

Biblical Conversations about Race
John Perkins: Small group questions

Week 1 (Foreword and Introduction):

Icebreaker/Connect: share your name, church you attend and ONE word that describes you

1. What stood out to you most in the foreword by Rick Warren?
2. Dr Perkins argues that we haven't been able to fix the reconciliation problem in our country because we've been applying solutions without understanding the problem. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
3. In the Foreword, Rick Warren states: "John has been beaten, spit upon, and oppressed simply for being black." How does this statement effect you?
4. How would you define biblical reconciliation?
5. How engaged have you been in the cause of reconciliation?
 - a. Little to none
 - b. Supported it but from the sidelines
 - c. Been engaged through events and activities
6. What is your attitude about biblical reconciliation as you begin reading this book?
7. Do you agree that there is an urgency for the message of biblical reconciliation to be accomplished in our country?

Week 2 (Chapters 1 & 2):

Icebreaker/Connect: share name again, share your favorite room in your house growing up and in one sentence or less why.

1. Why was it significant that God chose to reveal the good news of the gospel to shepherds?
2. The message of equality was heralded in our Declaration of Independence, yet many of the signers had slaves. How do we reconcile these truths?
3. Dr. Perkins describes how coming to faith in Christ almost immediately began to change his heart toward white people. How has your faith in Christ changed how you view or relate to other ethnicities?
4. Discuss the process of merging a black church and a white church that Shiloh and Ridgewood experienced. What issues do you think were presented? Would there be different issues here in Williamsburg?
5. What is your understanding of race?
6. What specifically does the Bible say about race? About ethnicity?

7. Why have issues of “skin color, hair texture, language, and ethnic origin” become more important than our oneness?
8. Dr. Perkins suggests that “in order for reconciliation to be achieved in the church a place must be made for minorities to serve in positions of leadership.” Do you agree or disagree with this? Explain your response.

Week 3 (Chapters 3 & 4):

Icebreaker/Connect: state your name, Name of town you grew up (if you moved a lot, one that you spent most time in) and state whether it was urban, rural or suburban area.

1. If one third of the Psalms are lament, and the Psalms were the worship songs when the people of God met what should we understand about how crucial lament is today?
2. Why have we, as black and white Christians, been content with the truth that the worship hour is the most segregated time in our country?
3. How was the American practice of slavery distinctly different from the biblical concept of enslavement?
4. Dr. Perkins suggests that, like the prodigal son, the Church has walked away from the standards that God set for us. What do you see as the standards that are guiding the church today?
5. Dr. Perkins, speaks of how anger on the part of blacks has played a role in the struggle for reconciliation? How do you respond to this perspective and its potential implications?
6. How are you impacted by John Piper’s statement (p. 87) “Many of my white brothers and sisters may need to confess denying that racism exists...”
7. Are you conscious of white privilege, or do you feel that it is a myth?
8. Do you have a personal confession that you feel led to make in this area of reconciliation?

Week 4 (Chapters 5 & 6):

Icebreaker/Connect: share your favorite extra-curricular activity

1. Is there anything from our first 3 meetings, that needs further discussion or clarification? Anyone feel misunderstood? (We want to take time to be sure we are all moving together through these chapters.)
2. What does it mean to say that forgiveness is in the DNA of every Christian? Is it possible in all scenarios or just some? Why or why not.
3. What are the things that have happened to you concerning the issue of race that you need to forgive? Or where you need to receive forgiveness concerning issues of race? (This may be a time to pause and pray for anyone who has shared.)

4. In the 6th chapter, Dr. Perkins speaks of simple ways to tear down walls. Do you see the value of making eye contact? Calling a person by name? How can you put this simple practice into action (one step you might take this week)?
5. We can make significant progress by learning each other's stories. What steps will you take to sensitize yourself to "life on the other side"?
9. Talk about the demographics where you live. Are they changing? If so, what is your attitude about the change?
10. Share your thoughts on the "Living it Out" story of Water of Life Community Church. How might your church begin to make progress toward a more multi-cultural congregation?

Week 5 (Chapters 7 & 8)

Icebreaker/Connect: share one highlight of your week since we were last together.

1. Last week we talked about simple actions we can take to tear down walls. Was anyone able to take a simple step towards that?
2. Why is it important for us to keep the stories of heroes of the faith and heroes of reconciliation in front of us?
3. Wilberforce introduced more than twenty resolutions to end slavery before finally achieving his goal. Does this encourage or discourage you? What does it teach us about commitment?
4. What points of application can you take away from the examples of Bill Pannell, Tom Skinner, Vernon Grounds, Paul Jewitt and George McKinney?
5. What are the things that God is calling you to do to engage actively in this battle?
6. Why is it important to understand how Satan is involved in the battle for reconciliation?
7. How do you sense Satan operating to prevent reconciliation?
8. Dr. Perkins suggests that we should pray prayers that are so big only God could accomplish them. What would be your request of God in this area of reconciliation?
9. Read the last paragraph on p. 160. Based on this Pastor's views, how do you apply this to an area like Williamsburg?

Week 6 (Chapter 9, Epilogue and Afterword)

Icebreaker/Connect: what have you enjoyed most about this study?

1. What is the connection between the love of God and reconciliation in the body of Christ?
2. Read together, the 3rd paragraph on page 167 (At a recent CCDA...). As we come to the end of our study, how will you continue to reach across to the other?
3. Dr. Perkins was able to make friends out of those who had opposing views by talking about what they both could agree on. How does this shed light on how opposite sides can approach the issue of reconciliation?
4. In the epilogue, Perkins speaks about his concerns over increasing violence and hate. Do you see this as a reality and how can the church rise above? (p. 172-3)
5. Perkins states he will continue to tell the story until his last “dying breath”. What is your part? What is it that God has specifically gifted you to do in this battle for biblical reconciliation?
6. Reflect on the “Afterword”. What stood out to you?
7. Spend some time praying for each other and for God’s hand to be upon this community to use this study as a starting point for Kingdom growth and unity.