

CREATING A CULTURE OF REPAIR

Taking Action on the Road to Reparations

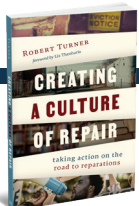
By Robert Turner

FOUR-SESSION BIBLE STUDY FOR SMALL GROUPS & INDIVIDUALS

Reparations can be a scary word for many Americans today. The injustice that African Americans have endured on this soil began so long ago and has affected so many people in so many different ways. Repairing such a vast breach feels impossible. If there is anything we know as Christians, however, it is that with God nothing is impossible (see Luke 1:37). We must resist using the magnitude of the challenge as an excuse to do nothing. Even when the path is unclear, God has a record of making a way where there is no way. We must take that first, timid step forward, trusting that with each step, more light will be shed.

Creating a Culture of Repair: Taking Action on the Road to Reparations provides 100 potential steps along the path. This Bible study, inspired by Robert Turner's book, will bolster Christian readers' spiritual strength for the journey, highlighting the biblical precedent for reparations and insight into God's vision for the freedom of all people.

The four sessions of this Bible study correspond to the four chapters of Turner's book. Each session includes a portion of the chapter to read or re-read together, connecting the type of reparations being discussed with the key passage(s) of Scripture for the day. Questions follow to help participants make connections between their faith and the work of racial justice.



Four-Session Bible Study Guide for Small Groups and Individuals
Using *Creating a Culture of Repair*, by Robert Turner

WJK WESTMINSTER
JOHN KNOX PRESS

SESSION 1: INDIVIDUAL REPARATIONS

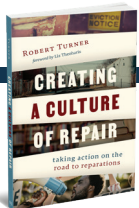
Focus Scripture: Matthew 25:31–46

CHAPTER EXCERPT

Pages 15–16, from “One common objection. . .” to “. . . oppression of African Americans.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you know your family’s history in relation to slavery? How would you describe your relationship to America’s racist past?
2. If Turner is correct that “it is not purely the malice of individuals that prevents equality, but the laws, structures, and norms of a society” (p. 15), what do you see as the role of individuals in creating a more equal society?
3. When thinking about a societal problem like homelessness or poverty, do you tend to favor acts of personal service and charity (like donating to food banks) or government interventions (like food stamps) as the best solution? How does your faith inform your answer?
4. What does Jesus’ parable of sheep and goats in Matthew 25 mean to you? If Jesus were living in the United States today, what actions do you think he might have listed?
5. Does it scare you that Jesus connects our care for those in need to our eternal reward (v. 34) or punishment (v. 41)? Why or why not?
6. Our desire to help others can get tricky when it comes at a cost to our own finances. What do you make of the fact that in Jesus’ “Good Samaritan” parable (Luke 10:29–37), the character we are to emulate spends his own money to restore the injured man to health?
7. What acts of individual reparations stood out to you in chapter one? Name three that you can commit to doing in the next few months.
8. What are some challenges you may face while taking these actions? What are some areas in which you need to grow in order to overcome these challenges?



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SESSION 2: SOCIETAL REPARATIONS

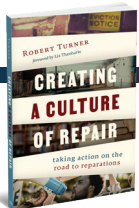
Focus Scripture: Luke 19:1–10

CHAPTER EXCERPT

Pages 44–45, the section “Making Things Right Together.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways do you see society still treating whiteness as a “public and psychological wage,” to use W. E. B. DuBois’ term (discussed by Turner on p. 41)?
2. Without laws forcing action to be taken, how do you think neighborhoods, cities, civic organizations, and businesses can best be motivated to take reparative actions like those listed in chapter 2?
3. Looking at the example of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10, how do you think Jesus inspired Zacchaeus to repay what he had stolen, and even more?
4. In response to Zacchaeus’ reparative action, Jesus says “salvation has come to this house” (v. 9) and implies that Zacchaeus had been “lost” (v. 10). What does this story tell you about Jesus’ mission to “save the lost”?
5. In Luke 3:10–14, people who worked for the Roman government—tax collectors and soldiers—ask John the Baptist how baptism should affect their exploitation-prone lines of work, and John replies that they are to stop taking advantage of people. What do you think John would say to modern people working in industries that historically exploited African Americans?
6. Are you in a line of work that historically or currently causes harm or limits opportunity for African Americans? What reparative actions do you think need to be taken by communities and organizations you are part of?
7. Name three actions of societal reparations that you can commit to advocate for with the appropriate groups.
8. From whom do you expect to encounter resistance while taking these actions? How can you prepare to stand up to or work through this resistance?



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SESSION 3: INSTITUTIONAL REPARATIONS

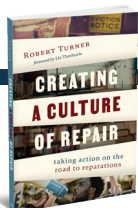
Focus Scriptures: Ezra 1:1–12 and Nehemiah 2:1–10

CHAPTER EXCERPT

Pages 80–82, from “Institutional Reparations Are Owed” to “. . . support of their government?”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Were any of the U.S. government’s discriminatory practices described in this chapter a surprise to you? Which do you find most horrifying?
2. Have you or your ancestors benefited from government policies like a land grant; a government-backed, low-interest home loan; Social Security payments; or the GI Bill? How would your family’s life be different if those benefits had not been available to you?
3. In today’s scripture readings, why do you think King Cyrus and King Artaxerxes wanted to support the Jewish exiles’ return to Judah and rebuilding of Jerusalem?
4. How do you think the Babylonian and Persian people felt about the kings’ orders to give the Jews money and supplies (Ezra 1:4, 6), timber and protection (Neh. 2:8–9)?
5. What would it mean for modern U.S. leaders to facilitate restoration for African Americans the way the Persian kings supported the Jewish exiles?
6. Are there certain areas of institutional racism you feel especially moved to explore further or take action on (e.g., criminal justice, education, or commerce)?
7. Name three actions of institutional reparations that you can commit to advocate for with your neighbors and elected officials. How will you do that?
8. How will you respond to those who say it would be too expensive to implement a national program of government reparations?



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SESSION 4: SPIRITUAL REPARATIONS

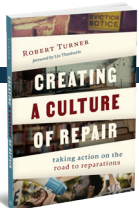
Focus Scripture: Exodus 12:29–36

CHAPTER EXCERPT

Pages 149–150, from “We have discussed . . .” to “. . . ideal of redemption.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does your faith influence your political convictions overall and, specifically, your attitudes and actions around racial justice?
2. Does your church talk about racial justice? If not, what needs to happen for the congregation to be willing to take action for spiritual reparations?
3. How does your (or your church’s) theology promote or hinder racial equality and justice? Consider things like the way you picture Jesus, your definition of sin, and the way you believe God wants Christians to engage with problems in the world.
4. In promises to Abraham (Gen. 15:13–14) and Moses (Exod. 3:21–22 and 11:1–2), God says that the Israelites will leave Egypt with “great possessions,” silver and gold. Why do you think God emphasizes that the people will not come out of slavery empty-handed?
5. What do you make of the idea that the Israelites “save,” “rescue,” or “deliver” the Egyptians by receiving their gifts in Exodus 12:29–36?
6. Consider Matthew Schlimm’s statement (quoted by Turner on p. 150): “Reparations benefit not just the oppressed but also the oppressors.” How do you think the United States would be different—for people of all races—after reparations are made to Black Americans?
7. Name three actions of spiritual reparations that you can commit to discussing with your pastor or congregational leaders. What will you do if your congregation refuses to take action?
8. How has *Creating a Culture of Repair* changed your thinking about the United States’ racial history? How will taking action for reparations help you to better love your neighbor as Christ commanded?



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