

Colorblind Video Discussion Guide

Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church

The Colorblind skit, based on [Mark 10:35-52](#), was developed by the Conference Anti-Racism Team with the Rev. Jim Walker in response to people who deny racism by claiming they are “color blind.” In the scripture and the skit, Blind Bartimaeus wants to see. In our contemporary context, Bartimaeus finally “sees” racism. We encourage groups to use the skit for conversations about racism that may enable participants to “see.”

Planning:

- Allow three hours for the gathering
- Introduce the idea to church leaders by sharing the link to the video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ErbDV9k9pw> (note volume is low from 1:27-1:42)
- For a more fruitful conversation, organize a group of 6 to 12 people for group discussion
- Invite specific groups of people to participate -- advertising day, location, and time in your newsletter, eblast, and bulletin announcements.
 - Choose what works best in your setting
 - Consider giving one month’s notice and repeating the invitation on Sundays
- Ask the congregation, as well as the planners and facilitator, to pray for the gathering
- Supplies: large wall post-its, index cards, and pens
- Provide food at the gathering
- Suggest advance reading:
 - “Color Blindness: The New Racism?” at
<http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-36-fall-2009/feature/colorblindness-new-racism>
 - Mark 10:35-52

At the Gathering:

- Mention the importance of having conversations about racism, particularly with the racial tensions in the nation and the important role the church needs to play in love, open conversations, and reconciliation. The difficulty of having these conversations is real, and we need to acknowledge that. However, challenges should not stop us from having them.
- Open with prayer:
By God of diversity,
Help us love otherness.
God of the Jesus mystery,
Help us to burn out hatred.
God of the Woman at the Well,
Help us to know our true need.
And God of the Ethiopian,
Help us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

--Michael Battle in *Race and Prayer: Collected Voices, Many Dreams*

Set Group Norms for Conversation

- Allow for 15 minutes for group to identify norms, an agreement, or covenant, using a large wall post-it
- Acknowledge people enter dialogues on race with a lot of apprehension
- Safety within the group is important for people to share deeply and express their true feelings. If people fear attack or vilification, they will remain guarded and open sharing will not happen.
- Acknowledge we are all entitled to be treated with respect and the group is engaged in a learning process. It is okay that we each pick up new ideas at different rates.
- Discuss the role that challenge and critique will play in the group. Respectful challenging of ideas can be beneficial, while defensive critiques are destructive.
- Create a shared agreement for dealing with conflict in a way that maintains each person's humanity
- Some themes to consider: respect multiple viewpoints; own your intentions and impact; challenge in love; take risks; name things; practice active listening; speak from your own experience; assert opinions without attacking other group members; affirm frustration, confusion, and fear; and maintain confidentiality.

--Excerpted from Shelley Tochluk's [Witnessing Whiteness Workshop](#), and [Vital Conversations on Realities of Racism](#) from the United Methodist General Commission on Religion and Race.

Background of Video

For its report, the Anti-Racism Team (A.R.T.) of the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church decided to present a skit and contacted the Rev. Jim Walker (a theater pro) to work with the team on the project. After several intense conversations involving team members and a others, Jim made major revisions based on the input of diverse people who related their personal experiences. All were transformed in the development of the skit. The team is grateful to Jim for his ability to listen and create the presentation you are about to see.

Watch the Colorblind Skit Video:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ErbDV9k9pw> (note volume is low from 1:27-1:42)
- 15.32 minutes
- Consider the reflection and questions, which are below while viewing the video

Reflect on Your Experience of the Video

Ponder in silence these two questions--jot notes to yourself

- Heart - how did this drama make you feel? Did you laugh? Were you surprised? Angry? Frustrated? At what part of the drama did you feel this way and why?
- Head - if you were to rewrite this drama, what would you omit? What would you add and why?

Group Sharing of Reflections

Questions

Continued conversation using the following as springboards:

- How does the scripture about Blind Bartimaeus take on new meaning after watching the video?
- In Bartimaeus' Christian experience, what did his new ability to "see" mean? He says, "I want to see."
- What does the term color blind mean to you before and after reading the article?
- How does color blindness serve to deny racism?
- "Prejudice + the misuse of power = Racism." What does that definition say to you?
- What is white privilege? What is the kneejerk reaction of yourself and others when told (I am) they are white and therefore privileged?
- What are the issues with swapping "Black Lives Matter" with "All Lives Matter?"
- Is superficially claiming a person of color as a friend enough? If not, how can whites proactively build relationships with people of color?
- What are some of the color blind excuses made by some whites?
- Why do some whites claim discrimination/prejudice including reverse racism? Is this form of racism legitimate? Why or why not?
- Why can't whites come up with a quick fix to racism? What is the alternative?
- How has religion been used as a tool to justify or reinforce racism?
- What can we as Christians do in response to institutional racism?

Time for Silence

Reflect on these questions: How is the Spirit moving in our midst in relation to this issue of institutional racism? How is the Kingdom of God breaking out here?

Time for Commitment (Provide index cards)

Write a personal statement of your next step--be sure it is one you are willing to do and not one you think others think you ought to do)

Closing Prayer

Form a circle--ask folks to go around the circle and say a word or phrase expressing what they will take with them tonight (i.e. "commitment to develop an anti-racist lens", "hope" "desire to become more aware of my White Privilege", "overwhelmed" "commitment to process our conversation" "desire to meet again soon". . .)

Leader Offers Closing Prayer

Passing of the Peace

Fellowship Time

- With conversation and refreshments

Contact the Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church -- Office of Diversity Development and Inclusion at diversity@wpaumc.org or 724-776-2300 with any questions.