

A THEOLOGICAL VISION FOR BIBLICAL RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE

Discussion Questions for Groups and Individuals

1. People define the term “reconciliation” in different ways. Peter uses Brenda Salter McNeil’s definition of reconciliation as the basis of this vision: “The ongoing spiritual process that involves forgiveness, repentance and justice, that restores broken relationships and broken systems to reflect God’s original intention for all creation to flourish” (pg. 2).
 - a. What is your reaction to the definition?
 - b. Do you agree that it aligns with Scripture, or do you read Scripture differently?

2. The paper points out that the word justice is “a polarizing and emotionally charged word” in our current culture (pg.3).
 - a. Is this true for you?
 - b. In what ways have you experienced people defining justice first through a political lens, and not a Biblical one?
 - c. How does your understanding of justice measure up to Scripture’s definition of justice as outlined in the vision?

3. One of the assumptions of the *Theological Vision* is that evil and sin manifest themselves in institutions and society. In other words, evils such as racism can be embedded in the ways in which we practically do life together as a large community. This systemic side of evil seems to be one major sticking point in the way disciples in our congregation understand and engage in Christ-centered justice.
 - a. What are your thoughts, based in Scripture, about the systemic side of evil? Of racism? If you are in a group in which not everyone agrees with you, try explaining your position in a way in which you seek to be understood, and not in a defensively or with the hope of changing the persons position. Listen well to the person who thinks differently and try to understand their position even if you disagree.
 - b. In what ways, if any, do you think our culture – which values and promotes the individual and individual choices – impacts our understanding of systemic evil? (see introduction paragraph on page 9)

4. The paper describes three stages of growth and development (pgs.9-10).
 - a. Do these ring true to what you have witnessed and experienced?
 - b. Where are you?

- c. What do you think about Peter's statement about how the whole church will engage in these three stages (pgs. 12-13)? Does anything he wrote make you wary? disappointed? or hopeful?
5. The paper urges us to dialogue, to pray together, and to be willing to get uncomfortable. Which of those are you most nervous about? Which one might the Lord be calling you to take a lead in at this time?
6. Carefully consider the summary of recommendations on pages 19-20. These are meant to guide our life as a congregation together. Do any of these recommendations give you pause, and if so, why? Do any fill you with hope or longing, and if so, why?
7. "The more we lean into efforts to pursue racial reconciliation and justice, the more we discover the depth of pain people of color have experienced and just how difficult and complex the problems are. Even though the work is hard and problems aren't easily solved, it is important kingdom work to which the Lord is calling us (pg.19)." With this in mind, what are the next steps the Lord might be leading you?