



A devotional reflection on race, racism, and culture

This prayer guide can be used individually or by a small group, with the hope that God might grant courage for insight and action on race and racism as they appear in your life.

These pages are meant for your own reflection and prayer, and to help create space through which God can move in your life, wherever you are in the struggle to address and overcome racism.

To get the most from this guide, you are encouraged to set aside at least an hour, and to begin by doing what opens you most deeply to God's presence (suggestions: a familiar prayer, lighting a candle, several deep breaths, or a meaningful hymn or song).

Read the instructions slowly, pausing for reflection whenever a word or phrase stands out to you. Take your time and let God move in and through you. There's no rush: It's all God's time. Take as long as it takes, and let God speak to you through this prayer time.

OPENING PRAYER: LORD OF ALL THE TRIBES AND NATIONS, OPEN ME TO YOUR PRESENCE, AND TO YOUR MOVEMENT IN MY HEART. HOLY SPIRIT, EMPOWER ME TO SEE MY LIFE CLEARLY. CHRIST, GRANT ME COURAGE AND OVERFLOWING GRACE AS I PRAY AND REFLECT.

I. Scripture teaches that all humans are created in God's image.

Genesis 1:27 "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

How would you describe God's image inside you?

What is in you deeper than what you like or don't like, or what other people see when they look at you?

Take time to pray about these questions. Write or sketch your reflections in the space provided below.

II. Racism can prevent us from remembering the common image of God inside of us – and everybody.

People of other races or cultures can seem so different that we forget how God's image connects us at a level deeper than words. They *sound* different, they *dress* differently, their skin is different from ours. They are often from a different place and have a different history.

What is the image of God in every person – even across race and culture lines?

Take a moment to listen for God's voice, and write or sketch your reflections or responses here.

Racism is exclusion or prejudice based on culture or skin color.

Sometimes it takes dramatic forms – beatings and killings, or laws that prevent a group from fully participating in society.

Sometimes it occurs more subtly – in who is remembered or forgotten.

Where has racism touched your life, personally? How has it touched your community?

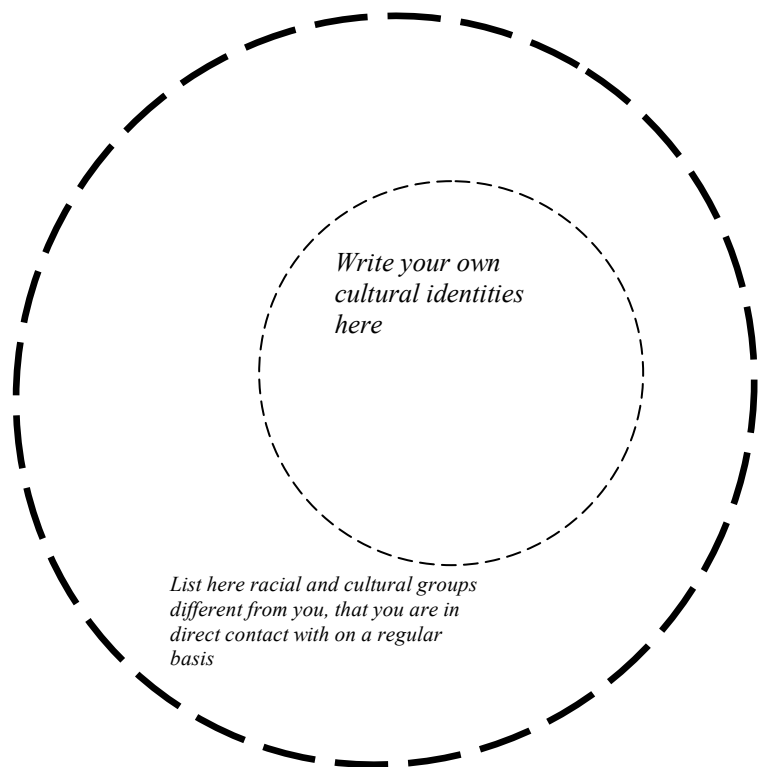
Find someone who you can tell these stories with, someone different from you.

When groups are more powerful, racism can make them forget their connection to others. When groups are less powerful, racism can make them believe they don't matter.

Are there any ways that racism makes you forget who you really are? How? What do you forget?

Pray: God, help me remember who I am.

III. Fill in the section below as you think about where your life actually touches people who have a different culture or race. As you do this, keep praying.



In this open area, write racial or cultural groups who are in your awareness but with whom you are not in regular relationship

After filling in the sketch:

What do you notice as you look at this drawing?

Social power is the power to get things done in society.

Racism often occurs when groups who have more social power either hurt or ignore those with less social power.

Which groups have “social power” in your drawing?

Where would you put God in the drawing you've just made? (Draw God in, somehow!) Pause to pray about how God touches people in different racial and ethnic groups. Ask for God's blessing on all people.

Ask God what you need to hear as you think about culture and race in your own life. Do you need healing? Do you need courage or vision? Do you need patience – or impatience?

IV. Now examine your worshipping community.

How often do you find yourself in worship with people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds?

If often, what did it take to create that kind of community?

If not often, why? What barriers prevent it?

Can you identify some racial power dynamics in your church or community, that people usually don't talk about?

What would be a first step for you in becoming more aware of these dynamics?

What would be a first step in addressing these dynamics for you and/or your worshipping community?

V. Pray slowly, aloud or in silence:

FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

Loving God, I pray for encouragement. Remind me of your grace, power and blessing, as I set my heart to understand race, culture, and their impacts on my life. Grant me your power and blessing as I try to see my life in a broader context.

FOR HONESTY

Dear God, I ask you to help me see more clearly how my life is near or far from the lives of those whose culture is different from mine. God, what do I need to be honest about with myself, right now?

FOR RELEASE

If there is anything you can lift from me, do it, God! I would be released from the soul burdens of bitterness, grief, and uncaring. Help me step forward into your freedom, remembering who you intend me to be.

FOR COURAGE

God, give me courage to talk with those who are like me about the hurts of racial division and racism.

Give me courage to talk and share with those who are different from me.

Give me the courage of the prophets, God, to name what I see in my congregation and my community.

AMEN.

Join On Earth Peace in making a commitment to build racial justice.
If you benefited from this resource, please support the Christian peacemaking ministries of On Earth Peace, PO Box 188, New Windsor, MD 21776.

www.onearthpeace.org

