

Discussion Questions for *More Than Equals*

The discussion questions that follow are roughly in the sequence of the chapters of the book. They were developed based on the questions at the end of the book, questions that were provided by the publisher, and the input of the Presbytery of Charlotte "One in Christ" Committee.

Some suggestions:

- These questions are best discussed with a multi-racial group. Only with this group makeup will a broad perspective of views be present.
 - For groups made up of multiple organizations, try to share the session facilitation with all groups.
 - It is best to limit discussion groups to 12 people or less. If you have more than this number, consider breaking into subgroups.
- More Than Equals covers a lot of ground. It is optimum to allow ample time to discussing the questions. We would suggest at least 2-3 sessions of 60-90 minutes.
 - Question 1 is optional; it is intended as an ice breaker.
 - If you have just one session, try to include the following questions: 3, 4, 5, 13, and 14.
 - If you have two sessions, try to cover most of the first 8 questions in the first session (this is the Admit section of the book), and the remainder in the second session.
 - If you have three sessions, you could break the three into the following sections: (1) Questions 1-4, (2) Questions 5-10, (3) Questions 11-16.
 - For multi-session formats, select those questions you think are most important, and be sure to devote some time to them.
 - It is impossible to cover all parts of the book in a set of questions, so it is also advisable to allocate a little time to other thoughts and comments from the group... as well as actions going forward.
- For questions and feedback, please send them to
 - Debbie.Wilkinson@presbyofcharlotte.org or -
 - RossLoeser@aol.com

Please let us know how it went, and provide suggestions for how to better conduct this process in the future. THANKS!

Discussion Questions for *More Than Equals*

- 1) Getting started...
 - a) What is your first memory of when race was an issue?
 - b) What is your most vivid positive personal experience regarding race?
 - c) What is your most vivid negative experience regarding race?
 - d) What is one thing in your world that is different from your parents' world in terms of race?
 - e) On a scale of one to ten, what score would you give race relations in America today? What about in the church?
- 2) The authors contend that integration was once the dominant national ideal for race relations, but now a higher ideal of reconciliation is needed. How do the two ideals differ? (note: question 9 also addresses reconciliation)
- 3) What do you think of when you think *neighbor*? How does Jesus' definition compare to yours? Is loving our racially different neighbor optional or a nonnegotiable tenet of the gospel?
 - a) Discuss Chris's statement in the Introduction (p. 10) – Our witness as Christians labors under the burden of a great historical contradiction: that it is possible to be reconciled to God without being reconciled to your neighbor.
 - b) Discuss Spencer's statement on page 62 – "...at a very early age I concluded that it was impossible to be a white Southerner and a Christian."
- 4) Consider the concept of "white blinders" (chap.5) – the ability of white people to ignore the issues and problems of people of another race in their daily lives. To what extent does this exist in the churches and communities of the Presbytery of Charlotte today? What does this imply for the white Christian? How about the black Christian?
- 5) In his book, Blood Done Sign My Name, author Timothy Tyson stated that we must honestly confront our past in racial matters in order to move forward. How does this thought relate to the concept of "black residue" (chap. 6 – showing itself as black anger and self-doubt).
- 6) "It is easy to remain angry with a faceless white race. It is much harder to direct that anger at a particular white brother or sister who has a name and a face" (chap. 7). What are the implications of this principle as a hopeful step toward racial reconciliation?
- 7) Chapter eight, in fact the entire book, is not so much concerned with overt racism. Its focus is unconscious attitudes, systems, preferences, practices—the social and institutional blinders—which do not intentionally exclude, harm and discriminate but nevertheless have the same result. Do an honest examination of your life and circles of influence for how silence may be giving consent to social or institutional blinders. What do you "see"? (This is a serious challenge – humans could not see the evils of slavery and Nazism (p 105-6).)
- 8) Re-read the second paragraph on page 127, starting with, "Many blacks feel that the only setting in which they can be fully respected is among other blacks." Discuss the reasons for intentional separation by black people. What approach is most consistent with the gospels?

- 9) Chris writes, "The gulf between black and white can be crossed only on a bridge built by the hands of God. . . .Without God at the center, there is no basis for reconciliation" (chap. 10). This is a bold statement. What does it mean to put God at the center of reconciliation, and why do you think Chris and Spencer believe this so deeply?
- 10) How might a church or other group committed to *being multiethnic* look and act compared to one that is homogeneous? How might a church committed to *racial reconciliation* impact its members and community?
- 11) Page 174 suggests three choices confronting blacks and whites in the American church today – (1) disagree, (2) compromise, (3) fight the conflict through to unity. Discuss the validity of this statement, and also how they are the same choices for other church issues.

It also states, "To seek the road of unity requires real humility." Why might this be true?
- 12) Why do you think interracial dating and marriage has been so vehemently opposed even by many Christians? Why has so much energy been invested in opposing it throughout history?
- 13) What "kingdom choices" could you or your group make for the sake of reconciliation that would provide a clear and compelling contrast to "normal" race relations in your setting?

Chapter 18 suggests you (1) be intentional ("prove neighbor", learn about other races, visit other churches ...), (2) take small steps forward, (3) put yourself where you can learn
- 14) Chapter 20 covers Spencer's discovery of the power of Grace. It deals with forgiving others, giving up our grievances, eliminating resentment... even though the other person does not "deserve" it. He says we should give grace while preaching justice and that this will unburden us and make our witness more effective. How do you see this working in the area of racial reconciliation? How might it work in other areas?
- 15) Much of this book was written in the early 1990s. It states "the wounds of racism are still deep." If the book had been written last year, what major issues would have changed?
- 16) To what extent does the need for reconciliation pertain to other groups today? Consider Latinos, Native Americans, and Asians. What about different sexual orientation?