

A large, dark wooden cross is centered on a light-colored, textured wooden background. The cross is made of two thick, slightly weathered wooden beams. The background wood grain is visible and runs horizontally.

# One. *in* Christ STUDY GUIDE

BRIDGING  
RACIAL  
AND CULTURAL  
DIVIDES

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## **Introduction:**

### **How to Use This Study Guide**

Spiritual growth is an intentional process. In the same way, building cross-race friendships must be intentional. If you are committed to fulfilling The Great Commission, telling people about Jesus Christ and His saving grace, this study guide will help you spread God's Word to people who look just like you as well as to those who are racially, culturally, and ethnically different from you. Any fear that may be holding you back from connecting with people will be lifted.

My focus is on coaching you on *how* to overcome the common, yet painful, obstacles that hinder the natural development of cross-race friendships. This study guide is the “how to” companion to my book, *One in Christ*.

This study guide contains six lessons for both individual and group exercises. It's also a great tool for an entire congregation to use as a companion to a sermon series on diversity or cross-cultural ministry. Here are some ways you can maximize this study if you are reading the book with a congregation or a small group:

1. Complete the reading, individual exercises, and reflective questions *before* you meet with your group. You will experience maximum growth and success if you allow the Holy Spirit to deal with your heart privately. The group exercises will simply deepen your experience and heighten your personal transformation.
2. Go through the group exercises with teams of no more than four to six people. A smaller group will create a greater level of vulnerability, trust, and openness—key elements to holding meaningful conversations on race and diversity.

3. Agree to keep each other's remarks, fears, and vulnerable comments private.

The group must be a safe place where opinions, myths, perspectives, and even misunderstandings about race can be shared in the trusted hope that prayer, encouragement, and right answers can lovingly emerge. Vulnerable conversations on such a delicate subject like race and culture requires the utmost confidence and feelings of emotional safety. Trust is a priceless commodity to be treasured. Treasure the emotional secrets of those in your study group.

Whether you are going through it alone, or with a group, view this guide as a tool of the Holy Spirit in your life. Whatever your prior experiences have been with diversity and multiculturalism, this study guide will boost your confidence and ground you in a biblical worldview of race relations.

The Holy Spirit has made an eternal commitment to lead and guide you into all truth (John 16:13). Expect Him to whisper comforting words, challenging words, and guiding words in your ear. God has given you the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:17-21) —uniting people to God and people to people—because you belong to Him. It's God's love that has given you the capacity to be a lover of people. This study guide is simply a tool to expand that quality in your life and in the lives of those you touch.

Whenever you feel stuck, need further clarity, or become unsure as to how vulnerable you can become in this journey towards a more cross-cultural lifestyle, remember to pray. God invites prayer. He responds to prayer. Prayer is God's invitation into your struggles, journey, and growth. So, pray!

## **Lesson One**

### **I Need to Really See Myself**

#### *Examining My Social Circle*

**Read: Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2 of *One in Christ*.**

One of the hardest things to do is to see yourself for who you are. I'm talking about the ability to see how you come across to others from a cross-racial perspective. Your mannerisms and body language reveal how comfortable you are in the presence of people who are unlike you. The ability to truly see yourself and to respond, correct, or adjust your behavior and your cross-cultural will prove invaluable to the process of your becoming attractive across racial lines.

The deep cry of your heart must be: *Lord, help me to see myself so I can change!* You have to probe deep within your heart to discover how you can become someone who attracts friends from across God's mosaic. The probing is equally important to the discovery. Change can only occur when you learn the status of your heart.

### **FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION**

1. Let's take out the mirror... so that you can see yourself. *Reconciliation* is a word that addresses the social dimension of your life. To see yourself now, and not in the future, consider the following social settings.

If you are married, answer this question.

A1. What *did* the racial makeup of your wedding look like?

A2. (For Singles) What will *your* wedding look like assuming your fiancé is the same race as you and has the same percentage of friends you currently have from other races?

<b>Race of <i>Your</i> Guests</b>	<b>Percentage of Audience</b> <i>(Most weddings have 100 guests)</i>
White	
African American	
Latino	
Asian	
Other (describe)	

Because weddings are expensive, most couples limit their invitations to the closest 100 or so people in their lives. Based on that reality, the closest people to you relationally are the ones you would or did invite to your wedding.

2. Are you surprised by the racial composition of your wedding? Why?

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3. What does the racial composition tell you about *your* friends?

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Reconciliation is an intentional process. That means you must intentionally connect with people from across cultural lines. I'm not suggesting tokenism; or the idea that you need five African American friends or three Asian friends, or two White buddies, so you stalk them until they surrender to your desire to become *their* friend. Rather, the idea is to understand the types of people you've been naturally drawn to in social situations. Let's take a look at another telling social setting.

4. Imagine you were able to look down upon the people at your funeral service. What would be the racial composition of the service based solely on the people your family thinks were close to you?

<b>Race of <i>Your</i> Guests</b>	<b>Percentage of Audience</b> <i>(Most funerals have 100-200 guests)</i>
White	
African American	
Latino	
Asian	
Other (describe)	

A person's cross-cultural success is made evident at their wedding and at their funeral. Those they've bonded with over the course of their life are invited to the wedding and are in attendance at the funeral. Your answer to the above questions represents your current social world. Should your answer skew overwhelmingly toward your own race, don't be discouraged. There's still hope. At least you know where you are and that you're well positioned to grow from there.

5. Describe your feelings and thoughts based on seeing your answers to the above questions.

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### **GROUP DISCUSSION EXERCISE**

Before you start your discussion, turn to the person next to you and ask: *What is one thing going on in your life right now that I can pray with you about?* Take no more than a minute or so to pray quietly with that person.

1. Share with your group the most interesting wedding you've experienced. Why was it so unusual? Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable based on your race and culture? Why?

(Give each person an opportunity to volunteer to share their experience. Be sensitive to the time so that you will have a chance to complete the other exercises in this lesson.)

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Have the person with the biggest smile slowly read Galatians 2:11-14 out loud.

The Antioch church had a multiracial and multicultural congregation. At the onset of Peter's visit he appeared to connect with the Gentiles by eating with them. Yet, the moment other Jewish leaders came from Jerusalem, Peter began to noticeably pull away from the Gentiles during the meal times. Paul confronted him publicly in an attempt to correct his behavior and coach him in how he ought to behave to foster healthy cross-cultural relationships. Without getting into any heavy theology or the finer points of Jewish and Gentiles customs, please address the following questions.

2. Did Peter's behavior have any impact upon cross-cultural relationships? How?

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3. Based on his social actions, do you think Peter was comfortable with diversity? Why or why not?

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4. Why was Paul upset with Peter's choice to eat exclusively with his Jewish friends?

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5. Was Peter's action to separate from the Gentiles intentional or accidental? How did Paul view it?

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6. If Peter's behavior continued, what impact would it have had on the Antioch church?

Would it have been easier or harder for the members to form cross-cultural friendships? Why?

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7. Discuss any correlation you can draw between the racial composition of your wedding (or possible future wedding based on current friends) and Peter's choice to eat solely with Jewish believers. How have you been personally challenged by either the Individual Reflection or Group Discussion here?

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8. Based on Paul’s confrontation and coaching of Peter, did it appear that building cross-race relationships requires intentionality? Why? Or, why not?

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9. What changes will you make regarding your social life and behavior based on what you’ve seen in the mirror?

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## **Lesson Two**

### **All Is Forgiven**

#### *Setting Yourself Free From the Pain of the Past*

**Read: Chapters 3 and 4 of *One in Christ*.**

C. S. Lewis, the English philosopher once said: “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” Pain can either be a killer or a wake-up call to healing and restoration. If pain is ignored, silenced, or numbed, the underlying problem remains unaddressed. But if pain motivates you to seek a healthy remedy, it has served its God-intended purpose. Paul shared with the Corinthians that “the pain turned you to God” (2 Cor. 7:8-9, *The Living Bible*). The truth of his letter pained them, but in the end they turned to God in repentance and healing. Pain can provide a positive outcome, if you let its redemptive side emerge.

Pain has remarkable benefits. Even the pain of unforgiveness can be medicinal. Oftentimes our ineffectiveness in building cross-race relationships stems from a painful experience in dealing with someone of another race. Whether yours was a childhood experience of not being invited to little Susie’s birthday party or being excluded from a pick-up game of basketball during recess, the pain of rejection because of race, culture, or some other visible characteristic still hurts. Equally if not more painful is the adult-sized offense of not being invited to have lunch with coworkers and being given some bogus excuse for the oversight. It’s especially hurtful when it’s clear that they are uncomfortable with you outside of the workplace. Hurt is hurt. These types of offenses are like a cancer to your soul, always limiting your attempts

to develop meaningful cross-race relationships. The only true antidote is forgiveness. And, for you to forgive those who have acted with prejudice toward you, you must be honest—honest with yourself, with your feelings, with your heart of unforgiveness. This kind of honesty leads to complete forgiveness. Forgiveness is essential to the process of creating cross-cultural appeal, because it is the bridge across the abyss of prejudice.

The pitfall that most often capture the unsuspecting is that they say, “They don’t deserve forgiveness. They hurt me deeply!” You may be absolutely right. But, this perspective becomes a pitfall that will keep you ensnared for years. Forgiveness is for you and not necessarily the guilty party. If you don’t forgive you will walk around ensnared by your heart’s ugly condition while the offender goes about their life without even the slightest notion that there’s a problem. For your own wellbeing and future success forgive. Gift yourself with this incredible gift by forgiving those who’ve hurt and rejected you.

### **FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION**

1. When have you personally encountered an act of prejudice? Were you the sole victim or was it an act against your group?

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2. How did you feel about yourself after the incident? Did you feel wounded, de-valued, de-humanized, or angry? Describe your emotions in the most emotionally vivid words that come to mind.

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3. Have you told anyone else about this experience? If not, why not? If so, how long after the incident did you wait before sharing it?

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4. Do you still feel the same way you did when the incident occurred? Have you been healed in this area since that time? When was the last time you shared this incident with someone?

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Our justice system gives victims of serious crimes the right to make a public statement in court before their attacker is sentenced. This statement allows the victim to express how the crime has impacted their lives emotionally, physically, financially, or otherwise. While some victims use this time to spew hatred toward their attacker, or anger at the court if leniency was granted, others choose to publicly release their pain through statements of strength and triumph. The personal benefit associated with communicating the pain another caused you is undeniable. In fact it is one of the steps in the four-step process of forgiveness. Getting free from the pain of prejudice occurs when you forgive those who've wounded you. But you have to express it. Silence imprisons. It keeps the wound open and raw. Share it with someone to begin the healing process. As you are speaking medicine is being pumped into your soul by the Holy Spirit.

Here are the steps towards forgiveness.

- ▶ Step 1: Hold Someone Accountable for the Hurt
- ▶ Step 2: Acknowledge That People Are Flawed and Fallible
- ▶ Step 3: Surrender Your Need to Get Even

► Step 4: Change Your Attitude Towards the Offender

5. If you were given the opportunity to say something now to your offender, what would you say?

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6. It's now time to exercise forgiveness. In a private and quiet space, get into a posture of prayer. Repeat these words out loud:

*Lord, \_\_\_\_\_ [name] hurt me deeply when he/she/they acted with prejudice toward me. I now realize that he/she/they is flawed, as am I. His/her brokenness has caused me a lot of pain and anger. It made me feel less than a human being. I don't want to get even; I just want to be healed. I don't want to live with unforgiveness in my heart toward them or anyone else. I forgive them now, in faith. Please set me free from any unforgiveness that may try to lodge in my heart. Help me to have a godly attitude towards everyone. I ask you these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

7. Write out your own personal prayer to God. Maybe you're still angry, feeling poorly about yourself, or even have been set free from the pain of having been victimized. Tell the Lord what's going on inside your heart right now.

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8. Write out a prayer to God on behalf of your offender. If you need the Holy Spirit's help, ask Him to help you to follow through with this selfless act of intercession.

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## GROUP DISCUSSION EXERCISE

This discussion will require a group of no more than two or three other people, so if your group is larger than this, you might have to divide up into smaller groups. Telling the story about your experience with prejudice will take time. It's critically important that each person has ample time to share his or her story for healing to occur.

1. Share with the group the changes you noticed taking place in your heart this past week in how you viewed and interacted with people of other races.

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2. Have you ever experienced prejudice because of your race, culture, or gender? What was the most painful experience you had? Why did it hurt so much? How did you feel about yourself afterward?

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3. Was this the first time you've shared this experience publicly? How do you feel about yourself now based on that incident?

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4. How has that painful incident affected your ability to connect with members of other races or cultures? After this time of reflection, what lies have been lurking in your heart as a result of that or other experiences with prejudice?

Lie #1 \_\_\_\_\_

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Lie #2 \_\_\_\_\_

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Lie #3 \_\_\_\_\_

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One way to reverse the pain of prejudice and to uproot the lies associated with evil acts is to forgive your victimizer. The mere notion of forgiving such a painful act may itself seem unjust. But, forgiveness is God’s wonder drug for repairing broken hearts and lives. Allowing unforgiveness to remain in your life will allow the poison of prejudice to continue running rampant in your heart.

The person who is most composed should read aloud Matthew 6:14-15:

Jesus said: “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

5. Forgiveness means to set free, to let go, and to pardon. Although forgiveness may be undeserved, Jesus taught that it is necessary for *you* to experience God's forgiveness of your sins. What part of your life do you want to reclaim by asking God to forgive you for the sin of unforgiveness toward your victimizer?

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6. Remember that forgiveness is a four-step process.

- ▶ Step 1: Hold Someone Accountable for the Hurt
- ▶ Step 2: Acknowledge That People Are Flawed and Fallible
- ▶ Step 3: Surrender Your Need to Get Even
- ▶ Step 4: Change Your Attitude Towards the Offender

Step #1: Who are you holding accountable for \_\_\_\_\_?

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Step #2: In what ways is your victimizer flawed or fallible?

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Step #3: How can you be sure that you've surrendered your right to get even?

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Step #4: With the help of God, will you change your attitude toward your victimizer?

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7. Each person in your group should now take turns praying out loud their personalized prayer of forgiveness. Begin by thanking God for giving you the gift of forgiveness.

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## **Lesson Three**

### **How to Hold a Vulnerable Conversation**

#### *Turning Strangers Into Friends*

**Read: Chapters 4 and 5 of *One in Christ*.**

Engaging in vulnerable conversations on matters of race, culture, or ethnicity is a key to forming strong and healthy cross-race relationships. This kind of opportunity moves the student of culture along the path toward building solid ties with members of other races. Cultural isolation reinforces false ideas, myths, and perspectives that lead to prejudice and ignorance. A surefire way to combat this outcome is to create opportunities for the free expression of thoughts, feelings, and ideas with someone of another race.

*Vulnerable conversations* are those in which both parties feel free to ask gnawing questions about the other's race, culture, or ethnicity. The questioners feel safe to be a student—an unlearned and unskilled person in matters of the other's culture and race. Their questions and opinions can be raised without fear of being judged or labeled as prejudiced or narrow-minded. The teacher in these conversations feels privileged because the student has opened up his or her heart. Vulnerable conversations reflect traits of honesty, truthful perspectives, and an open view of a person's stumbling blocks. Such conversations can remove fear, which often stems from lack of exposure to healthy cross-racial experiences and creates a barrier to cross-cultural awareness and growth. This is why you must allow the Holy Spirit to orchestrate conversations in which you can sometimes be the student and then, at other times, play the role of teacher. The result will move you into greater realms of cross-cultural relationships.

**FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION**

1. For you to have a vulnerable conversation with someone of another race regarding the topic of race, what would you need to make you feel comfortable?

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2. What gnawing questions would you like to ask someone of another race? Which races are you curious about?

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3. Is there someone in your social circle right now with whom you could have a vulnerable conversation? Are you afraid to approach that person? If so, why? If not, why haven't you had a vulnerable conversation with that person?

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Vulnerable conversations that have beneficial outcomes have certain key ingredients. There is humility, honesty, openness, and validation from beginning to end. The humility of the questioner to learn about the other person's culture, values, or even perspective is quite disarming. The honest admission of ignorance about another's background positions you as a student and the other person as your teacher. Your openness to learn becomes piqued as you validate aspects of the other person's culture that you find warm, loving, and powerful.

4. What can you say to someone to set the stage for a vulnerable conversation? How would you indicate your desire to ask them questions that require trust and courage on your part?

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5. Think back to a time when you had a vulnerable conversation with a non-family member on a personal topic other than race. What cues did you look for before you shared your real issue? How did you determine that this person was safe with the matters of your heart?

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Proverbs 24:3-4 teaches:

By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established;  
through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.

This passage helps us recognize that wisdom, understanding, and knowledge are tools to building and establishing a house. These same tools can serve you in building and establishing a cross-cultural life.

6. How would you pray through Proverbs 24:3-4 in anticipation of a vulnerable conversation?

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### GROUP DISCUSSION EXERCISE

Before beginning your group discussion, invite each member (between four and six people) to briefly share how their view of diversity has been impacted through the reading, personal reflection or group discussions. The last person to share should pray a brief prayer for everyone to grow in courage as they consider participating in vulnerable conversations on race.

1. When you hear the term *vulnerable conversation* what words come to mind?

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2. What would you say is the difference between a *personal* conversation and a *vulnerable* conversation? Please recognize that all personal conversations need not be vulnerable. What's the difference?

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3. What would you need to occur *first* in your relationship with someone of another race before having a vulnerable conversation—sharing your preconceptions, questions, myths, suspicions, and so on concerning their race or culture—with them?

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4. Have you ever had a vulnerable conversation on the topic of race or culture with someone of a different race? If so, what made you feel safe in sharing your opinion or raising your questions? What did you learn from that conversation?

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5. Is there anyone in your social circle (job, school, church, and so on.) right now who appears to be a person with whom you could have a vulnerable conversation on matters of race or culture? If so, what cues can you begin dropping in preparation for that type of conversation? What are you currently doing to develop a more personal relationship with that person?

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Vulnerable conversations on race and culture require that you position yourself as a student.

This takes a lot of humility and courage on your part. Good students listen intently, ask questions, explore new horizons, and process what they've heard. A good student can learn from anyone because much of learning comes through observation, maintaining a good attitude, and practicing a high degree of perceptiveness. How well a student captures the right meaning from heart-opening discussions determines his or her level of personal growth.

6. If you and your family adopted a child of another race, do you think that he or she should know something about his or her race and culture? Why? Or, why not?

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7. How would you expose your adopted child to his or her culture? Would you have to demonstrate an equal interest in learning about your child's culture? How would you convey a high-level of passion as a student of that culture?

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8. How would you convey to your adopted child that your door is always open to having a vulnerable conversation about racial or cultural questions?

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9. Here are two lies that can lodge themselves in the mind of an adopted child:

Lie #1: I wish my skin was the same color as yours (the parent). How come I'm different? What truth can you extract from Psalm 139:14—*"I praise you [God] because I am fearfully and wonderfully made...."*—that will help your child love himself?

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Lie #2: People who look like me (the adopted child) are not smart. None of my teachers look like me. What truth can you extract from James 1:5—“*If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him*”—that will help your child recognize that smart people are found in every race?

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10. To practice what you’ve learned in this lesson, you will have to engage in a vulnerable conversation about race or culture with someone of another race. There is never a perfect time to do that. To overcome the fear and anxiety such a conversation may pose, you need a game plan. This plan should answer such questions as:

- ▶ Who is the most likely person in my sphere that I can approach for such a conversation?
- ▶ What are my questions, talking points, myths, etc.? (Make a list beforehand.)

- ▶ How can I use the lessons learned in this course as a launching pad for that vulnerable conversation?
- ▶ Where should we meet?
- ▶ When should we meet? Can it be within the next week so that I can report back to this group the outcome?

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Read aloud 2 Timothy 1:7.

For the Holy Spirit, God's gift, does not want you to be afraid of people, but to be wise and strong, and to love them and enjoy being with them. (The Living Bible)

11. What do you fear most about having a vulnerable conversation? How can the others in your small group pray for you? How does 2 Timothy 1:7 encourage you to believe, pray, and live?

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## Lesson Four

### Forming Healthy Cross-Race Friendships

#### *The Building Blocks to Strong Interracial Relationships*

**Read: Chapter 6 of *One in Christ*.**

Have you noticed that the people who thrive in building healthy cross-race friendships are racially attractive? This person unconsciously gives off the signal: “I’m safe. I respect you even though we’re different. I’m open to relating with you without any hang-ups. I won’t bring up matters of race, culture, or ethnicity for no apparent reason. I’m comfortable with our differences. I’m safe.” If your cross-cultural resume doesn’t fit this profile, don’t worry. Becoming a racially attractive person can be learned over time. It will, however, require some intentionality on your part.

In *One in Christ*, I presented the following information with a fuller explanation about the eight building blocks for healthy cross-race friendships.<sup>1</sup> These building blocks, according to the below table, fall into two distinct categories—*required attitudes* and *required actions*.

Eight Building Blocks for Healthy Cross-Race Friendships			
	Required Attitudes		Required Actions
	Demonstrate comfort in the relationship.		Offer hospitality.
	Be free to laugh and joke.		Engage in vulnerable conversations.
	Practice honesty in the relationship.		Go on social outings.
	Seek mutually rewarding outcomes.		Have cross-race friends.

Attitude reflects your disposition, perspective and approach you consciously take when trying to foster a cross-race friendship. Action, on the other hand, communicates your silent, unspoken attitude about the other person. Both sets of items are vital to putting the building blocks of interracial relationships in place for you to enjoy those kinds of friendships.

### **REQUIRED ATTITUDES**

**Demonstrate comfort in the relationship:** Cross-race friendships form almost effortlessly when you feel comfortable in the relationship and that attitude is grasped and felt by others.

**Be free to laugh and joke:** Humor is contagious and free-flowing when you are relaxed and comfortable. People clam up and appear rigid in some social settings. It's an indication that they are outside of their element. They are uncomfortable. Your being free to laugh when in cross-cultural settings is a key ingredient to deepened that friendship.

**Be Warm and Inviting:** If you desire to have friends across racial and cultural lines, be warm and inviting to others. You will gain access in their world both organizationally and personally.

**Practice honesty in the relationship:** Honesty is a key ingredient in forming trust. Without trust a strong bond cannot form in same-race friendships. And, that plays an even more critical role in forming cross-race friendships. Honesty is tied to credibility, integrity, and trustworthiness.

**Seek mutually rewarding outcomes:** True cross-race friendship can only occur and be maintained if your relationship is based on equal status. This is seen as you offer mutually rewarding outcomes. It is a form of respect and value.

### **REQUIRED ACTIONS**

**Offer hospitality:** This action highlights the social aspect of your life. Hospitality touches the home front and your private social space. It includes inviting someone of another race to your home for dinner or even a party. It says: I want to invite you into the inner core of my life.

**Engage in vulnerable conversations:** Defenselessness is an action like the principle of sowing and reaping. When you engage in vulnerable conversations you're planting the seed that produces relational closeness. Sow it in your cross-race relationship and you'll reap a strong cross-race friendship.

**Go on social outings:** Choosing to be seen in a social setting publicly with someone of another race means that you're committed to the growth of this relationship. It tells onlookers, "I'm comfortable with this person. Deal with it if you're not!"

**Have cross-race friends:** Your current set of friends function like a magnet for new friends. Diversity is attractive. Jesus taught: "For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance" (Matthew 25:29). In essence, your cross-race friendships multiply the more you have cross-race friends.

When these eight building blocks are at work in your life, your cross-race attractiveness has no place to go but up. You will be irresistible with members of other cultures and races.

### FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

1. Of these eight building blocks, which one currently ranks weakest in your life? Why? What can you do to improve its strength?

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2. List the names of five people of a different race who you have personal access to. They are people who would easily fit the *Demonstrate comfort in the relationship* test defined above. Do you have a personal relationship with them? If not, how easy would it be to initiate one? If so, how easy would it be to increase your effort in developing a relationship with that person?

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3. What are your top three places where you go on social outings? Do people of other races go to those same places? Is there someone of another race or culture in your social reach that frequents any of those places? How can you connect with them around that social outing?

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4. One of the critical factors in promoting cross-cultural relationships is learning to *be free to laugh and joke* with the people within the organizations we are affiliated with. The challenge with this factor is that most people are not part of the senior management team and unable to exert any direct pressure on introducing organizational change that fosters diversity. But, you are free to act as an individual outside of work hours.

Is there someone from your job (in your school, church, and so on) of another race or culture you could invite to lunch? How intentional could you be in inviting someone of the same sex to lunch? Or, make it your business to sit with someone with whom you have obvious cultural differences during lunch in the company cafeteria. What can you talk about with this person to

build a cross-race relationship amidst laughter and jokes as you seek to discover mutual interests?

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5. Considering the impact of *seeking mutually rewarding outcomes* in our society. Can you recall an instance in which you witnessed someone sending off the signal that said: You are on a lower social status than I am? I'm going to take advantage of you because I think I'm better than you. How awkward was it for you to watch? How do you think the offended party felt when this happened? How did you feel?

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6. How do you go about letting someone of another race know that you enjoy getting to know them? (This is the building block of *practicing honesty in the relationship*.)

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7. *The Parable of the Good Samaritan* found in Luke 10:25-37 teaches that a Samaritan helped a wounded man. Jesus never shared the wounded man's race, culture, or religious affiliation. The only thing we know about him is that he was beaten, robbed, and left to die by the side of the road.

After you've read the parable (Luke 10:25-37), describe what role *demonstrate comfort in the relationship* and *offer hospitality* played in the Samaritan choosing to help the wounded man. What does this parable teach you about cross-racial opportunities?

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### GROUP DISCUSSION EXERCISE

Before beginning your group discussion, invite each member (between four and six people) to give a quick testimony of an interracial experience that occurred in their lives over the past two weeks. What was their take-away from that interaction? The last person to share should pray a brief prayer for each member to grow more racially attractive.

1. Rank in order of personal difficulty in your life the eight building blocks that lead to forming healthy cross-race friendships. Put the number “1” next to the Required Attitude or Required Actions that is the least difficult for you to master and the number “8” next to the most difficult. Discuss each person’s ranking.

Eight Building Blocks for Healthy Cross-Race Friendships			
	Required Attitudes		Required Actions
	Demonstrate comfort in the relationship.		Offer hospitality.
	Be free to laugh and joke.		Engage in vulnerable conversations.
	Practice honesty in the relationship.		Go on social outings.
	Seek mutually rewarding outcomes.		Have cross-race friends.

2. In your organization (church, job, school, and so on), how many people of another race or culture do you consider “Demonstrate comfort in the relationship” towards you? Keep in mind that *Demonstrate comfort in the relationship* in this context has to do with relational closeness and ease in relating to you though you’re from another race than they are.

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3. Do you share any common interests or values with people of other races who “offer hospitality” to you? How did you determine your answer? What have you seen or experienced that led you that conclusion?

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The building block that calls for *Seek mutually rewarding outcomes* is perhaps the most difficult to master because it is subjective and extremely personal. Mutually rewarding outcomes has to do with perceived values and equality of outcomes. And, equality has to do with perception—

your perception and that of the other person in how they think you view them, and how they view themselves, and the outcome of your interactions. Although differences in status has been shown to be a form of prejudice, people consciously and unconsciously drift toward those they perceive to be of the same social status based on the outcomes they are rewarded.

4. Did you ever feel offended because someone behaved in a way that suggested they saw you as socially inferior to them? What did they say or do that led you to that interpretation?

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The tallest person in your group should read Galatians 2:11-14 out loud.

5. Do you think that Peter's actions could have been perceived as a *respect* issue between Jews and Gentiles? Why or why not?

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6. Why did Paul correct Peter publicly rather than privately? Was the correction necessary? Do you think the correction helped undo any of the Jews' perception of mutual respect towards the Gentiles?

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7. If you wanted to convey to someone of another race or culture that “we” *seek mutually rewarding outcomes*, how would you go about doing so without creating more problems? What problems could you unconsciously be introducing by bringing attention to their race, your race, or society's view of race?

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8. What are two of the biggest lies about social status that were planted in your life by your parents or childhood friends about people from other races?

Lie #1 \_\_\_\_\_

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Lie #2 \_\_\_\_\_

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9. What are two biblical truths that you had to learn (or you are presently learning) to correct the lies fed to you by others concerning social status?

Truth #1 \_\_\_\_\_

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Truth #2 \_\_\_\_\_

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Using these words of James, one person should take a moment and pray all or part of these verses over the lives of the members of your group.

If you really keep the royal law found in the Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.” James 2:8-9

## **Lesson Five**

### **Bridging Racial and Cultural Divides**

*How to Live as a Citizen of the World*

**Read: Chapters 7 and 8 of *One in Christ*.**

To live as an authentic reconciler you must be willing to cross ethnic, cultural, and racial barriers by building bridges of reconciliation. To achieve this biblical requirement a sacrifice is often required. The word *sacrifice* speaks of discomfort and implies that you may have to take the high road even though the low road may seem easier.

A reconciler is a peacemaker and a bridge-builder. This person strives to connect people to one another through peacemaking and peace-keeping efforts. The reconciler's work is made possible because peace toward other races first occurred within his or her heart. This peace allows reconcilers to cross barriers that ordinarily would restrict them from connecting socially with others. Out of the overflow of the heart the ministry of reconciliation freely flows.

Paul writes:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation... (2 Cor. 5:17-19)

This passage helps identify some important elements necessary for empowering Christians to build bridges and cross cultural divides into the social worlds of other people.

**New Creation:** The new life one experiences stems from accepting Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. The old person disappears and the new person emerges from the place of repentance.

**God is the Source of Change:** Our new life stems solely from the fact that God reconciled us to Himself through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross.

**The Ministry of Reconciliation:** Each believer has been given the ministry of reconciliation—the ongoing ability to connect people to God and people to people.

### FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

1. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, is reconciliation everyone's responsibility or, is it the work of a select few? How does this reality change your outlook about God's expectation of you?

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2. Since you have been given the ministry of reconciliation, how does that knowledge change your outlook about God's call that you live an intentionally diverse lifestyle?

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3. If the Bible teaches that you have been given the ministry of reconciliation, what should you now expect of yourself? How will your prayers be affected? How will your actions be altered?

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Barriers are deterrents. Some can be self-imposed by our theology—the way we see and view God. Other barriers can arise because of societal patterns and behavioral expectations toward interracial relationships. Regardless of why the barriers exist, you have been given a mandate by God to function as a reconciler...His reconciler. Barriers must be overcome in order for bridges to be built that lead to cross-race relationships.

4. Based on your observation of those from other races *near* you, what are some noticeable barriers they have erected? These barriers likely prevent you from approaching them socially because of the awkwardness and isolation they typically produce. Are those of the other races justified in keeping these barriers in place? What signals have you sent them that say: “I’m safe. I am interested in having a friendship with you”?

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5. Breaking down barriers often requires bridge-building at the same time. Is there a social event or activity upcoming in the next thirty days that you can invite someone of another race or culture to? Who will you invite? What is the occasion? Be specific.

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6. Read Acts 10:1-29, then answer the next three questions. What barriers did Peter have in his life that prevented him from building relationships with Gentiles?

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7. How did Peter see Gentiles prior to the vision? Were they disrespected or devalued? How did his view of them create an impenetrable relational barrier?

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8. What was the bridge that helped Peter overcome his barrier toward Gentiles? What natural steps did Peter have to take to build a bridge to the Gentiles? How can you build a similar bridge in your life today?

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### **GROUP DISCUSSION EXERCISE**

Begin your group discussion with this brief icebreaker. Invite each member (between four and six people) to identify a barrier to cross-race friendships that he or she discovered through the Individual Reflection exercises. The last person to share should pray a brief prayer for everyone to overcome their barriers to building healthy cross-race friendships.

1. Have you ever been invited by someone of a different race to a meal at his or her home? If yes, what was the experience like? If no, would you go if you were invited?

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2. Have you ever invited someone of a different race to your home for a meal? If yes, how did it go? If no, would you given the opportunity?

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Bridge-building must be intentional. To develop healthy cross-race relationships, your heart must change significantly towards people. As this mushroom effect occurs, you will begin to naturally gravitate towards different kinds of people.

Ask the oldest person in your group to read out loud Acts 11:19-24.

The church at Antioch was birthed because persecuted saints in fear of their lives traveled from Jerusalem to the cross-cultural city of Antioch. They intentionally shared their faith with Greeks



and people from other culturally diverse cities, like Cyprus and Cyrene. Consequently, a thriving multicultural and racially-diverse church emerged.

3. What are some things that a multicultural/multiracial church must be sensitive of that a monoracial church need not pay any attention to? Why are these things important?

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4. What small sacrifices do you think you would have to make to become an active member of a multiracial church?

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5. When Barnabas arrived at Antioch and saw the multiracial and multicultural congregation, the Scripture says: “[he] saw evidence of the grace of God” (Acts 11:23). Why was this diverse gathering of converted people a reflection of the grace of God?

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6. For you to participate on the leadership team of a multicultural church, what skills would you need to develop? Why are these skills important? What potential harm could you inflict on the congregation or portions of it if you *did not* cultivate these skills?

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7. What are some things that you can do right now to start functioning as a bridge-builder within your sphere of influence? Are these things challenging for you to undertake?

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8. How can you take the first step toward being a bridge-builder in your organization (job, church, school, and so on)? What would your family and friends think? Who can you turn to for encouragement or coaching if your first steps are met with resistance or rejection?

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9. How can the group pray for you to build bridges and cross barriers?

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## **Lesson Six**

### **Leading Across Cultures**

#### *Modeling Diversity to Others*

**Read: Chapter 9 and Conclusion of *One in Christ*.**

In an attempt to sidestep one of God's primary commandments—to love your neighbor as yourself—a lawyer sarcastically asked Jesus: “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus, knowing how to deal with wise guys shared the powerful Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:11-27).

Therein we learn of a passerby who stops to tend to the needs of a man who was beaten, robbed, and left to die at the side of the road. This story is full of lessons concerning compassion, justice, and racial reconciliation. The Samaritan lived out the principle of reconciliation in that the racial, ethnic, or religious identity of the wounded man did not play a part in the Samaritan's choosing to come to the aid of the unfortunate victim.

We applaud the work and compassion of the Samaritan. But I wonder what the possible societal impact could have been some ten years later had he mentored others in the art of showing kindness to others. To model diversity you must go beyond a singular multicultural act. I applaud you for making efforts to intentionally choose to begin living a cross-cultural life. But I challenge you to take it up a notch. Build a cross-cultural ministry where you intentionally choose to help others make that same choice to become authentic reconcilers. Lead the way in this noble effort. The end result of more people loving their neighbors as themselves holds a far greater societal impact.

Read Acts 11:1-10 to learn of the power of rehearsing your positive stories regarding cross-cultural experiences.

**FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION**

1. According to the Scripture, what was Peter's initial reason in sharing the story of why he went to Cornelius' house?

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2. Why was Peter mindful about including the obvious involvement of God in his account with the Gentiles? What role did God play in the lives of the listening audience?

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3. What was the conclusion of the men who listened to Peter's testimony? How was Peter leading the way for others regarding their openness to cross-cultural experiences?

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If wide-scale change is to occur, cross-cultural leadership must be an intentional process whereby you purposely influence others. Influence is not the same as control. Influence can occur by modeling a cross-cultural lifestyle to others. And your influence can become more direct by the simple act of inviting a few of your friends to do this study with you. It means you'll have to repeat it, but expanding your cross-cultural effectiveness and at the same time influencing others is well worth it. This course, along with the book *One in Christ* can become gifts that you freely give to your family and friends in an attempt to influence their cross-cultural development.

4. Based on your observation of the people in your life, who has the most influence with other people from their own race? How can you begin to influence these influencers in their personal cross-cultural growth?

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5. Prepare a prayer list that identifies the top influencers in your immediate social circle. In what way can you strategically pray for them to grow in openness to diversity, cross-cultural awareness, and in their development of interracial relationships? Write out a prayer and commit to praying for these people daily over the next two weeks. This is how you develop a ministry of reconciliation.

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In reading through the Book of Acts, one cannot avoid Paul's conversion story (Acts 9:1-9). The interesting thing, however, is that he shares his dramatic conversion with others to influence them for Christ. He told it to the unruly crowd in Jerusalem (Acts 21:40-22:22); to Felix, the governor of Caesarea (Acts 24:17-26); to Festus (Acts 25:1-12); and then to King Agrippa (Acts



26:1-23). Each time Paul shared it, we see slightly different versions, as if to indicate that he had various lengths and accounts of his story based on the audience and the time he was given to speak.

In the same way, if you are to lead the way in modeling diversity and in challenging others to do the same, you have to have different versions of your story—the story behind your decision to become an authentic reconciler.

6. What factors led you to intentionally become a student of cross-cultural relationships?

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7. What would you say to one of your longtime friends (of the same race) if he or she asked: “Why are you hanging out with those kinds of people (referencing people of other races)?”

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8. How passionate are you in building cross-race friendships? If two of your longtime friends confronted you and said: “It’s either them (people of other races) or us (people of your same race).” What would you do? How would you handle this challenge?

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### **GROUP DISCUSSION EXERCISE**

Begin your group discussion with a testimony. Invite each member (between four and six people) to give a quick praise report of their cross-race experiences this past week. Have they noticed anything new in their confidence toward positively interacting with others of different races and cultures because of lessons learned through this study group? The last person to share should pray a brief prayer for everyone to continue to grow as authentic reconcilers.

1. What excuses do you constantly battle in your heart about your need to model diversity and grow as a cross-cultural ambassador?

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2. If someone asks you why you want to become an advocate for diversity, what answer would you give them? Is there a personal story behind your newfound passion for building cross-race friendships? What is it?

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Good leaders are good advocates—people who take-up the burden of defending and representing the interests of others. An advocate must know the perspective, opinion, and need of the one he is to represent.

Ask the shortest person in your group to read Acts 11:1-18 out loud.

Peter came across as very defensive in rehearsing the account of why he went into a Gentile's home—the house of Cornelius. In an attempt to make Peter's defense of his actions less awkward, you are to act as his advocate. How would you answer the following questions?

3. What's so terrible about talking to Gentiles about Christ? Shouldn't we care about the spiritual needs of others—those racially and ethnically different from us?

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4. Is Peter to be commended for his courage, or chastised for his actions? What was so courageous about his behavior?

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5. What role has courage played in your attempt to build a cross-racial relationship? Why were you initially apprehensive or fearful? How did that experience increase your level of comfort and confidence in dealing with people across the cultural divide?

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6. If you had to function as an advocate for someone of another race, could you effectively represent their racial or cultural concern? If not, what strategy can you develop to strengthen your effectiveness? If so, what advice would you offer someone who desires to function as a multicultural advocate but is hesitant?

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7. What sacrifices have you made to develop yourself as a cross-cultural ambassador? Why do you consider those actions to be sacrificial?

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8. Are you willing to start and lead a study group around this subject? If so, when will you do that? If not, why not?

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9. What is the most significant lesson or experience you've learned about diversity from this study? Why was that lesson so meaningful to you?

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10. How can your group pray for your continued development as an authentic reconciler?

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<sup>1</sup> Ireland, David. *One in Christ* (Washington, DC: Regnery Faith, 2018), 93-110.