

LEADING THEOLOGICALLY SEASON 2: RECONCILIATION STUDY GUIDE 2025

Discussion Worksheets
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Find the Leading Theologically podcast on your favorite podcasting platform or on YouTube. Your host is Rev. Bill Davis, Senior Director, Theological Education Funds Development at the Presbyterian Foundation.

Reconciliation Episode 1: Paul Roberts

This is a study guide to accompany the Theological Education Fund's podcast *Leading Theologically*. You can find episodes at the link below, your favorite podcast platform, or follow us on YouTube or Facebook [Leading Theologically: A Podcast - Presbyterian Foundation](#)

Guest: Paul Roberts, President, Justice Center for Sacred Theological Studies

Word	Working Definition
Reconciliation	A process of repair to a harm/s between a person/community who was harmed and those who committed or benefitted from that harm.
Reparations	The United Nations defines reparations as measures taken by a government to repair violations of human rights, by providing a range of material and symbolic benefits to victims or their families as well as affected communities and society as a whole. According to the UN, reparations must be adequate, effective and prompt, and should be proportional to the gravity of the violations and the harm suffered.

Isaiah 58:12, “Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.”

Take a moment to read through the questions and take 5 minutes to jot down thoughts. Turn to a few neighbors and discuss your reactions and answers to the following questions. After about 10-15 minutes, invite a discussion leader to open the discussion to the whole group.

- 1. How do you demonstrate to another person that you value them?** Roberts says, “That is the point of the Christian journey. That is the point of any authentic reconciliation work. That is the point of any discussion about reparations.” Take a moment to think about times when you have felt valued, or times when you have been intentional about showing someone you value them.
- 2. If reconciliation is the end, what are aspect of the process that you know need to be part of the journey?** In your own healing journeys, what have been important aspects of repair? Roberts says, “Reconciliation at its core not only acknowledges a wrong, but engages a certain process in order to repair the harm felt or experienced by the harmed.”
- 3. What are the conversations you have had with your family, partner, and church around money and what ethics were encouraged around it?** Robert says, “We live in a capitalistic society, money is an integral part of our world and our relationships.”

Reconciliation Episode 2: Adrian Miller

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Guest: Adrian Miller, The Soul Food Scholar, Author, Culinary Historian

Take a moment to read through the questions and take 5 minutes to jot down thoughts. Turn to a few neighbors and discuss your reactions and answers to the following questions. After about 10-15 minutes, invite a discussion leader to open the discussion to the whole group.

1. **Begin with reflecting on the different tables you sit at. Think of your week. What tables do you repeatedly sit at? And how do you prepare? Who sits at those tables with you? Who is at the table now having this conversation?**
2. Miller says "Setting a table, and extending the invitation" is the key part to beginning this work. **How does one set the table? What are ways that you or your community have prepared to navigate reparative conversations?**
3. Miller says "The body of Christ is broken by race." **How have you witnessed this? What are the ways you have seen broken bodies heal, and how might we be committed to the healing of Christ's body?**

What You Can Do

The President's Initiative on Race (dating back to the Clinton White House) was mentioned during the interview. Review the list and reflect on how relevant this list is. What are ways we can expand on it?

<https://clintonwhitehouse3.archives.gov/Initiatives/OneAmerica/what.html>

Reconciliation Episode 3: Laurie Lyter Bright

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Guest: Laurie Lyter Bright, Executive Director, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

Word	Working Definition
Accompaniment	The practice of walking alongside someone, providing support and companionship, or being present for moral support, rather than leading or directing

Matthew 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God.”

Dr. Lyter Bright speaks about our personal beliefs and how those are reflected in our personal actions. Reflect on a few of your own personal beliefs and the actions you make because of those beliefs.

Personal Belief	Personal Actions
It is more blessed to give than receive.	I am generous by...

Now reflect on the collective values of your congregation.

Collective Belief	Collective Action
Love thy neighbor	My Church loves our neighbors by...

Reconciliation Episode 4: Jermaine Ross-Allam

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Guest: Jermaine Ross-Allam, Director of the Center for Repair of Historic Harms, PC(USA)

Exodus 12:35 “The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing.”

Memorial Presbyterian Church in Juneau, Alaska was closed in 1963. The closure was a racist process that deliberately closed an indigenous Alaskan church that was led by an indigenous pastor. [Watch this video](#) on the reparations process with Memorial Presbyterian Church and the PCUSA through the Center for the Repair of Historic Harms.

1. Distance plays an important role in how corrupt and harmful systems continue. In the United States, indigenous children were stolen from their families and forced into boarding schools, far from their families and far from cities. Why is distance a powerful tool? How do we address the power distance has? How do you see distance or distancing manifest today?
2. Churches, including predecessors of the PC(USA), owned and operated several boarding schools in which indigenous children were stolen, abused, and forcibly denied access to their native language and community. Why do you think churches played such a significant role in this process?
3. Ross-Allam says, “The church has a very unique role as a moral community to see to it that we play our role in changing public opinion.” What parts of our faith encourage us to engage in these repairs? Are there any figures in our tradition or scripture passages that highlight our moral obligation of repair?

Reconciliation Episode 5: Allen Hilton

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Guest: Allen Hilton, Founder and Leader of House United

Ephesians 4:3-6 “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

What do you think of when you hear the word unity? How about uniformity? How would you define these terms? Do they have anything in common?

Unity	What do they share?	Uniformity

1. It is not uncommon to conflate uniformity with unity, but when we do that, differences and diversity become roadblocks to success. However, Hilton says “differences (within people) are assets rather than threats.” Can you think of a time when the success of a project or group was because of someone’s unique skill or relationship?
2. Hilton says “the center of reconciliation for Jesus is always in community.” What communities are you a part of? What makes them a healing place?
3. A powerful image Paul paints in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 is that the church is a body. It is one thing with many parts. Our differences make us more complete. How can we foster a greater sense of interdependence and unity within Christian communities?
4. What practical steps can we take to care the members of the body of Christ?

Reconciliation Episode 6: Justin Reed

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Guest: Justin Reed, Assoc. Prof. of Old Testament and Hebrew Bible, Louisville Seminary

In this episode, Bill Davis and Justin Reed explore 3 stories in Genesis that center on male family members reconciling with each other. Read these scriptures first silently then out loud together and reflect on the following questions.

Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:11-15)

- Every translation is an interpretation. Reed explores the ambiguity of translations from ancient Hebrew to English. How does exploring multiple translations deepen one's personal connection with the scriptures?
- In reflecting about Cain's punishment for murdering his brother Abel, Reed focuses on God reconciliation and grace within the punishment by giving Cain a mark of protection. Reed says, "there is grace with the punishment that there is a concern for the perpetrator of wrong and there is some care for the fears of the perpetrator." What is the relationship of grace in punishment?

Jacob and Esau (Genesis 33:1-20)

- What does Esau's statement, "I have enough," imply about his contentment and forgiveness? (Genesis 33:9)
- What are the key steps in the reconciliation process as demonstrated by Jacob and Esau? (Humility, acknowledgment of wrongdoing, seeking forgiveness, offering restitution, and extending grace)
- What does it mean to "lay aside your rights" in the context of reconciliation? (Genesis 33:1-3)

Jacob and his 11 brothers (Genesis 45:1-15)

- Reed's love for Genesis comes from his belief that the book doesn't say "and the lesson is ..." The things we bring to the text make a difference in terms of what we pay attention to. What are you bringing to the text? How does your understanding of reconciliation match or mismatch from these biblical examples?

Reconciliation Episode 7: Rodney Caruthers

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Guest: Rodney Caruthers II, Asst. Prof. of New Testament, Austin Seminary

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Word	Working Definition
Restoration	The process of repairing something damaged or broken to the original or new condition.

1. Caruthers adds a 4th "R" word to the season: Restoration. How does this word differ from reconciliation? How do these words manifest differently relationally? When is restoration appropriate and when is reconciliation a better term?
2. What does it mean to be reconciled to God? How does Christ's sacrifice achieve this reconciliation?
3. Caruthers describes followers of Jesus as "little christs" or ambassadors to be sent out with same message the kingdom of God. What does it mean to be an "ambassador for Christ"? What are the implications for how believers live and interact with the world?
4. Much of Caruthers's scholarship deeply considers the cultural and historical context in which scripture is written. How does the context he shares around the passage "While we were still enemies" add to your understanding of the passage?

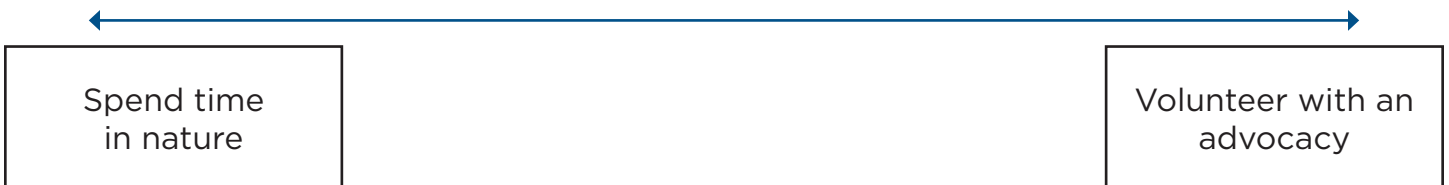
Reconciliation Episode 8: Emma Jordan-Simpson

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Guest: Emma Jordan-Simpson, President, Auburn Theological Seminary

1 John 3:14 “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.”

Jordan-Simpson says, “Peacemaking is work. It has to be pursued every day.” What are some everyday actions we can take to be peacemakers? Make a spectrum of small to large actions for peace making. What about those actions contribute to peace making?



1. So often we expect instantaneous results from our actions, but Jordan-Simpson says, “Reconciliation is not, ‘this happens by Friday’... it is a way of life.” The process is not linear. How do you define progress in nonlinear healing?
2. Jordan-Simpson says, “Reconciliation repair is not something were doing to someone else. It begins with ourselves. Do we want to be healed?” Often times reconciliation is seen only outward. What are some internal ways we can practice and live into reconciliation?
3. Jordan-Simpson says, “When I imagine a healed future I hear the sound of children laughing.” What are the moments or feelings that you have that give you hope and confidence that you are going the right direction?

Reconciliation Episode 9: Bruce Grady

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Guest: Bruce Grady, Executive Presbyter, Presbytery of New Hope

Romans 12:18 “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

1. Grady reflects on how there is often a focus of reparations as a transactional process for wrongs committed in the past, and offers that reparations is actually a “Transformational process, a radical transformational process” of the present and future relationships of people. How does that shift in definition/action change the way you think about reparations?
2. Grady describes an example of how his presbytery addresses a systemic issue in one of the counties he serves. What are ways you and your church can engage in reconciliation or reparations on a local level?
3. Was there a specific episode that stood out to you? What about that episode made it so engaging for you?
4. What are you still curious about and want to explore more?
5. What concept or conversation was the most challenging for you to engage with? Why?

This study guide was created by the Theological Education Fund, a national PC(USA) source of support for theological education. We are committed to investing in future church leaders and engaging with communities to promote theological education and church leader development.

We invite you to engage with our resources and if you have any questions concerning the fund or our partner seminaries, please reach out to Bill Davis, the Senior Director of the Theological Fund Development, at bill.davis@presbyterianfoundation.org.