



What Is Critical Race Theory? July 27, 2021

Dear Member of the JustFaith Network,

We are grateful that you are a part of our JustFaith community. Whether you are a graduate of one of our programs or you are just getting to know us, we hope this offering will help sustain you spiritually and equip you to work for justice.

Our bi-monthly resources are sent the second and fourth Tuesday of each month, and you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith account. You can use these resources for personal reflection, or you can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current or past JFM small group to join you in-person or via video conferencing. If you are new to video conferencing, Zoom tutorials are available on our YouTube page – [Click here to access.](#)

This resource discusses critical race theory (CRT): what it is, what it isn't, and how to navigate tough conversations around this hot-button issue. If you are facilitating a group conversation around this resource, please choose the article below that will be most relevant to your group and email the link to everyone in advance.

- If your group is ecumenical or religiously unaffiliated, or if your group contains a diversity of religious/denominational perspectives, we suggest *The Conversation's* "[Critical Race Theory: What It Is and What It Isn't](#)" by David Miguel Gray.
- If everyone in your group identifies as Roman Catholic, we suggest *America Magazine's* "[Should Catholic Schools Teach Critical Race Theory?](#)" by Christopher J. Devron, S.J.

In addition, given the contentious nature of this topic, you may want to encourage your group to spiritually prepare themselves for the conversation through prayer, meditation, or journaling.

While we hope that this twice-monthly resource will inspire and sustain your community while distancing, now is also the perfect time to start one of our regular programs. Today's resource speaks to the theme of racial justice, which is highlighted in our racial justice series



for small groups. For more information, click [here](#); scroll down to the square labeled “Racial Justice,” and click on any of the three options.

Last but not least, all of our work is a collaboration with people like you. When you donate, your gift helps us sustain and equip individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out](#). Also, please feel free to forward this resource to friends and family!

With gratitude,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff

Welcome, Scripture Meditation, and Prayer (20 minutes)

Invite the group to turn to Luke 4:14-29, using either their Bibles or a trusted Scripture app or website. Ask for five volunteers to help read the opening prayer in a few minutes. Begin with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It’s so good to be with all of you. Today we’ll begin with prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we’ll have some conversation around a short reflection before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we’re called to be.

Let’s take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the Scripture meditation.

Scripture Meditation

Ask a volunteer to read Luke 4:14-22. Then invite the group to pause for silent reflection before facilitating a brief discussion of the following questions:

- According to this passage, what has Jesus set out to do over the course of his ministry? (Encourage participants to look at verse 18: good news to the poor, freedom for prisoners, etc).
- How do the people of Jesus’s hometown receive this first part of his announcement? (see verse 22).

Ask another volunteer to read Luke 4:23-29. Then briefly discuss:

- What is the crowd's reaction to this second part of his announcement? Why?
- Who is the widow in Zarephath? Who is Namaan the Syrian?
 - Note aloud: The widow at Zarephath in Sidon was a *foreigner* who God chose to rescue the prophet Elijah during a famine. Namaan the Syrian was the commander of a *foreign army*, and God chose to cure him of his leprosy. The people of Jesus's hometown thought Jesus was coming for *them*, not these outsiders!
- How does this passage speak to us today?

Opening Prayer

- Reader 1: Dear God, in our efforts to dismantle racism, we understand that we struggle not merely against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities - those institutions and systems that keep racism alive by perpetuating the lie that some members of the family are inferior and others superior.
- Reader 2: Create in us a new mind and heart that will enable us to see brothers and sisters in the faces of those divided by racial categories.
- Reader 3: Give us the grace and strength to rid ourselves of racial stereotypes that oppress some of us while providing entitlements to others.
- Reader 4: Help us to create a Church and nation that embraces the hopes and fears of oppressed People of Color where we live, as well as those around the world.
- Reader 5: Heal your family, God, and make us one with you, in union with our brother, Jesus, and empowered by your Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Written by the [Pax Christi Anti-Racism Team](http://www.paxchristiusa.org/)
Used with permission from Pax Christi USA
<http://www.paxchristiusa.org/>*

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you are by yourself, journal about them.

Note: If you're with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the



group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- Before we begin this week's reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling? (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- What is something you're struggling with this week?
- Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?

Other optional questions include: What is something you've learned about yourself during this time of social distancing? Where have you experienced a "thin place" in the last week? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you'd like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?

Reflection (30 minutes or so)

Participants should have read *The Conversation's* "[Critical Race Theory: What It Is and What It Isn't](#)" by David Miguel Gray OR *America Magazine's* "[Should Catholic Schools Teach Critical Race Theory?](#)" by Christopher J. Devron, S.J.

Setting Intentions

Before beginning the conversation, invite everyone to pause to silently name a one-word intention for your reflection time together. Examples include "understanding," "discernment," and "community."

Pause for 30 seconds. Then invite each participant to share their word.

Reflecting on the article

Choose the questions that are the most interesting/relevant to your group.

- Invite participants to choose one sentence that particularly stood out to them from the article. Allow time for participants to silently choose their sentences before you begin sharing.
- How would you explain critical race theory to someone who is confused about what it is?



- What are some misconceptions about critical race theory? Encourage everyone to communicate respect toward those with whom they disagree, whether they are present in your group or outside of it.
- How does the discussion around critical race theory connect with Luke 4:14-29?
- The conversation around critical race theory has spotlighted the deep divisions in America. What are some methods for engaging in conversation with someone who disagrees with you on this issue, while also honoring the image of God (imago Dei) in that person?
- Has the controversy over critical race theory affected your local community? If so, how? Are there opportunities to productively advocate for racial justice around this issue? *If you're not sure, designate someone to contact a local organization working on racial justice issues, and to report back to the group. Alternatively, if this question is not relevant to your group, use this time to list ways to get involved with anti-racism work on a local level.*

Announcements (10 minutes-ish)

- Remind participants that today's conversation offered only a brief insight into a huge topic. If they would like to take a deeper dive into this subject matter, they should consider the eight-session program [Faith and Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege](#).
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff in order to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. To support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through justfaith.org.
- JustFaith Ministries hosts a monthly webinar series called "Acting for Justice." Join us on Thursday, August 19, 7:00 EDT for a presentation by JustFaith founder, Jack Jezreel, entitled "A Dynamic Church for a Dynamic Mission," discussing a new template for church life. Visit the [JustFaith Ministries Facebook page](#) for more information on times and topics. You can also register [here](#).
- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice.



Closing Prayer (10 minutes-ish)

Say: Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.

Pause for 30 seconds. Then say:

As our closing prayer, we will listen to Gayatri Nair’s cover of “Freedom” by Beyonce Knowles. As we listen, let us pray for those who live out Jesus’s mission by working for racial justice in our world today.

Play [Gayatri Nair’s cover of “Freedom” by Beyonce.](#)

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.