

**WHO'S MY**

**NEIGHBOR?**

**TAKING STEPS TOWARDS RACIAL RECONCILIATION**



**Highlands Small Group  
Leader Guide**

# INTRODUCTION

Thank you for choosing to lead a *Who's My Neighbor?* Small Group. We are grateful for your willingness to help facilitate what can sometimes be difficult conversations in order to foster unity and oneness in the Body of Christ. Though some group meetings may be challenging, the end result will always be worth it. In this guide, we will help you prepare to navigate moments of tension and work towards unity within your group. Don't be intimidated. The content of this curriculum is close to God's heart; He is passionate about this cause. He has given you everything you need to lead this group well, and the Small Groups Team will be right here with you every step of the way.

## Resources Available to You

- Weekly Zoom meetings with other *Who's My Neighbor?* Small Group Leaders, including Highlands' Diversity Pastor, Courtney Winston
- Your campus' Small Groups Director
- Additional resources listed on the final page of this guide

## Group Guidelines

We want to set Group Guidelines for your group to help lay the foundation for healthy conversations. Please go over these Group Guidelines with your group before you begin **every meeting**.

1. Agree to make this a safe space for everyone in our group.
2. Offer grace quickly.
3. Take condemnation off the table.
4. Give everyone an opportunity to speak.
5. Use words like "me" and "you," not "us" and "them."
6. Be comfortable with being uncomfortable.
7. Engage in the conversation.
8. Take risks and be willing to ask the "dumb" questions.
9. Be respectful of others' opinions and experiences.
10. If you feel resistant to someone else's perspective, pause before you speak.  
Ask God why you feel that way.
11. Listen to what God is saying to you, and respond.

**Please note:** This curriculum is currently "in beta." We are still learning and will continue to make this content better each semester. Please feel free to send feedback to [smallgroups@churchofthehighlands.com](mailto:smallgroups@churchofthehighlands.com).



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## **Week One**—The Value of Hard Conversations

### **Preparation**

- **Pray First:** Before you meet, pray against the spirit of offense, and ask God for a spirit of humility and grace to rest on your group. Ask God to lead the conversation, to equip you as a leader to navigate this semester with wisdom, and to make your group one, just as He intends for the Body of Christ be one in Him.
- Watch the Unity Leader video.
- Ask a friend to be praying during your Small Group meeting.

### **During Your Small Group Meeting**

- Read over the introduction with your group and watch the Unity Group Participant video together.
- With this being the first meeting, really take the time to create a safe place for your members to engage. Encourage your group to adopt a spirit of humility and grace, and lead from this posture.
- Go over the Group Guidelines.
- “Get to Know Your Group” -- Before you dive into the content for this group, help your group get to know each other first. Have your group members go around in a circle and share their name, a little bit about themselves, and why they decided to attend a Who’s My Neighbor? group this semester. Start by introducing yourself and telling them why you wanted to lead this group.
- Ask one or two group members to read the Week 1 Big Idea and Scripture sections aloud.
- As you wrap up your meeting, challenge your group members to learn something new about America’s history with race this week.
- Pray together at the end of your meeting.

### **After Your Small Group Meeting**

- Make a group roster with names and numbers, and consider beginning a group message on the GroupMe App so you can communicate throughout the semester.
- Pray for your group members daily by name.

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## Week Two—Empathy

### Preparation

- **Pray First:** Before you meet, ask God to put in each of your group member's hearts the desire to connect and empathize with others. Pray over the empathy exercise and ask the Holy Spirit to use it to break down barriers that might make people hesitant to extend empathy. Pray for this week's lesson to really set the tone for the rest of the semester so that your group can make progress towards the goal of reconciliation and oneness. As the leader, ask for wisdom to navigate today's conversation.
- Ask a friend to be praying during your Small Group meeting.
- **Note:** Prepare for the Empathy Exercise by having the images pulled up on a computer or television that you can access easily during the group. Be sure to click through the whole collection of photos before your group starts so you are familiar with what you will be showing them.
  - Empathy Exercise Images: <https://coth.co/2YCoRP2>

### Empathy Exercise Instructions

- Explain the exercise to your group: *We are going to view 8 provocative images that have something to do with the conversation on race. As each image is shown, silently identify your immediate emotional response to that image.*
- Go to the Dropbox folder, and pull up the *Who's My Neighbor?* cover image full screen.
- Slowly scroll through the following 8 photos, giving your group a full 8-10 seconds to take in each photo.
- Give your group members 1-2 minutes to silently reflect on which image they had the strongest reaction to, and why.
- After the silent reflection, move directly to the Discussion Questions, where we will unpack the Empathy Exercise.

### During Your Small Group Meeting

- Go over the Group Guidelines.
- Ask one or two group members to read the Week 2 Big Idea and Scripture sections aloud.
- Once you've read through this week's curriculum together, lead your group through the Empathy Exercise.
- When you move on to discussion, be sure every person in your group shares their reflection on the Empathy Exercise. Encourage your group members to lean in and ask follow-up questions. Be sure to lead by example in this.



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- As you wrap up your meeting, challenge your group members to process today's meeting with a friend or family member. Encourage them to identify hesitations they have within themselves and to bring them to God in prayer.
- Pray together at the end of your meeting.

## **After Your Small Group Meeting**

- Pray for your group members daily by name.



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## **Week Three**—Who's My Neighbor?

### **Preparation**

- **Pray First:** Ask God to reveal the truth of the story of the Good Samaritan to your group members, and pray for the soil of their hearts to be ready for that truth. Pray for everyone in your group to grow in their love and compassion for others through today's meeting.
- Ask a friend to be praying during your Small Group meeting.

### **During Your Small Group Meeting**

- Go over the Group Guidelines.
- Ask one or two group members to read the Week 3 Big Idea and Scripture sections aloud.
- As you wrap up your meeting, encourage your group members to connect with someone from a different ethnic background this week. Share ideas for practical ways to connect with and serve others. Also, encourage them to engage with a culture other than their own in some way, whether through a documentary, a book, a podcast, art, music, cuisine, or a video of different kind of church service.
- Pray together at the end of your meeting.

### **After Your Small Group Meeting**

- Pray for your group members daily by name.



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## **Week Four**—Image Bearers

### **Preparation**

- **Pray First:** Ask God to show the members of your group how every person carries His image. Pray for your group members to grow in their ability to see the same inherent value in every person, regardless of the color of their skin. Ask God to give you wisdom as you lead today.
- Ask a friend to be praying during your Small Group meeting.

### **During Your Small Group Meeting**

- Go over the Group Guidelines.
- Ask one or two group members to read the Week 4 Big Idea and Scripture sections aloud.
- Encourage your group by sharing your personal experiences or revelations about this week's study. Share how looking for God's image in others has changed the way you perceive and interact with others. Your willingness to open up will give others the confidence to share as well.
- Pray together at the end of your meeting.
- Talk about next week's meal together, and make a list of potluck dishes.

### **After Your Small Group Meeting**

- Pray for your group members daily by name.



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## **Week Five**—Share a Meal

### **Preparation**

- **Pray First:** Ask God to develop healthy, deep, diverse friendships in your Small Group. Ask Him to be present in the conversation over the meal today, and thank Him in advance for the bonding that will take place during this group meeting.
- Ask a friend to be praying during your Small Group meeting.
- Try to make this week informal and fun! Set up a table for the potluck, and make sure you have everything you need for the meal (cups, plates, silverware, etc.).

### **During Your Small Group Meeting**

#### *If in person*

- Encourage your group members to talk amongst themselves and build relationships. We want to develop community in this group.

#### *If on Zoom*

- After a few minutes connecting as a big group, create breakout rooms where people can have smaller, more intimate conversations. Encourage them to get to know each other, and offer them some talking point ideas:
  - What was life like for you growing up? What is your family like?
  - What is an average day like for you now?
  - What kinds of things do you do for fun?
- No need to ask all or even any of those questions. Just let the conversation go wherever it naturally goes.
- Pray together at the end of your meeting.

### **After Your Small Group Meeting**

- Pray for your group members daily by name.



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## Week Six—Diversity

### Preparation

- **Pray First:** Ask God to reveal the beauty and value of diversity to the members of your group. Pray for each member of your group to have an open mind and soft heart as you begin to dig into deeper conversations this semester. Ask God to help everyone in your group embrace the call to expand their circle and do life with people from different backgrounds.
- Ask a friend to be praying during your Small Group meeting.

### During Your Small Group Meeting

- Go over the Group Guidelines.
- Ask one or two group members to read the Week 6 Big Idea and Scripture sections aloud.
- As the group moves forward with this week's Action Step, remind them of the heart behind it. Embracing diversity by enlarging your circle isn't a project, it's the purpose of God's design being fulfilled. When we embrace God's heart for diversity, our actions will reflect His heart!
- Pray together at the end of your meeting.

### After Your Small Group Meeting

- Pray for your group members daily by name.



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## **Week Seven**—Overcoming Bias

### **Preparation**

- **Pray First:** Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of your group members so that the seeds planted in today's conversation will bear fruit. Ask Him to reveal to each group member any unconscious bias they have that needs to be rooted out, and pray against the spirit of offense that would try to take today's discussion off track. Ask God to lead your group's conversation on bias, and pray for wisdom and grace to navigate difficult moments in a productive way.
- Ask a friend to be praying during your Small Group meeting.
- **Note:** This week's topic requires both humility and grace from the group members. It's hard to admit biases, even if they're unconscious. Biases can also be hard to hear. Make the group aware of this at the beginning of your meeting, so you can make great progress during this session.

### **During Your Small Group Meeting**

- Go over the Group Guidelines.
- Ask one or two group members to read the Week 7 Big Idea and Scripture sections aloud.
- Be willing to share an example of bias that you had to root out of your own life. Your transparency will help others feel comfortable sharing and may highlight a type of prejudice that others didn't know they had.
- Pray together at the end of your meeting.

### **After Your Small Group Meeting**

- Pray for your group members daily by name.



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## Week Eight—Forgiveness

### Preparation

- **Pray First:** Ask God to bring freedom to your group members today. Pray for healing from offense and hearts ready to forgive the offenders. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict the hearts of individuals in your group who may have offended others so that they can repent and be free as well.
- Ask a friend to be praying during your Small Group meeting.
- **Important note:** People in marginalized groups are often taught that their viewpoints and feelings don't matter, causing them to stuff down their emotions and avoid processing them in a healthy way. It's important to validate and encourage your group members to process their pain. Before they can forgive, they need to acknowledge offenses they've endured. Help them understand that God wants them to express what they feel, and He wants them to bring their emotions to Him for healing. Suggest journaling as a way to get in touch with buried emotions, and let your group members know you are available to help them process what they've experienced.
- **Additional note:** Although it is rare, it is possible that one of your white group members may have experienced racial discrimination at some point in their lives. Allow this to be a safe space for them to process this offense along with others.

### During Your Small Group Meeting

- Go over the Group Guidelines.
- Ask one or two group members to read the Week 8 Big Idea and Scripture sections aloud.
- Share a way unforgiveness has tried to take root in your own heart, and talk about how you chose forgiveness in that situation. How did you walk out the process of forgiveness?
- Talk about some practical ways to “walk out forgiveness,” with the understanding that our choices can lead and feelings follow.
- Pray together at the end of your meeting.

### After Your Small Group Meeting

- Pray for your group members daily by name.



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## Week Nine—Justice

### Preparation

- **Pray First:** Ask God to bring your group members' hearts into alignment with His heart today. Ask Him to stir up passion in your group for the things He is passionate about. Pray against the spirit of offense that would try to take today's discussion off track. Ask God to lead your group's conversation on justice, and pray for wisdom and grace to navigate difficult moments in a productive way.
- Ask a friend to be praying during your Small Group meeting.
- **Note:** This week's lesson may be difficult for some group members. Be prepared to engage in and initiate healthy conversation.

### During Your Small Group Meeting

- Go over the Group Guidelines.
- Ask one or two group members to read the Week 9 Big Idea and Scripture sections aloud.
- Encourage your group to take advantage of the resources listed in the Action Step, and discuss how educating yourself has impacted your understanding of injustice.
- Share extra resources that have been impactful for you as you've learned about injustice in America to help your group continue to learn more about the subject (particular documentaries, podcasts, books, etc.).
- Pray together at the end of your meeting.

### After Your Small Group Meeting

- Pray for your group members daily by name.



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## Week Ten—Our Role

### Preparation

- **Pray First:** Thank God for the work He has done in your group members so far this semester. Ask Him to help everyone in your group identify their role in the work of racial reconciliation and justice. Pray for your group to take what you discuss today and truly put it into practice. Ask God to raise up advocates for His purposes – for His glory.
- Ask a friend to be praying during your Small Group meeting.
- **Note:** This is a great week to lead by example. Ask God to show you how you can serve and advocate for others, do some research about what's happening in your community, and make a list of tangible ways you can play your part. Share these ideas with your group to encourage them that they can make a difference.

### During Your Small Group Meeting

- Go over the Group Guidelines.
- Ask one or two group members to read the Week 10 Big Idea and Scripture sections aloud.
- Be sure to share the list of ideas you put together before the meeting and encourage your group members to find practical ways to advocate for racial reconciliation and justice.
- Pray together at the end of your meeting.

### After Your Small Group Meeting

- Pray for your group members daily by name.



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## Week Eleven—Unity

### Preparation

- **Pray First:** Ask God to give each of your group members a true heart for unity. Pray for your group members to be “clothed” in the characteristics of a Christian found in Colossians 3:12-14: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and, above all, love. Ask God to give your group passion and conviction to continue to pursue racial reconciliation and justice long after your Small Group ends.
- Ask a friend to be praying during your Small Group meeting.

### During Your Small Group Meeting

- Go over the Group Guidelines.
- Ask one or two group members to read the Week 11 Big Idea and Scripture sections aloud.
- Remind your group about the discussion you had during your first meeting regarding why they joined the group and what they hoped to gain from it. Ask: Do you think you got what you were hoping to get from this group?
- Take time to encourage people in their next step toward being an advocate for racial reconciliation and justice. Highlight this week’s Action Step and challenge them to get involved. Be sure to mention that co-leading a *Who’s My Neighbor?* group next semester could be a great opportunity to make a difference and help facilitate these conversations for others in our church.
- Pray together at the end of your meeting.
- Talk about next week’s meal together, and make a list of potluck dishes.

### After Your Small Group Meeting

- Pray for your group members daily by name.
- If you feel like any group member stood out as someone who would make a great *Who’s My Neighbor?* Small Group leader, share what you see in them and encourage them to co-lead next semester! Consider inviting them to co-lead with you, if you plan to lead again.

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## A Prayer for Unity

Heavenly Father, I believe every person is created in Your image and likeness and therefore has inherent value. Help me see every person as worthy of respect and honor, regardless of their color, race, socioeconomic status, or physical and mental abilities. Help me love like You do and intentionally treat all people respectfully, so that my actions toward them will rightly acknowledge their value and bring honor to You.

Father, help me identify any thoughts or habits in my life that could be harmful to others, and transform the way I think through the power of Your Word. Give me courage to be an advocate for unity and oneness in my home, church, workplace, and other spaces where You have given me influence. I pray also for oneness in the body of Christ, so that the world will know that You sent Jesus. Thank you for the opportunities You give me every day to love, honor, and bring value to everyone who crosses my path. Make my light shine before others so that they may see my good works and glorify Your Name. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

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## **Week Twelve**—Share a Meal

**Special Option:** As you wrap up the semester, your group could have a powerful experience visiting the Civil Rights Museum in Birmingham or the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery together. Instead of sharing a meal at your usual meeting place, consider taking a trip to one of these locations as a group and sharing a meal afterwards to talk about what everyone learned and experienced.

### **Preparation**

- **Pray First:** Ask God to continue to develop life-giving, long-term relationships in your group. Pray for today's conversation to inspire group members to continue to dig into the topics of racial reconciliation and justice beyond the end of the semester.
- Ask a friend to be praying during your Small Group meeting.

### **During Your Small Group Meeting** (if not visiting one of the suggested civil rights sites)

#### *If in person*

- Encourage your group members to talk amongst themselves and keep building relationships. Celebrate the community developed through this group.

#### *If on Zoom*

- After a few minutes connecting as a big group, create breakout rooms where people can have smaller, more intimate conversations. Encourage them to keep getting to know each other, and offer them some talking point ideas:
  - How has this Small Groups semester been for you?
  - What week of the curriculum was most impactful for you?
  - What has been your biggest takeaway?
- No need to ask all or even any of those questions. Just let the conversation go wherever it naturally goes.
- Pray together at the end of your meeting.

### **After Your Small Group Meeting**

- Pray for your group members daily by name.



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## **Additional Resources:**

- *Where Do We Go From Here* by Martin Luther King, Jr.
- *The Third Option* by Miles McPherson
- *Oneness Embraced* by Tony Evans