

# The Third Option Group Questions

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Supplemental Material Provided by Christ's Church of Amherst*

# Session 1: The Third Option

## [Video Link](#)

Big Idea: We don't have to fall into the "us versus them" trap. The third option calls us to love people beyond our group by acknowledging our blind spots, renaming "those people" as brother and sister, acknowledging their color, viewing conversations as race "consultations" and giving our hearts to those not like us.

Group Goal: Identify some ways we might hold a subconscious bias toward our in-group and consider some ways we might love the other side.

Facilitator Goal: Select the four questions that will best help your community accomplish the group goal above. You may use the following questions or draw on your own questions. Watch the clock and give adequate time to discuss these, filling in extra time with additional questions.

## Warm-Up Questions

- What did you feel when you first learned about the George Floyd killings?
- What kind of comments during that time caused you to react the most?
- What does it look like to promote racial justice in Southern New Hampshire?
- What are some ways Pastor Miles challenged your perspective on the race issue?

## Video Questions

- Read Joshua 5:13-15. Imagine that you, like ancient Israel, have received a special mission from God. And then some spiritual being appears before you. Like Joshua, you ask it whose side it's on: our side or their side. And the spiritual being says neither.
  - What would surprise you about this?
  - What does this response tell us about God?
  - What might this response tell us about Joshua's blind spots or biases at the time?
- When you think of the current racial divide, who would you be most prone to characterize as "us" and "them" in your own mind?
- Pastor Miles said that politics aren't going to fix the problems of justice even if laws need to be changed.
  - What do you think he meant by this?
  - Do you disagree or agree with his statement?
- What groups of people do you consider yourself to be "most like?"
- Have you ever received better treatment because of your group identity? Tell us more.
- Have you ever seen others receive lesser treatment because of their group identity? Tell us more.
- What might it look like to be a humble learner in the midst of a heated dispute on racism?
- Help us understand why saying "I don't see color" might be problematic today and why there is a generational disconnect with the phrase.
- What are some labels you find yourself using for people? How does using those labels reinforce feelings about those people?
- How might it look to turn a negative conversation on racism into something positive?
- Pastor Miles used some strong language when talking about relating to "the other." He said to give your heart to them. Read John 15:13. Why do you think the way he uses this is important for providing a path forward?

## Session 2: Blind Spots

### [Video Link](#)

Big Idea: Even if we don't have racist intentions, we all have racial blindspots that can be addressed by admitting them, understanding their nature and removing them.

Group Goal: Foster a desire to identify personal blind spots and learn from the experiences of others.

Facilitator Goal: Select the four questions that will best help your community accomplish the group goal above. You may use the following questions or draw on your own questions. Watch the clock and give adequate time to discuss these, filling in extra time with additional questions.

### Warm-Up Questions

- Was there a time when you came to learn something difficult about yourself such as some character defect? Tell us more.
- What kind of character defects are some of the hardest to admit?
- Why might it be so difficult for modern Americans to acknowledge that they might have some racist tendencies?

### Video Questions

- Read Jeremiah 17:9.
  - Who does the human heart deceive?
  - Why does it deceive?
- The statement "I don't see color" was once thought of as an anti-racist expression. Today many people take offense to it because they argue that an unwillingness to acknowledge color is racist.
  - What position did Pastor Miles take?
  - How would you respond if you heard a friend say something like that today?

- Pastor Miles shared several examples of racial blind spots including: (1) resistance to letting family members get close to people of another race,(2) opposition to visiting a person of another color's home or church (even if you're willing to have them visit your own) and (3) denying the racial experiences of others based on one's own limited experience and (4) stereotyping while criticizing people who stereotype. Share some personal examples of times you have encountered these blind spots or have seen them in yourself.
- What does Pastor Miles mean by having an internal "race consultation" before suspending judgment? Why isn't this an act of racism?
- Why might it be difficult to ask someone to let you know if there is anything in your life that is racially offensive?
- What are some ways we protect our planks?
- What might the story of the double healing in Mark 8 teach us about the process of removing our blind spots?
- Who is someone you trust enough to share with you some of your blind spots?
  - Generally, what kind of person would you want in this position?
  - Generally, what kind of person would you *not* want in this position?
- What is it like to be around someone at your work or in your family who is open to learning new things and isn't threatened by advice or counsel?
- What are some engaging, non-threatening questions you might ask someone of another race that might help you learn about their experience?
- Describe a time when you experienced some positive transformation after learning about a blind spot as a parent, sibling, friend or co-worker. What would you be like today if you hadn't had that experience?

## Session 3: Unalienable Honor

### [Video Link](#)

Big Idea: We have priceless value that God calls us to recognize in ourselves and others by loving people, protecting justice and investing in the dreams of others because of the undeserved, unalienable image of God in our lives.

Group Goal: Envision how we might better embrace and protect the potential in different groups of people.

Facilitator Goal: Select the four questions that will best help your community accomplish the group goal above. You may use the following questions or draw on your own questions. Watch the clock and give adequate time to discuss these, filling in extra time with additional questions.

### Warm-Up Questions

- What are some of the most common ethnic or racial stereotypes you hear about?
- What kind of racial or ethnic stereotypes are levied against the race or ethnicity you most identify with?
- What effect can these stereotypes have?

### Video Questions

- What was it like to picture an ethnicity that you had negative thoughts about when Pastor Miles prompted us to do so?
- What does it mean to bear the image of God?
- How might knowing that the image of God in us is undeserved help us to acknowledge it in others?
- Read Micah 6:8 in more than one translation. What do you observe? What is biblical justice?

- In what ways can racism restrict people's potential?
- Pastor Miles doesn't like calling people who loot "looters." Why?
  - Explain the "glove illustration" that Pastor Miles used about the human heart.
  - How does this help us become racial healers?
  - What are the biggest barriers to overcoming racial division in your opinion?
  - What would you say to those who might respond by saying individual, spiritual solutions are not enough?
- How would the image of God act if it saw someone verbally attacking another person using racist language? Be specific.

## Session 4: My Brother's Keeper

### [Video Link](#)

Big Idea: Brother's keepers honor the image of God in others by identifying a brother to keep, doing right over being right, keeping themselves and keeping as long as it takes.

Group Goal: Help your group identify meaningful ways they might grow personally and engage others on the topic of racism.

Facilitator Goal: Select the four questions that will best help your community accomplish the group goal above. You may use the following questions or draw on your own questions. Watch the clock and give adequate time to discuss these, filling in extra time with additional questions.

### Warm-Up Questions

- Who has been someone that has been a spiritual parent to you? Explain what that relationship looks/looked like and how you feel about it.

### Video Questions

- What are some specific ways Pastor Miles illustrated what it looks like to be a brother's keeper? (He asked questions like "Have you ever heard of in-group bias?" or "Do you think you're a racist?")
- Do you have someone you can be honest with and confront in love? How has that relationship changed you?
- What does it look like to "police" someone in a racial conversation? How is nurturing someone different?
- How did Pastor Miles use questions to continue a racial conversation instead of reproofing them?
  - What effect does that have?



- Pick a response that you found to be particularly useful in those hard discussions (20:00 into the video)
  - Hmm. That's not my experience.
  - I see it a little differently.
  - Here's a totally different perspective.
  - Help me understand how that's funny.
  - Why do you always see the dark side of things?
  - Do you know them personally?
  - Can't you say anything positive about \_\_\_\_\_?
  - What is your experience with people like that?
  - How do you know that's true?
- When Pastor Miles wrote *The Third Option*, one of his reviewers said he was angry and that that wasn't the Pastor Miles she knew. What does this show us about the difference between intent and impact?
- What does it mean to be a nurturer of self? What are some ways you can assess your heart to better honor the image of God in others?
- What are some ways we might play the long game with friends we disagree with on this subject?
- What kind of change have you seen over time in people's lives who you might not have expected it from?

## Session 5: A Surprise Answer to the Race Problem (Where we Stand)

### [Video Link](#)

Big Idea: The humility and gratefulness that result from God's undeserved, all-encompassing grace creates a genuine and lasting bond of peace.

Group Goal: Help people become more aware of their own group's need for God so that they can become more aware of and connected to groups different from them.

Facilitator Goal: Select the four questions that will best help your community accomplish the group goal above. You may use the following questions or draw on your own questions. Watch the clock and give adequate time to discuss these, filling in extra time with additional questions.

### Warm-Up Questions

- What racial or ethnic groups do you most identify with? Tell us about some of the negative values and some of the positive values your group tends to embrace.

### Video Questions

- In the midst of a racial and ethnic conflict, Paul invited the Ephesians to remember grace. What is it about grace that challenges group pride and envy?
- Why is it so difficult to identify racial or ethnic pride?
- Why is reconciliation and unity stifled when we stereotype certain groups of people by the problems they have?
- How would you respond to someone who says that there is a reason stereotypes exist?
- What are some cultural strengths that some marginalized groups have that are sometimes overlooked?

- What is critical race theory?
- What are some ways one might encounter aspects of critical race theory in the public square?
- Pastor John shared a story about a black friend of his calling privilege bad. He responded by asking him about James 1:16-17, which says, “Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights...” What, in your opinion, is a healthy view of advantage and disadvantage that does not overlook a Christian’s responsibility to help those in need?
- How would you explain the difference between corporate responsibility and corporate guilt?
- In a teaching on loving one’s enemies, Jesus taught that we should walk two miles with the person who demanded that we walk one with them. Taking this into consideration, what is your feeling on racial reparations?
- Tell us about a time you felt humbled by an act of grace directed toward you.
- How can we better view our power and material possessions from an eternal perspective?

## Session 6: Christianity and Power (Where we Go)

### [Video Link](#)

Big Idea: We can be faithful witnesses to Jesus by denying power when we can, giving generously when we are able and creating opportunities for the gospel always.

Group Goal: Help your group foster a desire to remove stumbling blocks and do good for their neighbors as a way of creating an opportunity to share about God's love.

Facilitator Goal: Select the four questions that will best help your community accomplish the group goal above. You may use the following questions or draw on your own questions. Watch the clock and give adequate time to discuss these, filling in extra time with additional questions.

### Warm-Up Questions

- Why are there so many different perspectives on how a Christian should vote or participate in partisan politics today?

### Video Questions

- Read Mark 10:42-45. What is different about Christian leadership?
- Read Micah 6:8. Why is it difficult to separate the civic lessons of the Old Testament from the religious expectations?
- In 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 Paul writes that believers should not disassociate from outsiders nor judge them by Christian standards.
  - Have you ever met a nonChristian who said they felt judged by other Christians? Tell us more.
  - How might we create meaningful connections with our neighbors and friends who might live differently than we do without giving up Christian moral convictions?

- Read Romans 13:4.
  - Why might it have surprised the first Christians to hear that the government was “God’s servant.”
  - Paul says that the purpose of government was for the Christian’s “good.” “Good” can refer to the prosperity of the Christian or the “good deeds” Christians were called by God to do. Which do you think it is? Explain.
  - How might Paul’s vision for government back then inform our relationship to government today?
- Imagine that you are a member of the local school board or another local governing body serving with people of mixed religious and nonreligious backgrounds.
  - What kinds of disagreements might come up?
  - What would be some of your nonnegotiables?
  - What ways could you demonstrate humility, a willingness to disadvantage yourself and an uneasiness to force your values on people who might disagree?
- How would you respond to someone who says we should focus on the gospel and not on the “issues”?
- What are some areas of need in your community that you can address to earn a hearing for the gospel? What are some ways your church can get involved?
- What kind of opportunities has God given you to share about his love?
  - What led up to those opportunities?
  - What did you say?