

# HOW TO NEIGHBOR

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## CONNECT

- What's one unique cultural experience from your upbringing?
- Name a country you'd love to travel to one day. What about its culture excites you?
- How did your family of origin influence the way you see people of other ethnicities?

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## TRUTH

When Jesus was asked what's most important in life, he said to love God and love your neighbor. Loving your neighbor can get complicated. Given the racial tension in America, we need to understand how followers of Jesus can be reconciled instead of divided. Peter wrote a letter to Christians who'd been rejected for their faith and dispersed all over the Roman Empire. It's in this letter that we discover our answer.

## WHAT WE NEED TO PUT AWAY

**READ:** 1 Peter 2:1-3

**DISCUSS:** How do you think the spiritual milk of God's word can help Christians put away malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander?

Oppressed people have good reason to feel malice, envy, and a desire to slander. Deceit, hypocrisy, and slander have been the favored weapons of oppressors for centuries. But if these things are going on in a church community, races won't be reconciled. If a diverse church is going to grow in love, it must immerse itself in the spiritual milk of God's word. In God's word, all people are created in his image. In God's word, injustice is recognized and exposed. In God's word, both oppressors and the oppressed are called to repentance and forgiveness.

## WHO WE NEED TO GO TO

**READ:** 1 Peter 2:4-8

**DISCUSS:** How does Jesus's experience of rejection empower us for repentance and forgiveness?

Peter provides the image of God's people being like the temple in Jerusalem. Pilgrims would travel to the temple to worship God, to learn about his character and his purposes, and to experience his presence. Now, through Jesus, people come to the followers of Jesus to experience what it means to know God. But Peter points out that all this was made possible because Jesus forgave those who rejected him. As we extend mercy to one another

instead of retaliation, and as we repent of ungodly attitudes toward others, we're being built into a temple through which God's glory can spread into the world.

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## GRACE

### THE GIFT WE NEED TO RECEIVE

**READ:** 1 Peter 2:9-10

**DISCUSS:** What about these verses stands out to you?

There's a part of us that feels like races being truly reconciled is wishful thinking. And it is... if it were up to us. But the good news is that God has given us the gift of rebirth, and now the basis of our identity is our new family. God's people are chosen, no matter who rejects them. God's people are royal, no matter where they stand on the socio-economic ladder. God's people are holy, no matter what names are used to mock them. God's mercy in Jesus is the great equalizer, turning the offended and the offenders, the oppressed and the oppressors, into brothers and sisters.

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## CHANGE

- How has this discussion impacted the way you think about racial reconciliation?
  - Are there attitudes about people of other races or actions toward them that you need to repent of?
  - What does it look like for you to live your life as part of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation?
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## PRAYER

- Repentance and forgiveness can't happen apart from the help of the Holy Spirit. Pray for the softening of our hearts toward one another in view of the mercy of Jesus.
- Pray that we would rightly reflect who we are as the chosen people of God into a world that so badly needs to see it.

### DISCIPLESHIP CHECK-IN

- Have you read your Bible consistently the past week?
- Who is someone you're praying to share Jesus with this week, and what's one way you can love them well?