

SETTING THE TABLE

THE UNITY TABLE

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO CONVERSATIONS THAT LEAD TO RECONCILIATION

THE UNITY TABLE

One Community Church

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Printed in the U.S.A.

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SETTING THE TABLE



When I grew up, my mother had a set of what she called “good china”. This was her favorite and most expensive porcelain dinnerware. They were very ornate and heavy. My sister and I were not permitted to put them into the dishwasher; they had to be hand washed. When my mother set them out along with a dazzling white tablecloth and gilded cutlery, it was like dining at Buckingham Palace!

On the rare occasion when we were blessed to eat from the “good china,” we knew the people who were dining with us that night were very special to her because of all of the fuss she made over them. It took a lot of time and effort to set the table. First, we had to go into the attic to retrieve the china. She kept it all in its original containers. Each plate had its own cardboard protector to keep it from being broken. Then, we had to hand wash each plate and cup before it could be placed on the table. Finally, after the meal was over, we had to wash everything again and put it back into the box and then hoist it back up the attic. Needless to say, we did not use our china set very often.

By God’s divine sovereignty we find ourselves living in historic times. The COVID-19 pandemic and the death of George Floyd have awakened the consciousness of the American people and things are changing. Racist symbols, social injustice, and discriminatory tactics are being questioned. Now more than ever, people are open to having conversations about the one issue that has divided our country and our churches for centuries—race. As the body of Christ, we cannot shirk our duties to be salt and light in this world. Therefore, instead of waiting for others, we must take the lead in encouraging courageous conversations that will lead to racial reconciliation in our country. However, healthy and God honoring dialogue that leads to reconciliation does not just happen. It takes preparation. This book is designed to help you prepare for these conversations which we call the Unity Table.

Setting the table requires work. If we want to have a great experience, we need to do some work ahead of time to prepare our hearts, our minds and even the physical environment for a great conversation. We are not naïve. What we are asking you to do is beyond your comfort zone. If it were easy then we would already be doing it. What we are asking you to do will take courage; it will take humility and God’s reconciling power.





THE ENVIRONMENT MATTERS



We all recognize the importance of ambiance. In the culinary world, the presentation of food is almost as important as the food itself. Restaurants live or die by the atmosphere they create. Yes, even though it is possible to get good food from a “hole in the wall” joint, when we want to really enjoy ourselves, we look for those places that have great food, great service and a great environment. We hope the food, the environment and the service will be the recipe for a great conversation and an amazing experience. The environment matters.

Remove distractions

When looking for a place to have a Unity Table Talk you should find a place that is conducive for conversations. Some places are open and friendly but the busyness, the music and the chatter may be too loud which may frustrate your ability to hear each other. The simple agitation of having to talk loudly to be heard or strain to hear each other over the crowd noise can actually make the conversation seem more tense than it really is. There may even be times when you feel like the other person is yelling at you when they really are just speaking loud in an attempt to be heard. In loud environments you may also miss a lot of the nuances of what they say and how they say it, which may lead to wrong assumptions and misunderstandings.

On the other hand, a place that is too quiet may be awkward. Likewise, if you are sitting too close to another table and your conversation may be overheard easily, you or the other person may not feel comfortable sharing your thoughts and ideas for strangers to hear.

When in doubt ask the other person where they would like to sit. In doing so, you

are letting them know that you have their interests and preferences in mind. This is particularly helpful to destroy any perception that you want to dominate the situation or control the conversation. This small gesture means a lot.

Put your phones away. When you both agree to do this, you will honor each other and ensure that you are giving undivided attention to each other. Nothing can be more off putting than someone who is constantly looking down at their phone when you are attempting to share your heart with them.

Find common ground

You should try to find a neutral site in which you will both be comfortable. Find a place where you have both eaten and have had a good experience. If you do choose a place you have not visited before, it is worth taking some time to check out the place beforehand. Select a place that has food you both enjoy. (It is wise to save the ethnic food experience for a later time!)

Although it promotes intimacy, eating at someone else's home (especially during the COVID19 pandemic) is not always the best idea. Unless you have a strong relationship with them already (and you can take the necessary health precautions), it is far better to eat together outside at a restaurant while practicing social distancing. Eating in public also keeps the focus on the conversation and not about whether you think that they liked your house. There will be time for meeting in each other's homes as the relationship develops.

Split the tab

You should both agree ahead of time to split the bill. Again, this sounds like a little thing but it can be perceived as a power move if you offer to pay for the meal. It is wise to carry cash in the event that the server cannot divide the bill.

notes

HISTORICAL MILESTONES

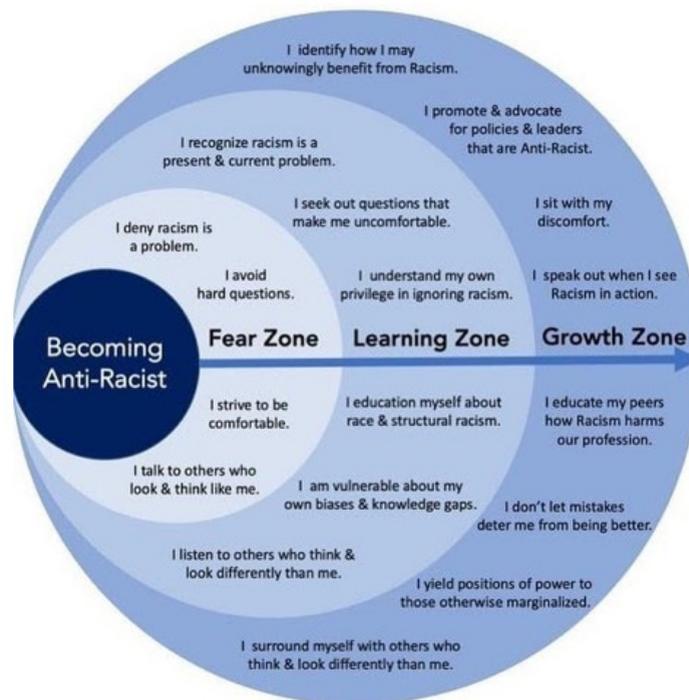
1619	Dutch ship brings 20 Africans to Jamestown, Virginia. These were the first enslaved Africans of the United States.		1957	Little Rock Nine integrates Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas.			
1793	Eli Whitney's new cotton gin increases demand for slaves; Congress passes Fugitive Slave Act, making it a federal crime to aid an escaping slave.		1962	James Meredith becomes first Black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi.			
1808	Congress bans importation of slaves.	1820	Missouri Compromise bans slavery above southern borders.	1963	More than 200,000 people march in the largest civil right movement in U.S. history; Martin Luther King Jr. gives his "I Have A Dream" speech.		
1849	Harriet Tubman escapes to Philadelphia through the Underground Railroad and helps about 300 people escape as well.		1964	President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964, giving the government the right to protect citizens against race, religion, or sex discrimination.			
1857	In the Dred Scott vs. Sanford case, the U.S. Supreme Court declares that Blacks are not citizens of the United States.		1965	President Johnson signs Voting Act of 1965.	1967	Thurgood Marshall becomes first Black U.S. Supreme Court Justice.	
1865	The 13th Amendment is ratified and slavery is abolished.	1868	The 14th Amendment is ratified and Blacks can become U.S. citizens.	1968	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated.	1972	Shirley Chisholm becomes first major-party Black candidate to run for president.
1870	The 15th Amendment is ratified and guaranteed that voting cannot be denied because of race; Hiram Revels becomes the first Black member of Congress.		1983	Vanessa Williams becomes the first Black Miss America.	1990	Douglas Wilder of Virginia becomes first Black to be elected governor.	
1900	William H. Carey becomes first Black to be awarded with a Medal of Honor.	1926	Carter G. Woodson established Negro History Week.	1991	President George H. W. Bush signs the Civil Rights Act of 1991, strengthening the laws on employment discrimination.		
1940	Hattie McDaniel becomes the first Black to win an Academy Award.		1993	Dr. Joycelyn Elders becomes first Black Surgeon General.			
1947	Jackie Robinson becomes first Black to play Major League Baseball.	1950	Ralph J. Bunche becomes first Black to win the Nobel Peace Prize.	2001	General Colin Powell becomes first Black Secretary of State.		
1953	Willie Throver becomes first Black to play quarterback in the National Football League.		2009	Barack Obama becomes first Black president.			
1955	Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. This leads to the Montgomery Bus Boycott.		2014	Protests begin for the murders of Michael Brown and Eric Garner.	2020	Murder of George Floyd sparks protests nationwide.	



SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS



Calm down! Remember, Rome was not built in a day. If you believe that all it takes is one Unity Talk to radically change the other person, you are setting yourself up for failure. Change is a process. Moreover, reconciliation is a spiritual matter that requires the work of the Holy Spirit. The decision and the power to change comes from the Lord. We are simply agents, empowered by God to create opportunities that inspire change in others. Our Unity Table Talks enable us to be “iron sharpening iron” so we will grow in our faith. These conversations at best reveal where we are on the path to becoming Anti-Racist (See the “Becoming Anti-Racist” chart below).



Listen first to gain the right to be heard. Many times, when people talk about social injustice and ending racism, they are driven by the desire to prove a point. When two of these people try to have a conversation, it never works. They end up speaking past each other and nothing is accomplished. Sometimes their unconscious goal may even be to punish the other person. They want the other person to feel the pain they feel, so they attack them emotionally. Instead, your goal should be to hear and to be heard by the other person. The Bible calls this “mutual edification” (Romans 14:9).

Even if you may make some fantastic points and “win the argument” you may lose the person because they may feel attacked, and that negative experience may ultimately reinforce their beliefs and stereotypes. Unless you are willing to surrender your right to be right, you will never get anywhere. Unless you heal from your own hurt, you cannot be reconciled. The Unity Table is not a debate in which you are trying to score points. It is an opportunity to learn how you can love your brother and sister in Christ better.

Your first goal is to earn the invitation to have a second conversation. This goal recognizes you will always be learning about the other person. One conversation is never enough. You must establish a relationship that will allow you to grow in this area over time.

Don't assume that this person and their views represent their entire race and culture. The African American diaspora is very diverse and complex. There are many subcultures and cultural experiences that cannot be lumped into one category. This is the same for all cultures. The more relationships and conversations you have with people of different races the more you will broaden your perspective.

notes

Be prepared to give and receive a lot of grace

People make mistakes. You must give them the permission to make mistakes or they will never reveal what they are actually thinking and feeling. You must create a safe place for them. They are going to eventually say something that will outright offend you or just make you feel uncomfortable. You must be quick to forgive.

Now there is a difference between being quick to forgive and accepting. You should not be passive aggressive and not address significant things. However, you must not constantly correct and adjust every little thing they say. It takes a mature person to know the difference and the only way to grow is to try and fail a lot! When they say something that is offensive, gently let them know and encourage them to continue. Remind them you are their friend and you are both trying to learn together.

Do not expect to resolve every issue

If you think the goal is to keep talking until you come to a mutually agreed upon viewpoint, then you will be frustrated. You may agree to disagree about certain issues. The purpose of dialogue is to understand and appreciate the other person's viewpoint, not to conform them to yours. Certainly it is your duty to lovingly point out issues that the other person may be overlooking, especially those that come from Scripture, but it must be done in love.



Educate yourself

Information is everywhere. You just have to seek it out. Take some time to write down everything that you do not know much about in regards to the topics of race, discrimination and social justice. Then take the time and effort to research them. We have also created a list of Resources and Terms to get you started. Familiarizing yourself with the language around this topic will make you more comfortable discussing it at the Unity Table.



SET GROUND RULES



Set a specific time to start and end

Starting on time and ending on time may not be important to you but it may be important to the person you are meeting with! Cultures view time in different ways (polychronic vs monochronic). In general, Western culture values punctuality and time can be more valuable than money whereas other cultures view it more loosely. When planning social events and appointments, other cultures see time in approximations versus exactness. This can cause conflict when the person who believes in punctuality feels disrespected by the other person who casually arrives at the table tardy.

In the same manner because Western culture places such a high value on time, some will want to have an ending time. They will have other appointments and events they need to attend and they will want to leave promptly even if the conversation has not had a chance to properly conclude. This may make the person who does not share this high value for time feel disrespected.

Therefore it is important to give grace on both ends. Give grace to the person who does not start on time and grace to the person who wants to end the conversation according to the clock instead of when the conversation has naturally resolved. For this reason, it is wise not to plan other activities and engagements too closely around the time that you will be meeting for your Unity Table Talk.

You must respect each other's boundaries

Agree to pause whenever someone says that they need a break. Although you

may be fine and you think that the other person is fine as well, they may actually be doing their best to keep their emotions under control. If they indicate that they do not want to talk about something, discontinue the discussion or take a break. Do not press them on it. Asking, “Why?” may actually open up a flood of feelings which may lead them to say things that they will regret. We are engaging in a very serious and sensitive topic and something you say may trigger a very strong emotion in them. It is wise not to avoid these emotional cues.

What is shared at the Unity Table, stays at the Unity Table. Decide ahead of time whether the things discussed at the Unity Table can be shared with others. The last thing that you want to do is to use this experience as fodder for your next sermon or class, or as a post on social media. No one wants to feel like they are a project. So don't weaponize their words by sharing them with others even if you don't use their name, or if you think that they won't mind.

Don't overwhelm people

You cannot eat an elephant in one bite. If you try to address all of your concerns or ask all of your questions in the first conversation you will overwhelm the other person and it may feel like an interview. It is better to take time to get to know each other in an authentic manner than to come with a list of questions or issues that you want to address. As questions and tangents arise, agree to save them for another discussion. It will give you new topics to discuss if you are privileged to have another Unity Table Discussion with them.

Avoid hot button topics

You must first build a relational bridge that will support the weight of some sensitive topics before you go over them. If you begin to discuss these highly charged topics too early, the other person will not know your heart and therefore will not perceive that you are really seeking understanding but just picking a fight. All relationships are based upon trust and goodwill. If the other person does not trust you, they will question your intentions and become defensive.

Choose your words wisely

Words and phrases like “Systematic Racism”, “Bigot”, “Racist”, “All y’all”, “Always”, “Never”, “You People”, “Black Lives Matter”, “All Lives Matter”, kneeling during the National Anthem, “black on black crime”, “Reparations”, Donald Trump, the Confederate Flag and tearing down monuments are just a few topics and concepts that are better left for later discussions. As tempting as it may be, steer clear of them. These explosive topics will only derail your conversation and turn the Unity Table into a “Debate Table”.

Don’t interrupt

Interrupting indicates that you either want to correct the other person or that you are actually just waiting for the other person to finish so that you can make your next point. This reveals your posture. Are you there to learn or to teach? Are you there to emotionally punish or to empathize? Rather than interrupt, intentionally practice good listening skills by observing your posture, making eye contact and restating back what the other person has shared. Remember to smile and nod to affirm the person even if you do not agree with what they are saying.

Don’t skip around to various topics

Try to stick to just a couple of ideas for each talk. It is better to cover one or two ideas deeply than to have a scattered conversation about several unrelated themes. You may think that going off topic creates an “organic” conversation, but many times it actually leads to exasperation.

Avoid the “what abouts”

This is the tactic that many debaters use to draw attention away from a serious issue. Instead of addressing a legitimate concern, they point to a completely different issue that they believe is also as important and is not being addressed either. Here is their logic: “You say that this issue is important, but what about all of these other issues over here that aren’t being addressed? Why is it that you do not talk about them with as much passion?” The truth is that there are unlimited

problems in our fallen world. When we focus on one it does not mean that we do so to the exclusion of others.

BELIEVE THE BEST.



Agree to never question each other's motives or to attack each other's character. People never respond well when their character or motivations are being questioned. It shuts down conversations, or worse, generates in-kind retaliation and perpetuates a vicious cycle.

notes

RESOURCES

BOOKS

1. *Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice*, Eric Mason (Amazon)
2. *Birth of a White Nation: The Invention of White People and Its Relevance Today*, Jacqueline Battalora (Amazon)
3. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Michelle Alexander (Amazon)
4. *Letters from a Birmingham Jail*, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Amazon)
5. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, Robin DiAngelo (Amazon)

VIDEOS

1. Eyes on the Prize (YouTube)
2. What is Systemic Racism, Tony Evans (YouTube)
3. Race in America, Holy Post (YouTube)

MOVIES

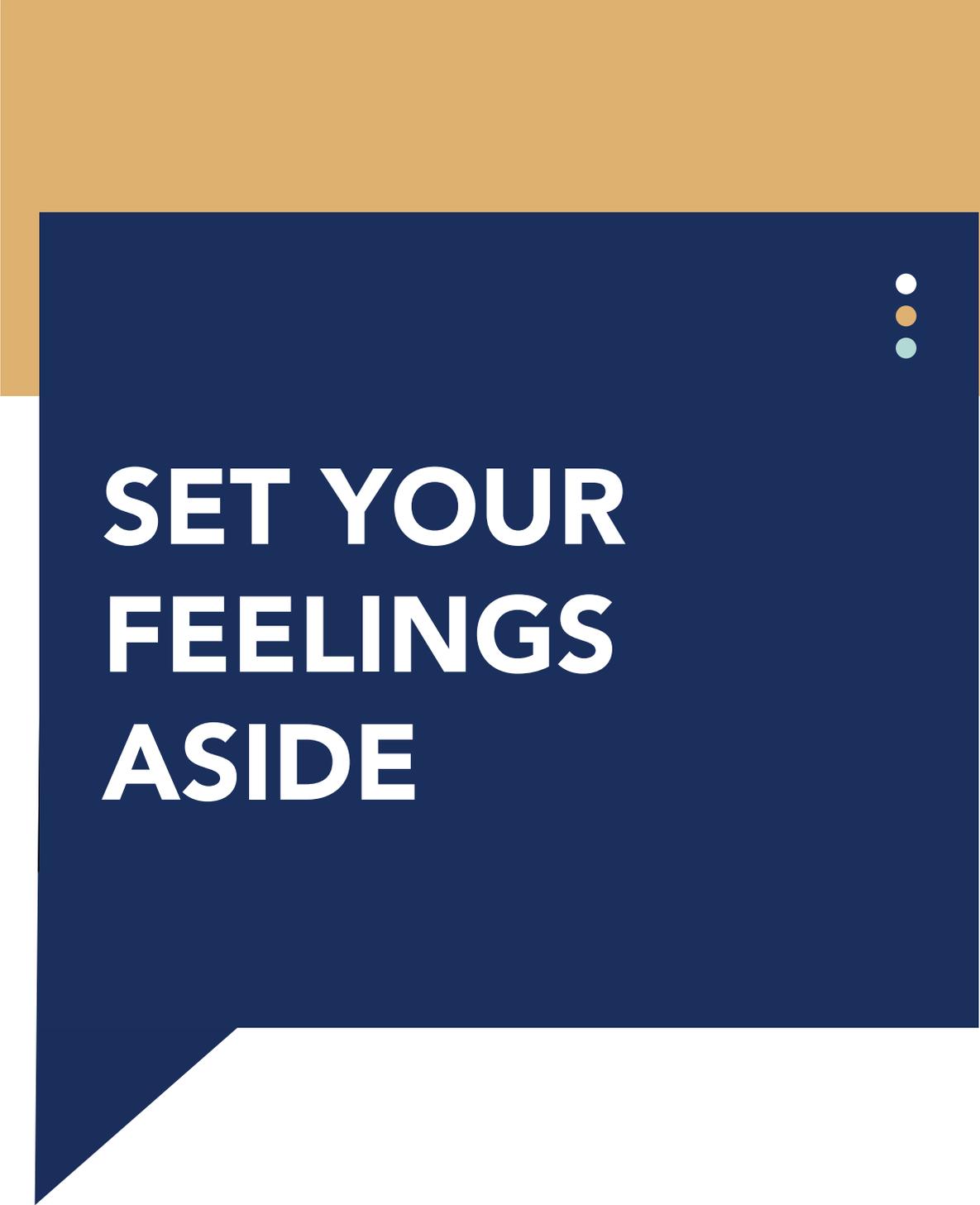
1. Selma (Prime Video)
2. 42 (Prime Video)

MUSEUMS

National Museum of African American History & Culture, Washington, D.C.
(www.nmaahc.si.edu)

COURSES

One Community Church
Masterclass: History of Racism in America (www.visitonecc.com)



**SET YOUR
FEELINGS
ASIDE**



Don't lecture

Your intent can never be to make the other person feel your pain. They will never know fully what it's like to walk in your shoes. So, if you say things that are deep and meaningful to you and the other person does not respond emotionally, do not get offended. They may still be processing what you are saying. Sometimes they may never actually fully understand and you must be ok with that. Do not judge the other person by their reactions. These conversations are quite uncomfortable for many people and their facial expressions and reactions may not align with their true feelings.

Be gracious. Many of us are heartbroken and tired. Some people have been crying for days. Others have been marching. Others have been praying. Let's remember many of us are still in shock and fear. Before you can have a discussion you must understand for yourself how you feel and label your emotions. When emotions are high we are less likely to be forgiving and patient.

On the other hand, you should try your best to feel their pain and their emotions. The Bible says that we ought to weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15).

Mind your mood

Self-awareness is critical in these discussions. You have to be extremely disciplined emotionally. Avoid raising your voice. Monitor yourself throughout the discussion and step away if you need to.

Don't completely discredit your own opinions

Your thoughts are valid, but keep them in perspective. You think a certain way

because of your experience, your upbringing, your background, your culture and your exposure to ideas and information. The way you think is constantly changing. As your experiences change and you are exposed to people of different backgrounds and cultures, if you are open to growth, your ideas and feelings will also change. How you feel now is a starting point, not the end point.

Don't be dogmatic

Acknowledge your feelings but ground them in the context of the long history of racism in America. There is so much to know and understand. Humility is the irresistible aroma that draws people to the Unity Table.

Address your fears

Many people fear having Unity Table Talks because they are afraid that they will say the wrong thing or they will not be able to manage their emotions. Just one mistake and they risk being labeled the “R” word: a Racist. Although it is much safer to not put yourself out there, we must be willing to forgive ourselves and others when they make mistakes.

Don't be dismissive

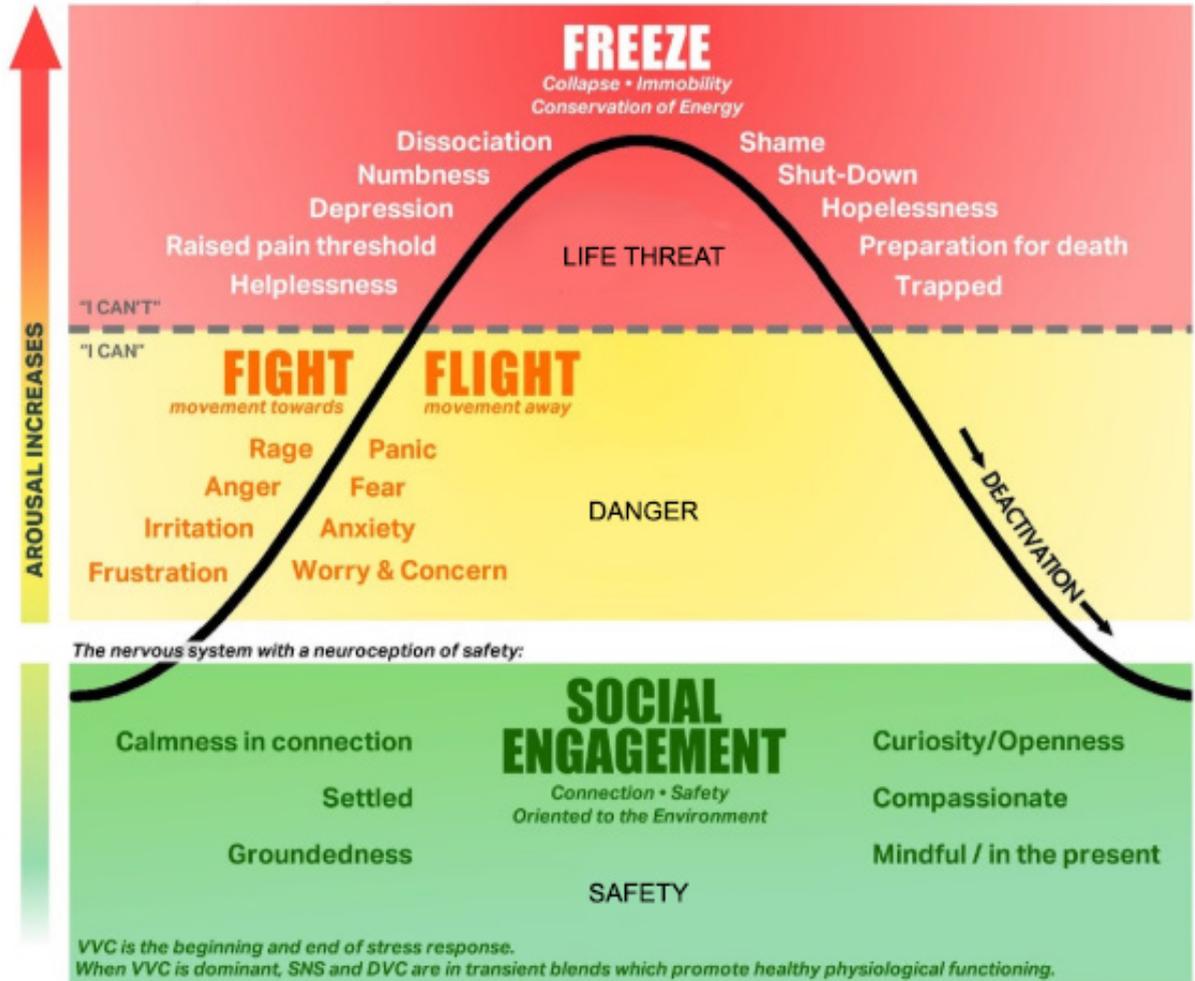
As we listen to each other's stories and concerns we may be tempted to compare our own personal story with theirs or of those who have been affected by racism and social injustice. We may consider our own hardships and struggles and begin to wonder, “If I could make it, why can't they?” Questions like these are unhelpful because they assume that their circumstances are equivalent with ours. The point of the Unity Table Talk is to discover these differences. Such a question may also be an indicator that you may need to do some more preparation before having a Unity Table Talk. See the Resource Guide on page .

Do not have a Unity Table Discussion until you are ready emotionally. Refer to the notes on the automatic defensiveness we have when we are confronted ... fight or flight mode.

- Actually listen! Try rephrasing their statements to make sure that you understand.

- Strive to be the most gracious person at the table.
- Know your feelings and mood (See chart below).
- Do not try to prove that you are not racist. Do not come armed with how many “Black, Asian or Latino friends” you have or that you have relatives who are Black, etc.

The nervous system with a neuroception of threat:



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notes



SET APART CHRIST IN YOUR HEART AS LORD

(1 Peter 3:15)



Pray, pray and pray some more

What are you praying for? Empathy. Before we can begin to understand how another person feels, we must first remove the barriers of prejudice, political affiliation, cultural identification, feelings of entitlement, cultural distance, and denial.¹

Pray that you God will increase your empathy for people outside of your social circle. Instead of having a critical spirit, ask God to give you a missional heart that is interested in understanding different cultures and peoples.

The Bible says that the mark of a mature believer is the ability to be able to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Before you can speak the truth you must first love.

Pray you will begin to look for the things that you have in common with people first rather than being put off by their differences.

Ask God to give you a better picture of yourself and how your culture and background shapes your identity.

Ask God to reveal the prejudice that is in your own heart. Remember there is no one who is righteous. This means we all have fallen short in this area no matter what race we are. Our sin nature always wants us to favor those who look like us and share our background and culture. We must put to death the inclination that

¹ Krznaric, R. (2015). *Empathy: Why it matters, and how to get it*. London: Rider Books.

we are somehow more deserving of the things that we have and humbly thank God for the privileges and favor that He has given. We have no right to anything. We are all stewards of the things God has graciously loaned to us. One day we will give a reckoning for how we used these privileges: either for selfish vainglory or for the advancement of the Kingdom of God and his glory.

Pray you will not be like the children of Israel who used their advantaged position among the nations for themselves. God judged them for keeping his blessings to themselves and not blessing the nations around them. Ask God to show you how you are to use all of the privileges that you have to be a blessing to all people.

Pray that God will increase your love for all people, especially those who do not look or think like you do. Pray that you will love them deeply from the heart (1 Peter 1:22). We ought to love one another as ourselves (Mark 12:31).

Pray for yourself. Pray that you will not be motivated by feelings of guilt or shame but by love. Pray that you will humble yourself so that you will be in a place where God can use you.

Ask God to help you forgive those who have harmed you (Colossians 2:12-13, Philippians 1:6, Matthew 5:44-45). Acknowledge the pain that they have caused you. Give your anger to God. Confess to God your desire to retaliate. Ask God to replace this desire with a genuine love for the other person, a love that desires their well being and blessing.

Ask God to help you live in an attitude of forgiveness. Take the time to pray for their salvation and God's blessing upon them.

Pray for the other person. You will never know what it is like to walk in another person's shoes but that does not prevent you from trying to understand.

Ask God to help you recognize your own sin and not to see other's sin as greater and more reprehensible than your own (Luke 6:42).

Pray that the Lord will teach you how to love them better than you love yourself. Now that they have shared their heart with you, you have a better understanding

of who they are and how they think about things. You have more to pray about. Also pray against the enemy who would try to inflame differences and leave you both feeling insecure, frustrated, or discouraged.

Continue to pray for your own heart. Commit to praying daily. This is intense spiritual warfare. It is harder to move mountains than it is to change some people's minds. But it takes only a little bit of faith to do both. Pray that the Lord will teach you how to love them better than you love yourself.

PRAY FOR RECONCILIATION!



The purpose of the Unity Talk is racial reconciliation.

notes



SET UP THE NEXT DISCUSSION



At the conclusion of your first Unity Table Talk, make plans to meet together again. Although we may be well intentioned, we all tend to be busy or forgetful. If we do not immediately make the effort to decide the details of the next Unity Table Talk, the likelihood of it happening again diminishes. Selecting a date and time shows that you are committed to reconciliation. A verbal commitment also strengthens our resolve to fulfill our promise.

Spend some time reflecting upon the first Unity Table Talk. Plan to do this soon after your talk. You will not remember everything that you said but you will remember how you felt. It is important to write down how you felt, what you thought, what you said and what you learned. Keeping a journal of your ideas, thoughts and feelings will help you discover things about yourself and the other person.

As you reflect, write down the things that you really wanted to say but either did not have the words to articulate or time did not permit. Also review the things that the other person said that stood out the most.

Do some research. Look up the things that you did not understand. Were there some new ideas or phrases that you were unfamiliar with? Did the other person challenge some things that you previously assumed were true? Take some time to learn about these things.

notes



CONCLUSION



Despite Jesus' final prayer for oneness in John 17, the reverend Martin Luther King rightly observed that the most segregated hour in the United States is when people attend church on Sunday mornings. Instead of being the example of love and unity, the church mirrors the racial division of the world. For centuries, churches have coddled racist ideology and have even gone so far as to justify it and preach it either consciously or unconsciously.

Now is our time to embrace our godly calling to be ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:11-21). God could have created you and I to exist at any time in history, but he chose now. Like Esther we were created for such a time as this. Will we rise to the occasion and make this the Church's finest hour, or will we cautiously sit on the sidelines and wait for another generation to arise and take the lead?

Tolerance is not the goal. In order to be the Church that God desires, we must move from just tolerating each other to appreciating the differences in our diversity. We must move from not being racist to being anti-racist. We must move from being color blind to being "color brave".¹ Remember that it is God who made different races. This was not a mistake nor the result of the Fall. Our diversity and unity brings God glory and pleases him (Revelation 7:9).

Eating together is the first step towards the path of reconciliation. Indeed it is one of the most intimate things that we can do. The table is the place where relationships are started, strengthened and sustained. In fact, many of the most significant events in the Bible happened around a table.

In the Old Testament, Isaiah prophesied that in the Last Day, when God redeems everything that he has created, the saints from all nations will gather together on the holy mountain, around a table for a great feast (Isaiah 25:6). Death, sadness, sin and prejudice will all be swallowed up. God will dine together with all of his children from every tribe and tongue in perfect harmony.

In the New Testament, Jesus used the table as an opportunity for restoration and reconciliation. Jesus was notorious for eating with people who were unaccepted by his culture (Mark 2:15-16). When he ate with sinners and tax collectors, he demonstrated God's heart and deep desire for intimate fellowship with all people. The Church is the Body of Christ and we have been commissioned to continue his ministry of reconciliation. Why would we not also do this around a table?

¹ Mellody, H. (2019, December 23). PwC Talks: Being Color Brave™ with Ariel Investments President Mellody Hobson. Retrieved July 24, 2020, from <http://www.pwc.com/colorbrave>.

Just before Jesus died, he assembled his disciples around a Unity Table for one last meal, the Last Supper. It was more than just a meal, it was communion. Besides its common religious connotation, “communion” is defined as “the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings...”¹ Those present were invited to partake of Jesus’ body and blood. In this act they were becoming one with Christ. Jesus said that we ought to continue to do this in remembrance of him. It is the bond of unity between Christ and all people who call him Lord. Breaking bread, the Eucharist, is a symbol of unity that happens regularly around a Unity Table.

Then, in Acts 2:46, we see that one of the hallmarks of the early church was that they gathered to break bread together around Unity Tables. Remember that the first church was a multicultural church. Look at the list of all of the different people groups who made up the first church: “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians.” It is clear from this list that these were people of different cultures, languages and skin colors. Yet, they gathered together regularly to break bread together around a Unity Table.

In a reversal of the tower of Babel, where God confused the language of mankind because of their arrogant attempt to advance their own name and to reach heaven through their own devices (Genesis 11:1-9), God gave man a common language so that the Church could come together as one to advance the image of God through His power. Speaking the same language around the same table was integral to God’s redemptive plan. When God started his church it began with many people from different ethnicity groups eating around a Unity Table.

Finally, the consummation of God’s plan of reconciliation is realized at the Unity Table. In Revelation 19:6-9 John prophesies that there will be a large assembly gathered at the great marriage supper of the Lamb to dine together to celebrate the commencement of Christ’s reign on earth. Moreover, in Matthew 8:11 Jesus says that “many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus is talking about the faith of the centurion, a Gentile when he says this. Therefore it is clear that the people from the east and the west are Gentiles like the centurion. The picture of heaven that Jesus gives us is that of all nations gathered together at one table. It is a picture of a Unity Table.

¹ Communion: Definition of Communion by Oxford Dictionary on Lexico.com also meaning of Communion. (n.d.). Retrieved July 24, 2020, from <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/communion>.

A diverse church, united around a common table and the communion table was meant to prove to the world that the love that we have received from Christ is truly alive in us. Unity is the trademark of authentic Christianity. Jesus said that the world will know that we are Christians by our love for one another (John 13:35). Why? Because the sinful nature that controls the non-Christian is self exalting and therefore can never truly be united with another person in the way God intended. In John 17:21 Jesus prays that his Church, made up of people from all nations, countries and races would be one in the very same way that Christ is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the trinity. This can only be achieved through the supernatural work of God. When it happens it will be beautiful and an undeniable work of the Spirit.

In order to facilitate Unity Table Talks in our area, we have partnered with our local community leaders and restaurants to designate every 5th Sunday as the day of Unity. Begin setting the table now so that you are ready to have a conversation with someone who is from a different race or ethnicity than you. It is only when Spirit-filled believers break bread together with the purpose of reconciliation that we will see the healing that our country and churches sorely need.



SILENCE BREAKERS

- I'm really nervous/scared/uncomfortable saying this and/but ...
 - From my experience/perspective as [identity] ...
 - I'm afraid I may offend someone, and please let know if I do, but ...
 - I'm not sure if this will make any sense, and/but ...
 - I just felt something shift in the room. I'm wondering if anyone else did.
-
- It seems as though some people may have had a reaction to that. Can you help me understand why?
 - Can you help me understand whether what I'm thinking right now might be problematic?
 - This is what I understand you to be saying: ____ Is that accurate?
 - I'm having a "yeah but." Can you help me work through it?
 - I'm engaged but just needing time to process this. What I am working on processing is ____.¹

¹ DiAngelo Westfield State University 577 Western Ave., R., & Sensoy, O. (2014, August 4). Calling in: Strategies for Cultivating Humility and Critical Thinking in Antiracism Education. Retrieved July 24, 2020, from <http://www.wpcjournal.com/article/view/12101>.

DEFINITIONS

Diaspora

The recognition that today's African American culture is composed of and is influenced by a vast number of disparate, African people groups who were displaced from various parts of the world via the Slave Trade. It further emphasizes that each African American's experience is unique. Therefore, it is unwise to make gross generalizations and stereotypes based upon the opinions of one black person.

Paternalism

Thinking or behaviour by people in authority that results in them making decisions for others.

White Privilege

The fact of people with white skin having advantages in society that other people do not have. The concept of white privilege explains why white people have greater access to society's legal and political institutions.

Woke

Aware, especially of social problems such as racism and inequality.

Systemic Racism

Discrimination based on race and ethnicity by those with power in government institutions.

Code Switching

The act of altering how you express yourself based on your audience to act or talk more like those around them.

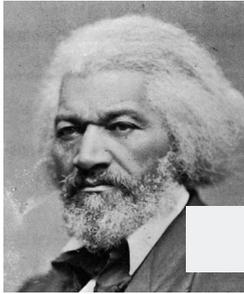
Unconscious Bias

Conscious or unconscious prejudice against an individual or a group, based on their identity. In the Social Justice Standards, Teaching Tolerance uses this term to designate the prejudice held by individuals. When your identity is dominant, it's easy to think of your experience as universal and to overlook or downplay the experiences of others. These kinds of biases are often unconscious.

Discrimination

Unfair treatment of a person or group based on their identity. In the Social Justice Standards, Teaching Tolerance distinguishes between discrimination, often executed by individuals and systemic discrimination, which exists on a larger, institutional level.

SIGNIFICANT FIGURES



FREDERICK
DOUGLASS



WILLIAM
LLOYD
GARRISON



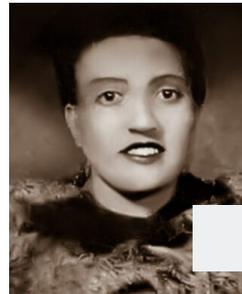
HARRIET
BEECHER
STOWE



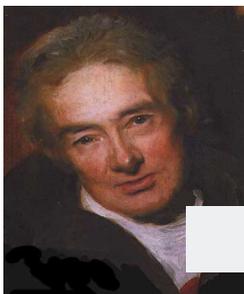
MARY
MCLEOD
BETHUNE



RICHARD
ALLEN



HENRIETTA
LACKS



WILLIAM
WILBERFORCE



ANGELINA
GRIMKE

FEELINGS CHART

What are you most afraid of?

What are you afraid that these discussions may reveal?

What are you excited about?

Which emotion are you feeling and why?

HELP ME UNDERSTAND

White person's perspective on race Quotes from Racy Conversations

- The primary goal for white people working to understand racism is not to learn how racism impacts people of color. The primary goal is to recognize how the system of racism shapes our lives, how we uphold that system, and how we might interrupt it.
- America became post-racial after Obama's presidency.

HELP ME UNDERSTAND

Black person's perspective on race

- “I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality ... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.” - Martin Luther King Jr.
- “I am convinced that men hate each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don't know each other, and they don't know each other because they don't communicate with each other, and they don't communicate with each other because they are separated from each other.” - Martin Luther King Jr.

QUICK SUMMARY OF GROUND RULES

- Listen carefully and intently. ¹
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- Take ownership of your statements by using “I.”
- Use each other’s name during the dialogue.
- Respect each other’s attempt to share and receive information.
- Be mindful of communication styles/language that may be a barrier.
- Discuss the issues and do not attack people (verbally or physically).
- Allow one person to speak at a time, without interruption.
- Avoid side bar conversations.
- Keep discussions focused.
- Ask questions and answer questions honestly and respectfully.
- Acknowledge the acceptance of ground rules.

¹ Let’s Bridge. (n.d.). Retrieved July 24, 2020, from http://www.belovedcommunitytalks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/TKC_Beloved-Community-Talks_Tool-Kit_v2.pdf.

SHARE YOUR STORY

This exercise will help you to share your story and understand more about the person across the table.

*Fill in the blank with as many statements as you can about who you are.*¹

“I am from _____”

EXAMPLES

- » I am from the beautiful state of Michigan.
- » I am from the laughter of my parents, And the tears of my parents.
I am from a broken marriage.
- » I am from families who value good food and have a deep love for chocolate.
Who love gathering around big round tables so we can all be a part of lively conversations.
- » I am from a family of artists, dancers, singers, and visits to countless museums because we value the arts.
- » I am from privilege that has enabled me to be able to experience a lot of the world and experience very different cultures than mine.
- » I am from a creator that made me to be creative and engage well with others.
- » I am from a Heavenly Father who calls me his beautiful daughter.

¹ Crutweets. (n.d.). Engaging in Racial Reconciliation: Cru. Retrieved July 24, 2020, from <https://www.cru.org/us/en/digitalministry/engaging-in-racial-reconciliation-leaders-guide.html>
<https://www.cru.org/content/dam/cru/digital-ministry/facebook-live-leaders-guide.pdf>.

APPETIZERS

- Share about an experience of racism.
- As a child, what experiences, conversations, or people shaped your view on race?
- What other experiences have shaped your understanding of race in America?
- Do you feel pessimistic or optimistic about the direction of our country right now and why?
- What things are important to you and your family right now?
- What kinds of things make you uncomfortable with talking about race and reconciliation?
- What types of things have you read or seen that has helped you understand the need for racial reconciliation?
- What grieves you the most about the division that exists in churches in America today?
What do you think we should do about it?

MAIN COURSE

- How often do you think about your racial or ethnic identity?
- What aspect of your racial or ethnic identity makes you the proudest?
- In what ways does being White/Latino/Hispanic/African American/Black/Asian/Native American/American Indian/Pacific Islander impact your personal life? Your professional life?

- Have you ever experienced a situation where your racial or ethnic identity seemed to contribute to a problem or uncomfortable situation?
- What does progress in racial reconciliation look like for you?
- Does racial or ethnic identity enter in your process of making important or daily decisions? If so, how?
- Have you ever felt “different” in a group setting because of your race/ethnicity? How did this affect you? How often/deeply do you interact with people of a different racial/ethnic identity other than your own? What is the nature of these relationships and interactions?
- Have you ever witnessed someone being treated unfairly because of their racial or ethnic identity? If so, how did you respond? How did it make you feel?

DESSERT

- What did you enjoy most about this discussion?
- What was the most helpful thing that we shared together?
- Both of you pray for and with each other. Be careful not to use prayer as a power move to exert authority.
- What is something you were surprised to hear or never thought about before?



A ONE COMMUNITY CHURCH PUBLICATION (PLANO, TEXAS)
WWW.VISITONECC.COM