



Reclaiming the Community of the Cross (Week 1)

Luke 14:4-14; Ephesians 2:11-22; Revelation 7:9-10, 19:6-7

OPEN

What comes to mind when you think of *race*, *race relations*, or *racism*?

How have media and news outlets shaped your most recent thoughts about race relations?

DISCUSS

Dan Meyer says in his weekend message:

"I guess what I'm trying to say is that if any people ought to be able to be the courageous, creative agents needed at this moment in history, it is the Christian community as Jesus founded and envisioned it. Were we and churches all across our country truly successful at being such agents, it would not just help forge a more unified nation. It might well help bring about the restoration of fascination with the Christian gospel and spiritual revival and that is America's deepest need."

David Anderson in his book *Gracism* says:

"Gracism, unlike racism, doesn't focus on race for negative purposes such as discrimination [or recrimination]. Gracism focuses on race for the purpose of positive ministry and service." It aims at building redemptive relationships.

Before we begin our journey into Gracism, what is your impression (or confidence) in the church to bring change and redemption to communities, cities, or nations? Why?

Practicing *Gracist* Behaviors

Each week tangible behaviors will be provided in order to be practiced--helping each of us (and the church collectively) be agents of grace in the challenging times of our day, especially in the area of race. This week, you are given these behaviors as our starting place. Read and discuss these as a group as well as the questions with them.

1. **BE HONEST.** So dare to BE HONEST – at least with yourself -- about where you're starting from. We all bring to the subject of race a variety of experiences and mental models and a whole set of passions. Be willing to confess what yours are right now and that even talking about this stuff feels risky.
 - a. What bothers you about the racial tensions we are seeing in our country...honestly?
 - b. What questions do you have when it comes to race and race relations?

2. **LISTEN DEEPLY.** A good rule of thumb in all areas of life is to listen versus speak on at least a two-to-one ratio. It's the two ears-to-one mouth principle! But that's especially important in building better race relations.
 - a. What have been your experiences around the subject of race?

 - b. Find somebody of a different race than you and ask them to tell you their story.

3. **LEARN MORE.** The story of race in America is too deep and complex to be explained by any one person... Go further on a learning journey of your own. We're going to put in our Bookstore some really helpful books and provide in print and on our website a list of other resources you can access to learn more. Don't be content with what you already think you know. This subject is too central to the Gospel and too crucial for America's future.
 - a. Can you commit to one more learning resource and talking about it as a group? Have a few people in the group investigate some options.

4. **BE HUMBLE.** When you're honest with others and truly listen and start to learn more than you did before, you will be confronted with some things that make you very defensive. That make you want to deny or argue to protect your existing worldview or sense of status. Resist that impulse.
 - a. Read Luke 14:10-11 and Philippians 2:3-5. What are your thoughts?

CLOSE

Read and discuss your impressions of Ephesians 2:13-19.

How have you been challenged by Week 1 of *Gracism* and your group's discussion?

NEXT STEPS

- Read and reflect on the Scripture verses for this study.
- Clarify your plan on how you will commit to the behaviors above.
- Try to talk to at least one person of another race about how they have been impacted by the topic of race I their life.