◆ Who initiates reconciliation in 2 Cor 5:18–19?
- ◆ What “dividing wall” does Paul describe in Ephesians 2:14?
- ◆ How is the church described in Ephesians 2:19–22?
- ◆ How does Paul define reconciliation?

### Interpretation

- ◆ What does it mean that reconciliation is “entrusted” to us?
- ◆ How do these passages connect reconciliation with the gospel itself?
- ◆ Why does Paul use the imagery of citizenship and household in Ephesians 2?
- ◆ What does it mean to be “ambassadors” of reconciliation in the ancient world and today?
- ◆ What's the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?

### Application

- ◆ What dividing walls still exist in Canadian society between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples?
- ◆ How can reconciliation be lived out in our relationships not just spoken about?
- ◆ What role can our church take as a bridge-builder in our community?
- ◆ How could you personally live as an “ambassador of reconciliation” this week?
- ◆ What barriers do you see in your community?

## Activity: Barriers & Bridges

- ◆ On chart paper, draw two columns: Barriers / Bridges.
- ◆ Brainstorm together. Leave the chart visible as a reminder.

## Prayer Practice

Responsive prayer:

**Leader:** “Lord, break down the walls.”

**Group:** “Lord, build your bridges.”

## Prayer Prompts

- ◆ Lord, who are you calling me to be reconciled with?
- ◆ Jesus, make me an ambassador of reconciliation in my family, my church, and my community.
- ◆ Break down the walls of division between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
- ◆ Holy Spirit, give us patience and perseverance when reconciliation is difficult.

## Take-Home

Research your local Indigenous nation or treaty. Bring back one fact to share in Session 4.

# Session 4: Healing and Forgiveness

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1–4; Psalm 34:18; Matthew 18:21–22

## Goal:

To reflect on God’s healing for survivors, and how forgiveness and reconciliation work together.

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## Suggested Schedule (90 mins)

- ◆ What barriers do you see in your community?
- ◆ What bridges can the Spirit build through us?
- ◆ up & Next Steps (5 min)

## Leader Background Notes

- ◆ Isaiah 61: God restores ruins and comforts the brokenhearted.
- ◆ Forgiveness is commanded (Matt 18), but it cannot be forced on survivors.
- ◆ The church must walk patiently, holding space for both lament and healing.
- ◆ Trauma is generational and reconciliation requires long-term commitment.

## Teaching Outline

- ◆ God heals the brokenhearted (Ps 34).
- ◆ Healing takes time and it’s Spirit-led.
- ◆ Forgiveness and reconciliation are connected but not identical.
- ◆ Our role: presence, patience, prayer, action.

## Discussion Questions

### Observation

- ◆ In Isaiah 61, what does the Spirit of the Lord anoint the servant to do?
- ◆ What contrasts do you see in verses 3 (ashes/beauty, mourning/joy)?
- ◆ According to Psalm 34:18, who is God especially close to?
- ◆ In Matthew 18:21–22, what question does Peter ask, and how does Jesus respond?
- ◆ What do these passages teach us about healing?

### Interpretation

- ◆ What does Isaiah 61 teach us about God’s heart for the brokenhearted?
- ◆ How does the promise of restoration in verse 4 go beyond individual healing?
- ◆ Why does Jesus call for radical forgiveness (seventy-seven times)?
- ◆ How can we hold together both justice and forgiveness in the work of reconciliation?

### Application

- ◆ Where do you see brokenheartedness in our communities today?
- ◆ How can our church embody God’s nearness to survivors of trauma?
- ◆ How should we respond when forgiveness has not yet been extended?
- ◆ What step could you take this week to bring healing to someone else’s brokenness?

## Closing

- ◆ Provide orange cards (“Every Child Matters”).
- ◆ Each participant writes a prayer, confession, or commitment.
- ◆ Read aloud a Commissioning Liturgy (see Below).

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### *Commissioning Liturgy for Truth and Reconciliation*

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#### Leader:

Sisters and brothers, we have walked through Scripture together, listening for God’s voice in the call to justice, truth, reconciliation, and healing.

#### People:

We have heard God’s heart for the brokenhearted, and we commit ourselves to walk humbly with our Indigenous neighbours.

**Leader:**

We have seen that true repentance requires action, not only words.

**People:**

We will seek to make wrongs right, to support healing, and to live as people of truth.

**Leader:**

In Christ, the dividing walls have been broken down.

**People:**

We will be ambassadors of reconciliation, bringing peace where there has been pain.

**Leader:**

God's Spirit sends us out to proclaim good news and to bind up the brokenhearted.

**People:**

With God's help, we will carry this work forward in our homes, in our churches, and in our communities.

**Leader:**

Go now in the name of the Father who created all peoples,  
the Son who reconciles us through the cross,  
and the Spirit who empowers us for justice and peace.

**All:**

Amen. We go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**Prayer Practice**

- ◆ Circle prayer: each person offers one word (hope, healing, courage, justice).
- ◆ Leader closes with Isaiah 61:4.

**Prayer Prompts**

- ◆ Lord, comfort survivors of residential schools and their families.
- ◆ Heal the wounds that have been carried for generations.
- ◆ Teach me how to forgive when it feels impossible.
- ◆ Restore hope where it has been lost, and make us agents of healing.

## Take-Home (Ongoing Challenge)

- ◆ Commit to one reconciliation practice: ongoing learning, relationship-building, advocacy, or financial support of Indigenous-led work.

# A Closing Pastoral Word

Dear Friends in Christ,

Over the past four sessions, you have listened to Scripture, wrestled with hard truths, prayed with lament and hope, and considered what reconciliation might look like in our time and place. This is no small thing.

But let us be clear: this journey does not end here. Truth and reconciliation are not boxes to check or studies to complete. They are ongoing commitments of the heart, shaping the way we live as God's people in Canada.

The gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to more than words. Like Zacchaeus, we are called to repair what has been broken. Like Paul, we are called to live as ambassadors of reconciliation. Like Isaiah, we are called to proclaim good news and bind up the brokenhearted.

As you leave this study, may you carry with you both the weight of history and the hope of God's Kingdom. May you be quick to listen, slow to speak, and ready to act with humility and love. And may your church be a living sign of Christ's reconciling power to building bridges, seeking justice, and embodying healing in partnership with Indigenous sisters and brothers.

Go now with courage, for the Spirit of the Lord is upon you, and He has anointed you for this work.

Justice – Grace – Mercy.

# Next Steps for Your Church

This Bible study is only a beginning. Truth and reconciliation is an ongoing journey, and CBOQ desires to walk alongside our churches as we seek justice, healing, and renewed relationships with Indigenous communities.

Here are a few concrete action steps your church can take:

## 1. Contact CBOQ for Feedback

- ◆ Share how your church used this Bible study and what you learned.
- ◆ Contact Rev. Dr. Ken Foo (Director, Church Life and Leadership) for feedback on the resource and to let CBOQ know how it served your community  
– [kfoo@baptist.ca](mailto:kfoo@baptist.ca)

## 2. Connect for Future Conversations

- ◆ Ask CBOQ: “Would our church like to be part of future conversations with our First Nations churches and communities?”
- ◆ Express your willingness to listen, learn, and build relationships.

## 3. Clarify Your Best Contact Method

- ◆ Let CBOQ know how you would like to be contacted (email, phone, Zoom, in-person).
- ◆ Provide the name of a key contact person from your church who can follow up on next steps.

## 4. Consider Local Engagement

- ◆ Research the First Nations territory and history of your own area.
- ◆ Explore ways your church can partner with Indigenous-led organizations or ministries.