

## Becoming Like Jesus | Week 3 - Jesus Fostered Reconciliation

### Message Big Idea

To be deeply formed into the image of Christ, we must engage in habits that can help bring racial solidarity in the church and to the world.

### Scripture

Mark 3:13-19, Matthew 10:2-4, Acts 10, Galatians 2:11-14

### Icebreaker & Opening Thought

1. When are you the most at ease with yourself?
2. Read through COMMUNITY's Rules of Engagement on the Resource page included in this guide. What stands out to you? How can they help us talk about challenging topics like racism and racial solidarity?
3. When did you first become aware of race and racism? Where are you on your journey with this topic?

### Bible Discussion

4. Read Acts 10:1-48. What do you notice in this chapter? What stands out to you?
5. How do you see Peter practicing listening and empathy?
6. By eating with Gentile (non-Jewish people) and including them in the people of God, Peter went against the narratives, structures, and beliefs of his day. He even had to defend himself against other Christians later (11:3, 18). Put yourself in Peter's shoes; how do you think he felt during his time with Cornelius? How willing would you be to do something similar?

### Life Application & Challenge

7. Pastor and author Rich Villodas, in his book "The Deeply Formed Life", writes: "God is not simply in the business of saving souls; he is in the business of creating a new family." What do you think about that statement?
8. We form a family of God shaped by racial solidarity when we practice four habits. Read them as a group and discuss which of these practices you might want to lean into as a group or as individuals. Which of these have you practiced? What was your experience? What could you begin practicing this week?
  - a. **Remembering:** We must not forget the good and the bad about our country and be honest about the past and present realities. This is not an exercise in shaming or hating our past, but a way of loving our country and moving toward healing.
  - b. **Listening:** To move toward racial solidarity, we must form the habit of deeply listening to those different from us without being easily offended. When we listen and learn from others who have lived a different experience, we see the image of God in one another.
  - c. **Lamenting:** Throughout Scripture, the practice of lament is a deep, spiritual, mature response to sadness and sorrow. Peter listened to Cornelius and then acknowledged that his old way of thinking was wrong. In lamenting, we join those affected by racism in our country. We cry with them, but we go further because lamenting is more than a social outcry; it is trying to discern through tears how we can join God's work of solidarity and reconciliation.
  - d. **Self-examination:** We all have been shaped by our own cultures, upbringing, and even our cities and neighborhoods. We all carry some baggage of ideas and worldviews around. And unless we take the time to self-examine, we will continue to perpetuate beliefs and practices in ourselves and future generations.
9. Everyone is invited to go on a journey of racial solidarity. Our website has excellent resources to help us take another step toward racial solidarity. Check out our website [communitychristian.org/starthere](http://communitychristian.org/starthere). What resources appeal the most to you? Also, you are invited to join a Living UNDIVIDED Group beginning February 28 at 7pm. Check out the website and consider signing up at [communitychristian.org/cares](http://communitychristian.org/cares)
10. What next step would you like to take on our journey toward racial solidarity?

## COMMUNITY's Rules of Engagement

1. **Listen Well.** We don't listen in anticipation of our turn to talk. We listen to understand. We are also not listening to blame a group of people when there is disagreement. When we listen to understand, we absorb and diffuse negative emotions.
2. **Ask Anything.** What if your first response to someone's challenging statement was a question, not a rebuttal. By asking questions and understanding how people have arrived at their opinions and perspectives, we create a safe place where people can belong and be known. Listening is one of the most practical ways we love people.
3. **Disagree Freely.** We have to help people become more comfortable with disagreement. This is like a muscle - a community muscle that needs to grow and develop, and it grows stronger as we come together and get more comfortable living in a diverse community.
4. **Love Anyway.** Loving well doesn't mean we will all agree or expect uniformity. It means giving others space and freedom to be who they are and where they are on their spiritual journey. As a leader, you are helping people to grow and take steps they wouldn't have taken on their own, so we want to love people right where they are in their journey by challenging them and supporting them.