



Talking with youth about... **Racism**

The meaning in the Catechism to the first article of the Apostle's Creed reminds us that God has lovingly made all people only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy. Scripture tells us repeatedly that all humans have equal worth and dignity. Racism is a rejection of our Creator's design. While addressing issues of systemic injustice and inequalities are complex, as Christians we can be clear that racism is evil and the result of our fall into sin. Racism shows itself in big and small ways, in both our action and our inaction. As individuals and the church, we fail to see others as equally created and loved by God. Yet even in that sin, Jesus died to save all and desires all, regardless of nationality or race, to come to a saving faith in Jesus.

One of the end goals of youth ministry that we list is that young people and the church embrace and value the diversity of ethnicity, language, and culture in God's creation. It's important to address issues of race and racism with your youth. Be sure to foster warmth, challenge and grace as you open what can be a difficult conversation. Below are some activities, questions, and scripture verses that may help guide your time.

Potential Activities

- Watch the short movie "The First Rosa" available online at lcms.org/thefirstrosa. This film highlights Dr. Rosa J Young's remarkable history as a pioneer Lutheran educator and missionary. (Full lessons for other age groups are available for this movie online.)
- Have students create a word cloud or a list of words they have heard from the news, in their homes, and in social media around race and racism. Take time to unpack words that they may not totally understand.
- Help students consider how God calls them to show empathy to others. Have students write down a one or two sentence prompt on a time when they felt hurt, angry or sad. Then read that scenario to the group and ask them to share or act out how they might respond in an empathetic, loving way to someone in that situation.
- As you are able and is appropriate, invite adults from your congregation or church workers of different ethnicities to come and share their experiences with your teens. It is important to remember that having someone share their story is a gift to your group that needs to be treated respectfully. If you are bringing in an outside speaker, please be sure to thank and compensate them for their time.

Discussion Questions

For these questions, refer to the scriptures below for guidance and direction.

- Where have you seen or experienced people being treated differently because of how they looked or their race?
- What stereotypes do you see about different races shown on social media, television, movies or music? How do those impact how we think about other people?
- What does God say about the value of every human being?
- What attitudes and feelings do we sometimes have about people who are not like ourselves? What does it look like when people and our society fail to see God's image and value in others?

- What does repentance (asking forgiveness, receiving absolution, turning from sin) look like when we devalue others based on their race or appearance?
- What does it look like when, through the Holy Spirit, people and our society begin to reflect the value God gives to all humans?
- We all have vocations (student, friend, neighbor, etc.) that connect us to other people. How can we build transformational rather than transactional relationships with people who are different than us?
- As a youth ministry, how can we better serve our communities and the diverse people in them?
- With God's help, how can we help prevent racism and injustice and those affected by it?
- When faced with racism and injustice, how can we point people back to Jesus by what we say and do?
- Are there actions and issues in the community our church could focus on to take steps towards being a witness to Jesus' love?

Bible Verses to Consider

For these questions, refer to the scriptures below for guidance and direction.

Genesis 1:26-27 and Psalm 139:13-14

Every human being is made lovingly by our God.

1 Samuel 16:7 and Acts 10:34-38

God reminds Samuel not to judge on outside appearance, but on the heart. Peter reminds the crowd that God does not show partiality, but rather gives faith, forgiveness, and purpose to share the Gospel to all who believe, regardless of race.

Mark 12:29-31

In this verse we are reminded that God's greatest commandment was to love Him and love our neighbor as ourselves. While we fail to live up to these commandments, Jesus never did and offers forgiveness when we fail by loving ourselves more than God or others.

Colossians 3:11-17, 25

Paul reminds us that we are all brought together in Christ, even though we are different. While we will fail to show compassion, kindness and humility, we forgive each other because Christ has forgiven us. These are beautiful instructions for how we bring together diversity through the love of Jesus.

Romans 10:9-13

Salvation comes from Jesus alone and Jesus shows no distinction between races. Jesus gives the riches of faith to all who believe. We should appreciate and encourage the diversity of the church as many come to saving faith.

1 John 4:19-21

Because Jesus has loved us, we love others. That love does not stand for hatred and fear of those who God has made. We are called to love others, even those that look different than us.

Other Resources

- End Goals Podcast on KFYO has interviews with Revs. Keith Haney and Gerard Bolling on issues of identity, race and racism.
- Youth E-Source has a Bible study series on identity and race by Rev. Keith Haney called "The Search for My Identity".
- Listen to Gathering Sessions on race and our Christian identity as a podcast.