



SERMON STUDY GUIDE
For the sermon preached on
1/24/2021:
“Hope in the Face of Injustice”
from the Sermon Passage
Luke 6:17-26

How to use the Study Guide During Virtual Online Group Meetings

Group life is even more critical during this incredible season. Over and over, group leaders are reporting that suddenly there is a new hunger to connect, share, pray, and meditate on Scripture together, and so we are making these guides available weekly and suggesting a new format during this season.

As you know, our Group Life’s vision is to “practice the way of Jesus.” And while Jesus never had to lead a Torah study over Zoom, he was strategic in his teaching ministry, and we want to be as well.

There are a number of differences between meeting in person and meeting online, ranging from the obvious to the subtle. One is, given our attention spans for online meetings, we want to encourage you to limit the length of your call between 45-60 minutes and we are calling this “Check-In Plus One.” Meaning, spend a few minutes checking in with your group and see if there are any new needs with them (or even amongst their neighbors). The “One” is to spend time in study. As our virtual season continues, our desire for meaningful content and interaction will grow. Given our new format, the study guides based on Sunday’s sermon will be designed to be more application based (as opposed to unpacking the text with the Inductive Bible Study method). You might consider sharing the passage beforehand with your group in hopes that they might spend more time with the Scripture before the gathering.

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do in practicing the way of Jesus in community.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tim Ghali and Pastor Rachel Keeler on behalf of the Group Life Team

For the Leader: “Check-In Plus One”

Welcome everyone to the Zoom call and outline the goal of this call being 45 minutes. Spend 15-20 minutes checking in with one another, then move into a time of prayer, and then spend some time discussing the application of the Scripture passage. A “check-in” question might be, “How are you doing, and is there anything new that has arisen in your life or in your neighborhood that we can pray about?”

Introduction:

Good we are here – As Christ-followers, we desire to be people committed to love and justice, to serve God, and to treat others in a way that honors the Lord.

When dealing with challenging societal topics, we want to do our best to listen to one another, be attentive to the heartbeat of Scripture, and express ourselves with authenticity, clarity, and charity. And we are doing this over Zoom! Though the work is hard, the fruit of such discussions has the potential to make a difference in the world around us. So may we commit to fostering such an environment today and let's begin in prayer.

Our study guides are designed around the sermons preached from that Sunday. This study guide will quote more from the sermon than usual given the sensitive nature of the topic, both to help our memory of what we heard, and also to give some context for those who have not heard the message.

Given that perhaps not everyone was able to hear the message and for the group's sake, it would be helpful to frame our conversation around the words Pastor Bryan gave in the introduction:

“We know that **many** in our nation have been disappointed by the **unjust treatment of people of color**. The **tragic deaths** of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and others this past year have **captured** the nation's attention and brought the issue of **racial justice** out into the open, particularly as it relates to **Black Americans**. But Americans of **other minority cultures** have **also** experienced suspicion, discrimination, and harassment simply because of their **ethnicity**.

We also know that many **middle and working-class people**, white Americans included, have felt **overlooked** and **disempowered** by the **systems and structures** of our nation. We know that **women** in our nation continue to struggle for **equal pay and opportunity** in the workplace, and for **protection** and justice in the face of exploitation and harassment. We know that people with **different abilities**; the **elderly**; and those advocating for the **unborn**, often feel threatened and marginalized by society at large.

We've defined **disappointment** as the **gap** between expectation and reality. It seems that the expectation of being **treated fairly** as a human being or citizen, and the reality of being as **something less** than that – that **gap** seems to have **widened** for many people in recent years, **in spite of advancements** we thought we had made on these fronts.”

Q – Bryan's introduction cast an understanding that many people throughout our society are experiencing injustice in a variety of ways and asked what to do with all that disappointment and are there reasons to be hopeful? Jua Robinson later added that as Christ-followers committed to Scripture we must recognize that confronting racism is an extension of the gospel. So let's begin by asking – what societal injustices grieve *your* heart? (Please try to answer with a bit of brevity so we can hear from others and keep our discussion focused.)

Q – We’ve listed a number of societal injustices and each grieves the heart of God. Whether it be a person of color experiencing discrimination, a corrupt system protecting an abuser, the plight of the unborn, or any one of countless more. Those gathered to hear Jesus in Luke 6 were also experiencing brutal oppression by the Roman occupation and various injustices by those higher in the social order. It was telling that Jesus devoted so much of his ministry to the marginalized of his day and often gave his most memorable words to this audience. Let’s look at what he said:

<p>²⁰“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. ²²Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. ²³ Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors</p>	<p>treated the prophets. ²⁴ But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. ²⁵ Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. ²⁶ Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.”</p>
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Luke 6:20-26

Q – Bryan and Jua mentioned the book they found helpful called, *Reading While Black* by Esau McCauley. As Bryan explained, “the premise is that the Bible offers truths that are especially **relevant to** and **informed by** the **Black experience** in America. It’s a commonly-understood perspective in the Black church, but **unfamiliar** to the White-Christian tradition. Of course, a **similar dynamic** could be at work for someone reading from an **Asian-American** experience, or a **woman’s** perspective, or any oppressed background. We each bring our **life experience** – our cultural heritage, our wounds, our biases, as well as our aspirations and dreams, to our reading and application of the Bible. For that reason, McCauley encourages us to be ‘...willing to listen to and enter into dialogue with Black and White critiques of the Bible in hopes of achieving a better reading of the text’(- Esau McCauley).”

Jua added, “Jesus identifies 2 groups of people. The first group includes the poor, the hungry, the sad or grieving, and the hated or marginalized. People on the under-side of society; under-resourced, under-valued, under-represented. The poor and powerless, in the words of a popular worship song. Scholars describe these people as “the pious poor.” In other words, they’re not in this condition because they’re lazy or reckless or wicked. It’s just how life or the world has treated them. And Jesus declares that in His Kingdom, such people **can be** included, provided for, happy, and honored. ***What Jesus is not saying is all who are marginalized with inherit the kingdom but those who have determined to become His disciples. He literally tells them to rejoice because their reward is great.**

The second group of people he identifies as the rich, the well-fed, the happy, and the highly-regarded. People on the upper-side of society; enjoying the good things of the world. The text doesn't say so explicitly, but we get the sense these people are enjoying these blessings at the expense of others, or at least, without concern for others. In contrast to "the pious poor," these might be described as "the callous rich." In his Kingdom, he says, these people will be the unfortunate ones; the ones who miss out."

As we consider the message of Luke 6, how does this help you understand Jesus' teaching and ministry and how Jesus is inviting all Christian disciples to live?

Q – Let's read an excerpt of Jua's message and see what convicts us and what inspires us:

"You must determine if you are going to be a Peace Maker or a Peace Keeper.

A peace keeper wants to keep certain people out of systems, desires a lack of sincerity, conflict, and tension, and pursues a false sense of unity. Instead of attempting to understand the emotion and sentiment behind a protest against injustice a peace keeper is quick to condemn without any informed context and is afraid to name injustice, domestic terrorism, white supremacy, racial terrorism, white power, police brutality, unfair policing, voter suppression, and unequal sentencing.

A peace maker calls out systems of oppression, walks toward imagining something new, is not afraid of something unseen, is more than a Twitter rant, Facebook post, book club, panel on racism, diversified bookshelf, or quote on MLK Day. A peace maker recognizes just because you've adopted a black child, read Esau McCauley, Jemar Tisby, or Latasha Morrison you have not arrived. Recognizes there still may be racism within their heart. A peace maker is willing to be misunderstood, listen to informed people of color, risk something, lose people, pick a side of righteousness, refuse to use scripture to gaslight, intimidate abuse, silence, justify, violate, continual oppression of others. **A peace maker deconstructs unjust systems and is willing to repent of their contribution to an unjust system."**

Take a moment and answer what do you find yourself convicted by and what do you find yourself inspired by in the pursuit of racial justice? (Leader, you may want to either repeat the quote or share the screen of the quote).

These are among the essential conversations we as Christ-followers need to be having in order to keep building the Kingdom of Jesus. First, let's be grateful that we are having this conversation together – it's challenging but needed. Second, let's be grateful for the power of Scripture and how its authority centers us and propels us towards all forms of justice. And lastly, let us pray and ask the Lord to help us internalize these truths and live faithfully, courageously, and justly in the days to come.