



## Weekly Resource

### **June 8, 2020: Reckoning with Racial Injustice**

Dear friends,

In the wake of so many racial injustices, we are grateful to see so many of you across the country demanding change. We stand with you in solidarity and seek to support you through our programs, weekly resources, community, and our prayers.

This week's resource is intended to help you process what's been going on in our country over the last few weeks. We hope it will help you to ask important questions that will guide your action.

**A logistical note: You may want to email out Bryan Stevenson's article ahead of time so that group members can read it before you meet.** Alternatively, you can take turns reading it aloud during your time together. [Click here](#) to access the article.

A little background if you are new to our resources: we're sending them every week during the pandemic because we humans are built for community. You can use it to stay connected with your current and past JFM small groups or with your family and friends. Or you can use it as an individual resource for personal prayer and learning.

In the meantime, [now is also the perfect time to start one of our regular programs](#), perhaps one on racism. We're offering tips and tools for facilitating all of our current programs through videoconferencing, including tutorials on how to use Zoom. The call to seek justice is just as important now as ever!

Last but not least, generosity is, at its core, a benefit to everyone. When you donate today, your gift helps us sustain individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out](#). Also, please feel free to **forward this resource** to friends and family!

Stay well,  
The JustFaith Ministries Staff



## Welcome and Opening Meditation (5 minutes)

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When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

**Welcome, everyone. It's good to be with all of you. Our theme for today is "reckoning with racial injustice." I hope that today's session will help us process what is happening in our country right now, so that we can have a better sense of how God might be calling us to respond. Before we begin, let us pause for a moment to silently honor God's presence.**

**Let us join in our opening prayer, which has been adapted from Psalm 46.**

Reader 1: Nations are in uproar and Kingdoms fall.  
But you, O God, are our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help when we are in trouble.  
Give us courage to believe in your grace,  
that even when the earth gives way  
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,  
even when the waters roar and foam  
and the mountains quake with their surging,  
*even then* we may not fear,  
for you, the Lord Almighty, are with us.  
You are the God of Jacob. You are our fortress.

Reader 2: Use us, Lord God,  
to make wars cease to the ends of the earth,  
to break bows and shatter spears,  
that we may no longer need our shields,  
that you may melt our defenses with holy fire.

Reader 3: You say to the people of Israel, and to us, your children:  
"Be still and know that I am God."  
And so we pause now in the stillness acknowledge your presence.

*Pause.*

Facilitator: The Lord Almighty is with us.  
The God of Jacob is our fortress.



We gather and pray in the name of our creating, redeeming, and sustaining God.

Amen.

## Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

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Ask this open-ended question. If you are by yourself, journal about them.

How are you responding spiritually, emotionally, and practically to situations of racial injustice happening in our nation?

## Reflection (30 minutes or so, depending on if your group read the letter ahead of time)

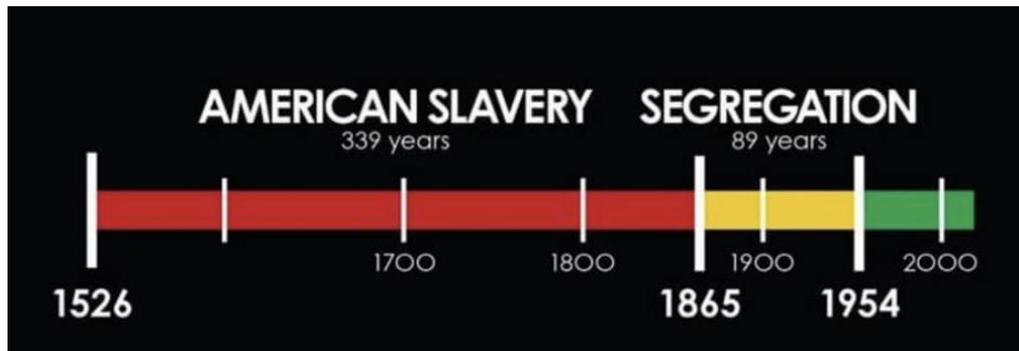
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Option 1: [send out this article](#) for group members to read ahead of time.

Option 2: read [the article](#) aloud, perhaps taking turns reading paragraph-by-paragraph.

Discussion questions (pick the ones that seem the most interesting and relevant):

- What are your initial reactions to this article? If participants have the article in front of them, ask them to take a minute or two to pick out a sentence that particularly stood out to them.
- In the article, Stevenson says: “We need to reckon with our history of racial injustice. I think everything we are seeing is a symptom of a larger disease. We have never honestly addressed all the damage that was done during the two and a half centuries that we enslaved black people.”
  - Do you agree with Stevenson’s statement here? If so, why is a historical perspective so crucial to understanding what is happening in our world today?
  - What books or articles on African American history do you recommend to the group (JustFaith Ministries has an 8 week program on this subject called [Faith and Racial Healing: Exploring Truth, Justice, and Restoration](#). It provides much background on the anger and despair our nation is experiencing right now).



- In his response to the question, “Should the protests be oriented toward a specific agenda, and, if so, what should that agenda be?”, Stevenson talks about “changing the narrative” and changing the culture of institutions in America.
  - What do you think about Stevenson’s idea?
  - What should this “new culture” look like?
  - How do we go about changing culture?
  
- Stevenson talks about the responsibility of local police departments to make reforms, rather than relying solely on the White House.
  - Do you have a connection with the local police department in your community? What do you know about them?
  - How can you support your local police department in taking preventative steps to ensure that tragic and needless deaths do not happen in your community?
  - Do you know of any community organizations who are taking on this work? Invite group members to help connect one another to these groups (our voices are louder when we work together!)
  
- Do you have any action steps to which you would like to commit aloud, so that the group can help hold you accountable and support you through our prayers?

**NOTES ABOUT SPECIAL RESOURCES OUT RIGHT NOW ON THIS SUBJECT:**

- Watch Dr. Lewis Brogdon’s presentation “We Won’t Take It Any Longer: Understanding the 2020 Black Protest Movement.” You can find a link [on our facebook page](#).
- PBS materials that were formerly tricky to access are available for free right now through pbs.org. Here’s a [list of what’s available](#). The episode on [Policing the Police looks particularly good](#), though I (Kristin) haven’t watched it yet. Shout out to our resident PBS fan on staff – Susan C. – for alerting us!
- This podcast episode of *The New York Times’ The Daily* called “[The Systems that Protect Police](#)” was really helpful to me. It breaks down the complicated question of why police misconduct cases rarely result in meaningful discipline.



- Watch [Just Mercy](#), which you can stream for free in June.
- Check out the article “[75 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice](#).”
- Last but not least, do a deep dive into racism in the U.S. by taking [one of our three eight-week programs on racial justice](#). Even if you already know a lot about this subject, I guarantee that your perspective will be shifted, and that you will emerge from the program better equipped to work for meaningful change.

## Closing Meditation (15 minutes)

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Read the following excerpt from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1967 book *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*

“Many of the young people proclaiming Black Power today were but yesterday the devotees of black-white cooperation and nonviolent direct action. With great sacrifice and dedication and a radiant faith in the future they labored courageously in the rural areas of the South; with idealism they accepted blows without retaliating; with dignity they allowed themselves to be plunge into filthy, stinking jail cells; with a majestic scorn for risk and danger they nonviolently confronted the Jim Clarks and the Bull Connors of the South, and exposed the disease of racism in the body politic. If they are America’s angry children today, this anger is not congenital. It is a response to the feeling that a real solution is hopelessly distant because of the inconsistencies, resistance and faintheartedness of those in power. If Stokely Carmichael now says that nonviolence is irrelevant, it is because he, as a dedicated veteran of many battles, has seen with his own eyes the most brutal white violence against Negroes and white civil rights workers, and he has seen it go unpunished.”

If you have time, ask: What wisdom do Dr. King’s words hold for us today?

If you don’t have time: Allow for one minute of quiet reflection.

Then invite the group into the closing prayer.

Loving God,

We pause to remember those whose lives have been cut short because of racism.



We name before you:

Sandra Bland.

Tamir Rice.

Trayvon Martin.

Rekia Boyd.

Eric Garner.

Alton Sterling.

Philando Castile.

Freddie Gray.

Michael Brown.

Breonna Taylor.

Ahmaud Arbery.

George Floyd.

David McAtee.

We name aloud or in our hearts others who have been killed because we, your people, have failed to acknowledge your holy image in all of your beloved children. *Pause*

We pause now to honor their lives and to pray for their families. *Pause.*

Forgive us for the sins of racism and indifference, Gracious God.

Guide us in how to speak and act for justice.

Show us how to change systems that hurt and even kill your beloved children.

Teach us how to pick up the cross and follow you.

We pray these things in the name of our Lord Jesus,



**Amen.**

Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

**We are disciples on a journey.**

**We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.**

**We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.**

**If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.**

Leader: We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world. Amen.